

**A** **S IS EVIDENT FROM** the findings of this study, nearly all Jewish young adults engage with being Jewish in some way, though only one in eight report feeling very connected. For many, a yawning gap exists between current levels of Jewish engagement and their professed desire for a Jewish community or a rekindling of positive past Jewish experience. These characteristics suggest openness and a possibility for future connections. The very fact that 64 percent of Jewish young adults have a sense of nostalgia for their Jewish upbringing and are often wistful about its current absence from their lives and that 81 percent enjoy participating in activities tied to being Jewish offers a host of possibilities for Jewish institutions and philanthropies seeking to engage with this age group.

While some Jewish young adults express an openness to engaging more with being Jewish, they also struggle to come up with meaningful ways to do so. Most do not have present-day examples of more relevant expressions of being Jewish as adults. Their emphasis remains on informality, inclusivity, and ties to shared interests, which often feels at odds with how they think they are supposed to approach Jewish community. “I really would like a community that is more diverse than the options we have now,” an online focus group participant said. “In my experience, everyone in a given community believes the same way and while that makes sense I think it also limits us and makes it more common for people to leave.”

While many focus group participants express an unwillingness to pay for experiences that would profit the organizing Jewish institutions, Jewish young adults do in fact make relatively high levels of financial contributions to organizations and causes they care about.

Many already engage with holidays and Shabbat, and some are interested in exploring Shabbat more. These young adults express curiosity in modernizing the Shabbat experience, although not all are sure how this modernization may work in practice. For those with ideas of what modernization might mean, the concept of “unplugging” deeply resonates. “I love that idea,” one focus group participant said. “Just putting your phone away, not turning off the lights, but just getting off the apps and talking to your friends, having some wine, just something like what you would normally do with your friends on Friday, maybe a little more focused on the community aspect.”

A more sweeping consensus can be found around food—both cooking and eating—which emerges as a top factor for both being Jewish and Jewish engagement. As a focus group participant explained, “I like the food oftentimes. Especially if it’s a Jewish holiday and my mom or my aunts get together and cook some stuff that I haven’t had in a while, matzo balls or other things. That’s enjoyable.” Other top factors for engagement include Jewish humor, learning about Jewish history, and diving deeper into personal Jewish

ancestry. As one young adult summed up, “I’m just very connected to our history. That’s where I feel that my [connection to] Judaism lies.”

Additional on-ramps for Jewish engagement include an appreciation for Jewish values and a desire to know more about or have a deeper connection to Israel. As one online focus group participant described, “I don’t know nearly what I want to know [about Israel]. I think it would help me understand a lot more about the things I have learned throughout my life.”

Further, several focus group participants believe that getting married or having children will open up future points of reentry for them to engage with being Jewish. As one participant surmised: “I think that my future children would probably be a force for me to seek out and find ways to get... more knowledgeable and experienced in those traditions, pass them on, and maybe some will rub off on me as well.”

On the whole, today’s Jewish young adults are compassionate, active in exploring new activities, and generally proud of being Jewish. In focus groups, participants were prompted with certain lines, such as: “I am Jewish and \_\_\_\_\_.” Seemingly speaking for the entire young adult age group—one focus group participant wrote down just one word: “Curious.”

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FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT