

Highlights From *Jewish Community Study of New York: 2002* Focus on Russian-Speaking Jewish Households

August 2006

The Russian-speaking Jewish community is one of the largest population groups within the New York Jewish community. The massive emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union and the various countries that have succeeded it, particularly from 1989 through the mid-1990s, brought hundreds of thousands of newcomers to the eight-county New York area. The following provides a portrait of the Russian-speaking Jewish community of New York, with statistics drawn from published reports of the *Jewish Community Study of New York: 2002* as well as additional, previously unpublished data.¹

DEFINITIONS

Eight-County New York Area: Although several counties in New Jersey and Connecticut could be considered part of the New York metropolitan area, this study was confined to the eight counties that constitute UJA-Federation of New York service's area:

- New York City: the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island
- Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester counties

Jewish Persons: Adults (age 18+) who consider themselves Jewish, as well as children being raised as Jews.

Jewish Households: Households that include at least one or more Jewish adults, at least 18 years old. These households may also include non-Jewish adults and/or children who are not being raised as Jews.

Survey Respondents: 4,533 interviews with respondents in Jewish households were conducted between March 11 and September 13, 2002.²

Russian-Speaking Households: A household is considered "Russian-speaking" if:

- The household has at least one adult born in the Former Soviet Union
- The survey interview was completed in Russian, regardless of whether any adult in the household was born in the former Soviet Union.³

¹ Source: *Jewish Community Study of New York: 2002*, Jacob B. Ukeles and Ron Miller, Principal Investigators, UJA-Federation of New York, October 2004, and further analysis of the data set from the study by Jennifer Rosenberg. PDF versions of all Jewish community study publications are available at www.ujafedny.org/jewishcommunitystudy.

² More than a half million phone calls were made to more than 175,000 randomly selected phone numbers. Almost 69,000 households were contacted; 23,000 non-Jewish households completed a brief interview; 6,035 Jewish households were identified during the interviewing process; the 75% interview cooperation rate among identified Jewish households exceeded initial expectations.

OVERVIEW: HOUSEHOLD AND POPULATION ESTIMATES

Population Size. The New York area is home to the largest Jewish community in the world outside of Israel. Over the past decade, the size of the eight-county New York area Jewish community has remained essentially stable, in part due to the significant increase in the number of immigrants.

Jewish Households, Jewish People, and All People Living in Jewish Households, Eight-County New York Area, 2002

Number of Jewish Households	643,000
Number of Jewish People	1,412,000
Number of People in Jewish Households	1,667,000

Proportion Foreign-Born. The proportion of Jewish adults living in the eight-county area born abroad has doubled since 1991, primarily due to the influx of Jews from the FSU. In 1991, 13 percent were foreign-born. In 2002, nearly 300,000 people (27 percent of all eight-county New York Jewish adults) are foreign-born. FSU-born Jewish adults accounted for 43 percent of all foreign-born adults in 2002, compared to 26 percent in 1991.

Place of Birth, All Jewish Adults, Eight-County New York Area, 2002

New York City	52%
Nassau, Suffolk, or Westchester	6%
Other New York State	2%
Other USA	13%
Outside the United States	27%

OVERVIEW: HOUSEHOLD AND POPULATION ESTIMATES, THE RUSSIAN-SPEAKING JEWISH COMMUNITY

Population Size. Over 220,000 people live in 92,000 Russian-speaking Jewish households in the eight-county New York area.⁴ The size of the Russian-speaking Jewish community in the eight-count New York area must be understood in a national context. The Russian-speaking

³ Special effort was made to secure as large a response as possible from the Russian-speaking community. A Russian-language interviewer was engaged to conduct interviews in Russian with Russian-speaking households. Experienced bi-lingual educators received special training for this particular study. For the first time ever in a study of this kind, many randomly generated screening calls were made in Russian first, not English, within the telephone exchanges in Brooklyn and Queens identified as likely to be relatively high in percentages of Russian-speaking households. The bi-lingual interviewers adjusted the language they used to begin the interview based upon hearing how the phone was answered by the respondent. This reduced the number of "slam-downs" from Russian-speaking households contacted during the screening phase. Of course, if a Russian-speaking household was contacted but no adult viewed themselves as Jewish, the household would not be counted as Jewish. If an American-born young adult child of immigrant parents no longer lives at home and completed the full interview in English, the household would not be counted as Russian-speaking. It also should be noted that many Russian-speaking Jews live just beyond the limits of this survey, e.g. in Bergen and Rockland Counties. Although many may work and socialize in New York, they are not residents of the Eight-County New York area and hence were not counted in this study. A total of 300 interviews were completed in Russian, and 480 interviews were completed with persons born in the former Soviet Union.

