2018 Survey of Jews in Canada

Executive Summary

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Introduction

Background

The first Jew to settle in what is now Canada was an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company. He arrived in 1732. Today, Canadian Jews number about 392,000 and form the world's third or fourth largest Jewish community.

As late as the first half of the 20th century, Canadian Jews experienced a high level of discrimination in accommodation, employment, property ownership, and everyday interaction. Despite these impediments, they proved to be highly resilient. They achieved rapid upward mobility and made many important contributions to Canadian medicine, jurisprudence, science, education, government, the economy, and the arts.

Upward mobility and increasing acceptance on the part of the Canadian mainstream have had what many community members regard as a downside: these social processes heightened the prospect of cultural assimilation, loss of traditional languages, and intermarriage. Many in the community are also deeply concerned about the recurrence of a stubborn malady; since the early 2000s, anti-Israel sentiment has sometimes engendered anti-Semitism, and over the past few years, the rise of "white nationalism" has resulted in increased anti-Jewish harassment and violence. Although the latter circumstance did not motivate this survey, it is part of the context in which the 2018 Survey of Canadian Jews was conducted.

What is known about the identities, values, opinions, and experiences of Jews in Canada today? The basic demographics of the Jewish population are captured every five years through national censuses conducted by Statistics Canada, which document the number who identify as Jewish ethnically and/or religiously, where they live, and their basic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, and education). However, this research does not provide a full understanding about the Jewish experience in this country, and such knowledge is becoming increasingly important given the dynamic changes taking place in society generally, and in the Jewish world in particular (e.g., assimilation, intermarriage, and anti-Semitism). It is remarkable that the Canadian Jewish community is one of the least studied in the world—in sharp contrast to that of the USA and the UK.

2018 Survey of Jews in Canada

In 2013, the respected Pew Research Center published the results of a comprehensive survey of American Jews that examined the identities, values, opinions, and experiences of Jews in the United States. To address the gap in knowledge about these issues among Canadian Jews, the Environics Institute for Survey Research, in partnership with Professor Robert Brym (SD Clark Professor of Sociology at the University of Toronto) and Professor Rhonda Lenton (President and Vice-Chancellor, York University) conducted a landmark national survey of Jews in Canada in 2018.

The survey focuses on what it means to be Jewish in Canada today—specifically, patterns of Jewish practice, upbringing, and intermarriage; perceptions of anti-Semitism; attitudes toward Israel; and personal and organizational connections that, taken together, constitute the community. This research is modelled closely on the 2013 Pew Survey of American Jews, to provide the basis for cross-national comparison and set a high research standard.

The principal investigators assembled the necessary institutional resources, funding, and research expertise required to launch a study of this scope. This included securing financial support from the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, Federation CJA (Montreal), the Jewish Community Foundation of Montreal, the Jewish Foundation of Manitoba, and the Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies, University of Toronto. The support provided by these organizations made it possible to expand the scope of the research to more effectively cover the Jewish population in particular cities and groups.

The principal investigators also assembled an informal advisory group of community members to provide input for the development of survey themes and questions. This group included Professor Anna Shternshis, Esther Enkin (journalist, and former CBC Ombudsman), and Michael Miloff (a consultant in strategic planning to both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations). Through the participation of Federation CJA (Montreal) and the Jewish Foundation of Manitoba, city-specific questions were included in the survey that addressed issues of particular interest to these organizations.

Survey methodology

Because Canadian Jews constitute only about one percent of the Canadian population, the use of standard survey research methods was not a feasible option given the high costs of using probability sampling to identify and recruit participants.[1] The principal investigators developed a research strategy to make the research sample as comprehensive and representative as possible within the available budget. This strategy entailed two main parts. First, the survey focused on the census metropolitan areas encompassing Canada's four largest Jewish communities (Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, and Winnipeg) that include approximately 82 percent of the Canadian Jewish population.

