

# **The 2005 Boston Community Survey: Preliminary Findings**

**A Report by the Steinhardt Social Research Institute,  
Brandeis University**

**for**

**Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Boston**

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## Chapter 1: Background and Study Design

Every 10 years since 1965, Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP) has sponsored scientific surveys of the Jewish population of the Greater Boston area. Like the four previous surveys, the 2005 study seeks to understand who the Jews of the Greater Boston area are, how those individuals participate in Jewish communal life, and what the community members' needs are for programs and services. The study provides a rich portrait of the Boston Jewish community that is intended to facilitate communal reflection and planning.

The 2005 preliminary report begins by examining the scope of the Boston Jewish community and its size. Then, the report looks within the community to focus on demographic characteristics and challenges posed by several of those findings, particularly those concerning age and economic vulnerability. The report then turns to intermarriage and the upbringing of children in intermarried families. Finally, the report explores the many varied connections to Jewish life, through ritual practice, membership in Jewish organizations, education of Jewish children, philanthropy and volunteering, and ties to Israel.

Boston's Jewish community is dynamic and vibrant. Specifically, the study finds:

- ❑ The Jewish community of Greater Boston is larger, perhaps substantially so, than that estimated in 1995;
- ❑ The Jewish community is highly educated, generally secure financially, although some are at risk of poverty;
- ❑ The Jewish community consists of a diverse array of Jewish households that contain an increasingly large number of non-Jews;
- ❑ The Jewish community is engaged and connected, with Jews connecting to their identity in many different ways.

### How Was the Study Conducted?

The 2005 Boston community study, like its immediate predecessors, was conducted through telephone interviews with adults in the CJP catchment area (see Appendix). The interviews focused on ethnic and religious identity and, for those identified as Jews, about the characteristics of their household and their involvement with the Jewish community, Judaism, and Israel. The study was developed by the Steinhardt Social Research Institute at Brandeis University, under the auspices of CJP and the community study committee, which was composed of lay and professional leaders.

### Who Was Surveyed?

The 2005 Boston Jewish Community Study drew from two sources to create a sample of interviewees:

- ❑ A random digit dialing (RDD) frame, drawn from residential telephone numbers in the CJP area (numbers found on the list frame were removed from the RDD frame to ensure that no double-counting took place);
- ❑ A list frame comprised of names from 84 lists from Jewish organizations operating in the Boston area.

Nearly 3,000 households were screened in the RDD portion of the study, of which more than 400 included a Jewish adult. An additional 1,400 interviews were conducted with individuals from the list sample. The data were weighted for probability of selection and nonresponse.<sup>1</sup> The overall response rate for screener interviews was 40 percent; 34 percent for the RDD frame and 50 percent for the list frame.

## **Who Was Considered Jewish?**

One of the study goals was to describe the breadth of the Boston-area Jewish community. In identifying individuals to interview, a broad definition of Jewish background was used. The initial round of questions, designed to "identify" or screen for Jewish adults asked whether the respondent or any other adult in the household considered him/herself to be Jewish, was raised Jewish, or had a Jewish parent. Answering "yes" to any one of these questions resulted in one of the eligible adults being included in the survey. In analyzing responses to the survey, the following definitions were used:

- ❑ Jewish adults (ages 18 and above) were defined as individuals who identified as Jews (religiously, ethnically, or culturally) or who were raised as Jews and did not identify with any religion.
- ❑ Jewish children (ages 0 to 17) were defined as such if a parent reported that they were being raised as Jews.
- ❑ A Jewish household was defined as a household that contained one or more adult Jews.
- ❑ A household included all people living in the same dwelling, whether related or not.

## Chapter 2: Our Size

The Jewish community of Greater Boston, based on the 2005 survey, now includes nearly 210,000 Jewish adults and children and an additional 55,000 non-Jewish members of Jewish households (see Figure 2.1). Using parallel definitions of Jewish identity, the 1995 Jewish population survey of the same area indicated that there were an estimated 177,000 Jewish adults and children and 30,000 non-Jewish household members.<sup>2</sup> The number of Jewish adults in 1995 was estimated to be 136,000 and is now estimated to be 160,500. The number of Jewish children increased from an estimated 41,000 in 1995 to 48,000 in 2005.

Jewish individuals are now 7.2 percent of the Boston area population, and the total Jewish household population is 9.1 percent of the population of the CJP Boston area.

### Increase in Jewish Households

Accompanying the increase in the total Jewish population, the number of Jewish households is also estimated to have increased from 86,000 in 1995 to 105,500 in 2005.<sup>3</sup>

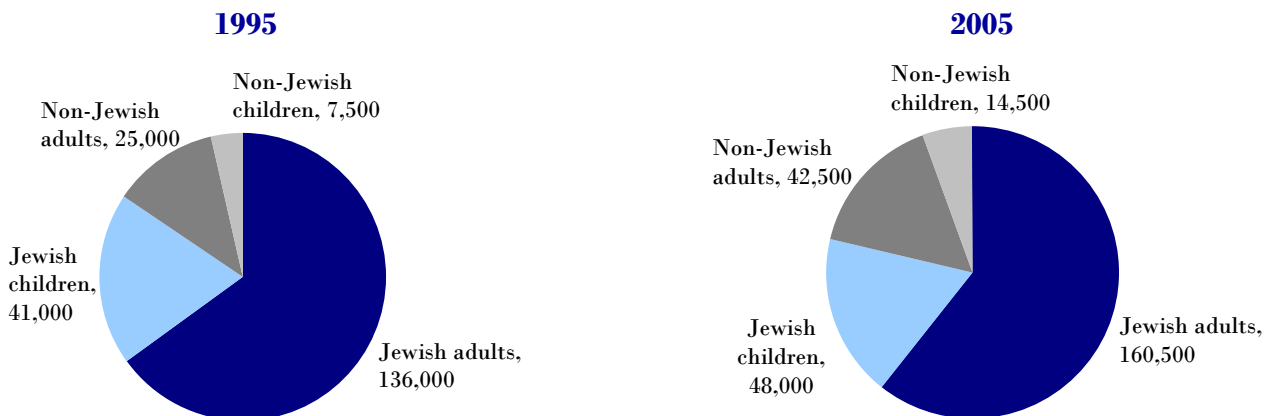
### Increase in Household Members

The most dramatic increase in the Jewish population is among the total number of individuals, Jewish and non-Jewish, living in Jewish households. Household members increased from an estimated 209,500 in 1995 to 265,500 in 2005.

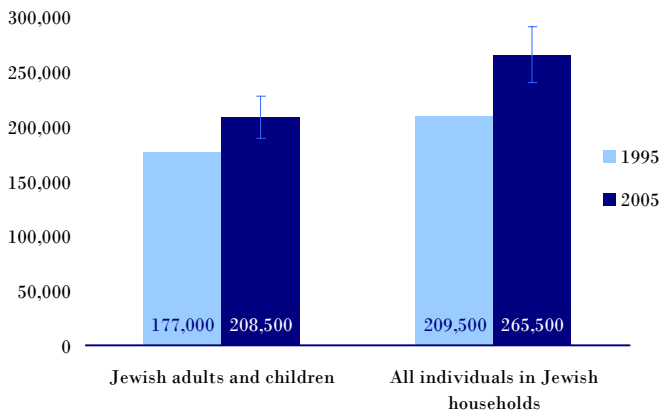
This sharp increase is due to the near-doubling of the number of non-Jewish adults and children living in Jewish households. The number of non-Jewish children was estimated to have increased from 7,500 in 1995 to 14,500 in 2005, while the number of non-Jewish adults increased from 25,000 in 1995 to 42,500 in 2005.

Figure 2.2 shows first, the increase of the Jewish population and second, the increase of Jewish household members.

**Figure 2.1: Jewish Household Population Estimates**



**Figure 2.2: Jewish Population and Jewish Household Population, 1995 and 2005**



Notes: Lines indicate 80% confidence intervals.

### Undercounted Groups

The 2005 Boston Jewish population estimate is probably conservative. Because the survey was conducted by telephone, some populations were difficult to reach and are likely to have been under-represented. This was probably true in 1995, as well. Several groups can be identified in 2005 as likely to have been undercounted. Table 2.1 lists these groups and provides rough estimates of their size.

**Table 2.1: Undercounted Groups<sup>4</sup>**

Group	Estimated Undercounts
Young adults without landline telephones	~ 2,500
College students in dormitories	~ 7,000
Residents in institutional facilities	~ 2,000
Adult immigrants from the Former Soviet Union	~ 7,000

### Reasons for Increase

The finding that the Boston Jewish population is larger than previous estimates runs counter to widely held perceptions of a declining American Jewish population, especially in the Northeast. Although it is impossible to ascertain the relative contribution of these factors, it is likely that the increase is a result of improved survey methodology, growth in the total population of Greater Boston and the phenomenon of a majority of children in intermarried households being raised as Jews.

### Improved Methodology

A variety of techniques designed to improve identification of Jewish households and improve the survey response rate were used in the 2005 Boston community study. Incentives were provided to increase cooperation rates and dozens of attempts were made to contact households by phone and mail. In addition, the use of the expanded list frame assured excellent coverage of affiliated Jewish households.

