



The Jewish Federation
OF GREATER SEATTLE

2014

GREATER SEATTLE
JEWISH COMMUNITY STUDY



SECTION N: SENIOR ADULTS

Cohen Center
for Modern Jewish Studies

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Introduction and Overview

Senior adults, aged 65 and older, encompass a wide spectrum from Baby Boomers to the elderly. Some are employed and many are retired; some are active and engaged with family and community and some struggle with health and financial concerns. This report portrays a group that is much like the general population in many ways in terms of engagement with the Jewish community. Although they have more health concerns than younger adults, there is little self-reported poverty or unmet need for social services.

Seniors constitute 12% of the Greater Seattle Jewish population. Of all Jewish households, 16% are composed only of senior adults. About one-quarter (24%) of households have at least one household member aged 65 or older.¹

Jewish senior adults	
Jewish adults aged 65+	7,600
Non-Jewish adults aged 65+ in Jewish households	1,500
Households with seniors	7,500
Jewish seniors living alone	2,600

In this section, all analyses about individual attributes, such as religion raised and employment status, compare Jewish adults aged 65 or older to the rest of the Jewish population. Most analyses of household-level information, such as synagogue membership or standard of living, compare Jewish households in which at least one adult aged 65

or older is living to all other Jewish households. Analyses regarding financial and health information are presented for senior-only households compared to other households in order to capture the unique financial and well-being concerns of seniors who live alone.

Demographics

About one-third (34%) of Jewish seniors live alone. Half of Jewish seniors (48%) live with other seniors and the remainder, 18%, live with younger people (n=721).

Households with seniors are primarily found outside King County (17%) and in Northeast Seattle (16%). In contrast, senior-only households are primarily found in Northeast Seattle (19%) and outside of King County (15%) (Table N.1).

Table N.1. Residence of Senior Adults

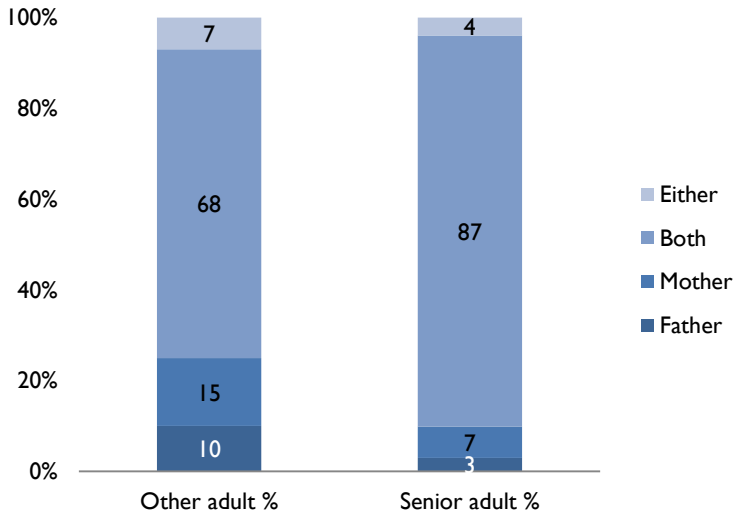
	HH with a senior	Senior-only HH
Southeast Seattle	11	13
Northeast Seattle	16	19
Northwest Seattle	12	10
Downtown and Surrounding Neighborhoods	8	9
Southwest Seattle	3	2
Other King County	10	9
Outside King County	17	15
Bellevue	12	11
Mercer Island	6	6
Redmond	5	5

Note: Weighted estimates, %; n=641

Religious Background

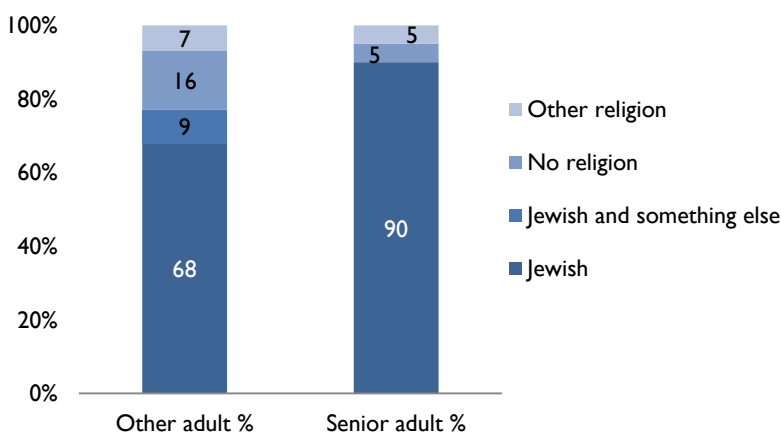
Senior adults are more likely to have been raised Jewish (90%) by two Jewish parents (87%) than were younger adults (Figure N.1 and Figure N.2). There are no significant differences in denominational distribution, ethnic background, or intermarriage rates between senior and other adults.

