Because of the inconsistent nature of racial assignments in the United States, "white" has not been a historically stable status for Jews of European descent. Racial categorizations are contingent on the social and political climates in which they are used, and meaning can shift based on context. Over the past century and a half, Jews have been variously designated as white, non-white, or as some scholars have noted, "off-white" or "not-quite-white."[16] While white-presenting or white-passing Jews may not be targeted by and subject to overt discrimination on the basis of their skin tone, they may still experience systemic institutional marginalization, social prejudice, a sense of being outsiders, and anti-Semitic violence.

The challenge of terminology reflects the historical moment in which this study was conducted. The murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, and the national movements that gained momentum in their wake, advanced a conversation about race in American politics, culture, and history and sparked a reckoning with the role of racism in the United States. In the context of the national conversation about race in the United States, this study seeks to enhance American Jews' understanding of their own racial and ethnic diversity and provides an opportunity to reflect on how systems of inequality are perpetuated in our own community. By raising awareness about the lived experiences of JoC, the research findings are shared in the service of building a more just, equitable, and inclusive American Jewish community.

Study Design

Beyond the Count employs a mixed methods approach to bring JoC perspectives and experiences to the forefront based on in-depth interviews conducted with 61 JoC and survey findings are based on 1,118 respondents. Interview participants were selected using a purposive sampling method designed to reflect a broad range of perspectives and included: JoC professionals and lay leaders (n=39), key stakeholders (n=9), and a selected sample of Count Me In survey respondents (n=13).[17]

Survey respondents were recruited using a non-probability, referral sampling technique.[18] This approach is particularly useful with small populations that are hard to reach through conventional probability sampling. JoCI aided recruitment with a social media campaign and by sharing the survey link with organizations and individuals within and across their networks. Without more extensive demographic data about the larger population of JoC for context, it is not possible to confirm that the sample is representative. The study includes input from more than 1,000 respondents who shared a broad range of experiences.[19]

The survey findings highlighted in the report were included because they capture particularly interesting and salient themes, trends, and recurring narratives. Survey respondents were not required to answer any questions after the screeners, so the number of respondents who answered each question differs and is indicated with "(n=#)."

Participant quotes were selected from both interview transcripts and survey free-response items based on how well they illustrate respondents' shared sentiments. Almost every quote is excerpted from a unique respondent; three people are quoted twice. Quotes were lightly edited for readability. (For more in-depth information about research methods, see Appendix A: Methods)

The study design draws on feminist[20] and participatory research methods[21] and was informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT)[22] in several ways. The research team's racial and ethnic composition, the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods, and the interview style were all influenced by CRT. A counter-storytelling approach was utilized.[23] This is a method of conducting and presenting research that is grounded in the racialized experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC),[24] which "generates knowledge by looking to those who have been epistemologically marginalized, silenced, and disempowered."[25]

The research team was assembled strategically so the inquiry would be shaped by a broad range of positionalities. The scholars that comprise the team come from a wide variety of racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, and are of diverse ages, genders, and areas of expertise. The composition of the team informed both how and what questions were explored.[26] (See Appendix B: Who We Are)

About the Quotes

To give survey and interview respondents as much agency in self-definition as possible (within the limitations of survey design and analysis), both groups were able to provide a range of racial and ethnic identity terms to describe themselves. For the interviews, respondents were asked what words they use to describe their racial/ethnic identities and their gender. Survey respondents selected one or more racial and gender categories offered in the questionnaire and could also elect to provide additional language. **The identity terms that respondents chose to describe themselves are used wherever possible throughout this report.**

Throughout the report, quotes are labeled by data source:

☑ = **Survey quote**

💬 = **Interview quote**

Overview

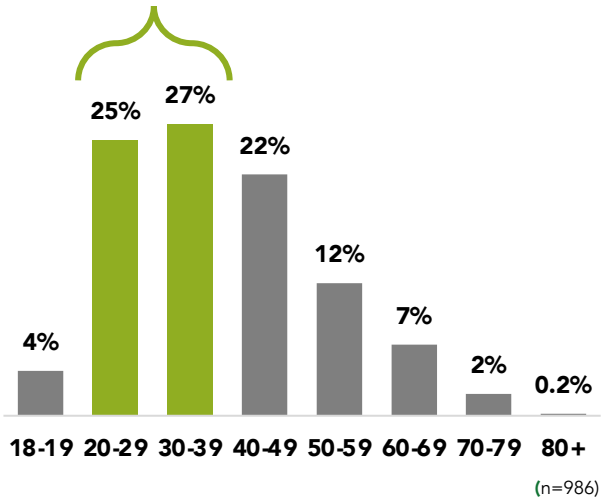
This report integrates survey and interview data as interwoven threads of a complex fabric of JoC identities, lived experiences, and perspectives. Taken together, these parallel indicators work in conversation to tell a story of joy, persistence, isolation, and self-discovery.

