



The Jewish Federations®  
OF NORTH AMERICA

# Jewish Active Adults 55+ Engagement Research

APRIL 2023



Benenson  
Strategy  
Group

# Methodology



On behalf of The Jewish Federations of North America, Benenson Strategy Group conducted N=536 interviews with Jewish respondents aged between 55 to 74 nationally from March 21 to March 28, 2023.



10-12 minute  
SMS survey



N=536 interviews with  
Jewish adults aged 55-74



Drawn from a representative  
sample of people aged 55-74  
of Jewish descent

Overall margin of error is  $\pm 4.23\%$  and is higher among subgroups. Note: answer choices may not add to 100 due to rounding.



# Executive Summary



- ✓ This research indicates most 55-74-year-old Jewish adults are overall content with where they are in life, and are excited about their next chapter, regardless of the life stage they are currently in.
  
- ✓ They are very active, social and engaged in a variety of hobbies and interests. And, most importantly, they are looking forward to – and seeking out – even newer experiences, newer connections and newer adventures as they age and leave the workforce.
  
- ✓ As they age, they are not looking to stand-still, or do what they currently do with the people they currently do it with. Rather, they are looking to meet new people, try new things and experiences and remain connected to their friends and families.
  
- ✓ However, not all Jewish adults in this stage are as eager or excited.
  - A sizeable contingent do express concerns and anxieties around their financial situation, being left alone or losing touch with their family and friends (and not being able to make new ones), and becoming incapable of taking care of themselves as they age.
  - There is also a sense this group worries their best years are behind them and cannot partake in the types of activities they want.
  - While not the majority, these are real feelings that are clearly impacting the needs of this group, their likelihood to engage with the community, and their overall outlook for the future.

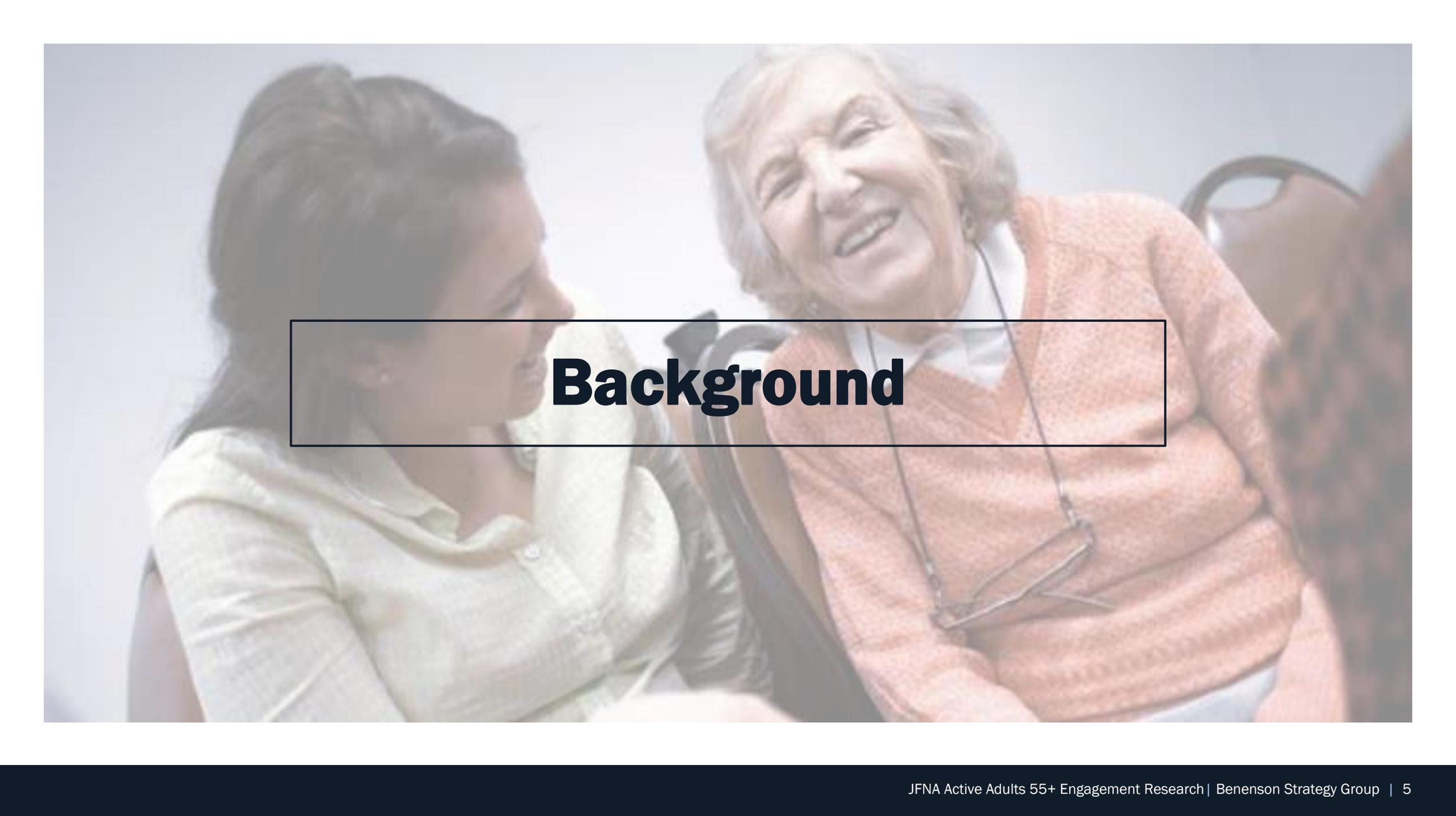


# Executive Summary



- ✓ As noted, maintaining a “human connection” is perhaps one of the most important things this cohort of Jewish adults emphasize as they grow older – even more so than maintaining their religious or heritage connections.
  
- ✓ As such, it will be important for JFNA (or any organization focused on this community) to build and offer programs that are social and engaging, bring different types of people together, and provide a variety of activities and new experiences.
  
- ✓ That said, most of these adults also indicate it is important to maintain *some* connection to Judaism (religious and/or cultural), although only about half claim to be “engaged with their Jewish community.”
  - Barriers to engagement and involvement tend to be based around convenience issues (work gets in the way, too busy with other activities, location too far or not easily accessible).
  - Importantly, while about half of this cohort is not currently engaged with the Jewish community, about a third of them claim they wish to become more engaged (in some capacity).
  
- ✓ While not all belong to a synagogue, the majority are partaking in some sort of religious activity (high holiday services, Shabbat, other customs and rituals, etc.), and, importantly, most believe they have opportunities in their community to do so.
  - Notably, secular Jewish adults and those not active in a temple feel excluded from the community and current programming. They want to see activities that allow them to learn more about Judaism and feel welcomed, without religious expectations.



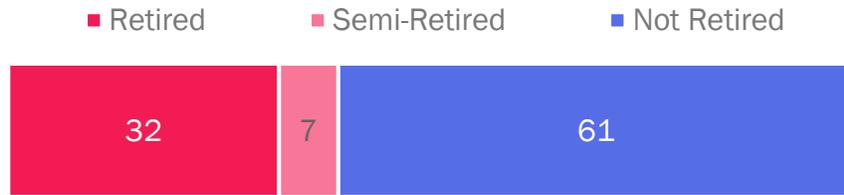


# Background



# Profile of Jewish adults ages 55 to 74 years old: Work, Retirement and Encore Careers

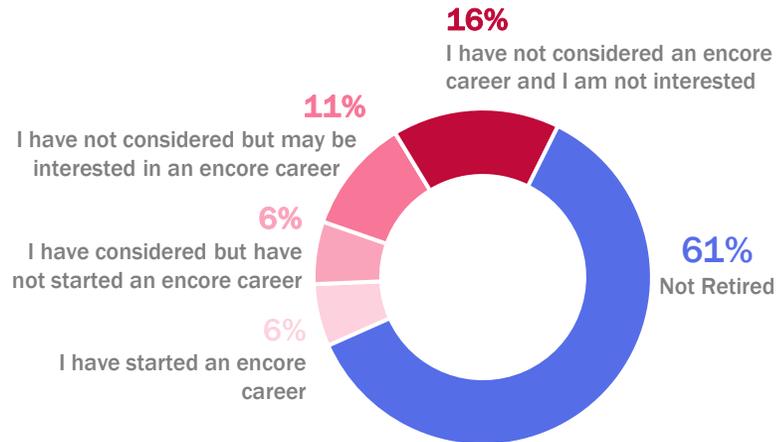
## CURRENT WORK/RETIREMENT STATUS



## ENCORE CAREER

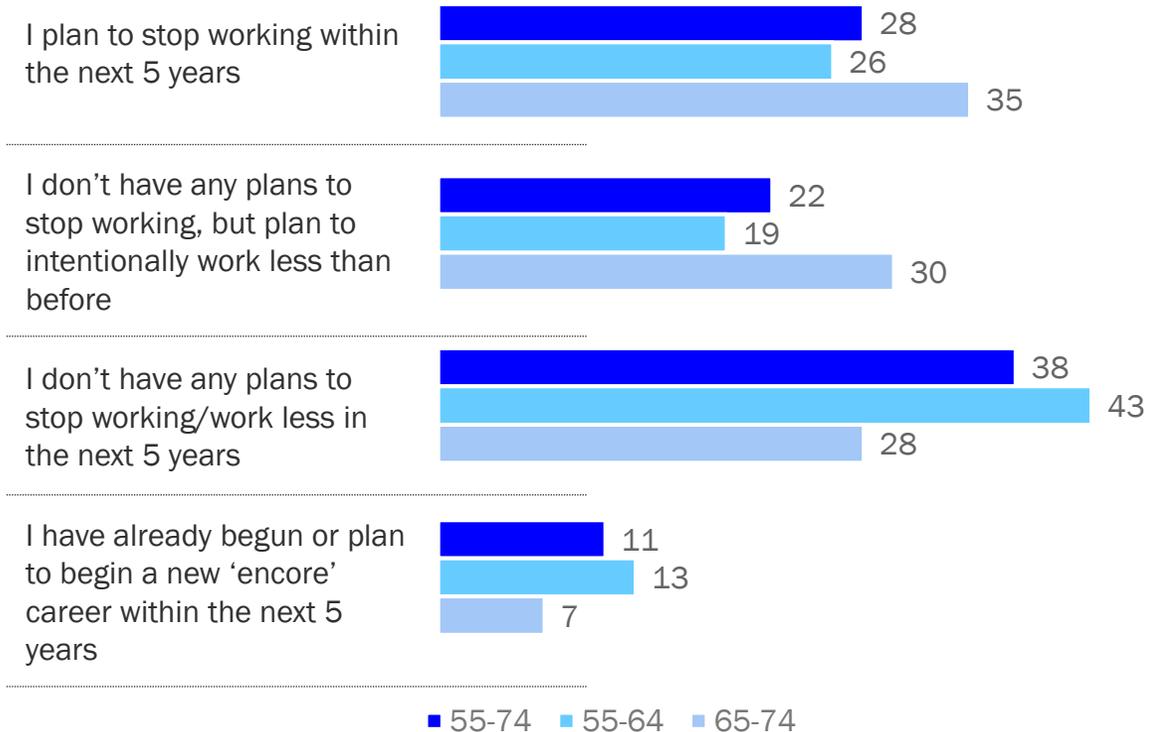
Have you considered/begun a new “encore” career since retirement?