### Increase in the Total Population

Between 1995 and 2005, the total population of the area included in the Boston Jewish Community Study is estimated to have increased by approximately 100,000 people.<sup>5</sup> Although a proportionate increase in the Jewish population amounted to some of the estimated growth, it is important to remember that the context in which the increase occurred was one of general increase, not decline. Growth was particularly marked inside and along Route 128, where more than half of the Boston area Jewish community resides.



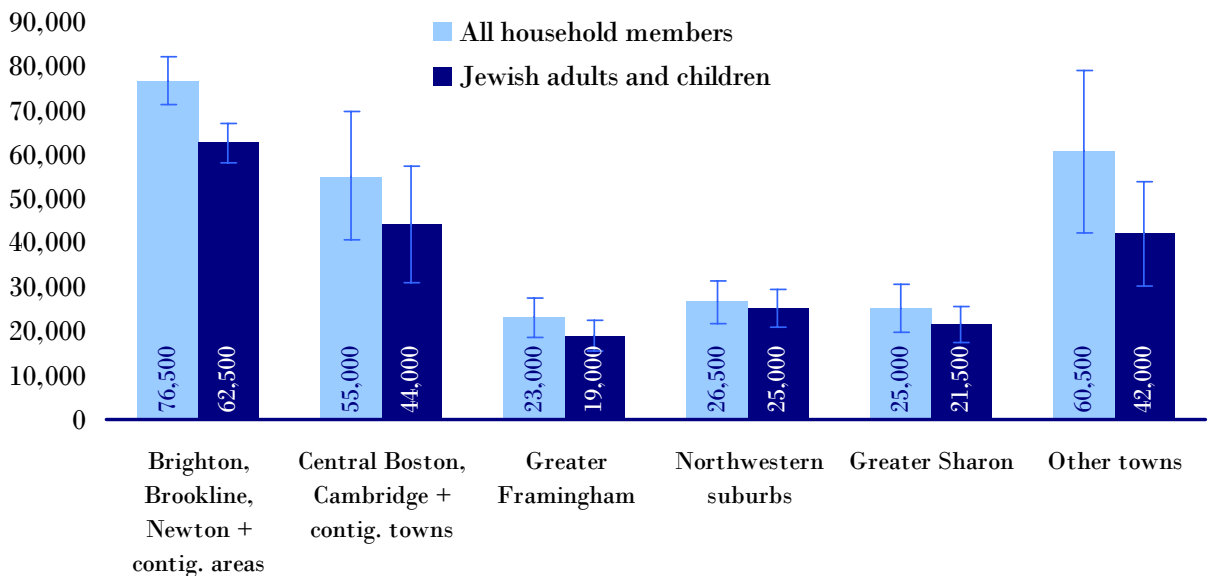
### Intermarried Households

Although intermarriage is generally presumed to have a negative impact on the size of the Jewish population, in Boston it appears to have increased the size of the Jewish population. The 2005 study estimates that 60 percent of children of intermarriages are being raised as Jews by religion. Intermarriage, therefore, is contributing to a net increase in the number of Jews (see Chapter 3, p. 11).

### Geographic Dispersion

The Boston Jewish community continues to be geographically dispersed (Figure 2.3), with half of the population residing within Route 128 and half outside of it. In comparison to the 1995 estimates, however, the overall picture today is one of relative equilibrium (Table 2.2). This newfound geographic stability represents a major change in the residential patterns of the Jewish community of Greater Boston, which have shifted westward for over a century. The historically central areas of Newton and Brookline, which house many communal institutions, continue to be home to the largest Jewish population.

**Figure 2.3: Jews and All Household Members by Area**



Notes: Lines indicate 80 percent confidence intervals. Totals may not add up due to rounding error (see endnotes for specific towns included in each of the areas).<sup>6</sup>

**Table 2.2: Jewish Population Estimates by Area**

<b>Area</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2005</b>
Brighton, Brookline, Newton, and Contiguous Areas	56,000	62,500
Central Boston, Cambridge, and Contiguous Towns <sup>7</sup>	24,000	44,000
Greater Framingham <sup>8</sup>	17,000	19,000
Northwestern Suburbs	19,000	25,000
Greater Sharon	22,000	21,500
Other towns	42,000	42,000

## Chapter 3: Who We Are

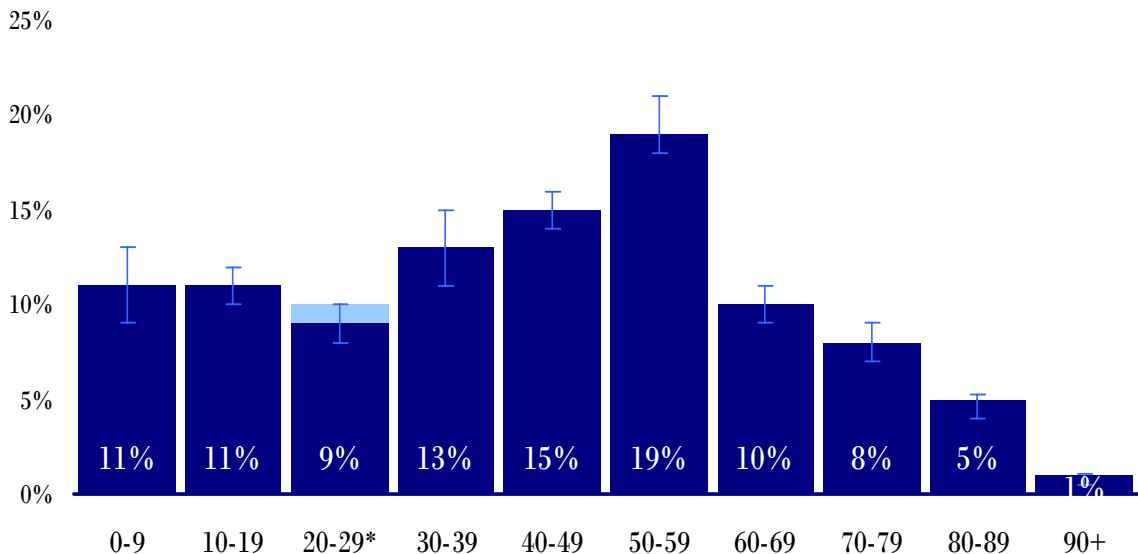
The Jewish community of Greater Boston is demographically, economically, and socially diverse. In general, the Jewish population is highly educated, well-off financially, and healthy. Nevertheless, on each of these dimensions of social status and health, some members of the Jewish community are significantly less well off.

In addition, the community includes a high proportion of “baby boomers” (those between 50 and 59 years of age). As they move into their retirement years, the proportion of elderly will increase, (assuming that individuals remain in the Boston area). This increase may result in important changes in the needs for social and health services.

### Age

Like most other communities, the Boston-area Jewish community has a pronounced demographic bulge of baby boomers (those aged 50 to 59). Over time, the age distribution of the population will equalize for those born after 1975 (Figure 3.1).

**Figure 3.1: Age Distribution**

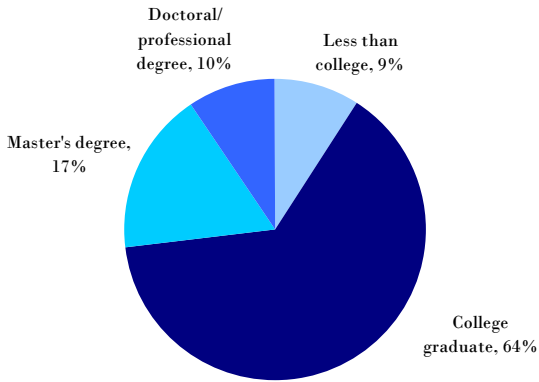


*Notes:* Jewish adults and children. \* Light blue area indicates estimated unenumerated young adults with no landline telephone.

### Education

The Boston Jewish community is highly educated, with 91 percent of Jews aged 25 and above having at least graduated college; 27 percent of Jews having completed one or more advanced degrees (Figure 3.2). By contrast, of non-Jews age 25 and above screened by the survey, 66 percent have at least graduated college and 9 percent have completed one or more advanced degrees.

**Figure 3.2: Education**



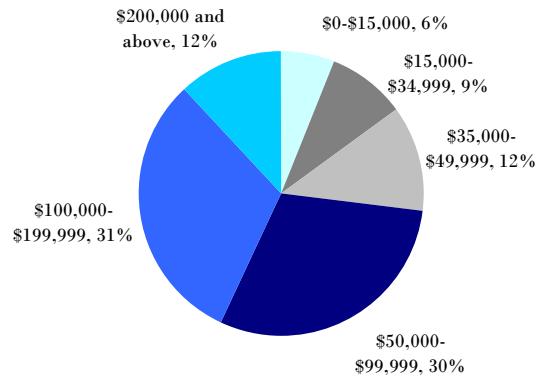
Notes: Jews aged 25 and above.

### Wealth and Poverty

The survey assessed the financial status of Jewish households in the Boston area by examining three different attributes: household income, self reported financial situation, and ability to pay for food and medicine.

Looking at income first, Jewish households in the Greater Boston area are represented in each income bracket but, as Figure 3.3 demonstrates, most appear to be financially secure or affluent.

