

03c.

Being Jewish

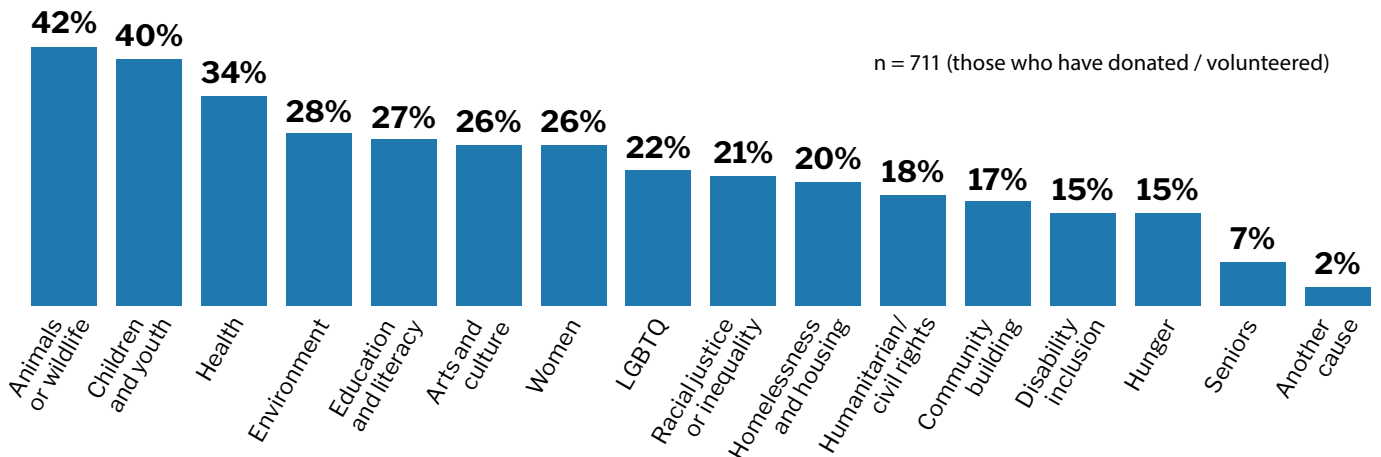
ASKED TO DESCRIBE what being Jewish means to them, focus group participants often made a distinction between being culturally and religiously Jewish. Those growing up in the Former Soviet Union particularly note feeling culturally rather than religiously Jewish. Some also find Judaism’s lack of religious expectations to be compelling: “It’s one of the few religions that you can just ‘be.’ You can be Jewish and not be religious,” an online focus group participant said. For others, however, being Jewish is a matter of religiosity. “I like being part of a religious community. I like attending services and having Shabbat

meals every week ... I just like the sense of community about it, and I also like the religious observance,” another focus group participant said.

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FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

