



The Jewish Federation  
OF GREATER SEATTLE

2014

**PUGET SOUND**  
**JEWISH COMMUNITY PROFILE**



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle thanks the many individuals and organizations who made possible the production of this Profile of the Puget Sound Jewish Community - 2014, which summarizes essential findings and recommendations from the 2014 Greater Seattle Jewish Community Study. The study was produced by the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle based on data gathered between May and July 2014 and analyzed by the Maurice & Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University. We thank the Cohen Center and its research team for their invaluable work.

The study on which this Profile is based was made possible by the dedicated guidance of the Federation's Community Study Committee, including JFGS Board Chair Celie Brown, Committee Chair Corey Salka, and members Claudia Berman, Sarah Boden, Dianne Loeb, Tina Novick, Julie Smith and Rabbi Rob Toren.

We also thank key Federation staff, including President & CEO Keith Dvorchik, Chief Operating Officer Nancy Greer, Planning Manager Noa Guter, and Center for Jewish Philanthropy Operations Manager Aimee Finn; the Jewish Federation's Board of Directors, professional staff and Communications Committee; the leaders and staff of Jewish communal organizations in the Puget Sound region; and the research and planning professionals at other Jewish federations. We value our relationship with AlphaGraphics and the outstanding quality of their printing work, and we acknowledge their contribution to community.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle is confident this Profile and the full study report will contribute to a deeper understanding of our community, its needs and priorities; and will enable all of Puget Sound's Jewish organizations to better serve the area's Jews and to actualize opportunities for building Jewish Connections for Life.

## PART 1: OVERVIEW

The Jewish community in the Puget Sound region has grown dramatically since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and is likely to continue growing for years to come, according to the findings of the 2014 Greater Seattle Jewish Community study, produced by the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle. The study was based on data compiled and analyzed between May and July 2014 by the Maurice & Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University. It is important to note that different demographic studies employ different methodologies, so the numbers published in the study and in this Profile should be regarded as estimates and their differences with other studies should be regarded as trends.

The growing population of the Jewish community, along with its characteristics, affiliations and attitudes on a range of important issues, has significant implications. Engagement with local Jewish life, our thoughts about Jewish education, our relationship to Israel and overseas Jewry, our interest in giving back to the Jewish and broader communities, the hopes and aspirations we have for our children, and how we define ourselves as Jews all have bearing on the prospects for building Jewish Connections for Life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

To understand the Jewish community in the Puget Sound region, to plan for the future, and to actualize opportunities for building Jewish Connections for Life, this Profile focuses on the following:

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### Demographic Characteristics

Jewish Education

Young Adult Attitudes

Participation in Jewish Life




Connections with Israel and World Jewry

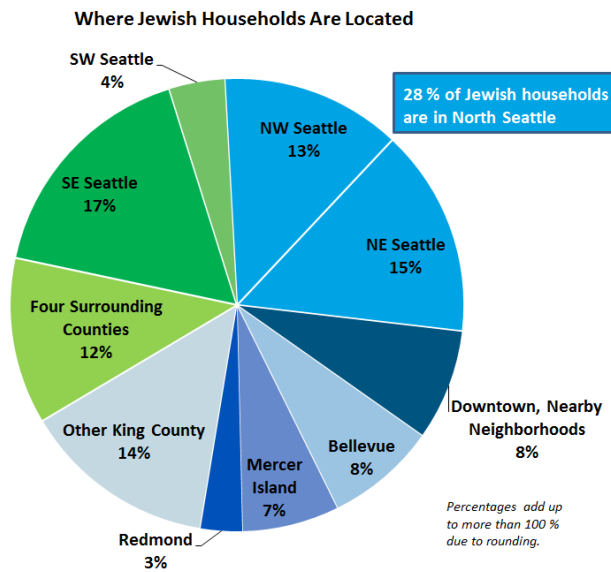
Volunteering and Philanthropy

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### Demographic Characteristics

*(Data collected between May and July of 2014)*

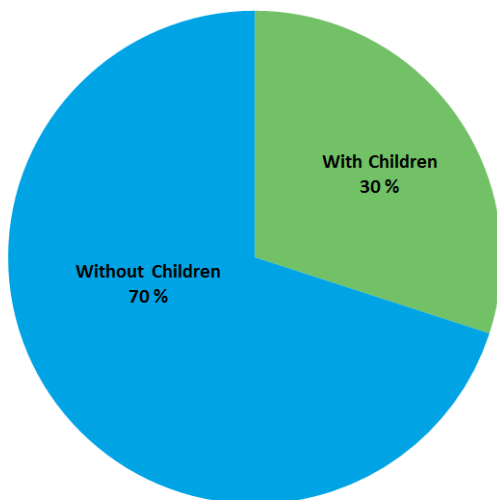
Jewish Population in Puget Sound Region	Population Growth Since 2000-01	Jewish Households in Puget Sound Region
 <b>63,400</b>	 <b>70 %</b>	 <b>33,700</b>



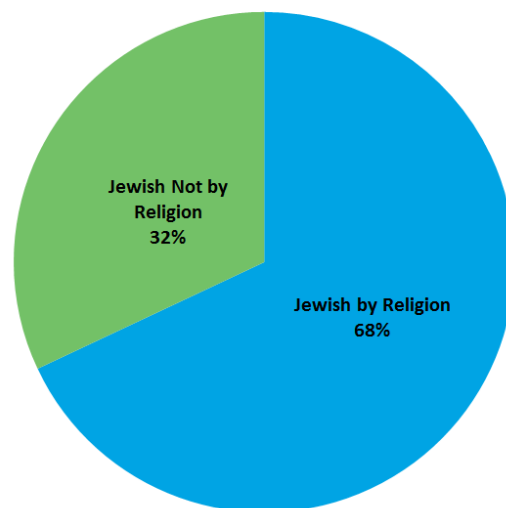
The majority of Jewish households (57 %) are in the City of Seattle, 11 % are in the Eastside communities of Bellevue and Redmond, 7 % are on Mercer Island, and the balance are located elsewhere in King County and four surrounding counties.

The charts on Pages 3 and 4 highlight a variety of demographic characteristics with strong relevance for program planning and implementation. They describe the makeup of households, how Jews self-describe their Jewish identity, denominational affiliations, educational attainment of Jewish adults, and rates of intermarriage.