*Only asked of the 39% who are semi-retired and retired*



## CAREER PLANS IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS

Are you planning for a transition in your career?  
*Only asked of those people still working*



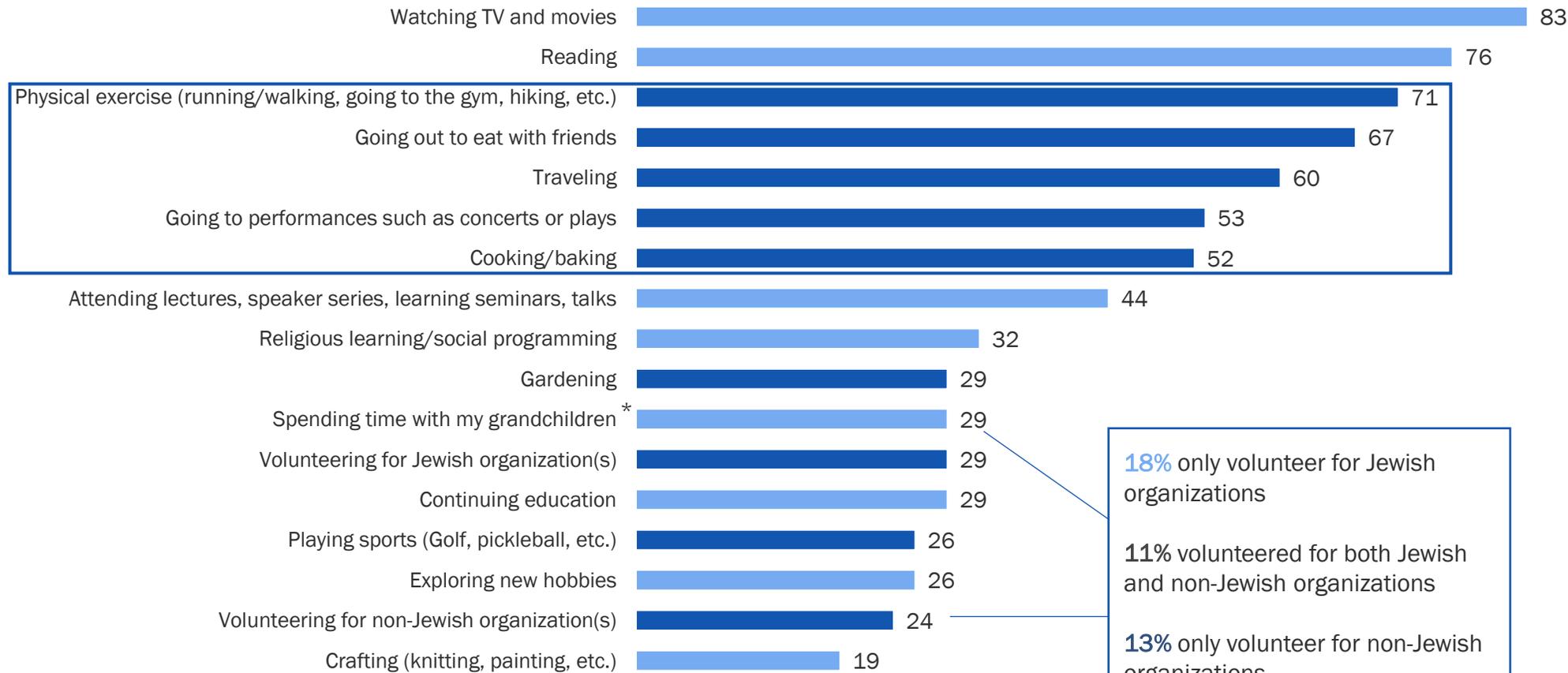


# **Behaviors, Values and Attitudes**



# Most older Jewish adults are being physically active in their life right now; They are not sitting around or isolated...

## ACTIVITIES DONE REGULARLY MULTISELECT



Among those who are retired, they are much less likely to participate in or attend **continuing education** (-9% pts), **religious learning/social programming** (-7% pts), **lectures, speaker series, learning seminars/talks** (-7% pts)

**18%** only volunteer for Jewish organizations  
**11%** volunteered for both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations  
**13%** only volunteer for non-Jewish organizations

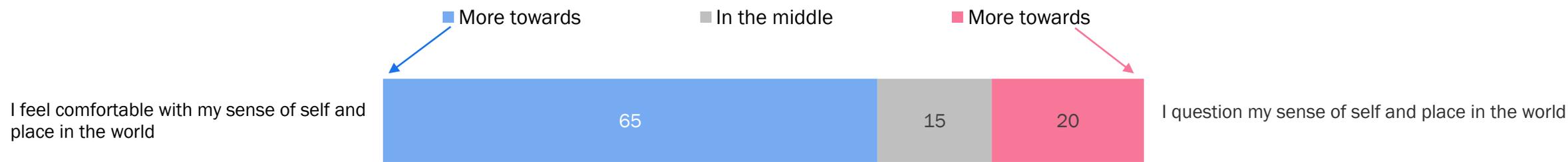
\* asked only of Grandparents





# ...And are very content with themselves. They are mostly positive about their self-worth and purpose in life, although a small portion do have some doubts about these aspects in their lives

## FEELINGS ON FUTURE



Those engaged in their Jewish community are more likely to feel confident about their self-worth and purpose in life (+7-8% pts)

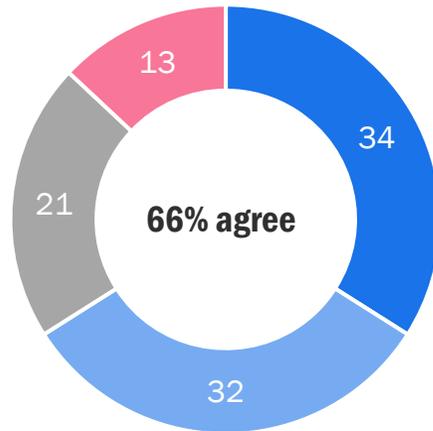




# Looking ahead, the majority are excited to try and experience new things – and look forward to having the flexibility to do so. However, a sizable number are not as eager

## STATEMENTS ABOUT FEELINGS TOWARD THE FUTURE

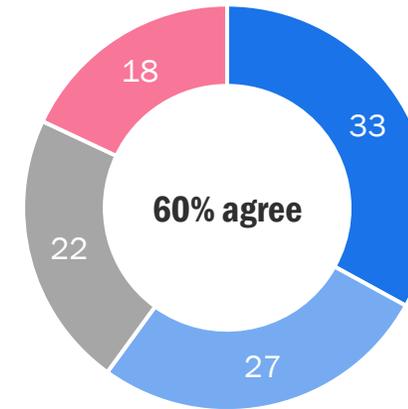
I am excited to try new things and experience new facets of my life



- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neutral
- Disagree

55-64-year-olds, women and those engaged in their Jewish community are more likely to “strongly agree” with these statements

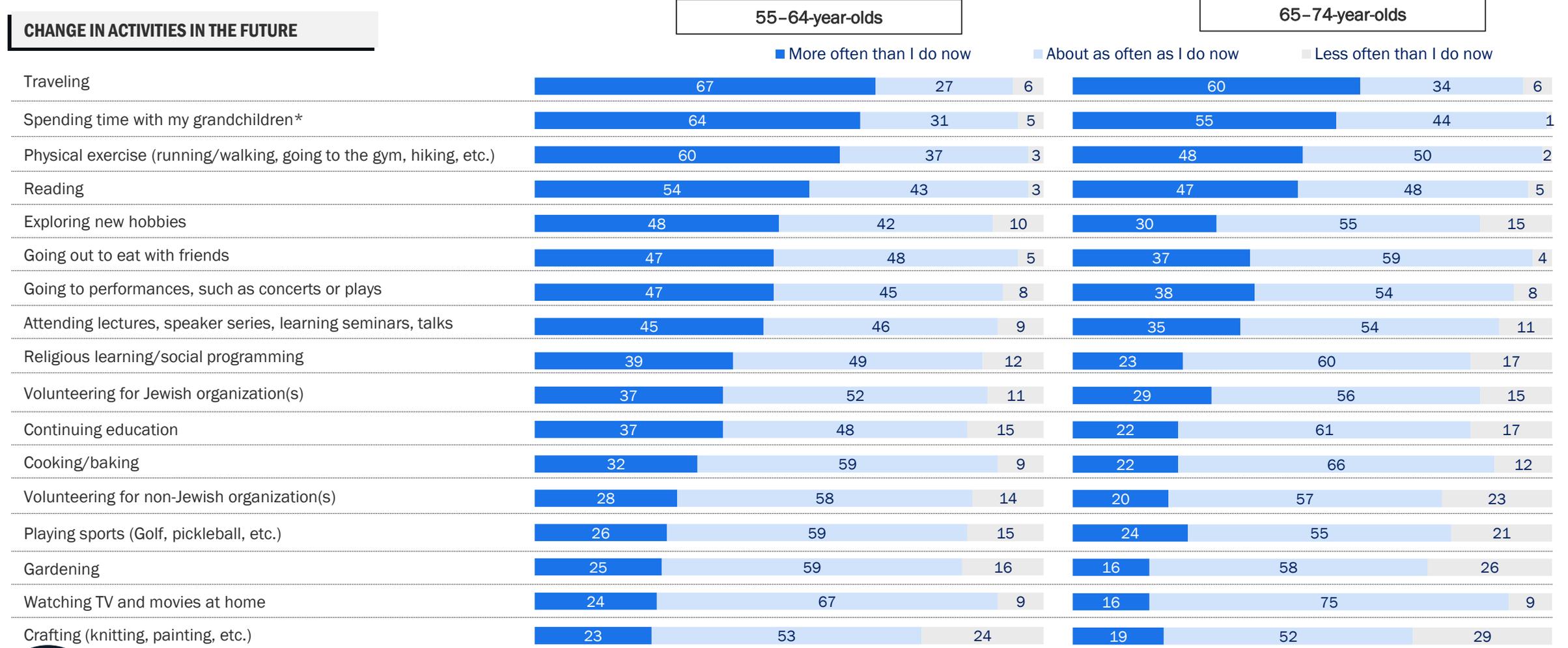
I look forward to having more flexibility and freedom to do what I want



- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neutral
- Disagree



# As they look ahead to their next chapter, most want to engage in a diversity of new activities and learning opportunities, with travel, new hobbies, and partaking in social and cultural activities topping the list



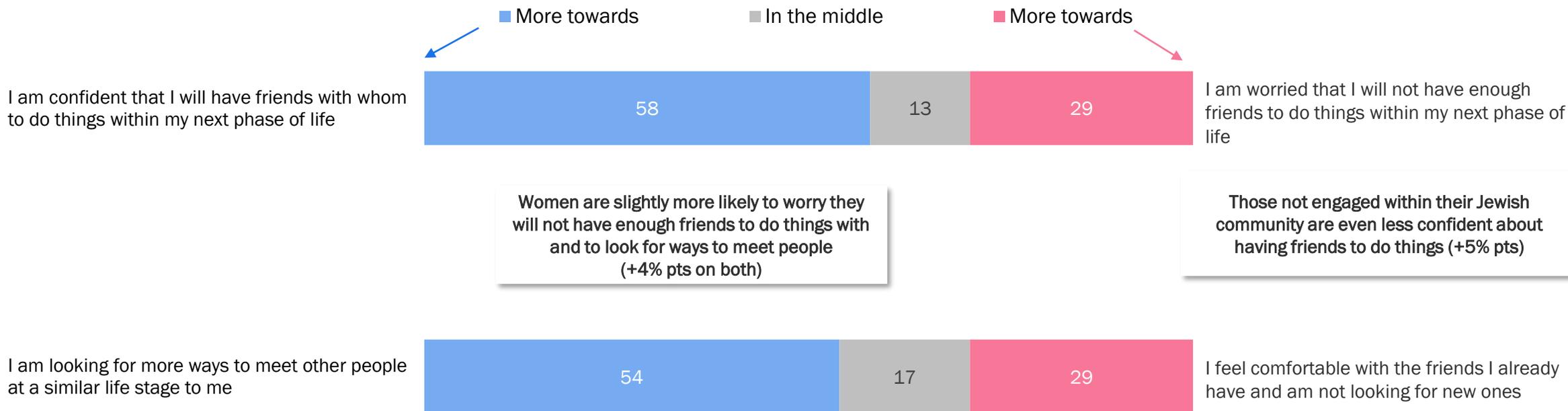
\*asked only of grandparents

Q19. Still thinking about where you are in your current stage in life, are you planning on doing these actions more, less, or about the same as you do them now?



# While most are confident that they will have friends to enjoy things with, a majority still want to find ways to connect with other people at a similar life stage; this represents an opportunity for JFNA to position programs as a way to connect and develop meaningful relationships

## FEELINGS ON FUTURE



And 43% said I would like to meet other Jews at a similar life stage in my area

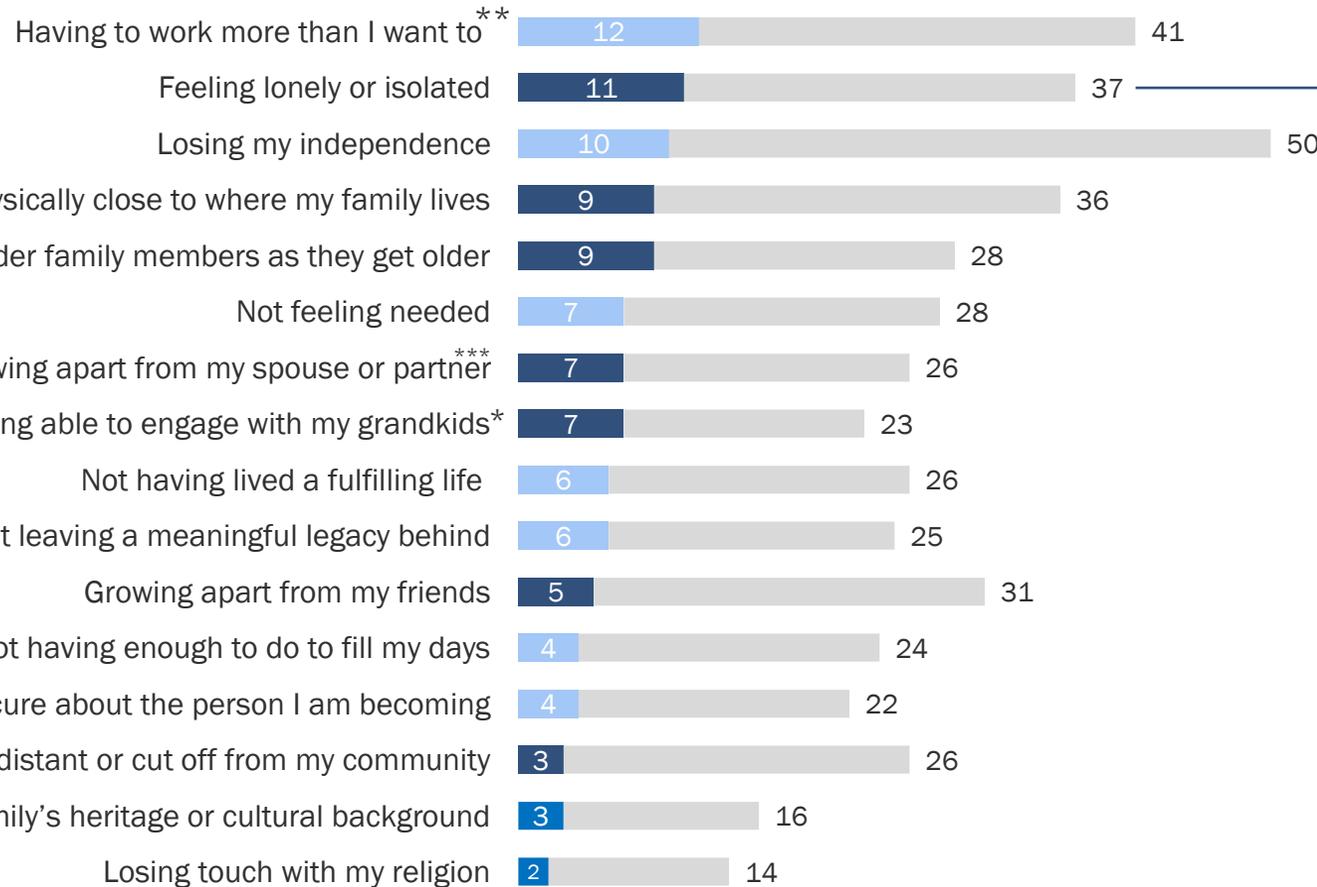




# But not all is great, as they do have some concerns and worries (although not overwhelmingly); fears about not being able to retire when they want or becoming isolated and growing old alone are the largest anxieties faced

## CONCERNS ABOUT THEIR FUTURE

Very worried      Somewhat worried      Total worried



Women and those not engaged with the Jewish community are more likely to fear feeling lonely or isolated (+8% pts.)

Self-insecurities about future  
Religious concerns  
Feelings of isolation

\*\*\* asked only of those with spouse or partner  
\*\* asked only of those employed  
\* asked only of grandparents

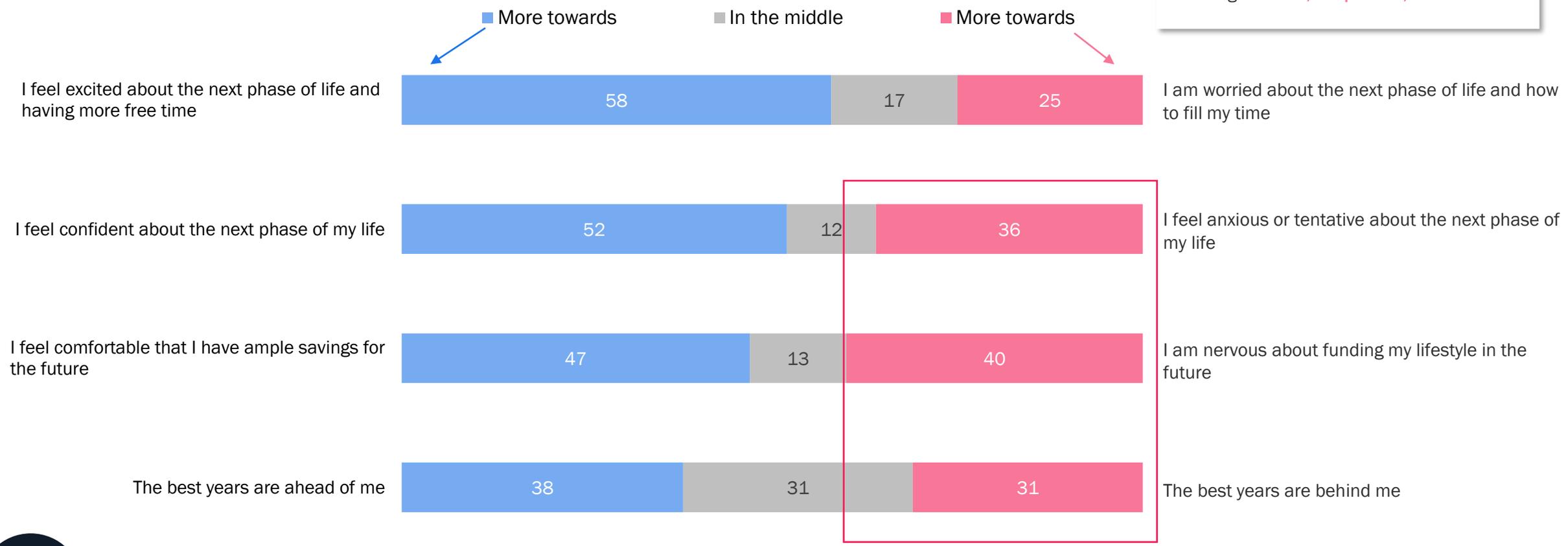




# Further, some Jewish adults have reservations about what's in store for them – some worry about funding their future, feel anxious about what's next, and think the best years of their lives might be behind them

## FEELINGS ON FUTURE

Those who feel more negatively over index on being **divorced, not parents, and women**



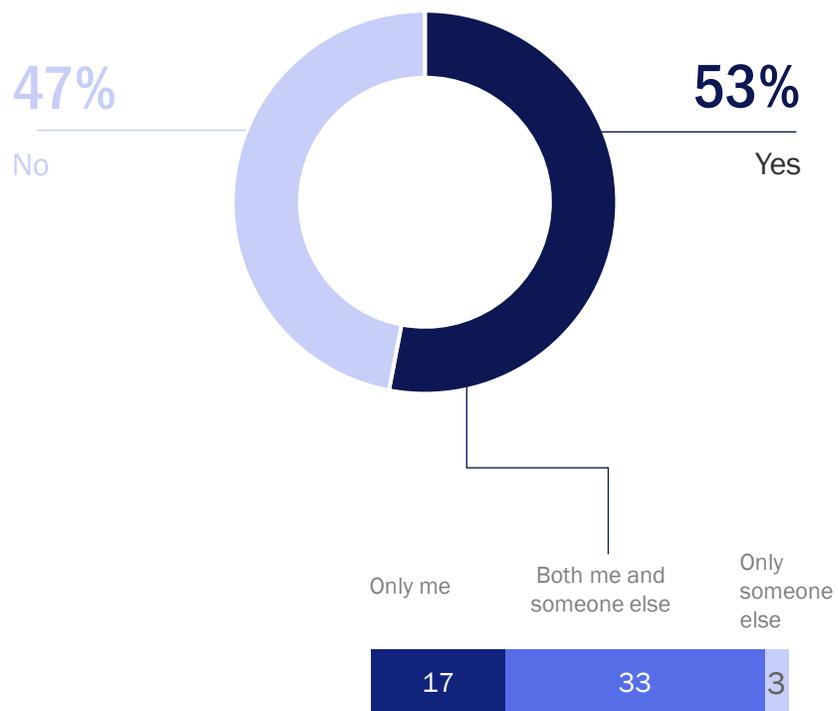


# Jewish Community Engagement



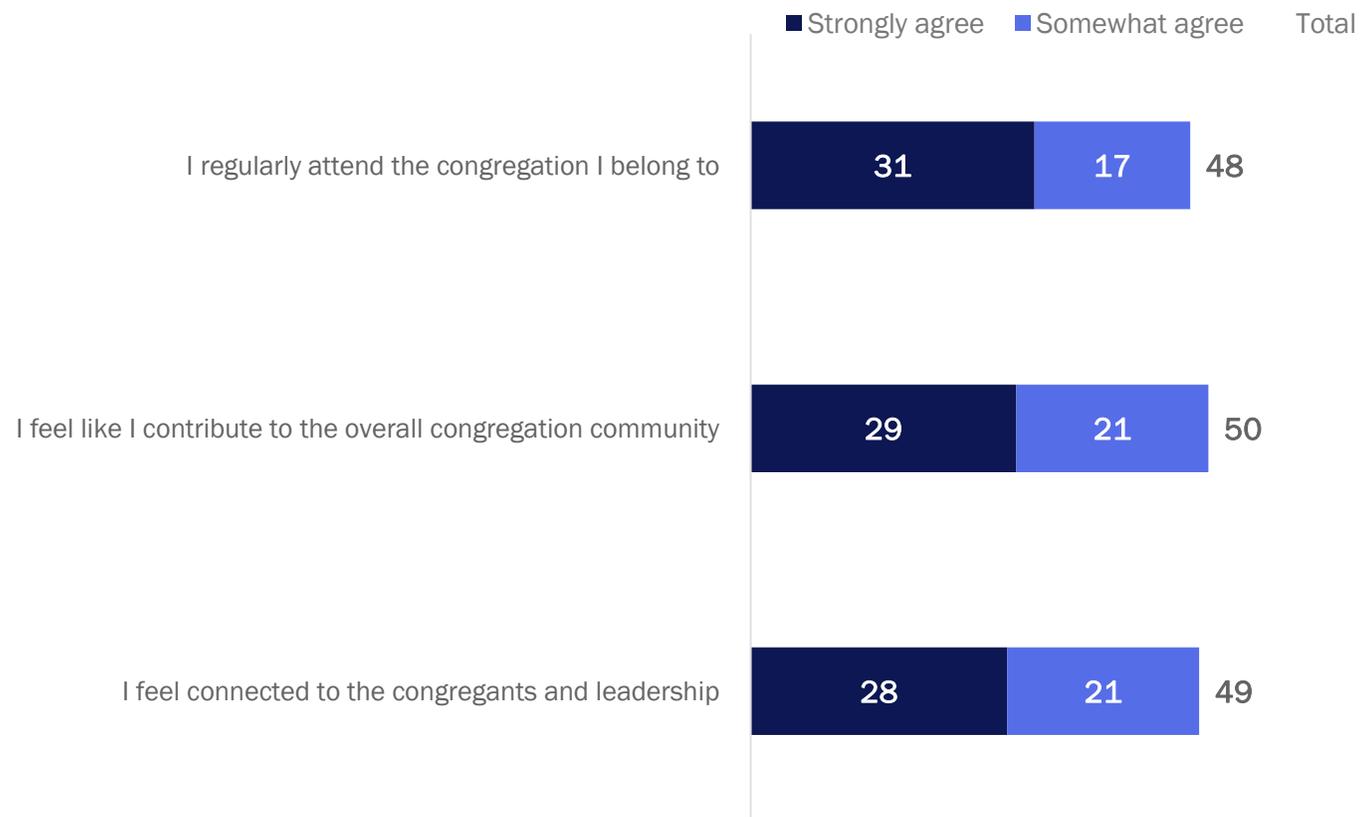
# Congregation affiliation and engagement is relatively low

## CONGREGATION MEMBERSHIP OF YOU OR A FAMILY MEMBER



## ENGAGEMENT WITH CONGREGATION

Only asked of those who belong to a congregation



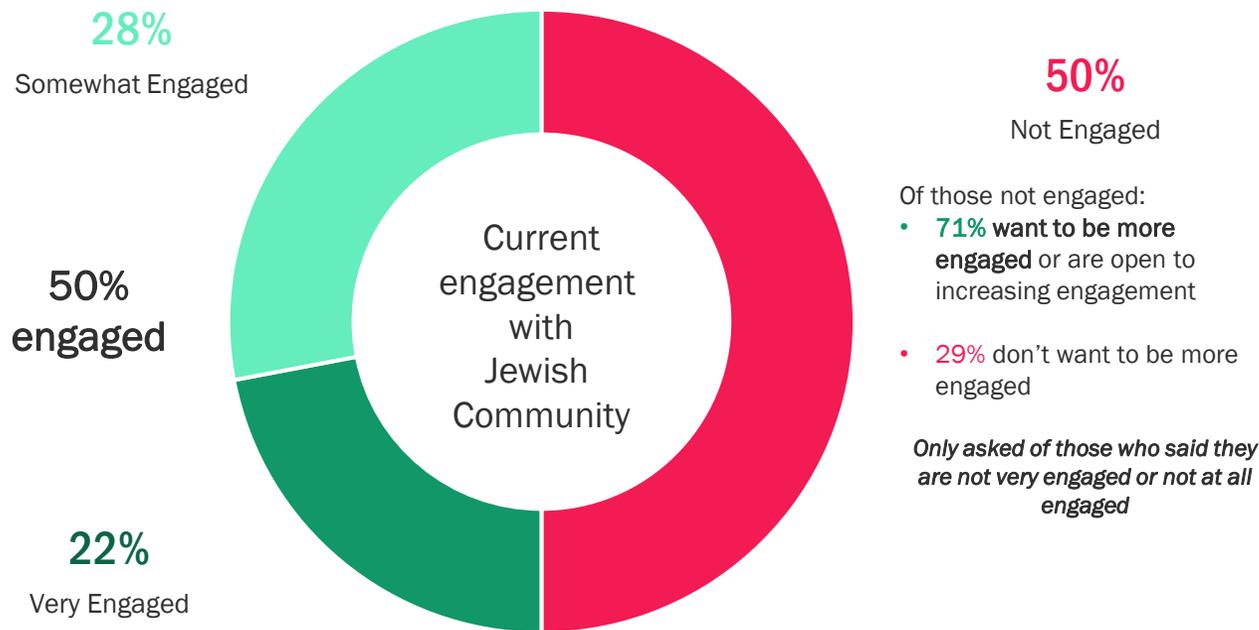
\*asked of Grandparents only

Q17. Do you or anyone in your household currently belong to a Jewish congregation, such as a synagogue, temple, minyan, or chavurah? / Q31. Below you will see a list of statements that you may or may not agree with. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the statement.