Second, a multi-stage sampling plan was developed to complete interviews with Jews in each of the four cities using a combination of sample sources and survey modalities. The primary sampling frame was drawn from a dictionary of several thousand common Jewish surnames that was used to select households with listed landline telephone numbers in census tracts with a minimum of five percent Jewish households. This source was supplemented by requesting referrals from respondents who completed the survey, social media promotion, and on-site recruitment at the Jewish Community Centre in Winnipeg. People were eligible to participate in the survey if they were 18 years of age or older and self-identified as Jewish or partially Jewish.

The survey was conducted with 2,335 individuals by telephone or online between February 10 and September 30, 2018. Quotas were established in each city for age cohort and gender based on the 2011 National Household Survey to ensure adequate representation by these characteristics.[2] In addition to completing the survey with a representative sample in each city, additional surveys were conducted with Jews between the ages of 18 and 44 in Montreal and those who immigrated from the former Soviet Union, in both cases at the request of study sponsors.

The distribution of completed surveys by city is presented in Figure I-1 below. The final data were weighted by each city's population, age and gender distribution, and the national percentage of Jews in each age cohort who were married or living common-law with someone who is not Jewish. Because the survey is not fully based on probability sampling, sampling error cannot be calculated.[3] A more complete description of the survey methodology is presented in the appendix to this report.

Figure I-1

Survey sample by city

Census Metropolitan Area	Final sample	% of Canadian Jewish population
Toronto	1,135	48%
Montreal	638	23%
Winnipeg	361	4%
Vancouver	201	7%
TOTAL	**2,335**	**82%**

[1] The 2013 Pew Survey of American Jews used a comprehensive probability sampling strategy, which was made possible by a research budget estimated to be in the millions of dollars.

[2] This extended time period was required because some quotas were considerably more difficult to fill than others (e.g., younger respondents are more difficult to identify and recruit than older ones).

[3] However, as a rough benchmark, we note that 19 of 20 random samples of 2,335 respondents would result in a maximum margin of error of plus or minus 2.0 percentage points.

About the final report

The final report from which this summary is excerpted presents the results of the research and covers the following themes: what it means to be Jewish; types of Jewish practice; strength and type of connections to other Jews and to Jewish organizations; patterns of Jewish upbringing; intermarriage; views on Israel; perceptions of, and experiences with, discrimination and anti-Semitism; and connection to the local community. Throughout the report, the results highlight relevant similarities and differences across the Jewish population, by city, age cohort, denominational affiliation, and other characteristics. The Canadian results are compared with those of American Jews based on the 2013 Pew Survey of American Jews where available, and in several cases also compared to results from surveys of the Canadian population at large. Each chapter ends with a commentary with further analysis and interpretation of the results.

Detailed tables presenting results for all survey questions by Jewish population segments are available separately on the Environics Institute website at *www.environicsinstitute.org*. All results are presented as percentages unless otherwise noted.

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This research was made possible with the support from a number of organizations and individuals. The principal investigators would like to acknowledge the important contributions of the study sponsors (UJA Federation of Toronto, Federation CJA (Montreal), the Jewish Community Foundation of Montreal, the Jewish Foundation of Manitoba, and the Anne Tannenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto; study advisors (Esther Enkin, Michael Miloff, and Anna Shternshis); the research team at Environics Research; and, finally, the 2,335 survey participants who took the time to share their background, experiences, and opinions which collectively informed our understanding of what it means to be Jewish in Canada today.

Executive summary

This research provides the first empirically-based portrait of the identity, practices, and experiences of Jews in Canada, based on a survey conducted in four cities containing over 80 percent of the country's Jewish population (Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and Winnipeg). Four overarching themes emerge from the survey.

CHANGING BASIS OF IDENTIFICATION. Identifying oneself as a Jew is not what it used to be. Three centuries ago, being Jewish meant practicing a distinct religion. Today, only one in three Canadians who identifies as Jewish considers religion very important in his or her life, and just six in ten say they believe in God or a universal spirit (compared to seven in ten of all Canadians). For most Canadian Jews today, the basis of Jewish identity is less about religion than about culture, ethnicity, or a combination of culture, ethnicity, and religion.

