

# ***What and Why JUF/JF's Community Survey Counts***

*By Jay Tcath*

In the greater Chicago area, Jews have been migrating from where to where? Based on births since 2000, the number of Jews utilizing Illinois Hillels will increase or decrease starting in 2018? Based on that same birth data and synagogue affiliations trends, Jewish summer camp enrollment is likely to ... ?

Where do we live? How does Judaism shape us? What are our human needs and Jewish dreams? These and other Jewish demographic questions are not trivial.

Every decade the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago's Community Survey tries to answer those questions. Supplemented with service updates from our agencies, what we learn from these studies allows us both to adjust to new realities while also engaging in long-term planning. The results reveal how Federation can better serve the community.

The stakes are so important – the allocation of tens of millions of dollars annually and what and how we address Jewish needs – that only real data, not anecdotes or impressions, can be trusted. The survey is not just a snapshot of who we are now and who we've been the last 10 years. This data provides the building blocks of information that will guide the strategic deployment of Jewish philanthropic resources for years to come.

Enjoying the trust of the largest number of donors in our community, as well as raising and allocating the largest amount of Jewish philanthropy, JUF/JF Federation applies the lessons gleaned from the community survey every decade in order to fulfill those sacred responsibilities.

We also share relevant survey data with key Jewish institutional partners, social services agencies, day

schools, and synagogues. They also need to know who is affiliating and why, who is moving in or out of their neighborhood, and the background and Jewish lifestyle choices of the people they serve now and will in the future.

Other key consumers of this data are Jewish foundations, which seek to leverage Federation's infrastructure and research with grants of their own. These surveys both confirm and debunk their assumptions, allowing for more informed and hence successful foundation grant making.

Thank you to all who participated in the 2010 community survey. When called, you answered, helping ensure our community's future strength.

We will conduct another community survey – our fifth – in 2020. We don't merely count for counting's sake. We do so because you count. Our community counts. How wisely and effectively Federation distributes communal tzedakah counts.

Our dreams count. Of that, there is no question.



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*Jay Tcath is executive vice president  
of the Jewish United Fund/Jewish  
Federation of Metropolitan Chicago.*

# Chicago's Jewish Community Is **Growing, Committed and Connected**

## *First Population Study in a Decade Provides Snapshot*

By Linda Haase

A 2010 Chicago Jewish Population study conducted by the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago shows a robust, growing and diverse local Jewish community with strong connection to Israel and widespread participation in Jewish education.

This is the fourth Metropolitan Chicago Jewish Population Study. Information is being used and will continue to be available for planning purposes in years to come.

The survey was conducted from March to June 2010 by Jewish Policy and Action Research. It was conducted through random digit dialing of 156,000 telephone numbers, including 25,969 cell phone numbers, and yielded 2,828 Jewish households; 1,993 of those completed interviews. The capacity to reach households with cell phones was important, as increasing segments of the population (especially young adults) are eliminating land lines. The interviews lasted on average 20 minutes. Following is a summary of the survey's findings.

### **Population Growth**

Chicago's Jewish community is strong and growing. Over the last decade, the number of self-identified Jews in the Chicago metropolitan area has grown to 291,800, up eight percent from 270,500 in 2000 and

an increase of 18 percent since 1982. That's double the rate of the overall Chicagoland population, which grew just four percent from 2000 to 2010, according to the U.S. Census.

#### **Decades of Growth in Jewish Chicago**

Over the last four studies, the number of Jewish persons in metropolitan Chicago grew by 18%, but the comparable increase in all people living in Jewish households was 38%.

	<b>1982</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>% Change 1982–2010</b>
<i>Jewish Households</i>	107,000	120,000	137,700	<b>148,100</b>	<b>+38%</b>
<i>Jewish Persons</i>	248,000	261,100	270,500	<b>291,800</b>	<b>+18%</b>
<i>All People in Jewish Households</i>	276,800	302,400	327,200	<b>381,900</b>	<b>+38%</b>



Over the same generation, the number of households with a Jewish member has grown 38 percent to 148,100, with a companion increase to 381,900 in the number of people – Jews and non-Jews – living in Jewish households.