Figure N.1. Jewish Parent



Note: Weighted estimates, %; n=2,922*

Figure N.2. Religion Raised



Note: Weighted estimates, %; n=2,911*

Jewish Education

Senior Jewish adults have a Jewish educational background that is similar to all other Jewish adults in Greater Seattle. Seniors are less likely to have had a bar or bat mitzvah as a child (39%) than are younger Jewish adults (49%). Some of this difference might be explained by the increasing popularity of the bat mitzvah for women among younger generations. Senior adults are much less likely to have attended Jewish day school than are younger Jews, as shown in Table N.2. It should be noted, however, that day schools were less available when today's seniors were in school, compared to present day.

Table N.2. Participation in Jewish Education

Form of Education	Other adult %	Senior adult %
Day school (n=2,400)*	17	8
Supplementary school (n=2,607)	67	70
Jewish camp (n=2,530)	48	41
Jewish youth group (n=2,497)	47	51
Bar/Bat Mitzvah (n=2,712)*	49	39

Note: Weighted estimates, %

Religious Life

Senior adults who attend synagogue services reported more positive experiences than did other adults at those services. Older adults join synagogues at the same rate as the rest of the population and attend religious services, including High Holiday services, at the same frequency as younger Jewish adults. Given their age, it is unsurprising that their tenure as synagogue members is longer than that of younger adults; 40% have been members of the same synagogue for more than 20 years, compared with 25% of younger adults (n=1,560).

Compared to younger Jewish adults, older adults were more likely to report that they received a warm welcome and that they felt connected to other participants, and were less likely to feel bored at services (Table N.3).

Table N.3. Perception of Religious Services, % Agree/Strongly Agree

	Other adult %	Senior adult %
I was warmly welcomed. (n=2,372)*	77	78
I did not understand what was going on. (n=2,370)	12	13
I was bored. (n=2,366)*	26	17
I was inspired or emotionally involved. (n=2,380)	61	53
I felt connected to the other people there. (n=2,376)*	65	76
Note: Weighted estimates		

Social Networks

Older adults reported having slightly more Jewish friends than do younger adults, but the difference is significant (Table N.4). Just 5% of older adults have no Jewish friends compared to 10% of other adults; 29% of older adults report that most or all of their friends are Jewish compared with 21% of other Jewish adults. However, feelings of connection to the Jewish community and to its customs and history do not differ for older adults compared to other Jewish adults.

Table N.4. Proportion of Closest Friends Who Are Jewish

	Other adult %	Senior adult %
All	2	3
Most	19	26
About half	22	17
Some	48	49
None	10	5
Note: Weighted estimates, %; n=2,818*		

Antisemitism

Older adults are less likely to have reported experiences of antisemitism in the past year than are younger respondents (Table N.5). Four-fifths (81%) of Jewish adults age 65 or older experienced no antisemitism in the prior year compared to 65% of younger respondents.

Table N.5. Reports of Antisemitism in Past Year

Amount	Other adult %	Senior adult %
Not at all	65	81
A little	30	15
Somewhat	5	3
Very much	1	1
Note: Weighted estimates, %; n=2,759*		

Programming

Senior adults differ in their interests in Jewish programs from younger adults. The programs shown in Table N.6 are the ones in which the interests of seniors differ from those of other Jewish adults. They are unsurprisingly more interested in programs geared toward seniors (48%) and are less interested in other forms of programming.