The first sections of the report (Participant Characteristics, Backgrounds, and Jewish Experiences) describe respondents' demographic information and family backgrounds. They also include information about respondents' foundational Jewish touchpoints and the relationships that influenced their Jewish identities. The next sections (Jewish Expressions and Social Perspectives) illustrate how respondents engage their identities as JoC, along with their understanding and reflections on the social and political contexts that impact their lives. In the Racism and Discrimination section, the report sheds light on the contexts in which respondents experience various types of prejudice and the role this plays in their social behavior and sense of self. Respondents' perspectives on how well Jewish institutions are addressing issues of racism and inequity in-house and more generally are shared in the Organizational Responses section. The Belonging section highlights the ways respondents have found nourishing Jewish community, especially with other JoC. *Beyond the Count* concludes with a synthesis of the broad implications of the study and offers guidance on strategic actions steps for organizational leaders.

Participant Characteristics

Jews of Color in all but three states responded to the survey. More than half of respondents live in California, New York, Massachusetts, and Washington.

More than half of respondents (52%) are in their 20s and 30s.



Unless otherwise indicated, reported values refer to survey findings.

Interviewee Characteristics

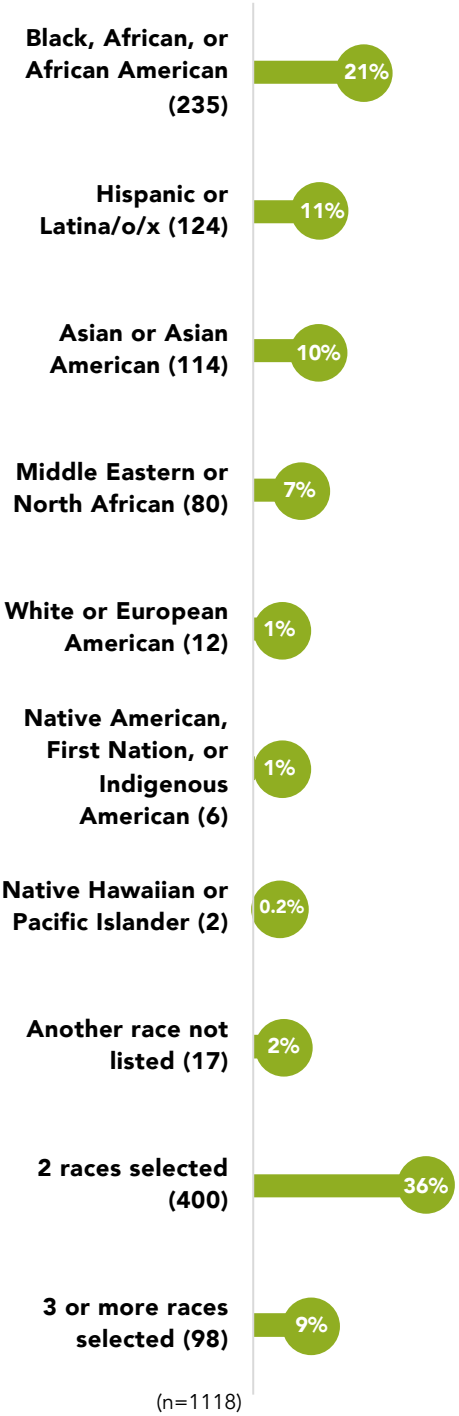
Age: 31% were 20-29, 42% were 30-39, 15% were 40-49, and 8% were 50-59; there was 1 person in their 60s and 1 in their 70s

Gender: 83% were women and 17% were men

Region: 42% were from the Western states, 25% from the Mid-Atlantic/Northeast, 12% from the South, 10% from the Midwest, 8% from the Pacific Northwest, and 4% from the Southwest

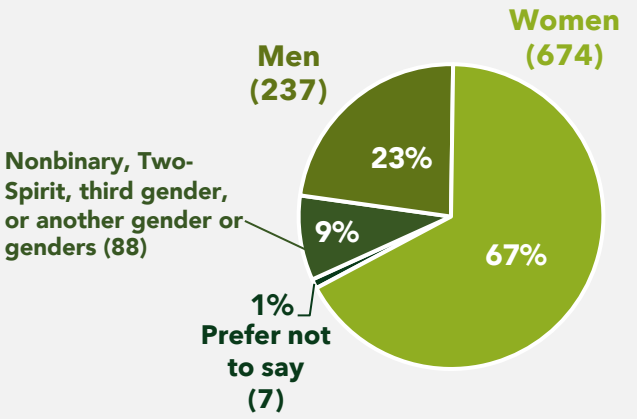
Raised Jewish: 67% were raised Jewish, 31% were not raised Jewish and converted as teens or adults, and 1 person was converted as a child (n=52)

More than a third of respondents (45%) selected two or more racial categories. When asked, 66% identify as "biracial, mixed, multiracial" or some combination of those identities.[27]



(n=1118)

The majority of respondents identify as women.