Consider that one of the most important expressions of Jewish identity involves families getting together over a meal to mark a Jewish holiday. What does this practice mean? For a growing number of Canadian Jews, the practice seems to be chiefly a means of achieving conviviality in the family and, beyond that, solidarity with the larger community. The purely religious significance of the practice is less important than it was in the past.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE. It would be wrong to conclude that change in the basis of Jewish identification signifies that widespread assimilation is taking place among community members. To be sure, the rate of intermarriage is growing. A small minority of Jews display a Christmas tree (or, among relatively recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union, a New Year's tree) in their homes. The quickly growing Vancouver Jewish community stands out in its degree of religious, ethnic, and cultural assimilation. However, the Canadian Jewish community as a whole remains surprisingly cohesive across generations. A range of indicators tells us that. Whether we examine the weekly ritual of lighting candles at the onset of the Sabbath, belonging to Jewish organizations, donating to Jewish causes, or regularly attending synagogue services, we find little difference between young adults and elderly Jews.

Universally, discrimination increases group cohesiveness, and Canadian Jews are no exception in this regard; perceptions of the level of anti-Semitism in Canada contribute to community cohesion. The survey examined Canadian Jews' views on discrimination against various racial, religious, ethnic, and sexual minorities. The results suggest that, by and large, Canadian Jews assess the extent and threat of anti-Semitism realistically.

CANADIAN JEWISH EXCEPTIONALISM. The cohesiveness of the Canadian Jewish community contrasts with that of the Jewish community in the United States. We know this from previous research—but the magnitude of the difference revealed by this survey is so large that it nonetheless strikes one as remarkable. Intermarriage is far more common in the United States than in Canada, the ability to read or speak Hebrew is much less widespread, visiting Israel is a lot less common, and so on.

Since World War II, the story of the Jewish diaspora has been dominated by historical events and social processes taking place in the United States and the former Soviet Union. In both cases, community cohesiveness is on the decline. Lost in the dominant narrative is the story of Canadian exceptionalism. The Jewish communities in Montreal and Winnipeg are shrinking in size, but those in Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver are growing, as is the Canadian Jewish population as a whole (albeit slowly). The overall result is that Canada's Jews are on the verge of becoming the second largest Jewish community in the diaspora, next in size only to the much larger American Jewish community. (Some research finds that the Jewish population of Canada already exceeds that of France.) In short, evidence of Canadian Jewish population growth and resilience suggests the need for a modification of the dominant diaspora narrative.

HETEROGENEITY. Cohesiveness does not imply homogeneity. Far from it. This report documents that Canadian Jews vary widely in denominational affiliation,

subethnic identification, strength of ties to the community, Jewish upbringing, and much else. Geographical differences exist too: a strong east/west pattern emerges, with the large Montreal and Toronto communities being the most cohesive, the Vancouver community in many respects looking more like a part of the United States than of Canada, and Winnipeg sitting between these extremes, although closer to the eastern model.

Heterogeneity extends to support for different Canadian political parties and, perhaps surprisingly to some, differences of opinion concerning key issues in the Jewish world, notably attitudes toward Israel's West Bank settlement policy. Among those with an opinion on the subject, nearly three times more Canadian Jews believe that West Bank settlements hurt Israel's security than believe the settlements help Israel's security. Some people think of the Canadian Jewish community as a monolith. This research should disabuse them of that impression.

Following are the main highlights from the study.

Canadian Jewish population

Canada's approximately 392,000 Jews comprise about one percent of the country's population. They are highly urbanized, with more than 87 percent living in just six census metropolitan areas: nearly one-half in Toronto, nearly one-quarter in Montreal, and nearly one-sixth in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Ottawa, and Calgary combined. The country's Jewish population is growing slowly, but trends vary by city. Vancouver is the country's fastest growing Jewish community, followed by Ottawa, Toronto, and Calgary. In contrast, the Jewish populations of Montreal and Winnipeg have been declining.