**Household Composition**



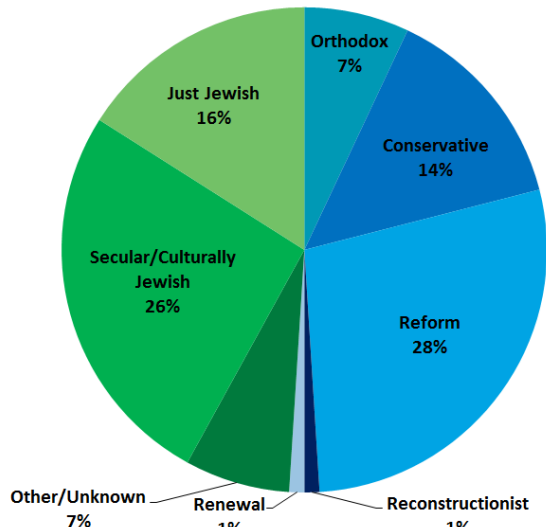
**Jewish Identity**



**Key point:** The Puget Sound region’s Jewish community is likely to experience significant natural increase in the next one to two decades as a result of family formation and childbirth.

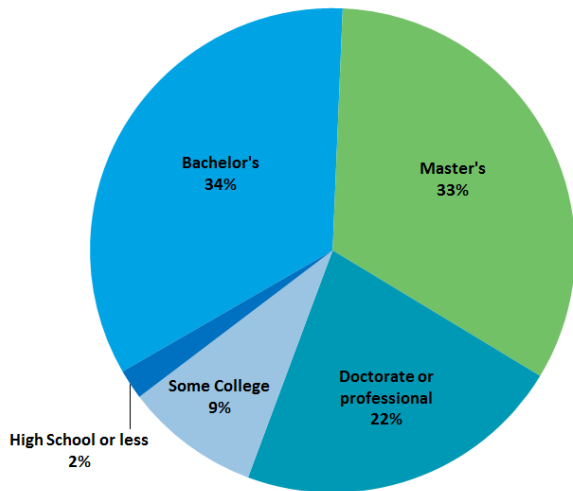
**Key point:** The ratios of Jews by religion (JBR) and Jews not by religion (JNR) are similar across age groups. This differs from the national pattern in which people tend to be more likely to identify as JBR as they age. (Please see Page 8 for definition of JBR and JNR.)

Denominational Affiliation



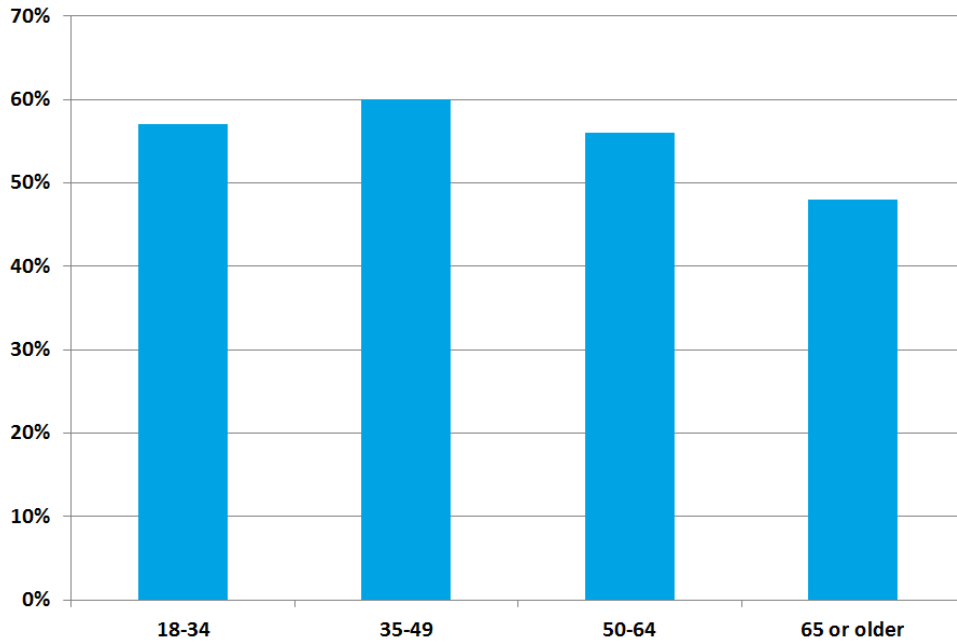
**Key point:** The proportion of the Puget Sound region's Jews identifying with a denomination is smaller than the national rate.

Educational Attainment



**Key point:** The Puget Sound region's Jewish residents have significantly higher levels of educational attainment than both the general Seattle population and the national Jewish population.

Married Jews: Intermarriage Rates by Age Group



**Key point:** The Puget Sound region's rates of intermarriage are similar across age groups, which differs from the national pattern, in which intermarriage rates decline significantly with age.

**Jewish Education**

Forty percent of Jewish children in the Puget Sound region participate in Jewish education compared to 50 % of Jewish children across the country. Among age-eligible Jewish children, enrollment estimates, from highest to lowest, are:

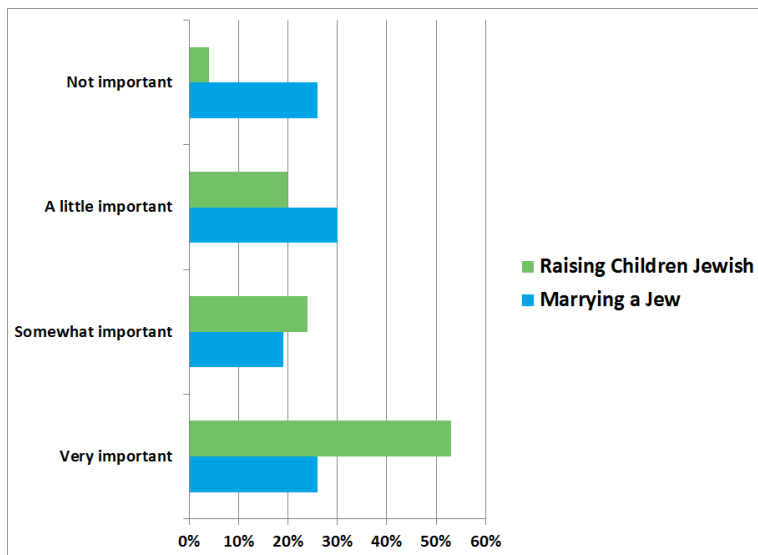
Education Type	Percentage of Age-Eligible Children Enrolled
Supplementary school	40 %
Jewish preschool	32 %
Jewish day camp	26 %
Jewish youth group	23 %
Jewish overnight camp	22 %
Day school	5 %

Parents reported a variety for reasons for wanting their children to have a Jewish education, including: 1) Instilling Jewish values and appreciation for their Jewish heritage, 2) Making Jewish friends, and 3) Connecting with the local Jewish community. A revealing comment one parent told study researchers was that the Puget Sound region lacks the visible Jewish culture found in other metropolitan areas in the U.S. and Jewish education is one way to build connections to Jewish life.