**Figure 3.3: Household Income**

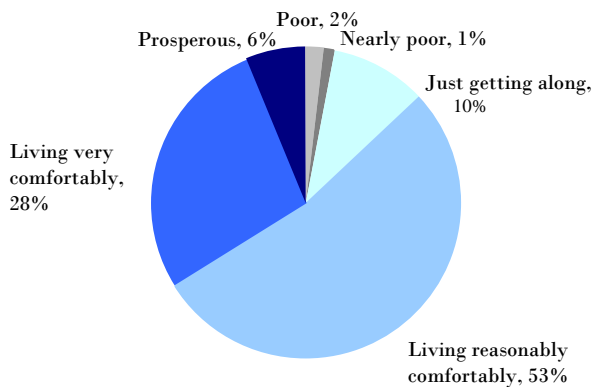


Notes: Jewish households.

As a guide to poverty, however, income is only a partial measure. Even those whose income is significantly higher than the federal definition of poverty, frequently experience significant financial difficulties. For the purpose of this study, the poverty line was set at 200 percent of the U.S. government measure.<sup>9</sup> Even this expanded definition describes, however, only seven percent of Jewish households.

In addition to this “objective” measure of income, the survey also asked respondents for their personal assessment of their financial situation. These subjective assessments are shown in Figure 3.4.

**Figure 3.4: Self Reported Financial Situation**

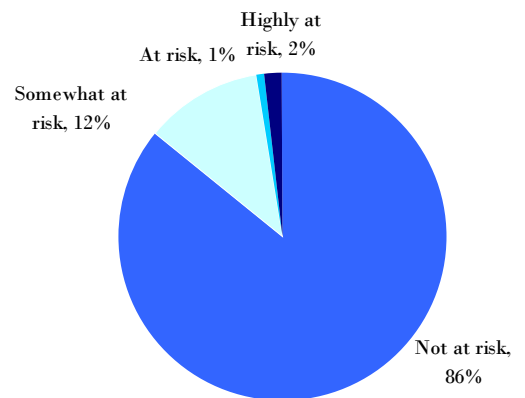


Notes: Jewish households.

As a further measure of risk of poverty, respondents were asked whether they or anyone in their household had cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there was not enough money for food in the past 12 months. They were also asked if they or anyone in their household needed prescription medicines but did not get them because they could not afford it. Almost no respondents reported reducing or skipping meals, but five percent of households reported they had been unable to purchase needed medication.

Being at or below 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines, self-reported financial situation of being poor or nearly poor, and having skipped meals or been unable to afford medicine were combined to form an index measuring the risk of poverty. Households with one indicator were classified as being somewhat at risk, households with two indicators as at risk, households with all three indicators as highly at risk, and those with no indicators of poverty as not at risk. Figure 3.5, below, shows the distribution of risk of poverty in the Jewish community. Altogether 14 percent of Jewish households had one or more indicators of risk of poverty, although only those with two or more indicators should be considered those in serious financial straits.

**Figure 3.5: Jewish Households by Risk of Poverty**

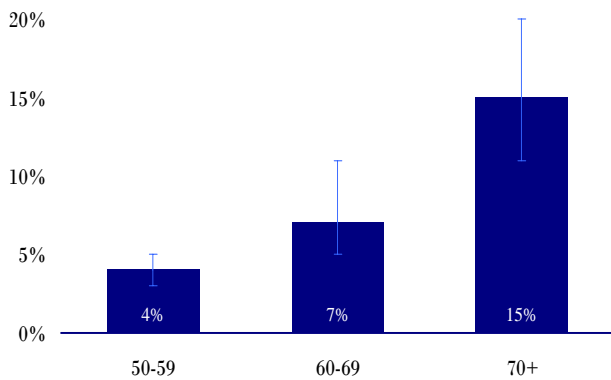


Notes: Jewish households.

### Health

As would be expected, the proportion of Jews with serious health conditions increases steadily with age, with 15 percent of Jews aged 70 estimated to be in this group (Figure 3.6).<sup>10</sup> As the baby boomers begin to enter this stage of their lives in a decade, there will likely be a significant increase in the number of Jews needing care.

**Figure 3.6: Health by Age**

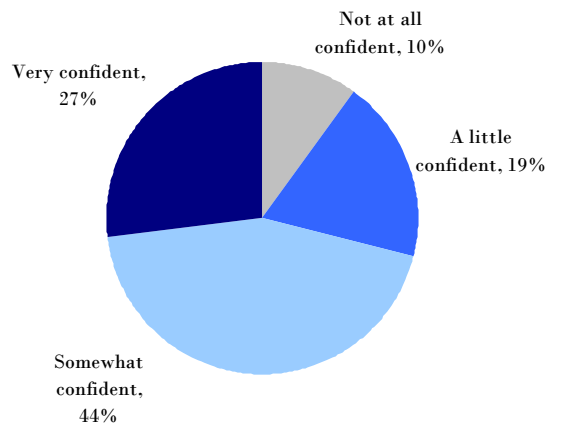


Notes: Jews aged 50 and above.

### Retirement

The financial resources of adults also tend to decline as they age and retire. Nearly 30 percent of Jews aged 55 or older stated that they had no or little confidence in their ability to finance their retirement (Figure 3.7). Those without sufficient resources will depend on their children or other sources for support. Clearly, these trends will be exacerbated as baby boomers reach retirement age.

**Figure 3.7: Confidence in Ability to Finance Retirement**

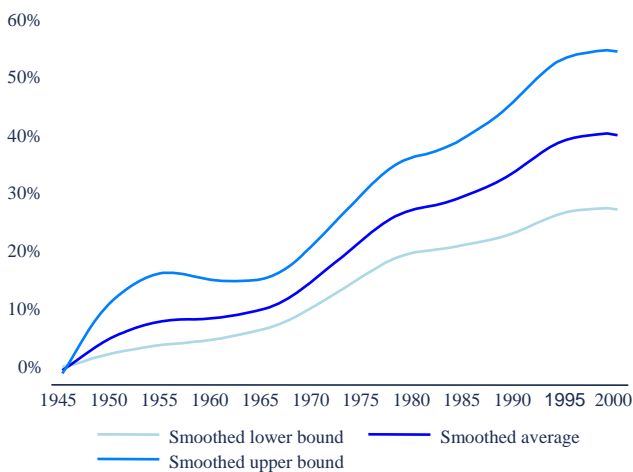


Notes: Jews aged 55 and older.

### Intermarriage

The Boston Jewish community has experienced consistent growth in the rate of intermarriage (see Figure 3.8, below).<sup>11</sup> Based on a Brandeis analysis of the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01 (NJPS 2000-01), the current rate of intermarriage (for marriages between 1996 and 2001) for the United States as a whole is 52 percent.<sup>12</sup> However, national rates appear to have held stable at around 50 percent for marriages that have taken place since 1985. The 37 percent current intermarriage rate estimated for Greater Boston is practically identical to the 36 percent current intermarriage rate (1998 to 2002) reported for the New York area.<sup>13</sup>

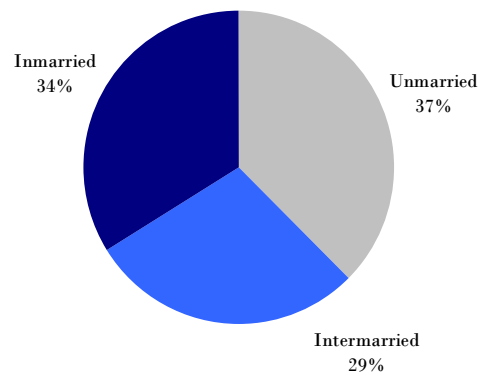
**Figure 3.8: Intermarriage Rate by Year of Marriage for Greater Boston**



Notes: Smoothed average.<sup>14</sup>

The impact of intermarriage on the Boston Jewish households can be seen in Figure 3.9. Although there are still more inmarried than intermarried households, the gap separating them is very narrow.<sup>15</sup> It is estimated that more than a third of Jewish households contain only unmarried adults.

**Figure 3.9: Marital Status of Jewish Households**



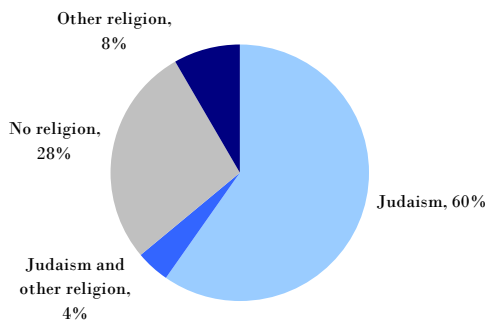
Compared to the estimates from the 1995 survey, the number of intermarried households increased from 18,000 in 1995 to 30,000 in 2005. At the same time, the number of inmarried households is estimated to have decreased from 39,000 in 1995 to 35,500 in 2005. This reflects the cumulative impact of intermarriage rates which began to increase dramatically in the 1970s. The number of not currently married households is estimated to have increased from 36,500 in 1995 to 39,500 in 2005.

### Children of Intermarried Households

The increasing proportion of intermarried households—which in 2005 approaches that of inmarried homes—has its most profound impact on how the children of Jews are being raised. The Boston Jewish community appears to be exceptional in this regard.