⁴ The 92,000 Russian-speaking Jewish households include 76,000 households where the respondent was born in the former Soviet Union (many of whom completed the interview in English). Respondents representing another 16,000 Jewish households completed the interview in Russian, but no adult in the household was born in the FSU. They are defined (for this study) as part of the Russian-speaking community.

Jewish segment of the New York community – if looked at independently – would numerically rank in the top 10 of American Jewish communities, with only New York (non-Russian-speaking), Los Angeles, Chicago, Broward County (Florida), Philadelphia, Boston, and the San Francisco Bay area having larger Jewish populations than the Russian-speaking Jewish population in New York City.

**Russian-Speaking Jewish Households, Jewish People, and All People Living in Jewish Households,
Eight-County New York Area, 2002**

Russian-Speaking of Jewish Households	92,000
Jewish People in Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	202,000
All People in Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	223,000

City-Suburban Patterns. New York City is the geographic hub of the whole eight-county New York area. Seventy percent of the area's total Jewish population lives in the city, and 30 percent lives in the suburbs. The Russian-speaking Jewish community is more urban than the general Jewish population, with more than 90 percent living in New York City. Russian-speakers are starting to move into the suburbs, but the vast majority of all Russian-speakers in the UJA-Federation service area live in the city. The 186,000 Jews in Russian-speaking Jewish households in the city represent 19 percent of all New York City Jews. One in every five Jews in the city lives in a Russian-speaking Jewish household. In contrast, Jews in Russian-speaking households represent just 4 percent of all Jews in the three suburban counties. One uncertainty looking to the future is whether the Russian-speaking community will ultimately mirror the general Jewish population in the rate of relocation to the suburbs, or whether they will remain a more urban community.

**Russian-Speaking Jewish Households, Jewish People, and All People Living in Jewish Households,
New York City and Suburbs, 2002**

	New York City	Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester	Percent of Total Russian-Speaking Jewish Community Living in New York City
Russian-Speaking of Jewish Households	87,000	5,000	94%
Jewish People in Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	186,000	16,000	92%
All People in Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	205,000	18,000	92%
Percent of all Jewish People in the Area Who are Russian-Speaking	19%	4%	

Distribution by County. Within the eight-county area, the Russian-speaking Jewish community is concentrated in Brooklyn and Queens. There are almost as many Jews living in Russian-speaking households in Brooklyn (more than 124,000) as there are Jews in all of Westchester County (129,000). In terms of the proportion of all Jews within a county, the Russian-speaking Jewish population represents a more than a quarter of the Jewish population of Brooklyn and Staten Island, and more than one in every five Jews in Queens. In the context of current mobility patterns, the percentage of the Jewish population in Staten Island that lives in Russian-speaking Jewish households may increase significantly over the next decade.

**Jews in Russian-Speaking Jewish Households by County of Residence,
Eight-County New York Area, 2002**

Borough/County	Number of Jews in Russian-Speaking Households	Percent of all Jews in Russian-Speaking Households in the Eight Counties	As a Percent of All Jews Living in Each County
Brooklyn	124,000	62%	27%
Queens	39,000	19%	21%
Staten Island	11,000	5%	26%
Nassau Cnty	10,000	5%	4%
Manhattan	9,000	4%	4%
Westchester County	5,000	2%	4%
The Bronx	3,000	2%	7%
Suffolk County	2,000	1%	2%
Total*	202,000	100%	

* Here and throughout, percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding for presentation.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Age Distribution. The Russian-speaking Jewish community is older than the general eight-county Jewish population; 27 percent are seniors age 65 or older, compared to 20 percent of all eight county Jewish people. The percentage of Jews who are children is smaller in Russian-speaking households (16 percent) than among all Jews in the eight-county New York area (22 percent). While this partially reflects the higher proportion of Russian-speaking Jewish seniors, fertility patterns among child-bearing-age Russian-speaking Jews will be an important demographic component of the future of the eight-county New York Jewish community.