**Key point:** Research has shown children of intermarried parents are likely to embrace a Jewish identity and have strong ties to the Jewish community if they are exposed to high-quality Jewish education.

**Young Adult Attitudes**

Among non-Orthodox Jewish adults ages 18 to 35 who do not have children, few of their partners and significant others are Jewish, but among those who are married or engaged to be married, about half of

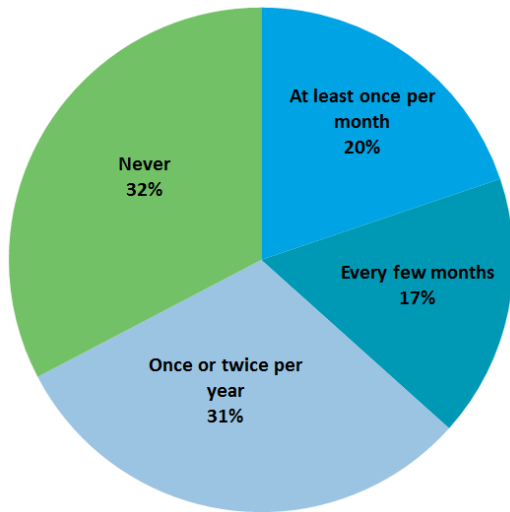


their partners are Jewish. There was a significant difference in the attitudes of young adults towards marrying a Jew and raising their children Jewish. Fewer than half (45 %) believed it “very important” or “somewhat important” to marry a Jew, but 77 % said raising their children Jewish is “very important” or “somewhat important.”

**Key point:** Providing more engagement opportunities for young families will help ensure children are raised Jewish and strengthen families’ ties to the Jewish community.



Frequency of Synagogue Attendance

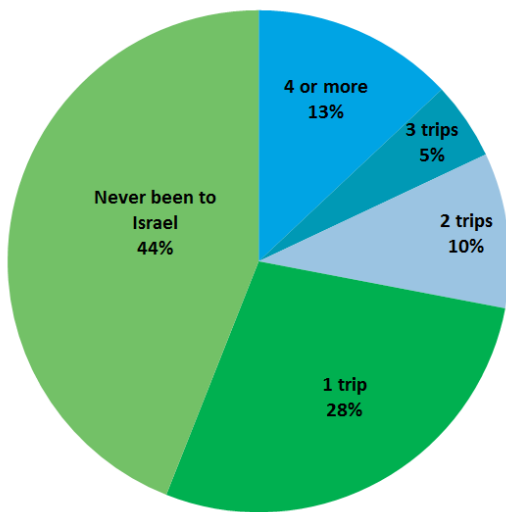


**Participation in Jewish Life**

Synagogue membership is a common indicator for assessing participation in Jewish life. In the Puget Sound region, one in three households has at least one person who is a member of at least one synagogue. In households in which there are one or more Jewish by religion (JBR) adults, rates of synagogue membership are far higher than households made up entirely of Jewish not by religion (JNR) adults -- 55 % versus 7 %. Likewise, synagogue attendance rates are significantly higher among JBR adults compared to JNR adults: nearly one-third of JBR adults attend services at least once per month, while two-thirds of JNR adults never attend services.

**Key point:** Exposure to Jewish education in childhood is a key marker of synagogue members. Those who experienced some form of Jewish education as children are more likely to be synagogue members than those who didn't.

Trips to Israel



**Connections with Israel and World Jewry**

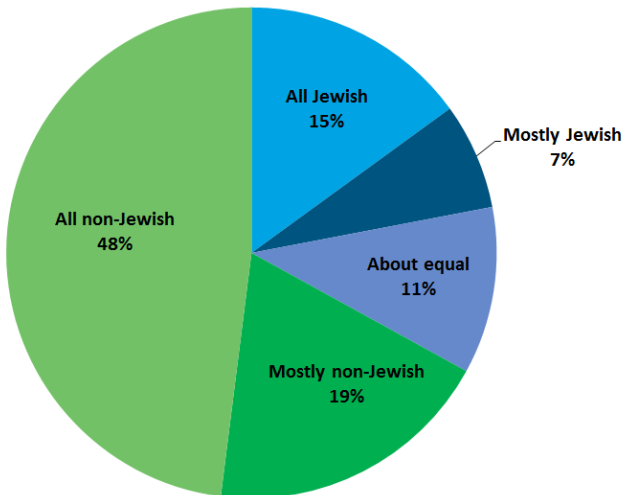
A striking finding of the study is that Jews in the Puget Sound region feel a greater sense of connection with Jewish communities in Israel and elsewhere in the world than they do with the local Jewish community. More than half (56 %) of survey respondents have traveled to Israel at least once, which is significantly higher than the 43 % national average. The Puget Sound region's higher numbers for Israel travel hold for both JBR and JNR Jews.

Among inmarried Jews (couples in which both partners are Jewish), 84 % felt "somewhat" or "very much" connected with the worldwide Jewish community, versus 72 % feeling "somewhat" or "very much" connected with the local community. Likewise, among intermarried Jews (couples in which one partner is

Jewish and one is not), 57 % indicated they felt "somewhat" or "very much" connected with the global community, but only 27 % reported comparable attitudes about the local community.

**Key point:** The lower levels of connection with the local community create an opening to strengthen Jewish life in the Puget Sound region through providing diverse engagement opportunities that appeal to people's interests and passions. Given the high in-migration to the Puget Sound region, outreach to newcomers will be especially important.