The 2005 study estimates that a majority of children in intermarried households are being raised as Jews by religion (see Figure 3.10). It is estimated that 60 percent are being raised as Jews, while more than a quarter of these children are being raised in “no religion.” A small proportion are being raised in multiple religions, or as Catholic or Protestant.

**Figure 3.10: Religion Raised of Children in Intermarried Households**



The estimated proportion of children being raised Jewish in Boston is substantially higher than that reported nationally or in other local community studies. In part, the Boston rate reflects the fact that far fewer respondents report children being raised in Judaism and some other religion.

By way of comparison, NJPS 2000-01 reported the proportion of children in intermarried households being raised as Jews variously as between 33 and 39 percent.<sup>16</sup> The 2002 Jewish Community Study of New York reported 30 percent of children of intermarriages were being raised as Jews, 18 percent in two religions, and 49 percent as not raised Jewish (4 percent were undecided).<sup>17</sup> The 2002 Pittsburgh Jewish Community Study reported that 36 percent of children were being raised as Jews, 11 percent in multiple religions, and 40 percent were not being raised Jewish (14 percent were undecided).<sup>18</sup>

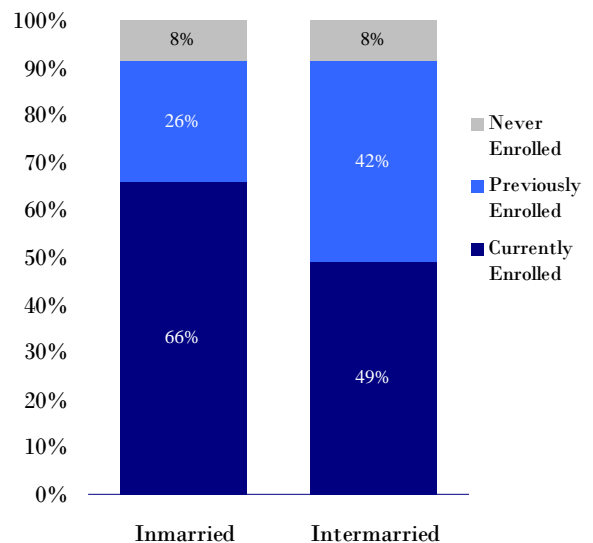
Underlying the finding that the majority of children in intermarried households are being raised as Jews is a gender difference.<sup>19</sup>

Intermarried households where the Jewish parent is female are significantly more likely to raise their children as Jews. Jewish mothers, married to non-Jews, are near-universal in reporting that they raised their children as Jews. In contrast, Jewish fathers in interfaith relationships are much less likely to report that they are raising their children as Jews.

Just as a person’s level of Jewish background influences how likely they are to become intermarried, it also influences the likelihood that a child of an intermarriage will be raised as a Jew—intermarried Jewish parents who grew up in a more ritually observant household are more likely to raise their children as Jews.

In terms of the level of involvement of children of intermarriages, they are as likely as other Jewish children to have received Jewish education (see Figure 3.11).<sup>20</sup> Children from inmarried families, however, are more likely to be currently enrolled in Jewish education. This effect is primarily a result of children in intermarried homes being less likely to continue Jewish education after celebrating bar or bat mitzvah.

**Figure 3.11: Enrollment Status of Jewish Children by Household Type**



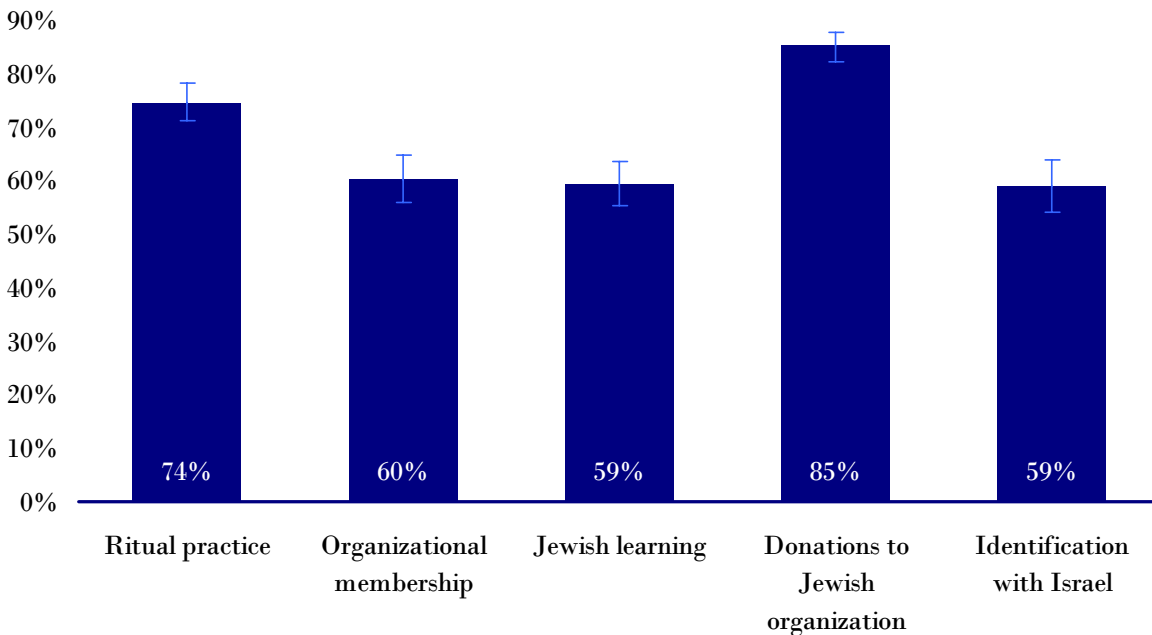


## Chapter 4: Our Connections

The pattern of diversity that appears in the demographic profile of the Boston area also appears with respect to connections to the Jewish community. Although no single connection encompasses the entire Jewish community, virtually all Jewish adults in Greater Boston have some type of connection to being Jewish. Figure 4.1 shows the percentage of Jewish adults by type of connection.

Only 4 percent of Jewish adults are estimated to have no connection to Jewish identity at all, while the mostly highly connected group (which has each type of connection shown in Figure 4.1) accounts for 26 percent of Jewish adults. Very few Jews are entirely unconnected, while the overwhelming majority of community members have multiple connections to Jewish identity.

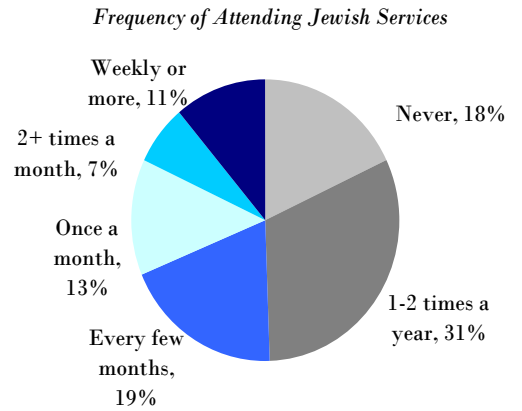
**Figure 4.1: Percentage of Jewish Adults by Type of Connection**



Notes: Jewish adults.<sup>21</sup>

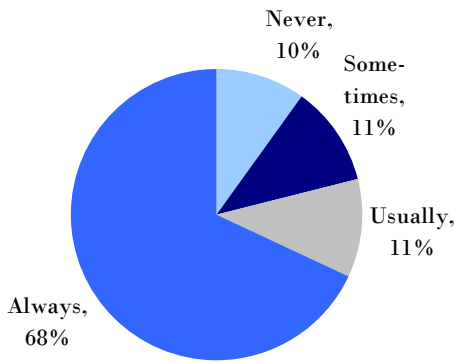
### Ritual Practice

Most Jews in Greater Boston participate in some form of Jewish ritual observance during the year (Figure 4.2). The most common observance is lighting Chanukah candles, followed by attending Passover Seders. At the other end of the spectrum, a little over a quarter of Jews in Boston report observing Jewish dietary laws strictly or to some extent.