Table N.6. Interest in Programming

Program type	Other adult %	Senior adult %
Jewish and Israeli culture (n=2,599)	70	59
Community service (n=2,552)	58	38
Social (n=2,501)	49	36
Jewish education (n=2,546)	52	34
Jewish holidays (n=2,511)	53	26
Programs for specific groups		
Seniors (n=2,452)	14	48
Jewish singles (n=2,405)	18	12
Intermarried (n=2,416)	28	11
LGBT (n=2,358)	16	6
Parents (n=2,408)	28	4
Note: Weighted estimates, %*		

Access to programs and information may be more challenging for seniors than for younger adults. Although seniors are about evenly divided in their preference for print or electronic information about programs, other adults have a strong preference for electronic communication (Table N.7). Additionally, seniors prefer to attend programs that are close to home; as shown in Table N.8, about the same proportion of older and younger adults would be willing to travel up to 20 minutes to a Jewish program, but a larger share (28% vs. 14%) would only travel up to 10 minutes.

Table N.7. Preferred Mode of Receiving Information on the Jewish Community

Membership Status	Other adult %	Senior adult %
In print (newsletters, mailings, etc.)	7	28
Electronically (email, social media, websites, etc.)	62	30
No preference	31	42
Note: Weighted estimates, %; n=2,712*		

Table N.8. Acceptable Travel Time for Jewish Programs

Travel time	Other adult %	Senior adult %
Less than 10 minutes	14	28
10-20 minutes	43	30
20-40 minutes	35	32
40-60 minutes	5	6
An hour or more	3	4
Note: Weighted estimates, %; n=2,606*		

Volunteering

Just over half (53%) of seniors volunteered in the past month. Those who volunteer contribute more hours of service than do younger adults. Among seniors, 18% volunteer more than 20 hours per month compared to 11% of younger adults. The types of organizations for which they volunteer, and their choice of Jewish or non-Jewish organization, are the same as the rest of the population.

Table N.9. Hours Volunteered in the Past Month

Number of hours	Other adult %	Senior adult %
Under one hour	1	2
1-10 hours	66	61
11-20 hours	21	18
21-40 hours	9	10
41+ hours	2	8

Note: Weighted estimates, %; n=1,547*

Charity

Seniors in the Greater Seattle Jewish community are more likely to have donated money to charity in the previous year than the rest of the community; 98% of seniors have donated money, compared to 90% of the rest of the community (n=2,691). The donations are similar in amount to those made by other adults. Few seniors, however, expect to increase their donations in the coming year, likely because they tend to live on fixed incomes (Table N.10).

Table N.10. Anticipated Change in Donations in Coming Year

Change in donations	Other adult %	Senior adult %
Increase	17	6
Decrease	9	8
Stay the same	74	86

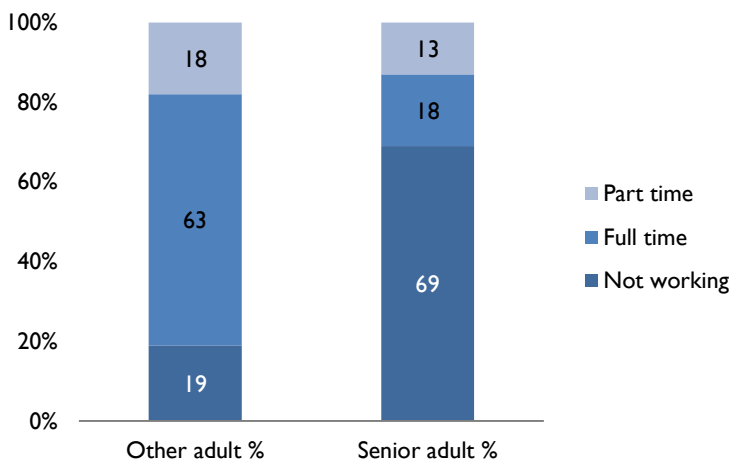
Note: Weighted estimates, %; n=2,620*

Seniors in the Greater Seattle Jewish community are more likely to have received requests for donations from local Jewish organizations in the previous year than the rest of the community; 71% of seniors have received such a request, compared to 60% of the rest of the community (n=2,617).

Finances

Jewish adults who are aged 65 and over are far less likely to be working, either full- or part-time, or seeking work than are younger adults. They are, however, more confident in their ability to support themselves through retirement than are their younger peers.