**Age Distribution of Jews in Russian-Speaking Jewish Households,
Compared to Age Distribution of All Jews, Eight-County New York Area, 2002**

Age	Jews in Russian-Speaking Households	All Jews in the Eight Counties
0 – 17	16%	22%
18 -24	9%	9%
25 – 34	10%	12%
35 – 44	10%	12%
45 – 54	13%	15%
55 – 64	14%	11%
65 – 74	15%	9%
75+	12%	11%
Total	100%	100%

Marital Status. With the Russian-speaking Jewish community being older than the general eight-county Jewish population, it is not surprising that the rate of widow-hood is slightly higher in that community. We do not have baseline information to know whether rates of separation or divorce are increasing, although that is a somewhat common phenomenon among immigrant groups as families go through stresses of dislocation and cultural change,

particularly from a more patriarchal to a more egalitarian society. Anecdotal reports from the Bukharian community suggest this phenomenon may be happening to some degree. The percent of respondents who were never married is lower in the Russian-speaking Jewish community than in the general eight-county Jewish population. Both nationally and in New York, marriage rates are declining. It remains to be seen whether the Russian-speaking community will join that trend.

**Marital Status of Respondents in Russian-Speaking Jewish Households,
Compared to Respondents in All Eight-County Jewish Households, 2002**

Marital Status	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	All Eight County Jewish Households
Never Married	13%	20%
Married	58%	57%
Living Together	<1%	2%
Separated/Divorced	12%	9%
Widowed	17%	12%

Household Composition. The Russian-speaking Jewish community has significantly more senior households than the general eight-county Jewish population. About 20 percent of Russian-speaking Jewish households have an adult child living at home, in comparison with 16 percent in the general Jewish population. Less than three percent of the Russian-speaking Jewish community lives in a single-parent household.

**Household Composition of Russian-Speaking Jewish Households
Compared to All Eight-County Jewish Households, 2002**

Household Composition	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	All Eight County Jewish Households
Minor Children in Household Younger than Age 18	25%	28%
Adults Ages 18 to 64	33%	39%
Senior Household: Someone Age 65+ in Household (no minor children)	42%	32%

Of households with children, most Russian-speaking households tend to have just one child, whereas in the general population, two is more the norm.

**Number of Children Per Household, Russian-Speaking Jewish Households
Compared to All Eight-County Jewish Households, 2002**

Number of Children Per Household*	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	All Eight County Jewish Households
No Children	47%	50%
1 Child	28%	16%
2 Children	17%	19%
3 Children	5%	8%
4+ Children	2%	7%

* Based on respondents under age 50.

Educational Achievements. Levels of educational attainment are similar between Russian Jewish respondents and non-Russian speakers, ages 18 to 64. Slightly more seniors in Russian-speaking Jewish households have completed at least a college education than their non-Russian-speaking counterparts, reflecting the high value placed on education in the FSU.

Educational Degree Status of Respondents and Spouses Ages 18 – 64 and Ages 65+ in Russian-Speaking Jewish Households, Compared to that of Respondents and Spouses in All Jewish Households, Eight-County New York Area, 2002

Highest Degree	Respondents and Spouses			
	Ages 18 - 64		Ages 65+	
	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	All Eight-County Jewish Households	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	All Eight County Jewish Households
High School Diploma/Technical School	17%	17%	29%	33%
Some College/Associate's Degree	16%	13%	13%	15%
Bachelor's Degree	34%	31%	29%	23%
Master's Degree/Doctoral Degree	33%	39%	29%	30%

Employment Status. Half of all Russian-speaking Jewish household respondents and spouses younger than age 65 are employed full time – a percentage essentially identical to the employment status of all non-senior survey respondents and spouses in eight-county Jewish households. Similarly, 7 percent of the Russian-speaking and the general Jewish adult population are employed part-time. The relatively recent immigrant status of Russian-speakers and the hardships endured before coming to the U.S. have had some impact on the overall employment status of Russian-speaking Jewish adults between the ages of 18 and 64. They are less likely than non-Russian counterparts to be self-employed, more likely to be unemployed, and more likely to be disabled and unable to work.