Volunteering by Organization Type



### Volunteering and Philanthropy

Many of the Puget Sound region's Jews live their Jewish values by donating their time and financial resources to both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. More than half of respondents said they had volunteered in the previous month, and 92 % said they had made charitable contributions in the previous year. Two-thirds of the volunteers gave their time exclusively or mostly to *non-Jewish* organizations. Lack of time, interest, and/or awareness were common reasons that were given for not volunteering for Jewish organizations. Other reasons were interest in

issues that are not Jewish per se, such as the environment or health care. Likewise, well over half of donors reported making their contributions exclusively or mostly to *non-Jewish* organizations. Lack of awareness or not being asked were common reasons respondents cited for not donating to Jewish organizations.

**Key point:** *Survey respondents strongly associated values of tikkun olam and giving back with Jewish identity. Volunteering and philanthropy are promising pathways for engaging Jews who currently are not involved or only lightly involved in the local Jewish community.*

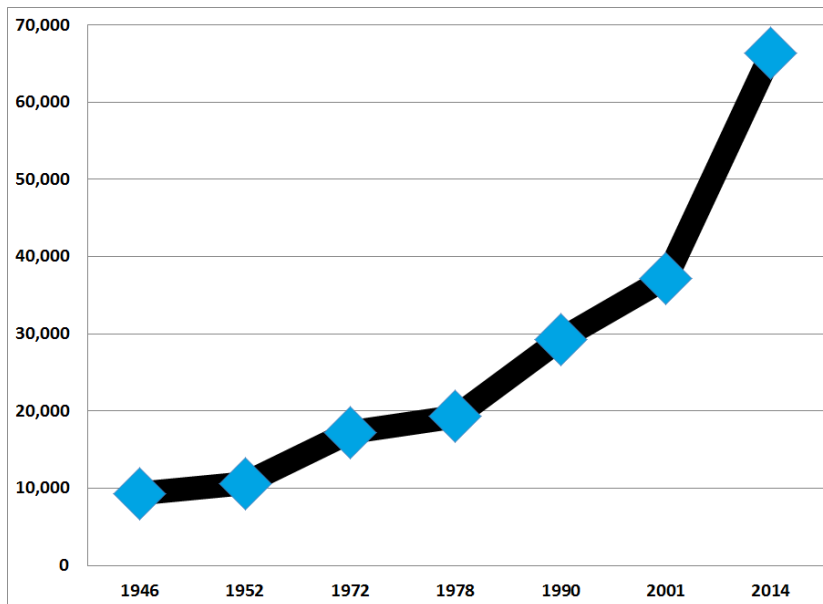
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The second section of this Profile provides additional details about the topics described above, followed by a summary of observations from the study about strengthening community and building Jewish Connections for Life.



## PART 2: ADDITIONAL DETAIL

### Demographic Characteristics

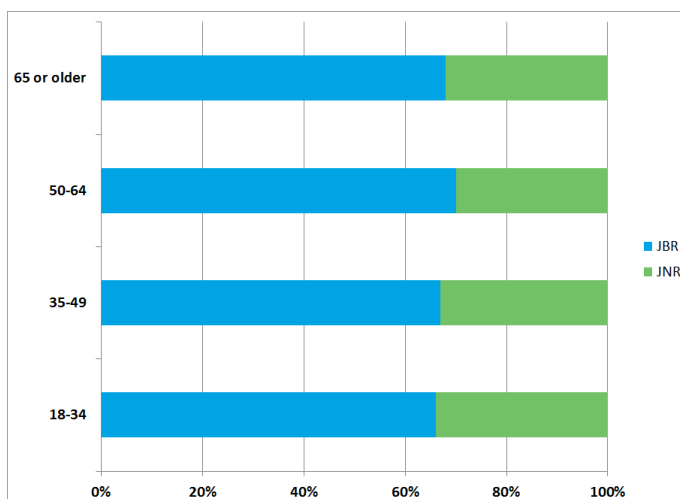


#### Population Growth

The Puget Sound region's Jewish community has experienced substantial growth since publication of the previous community study in 2001. In 1946, the earliest available count of the Jewish community's size, the estimated population ranged from 9,300 to 10,300. Over the next quarter-century, the Jewish community grew to an estimated 17,250.

The first demographic study of Jewish Seattle was carried out in 1978, when the population was estimated at 19,300. Twelve years later, the estimated size was 29,300. By 2000-01, the last time a demographic study was carried out, the population's size had increased to 37,180. Between 2000-01 and 2014, the Jewish population's share of the Puget Sound region's general population grew from 1.1 percent to 1.6 percent. The rapid growth of the Jewish population over the last 14 years has been attributed by numerous observers to the area's overall economic strength. Jewish organizations have grown, but there has been significant growth in the number of Jews who are not active in the community, those same observers report.

The first demographic study of



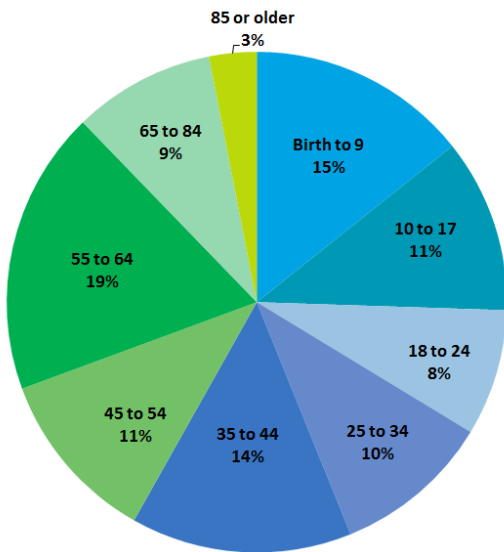
#### Jewish Identity

Following the markers of Jewish identity used by the 2013 Pew Study, Jews fall into two broad categories:

1) Jews by religion (JBR), who respond "Jewish" when asked about their religion, and 2) Jews not by religion (JNR), who consider themselves Jewish through ethnicity or cultural background. In the Puget Sound region, the proportions of JBR and JNR Jews are similar across generations, a different pattern than documented nationally, in which a higher

number of younger Jews tend to classify themselves as JNR than do older Jews. In addition, the overall 68 % rate of JBR in Seattle is significantly lower than the overall national rate of 78 %.