# But opportunity exists to increase engagement among this group – Only half of Jewish adults feel engaged with the Jewish community right now, but of those who are not, most want or are open to increasing their engagement

## ENGAGEMENT WITH THEIR JEWISH COMMUNITY



Demographic Profile	Engaged	Not Engaged
55-64-year-olds	55	45
65-74-year-olds	45	55
Men	47	57
Women	53	43
Retirees	27	36
Parents with children >18	83	78
Grandparents	38	37
Reform	30	36
Conservative	36	24
Orthodox	16	4
Just Jewish	6	12
Secular/Culturally/Ethnically Jewish	3	19





# Lack of time, distance to their congregation, and current programming hold many back from engaging more with their Jewish community

## BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT WITH THEIR JEWISH COMMUNITY

While lack of time is a barrier difficult to overcome, JFNA can tailor programs that suit their interest and makes it easier for them to join (i.e., daytime activities, free transportation, etc.)

### Too busy / lack the extra time to engage (44%)

Not enough time outside of work to devote to the community.  
– Male, 51

Working full time and taking care of elderly family.  
– Female, 62

Time. I currently am a public health employee and **have to work in two full-time management positions** due to limited workforce... **this leaves me exhausted weekday evenings and weekends** with limited energy for other activities.  
– Male, 63

### Current activities do not interest them (8%)

If there is something that interests me, I will become engaged. Otherwise, I'll wait.  
– Female, 62

Lack of creative programming...too many people not in my demographic.  
– Female, 56

I have not found anything that interests me.  
– Female, 65

Jewish activities seem mostly devoted to younger people with kids. **I've tried to join congregations but they showed zero interest in me.**  
– Male, 71

### Distance to the congregation / driving at night (8%)

My health prevents me from driving and engaging with others.  
– Female, 60

I live in a neighborhood which prevents me from coming home alone at night.  
– Female, 70

I don't like to drive at night or drive into the city.  
– Female, 61

I belong to a synagogue that is far away.  
– Female, 61

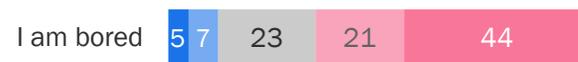
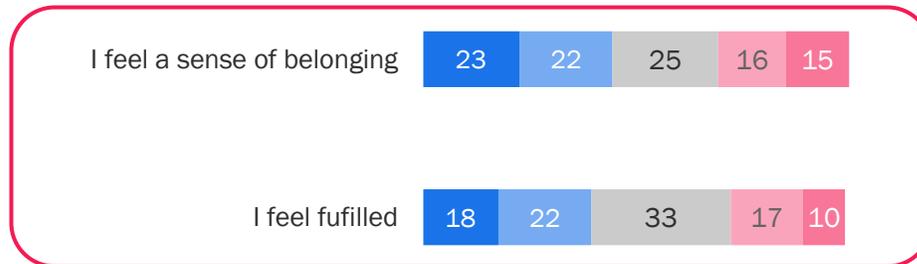




# While few feel bored or uninspired when it comes to their engagement with the Jewish community, there is a big gap in a sense of belonging and fulfillment with the community among these adults; JFNA's programs can help fill this gap

## FEELINGS RELATED TO JEWISH COMMUNITY

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree



55-64-year-olds, women and those engaged in their Jewish community are slightly more likely to be seeking more meaningful opportunities (+4-6% pts in total agreement)

**Engaged**  
(% pts. Diff from total agree)

**Not Engaged**  
(% pts. Diff from total agree)

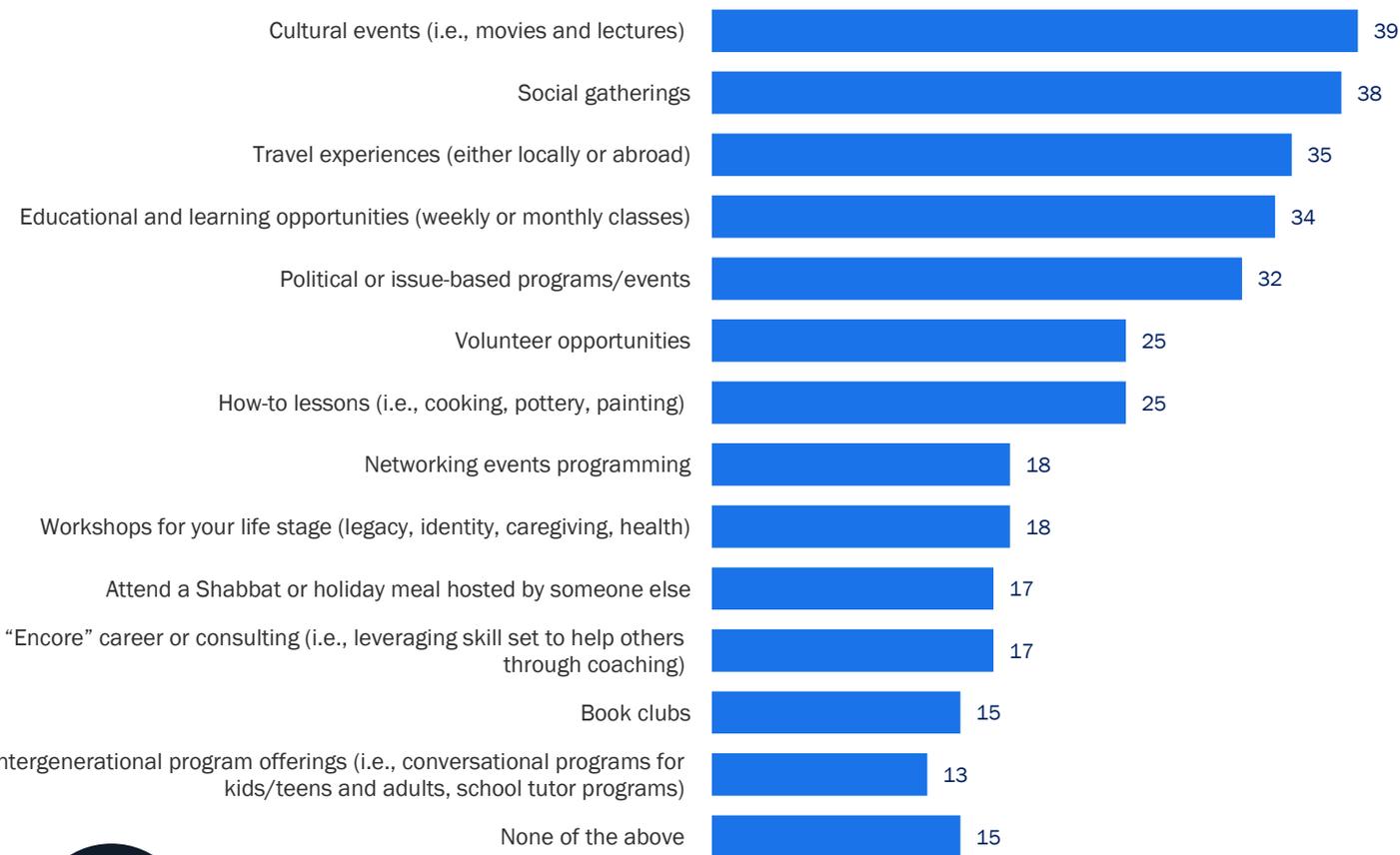
+22	-23
+17	-17
+5	-7
-6	+5
-4	+4

Not surprisingly, those not engaged are much less likely to feel a sense of belonging and fulfilled with the Jewish community



# Regardless of engagement levels, many want more opportunities to connect with the community, and place emphasis on connecting through cultural and social events

## LIKE TO SEE MORE WITHIN YOUR JEWISH COMMUNITY



Engaged (% pts. Diff from total)	Not Engaged (% pts. Diff from total)
0	-1
0	+1
+5	-4
+1	-1
-4	+3
-2	+2
0	0
+1	-2
+3	-2
+3	-4
+1	-1
-1	+1
+3	-3
-3	+3

## What other activities, resources, or events would you like to see offered, or offered more of, within your community?

Social gatherings with discussion about life, religion and how we can be helpful to our Jewish communities, so we still have a purpose and meaning in our lives.

- Female, 57

Guest lectures; Jews impact on history and present society outside of religion.

- Male, 62

More information about Jewish holidays such as lag b’omer. Simchas Torah, tu Bish vat and how to celebrate them properly.

- Male, 57

Raising Jewish grandchildren, Israel today and how to increase support, helping younger generations become more connected to their Judaism.

- Female, 68



# These Jewish adults long for a diversity of social, educational and cultural opportunities so they can find activities that suit them and everyone, regardless of their background or religion, can feel welcomed

## STATEMENTS ABOUT JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

What are some of the things, if any, that you wish at this specific stage in your life were offered by your local Jewish community for people like YOU?

### SOCIAL GATHERINGS & EVENTS WITH PEOPLE IN MY AGE GROUP (13%)

Just coming into retirement and my career has been in Jewish education so I am looking more towards social aspects. I would be interested in social activities and volunteering as well.

- Female, 65

Social gatherings to meet more people with similar cultural backgrounds and religions.

- Female, 64

[All around more] activities...hikes, art, music, museum visits, learning, speakers/discussions.

- Male, 58

### EDUCATIONAL & CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES (8%)

Book clubs with peers; cultural events that occur frequently and are diverse enough where I can pick and choose.

- Female, 62

Opportunities to participate in doing a simple mitzvah that would make me think I helped make a difference.

- Male, 68

Reclaim my heritage... gain more knowledge and understanding of texts, traditions, and rituals and their relevance and contributions to contemporary secular life.

- Female, 62

### WELCOMING & SECULAR OPTIONS FOR LESS RELIGIOUS JEWS (7%)

Events for culturally Jewish people who are atheist/agnostic. Ways to learn a little about Judaism without the religious expectation.