(n=1000)

Respondents are highly educated. Most (80%) have completed college. Almost half (45%) have postgraduate or professional degrees. (n=997).

While respondents have viewpoints across the political spectrum, the majority skewed liberal. Most described their political views as liberal (28%) or very liberal (36%). The remaining 17% of respondents are moderate (13%), conservative (3%), or very conservative (1%) (n=996).

Most respondents (63%) are in a relationship. The other 36% are single, widowed, divorced, or separated (n=1003). The majority (58%) identified as heterosexual/straight. A third (34%) identified with a different sexual/romantic orientation, such as homosexual/gay/lesbian or bisexual/biromantic (n=968). More than a third of respondents (42%) have children (n=1001).

5% of respondents identified as transgender

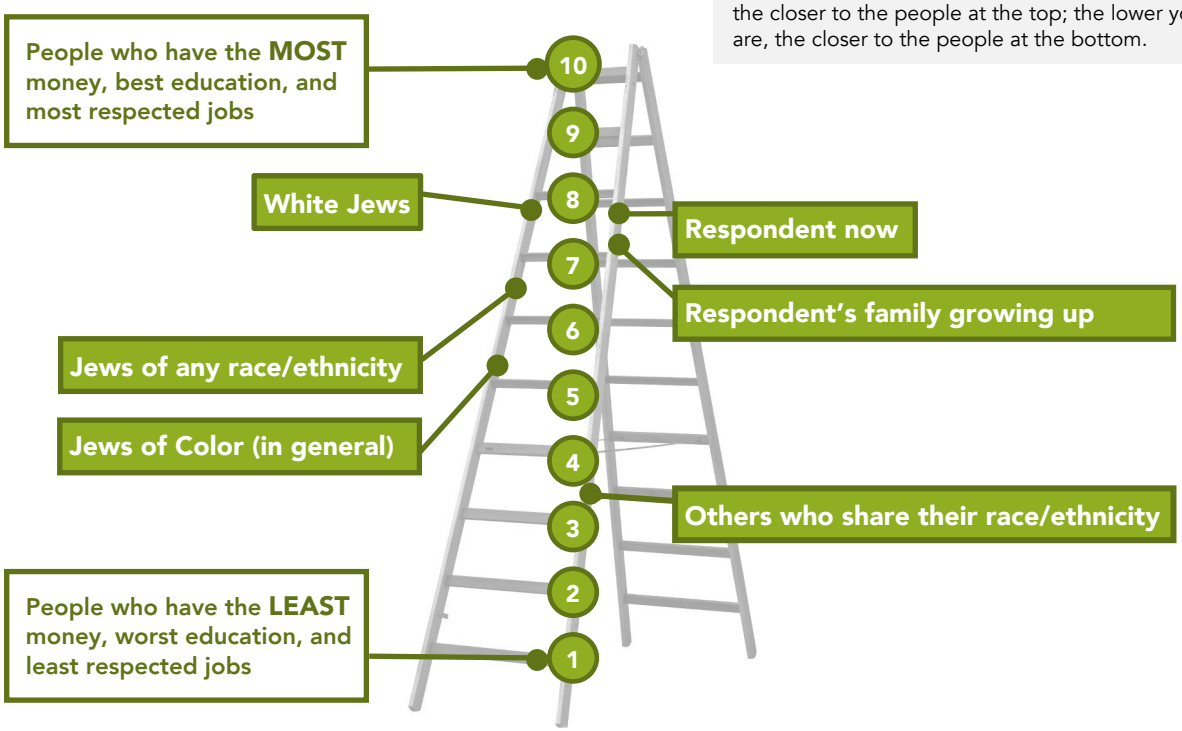
(n=993)

14% of respondents indicated they are disabled or identify as a person with a disability

(n=1000)

On a metaphorical social ladder, most respondents see themselves as slightly better off than their families growing up, and slightly worse off than white Jews. Most think of Jews of Color as better off than non-Jews who share their race/ethnicity, but not as well off as white Jews. Respondents think they are better off than other Jews of Color.