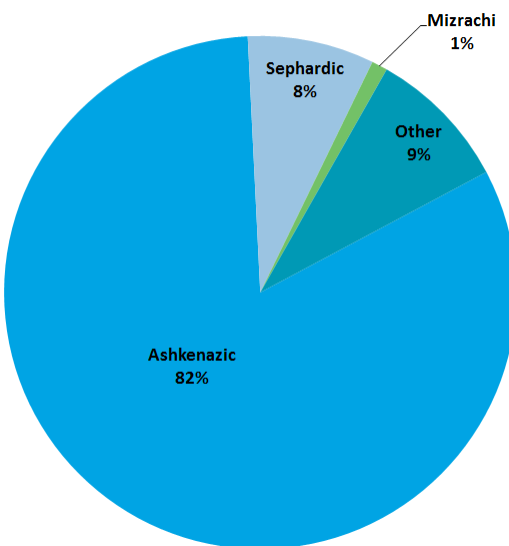
Age Distribution



### Age and Gender

The median age of the region's Jewish population (the age at which half the population is younger and half is older) is 39, while the median age for Jewish adults is 48, which is slightly younger than the national median of 50. Children 17 and younger total slightly more than one-fourth of the Jewish population, about double the number of adults ages 65 and older. The large number of children and of adults of child-bearing age suggests a significant natural increase in the Puget Sound region's Jewish population is likely over the next two decades. The gender ratio of the Puget Sound region's Jewish population is 54 % female and 46 % male.

Ethnicity

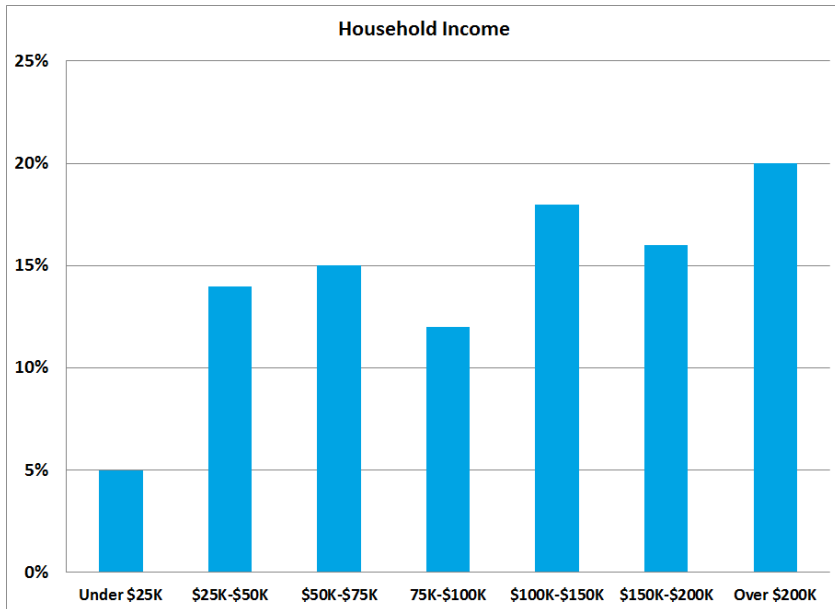


### Denominations and Ethnicity

In the Puget Sound region, the percentage of adults who are likely to identify with a specific Jewish denomination is lower than the national percentage. In addition, denominational affiliation percentages are similar across age groups in the Puget Sound region, which again differs from the national pattern, in which older Jews are more likely to affiliate with a denomination than younger Jews.

A large majority of Jews in the region, 82 %, consider themselves to be of Ashkenazic heritage. The percentage of Sephardic Jews in the area has dropped from 13 % in 2000-2001 to 8 % today. Nevertheless, the Puget Sound region remains one of the liveliest centers of Sephardic culture in the U.S., as evidenced by the Sephardic

Studies Program at the University of Washington's Stroum Center for Jewish Studies, the UW's digitized collection of books published in the Ladino language, and growing interest in studying Ladino.

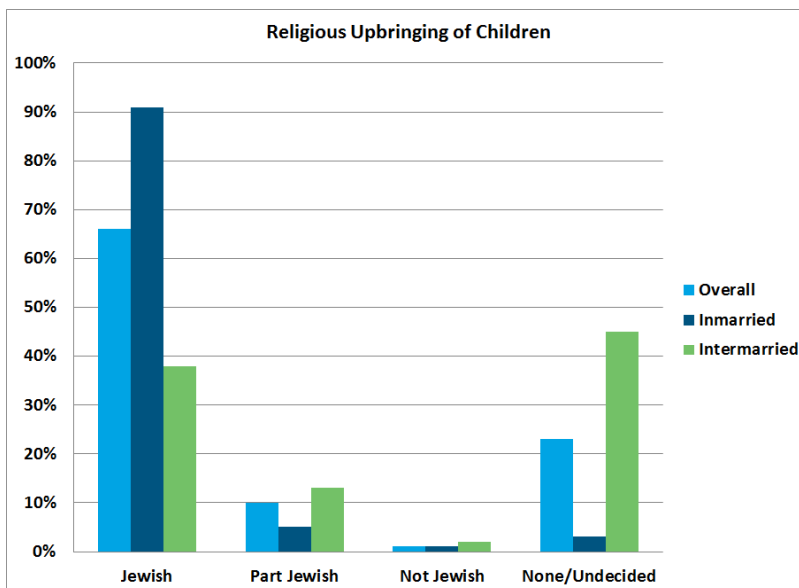


### Education and Income

The Puget Sound region’s Jewish community is affluent, as evidenced by high levels of educational attainment, rates of employment, types of employment, and household income. A total of 71 % of Jewish adults work full-time or part-time, while most of the remainder are either retired or involved in post-secondary study. One out of six Jewish adults works in the health care field. Other

high-ranking occupational categories include early childhood through post-secondary education (12 %), business ownership and/or management (12 %), engineering, science, and software development (8 %), and law (7 %). An implication of high employment levels is that Jewish adults have limited time for Jewish community involvement outside of their home and work lives.

Income levels among the Puget Sound region’s Jewish households are another marker of an affluent community. Income levels in Jewish Seattle trend significantly higher than those of the general populations, both for the five-county region and the U.S. as a whole.