- Male, 55

Progressive, thoughtful, open and stimulating congregations...with exploration and celebration of our culture, philosophy, history and ethics.

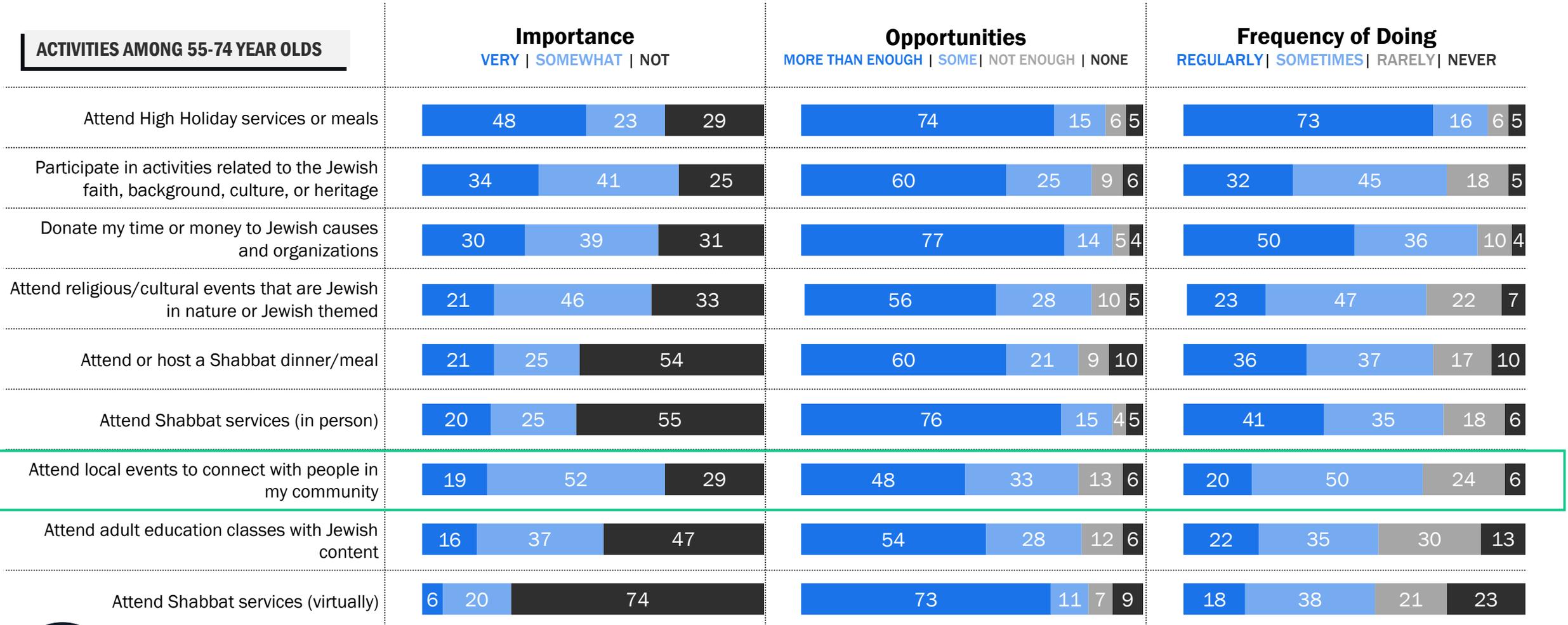
- Male, 68

I would like to see more secular Jewish education and community events. Activities not attached to a temple.

- Male, 70



# Opportunities to do the things they deem important aren't necessarily lacking in their view, but there is clearly an opportunity to increase the ability to connect with other Jewish people

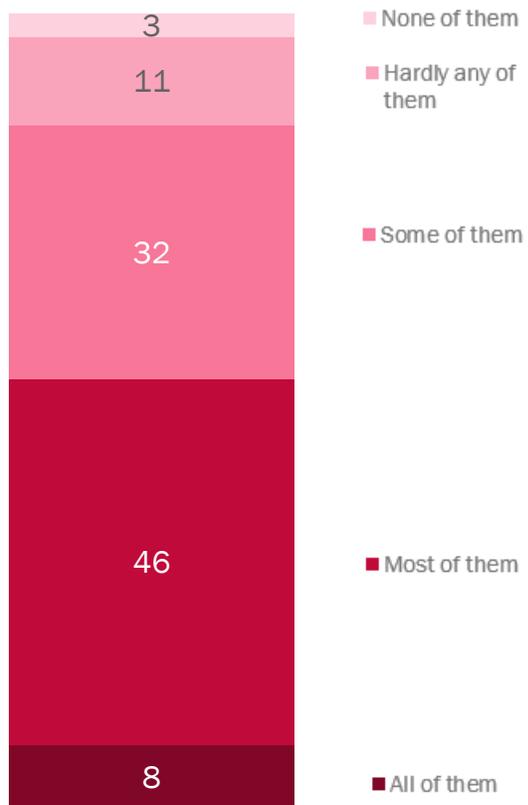


Q25. Regardless of how much time you spend doing it, how important is it to do each of the following things these days? / Q26. Still thinking about the things that are important for you to do these days, please indicate whether there are places or opportunities for you to do this. / Q27. In a typical year, how often do you do any of the following?



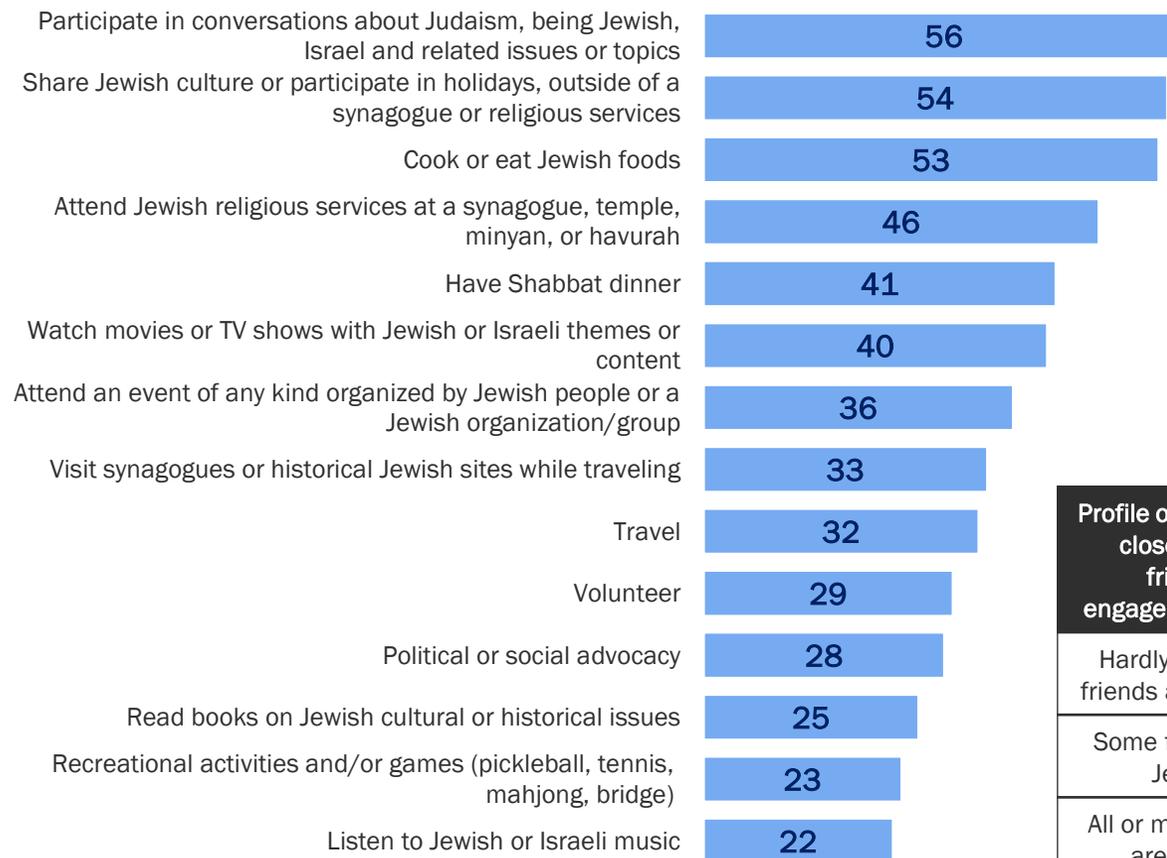
# While most Jewish adults have Jewish friends, only some partake in a variety of Jewish activities or cultural events with these friends, whether they be religious or non-religious in nature...

## CLOSE FRIENDS THAT ARE JEWISH



## ACTIVITIES DONE WITH JEWISH FRIENDS

Only asked of those with close Jewish friends

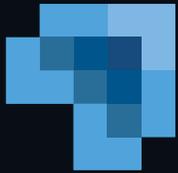


Profile of those with close Jewish friends' engagement levels	Engaged	Not engaged
Hardly any or no friends are Jewish*	19	81
Some friends are Jewish	42	58
All or most friends are Jewish	63	37

\*low base size, for directional use only



The Jewish Federations<sup>®</sup>  
OF NORTH AMERICA



Benenson  
Strategy  
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# Thank You