Employment Status of Respondents and Spouses Ages 18 – 64 in Russian-Speaking Jewish Households Compared to that of Respondents and Spouses in All Jewish Households, Eight-County New York Area, 2002

Employment Status	Respondents and Spouses	
	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	All Eight County Jewish Households
Self-Employed	11%	18%
Employed Full Time	49%	50%
Employed Part Time	7%	7%
Unemployed	12%	7%
Student	7%	4%
Disabled	6%	2%
Homemaker / Volunteer	3%	8%
Retired	6%	4%

Income. Despite minor differences in employment status, there are sharp differences in household income. Given the recent migration of many Russian-speaking households to the United States, and the older age distribution, it is not surprising that Russian-speaking Jewish

households have significantly lower incomes than the general eight-county Jewish community. Russian-speaking households are more than twice as likely to report annual household incomes of less than \$35,000, and three times less likely to report incomes of at least \$100,000.

**Annual Household Income of Russian-Speaking Jewish Households
Compared to All Eight-County Jewish Households, 2002**

Annual Household Income	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	All Eight County Jewish Households
Less than \$35,000	66%	31%
\$35,000 - \$49,000	12%	14%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	13%	24%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	5%	15%
\$150,000 +	4%	17%

Subjective Perceptions of Financial Status. Using a subjective measure of financial status, six out of ten Russian-speaking respondents report that they “cannot make ends meet” or are “just managing,” compared with just over a third of all survey respondents.

**Respondent Subjective Assessment of Household Financial Status, Russian-Speaking
Respondents Compared to All Respondents in the Eight-County Area, 2002**

Subjective Assessment of Household Financial Status	Russian-Speaking Respondents	All Respondents in the Eight County Area
Cannot Make Ends Meet	12%	4%
Just Managing	48%	32%
Has Enough Money	32%	38%
Has Extra Money	6%	22%
Wealthy	2%	4%

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Poverty. One in six (16 percent) New York area Jewish households is poor, as measured by 150 percent of Federal Poverty Guidelines.⁵ Jewish poverty is concentrated in the five boroughs of New York City, in which 20 percent of all people in New York City Jewish households live in poor Jewish households (226,000 people in 96,000 households). Jewish poverty in New York City is concentrated in larger Orthodox households, Russian-speaking Jewish households, and senior households. Russian-speaking Jewish households constitute 50 percent of the 96,000 poor Jewish households in New York City.

⁵ For a family of three, this means an income of less than \$22,500 per year. For the income levels that define the 150% poverty level for households of various sizes, see *Report on Jewish Poverty*, Jacob B. Ukeles and David A. Grossman, Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty and UJA-Federation of New York (January 2004).

Jewish Groups in Poverty, New York City Only, 2002

	Number of Poor People in Jewish Households	Percent of All Poor People in Jewish Households in NYC
Poor, Larger Orthodox Families (four or more people)	60,000	27%
Poor Russian-Speaking Households, All Adults Younger Than Age 65	52,300	23%
Poor Russian-Speaking Households, Senior Age 65+ in Household	48,300	21%
Poor Non-Russian-Speaking Households with Senior Age 65+	28,800	13%
Other Poor Households, excluding the above, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Households with a person who has a disability and is unable to work ▪ Unemployed member of households ▪ Other households with people with less than a college education 	36,600	16%
Total – New York City	226,000	100%

Russian-Speaking and Non-Russian-Speaking Jewish Households Percentage Below 150% Poverty Level, New York City Only, 2002

	Total Number of Jewish Households	Number of Poor Jewish Households	Percent of Jewish Households That Are Poor
Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	87,000	48,000	55%
Non-Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	368,000	48,000	13%
All New York City Jewish Households	455,000	96,000	21%

Age and Poverty in Russian-Speaking Jewish Households. Nearly half (49 percent) of all people in Russian-speaking Jewish households in the city are poor. The rate of poverty is sharply higher among Russian-speaking seniors. Eighty-five percent of seniors in Russian-speaking Jewish city households live below the 150 percent poverty level, partly a reflection of their limited American work histories and, therefore, lack of qualification for traditional Social Security and private pensions. This group is extremely unlikely to emerge from poverty. In contrast, only 29 percent of young Russian-speaking adults (18 - 34) and 39 percent of mature Russian-speaking adults (35 - 64) live in households that are below the 150 percent poverty level. The majority of non-senior adults in these households are above the poverty level, and the status of those below the poverty level may be only a temporary, immigrant-related status.