“These findings reinforce what we have long known: Chicago’s Jewish community continues to be a vibrant Jewish community,” said David T. Brown, chairman of the Federation’s Overall Planning and Allocations Committee. “We are quite fortunate to have a dynamic mosaic of Jewish life throughout the Chicago metropolitan area.”

Chicago continues to attract newcomers, with only 56 percent of area Jewish residents being Chicago-

born and 91 percent indicating that they have no plans to move out of the metropolitan area in the next three to five years. The majority of respondents who were not born in Chicago (29 percent) were born elsewhere in the United States. Nine percent of Chicago-area Jews were born in the former Soviet Union and the balance (six percent) were born in other countries.

The Chicago metropolitan area covers Cook, DuPage, Lake, McHenry, Will and Kane counties.

Jewish populations are focused in the following seven geographic regions:

Geographic Area	Number of Jewish Persons, 2010
<b>City North:</b> Chicago, extending from the Loop through West Rogers Park, including the north lakefront	<b>70,150</b>
<b>Rest of Chicago:</b> (city other)	<b>19,100</b>
<b>Near North Suburbs:</b> suburbs contiguous to the city from Evanston through Park Ridge	<b>64,600</b>
<b>North/Far North:</b> extending from Wilmette to Wisconsin border, and west to include Northbrook, Glenview, Deerfield, etc.	<b>56,300</b>
<b>Northwest Suburbs:</b> includes parts of Lake county, all of McHenry county, and northwest Cook county	<b>51,950</b>
<b>Western Suburbs:</b> includes Oak Park and River Forest in Cook county, plus all of DuPage and Kane counties	<b>23,300</b>
<b>Southern Suburbs:</b> south and southwest Cook county beyond the city of Chicago to Indiana border; includes Will county	<b>6,400</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>291,800</b>

## Demographics & Household Structure

Jewish households have become more diverse, with more non-Jewish members: More than 90,000 non-Jews live in the 148,100 households that have at least one Jew. The overall percent of all household members who are Jews is 76 percent for the total metropolitan area, and ranges from 52 percent in the West Suburbs and 57 percent in the South Suburbs to 87 percent in the Near North Suburbs and 88 percent in the North/Far North Suburbs.

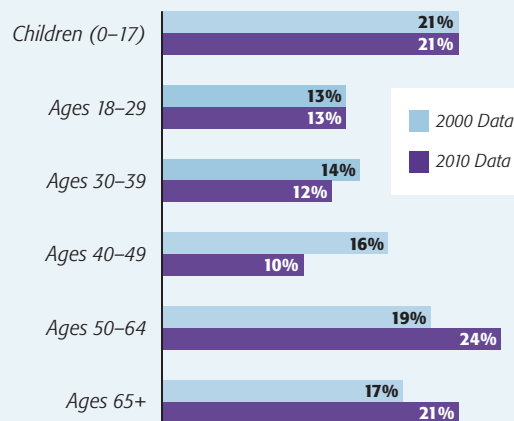
Intermarriage has grown, from 30 percent in 2000 to 37 percent in 2010, but the proportion of children in interfaith families who are being reared as exclusively Jewish has jumped to 49 percent, up from 38 percent in 2000.

“The fact that one in two local interfaith families is choosing to rear their children as Jewish has profound significance for the Jewish future,” said Peter Friedman, Federation executive vice president. “This finding has hopeful implications for Jewish continuity, and reinforces the importance of JUF/ Federation’s multi-faceted ‘Joyfully Jewish’ outreach programs for families with young children.”