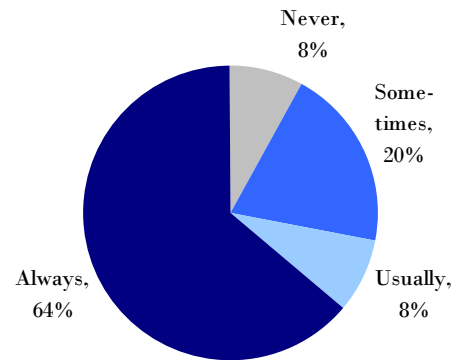


**Figure 4.2: Level of Observance of Selected Ritual Practices**

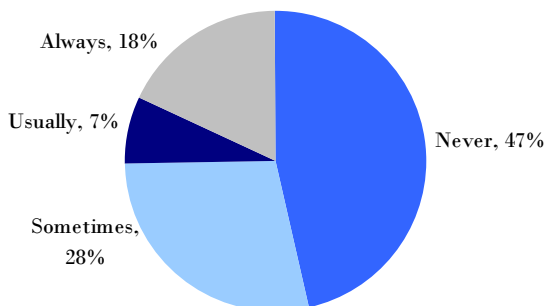
*Light Chanukah Candles*



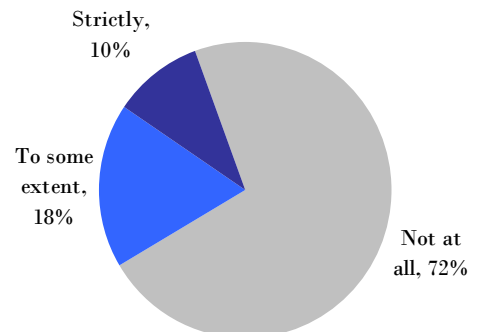
*Attend Passover Seder*



*Light Shabbat Candles*



*Observe Jewish Dietary Laws*



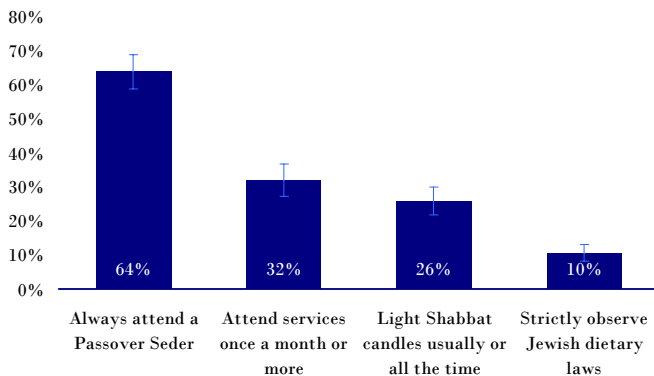
Notes: Jewish adults.

A scale becomes apparent in which those who follow the least observed rituals have an extremely high likelihood of following more commonly observed rituals:

- ❑ If one strictly observes Jewish dietary laws, then one will light Shabbat candles usually or all the time.
- ❑ If one lights Shabbat candles, then one will attend services once a month or more.
- ❑ If one attends services, then one will always attend a Passover Seder.

The elements of this scale are shown in Figure 4.3.

**Figure 4.3: Level of Observance of Selected Jewish Rituals**



Notes: Jewish adults.

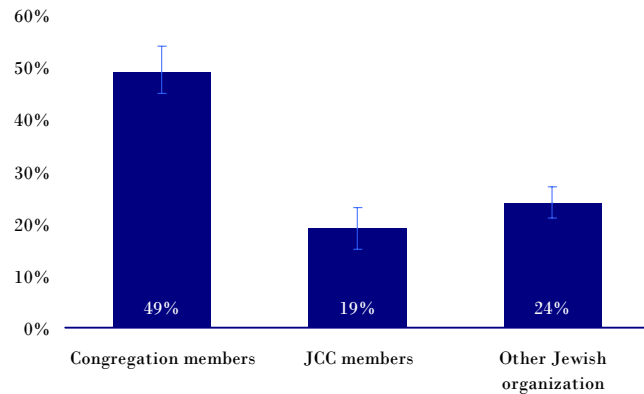
These figures indicate that nearly two-thirds of Boston Jews always attend a Seder, one-third attend services once a month or more, a quarter light Shabbat candles usually or all the time, and a tenth report strictly observing Jewish dietary laws. While some Jews are not connected to Jewish rituals, most of these are connected to Jewish life in some other way. Very few Jewish adults have no form of connection to Jewish life

at all, whether through ritual, philanthropy, Israel, Jewish organizations, or Jewish education.

### Organizational Membership

The core institution of the Boston Jewish community is the congregation. Nearly half of all Jewish adults are estimated to belong to a congregation (Figure 4.4).<sup>22</sup> About a fifth of Jewish adults report belonging to a Jewish Community Center.<sup>23</sup> Finally, about a quarter of Jews in Boston report belonging to a Jewish organization other than a JCC or congregation.

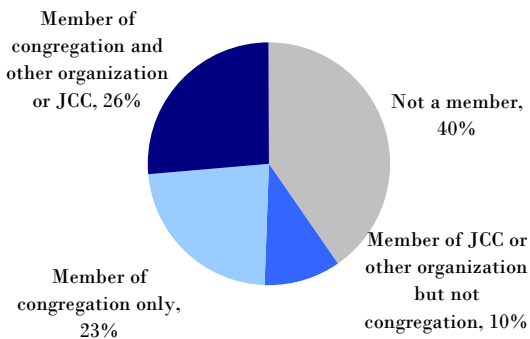
**Figure 4.4: Membership by Organizational Type**



Notes: Jewish adults.

Altogether, an estimated 60 percent of Jews in Boston belong to one or more Jewish organizations (Figure 4.5). A quarter of Boston Jews are estimated to belong to a congregation and a JCC or other Jewish organization, while another quarter belongs only to a congregation. Approximately 10 percent of Jews in the Greater Boston area belong to a JCC and/or another Jewish organization, but not to a congregation.

**Figure 4.5: Overlap in Organizational Membership**

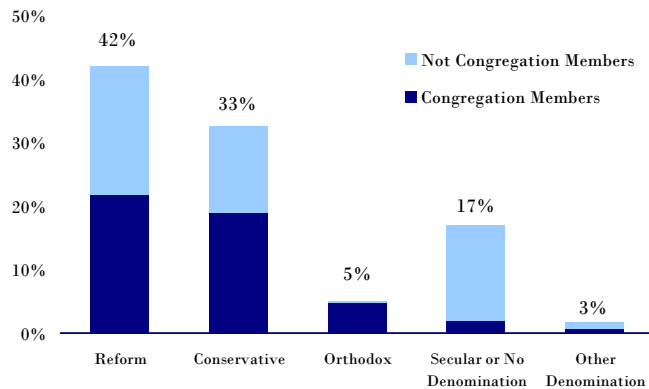


Notes: Jewish adults.

Congregational membership differs by denominational identification (see Figure 4.6). The percentage at the top of each column shows the proportion of Boston Jews identifying with that particular category. The individuals identifying with that category who report belonging to a Jewish congregation is shown by the relative size of the dark blue portion of the column.<sup>24</sup>

Being Orthodox is virtually synonymous with belonging to a congregation. On the other hand, large numbers of Jews who identify as Reform or Conservative do not belong to a synagogue, with a somewhat higher proportion of Conservative Jews reporting congregational membership. Those individuals who do not identify with a specific denomination or who describe themselves as secular Jews are unlikely to belong to any congregation.

**Figure 4.6: Congregational Membership by Current Denomination**

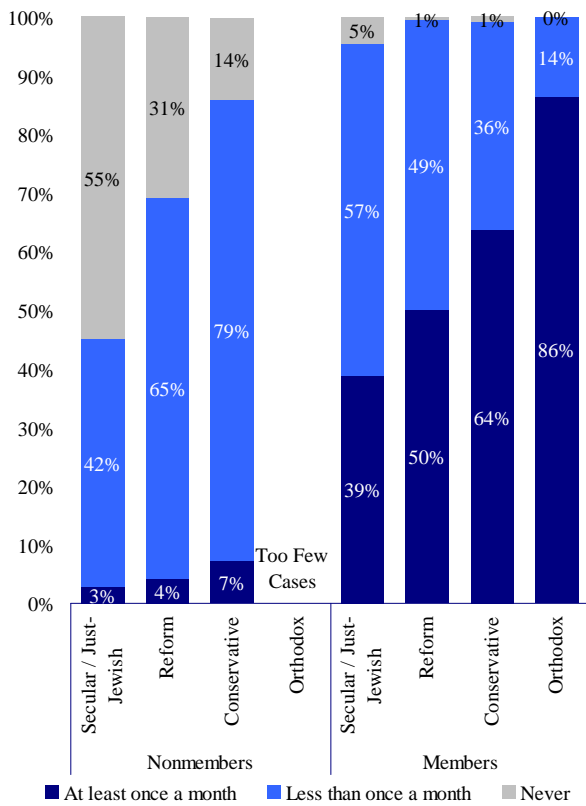


Notes: Jewish adults.

Congregational membership is strongly associated with having a child aged 6 to 14. When controlling for other variables, Jewish adults with a child in that age range are nearly three times more likely to be synagogue members than those with no children in the household.<sup>25</sup>

Congregational membership, however, is only imperfectly related to participation in congregational life. As Figure 4.7, below, shows, attendance at services monthly or more is strongly related to denominational identification. Orthodox Jews attend most frequently, followed by Conservative Jews, then Reform Jews, and finally Jews who do not identify with a particular denomination or who are secular.

**Figure 4.7: Percentage of Denominational Identifiers Attending Services Monthly or More**



## Jewish Learning

The Jewish community of Greater Boston is committed to the education of Jewish children and adults.

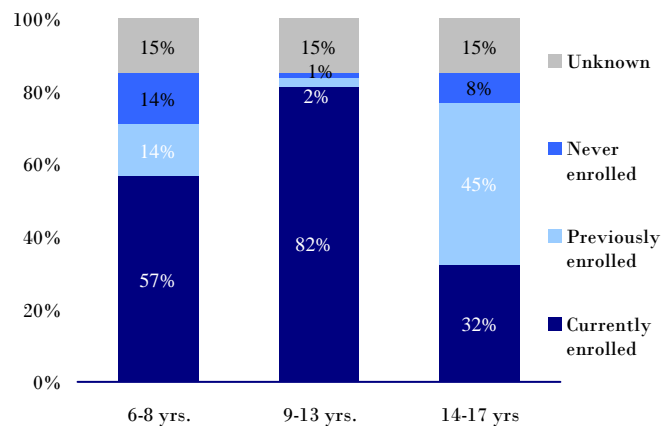
### Education of Jewish Adults

A minority of Jewish adults participate in adult education; 35 percent report attending adult education classes at least once during the past year. These included adult education programs like *Me'ah* and synagogue classes, but in some cases also included synagogue sermons.