The age and sex distribution of Canadian Jews is much like that of the entire Canadian population, but is somewhat more likely to include immigrants. More than eight in ten Canadian Jews define themselves as of Ashkenazi ancestry (from Western Europe and Eastern Europe), and one in ten as of Sephardi or Mizrakhi ancestry (from Southern Europe and the Middle East). The educational attainment of the Canadian Jewish population is extraordinarily high; eight in ten Jewish adults between the ages of 25 and 64 have completed at least a bachelor's degree, compared to fewer than three in ten in the population at large.

Jewish identity

Jews in Canada identify as Jewish in a variety of ways. About one-half consider themselves to be Jewish mainly as a matter of religion, by culture, or by ancestry/descent, while the other half emphasize two or more of these aspects. Identification by all three of these aspects is most common among Jews who are Orthodox or Conservative, and those who are actively involved in their local Jewish community. By comparison, identification as Jewish mainly through culture or ancestry/descent is most prevalent among those who affiliate as Reform, or are not attached to any denomination or movement.

Two-thirds of Canadian Jews say that being Jewish is very important in their lives, with most of the rest indicating that it is at least somewhat important. By comparison, only three in ten place this level of importance on religion, although a majority say they believe in God or a universal spirit.

What do Canadian Jews consider to be essential aspects of being Jewish? At the top of the list are leading a moral and ethical life, remembering the Holocaust, and celebrating Jewish holidays; a majority identify each of these as "essential" to what being Jewish means to them. In a second tier, at least four in ten identify as essential such attributes as working for justice and equality in society, caring about Israel, being intellectually curious, being part of a community, and having a good sense of humour. By comparison, no more than one in five places such importance on observing Jewish law, attending synagogue, and participating in Jewish cultural activities.

What Canadian Jews consider as being essential to being Jewish varies by age cohort. In particular, members of the youngest cohort are much less likely than those in the oldest cohort to consider a sense of humour to be an essential element of Jewishness. This difference may be due partly to the depletion among young adults of Jewish humour's richest reservoir—the Yiddish language, which was the mother tongue of nearly all Canadian Jews in 1931, but is spoken by just a few percent of Canadian Jews today. A second noteworthy difference is that younger Jews are considerably less like than older Jews to consider caring for Israel an essential aspect of Jewishness, a trend that has been noted in the United States for some time.

Comparisons with American Jews. How Canadian and American Jews identify as Jewish is broadly similar. American Jews are somewhat more likely to pin their identity to religion, culture or ancestry/descent rather than a combination of these aspects. They are less apt to say that being Jewish and being religious is very important to them personally, although they are more likely than Canadian Jews to express belief in God or a universal spirit. And what they consider essential aspects of being Jewish is comparable to what is articulated by Canadian Jews, but with less emphasis on being part of a community.

Jewish life and practice

Most Jews in Canada consider themselves to be part of an established Jewish denomination or movement. About six in ten affiliate with one of the three mainstream denominations, the largest being Conservative, followed by Orthodox or Modern Orthodox, and Reform. One in ten report being part of one of the smaller Jewish movements, including Reconstructionism, Humanistic or Renewal Judaism, Hasidism, or something else. Three in ten are not affiliated with any particular type of Judaism, including some who say they are "just Jewish."

Six in ten report they (or someone in their household) belong to a synagogue, temple or prayer group, and this represents the majority across all denominations/movements and even applies to three in ten Jews who are unaffiliated. Membership does not, however, translate into regular attendance: only one in six attend services at least once or twice a month outside of special occasions such as weddings, funerals and bar/bat mitzvahs. Apart from synagogues and temples, close to half of Canadian Jews say they belong to one or more other types of Jewish organizations, such as a Jewish community centre. Three in ten do not belong to any type of Jewish organization.

Even more prevalent than organization membership is providing financial support to Jewish organizations and causes. Eight in ten Jews in Canada report having made such a donation in the previous year (2017). This proportion is highest among those who belong to a denomination or movement, but such contributions have also been made by a majority of Canadian Jews who are unaffiliated and those with a household income under $75,000 a year.