Figure N.3. Employment Status



Note: Weighted estimates, %; n=2,644*

Very few (1%) households in which seniors reside report living in poverty or near poverty (n=718). Household income is lower in senior-only households (Table N.11), but since such households may be less dependent on income to meet expenses, only 1% of these households consider themselves to be poor or nearly poor.

Table N.11. Total Household Income

Income	Other adult %	Senior adult %
Less than \$25,000	4	3
\$25,000 to \$49,999	8	23
\$50,000 to \$74,999	12	9
\$75,000 to \$99,999	10	7
\$100,000 to \$149,999	15	9
\$150,000 to \$199,999	12	12
\$200,000 or more	17	5
I prefer not to answer	24	33

Note: Weighted estimates, %; n=2,667*

Need and Poverty

Senior Jewish adults live in households that are less affected by economic instability than other households. Aside from Social Security, seniors receive the same level of public assistance benefits as do those in other households. One-third (35%) receive Social Security compared to 5% of the younger population. Respondents in households with a senior are less likely to skip meals or medications in order to make ends meet (Table N.12).

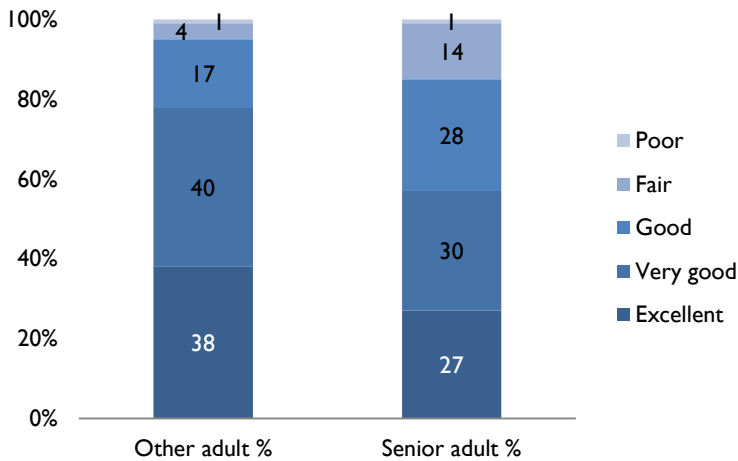
Table N.12. Economic Insecurity

	Other adult %	Senior adult %
Skip meals (n=2,676)*	5	2
Skip medications (n=2,677)*	7	3
Note: Weighted estimates, %		

Health

Overall, seniors in the Greater Seattle Jewish community report being in good health, with more than half saying that they are in excellent or very good health. Another 15% consider themselves in fair or poor health, higher than the 5% among the rest of the population (Figure N.4). In addition, nearly one-quarter (23%) of senior households included at least one person in fair or poor health and one-in-five (20%) had a household member with impaired function due to disability (Table N.13).

Figure N.4. Overall Health of Respondent



Note: Weighted estimates, %; n=2,652*

Table N.13. Health of the Household

Any member of the household	Other adult %	Senior adult %
In fair or poor health (n=2,066)*	7	23
Has impaired function due to physical or intellectual disability (n=2,709)*	9	20
Note: Weighted estimates, %		

Unmet needs are a concern for seniors. Senior households report lower needs for counseling or mental health services than other households, but higher need for housekeeping and home maintenance assistance (Table N.14).

Table N.14. Health Needs

Any member of the household	Other adult %	Senior adult %
Required counseling or mental health services in the past year (n=2,684)	31	13
Needs assistance with housekeeping and home maintenance (n=2,694)	6	17
Note: Weighted estimates, %*		

As expected, seniors are less likely to have living parents than younger members of the community. As such, seniors in the Greater Seattle Jewish community are less likely to report having a parent in an assisted living facility or nursing home than the rest of the community; 4% of seniors report that this is the case, compared to 8% of other adults (n=2,464). Among those who have parents in assisted living facilities or nursing homes, 66% of seniors report that their parents are in such a facility in the Greater Seattle area, while 40% of the rest of the community report that this is the case (n=186, no significant difference due to small n).

¹ Population estimates and proportions of senior adults are based on respondents who supplied information about the age of adults in the household (n=2,969). If no ages were specified we assume the adult was not age 65 or over (n=89). As a result, the number of senior adults and households with seniors might be underestimated.