### Education of Jewish Children

As the association between having a school age child below bar or bat mitzvah age and synagogue membership suggests, the age of a child is very closely associated with Jewish education (Figure 4.8).

**Figure 4.8: Participation in Jewish Education by Age of Child**



Notes: Jewish children ages 6 to 17.<sup>26</sup>

Enrollment in Jewish education is practically universal for Jewish children between the ages of 9 and 13 years; a sizeable majority of Jewish children aged 6 to 8 are or have been enrolled in Jewish education. The picture is very different for children aged 14 and above, where the proportion of those not enrolled exceeds those who currently receive Jewish education. (Note that there is no statistically significant difference between the proportions of 9 to 13 year-olds and 14 to 17 year-olds ever enrolled in Jewish education.)

The overwhelming majority of Jewish children are currently enrolled in some type of formal educational setting (Figure 4.9). As can be seen in Figure 4.8, many of the children who are not currently receiving Jewish education will be or were previously enrolled in a Jewish multi-day supplementary school, typically at a Jewish congregation. Children attending one day a week supplementary schools form the next largest group. Supplementary schools are offered by some Jewish congregations and at independent schools like the Sunday School for Jewish Studies in Waltham, the Kesher

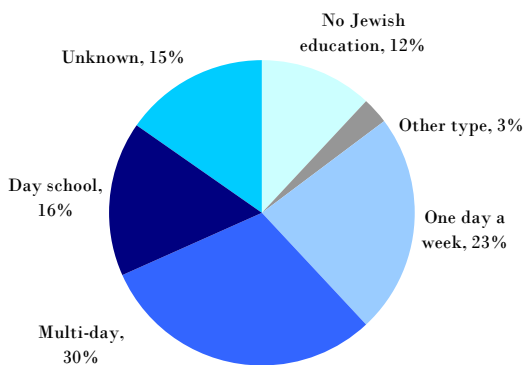
Community Hebrew Schools in Cambridge and Newton, and the Prozdor program for high school students at Hebrew College. Finally, a significant proportion of Jewish children attend one of Boston's Jewish day schools.<sup>27</sup>

### Philanthropy and Volunteering

Philanthropy and volunteering represent another connection to Jewish identity. As was seen earlier in Figure 4.1, giving to Jewish causes is the Jewish connection most often mentioned by respondents. However, as fundraisers and survey researchers alike will attest, giving is often overstated in surveys. Only 5 percent of Jewish adults report not having donated money to some cause in the previous year (Figure 4.10).

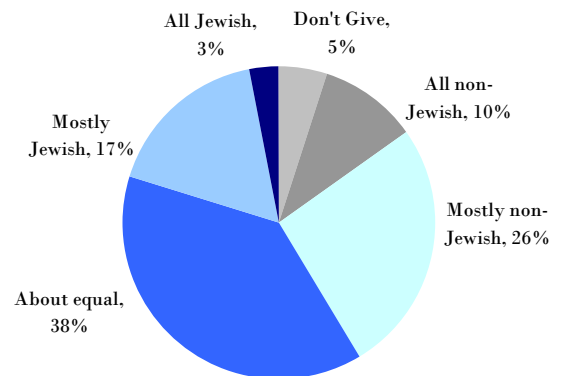
Another 36 percent of adults report giving most or all to non-Jewish causes. Close to two-fifths of adult Jews report giving about equally to Jewish and non-Jewish causes. Giving primarily to non-Jewish causes is more common among younger adults.

**Figure 4.9: Current Enrollment by Type of Jewish Education Received**



Notes: Jewish children ages 6 to 17.<sup>28</sup>

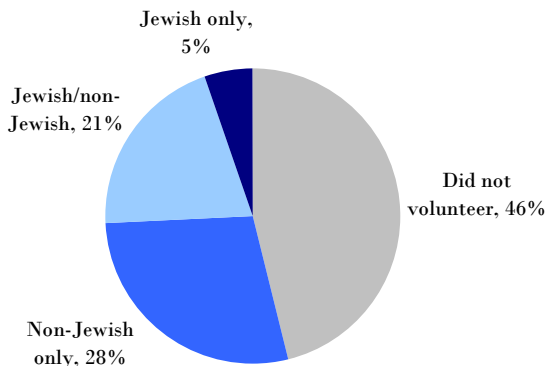
**Figure 4.10: Patterns of Charitable Giving**



Notes: Jewish adults.

Close to half of Boston Jews are estimated to have volunteered over the previous 12 months (Figure 4.11). More Jews volunteer exclusively for a non-Jewish organization than either volunteer for both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations or Jewish organizations alone.

**Figure 4.11: Patterns of Volunteering**



Notes: Jewish adults.

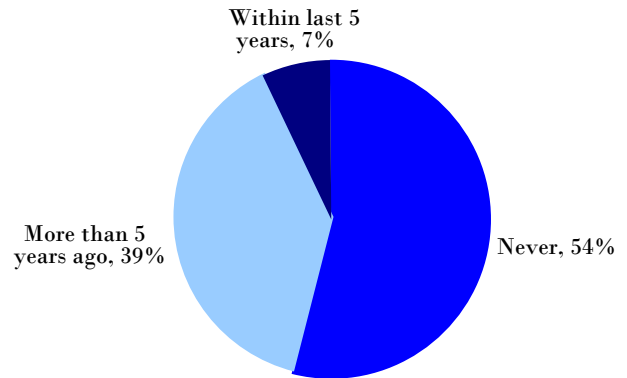
## Israel

The State of Israel plays a role in the institutional life of Boston Jewry. The community maintains an active relationship with its sister city of Haifa. In addition to missions sponsored by CJP, synagogues, and other organizations, the community also contributes to programs like Passport to Israel and birthright israel, which take teens and young adults to the Jewish state. Israel also plays a role in the lives of Boston Jews, both in terms of travel and feelings, which are examined below.

## Travel

Nearly half of Jewish adults in Boston are estimated to have traveled to Israel at some point in their lives, although only a relatively small portion have been to Israel during the last five years (Figure 4.12).

**Figure 4.12: Travel to Israel**

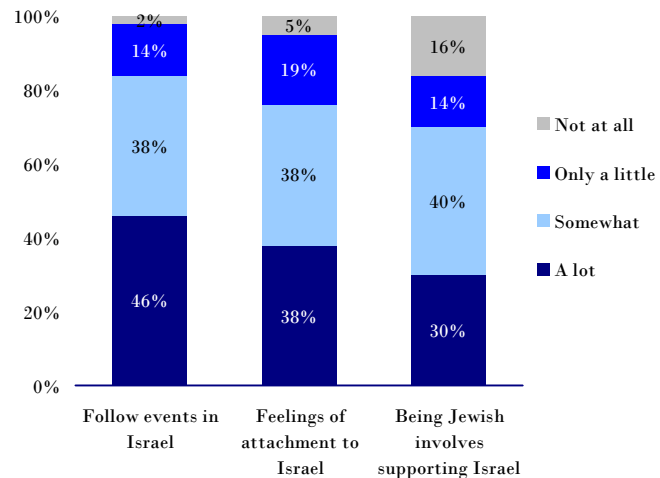


Notes: Jewish adults.

## Attitudes to Israel

Israel occupies an important but not central place in the minds of most Boston Jews. Figure 4.13, below, shows responses to three questions on attitudes to Israel. Taken as a whole, roughly two-fifths of respondents can be considered “most involved” with Israel, another two-fifths “moderately concerned” regarding Israel, and a fifth “largely disconnected” from issues concerning Israel.<sup>29</sup>

**Figure 4.13: Attitudes to Israel**



Notes: Jewish adults.

## Chapter 5: Looking Toward the Future

The 2005 CJP community study indicates the Jewish population of CJP's catchment area is large, diverse, mostly well-off, and engaged with Jewish life. The portrait of Greater Boston area Jewry provided by the study is very positive, particularly with respect to the Jewish connections of intermarried families. At the same time, the findings also point to ways that the community can enhance the means by which it engages individuals and families.

The study indicates that the 2005 population is 20 percent larger than indicated by the 1995 population study. There has been a substantial increase in the number of single adult and interfaith households. The number of intermarried households is approaching the number of households with two Jewish adults and is likely to surpass it in the near future. Importantly, however, the survey indicates that the majority of intermarried households with children are raising those children as Jews. Doing so is near-universal among Jewish women in interfaith relationships and somewhat less so for Jewish men.

In terms of socio-demographic characteristics, the 2005 study indicates that more than 25 percent of Greater Boston area Jews over 25 years of age have a graduate or professional degree and that almost all are college graduates. More than 40 percent report having household incomes over \$100,000 and more than 80 percent report that their financial situation is at least "reasonably comfortable." Prosperity is not, however, universal and many Boston Jews face difficult financial circumstances.

