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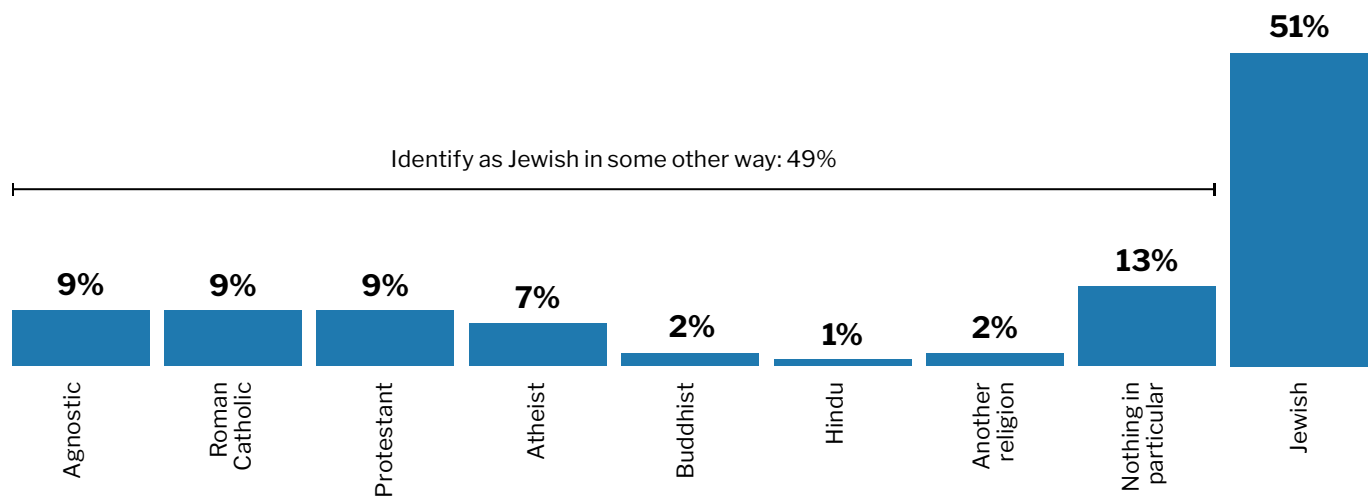
Profile of Today's Jewish Young Adults

JEWISH YOUNG ADULTS in this study are roughly split between 22-29 years old and 30-40 years old, and they skew female. The vast majority are highly educated and born in the U.S. Currently, 41 percent live in the Northeast, 17 percent live in the Midwest, 19 percent live in the South, and 23 percent live in the West. One in 7 identifies as a race other than white or as more than one race. Six percent are Russian-speaking Jews, and about 1 in 7 identifies as LGBT.

The group in this study mirrors a broader trend: More and more Americans have shied away from organized religion in

recent decades, opting instead for finding new forms of community and meaning.¹⁰ In general, *spirituality* means more to survey respondents than religion does: 27 percent say that spirituality is very important to them, compared to 19 percent who say the same about religion. Four in 10 report finding both religion and spirituality important; the same ratio reports finding both of them *unimportant*. As one focus group participant put it: "I feel like I get that much more from yoga than I do from my Jewish religion right now."

What, if any, is your present religion?



¹⁰ "Research Landscape Study," Pew Research Center, 2020.

How important is spirituality in your life?



How important is religion in your life?



Reflecting this trend, survey respondents are about evenly split between those who identify as Jewish by religion and those who identify as Jewish in another way. The term “another way” was left purposefully vague to include other facets of Jewish identity including culture, ethnicity, and heritage. Just over a third are married or living with a partner, and of those, about half are in a relationship with someone who does not identify as Jewish. Those who have a Jewish partner are more likely to identify as Jewish by religion, while those with a non-Jewish partner are more likely to identify as Jewish in another way.

Most Jewish young adults who participated in the focus groups say they find meaning through the relationships they have with family and friends. Yet, some tend to feel an absence of community and lament the geographic distance from their loved ones. “I think that as adults, you value the time

you have together with friends and family more than you do as a child,” one online focus group participant said. Many also mention competing responsibilities, such as work, as standing in the way of social engagement, as well as no longer being part of a school environment.

“When you meet somebody that finds out you’re Jewish and ‘Oh, so you know so and so.’ ‘That’s this guy’s cousin.’”

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

“My most vivid memories growing up are family gatherings for the holidays and us all gathering around the table laughing and enjoying a delicious meal.”

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

In focus groups, participants indicate they value informal gatherings—ones that are often based on shared interests—but tend not to associate Jewish engagement with such casual get-togethers. Rather, when asked about Jewish activities, many bring up formal and ritually-oriented activities such as attending a synagogue service. What they are looking for, as one focus group participant said, is “just getting together to do something... Food, bowling, just going [to friends] to hang out and watch some TV together.” Some enjoy Jewish-themed events in which Jews and non-Jews alike gather over homemade food.

When asked what a Jewish community means to them, many of the young adults conjure terms, such as “synagogue,” “temple,” or “Torah,” from which they sometimes feel an emotional detachment. For many, connectedness to Jewish life does not arise from formal institutions, such as synagogues. Their connectedness is tied to cultural customs and with

relationships they have with others, most often family members. Others cite looser connections to a Jewish community—a sense that there is such a thing as “Jewish geography” whereby many Jews are bound together through invisible links. As one focus group participant said: “When you meet somebody that finds out you’re Jewish and ‘Oh, so you know so and so.’ ‘That’s this guy’s cousin.’” Relatedly, 39 percent of survey respondents say that experiencing a connection when meeting fellow Jews makes them feel Jewish.

Which of the following best describes your marital status?