Apart from formal memberships and affiliation, being Jewish in Canada is about social connections. More than half report that either all or most of their current friends are Jewish, with very few indicating that hardly any or none of them are Jewish. Having a high proportion of Jewish friends is most closely linked to denominational affiliation, being most prevalent among Orthodox/Modern Orthodox Jews, and least so among Reform Jews and those who affiliate with smaller denominations and movements.

There is remarkably little difference between age cohorts in their degree of religious involvement (e.g., attending religious services, lighting Sabbath candles) and in their degree of community participation (e.g., belonging to Jewish organizations, donating to Jewish causes, having close Jewish friends). This finding suggests that, all else the same, the Canadian Jewish community is unlikely to become much less cohesive as younger generations age. On the other hand, inter-city differences in religious involvement and community participation are large, with community cohesiveness at a very high level in Montreal and Toronto, but declining as one moves west (notably in Vancouver, which approaches American levels of community cohesiveness).

Comparisons with American Jews. American Jews are as likely as Canadian Jews to have a Jewish affiliation, but are much less involved in their local community. Six in ten identify with one of the three mainstream denominations (predominantly Reform, and least apt to be Orthodox or Modern Orthodox), and like Canadian Jews about one-third have no affiliation. But American Jews are half as likely as Canadian Jews to belong to a synagogue, and even less likely to belong to other types of Jewish organizations. Only one-half have made a financial donation to Jewish organizations and causes (compared with 80 percent of Canadian Jews), and comparatively few have a preponderance of Jewish friends.

Jewish upbringing

A significant feature of the Jewish population in Canada is the continuity of identification and practice across generations. Nine in ten Canadian Jews report that both of their parents are Jewish, and a comparable proportion say they were raised in the Jewish religion. Being raised in the Jewish religion is most widespread among Orthodox/Modern Orthodox Jews, but it is also the experience of most Jews who are currently unaffiliated. Among the small percentage who were not raised in the Jewish religion, about half say they were raised in a secular Jewish tradition.

A key component of continuity is the prevalence of Jewish education, with most Jews in Canada having participated in one or more types of Jewish education when growing up. Jewish education is most likely to include attendance at an overnight summer camp, Hebrew school or Sunday school, but close to one-half have attended a Jewish day school or yeshiva and have done so for an average of nine years.

Also important to Jewish upbringing is the coming-of-age tradition of becoming bar or bat mitzvah, typically at age 12 for girls and age 13 for boys. Nine in ten Canadian Jewish men and four in ten Canadian Jewish women have done so, in most cases as a youth but for a small proportion as an adult. The gender difference is due largely to the fact that bat mitzvahs did not become common practice until the 1970s. Consequently, the prevalence of this experience is largely a function of generation, as it is reported by eight in ten Canadian Jews ages 18 to 29, compared with little more than one-third among those ages 75 and older. Notably, becoming bar or bat mitzvah is common even among Jews who are not currently synagogue members or affiliated with any denomination or movement.

Most Canadian Jews claim some knowledge of the Hebrew language, with three-quarters saying they know the alphabet, six in ten indicating they can read at least some Hebrew words in a newspaper or prayerbook, and four in ten claiming to be able of carrying on a conversation in the language. Such knowledge is most widely indicated by Jews who are Orthodox/Modern Orthodox, those under 30 years of age, and first-generation Canadians.

The positive effect of Jewish schooling on community cohesion is evident. Comparing those who did not attend a Jewish day school or yeshiva with those who attended such schools for nine or more years shows that the latter are much more likely to believe that being part of a Jewish community, celebrating holidays with family, and caring about Israel are essential parts of being Jewish. Those who attended a Jewish day school or yeshiva for nine or more years are also significantly less likely to have intermarried.

Comparisons with American Jews. One of the major distinctions between the two Jewish communities is the extent of Jewish education in the formative years. American Jews are as likely as Canadian Jews to say they were brought up in the Jewish religion. But they are half as likely to have attended a Jewish day school or yeshiva, and less apt to have attended a Jewish overnight summer camp, Sunday school or Hebrew school. Consequently, many fewer American Jews know the Hebrew alphabet or can carry on a conversation in Hebrew. At the same time, one-half of American Jews have become bar or bat mitzvah, not far behind the Canadian proportion of six in ten.