Virtually all Jewish adults in the Greater Boston area have some type of connection to Jewish life. The vast majority usually or always attend a Passover Seder and nearly a third attend services once a month or more. Just about 50 percent of adult Jews belong to a synagogue, *minyán*, *chavurah* or High Holiday congregation.

The overwhelming majority of Jewish parents provide formal Jewish education for their children. More than a half of community members have visited Israel.

Although the findings of the 2005 Boston Jewish Community Study suggest a growing and vibrant Jewish community, the study also identifies a host of challenges. One challenge is how to serve a large community. Sustaining a large network of institutions and programs, spread over a large geographic area, is inherently complex.

An additional challenge is presented by the diversity of the community, in particular, the large number of interfaith households. The educational needs of households with different levels of Jewish literacy require a diverse set of educational programs. As well, while engagement with Israel is high, relatively few have been to Israel within the last five years.

The 2005 study suggests that the challenge facing Boston is how to capitalize on its efforts over the last decade to create a Jewish community of *Torah*, *Chesed*, and *Tzedek*. The community has invested heavily in education and service programs, but not all Boston area Jews and Jewish households are touched by these efforts. Jewish tradition teaches, "It is not incumbent upon you to finish the task. Yet, you are not free to desist from it" (*Pirkei Avot* 2:21). The results of the present study will, it is hoped, aid the Boston Jewish community as it pursues its mission of enhancing the lives of all the members of its community.



## Appendix: Methodology

In much the same way that the 1965 study was at the cutting edge of methodological developments in research on Jewish communities, the fifth decennial study breaks new ground in its use of sophisticated survey sampling procedures and survey design.<sup>30</sup> These changes were necessitated by the increasingly difficult environment for telephone survey research. Falling response rates have significantly increased the difficulty and cost of reaching individual respondents. Substantial effort was devoted to identifying respondents and ensuring their participation. Furthermore, new screening procedures were developed to identify and interview the variety of Jews and people of Jewish background who live in the Boston area. Because of the rapid changes in the environment in which survey research is carried out, following previous methods would not have yielded accurate estimates. Although changing the protocol hindered direct comparison with earlier findings, such comparisons would have been difficult in any case.

### Sample

The 2005 study uses a dual frame sample composed of list and residual random digit dialing (RDD) frames, similar to the design used in the two previous surveys (see the Methodological Appendix). It differs from recent studies, however, by expanding the list frame beyond CJP alone to 84 lists from religious, cultural, educational, and social Jewish organizations, in order to minimize reliance on the far more expensive RDD frame. The RDD frame consisted of randomly generated numbers from 100 banks with three or more listed numbers in all telephone exchanges where one percent or more of the listed numbers were located in the towns and cities of the study. Telephone numbers of list households and business numbers were scrubbed from the RDD frame.

The RDD frame was stratified by estimated density of the Jewish population, modeled from the list frame. Higher incidence strata were oversampled and towns in the very low density stratum (less than five percent estimated incidence, no listed synagogue, and not contiguous with high incidence areas) were not included in the RDD sample. A total of 30,797 numbers were dialed in the RDD frame, 2,888 of which were screened. In all, full interviews were conducted with 401 eligible households from the RDD frame. A total of 6,724 numbers were dialed from the list frame, 2,254 of which were screened. A total of 1,365 interviews were completed with eligible households. The overall response rate (AAPOR RR2) for screener interviews was 40 percent; 34 percent for the RDD frame and 50 percent for the list frame.

### Bias

Although every effort has been made to prevent bias and identify and correct for it wherever possible, one significant source of bias remains. Young adults are universally difficult to sample as they are strongly associated with having cell phones rather than landline telephones. This poses major problems for survey research, as telephone surveys to cell phones are severely restricted by Federal Communications Commission regulations. In addition, some young people live in dormitories, which are outside of standard RDD frames. In the case of this survey, the size of the 18 to 29 year old Jewish population is likely underestimated. As a result, the sample of 18 to 29 year olds is likely biased with respect to measures of Jewish attitudes and observance, as well as marital status. Due to the present sampling environment, we were far more likely to reach young adults living at home or who married and had families than more typical situations.

In addition to young people, we may also have undercounted immigrants, in particular from the Former Soviet Union (FSU). Our experience with the list sample suggests that they are far more difficult to engage in an interview than other groups. In the list sample, this issue was addressed by having a native Russian speaker call those with Russian names. Government agencies report similar difficulties,<sup>31</sup> and the survey report includes an estimate of the number of unenumerated immigrants from the FSU.

### Survey Instrument

The survey questions were developed in close consultation with the study committee. Whenever possible, the questionnaire drew on items from previous surveys of Jewish communities, especially the 1995 Boston study. The instrument was divided into two parts. First, the informant (the person who picked up the telephone) was asked a set of screening questions to determine whether anyone in the households was eligible for the main interview and to collect some socio-demographic information. Eligible households were those that contained an adult who currently identified as a Jew, was raised as a Jew, or had a Jewish parent.

The socio-demographic questions, such as age, gender, education, and relationship of household members to one another were asked in the screener for several reasons. Any telephone survey that selects a random respondent from eligible adults in the household, as did the 2005 Boston study, will suffer some “drop out.” Asking basic demographic questions during the screener allows us to identify the bias caused by these drop outs and correct for it. In addition, a third of ineligible households were asked these questions to provide a basis for comparison with non-Jewish residents of the Boston area. After

the screener had determined that a household was eligible for the survey, a respondent was selected at random from eligible adults (currently Jewish, raised as a Jew, or had a Jewish parent) and was given the main questionnaire, which contained most of the questions that form the basis of this report. Whenever possible, questions were constructed in such a way as to minimize both potential bias and undue burden on the respondent. A complex series of “skip patterns” was also programmed in to ensure that respondents were only asked appropriate questions. The full interview took an average of 25 minutes, although length varied considerably depending on the composition of the household.

### Field Procedures

The survey was conducted by Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas, Inc, (SRBI), a national survey research firm known for its high-quality work. To address the increased difficulty of telephone survey research, staff from the Steinhardt Social Research Institute (SSRI) and SRBI jointly developed techniques aimed at increasing survey response and understanding nonresponse. Whenever possible, prenotification letters were sent to households prior to the first call attempt, which have been consistently shown to increase response rates. Half contained a token monetary incentive, while the other offered \$18 on completion of the survey. Studies have shown that incentives, particularly preincentives, significantly increase response rates. For households for which no address could be established (i.e. unlisted numbers on the RDD frame), a randomly selected half were offered the \$18 postincentive, while the other half were offered no incentive. To minimize nonresponse due to noncontact, up to 20 calls were made to each household to try to establish contact with a respondent. If the respondent refused the interview, an additional refusal

conversion letter and additional incentive (\$18 on completion of the interview) were sent and an additional 20 calls were made. After SRBI reported a number of non-English speaking respondents with distinctive Russian names, SSRI developed a Russian language instrument and administered a number of interviews with the help of a Russian-speaking staff member. In the case of those who refused the survey twice, a final letter was sent directing them to an abbreviated, online version of the survey.

### Weighting

Data were weighted for the probability of selection by sampling frame and stratum. In addition, poststratification weights were calculated that adjusted for variations in the probability of selection not accounted for by the study design. These weights adjust for differences in the response rates of various demographic groups. Due to large variation in the sizes of weights, weights were compressed to the power of .85. The specific level of compression was determined by analysis of mean standard error for a number of representative variables. Uncompressed weights are used for calculation of population size estimates.

### Analysis

Analyses were either done of Jewish households or adult Jews (who reported on household behaviors, such as how children are raised).<sup>32</sup> A Jewish household is a household that includes an adult Jew. A Jewish adult is an adult who currently identifies as a Jew or who was raised as a Jew and identifies with no religion (this latter group is small, but was included to parallel the inclusion of secular Jews in the 1995 survey). The 1995 data only included information on current religion and religion raised, not subjective identity. Secular Jews in

1995, then, had to be defined as people raised as Jews who currently identified with no religion. Jewish children are children who are being raised Jewish by religion or are being raised in no religion and being raised as Jews in some other way.

## Notes

1. See Methodological Appendix and Benjamin Phillips. 2006. "Numbering the Jews: Evaluating and Improving Surveys of American Jews." Ph.D. dissertation, Departments of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies and Sociology, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA.

2. CJP's previously published reports describing the 1995 Jewish population included non-Jewish members; to enable comparison, these data have been recalculated. Although a similar definition of Jewishness was used in the 1995 study, when reported, non-Jewish members of households were counted as Jews (e.g., the Christian spouse of a Jew was counted in the Jewish population figures). The definitions are not entirely identical however, because the 1995 study only asked about current and raised religion, not whether the respondent or other household members considered themselves Jewish. This might cause some secular Jews to be omitted from the 1995 figures. Unfortunately, data are not available to determine whether the apparent differences between the 1995 and 2005 represent a statistically significant increase. 2005 estimates include estimated population of unenumerated households in very low density areas and children of unreported religious status. 80% confidence intervals for 2005 estimates  $\pm 19,500$ .

