

## Highlights From *Jewish Community Study of New York: 2002* Focus on Synagogues<sup>1</sup>

December 2005

### OVERVIEW: HOUSEHOLD AND POPULATION ESTIMATES

**Population Size:** The New York area – the five boroughs of New York City and the three adjacent New York State counties (Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester) – represents the largest concentration of Jewish households and Jewish people in any geographic area in the world outside of Israel.

#### Jewish Households, Jewish Persons, and All People Living in Jewish Households, Eight-County New York Area

Jewish Households	643,000
Jewish Persons	1,412,000
All People Living in Jewish Households (Including Non-Jews)	1,666,000

Approximately 70% of the Jewish households and Jewish people live in New York City. About 30% live in Nassau, Suffolk or Westchester.

#### Number of Jewish Households and Percent of Jewish Households in Eight-County New York Area

Brooklyn	Manhattan	Nassau	Queens	Westchester	Suffolk	Bronx	Staten Island
171,000	155,000	89,000	87,000	55,000	44,000	24,000	18,000
27%	24%	14%	14%	8%	7%	4%	3%

#### Number of Jewish Persons and Percent of Jewish Persons in Eight-County New York Area

Brooklyn	Manhattan	Nassau	Queens	Westchester	Suffolk	Bronx	Staten Island
456,000	243,000	221,000	186,000	129,000	90,000	45,000	42,000
32%	17%	16%	13%	9%	6%	3%	3%

**Population Shifts:** Although the Jewish population in the eight-county area has remained about the same over the past decade, there have been significant changes within the area. Substantial increases have occurred in the number of people in Jewish households in Westchester, Staten Island, and Brooklyn. Substantial decreases have occurred in the Bronx, Queens, and Manhattan.<sup>2</sup>

#### Percent Change: Number of People in Jewish Households 1991-2002

Westchester	Staten Island	Brooklyn	Nassau	Suffolk	Manhattan	Queens	Bronx
+47%	+41%	+31%	+16%	+10%	-14%	-14%	-40%

<sup>1</sup> Note: The highlights contained here were selected specifically in reference to topics being discussed at the January 9, 2006, Full-Day Invitational Leadership Conference, *SYNERGY: Using Research on the Synagogue of Today to Enhance the Synagogue of Tomorrow*, sponsored by UJA-Federation of New York. For additional information about the Jewish community of New York, its demographic profile, vulnerable populations, Jewish connections, intermarriage, philanthropy, and other topics of interest, see Jacob B. Ukeles and Ron Miller, *Jewish Community Study of New York: 2002* (October 2004). PDF versions of all Jewish community study reports are available at [www.ujafedny.org/jewishcommunitystudy](http://www.ujafedny.org/jewishcommunitystudy).

<sup>2</sup> As the study was conducted between six and 12 months after the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan, the decline in Manhattan may be related to those events and might represent a temporary and reversible trend.

**Jewish Density:** Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Nassau are the counties with the highest Jewish density. The Bronx, Suffolk, and Queens have the lowest Jewish density.

**People in Jewish Households in the County as a Percent of All People in the County**

Brooklyn	Manhattan	Nassau	Westchester	Staten Island	Queens	Suffolk	Bronx
21%	19%	19%	16%	12%	10%	9%	4%

**Population Distribution and Synagogue Membership:** “Affiliation” within the Jewish community has numerous contexts. About one fifth of New York-area households belong to a synagogue and a JCC or other Jewish organization (19%). Another 24% report membership only in a synagogue, making the overall rate of synagogue affiliation 43%. With 9% reporting that they belong to a JCC or other Jewish organization (but not a synagogue), the remaining 48% of New York Jewish households are not affiliated with Jewish organizational life.

The percentage of Jewish households in the eight-county area that report belonging to a synagogue has increased slightly since 1991, from 38% of all households in 1991 to 43% in 2002. The eight-county average is comparable to the national average.<sup>3</sup> However, there are significant differences between the suburban counties (except Suffolk), which have much higher percentages of households belonging to synagogues than the city.