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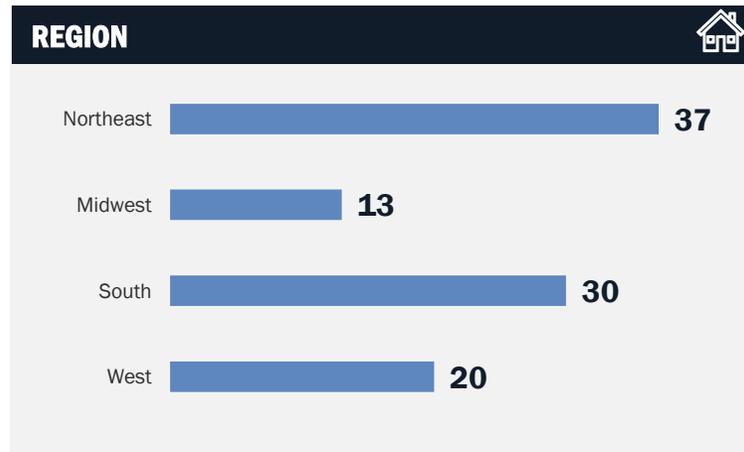
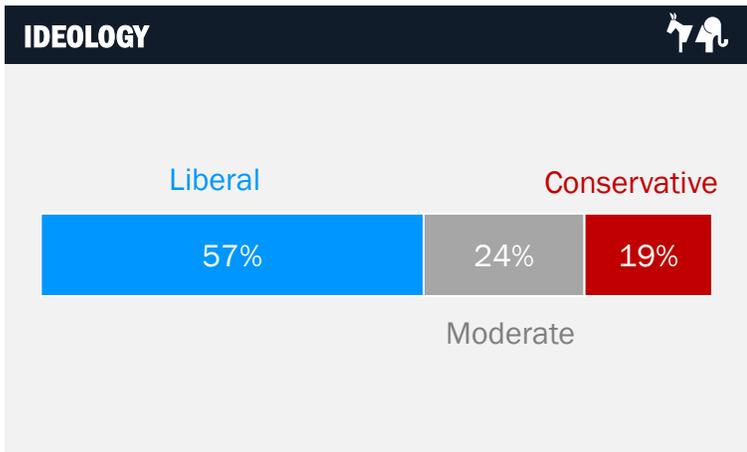
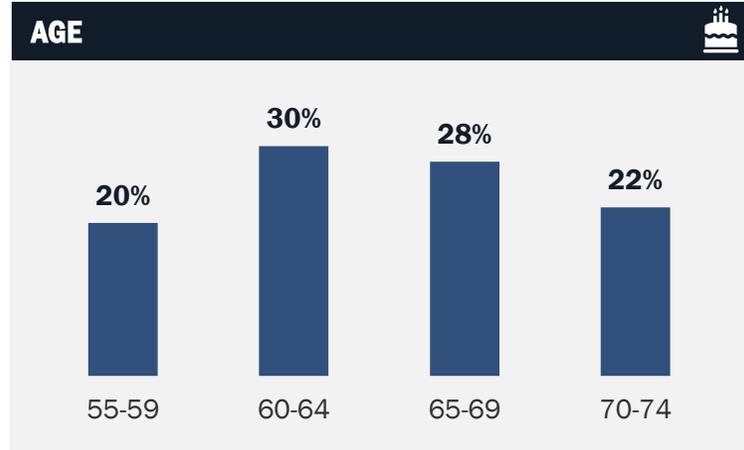
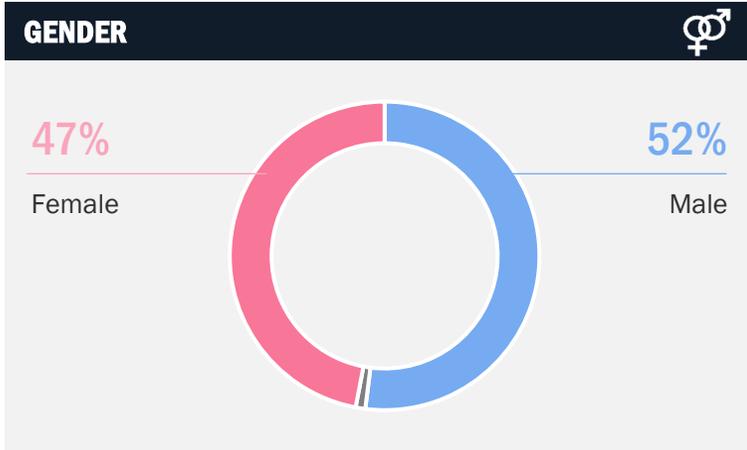
ANALYST

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# Appendix

# Demographic Snapshot of Jewish adults ages 55 to 74 years old



### DENOMINATION

Reform	33%
Conservative	30%
Orthodox	10%
Reconstructionist	2%
Just Jewish	9%
Secular/Culturally/Ethnically Jewish	11%
Other	3%
None of the above/ not affiliated/ Post Denominational	2%



# Full Demographic Profile



<b>Gender</b>	Male	<b>52%</b>
	Female	<b>47%</b>
	Prefer not to answer	<b>1%</b>
<b>Age</b>	55-59	<b>20%</b>
	60-64	<b>30%</b>
	65-69	<b>28%</b>
	70-74	<b>22%</b>
<b>Race</b>	White	<b>87%</b>
	Black	<b>1%</b>
	Hispanic	<b>2%</b>
	Other	<b>11%</b>
<b>Education</b>	< College	<b>14%</b>
	College +	<b>86%</b>
<b>Employment</b>	Employed	<b>56%</b>
	Unemployed	<b>44%</b>
	Retired	<b>32%</b>
	Encore career	<b>16%</b>

<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	<b>66%</b>
<b>Parental Status</b>	Parent, child >18	<b>7%</b>
	Parent, child <18	<b>80%</b>
	No children	<b>18%</b>
<b>Grandparent</b>	Grandparent	<b>37%</b>
<b>Political Ideology</b>	Liberal	<b>57%</b>
	Moderate	<b>24%</b>
	Conservative	<b>19%</b>
<b>Income</b>	Less than \$50,000	<b>11%</b>
	\$50,000-100,000	<b>16%</b>
	\$100,000-250,000	<b>31%</b>
	\$250,000+	<b>21%</b>
<b>Household Size (adults &gt;18)</b>	1	<b>35%</b>
	2	<b>53%</b>
	3+	<b>12%</b>

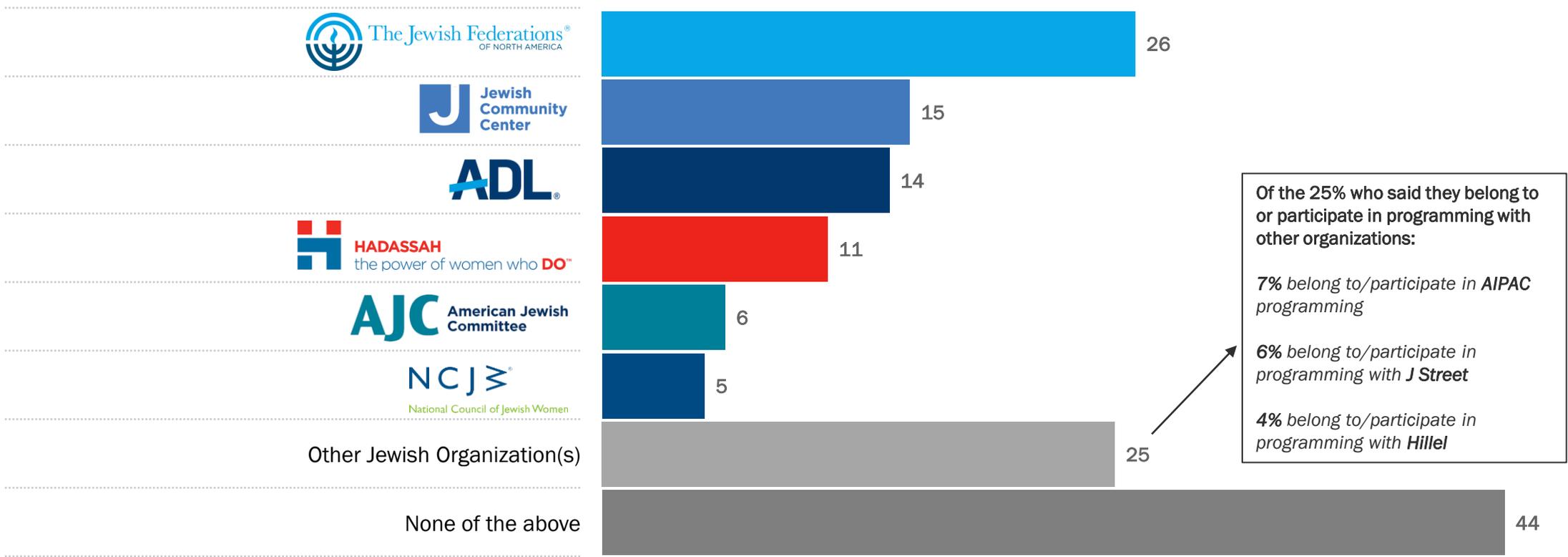




# These Jewish adults predominately belong to or participate in programming with the Jewish Federations of North America, as well as with additional Jewish- or non-Jewish organizations not listed

## JEWISH ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP

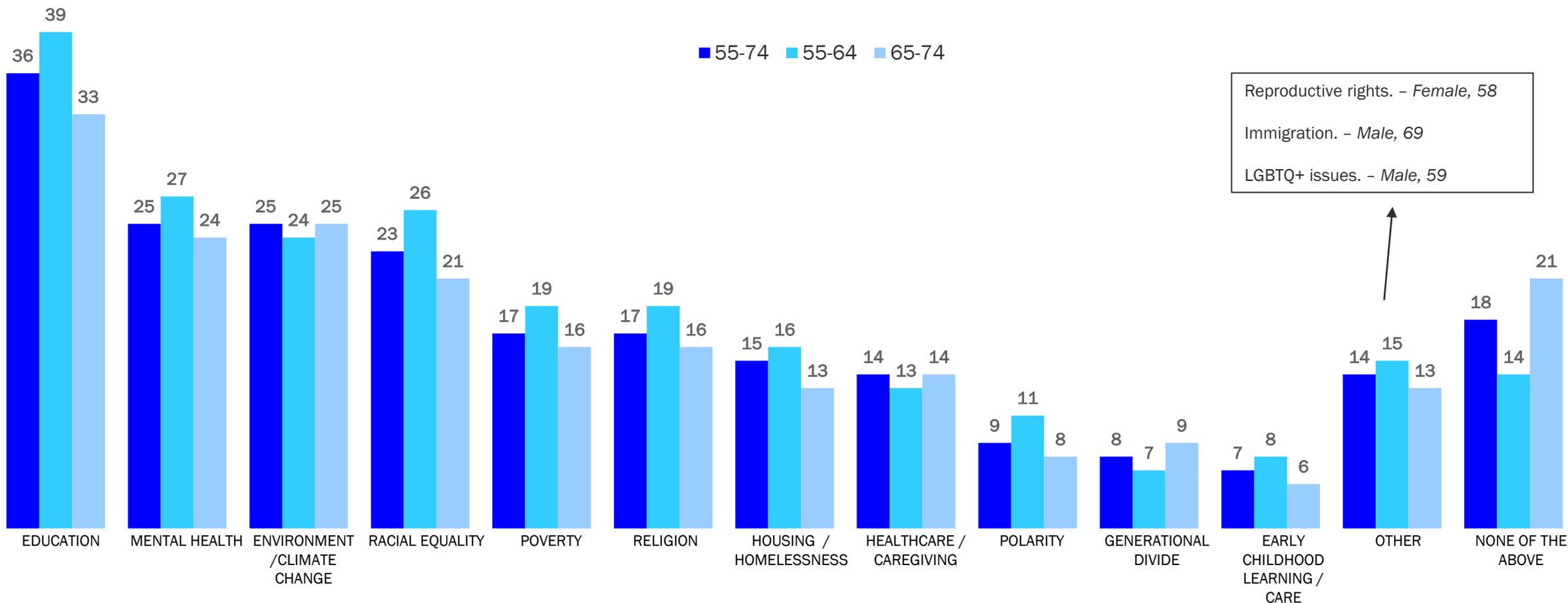
Which, if any, of the following Jewish organizations do you belong to or participate in programming with?