Intermarriage and child upbringing

Assimilation is a widespread concern in the Canadian Jewish community, and a key indicator is intermarriage. Just over three-quarters of Jews who are married or in a common-law relationship have a spouse who is Jewish by religion. Having a Jewish spouse is almost universal among those who are Orthodox/Modern Orthodox or Conservative, and somewhat less so among those who affiliate with Reform or another denomination or movement. Just over half of those who are unaffiliated have a Jewish spouse. Intermarriage is highest among Jews in the youngest age cohort (nearly one-third among those 18 to 29), declining to one in five among those 75 and over. In general, intermarriage is less common in cities with large Jewish marriage pools, but Vancouver is exceptional. With a Jewish population nearly twice as large as Winnipeg's, it has a higher intermarriage rate.

Most Canadian Jewish parents report raising their children in the Jewish religion. This practice is almost universal among Orthodox/Modern Orthodox and Conservative Jews, but is also reported by about half of those who are unaffiliated, those who do not belong to Jewish organizations, and those who themselves were not raised in a Jewishly religious home. Moreover, most Jewish parents with children under 18 years of age believe their children will grow up to have a connection to Jewish life that is as strong, if not stronger, than their own.

Comparisons with American Jews. In Canada, intermarriage rates are increasing for all ethnic and religious groups, but they are increasing faster for Jews than for Christians. Still, intermarriage is far more common among American Jews than among Canadian Jews, at a rate of 50 percent (compared with 23 percent among Canadian Jews). Largely because of intermarriage, American Jewish parents are less likely to report raising their children in the Jewish religion. This difference is most striking among Jews who are not affiliated with any denomination or movement, with American Jews less than one-third as likely as their Canadian counterparts to be raising their children in the Jewish religion.

Discrimination and anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism has a long history in Canada and continues to be experienced among Jews today. Close to four in ten Canadian Jews report having experienced discrimination in the past five years due to their religion, ethnicity/culture, sex and/or language. This is comparable to the experience of Muslims in Canada, and well above that of the population at large.

Specifically, about one in ten Canadian Jews say he or she has been called offensive names or snubbed in a social setting in the past year because of being Jewish. Even more common is attracting criticism from others for taking a position for or against the policies and actions of Israel; many have refrained from expressing opinions about this topic to avoid such a reaction. Close to four in ten say they have downplayed being Jewish in one or more types of situations, such as at work or while travelling outside the country. Across the board, experiences of discrimination are closely linked to age, with Jews ages 18 to 29 most likely to report such incidents.

While Jews in Canada are mindful of the burden of anti-Semitism, they do not see themselves as the most significant target of persecution in this country. They are more likely to believe that Indigenous Peoples, Muslims and Black people in Canada are frequent targets of discrimination, and are more likely to hold this view than Canadians as a whole.

Respondents' perceptions of discrimination against Jews are quite realistic if one considers official statistics on hate crime as one indicator of the actual level of anti-Jewish sentiment in Canada. In seven of the 12 years between 2006 and 2017, Jews ranked second in the number of hate crimes committed against Canadian minority groups. Jews ranked third in four of the 12 years and first in one of the 12 years. On average, about six (mainly non-violent) hate crimes per 100,000 Canadians are committed against Jews each year.

The same percentage of Montreal and Toronto Jews think they are often the object of discrimination, which is somewhat surprising given the historically higher level of anti-Semitism in Quebec than in Ontario as measured by surveys. Younger Jews are less likely than older Jews to report believing that Jews experience frequent discrimination, but are more likely to report experiencing discrimination themselves, possibly because younger Jews are more exposed to non-Jews in their daily lives, while older Jews grew up when discrimination was more common, and their perceptions may be influenced by memory of an earlier era.