**Percent of Jewish Households That Report Synagogue Membership, by County of Residence**

Nassau	Westchester	Brooklyn	Queens	Bronx	Suffolk	Staten Island	Manhattan
56%	51%	47%	46%	40%	36%	33%	30%

**Jewish Diversity:** The Jewish community in the New York area has a unique profile compared with the rest of the Jewish population in the United States on several measures. These characteristics include:

- **Economic Diversity:** Both substantial wealth and substantial poverty
- **Denominational Diversity:** In particular, the largest Orthodox Jewish community in the United States and a sizable secular Jewish community
- **Ethnic Diversity:** A substantial Russian-speaking Jewish community
- **Divergent Marital Patterns:** The largest concentration of single, never-married Jews in the United States, and lower intermarriage rates than the rest of the country

## ECONOMIC DIVERSITY AND SYNAGOGUE AFFILIATION

**Income:** Almost one in three Jewish households reports an annual income of less than \$35,000.

**Annual Household Income, Jewish Households, Eight-County New York Area**

Under \$35,000	\$35,000 – \$49,999	\$50,000 – \$99,999	\$100,000 – \$149,999	Over \$150,000
31%	14%	24%	15%	17%

<sup>3</sup> In one NJPS report (*The National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01: Strength, Challenge and Diversity in the American Jewish Population*, September 2003), it was reported that 46% of American Jewish households belong to synagogues, making New York slightly lower than the national average. However, another report (*Geographic Differences Among American Jews*, October 2004) reports that 40% of American Jewish households belong to a synagogue and that synagogue membership is highest in the New York Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (a 26-county area including counties in New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania; 44%).

Income and synagogue membership are related. More affluent households are more likely to belong to a synagogue. Less affluent households are more likely to cite financial cost as a factor that prevented them from joining a synagogue.

#### Relationships Between Annual Household Income and Synagogue Membership

	Under \$35,000	\$35,000 – \$49,999	\$50,000 – \$99,999	\$100,000 – \$149,999	Over \$150,000	Eight-County Total
Percent of All Jewish Households That Report Belonging to a Synagogue	37%	37%	39%	45%	57%	43%
Percent of Households That Report Financial Cost Had Prevented Them From Joining a Synagogue in the Five Years Preceding the Survey	25%	16%	17%	9%	7%	15%

#### DENOMINATIONAL DIVERSITY AND SYNAGOGUE AFFILIATION

**Denominational Identification:** Denominational identification appears to have shifted somewhat since 1991, but continues to reflect the diversity of Jewish beliefs, traditions, and groups.

#### Jewish Respondent Denomination, 1991 and 2002, Eight-County New York Area

(Jewish Respondents)	Reform	Conservative	Orthodox	Reconstructionist	No Denomination, "Just Jewish"	Secular and No Religion	Miscellaneous Answers
2002	29%	26%	19%	1%	15%	10%	<1%
1991	36%	34%	13%	2%	10%	3%	2%

#### Average Number of Jewish Persons in Household, by Denomination, and Number of Jewish Persons in Households, Eight-County New York Area<sup>4</sup>

	Reform	Conservative	Orthodox	Reconstructionist	No Denomination, "Just Jewish"	Secular and No Religion	Miscellaneous Denominations
Average Number of Jewish Persons in Household	2.1	2.1	3.4	2.3	1.8	1.7	1.8
Number of Jewish Adults	285,600	269,900	233,800	14,800	146,200	82,800	5,900
Number of Jewish Children	59,700	48,100	144,300	4,100	20,900	12,200	1,300
Percent of Jewish Persons in Eight-County Area	26%	24%	28%	1%	13%	7%	1%
Total Number of People in Jewish Households (Including Non-Jews)	396,600	348,800	408,600	20,700	198,800	122,100	9,800

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the figures reported in the chart, there are approximately 70,700 Jewish adults, 11,700 Jewish children, and 163,100 people that live in other Jewish households (respondent refused to answer denomination question or respondent non-Jewish).

**Denomination and Affiliation:** There is a correlation between identification with a denominational movement and synagogue membership. Affiliation rates are highest among those who self-identify as Orthodox and are lowest among those who called themselves secular.