3. Estimates of households include unenumerated households in very low density areas.

4. A major challenge to surveys that use telephone interviews has been a massive increase in the number of households that use cellular phones exclusively. Government rules severely restrict calls to cell phones and, increasingly, the telephone exchanges of mobile phones are not connected to the region where the caller lives. Research has shown that cell phone-only households are heavily concentrated among the young adult population. Accordingly, it is likely that young adults have been undercounted and that other efforts to include them were only partially successful. Based on estimates of households that exclusively use cell phones, it is estimated that approximately 2,500 young Jewish adults were not included in population estimates.

College students living in dormitories present similar challenges. For reasons of efficiency, most telephone surveys do not include the telephone banks that serve institutional residences. Based on Hillel estimates of the undergraduate Jewish student population of colleges and universities in the study area, it is estimated that

approximately 7,000 Jewish college students lived in dormitories and were not included in population estimates.

Similar problems apply to institutionalized populations, primarily residents of healthcare facilities. Based on U.S. Census data about institutionalized elders, it is estimated that there are approximately 2,000 Jews in long-term healthcare facilities.

Primary telephone interviews were only conducted in English. Households that could not be interviewed due to language difficulties and had Russian names were subsequently re-contacted by a Russian-speaking member of the Steinhardt Social Research Institute staff. Nevertheless, the overall estimate of adults born in the Former Soviet Union (FSU) appears to be too low. Based on U.S. Census estimates of individuals born in the Former Soviet Union, and adjusting for a small proportion that are presumed non-Jewish, the size of the population born in the FSU appears to be underestimated by approximately 50 percent. It is estimated that there are an additional 7,000 Russian-born adult immigrants living in the CJP area.

5. Estimates derived from projections using census estimates and 2010 middle-series population projections from the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER), the Massachusetts state data center for the U.S. Census. Unfortunately, the commonwealth decided to cease funding MISER early this decade, with the result that local data used to update census projections has not been available and, consequently, the 2010 estimates are not informed by the latest data.

6. "Brighton, Brookline, Newton + contiguous areas" is constituted by Allston, Brighton, Brookline, Needham, Newton, and Wellesley. "Central Boston, Cambridge and contiguous towns" is constituted by Arlington, Belmont, Cambridge, Central Boston, Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, Somerville, Waltham, Watertown, and West Roxbury. "Greater Framingham" is constituted by Ashland, Dover, Framingham, Natick, Marlborough, Sherborn, and Southborough. "Northwestern suburbs" is constituted by Lexington, Lincoln, Sudbury, Wayland, and Weston. "Greater Sharon" is constituted by Canton, Sharon, and Stoughton. "Other Towns" include Abington, Acton, Avon, Bedford, Bellingham, Boxboro, Braintree, Bridgewater, Brockton, Burlington, Carlisle, Charlestown, Chelsea, Cohasset, Concord,

Dedham, Dorchester, Dover, Duxbury, East Bridgewater, East Boston, Easton, Everett, Foxboro, Franklin, Halifax, Hanover, Hanson, Hingham, Holbrook, Holliston, Hopkinton, Hudson, Hull, Hyde Park, Kingston, Malden, Marshfield, Mattapan, Maynard, Medfield, Medford, Medway, Melrose, Milford, Millis, Milton, Norfolk, North Reading, Norwell, Norwood, Pembroke, Quincy, Randolph, Reading, Revere, Rockland, Roxbury, Scituate, South Boston, Stoneham, Stow, West Bridgewater, Wakefield, Walpole, Westwood, Weymouth, Whitman, Wilmington, Winchester, Winthrop, Woburn, and Wrentham.

7. The estimates for this area are particularly unstable, due to a wide range of variation in the probabilities of selection of individual cases. As a result, while an increase in Jewish population size in these areas is highly likely, there is considerable uncertainty about its magnitude.

8. The Greater Framingham area can be seen as the core of a broadly defined Metrowest, which includes communities from several of the areas listed above. The towns included are Ashland, Bellingham, Dover, Framingham, Franklin, Holliston, Hopkinton, Hudson, Marlborough, Medfield, Medway, Milford, Millis, Natick, Norfolk, Sherborn, Southborough, Sudbury, and Wayland. The Jewish population of Metrowest is estimated at 36,000 ( $\pm 10,000$ ), while the population living in Jewish households in Metrowest (Jews and non-Jews) is estimated at 44,000 ( $\pm 13,000$ ).

9. Federal poverty guidelines are issued annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and are based on household income and household size. The 2005 guidelines can be found at *Federal Register* 70(33):8373-5 and at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/05poverty.shtml>. As income was asked in categories, the poverty guidelines could only be approximated. The thresholds were: \$15,000 for one member, \$25,000 for two members, \$35,000 for three or four members, \$50,000 for five or more members.

10. A "serious health condition" was defined as being "any kind of physical, mental, or other health condition that has lasted for six months or more, which could limit or prevent educational opportunities or daily activities."

11. Inter marriages were defined as marriages between a Jew and a non-Jew. In other words, the calculation is based on the current status of adults. Inter marriage rates represent the probability a married adult Jew is married to a non-Jew (the "person rate"), not the proportion of intermarried households (the "couples rate").

12. NJPS estimates using weights adjusted for disproportionate drop-out of mixed ethno-religious status households between screening and main interview. This analysis uses the definition of intermarriage of the NJPS report.

13. Jacob B. Ukeles and Ron Miller. 2004. "Jewish Community Study of New York: 2002." UJA-Federation of New York, New York.

14. Compressed weights. Eighty percent confidence intervals. Smoothed 11 year moving averages use Lowess smoothing with a bandwidth of .4.

15. These households contain on average fewer people than do married households.

16. The 33 percent figure is cited in Laurence Kotler-Berkowitz et al. 2004. "The National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01: Strength, Challenge and Diversity in the American Jewish Population." United Jewish Communities, New York: 18, while the 39 percent figure is cited in Laurence Kotler-Berkowitz. 2005. "The Jewish Education of Jewish Children: Formal Schooling, Early Childhood Programs and Informal Experiences." United Jewish Communities, New York: , 6.

17. Ukeles and Miller, "Jewish Community Study of New York: 2002."

18. Jacob B. Ukeles and Ron Miller. 2003. "The 2002 Pittsburgh Jewish Community Study: Final Report." United Jewish Federation of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA.

19. Results of the logistic regression of gender of Jewish parent and childhood Jewish upbringing on whether child is being raised as a Jew.

20. Figure 3.11 is for children being raised Jewish by religion. Counting all children being raised Jewish changes the figures for children in intermarried households to 42 percent currently enrolled, 38 percent previously enrolled and 20 percent never enrolled.

21. Compressed weights. 80 percent confidence intervals. "Ritual practice" is defined as usually or always attending a Passover Seder. "Organizational membership is defined as self-reported belonging to a synagogue, JCC, or other Jewish organization. "Jewish learning" is defined as having attended any adult Jewish education classes or any other kind of adult Jewish learning, engaged in Jewish study by oneself, or enrolled one's child in a Jewish educational program over the past year. "Donations to a Jewish organization" is defined as self-report of any giving to a Jewish organization. Identification with Israel is defined as following events in Israel "a lot," feeling very attached to Israel, or feeling that being Jewish involves supporting Israel "a lot."

22. The question asked of respondents was whether anyone in the household belonged "to a synagogue, temple, minyan, or high holiday congregation." The broad wording was deliberate as there is tremendous variation in types of Jewish congregation in the Greater Boston area. The community is home to many *minyanim* and *chavurot*, lay-led organizations, some of which have more than 100 member families. There are High Holiday congregations, some long-established, that meet each year for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Some of these congregations are connected to campus Hillel organizations, several of which offer services during the High Holidays to non-student populations.

23. This exceeds the known membership of the Jewish Community Centers of Greater Boston. It seems likely that the figure represents JCC affiliation, including other forms of association with JCCs, like pool membership, sending children to a JCC-owned summer camp, and similar categories.

24. This does not mean that a person necessarily belongs to a congregation affiliated with the movement with which they identify.

25. Jewish adults. Compressed weights. Odds ratio of logistic regression analysis holding constant childhood ritual engagement, marital status, and denomination raised.

26. Compressed weights. Unknown category includes children of unknown religious status and unenumerated children in low density areas.

27. It is likely somewhat below the 16 percent reported in the figure below—Jewish day schools in the Boston area report an aggregate enrollment of 2,650 students, which amounts to about 11 percent of Jewish children of school age.

28. Compressed weights. Unknown category includes children of unknown religious status and unenumerated children in low density areas.

29. Although the overall patterns of responses were largely consistent, a person who answered one way to one measure did not necessarily do so for each other; 22 percent gave the most attached answer to each question, 12 percent to two questions, and 25 percent to one question, the rest only affirmed less attached categories.

30. See Phillips. "Numbering the Jews: Evaluating and Improving Surveys of American Jews" for details of the history of local study methodology and the ways in which the present study used/developed new methods.

31. See Office of Refugee and Immigrant Health, Bureau of Family and Community Health, Massachusetts Department of Health. 2000. *Refugees and Immigrants in Massachusetts 2000*. Massachusetts Department of Health, Boston, MA.

32. Analyses were conducted using statistical software (Stata 9 survey procedures) that takes into account the effect of the sampling scheme on the precision of estimates. This is the first Jewish population survey of which we are aware to utilize these analytic methods. The effect is to increase the variance and avoid Type I errors (false positives).