Comparisons with American Jews. Most of the questions in this section were not included in the Pew Survey of American Jews, so direct comparisons cannot be made. American Jews are as likely as Canadian Jews to report having been called offensive names or been snubbed in social settings over the previous year. American Jews also share with their Canadian counterparts the view that other groups in society (e.g., Muslims, Blacks) are more likely than Jews to be the target of discrimination; and they are more likely to express this opinion than is the general public in the United States.

Connection to Israel

Canadian Jews have a strong connection to Israel. A large majority express an emotional attachment to Israel and have spent time in the country. Eight in ten have visited Israel at least once and have done so an average of five times to date. One in six report having lived in Israel for six months or more. Travel to Israel is most prevalent among Jews who are Orthodox/Modern Orthodox, but it is common across the population, especially among Jews under 45 years of age and those with a post-graduate degree.

While Jews may share a connection to Israel, they do not agree when it comes to the politics of the region. Canadian Jews are divided in their views about the Israeli government's commitment to a peace settlement with the Palestinians and the building of settlements on the West Bank in terms of their legality and impact on the security of Israel. Critical opinions of Israel are most evident among younger Jews, and those who are Reform or unaffiliated.

Opinions are also divided when it comes to how Jews view their own country's relations with Israel. A plurality endorse Canada's current level of support for Israel, but a significant minority believe it is not supportive enough. Opinions are closely linked to federal political party affiliation, with a majority of Liberal Party supporters judging the country's support of Israel to be about right, and a majority of Conservative Party supporters maintaining Canada provides too little support. Substantial minorities of Jews who support the New Democratic Party and Green Party believe Canada is too supportive of Israel.

Comparisons with American Jews. American Jews have a much weaker connection to Israel than do Canadian Jews. They are only half as likely to feel a strong attachment to Israel and half as likely to have ever visited the country. At the same time, Canadian and American Jews are similarly divided in their opinions about the political situation in Israel, in terms of the government's commitment to peace, Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and their own country's support for Israel. The one notable difference is that American Jews are more apt to hold an opinion (whether positive or negative), while Canadian Jews have a greater tendency to say they are unsure or decline to offer an opinion.

Connection to local Jewish community

A large majority Canadian Jews feel somewhat, if not strongly, connected to Jewish life in their city. Such connection is largely a function of denominational affiliation and active involvement; strong connection is most prevalent among Orthodox/Modern Orthodox Jews, those with mostly Jewish friends, those who belong to multiple Jewish organizations, Israeli Jews, and those who live in Montreal. A strong connection is least evident among Jews from the former Soviet Union, those who identify mainly by ancestry/descent, and residents of Vancouver.

Reasons for not wanting to become more connected to Jewish life tend to fall into one of three broad themes. Some Jews do not want to become more connected because they are simply not interested in doing so. Others indicate obstacles that make it difficult, such as a lack of time, other priorities, access to the necessary connections or resources, and personal limitations (e.g., health issues). A third theme concerns not feeling Jewish enough, which in some cases is about not identifying or feeling comfortable with the local community.

Many Jews express interest in becoming more connected to the local Jewish community, but they also tend to be the same people who are already feeling strongly connected. The types of activities and programs most likely to be of interest are, in order, those that are educational (lectures, courses, book clubs), cultural (the performing arts, movies, concerts), and social (activities that connect people). Some would like to see programs and activities tailored for specific groups, notably families and young children.

Based on the survey results, the Canadian Jewish community includes roughly 37,000 Sephardim, 25,000 Jews born in the former Soviet Union (FSU), and 17,000 Jews born in Israel. Comparing members of these subgroups to the Canadian Jewish population as a whole, it is only among Jews born in the FSU that one finds a substantially larger proportion that feel less than very connected to their local Jewish community. However, Jews born in the FSU, as well as Sephardim and Jews born in Israel, seem to be significantly more eager to increase their connection to Jewish life in their city than are members of the Canadian Jewish population at large. Members of the three subgroups rank-order the kinds of programs and activities they would like to engage in much like the entire Jewish community does: educational programs and activities lead the list, followed by cultural and social programs and activities. Religious programs and activities, and those intended for specific groups such as children and families, rank lowest.

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