**Percent of Households in Each Denomination That Report Belonging to a Synagogue**

Orthodox	Conservative	Reconstructionist	Reform	No Denomination, "Just Jewish"	Secular and No Religion	Miscellaneous Answers
86%	57%	55%	37%	18%	16%	46%

**Affiliation – Belonging and Believing:** Not surprisingly, there is a strong correlation between affiliation and positive Jewish attitudes and practices.<sup>5</sup>

**Jewish Values and Beliefs, by Formal Affiliation Index**

<i>Percent that say the listed value is "Very Important"</i>	Strongly Affiliated	Moderately Affiliated	Nonaffiliated
Survival of the State of Israel	97%	92%	88%
Making the World a Better Place	93%	88%	84%
Jewish Value of <i>Tzedakah</i>	85%	71%	50%
Learning About Jewish History and Culture	82%	68%	54%
Giving Children a Jewish Education	88%	72%	46%
Being Jewish	85%	69%	46%
Being Part of a Jewish Community	79%	56%	28%
Jewish Art, Music and Culture	50%	41%	37%

**ETHNIC DIVERSITY AND SYNAGOGUE AFFILIATION: THE RUSSIAN-SPEAKING JEWISH COMMUNITY IN NEW YORK**

Approximately 27% of Jewish adults living in the eight-county New York area were born outside the United States. They come from the former Soviet Union, Eastern and Western Europe, Israel and other Middle Eastern countries, Latin and South America, and elsewhere. The largest immigrant group by far is Jews from the former Soviet Union. The Russian-speaking Jewish community is about one-fifth of New York City's Jewish community, but only 4% of Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester's Jewish populations.

**Households, Persons, and All People Living in Russian-Speaking Jewish Households, Eight-County New York Area**

Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	92,000
Jewish Persons in Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	202,000
All People Living in Russian-Speaking Jewish Households (Including Non-Jews)	223,000

Jewish respondents in Russian-speaking homes are most likely to self-identify as nondenominational or as secular. Fewer than half of all Russian-speaking household Jewish respondents identify with the three major American movements.

<sup>5</sup> Here, "Strongly Affiliated" households replied "yes" to at least two of the following three: belonging to a synagogue, participating in a JCC activity, and belonging to another Jewish organization. "Moderately Affiliated" households reported just a single membership or involvement, and "Nonaffiliated" households do not belong to any Jewish organization and have not participated in JCC activities.

### Denominational Identification, Russian-Speaking Jewish Respondents

Orthodox	Conservative	Reform	Reconstructionist	No Denomination, "Just Jewish"	Secular and No Religion	Miscellaneous Answers
8%	14%	19%	<1%	33%	25%	<1%

Russian-speaking households are much less likely to report belonging to a synagogue (31%). In Brooklyn, only 25% of Russian-speaking Jewish households report that they belong to a synagogue. In Queens, however, there are much higher rates of synagogue membership in Russian-speaking Jewish households (49%) – approximately equal to the rate of synagogue membership in non-Russian-speaking Queens households (45%). The Queens Russian-speaking Jewish community's involvement in Jewish congregational life is noteworthy, especially in contrast to the Brooklyn data. This may reflect the presence of a larger, more traditional Bukharan community.

Within the 31% of Russian-speaking households that belong to a synagogue, 16% of the respondents identified themselves as Orthodox, 23% as Conservative, 25% as Reform, 25% as nondenominational, and 11% as secular.

### MARITAL STATUS AND SYNAGOGUE AFFILIATION

**In-Marriage and Inter marriage:**<sup>6</sup> The percent of the Jewish population that is intermarried in the New York area has increased very slightly since the last New York Jewish Community study in 1991 (from 19% to 22%). The figures for the Russian-speaking community are not significantly different from the eight-county area population as a whole, except that a higher percentage are conversionary in-marriages.<sup>7</sup>

#### In-Marriage and Inter marriage, Percentages of Currently Married Couples, Eight-County New York Area\*

	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	All Eight-County Jewish Households
In-Marriages (two Jewish persons married each other)	68%	72%
Conversionary Inmarriages (Both respondent and spouse view themselves as Jewish currently, but one of them was not raised as a Jew)	15%	7%
Inter marriages (a Jewish-raised respondent or spouse is married to a non-Jewish partner)	17%	22%

\* Numbers and percentages may not add precisely due to rounding for presentation.

The 22% inter marriage finding is a summary statistic that includes all currently married couples, regardless of when the marriage occurred. As in almost every Jewish community, inter marriage rates are higher for marriages in recent years. Nevertheless, the New York Jewish community continues to have a much lower inter marriage rate than the national Jewish community. Among those married in the most recent five-year

<sup>6</sup> Rates of inter marriage can be calculated in different ways: based on married couples or on Jewish people, and based on current marriages, first marriages, all marriages, or recent marriages. *Jewish Community Study of New York: 2002* generally presents information using a married couples rate, using the current marriage of a survey respondent and his/her spouse. Inter marriage rates based on married couples are always higher than inter marriage rates based on Jewish persons. For example, in a scenario with two couples (four people), one couple inter married and one not, there is a 50% couples inter marriage rate, but only a 33.3% Jewish person inter marriage rate among the three Jews in this scenario. The couples inter marriage rate of 22% in the eight-county New York area translates into an inter marriage rate of 13% of Jewish persons in the New York area and compares with an inter marriage rate of 31% of Jewish persons in the U.S., based on the findings of *NJPS 2001*.