Those interfaith families rearing children Jewish indicate strong connection to Judaism and Jewish community, with 85 percent saying that being Jewish is “very important” to them, 43 percent

### Percent of Jewish Persons, 2000 and 2010, Metropolitan Chicago

The percentage of Jews who are children stayed the same as in 2000, but those aged 50 and older increased from 36% to 45%. The percentage of Jewish adults under age 40 has essentially remained stable: 27% in 2000, 25% in 2010.



belonging to a synagogue, JCC or other Jewish organization, and 36 percent having traveled to Israel. (Overall, 50 percent of Chicago Jews have visited the Jewish State.)

The aging of the population, fueled by the graying of the Baby Boomers, is completely counterbalanced by the population of children, with 21 percent of the

### Half of All Children in Intermarried Households Are Being Raised as “Jewish-Only”

#### Jewish-Raised Status

Jewish-Only

Jewish & Something Else

Not Jewish/No Religion

Raised Other Religion

Undecided

**Total**

#### Inmarried Couples

**98%**

**<1%**

**1%**

**<1%**

**<2%**

**100%**

#### Intermarried Couples

**49%**

**26%**

**15%**

**9%**

**1%**

**100%**



population older than 65 and an equal proportion of 21 percent of the population ages 0–17.

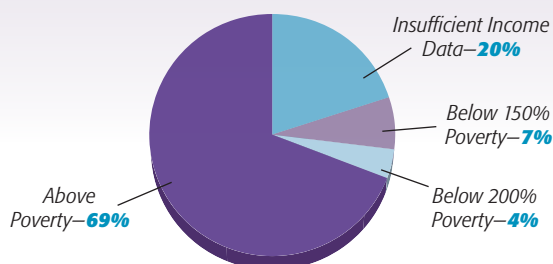
“Despite the reality that ours is an aging community, it is quite encouraging to see that our community also has as many children as we do senior citizens,” Friedman said. “This offers great promise for generations to come.”

The local Jewish population is highly-educated, with relatively low unemployment rates. Some 33 percent of Jewish adults ages 18 and older reported having earned a college degree, and another 38 percent have earned at least one graduate degree. Among respondents younger than 65, the reported unemployment rate in 2010 was six percent.

However, poverty remains a challenge, with at least 30,000 Jewish poor in 17,000 households, or 11 percent of the local Jewish population, falling below 200 percent of federal poverty levels. The incidence of poverty by that definition ranges widely, from 37 percent in City North to four percent in the North/Far North Suburbs.

“Since the recession began, we have seen an exponential increase in the number of formerly middle class Jewish families in crisis,” Friedman said. “During this time, our JUF/Federation agencies have provided food and emergency cash to nearly 50,000 local Jews.”

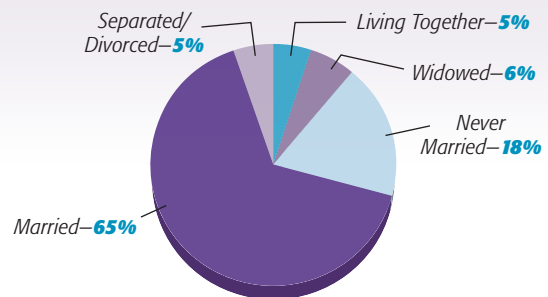
**Percent of Metropolitan Chicago Jewish Households Below Federal Poverty Levels**



Marital status remains stable, with two of three Jewish adults currently married (65 percent), down only three percent since 1982 (68 percent), and the proportion of Jewish adults who never married similarly ranging from 17 percent to 22 percent over the last three decades.

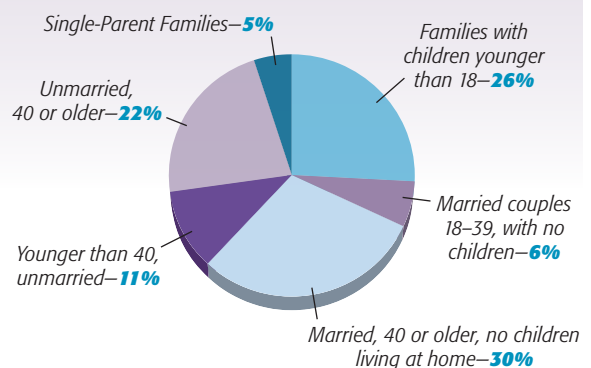
The current population’s marital status breaks down as follows:

**Marital Status of All Jewish Adults, 2010, Chicago**



Local Jewish household structure also remains stable:

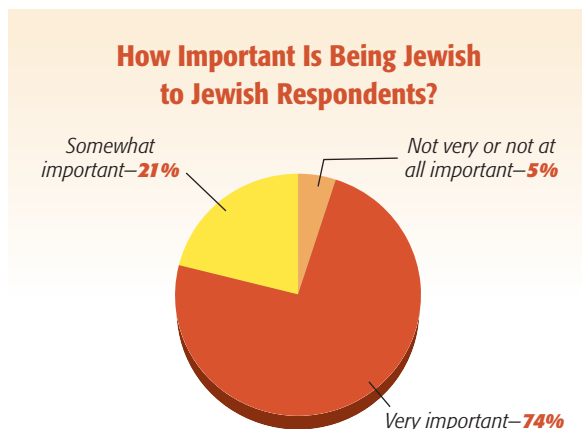
**Household Structure, 2010, Chicago**



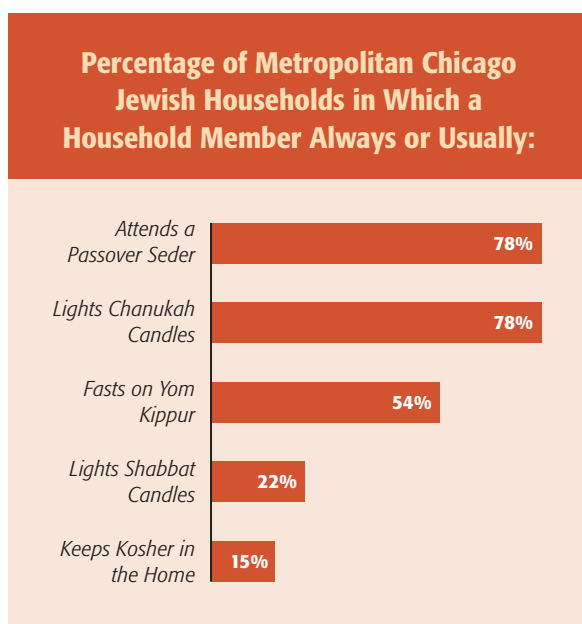
“This is an important reminder that there is no such thing as a ‘typical’ Jewish household, and that Jewish families come in all shapes and sizes,” Friedman said.

## Jewish Values, Connections, Identity & Education

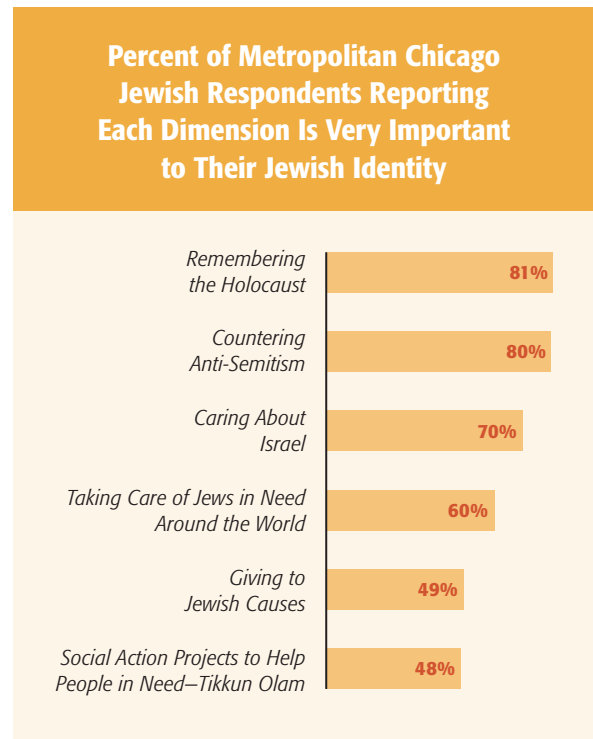
Ninety five percent of all Jewish respondents think that being Jewish is “very” or “somewhat” important, with 74 percent believing that being Jewish is “very” important. While this is an intangible element, the fact that it resonates as well with the younger age cohort (73 percent consider it “very important”) as well as the 65 and older (77 percent consider it “very important”) is an indicator of continuity.