### Intermarriage and Inmarriage

Of the two-thirds of Jewish households that include a married couple, 56 % are intermarried, meaning one partner is Jewish and the other is not. Inmarried households, in which both partners are Jewish, are more likely to identify as Jews by religion (JBR), are more likely to raise their children Jewish, and are more likely to expose their children to Jewish educational experiences, such as day schools and camp.

## **Jewish Education**

Jewish education is a lodestone of Jewish community life. For children, Jewish education increases the likelihood of their participation in Jewish community life as adults. Also, parents enrolling their children in Jewish education programs solidify their own connections to the Jewish community in doing so.

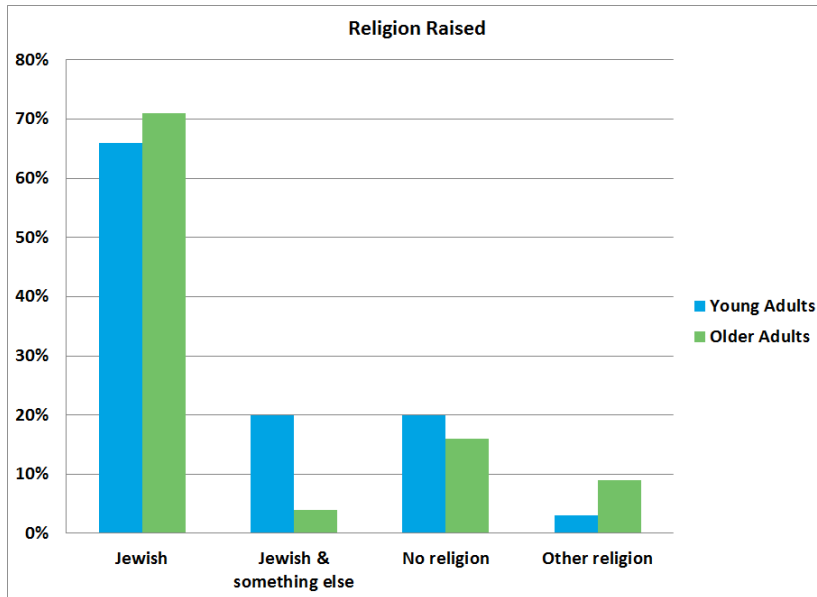
For adults, Jewish education experiences in their childhoods differ significantly between Jewish by religion (JBR) and Jewish not by religion (JNR) adults. Among JBR adults, 57 % celebrated a bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah as children and 5 % as adults. The comparable figures for JNR adults is 31 % and 3 %. Figures for participation in educational experiences, including day school, supplementary school, Jewish camp and Jewish youth groups, also are significantly higher for JBR adults compared to JNR adults.

In addition, Jewish adults with children are more likely to have had a bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah and to have attended Jewish day school than are Jewish adults without children, but the differences might be attributable to other factors, such as the greater likelihood mothers in younger age cohorts had a bat mitzvah, compared to mothers in older cohorts.

<b>Jewish Educational Background of Adults</b>		
<b>Education Experience</b>	<b>No Children %</b>	<b>With Children %</b>
Had bar or bat mitzvah	41	59
Day school	13	19
Supplementary school	68	66
Jewish camp	46	50
Jewish youth group	46	50

Parents have a variety of motivations for providing Jewish education for their children. The most commonly expressed reasons were developing their children’s Jewish identity and internalization of Jewish values. Other reasons include expanding religious knowledge and background, appreciation of Jewish heritage, exposure to Jewish culture, and making Jewish friends.

<b>Educational Choices Parents Make for Children</b>	
<b>Reasons for Choosing School</b>	<b>Reasons for Choosing Non-Jewish School</b>
School quality	Lack of interest in a Jewish school
Convenience	No good options
Preference for public schools	Children have “aged out”
Cost	
Special needs accommodation	



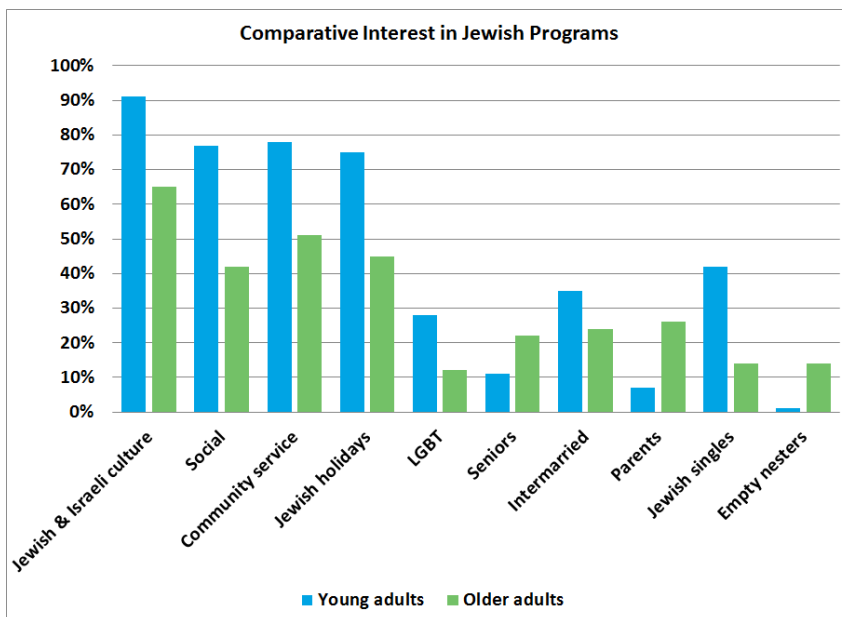
### Young Adult Attitudes

Young adults (ages 18-35) have substantially different upbringing experiences compared to older adults. For example, they are more than twice as likely to have been raised by one Jewish parent than two (41 % vs. 19 %). Likewise, they are five times as likely to have been raised in Judaism and in another religion (20 % vs. 4 %).

Regarding marriage issues, young adults are getting married later in life than older generations did, particularly young Jews who are not Orthodox. While Orthodox Jewish young adults nearly always marry Jews, non-Orthodox young adults tend to date and live with partners who are non-Jewish, but once they decide to marry, young adults choose Jewish partners at a higher rate than when they were dating.