# Education dominates causes they care about; following close behind but still deemed important are mental health, racial equality, and environmental causes

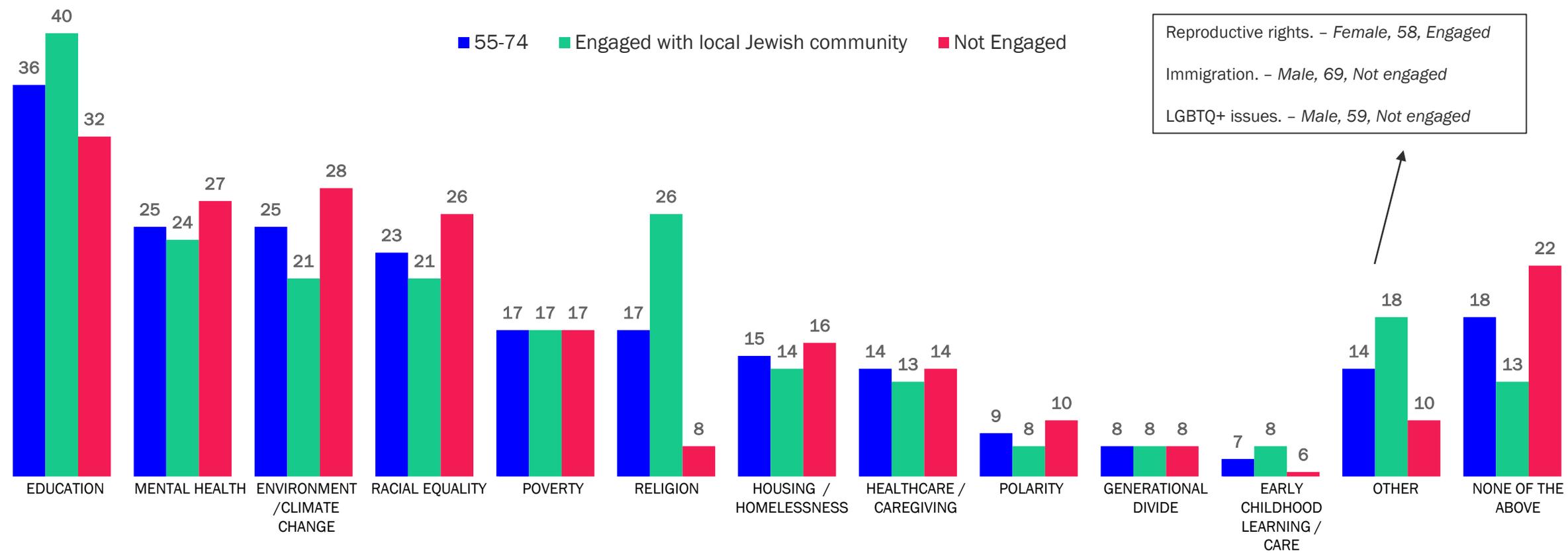
## CAUSES OR INITIATIVES WANT TO GET INVOLVED WITH





# Education continues to dominate causes those engaged and not engaged with the Jewish community care about; however, those engaged place more importance on religious initiatives while those not engaged value environmental and mental health causes

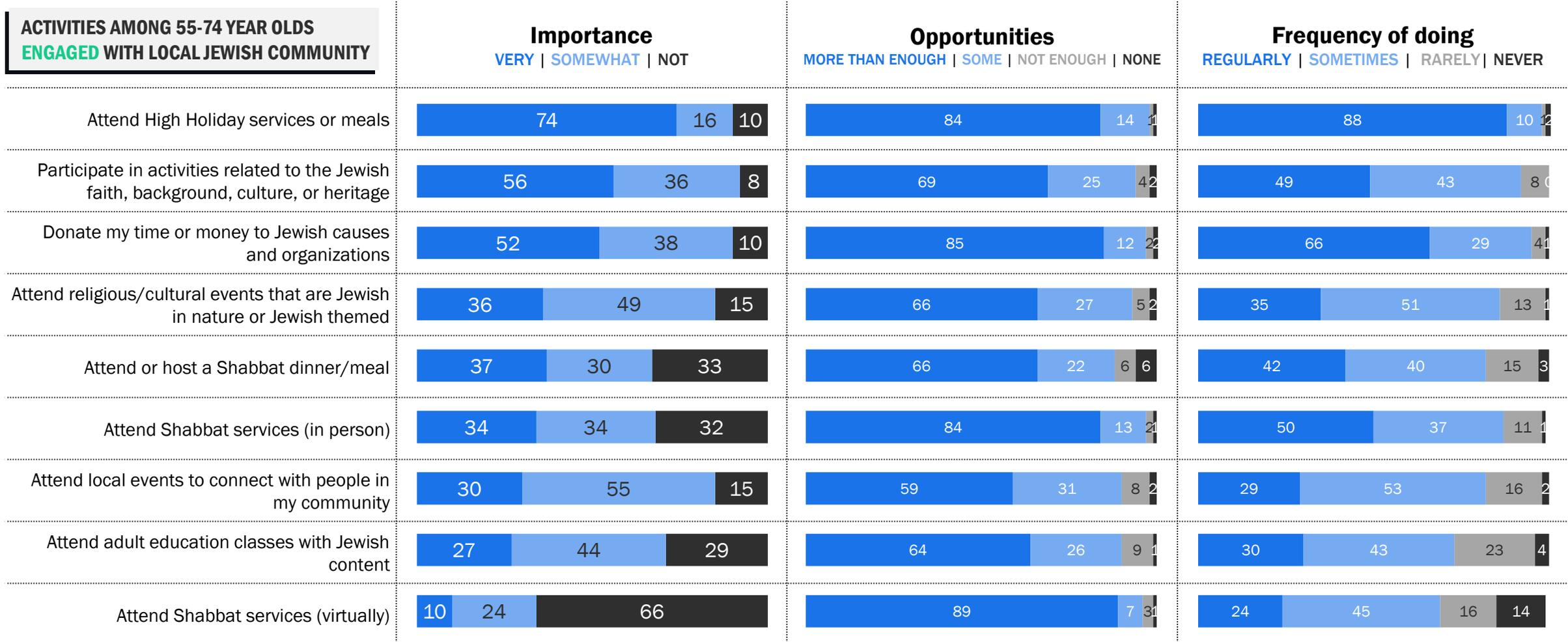
## CAUSES OR INITIATIVES WANT TO GET INVOLVED WITH



Q34. Now you're going to see a list of causes or initiatives. Please select up to 3 that you are MOST interested in getting involved with at this stage in your life.



# Those engaged in their local Jewish community are more likely to want to participate in activities that highlights their Jewish heritage



Q25. Regardless of how much time you spend doing it, how important is it to do each of the following things these days? / Q26. Still thinking about the things that are important for you to do these days, please indicate whether there are places or opportunities for you to do this. / Q27. In a typical year, how often do you do any of the following?



# Even though those not engaged in their local Jewish community are less likely to participate than the engaged, they are drawn to activities that allow them to connect with their Jewish heritage

ACTIVITIES AMONG 55-74 YEAR OLDS <b>NOT ENGAGED</b> WITH LOCAL JEWISH COMMUNITY	<b>Importance</b> VERY   SOMEWHAT   NOT	<b>Opportunities</b> MORE THAN ENOUGH   SOME   NOT ENOUGH   NONE	<b>Frequency of doing</b> REGULARLY   SOMETIMES   RARELY   NEVER
Attend High Holiday services or meals	21   30   49	56   17   16   11	47   26   15   12
Participate in activities related to the Jewish faith, background, culture, or heritage	11   46   43	44   26   17   13	5   48   35   12
Donate my time or money to Jewish causes and organizations	8   41   51	63   16   12   9	20   49   22   9
Attend religious/cultural events that are Jewish in nature or Jewish themed	7   41   52	40   30   20   10	3   40   39   17
Attend or host a Shabbat dinner/meal	5   19   76	44   19   16   21	20   30   23   28
Attend Shabbat services (in person)	5   17   78	51   23   10   16	12   30   38   20
Attend local events to connect with people in my community	9   49   42	32   35   22   11	6   46   36   13
Attend adult education classes with Jewish content	4   31   65	32   33   19   16	4   18   46   32
Attend Shabbat services (virtually)	2   16   82	43   18   16   23	6   24   31   39



Q25. Regardless of how much time you spend doing it, how important is it to do each of the following things these days? / Q26. Still thinking about the things that are important for you to do these days, please indicate whether there are places or opportunities for you to do this. / Q27. In a typical year, how often do you do any of the following?