Ritual observance is in accord with previous findings and those of other communities:



Local Jewish respondents reported multi-dimensional areas that are “very important” to their Jewish identity, which are similar to previous findings and those of other communities:



Jewish learning and communal life also are integral parts of Jewish Chicago’s identity. In fact, Chicago’s Jewish community reports widespread formal Jewish education, and high identification with the Jewish community and Israel:

**86%** of youth ages 6–17 have had some formal Jewish education.

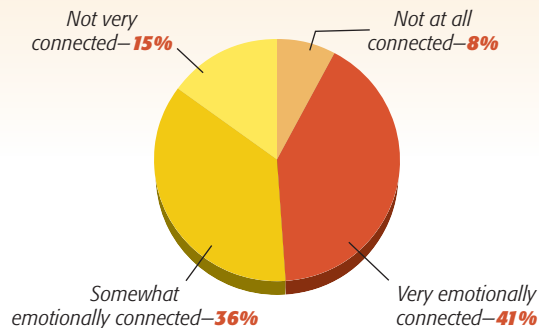
**42%** of Jewish adults participate in some adult Jewish education.

**79%** feel it is “very” or “somewhat” important to be part of the metropolitan Chicago Jewish community.

**77%** feel “very” or “somewhat” connected to Israel.

**50%** have been to Israel.

### Level of Emotional Attachment to Israel, Chicago Jewish Respondents, 2010



“The fact that fully half of Chicago’s Jews have visited Israel is very significant,” Friedman said. “At a time when some would suggest that American Jews are increasingly estranged from the Jewish State, these findings prove that quite the opposite is true. More Chicago Jews than ever before are expressing their connection by visiting the Jewish homeland.” During the past two decades there has been an increase in the percentage of those visiting Israel, which reflects successful efforts in promoting the primacy of Israel and meaningful Israel experiences.

One of the areas of continued focus is upon Jewish early childhood, given the large numbers of families with young children. There are more than 20,000 families with children below the age of six. Programs such as PJ library and JUF Right Start (which subsidizes a Jewish early childhood education for the first child in a family) have provided outreach to many thousands of members of this community.

As previous studies have indicated, only half the households are affiliated at any point in time:

- 48%** report being affiliated with any Jewish organization.
- 36%** of households are affiliated with synagogues.
- 23%** are members of a Jewish organization that is neither a synagogue nor a JCC.

However, the proportion of respondents who report volunteering for Jewish programs or causes has grown to 54 percent, a significant increase since 2001. This reflects interest in individuals and households in shorter term commitments, which may, however – with the proper nurturing – change into longer term affiliation.

When it comes to religious affiliation, 86 percent of the Jewish respondents identify with a denomination – Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, Traditional or Reconstructionist (in other communities there are increasing numbers who don’t identify with a denomination); however, many do not necessarily translate that identity with affiliation or involvement in that movement’s organizational life.

The local Jewish community is philanthropic-minded:

- 91%** report charitable giving to any cause.
- 67%** report charitable giving to a Jewish cause.
- 44%** report giving to the Jewish United Fund – nearly two thirds of those who report giving to a Jewish cause.