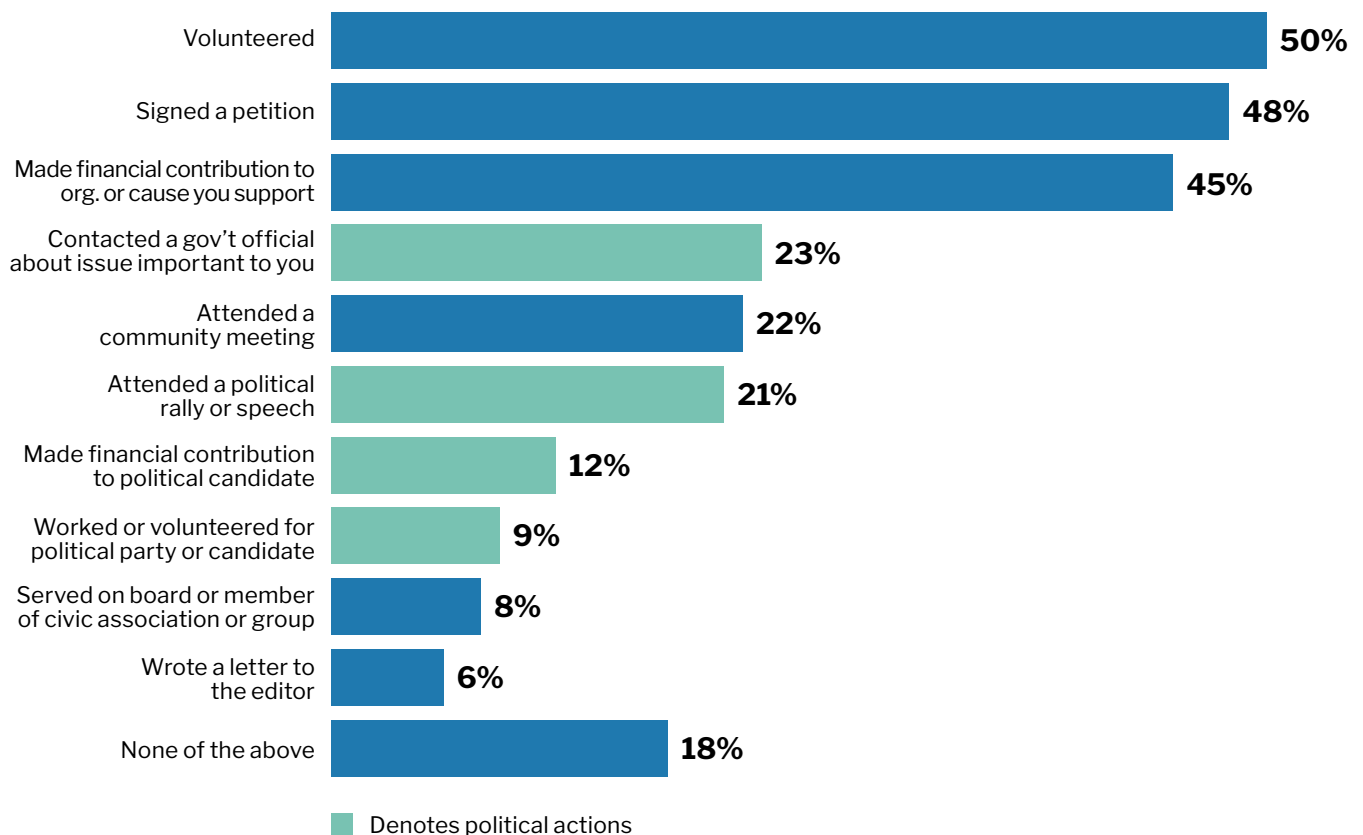
Which of the following types of causes have you supported through financial contributions / volunteering in the past year?



