Jewish Federations of North America

2026 Jewish Live in The United States Survey

METHODOLOGICAL STATEMENT

The results presented in this memo are derived from a national cross-sectional survey conducted by Burson, formerly Benenson Strategy Group, on behalf of the Jewish Federations of North America. The mixed methods survey was fielded **May 4th to May 27th, 2026**. Individuals were recruited via text messages to cell phone numbers which pushed them to a self-administered web survey. The survey sample was developed using a national database that utilized big data models to generate predictions of individual's demographics including religion. The sample was specifically designed to be representative of American Jewish community. Additional oversamples were developed of likely Jewish young adults due to their lower response rates. A total of 2,836 interviews were completed.

Overall margin of error is ± 1.84% for Jewish Adults. Data were weighted to ensure both the general population and the Jewish sample were representative. Answer choices may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Sample Design

Given the challenges of surveying a population representing 2% of the general US population, the survey sample was stratified in ways to maximize Jewish responses while also generating a representative sample of the general public.

The first stage of stratification sought to divide the country into groups based on the size of the Jewish population. The American Jewish Population Project's (AJPP) 2020 estimates were utilized to provide a Jewish population estimate at the county cluster level. This analysis is the most precise, methodologically rigorous, and consistent method when exploring Jewish populations across the country.

These geographic definitions are too large for sampling as Jewish population density is not consistent within counties. To achieve greater specificity, Jewish Federations of North America utilized data from a big data vendor that predicts an individual's likely religion. Their religion model utilizes big data and machine learning to estimate how likely someone is to identify with a standard list of religious affiliations. The number of individuals with a 40% or higher probability of being Jewish were calculated for each zip code overall and based on several demographic characteristics.

Zip codes are technically not geographically defined; single buildings can have their own zip codes, while others are just postal routes. A Zip Code to Zip Code Tabulation Area (ZCTA) was used to compare the religion model's zip code data to the AJPP county clusters. The zip code estimates by age were weighted to the AJPP age distribution numbers. This resulted is a Jewish population estimate at the ZCTA level.

In suburban areas, ZCTAs often resemble town/village borders. However, it is possible for an individual to travel to a neighboring town to engage in Jewish life. This makes ZCTA smaller than desired to explore the size of a local Jewish community. ESRI ArcGIS was utilized to calculate the Jewish population within a five-mile buffer of every zip code. This generated concentric circles ranging from areas with high levels of Jews to those with lower levels.

Using prior research on small Jewish communities by Dr. Matt Boxer, PhD, ZCTAs were stratified into six groups based on the estimated number of Jews within five miles:

1. Less than 100
2. 100 to less than 1,000
3. 1,000 to less than 5,000
4. 5,000 to less than 20,000
5. 20,000 to less than 95,000
6. 95,000+

An additional goal of the stratification process was to explore differences in experiences between Jews in larger communities and those in smaller communities. Recognizing that Jews in smaller communities make up a lower proportion of their local population than in large communities, the religion model was again utilized to stratify individuals by predicted Jewish score within strata. Three strata were utilized at this level:

1. 5 to less than 40% probability
2. 40 to less than 70% probability
3. 70% or higher probability

In prior years individuals with a 0 to less than 5% probability of being Jewish resulted in very few Jewish cases. Due to their limited size they were weighted along with those 5 to less than 40% likely to be Jewish. As this survey did not seek a general population sample, those strata were not included this year and instead larger samples were drawn from the other strata to improve efficacy.

The resulting stratification plan meant that any individual would fall in only one possible stratum so there would not be a potential for more than one chance of selection.

Data Collection

Individuals were recruited via SMS message pushed to a self-administered web survey. It was fielded May 4th to May 27th, 2026. Approximately 650 thousand phone numbers were contacted. Outreach for the survey identified who was sponsoring it. Given concerns in the Jewish community about nefarious actors, this generated some outreach to confirm the validity of the survey but also generated increased response rates from diverse groups.

Hi I'm David Manchester, Research Director for the Jewish Federations of North America. We are running a national survey to understand how Jewish Americans are currently feeling. You can reach me at Research@JewishFederations.org.

Here is your unique link to the survey:

Reply STOP to opt out

Near the end of data collection, individuals who had screened in as Jewish but did not complete the survey received a follow-up text message The text message included similar information to the invitation including the sponsor and purpose of the survey.

Weighting

Weights were developed to account for sample design and post stratify responses to the US Census and the Pew Research Center's 2020 study of Jewish Americans.