Percent of People in Russian-Speaking Jewish Households Below Poverty Level, by Age, Eight-County New York Area, 2002

	Percent of People in Age Group
Children and Youth (0 – 17)	37%
Young Adults (18 – 34)	29%
Mature Adults (35 – 64)	39%
Seniors (65+)	85%
All People in Russian-Speaking Jewish Households.	49%

Seniors Living Alone. Older people who share a household with someone else may have much more immediately accessible physical and psychological support. Over 60,000 Russian-speaking Jewish seniors live in households with other people, but 16,000 live alone. The 16,000 Russian-speaking Jewish seniors living alone are part of a larger cohort of over 82,000

Jewish seniors living alone in the eight-county New York area. Living alone increases vulnerability, particularly for older persons.

**Jewish Seniors Living Alone, Russian-Speaking Jewish Households
Compared to All Eight-County Jewish Households, 2002**

Age of Seniors Living Alone	Number of Seniors Living Alone in Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	Number of Seniors Living Alone in All Eight-County New York Area Jewish Households
65 – 74	6,900	26,800
75 – 84	7,200	36,800
85+	1,900	18,800
All Seniors Age 65+	16,000	82,400

Nazi Victims. Half of all New York area Nazi victims live in Russian-speaking Jewish households. Nazi victim respondents in Russian-speaking households are much more likely to be recent U.S. arrivals and to be poor.

**Russian-Speaking and Non-Russian-Speaking Jewish Nazi Victims,
by Period of Arrival and Poverty Status, Eight-County New York Area, 2002**

	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	Non-Russian-Speaking Jewish Households
Total Number of Nazi Victims in Eight-County Area	27,800	27,200
Percent of Nazi Victims That Moved to the U.S. Prior to 1970	10%	95%
Percent of Nazi Victims That Moved to the U.S. Since 1990	67%	1%
Percent of Households with Nazi Victims Below 100% of Poverty Guidelines	71%	6%
Percent of Households with Nazi Victims Between 100% and 150% of Poverty Guidelines	10%	15%
Percent of Households with Nazi Victims Above 150% of Poverty Guidelines	19%	79%

In general, Nazi victim history and a Soviet history each have an independent impact on the self-reported health of Nazi victims, cumulatively resulting in exceptionally poor health status reported by Russian-speaking Nazi victims.

Health Status of Jewish Survey Respondents, Age 57 or Older, Nazi Victims and Non-Victims, by Whether Respondent Lives in a Russian-Speaking Jewish Household, Eight-County New York Area, 2002

Self-Reported Health is:	Jewish Respondents, Age 57+, Lives In:			
	Russian-Speaking Household		Non-Russian-Speaking Household	
	Nazi Victim	Not Nazi Victim	Nazi Victim	Not Nazi Victim
Excellent	0%	5%	12%	26%
Good	15%	17%	36%	44%
Fair	57%	43%	46%	24%
Poor	28%	34%	6%	6%

Seeking Assistance for Social Service Needs. Nearly half (48 percent) of all Jewish households report seeking assistance for at least one of 11 human services. The number of Russian-speaking households seeking services is nearly identical (46 percent). For both Russian-speaking and non-Russian-speaking respondents, similar percents of people seek help for the

majority of services. However, significantly more non-Russians than Russians seek assistance for a child's learning disability and for personal, marriage, and family counseling, and the opposite is true (as expected) for refugee services.

Percent of Russian-Speaking and Non-Russian-Speaking Jewish Households That Sought Human-Service and Health-Needs Assistance, Eight-County New York Area, 2002

In the Year Preceding Survey, Household Member Sought Assistance With...	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	Non-Russian-Speaking Jewish Households
A Household Member's Chronic Illness	26%	23%
Help Finding a Job or Choosing an Occupation	12%	12%
Services for an Older Adult	11%	11%
Learning Disability of a Child in Household	8%	14%
Services for Persons with a Disability	8%	9%
Services for Refugees	6%	1%
Personal, Marriage, Family Counseling	1%	8%
Infant or Child Care	2%	3%
Adoption (ever needed assistance)	2%	3%
HIV/AIDS Testing or Services	<1%	2%
An Alcohol or Drug Problem	1%	1%