*“More Chicago Jews than ever before are expressing their connection by visiting the Jewish homeland.”*

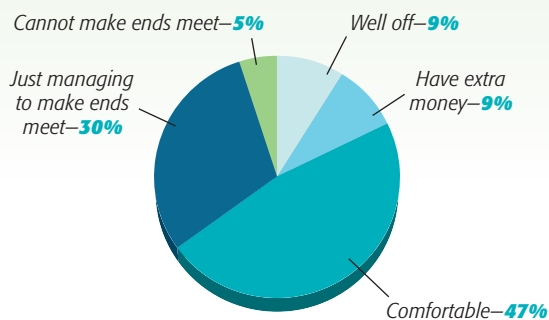


## Challenges & Service Needs

The economic downturn has had a strong impact on the local Jewish community; more than half (56 percent) of Jewish households reported that they have been negatively impacted by the recession, with one in five (21 percent) reporting a “strong” negative impact on themselves and their household and another one in three (35 percent) reporting “some” negative impact.

One in three Jewish households (35 percent) report that they are “just managing” financially or “cannot make ends meet.” More than half of single parent households (54 percent) and seniors living alone (53 percent) report that they currently are “just managing” or “cannot make ends meet.”

### Respondents' 2010 Subjective Assessment of Household's Financial Status



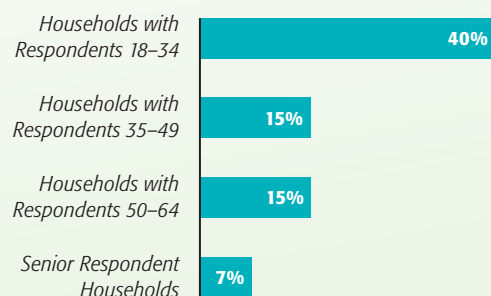
“These findings have important service implications,” Friedman said. In the short term, JUF/Federation created J-HELP, a special initiative that has bolstered the capacity of Federation agencies and congregations to meet the most urgent human needs born of the economic downturn. “Over the last two-and-a-half years, we have increased the number of local households receiving food, emergency cash assistance, and assistance in finding employment. However, with more than half of community members reporting that they have been adversely affected by the downturn and slow economic recovery, we will need to explore longer-term solutions.”

Since 2000, the percent of Jewish households seeking human services has doubled in such areas as personal issues, learning/educational problems, and physical or developmental disabilities, with more than one fifth of respondents reporting one or more of these problems. This may reflect both the willingness of individuals to acknowledge these problems, as well as an increase in such issues in the community. There was growth in two areas – financial need and employment need – due, in part, to the economic downturn starting in 2008.

In addition, respondents experienced more difficulty in accessing some services, with the most difficult need to meet reported as “finding a job or occupation.” Four in 10 (40 percent) of younger-respondent households (ages 18–34) reported seeking job or career assistance in the 12 months prior to the survey.

“Last year alone, our system helped 1,219 workers secure jobs, and assisted 11,238 with employment services,” Friedman said. “We launched new programs to help senior citizens in need and teenagers from low-income families find employment; provided increased assistance in helping prospective small business owners learn to write a business plan and secure loans to start a microenterprise; and to help young people who have failed to launch their careers.”

### Percentage of Respondents Reporting Someone in Household Sought Job or Career Assistance





All told, the metropolitan Chicago area has a growing Jewish population, which continues to attract newcomers from elsewhere in the United States as well as overseas. That population reflects the impact of the aging of the baby boom generation but also shows significant growth in the younger population. It is a community that demonstrates its long-term commitment to Jewish life and Israel, while also presenting challenges of affiliation. The findings underscore the need to reach out to families with young children, including those inter-faith families who want to be involved in Jewish community life. The social service challenges are clearly reflected in the figures of economically vulnerable segments of the community as well as growing social service needs.

“This is one of the reasons the Population Study is so important,” Friedman said. “It is critical to JUF/ Federation’s planning process that we examine the demographic composition of the Chicago area Jewish community, identify unmet needs, and understand the community’s access to existing services. The information shared in this report is only part of the large treasure trove of data that will continue to be assessed over time.”

### *Comments or questions?*

Contact [populationstudy@juf.org](mailto:populationstudy@juf.org).

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