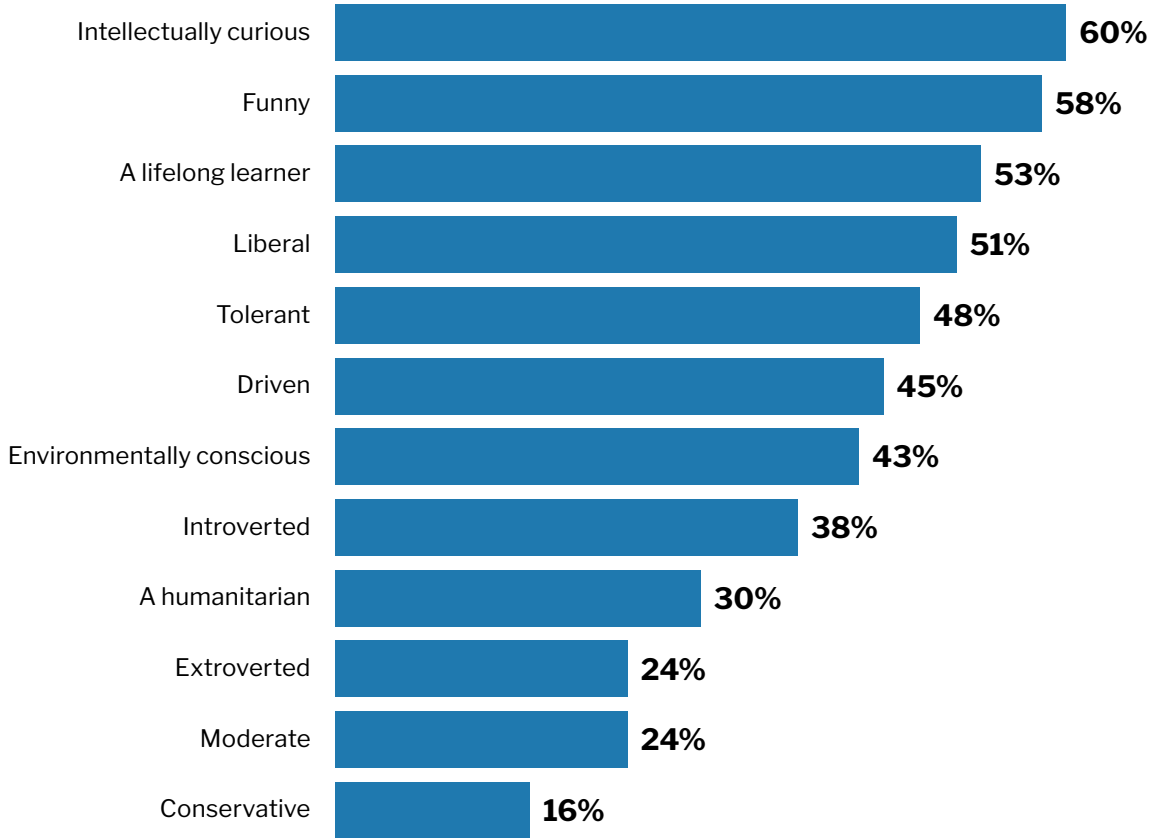
Jewish young adults in this study are, on average, highly driven with varied interests and curiosity. They seek meaning in their lives, and many of them find it through helping others. For some, this might mean working in fields where they can make a difference. For others, this entails volunteering or various means of charity: “Whether it’s giving them a place to sleep at night, a job, or a ride to work or school—when I help someone and feel needed, I know I’m doing the right thing,” another online focus group participant said.

In line with their desire to help others, survey respondents are highly engaged in their communities. Nearly nine in 10 report some type of civic engagement in the past year, and those who say that being Jewish influences their worldview engage at even higher rates. When asked to select how they engage, a majority of survey respondents note volunteering, signing a petition, or making a financial contribution to an organization or a cause. Those who feel connected to a Jewish community volunteer at higher rates than those who feel disconnected.

Thinking about the past year, which of the following have you done?



Which of the following words or phrases would you use to describe yourself?



Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

My worldview is influenced by being Jewish.



Family, family history, culture, or a shared history are some of the major reasons Jewish young adults feel Jewish. “Knowing what my relatives had to go through and knowing that history really puts things in perspective for me and makes me want to continue their story,” one focus group participant said. Another described seeing the number tattooed on their grandmother’s arm as a visceral reminder of their heritage. Some similarly drew connections between the history of the Holocaust and their own sense of perseverance and overcoming adversity. “I feel like they instilled something into our parents that still goes into us...That sense of adversity for sure is tied to religion and being better as a result of it,” one focus group participant said. Another summed up the legacy of Jewish history: “You never quit; you just keep fighting.”

Many also connect being Jewish to the values associated with it and sense that being Jewish influences their worldview. As one online focus group participant put it: “I see it as a value system, really about doing good for yourself and others, not so much about praying for this and that.” Relatedly, Jewish young adults often describe themselves as “intellectually curious,” a “lifelong learner,” and “funny.” These definitions align with their general view of Jewish culture, which they say places an emphasis on such values as education, curiosity, and humor.

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