Both poverty status and culture correlate with differences in reported utilization and need for services. In the Russian-speaking Jewish community, poor households seek assistance for chronic illness, older adults, disabilities, and refugee services at significantly higher rates than their non-poor counterparts. In contrast, fewer poor Russian-speaking households report seeking help finding a job and services for a child with a learning disability. This also contrasts with the non-Russian-speaking community, among whom more poor households seek both types of services. It seems likely that the difference relates to the fact that such a large portion of poor Russians are elderly – language or age may prevent them from trying to join the workforce, and they are less likely to have children in their households.

Percent of Poor (Russian-Speaking and Non-Russian-Speaking) Jewish Households That Sought Human-Service and Health-Needs Assistance, Eight-County New York Area, 2002

In the Year Preceding Survey, Household Member Sought Assistance With...	Poor Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	Poor Non-Russian-Speaking Jewish Households
A Household Member's Chronic Illness	40%	35%
Help Finding a Job or Choosing an Occupation	10%	19%
Services for an Older Adult	15%	8%
Learning Disability of a Child in Household	6%	20%
Services for Persons with a Disability	12%	15%
Services for Refugees	10%	3%
Personal, Marriage, Family Counseling	1%	8%
Infant or Child Care	2%	8%
Adoption (ever needed assistance)	2%	2%
HIV/AIDS Testing or Services	<1%	3%
An Alcohol or Drug Problem	<1%	2%

JEWISH CONNECTIONS

Respondent Childhood Jewish Education. Almost four out of five (79 percent) Jewish respondents in Russian-speaking households do not have any formal Jewish educational experiences, compared to 28 percent of non-Russian-speaking respondents. This is not surprising as the environment in the Soviet Union was hostile to Jewish education prior to the onset of *glasnost* in the late 1980s. Of the few respondents who received any formal Jewish education, a slight majority received a Jewish day school education. As there are still not a lot of day schools in the countries of the FSU, this probably reflects young adults surveyed who came to the U.S. as children and attended day school – there was a large effort to provide scholarships when significant numbers of Russian-speakers were arriving in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s.

**Respondent Childhood Jewish Education, Russian-Speaking Jewish Respondents
Compared to All Jewish Respondents in the Eight-County New York Area, 2002**

Jewish Childhood/Teenage Experience	Russian-Speaking Jewish Respondents	All Jewish Respondents
No Formal Jewish Education as a Child or Teen	79%	35%
Jewish Day School as a Child or Teen	11%	19%
Travel to Israel as a Child or Teen	24%	36%
Jewish Youth Group Member	11%	33%
Attended a Jewish Camp	12%	31%

Organizational Membership. Far fewer Russian-speaking households report belonging to synagogues and other organizations than non-Russian-speaking households. Household income and sense of connection to a community and its organizations tend to influence membership decisions. However, the tendency of Russian-speaking Jews not to join organizations may also be rooted in experienced or inherited suspicion, skepticism, and distrust of “voluntary” organizations from the Soviet era.

**Organizational Membership, Russian-Speaking and Non-Russian-Speaking
Jewish Households Eight-County New York Area, 2002**

Type of Organization	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	Non-Russian-Speaking Jewish Households
Synagogue	31%	45%
JCC	14%	13%
Other Jewish Organization	9%	20%
Any Jewish Organization	48%	62%

Synagogue Membership. Factors relating to synagogue membership include denominational affiliation, affluence, and suburban residence – and all of these factors make the Russian-speaking community less likely to join even without the different historical and cultural place of synagogue life – or lack thereof – for much of the community. In Brooklyn, the difference appears more extreme because of Brooklyn’s large Orthodox population. Although Russian-

speaking Jewish households are generally much less likely to report belonging to a congregation, this is not true in Queens, where Russian-speaking and non-Russian-speaking Jewish households are equally likely to join a congregation. This likely reflects the presence of a large, more traditional Bukharan community.