More than half of Jewish young adults (53 %) believe it is very important to raise their children Jewish, and nearly all believe it is at least a little important (96 %), which suggests that Jewish young adults

expect to raise their children Jewish whether their spouses are Jewish or not.



In their participation in Jewish life, young adults report substantially higher interest in participating in many types of Jewish programming than older adults. Among the comments reported to study researchers, young adults expressed an interest in programs targeted at their age group, and in particular at married young adults. In

addition, young adults are more likely to have visited Israel than adults in older age groups. Nearly three-fourths of young adults (73 %) have been to Israel at least once, compared to 54 % of older adults, and 42 % of young adults reported traveling to Israel as part of a Taglit-Birthright program.

**Participation in Jewish Life**

Synagogue membership and attendance at services, traditional measures of participation in Jewish life, vary widely in the Puget Sound region. Slightly more than one-third (34 %) of Jewish households include at least one adult who is a member of at least one congregation. Among synagogue members, nearly half (49 %) attend religious services at least once per month. Overall, one-third of survey respondents never attend religious services and another 31 % attend only once or twice per year. Attendance at services is far higher among Jewish by religion (JBR) adults than Jewish not by religion (JNR) adults.

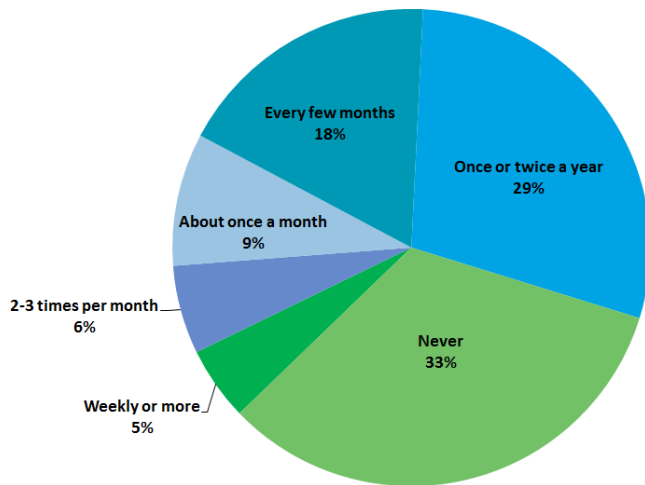
Among JBR adults, 30 % attend services at least monthly, compared to 4 % of JNR adults.

Reasons given for not joining a synagogue include lack of religiosity or of interest in organized religion, costs of membership, lack of time, and failure to find a synagogue meeting respondents’ needs. Others expressed discomfort with joining a synagogue because of perceptions that intermarried families or families without children are not welcome, and lack of knowledge of Jewish traditions, liturgy or Hebrew.

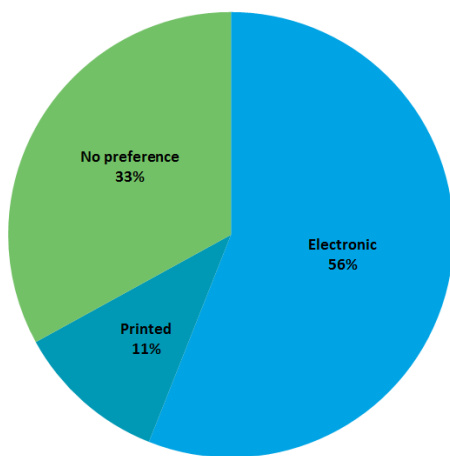
Another measure of participation in Jewish life is attendance at other programs and events.

Frequency varies widely among adults, but as is the case with attendance at synagogue services, participation is substantially higher among JBR adults. More than three times as many JBR adults (16 %) take part in Jewish programs at least two to three times per month as JNR adults (5 %). The overall number for attendance at least two to three times per month is 11 %.

Participation in Jewish Programs



Preferred Communications Vehicles



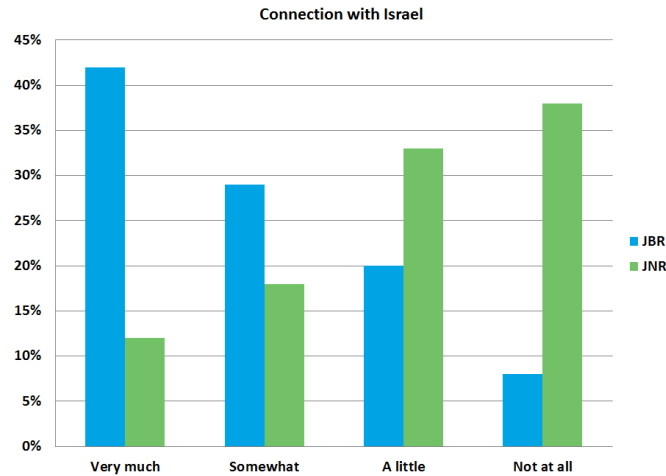
The five most common types of programs or events respondents reported attending were adult education (676), cultural (517), holidays (376), social (352), and religious (311).

When asked about the types of programs they would be interested in attending, many listed education while others asked for programs that bring the community together and foster communication among denominational and ethnic groupings.

Travel time can be a barrier to participating in Jewish programs. More than half of respondents (57 %) would be unwilling to travel more than 20 minutes to attend. One



out of six draw the line at 10 minutes. For learning about programs, a majority prefers electronic communications – e-mail and/or social media.



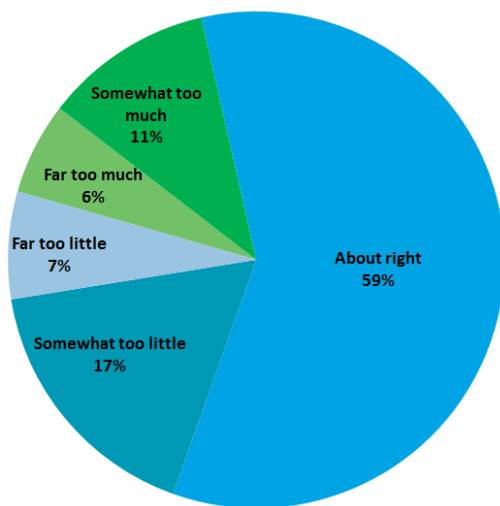
**Connections with Israel and World Jewry**

The attitudes of the Puget Sound region’s Jewish community toward Israel are complex. Israel is a source of both unity and division, depending on the context. Pro-Israel sentiments and criticism of the State of Israel are supported and are opposed by varying segments of the community. Interest in Israel-related programming, however, is strong.