<sup>7</sup> Although inter marriage rates in the former Soviet Union and current-day Russia and Ukraine are quite high, immigrant groups have a tendency to marry within their group in the first generation after resettlement, reflective of linguistic and cultural barriers and the very strong social networks they maintain.

period, 36% of couples are intermarried in the New York area, compared with 64% nationally (*National Jewish Population Study 2000-01*).

**Percent of Currently Married Couples that Intermarried, by Year Respondent was Married, Eight County New York Area**

Prior to 1970	1970 - 1979	1980 - 1989	1990 - 1997	1998 - 2002
8%	17%	29%	26%	36%

In the eight-county New York area, enormous variations in intermarriage exist by county. Recent intermarriage rates in Suffolk County and Staten Island approach national proportions while Brooklyn and Bronx intermarriage rates are exceptionally low, reflective of the large Orthodox population in Brooklyn and the older age profile of the Bronx.

**Percent of Currently Married Couples That are Intermarried, by County**

	Suffolk	Staten Island	Manhattan	Westchester	Queens	Nassau	Bronx	Brooklyn
All Currently Married Couples	41%	29%	31%	25%	20%	17%	15%	12%
All Couples Married Since 1990	61%	52%	35%	36%	36%	33%	17%	14%

There is a correlation between intermarriage and identification with a denominational movement. Intermarriage is least common among those who self-identify as Orthodox and is most prevalent among those who identify as secular.<sup>8</sup>

**In-Marriage and Intermarriage, by Denomination\***

	Orthodox	Conservative	Miscellaneous Denominations	Reform	No Denomination, "Just Jewish"	Secular and No Religion
In-marriages	97%	86%	78%	71%	67%	47%
Conversionary In-Marriages	2%	5%	8%	9%	11%	14%
Intermarriages	1%	9%	14%	21%	22%	40%

\* Numbers and percentages may not add precisely due to rounding for presentation.

**Synagogue Membership and Marital Status:** Households in which the respondent is married are more likely than nonmarried households to belong to a synagogue (51% of married households; 33% of nonmarried households). Synagogue membership is particularly low among the intermarried – only one in six intermarried households belongs to a synagogue (16%) – in comparison with 63% of in-married households.

**Percent of Households That Belong to a Synagogue, by Marital Status**

Married	Widowed	Never Married	Divorced
51%	37%	33%	29%

**Percent of Married Couples That Belong to a Synagogue, by In-Marriage and Intermarriage**

In-Married	Conversionary	Intermarried
63%	44%	16%

<sup>8</sup> Due to small numbers, Reconstructionist could not be separately analyzed here and is part of "Miscellaneous Denominations" along with people who considered their denomination "Sephardic," "Jewish Renewal," and other.

**Jewish Connections, Inter marriage, and Synagogue Membership:** Perhaps not surprisingly, on every measure of Jewish connections studied, intermarried households are less connected to the Jewish community than are in-married households. This is true even when you factor out Orthodox households (who exhibit the highest levels of connection on most measures) from other in-married Jewish households.

**Jewish Connection Variables by Household Intermarried/In-Married Status  
and Whether the In-Married Household Respondent is Orthodox**

	In-Married Orthodox Jewish Households	In-Married Households, Not Orthodox	Intermarried Households
Lights Chanukah Candles	98%	88%	65%
Attends Passover Seder	97%	86%	58%
Jewish Respondent Feels Part of a Jewish Community	95%	71%	42%
Jewish Respondent Fasts on Yom Kippur	96%	69%	38%
Being Jewish is Very Important to Jewish Respondent	96%	69%	37%
Jewish Respondent Feels it is Very Important to Give Children a Jewish Education	97%	69%	33%
Household Contributed to Any Jewish Charitable Cause (Including Synagogues, Federation)	91%	72%	31%
Jewish Respondent Has Visited Israel	81%	51%	30%
Household Attended JCC Activity in Prior Year	41%	41%	27%
Jewish Respondent Feels it is Very Important to Be Part of a Jewish Community	95%	54%	18%
Lights Shabbat Candles	94%	29%	9%
Household Participates in Jewish Organization Other Than Synagogue or JCC	34%	27%	7%
Jewish Respondent Attends Services at Least Monthly	76%	27%	5%

As seen earlier (page 4, Jewish Values and Beliefs by Formal Affiliation Index), there is a correlation between synagogue membership and other measures of Jewish connection. This correlation also exists among the intermarried.

**Jewish Connection Variables by Household Intermarried/In-Married Status  
and Synagogue Membership Status**

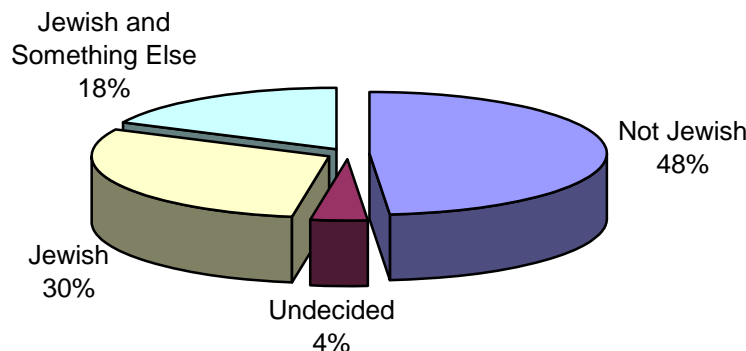
	Synagogue Members		Not Synagogue Members	
	In-Married Households (Not Orthodox)	Intermarried Households	In-Married Households (Not Orthodox)	Intermarried Households
Lights Chanukah Candles	95%	94%	80%	59%
Attends Passover Seder	94%	85%	78%	53%
Jewish Respondent Feels Part of a Jewish Community	85%	64%	58%	38%
Jewish Respondent Fasts on Yom Kippur	83%	88%	55%	28%
Being Jewish is Very Important to Jewish Respondent	81%	47%	58%	36%
Jewish Respondent Feels it is Very Important to Give Children a Jewish Education	84%	61%	55%	29%
Household Contributed to Any Jewish Charitable Cause (Including Synagogues, Federation)	86%	60%	57%	25%
Jewish Respondent Has Visited Israel	59%	44%	45%	28%
Household Attended JCC Activity in Prior Year	50%	48%	32%	23%

Jewish Respondent Feels it is Very Important to Be Part of a Jewish Community	70%	38%	39%	14%
Lights Shabbat Candles	41%	23%	17%	7%
Household Participates in Jewish Organization Other Than Synagogue or JCC	39%	15%	14%	5%
Jewish Respondent Attends Services at Least Monthly	47%	24%	6%	2%

**Raising Children Jewish:** An estimated 61,000 children live in intermarried Jewish households in the eight-county New York area, 16% of all children in the study area. In national terms, this is an exceptionally low proportion of children in intermarried Jewish households. For example, newer Jewish communities in the Western U.S. often note that 40% or more of the community's children live in intermarried Jewish households.

Overall, 83% of the 370,000 children in Jewish households in the eight-county New York area are being raised as Jews, and another 4% are being raised "Jewish and something else." Consistent with national patterns, almost every child in an in-married household is being raised Jewish (99%). Among conversionary households, 80% are being raised Jewish and 3% are being raised Jewish and something else (a low percentage compared to other communities). In contrast, fewer than half of all children in New York intermarried households are being raised as Jews: 30% as Jewish, and another 18% as "Jewish and something else." This statistic is consistent with national patterns, in which about a third (33%) of the children in intermarried households is being raised Jewish (*National Jewish Population Study 2000-01*).

#### Percentage of Children in Intermarried Households Who Are Being Raised:



#### Information from this study can be obtained from:

- **The reports**
  - Available at [www.ujafedny.org/jewishcommunitystudy](http://www.ujafedny.org/jewishcommunitystudy)
  - *Jewish Community Study of New York: 2002*
  - *Geographic Profile*
  - *Report on Jewish Poverty*
  - *Special Report on Nazi Victims in the New York Area*
- **The data file**
  - Available at the North American Jewish Data Bank, [www.jewishdatabank.org](http://www.jewishdatabank.org)
- **Inquiries to UJA-Federation of New York**
  - Address inquiries to Jennifer Rosenberg, director of research