Synagogue Membership by Area, Russian-Speaking and Non-Russian-Speaking Jewish Households, 2002

Area	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	Non-Russian-Speaking Jewish Households
Eight-County Area	31%	45%
Brooklyn	25%	60%
Queens	49%	45%

Denomination. Traditional measures of Jewish connections in America often start with the question of affiliation, yet the mainstream American denominations didn't really exist until recently in the FSU and the secular Soviet state discouraged and persecuted religion. How much do Russian-speaking Jews, now that they are here in the U.S., feel connected to religious denominations? It is not surprising to see that fewer than half of all Russian-speaking households identify with any religious denomination, with most considering themselves to be "Just Jewish" or secular.

Jewish Respondent Denomination, Russian-Speaking Jewish Households Compared to All Eight-County Jewish Households, 2002

Denomination	Russian-Speaking Jewish Respondents	All Jewish Respondents
Nondenominational, "Just Jewish"	33%	15%
Secular, No Religion	25%	10%
Reform	19%	29%
Conservative	14%	26%
Orthodox	8%	19%
Reconstructionist	<1%	1%
Miscellaneous Answers	<1%	<1%

Cost of Being Jewish. A significant percentage of Russian-speaking Jewish households report that financial cost had prevented them from certain involvements in Jewish life. These responses are strikingly different from the general eight-county Jewish population in the cases of going to Israel and sending a child to Jewish day school. There are several possible reasons for this divergence. Although household income differences are certainly a significant factor, it could also be that Russian-speaking Jews express more interest than other New York area Jews in going to Israel (due to higher levels of Zionism or a desire to spend time with family members who settled in Israel) and attending day school (due to a desire for Jewish education or a preference to avoid the public school system). The latter figures in this table suggest that interest and values may be a significant factor: there is little difference between the Russian-speaking and the general community in the impact of finances on their joining a JCC or synagogue.

**Percent of Households That Report Financial Cost Had Prevented Them From Involvements in Jewish Life
in the Five Years Preceding the Survey, Russian-Speaking Jewish Households
Compared to All Eight-County Jewish Households, 2002**

Cost Cited as a Factor Preventing:	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	All Eight County Jewish Households
Going to Israel	43%	24%
Sending a Child to Jewish Day School	39%	16%
Belonging to a JCC	18%	14%
Belonging to a Synagogue	17%	15%

Participation in Jewish Activities. In addition to synagogue and organizational memberships, measures of involvement in the Jewish community include attendance at JCC activities and Jewish cultural events. Participation in other Jewish activities is somewhat lower in the Russian-speaking population, but not dramatically different. Considering that these responses span a lifetime and until 15 years ago Jews in the FSU had little to no freedom to travel to Israel unless they emigrated, the numbers of Russian-speaking households who have been to Israel is quite high.

**Participation in Jewish Activities, Russian-Speaking Jewish Households
Compared to All Eight-County Jewish Households, 2002**

Jewish Activity Participation	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	All Eight County Jewish Households
Attended a Jewish Cultural Event, Jewish Music, Jewish Museum, or Jewish Art Event in the past year	53%	62%
Traveled to Israel (ever)	41%	51%
Attended a JCC Activity in the past year	29%	34%
Participated in an Organized Adult Jewish Education Program	18%	29%

Volunteering. The Russian-speaking population volunteers at lower rates than the rest of the eight-county Jewish population, but when they do volunteer, they are more likely to do so for Jewish causes.

**Volunteer Involvements, Russian-Speaking Jewish Households
Compared to All Eight-County Jewish Households, 2002**

	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	All Eight County Jewish Households
Volunteers	17%	43%
Of Those Who Do Volunteer...		
Volunteers Only for Jewish Organizations	43%	28%
Volunteers for Both Jewish and Non-Jewish Organizations	40%	40%
Volunteers Only for Groups that are Not Specifically Jewish	17%	33%

Ritual Observance. Interestingly, despite the high proportion of unaffiliated and non-denominational Jews, Russian-speaking Jewish households are more likely to always/usually light Shabbat candles than are non-Russian-speaking Jewish households. They are equally

likely to report fasting on Yom Kippur and lighting Chanukah candles, but are less likely to attend a Passover Seder or keep kosher.

It's not clear what to make of the candle-lighting statistic. The 10 percent difference between the groups is somewhat large, especially when the 30 percent non-Russian figure includes the Orthodox community – which suggests an even larger gap between Russian speakers and non-Orthodox non-Russian speakers. In part, these responses could reflect the sizable Bukharan community which is much more traditional than their counterparts from Russia and the Western former Soviet republics, but that does not seem to tell the whole story. This question may be worth exploring further.