Local Jewish adults feel a strong sense of connection with Israel, especially in the case of Jewish by religion (JBR) adults. In addition, local Jews feel a stronger sense of connection with Jewish communities around the world, and to Jewish history, customs and peers than they do with the local Jewish community.

Connection with...	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Jewish history	2%	14%	28%	56%
Jews around the world	6%	24%	34%	36%
Local Jewish community	23%	29%	26%	21%
Jewish customs	3%	19%	35%	43%
Jewish peers	6%	20%	36%	38%

**Views on Attention Given to Israel by Jewish Organizations**



When asked about the attention that local Jewish organizations give to Israel, majorities overall and of JBR and JNR adults responded the amount was “about right.” More than two-thirds of respondents reported they had not experienced anti-Semitism in the past year, and only 6 % said they had “somewhat” or “very much” experienced anti-Semitism. The impact of Operation Protective Edge on survey results is considered marginal, since nearly 90 % of respondents had responded to the survey before the operation began on July 8, 2014.

**Volunteerism and Philanthropy**

An important aspect of living the Jewish values of *tikkun olam* and *tzedakah* is giving time and financial resources to non-profit organizations. Slightly more than half of the study’s survey respondents (51 %) reported volunteering in the previous month. As the graph on Page 7 indicates, two-thirds of the organizations to which they donated time were all or mostly non-Jewish, while one-third of the organizations were all Jewish, mostly Jewish, or about equal. Among the 819 who reported volunteering for Jewish organizations, synagogues and Jewish education programs were the top two types that benefited from time donated by community members, 40 % of whom served on boards or committees.

<b>Volunteering for Selected Jewish Organization Type</b>	
Synagogue	218
Jewish Education	102
Israel-related	22
Arts/Culture	22
Other	181

Regarding non-Jewish organizations, the leading types for which survey respondents reported volunteering were schools in which their children were enrolled and alma maters. Others donated to professional associations, organizations addressing poverty, arts and culture groups, and neighborhood associations. Lack of time and interest, and lack of awareness were cited as reasons for not volunteering for Jewish organizations. A minority of respondents reported disenchantment with Jewish organizations and what they perceived as an exclusive focus on Jewish beneficiaries.

Respondents expressed clear wishes about the types of volunteer opportunities that would interest them. Clear pluralities of respondents are interested in working on poverty-related matters and want opportunities that are family-friendly, as the following table illustrates.

<b>Volunteer Opportunity Attributes</b>			
<b>Issue</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Activity Feature</b>	<b>No.</b>
Poverty	326	Family-friendly	161
Youth/Education	135	Irregular occurrence	56
Jewish and Israel	117	Social/community building	42
Elderly/seniors	99	Ability to use professional skills	38
Environment	97	Active/physical	36
No preference	71	Inactive	12
Social justice	55	Recurring	10

Volunteering time is not a viable option for many in the community because of their home and work responsibilities. On the other hand, 92 % of survey respondents reported donating financial resources to

non-profit organizations in the previous year, with 41 % of donors giving to Jewish organizations wholly or in part, and 59 % giving mostly or all of their gifts to non-Jewish organizations. As is the case with volunteering preferences, fighting poverty is a leading motivation for charitable contributions. The tables below show the leading causes and motivations for donations.

Cause	Number
Poverty	124
Local/community-based organization	114
Medical/health	74
Education/youth	73
Israel	69
Social justice/advocacy	51
Environment	47
Culture/non-profit media	47
Politics	40
International aid	25
Animals	23
Non-sectarian	23

Motivation	Number
Organization mission/vision/goal/programs	724
Personal connection/familiarity with organization	329
Organization is effective/efficient/low overhead	305
Organization is Jewish	246
Doing good	158
Can see donation impact	136
Need, urgency of donation	119
Obligation/reciprocating another gift	113
Can afford to give	82

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The growth of the Puget Sound region’s Jewish community over the past 15 years, the prospects for continued growth, and the diversity of interests and organizations serving those interests create many exciting options for building Jewish Connections for Life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As the 2014 Greater Seattle Jewish Community study noted:

*There is a rich blend of religious and secular, old and young, Ashkenazic and Sephardic, long-tenured and relative newcomers. As a complement to this diversity, programs are available to serve each of these subgroups, both separately and together, as well as programs for a wide array of interest groups.*

At the same time, the community's diversity also creates special challenges that must be addressed in order to tap the community's potential for engagement. Differing attitudes about participating in Jewish life, differing motivations for engagement, and differing opinions about Israel and other complex issues can be barriers to building Jewish Connections for Life, along with more prosaic barriers such as limited time for adding community activities to home and work commitments.

Nevertheless, the study identifies strategies for building Jewish Connections, by using the community's strengths and preferences to their best advantage. They include all of the following recommendations:

**Invest in Jewish Education**

Research shows that exposure to Jewish education during childhood is linked to a strong attachment to the Jewish community in adulthood. Additionally, the large number of the region's Jews who identify as Jews not by religion, along with the relatively large number of children, underscore the importance of Puget Sound Learning.

**Reach Out to Moderately Affiliated**

Jewish engagement does not follow a straight path over the course of one's life but varies depending on life circumstances. Offering programs acknowledging the community's diversity and appealing to a range of interests will increase opportunities for engagement.

**Promote Ties with the Local Jewish Community**

Offering programs appealing to a range of interests also will communicate a positive message that will enhance the sense of connection with the local community for people who feel more closely connected with the Israeli and world Jewish communities.

**Diversify Programs and Institutions**

As Jewish communal organizations develop new programs tailored to diverse interests, it will be important to identify new interests and needs as they emerge.

**Promote Connection Through Volunteering and Philanthropy**

The study shows there is strong interest in giving back to both the Jewish and general communities through donations of time and financial resources to non-profit organizations that call to people's interests and passions. Developing opportunities for volunteering and philanthropy can serve as another pathway to engagement and building Jewish Connections for Life.

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