Initial weights were developed to account for the sample design, balancing the probability that someone is Jewish and the Jewish population density to account for different probabilities of selection and response. These were enhanced to account for the oversamples to balance the potential for multiple selections.

The results were then post-stratified based on demographic, religious, and political affiliation responses, responses to whether individuals are Jewish by Religion or Jews of no Religion, and the denominal breakdown within the Jewish community. With the new stratification, the Jewish community represents 2% of the general population.

AI Administered Qualitative Questions

This survey utilized AI administered qualitative questions to better understand an individual. A total of 12 questions were used with an individual receiving up to 4 of them. This enabled question based logic to be incorporated into the open ended prompts so the questions dove deeper into elements of their engagement and experiences that they previously mentioned. This generated over 4,000 single spaced pages of qualitative data.

Claude Opus 5 was trained to assist in the qualitative analysis. For each of the 4 main areas of qualitative collection, moderated learning was utilized in training the AI.

1. The AI was trained that it was required to read the whole text of responses. At no point was it to truncate responses or use keyword searches. It also had to read every response it could not stop early because it was not finding new codes.
2. A human coder reviewed the first 100 responses and generated codes
3. The AI reviewed the next 200 in batches where it would code the responses and get immediate human coder review to confirm its work
4. The AI then would continue coding the remaining responses

5. Researchers running the AI would regularly confirm the AI was following all the rules because there were times it began truncating responses and would have to re-read those cases.
6. A human coder would randomly review the AIs work and offer corrections or changes where needed
7. The AI would conduct a second complete pass having learned from the correction and ensuring that codes that were developed later in the responses were equally applied throughout.
8. Some areas of interest required additional complete passes to review text without using keywords
9. Researchers would review the codes to identify similar themes that could be grouped together and to help develop the names of codes so they were easier to understand and connected to concepts discussed in the community.

How the Surge is Calculated

Calculating the surge is a 4 step analysis process utilizing a series of questions that build off prior responses:

1. Asking if since October 7 they have ever changed certain behaviors. This first step ensures we utilize identical questions back to the 2024 survey for consistent measurement.
2. For areas where they indicated changes, follow-up questions to understand if those changes continue
3. Identifying the overlap between the three behavioral changes that we define as the surge
4. Combine the three groups to get the total number

Communal:
There are two questions in the first stage that align with Communal engagement. 19% of respondents agreed with each of those questions however combined 25% agreed with either or both of them. You can see this visual in the diagram on slide 11. Then 52% indicated that they have maintained an increased engagement with a Jewish community since October 7th. We take the 52% of 25% and result in 13% still surging communally. You can see this 13% on the bar chart on slide 8.

Stage	Question	Response	Combined
1	Were engaging more with a Jewish community	19%	25%
1	Were participating more at services, events, programs, or activities offered by a synagogue or other Jewish organization	19%	
2	You have maintained an increased engagement with a Jewish community since October 7th	52%	13%

3	No overlap is considered for Communal, this will come later		13%

Educational:
Individuals indicated they "sought out ways to learn more about Israel or Jewish life" – 21%. Then, 68% of them indicated they "You are still seeking to learn more about Israel or Jewish life than before October 7th". Together these result in 14% of Jewish Americans surging Educationally. However, there is overlap of 4% between Educational and Communal which we need to account for. You can see the overlap in the Venn Diagram on slide 7 and as a result of 10% surging Educationally on slide 8.

Stage	Question	Response	Combined
1	You sought out ways to learn more about Israel or Jewish life	21%	21%
2	You are still seeking to learn more about Israel or Jewish life than before October 7th	68%	14%
3	Consider the overlap with Communal Surging	4%	10%

Social:
Over 1 in 3 Jews (36%) indicated the Were connecting more with other Jews since October 7th. Of them, 73% said they "have maintained or increased connections with other Jews since October 7th" and another 9% said they "are still working to meet with other Jews but haven't found the right connections." Together 82% of those that at some point surged socially still are which is 29% of the Jewish community still Surging Socially. However, there is a lot of overlap with Communal and Educational surging (15%) so just 14% of the Jewish Community is only surging socially.

Stage	Question	Response	Combined
1	Were connecting more with other Jews	36%	36%
2	You have maintained or increased connections with other Jews since October 7th	68%	29%
2	You are still working to meet with other Jews but haven't found the right connections	9%	
3	Consider the overlap with Communal Surging	15%	14%

Totaling the Surge:

Surge Type	Percent
Communal	13%
Educational	10%
Social	14%

Total	38%

Note: Figures do not add due to rounding

Questions about methodology should be directed to Reserarch@JewishFederations.org