**Ritual Observance, Russian-Speaking Jewish Households
Compared to All Eight-County Jewish Households, 2002**

Ritual Observance	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	All Eight County Jewish Households
Lights Chanukah Candles	77%	76%
Attends Passover Seder	68%	79%
Fasts on Yom Kippur	66%	65%
Lights Shabbat Candles	39%	30%
Keeps Kosher at Home	20%	30%

Intermarriage. Intermarriage rates are slightly lower in the Russian-speaking Jewish community.

**Inmarriage, Conversionary Marriage, and Intermarriage, Russian-Speaking Jewish Couples
Compared to All Currently Married Jewish Couples in the Eight-County New York Area, 2002**

Type of Marriage	Russian-Speaking Jewish Couples	All Currently Married Jewish Couples
Inmarriage	68%	72%
Conversionary Marriage	15%	7%
Intermarriage	17%	22%

Values and Beliefs. Russian-speakers do not differ greatly from other Jewish respondents in the value they place on the various subjects listed. The area of most significant difference is that of Jewish art, music and culture, which two out of three Russian-speakers embrace, verses just 41 percent of all the eight-county respondents.

**Importance of Key Jewish Topics, Russian-Speaking Jewish Respondents
Compared to All Jewish Respondents, Eight-County New York Area, 2002**

Percent of Jewish Respondents Who Say Topic is Very Important to Them	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	All Eight County Jewish Households
Survival of the State of Israel	97%	92%
Making the World a Better Place	85%	88%
Learning About Jewish History and Culture	73%	66%
Being Jewish	72%	65%
Jewish Value of <i>Tzedakah</i>	68%	68%

Percent of Jewish Respondents Who Say Topic is Very Important to Them	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	All Eight County Jewish Households
Jewish Art, Music, and Culture	66%	41%
Giving Children a Jewish Education	62%	66%
Being Part of a Jewish Community	56%	52%

Respondents were also asked what they think the Jewish community should support. The most extreme difference is in attitudes about supporting Israel. Russian-speakers are similar to the rest of the Jewish population in placing primary emphasis on Jews in need, whether they be poor, elderly, families in crisis or Jews in distress around the world. Interestingly, Russian-speakers voiced significantly more support for the Jewish community investing in Jewish education. Similar to the rest of the population, just over half felt that programs for non-Jews in need and for Interfaith families should be a priority of the Jewish community.

Jewish Respondent Priorities: Programs the Jewish Community Should Support, Russian-Speaking Jewish Respondents Compared to All Jewish Respondents, Eight-County New York Area, 2002

Percent of Jewish Respondents Who Say it is Very Important for the Jewish Community to Support Programs:	Russian-Speaking Jewish Households	All Eight County Jewish Households
Programs to Support Israel	93%	81%
Programs for the Jewish Poor and/or Jewish Elderly	90%	86%
Programs for Jewish Children and Families in Crisis	89%	86%
Programs to Help Rescue Jews Who are Persecuted or in Distress Throughout the World	88%	87%
Programs to Support Jewish Education for Children and Adults	77%	69%
Programs for the Non-Jewish Poor and/or Non-Jewish Elderly	54%	58%
Programs for Interfaith Families and Children	53%	54%

Subjective Feelings of Connection to the Jewish Community. Russian-speaking household respondents report feeling “part of a Jewish community in the New York area” (67 percent) at similar rates to non-Russian-speaking Jewish respondents (65 percent). Yet we cannot presume from this that Russian-speaking Jews feel well-integrated into, or part of the general Jewish community in New York. As seen above, Russian-speaking households are much less likely than non-Russian households to belong to any Jewish organizations or participate in Jewish activities. More likely, the size, scale and concentration of the Russian-speaking Jewish community in New York probably provide a strong sense of Jewish communal belonging for non-affiliated Russian-speaking Jewish households.

Information from this study can be obtained from:

- ❖ **The Reports** – 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 at www.jewishdatabank.org
- ❖ **Inquiries to UJA-Federation of New York**
 - Address inquiries to Jennifer Rosenberg, Director of Research