Respondents were asked to think of the ladder as showing where people stand in society in the United states. At the top of the ladder (10) are people who are the best off: those who have the most money, best education, and most respected jobs. Those at the bottom (1) are the worst off: those with the least money, worst education, and least respected jobs. The higher up on the ladder, the closer to the people at the top; the lower you are, the closer to the people at the bottom.



I had a lot of racist experiences growing up, but I thought, "this is just the way it is." I definitely woke up once I started to feel the economic exploitation of racism.

A Black man in his 20s

I am half Puerto Rican from my father's side and Ashkenazi Jewish from my mother's side. But I also grew up poor. The place where I feel most uncomfortable in Jewish circles is among wealthy non-observant Jews.

☑ A Hispanic or Latina/o/x and mixed woman in her 20s

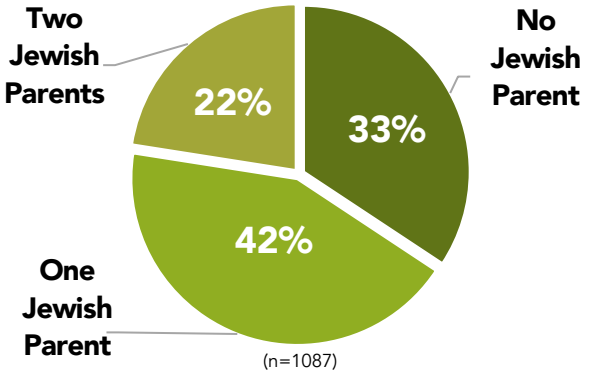
I went to inner city schools and my synagogue was in the suburbs. My religious practice and the difference in income and lifestyle and access to opportunities between the two were stark. I would literally go from my really underperforming public school to do my homework at my synagogue because my synagogue had more computers, more books, more resources, and more people around that were able to help.

A Black woman in her 30

There is this assumption that being a BIPOC you are not wealthy. I think there is definitely a prejudice by white Jews against people perceived to not have economic and political capital.

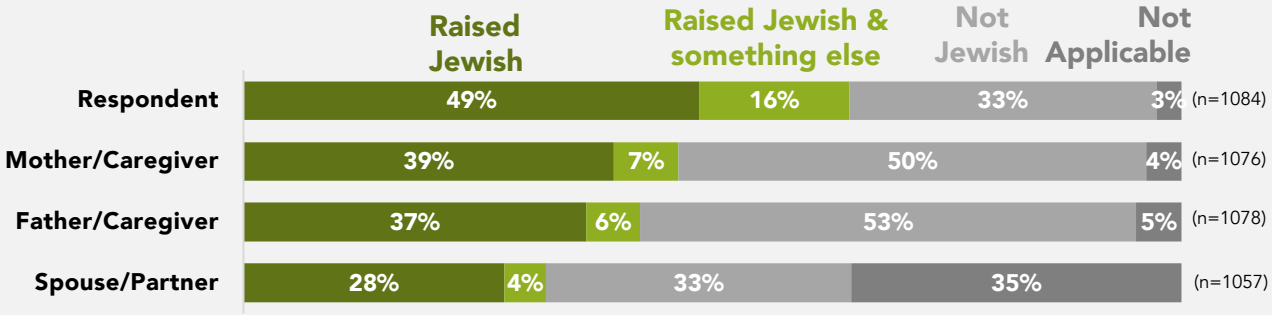
☑ A Hispanic or Latina/o/x, Native American, First Nation, or Indigenous American, and white or European American woman in her 40s

Most respondents (64%) have at least one Jewish parent: 22% have two and 42% have one.

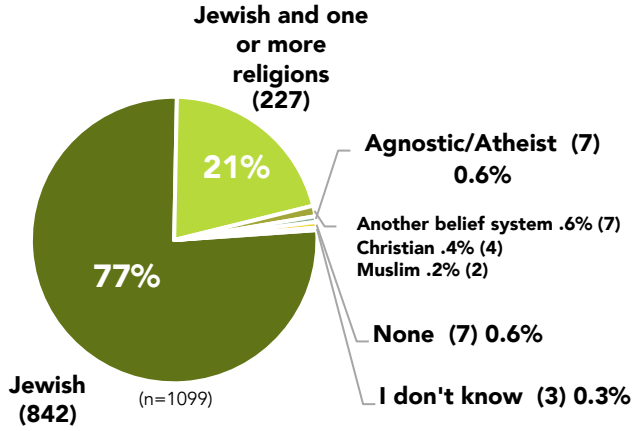


40% of respondents indicated they have converted or were converted to Judaism.

The majority of respondents (65%) were raised Jewish (49%) or raised Jewish and something else (16%).



Respondents were asked if they identify with any of the following religious traditions. Most respondents said they identify as Jewish exclusively.



More than one-third of respondents identify as Ashkenazi.