

Some Important Findings from the 2017 Jewish Federation of Omaha Population Study

The purpose of this study is to provide information that is useful for planning purposes for the entire Omaha Jewish community. This study is based upon 552 random telephone interviews both with households who are known to the community and with households who are unknown. We called landlines and cell phones and used special methods to obtain a reasonable sample of households who are cell phone only with non-local area codes. We present here a few of the more important findings that are detailed in the 900-page Main Report.

Population Size and Distribution

- 12,700 persons live in 5,150 Jewish households in Omaha. Of the 12,700 persons in Jewish households, 8,800 persons (69%) are Jewish. 1.8% of households in Omaha are Jewish households.
- The number of Jews in Omaha has remained relatively constant over the past 7 years, although the number of synagogue member households decreased by 139 from 2006-2016, JCC member households decreased by 209, and the number of households who donated to the Jewish Federation decreased by 476. There were approximately 726 donor deaths from 2006-2016.
- Over the past 7 years, the number of Jewish households in East Omaha increased by 175, while the number in West Omaha decreased by 350.
- 60% of Jewish households live in West Omaha; 24%, in East Omaha; and 16%, in Other Areas.

Migration

- 43% of adults in Jewish households were born in Omaha. 71% were born in the Midwest.
- 8% of adults in Jewish households are foreign born. Omaha has 500 persons living in households from the former Soviet Union.
- About 145 Jewish households move into Omaha annually.
- 37% of adult children from Jewish households establish their homes in Omaha.

Basic Demographic Characteristics

- The median age of persons in Jewish households is 46 years, compared to 38 years for all Americans. 24% of persons in Jewish households are age 65 and over, compared to 14% for all Americans.
- The median age in East Omaha is 40 years, compared to 52 years in West Omaha.
- There are 3,000 persons age 65 and over.
- 1,400 children are being raised Jewish or part Jewish and 1,200 children are not being raised Jewish in Jewish households.

- 13% of adults in Jewish households are age 35-49, the fourth lowest percentage among about 55 comparison Jewish communities*.
- 20% of households contain children.
- 36% of persons age 75 and over live alone.
- There are many more single females than single males.
- 15% of adults are currently divorced, the highest percentage of about 50 comparison Jewish communities*.
- 68% of adults age 25 and over in Jewish households have a 4-year college degree, compared to 29% of all Americans.
- 36% of adults in Jewish households age 65 and over are employed, the third highest of about 50 comparison Jewish communities*.
- Median Jewish household income is \$75,000, compared to \$54,000 for all US households.
- 2% of Jewish households in Omaha include at least one LGBT adult.

Jewish Connectivity

- 3% of Jewish households are Orthodox, 13% Conservative, 38% Reform, and 46% Just Jewish.
- The percentage of Conservative households is the lowest of about 60 comparison Jewish communities*. The percentage of Just Jewish is the third highest. The percentages of Orthodox and Reform are about average.
- 95% of respondents are proud to be Jewish and 78% have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people.
- Compared to about 40-55 other Jewish communities, Omaha has the third lowest percentage with a mezuzah on the front door, the second lowest percentage who always or usually participate in a Passover Seder, and the lowest percentage who always or usually light Chanukah candles. The percentage who always or usually light Shabbat candles and who keep kosher are about average.
- The percentage who attend synagogue services once per month or more is about average compared to 50 comparison Jewish communities*.
- 58% of married couples are intermarried. The 58% is the third highest of about 55 comparison Jewish communities*.
- While only 34% of households are synagogue members, 64% participated in some type of activity at a synagogue in the past year. The 34% is well below average among about 55 comparison Jewish communities*.
- 29% of households are JCC members, the fourth highest percentage of about 55 JCCs*.

- 50% of households participated in some activity at the JCC in the past year. 20% joined or were regular participants in a Jewish organization. 9% of households participated in some type of activity at, or sponsored by, Chabad in the past year.
- 97% of respondents feel very welcome or somewhat welcome at Jewish institutions in Omaha and 49% of respondents feel very much or somewhat a part of the Omaha Jewish community.
- 86% of Jewish households are involved Jewishly in some way. (Follow at least one home religious practice and/or attend synagogue at least once per year and/or join a synagogue, JCC, or Jewish organization and/or donate to a Jewish charity.)

Jewish Education

- Attending Jewish day school, Jewish overnight camp, Jewish teenage youth group, and/or college Hillel correlates positively with exhibiting more Jewish behaviors as adults.
- 26% of respondents attended some kind of organized adult Jewish education class or program in the past year. 36% engaged in some other type of Jewish learning. 55% went to a Jewish museum or engaged in some type of cultural Jewish programming.
- Three-fourths of Jewish children age 5-12 receive some formal Jewish education.
- 80% of children who went to a day camp this past summer went to a Jewish day camp.
- 96% of children who went to an overnight camp this past summer went to a Jewish overnight camp.

Jewish Agencies

- The Jewish Federation and its agencies are very well known to the Jewish community and very well perceived.

Social Services

- 25% of households contain a health-limited member, the highest of about 40 comparison Jewish communities*.
- 20% of households with adults age 18-64 needed job counseling in the past year.
- Among households age 75 and over, the greatest need is for in-home health care (24%), followed by senior transportation (19%).
- 69% of households age 75 and over have local adult children.

Israel

- 45% of households contain at least one member who visited Israel, including 25% with a Jewish group.
- Trips to Israel, particularly trips with a Jewish group, correlate highly with Jewish behaviors.
- 25% of households with children have sent at least one child to Israel, well above average among 45 comparison Jewish communities*.

- The percentage of respondents who are extremely or very attached to Israel (53%) is about average among about 35 comparison Jewish communities*.

Anti-Semitism

- 15% of respondents experienced anti-Semitism in Omaha in the past year.
- 30% of children experienced anti-Semitism in Omaha in the past year, the second highest among about 30 comparison Jewish communities*.
- 33% of respondents perceive a great deal/moderate amount of anti-Semitism in Omaha, well below average among about 35 comparison Jewish communities*.

Media

- The *Jewish Press* is widely read and well perceived. Only 29% of respondents never read the paper, the second lowest percentage among about 35 comparison Jewish newspapers*. 39% perceive the local Jewish newspaper as excellent, the highest of 22 comparison Jewish newspapers*.

Philanthropy

- 42% of respondents claim to have donated to the Jewish Federation in the past year; 28%, to other Jewish charities; 51%, to some Jewish charity (either Federation or some other charity); and 81%, to non-Jewish charities.
- The majority of respondents would rather see more of their Federation gift remain in the local community.

Political

- 51% of respondents are Democrats, 17% are Republicans, and 33% are independents.
- 98% of Jews are registered to vote.

*Not all comparison communities used the same survey questions thus the variance in number of comparison communities.

► | These findings are just a few of the more important findings from the 900-page Main Report. These results will be used by all Omaha Jewish institutions for the next decade to guide decision making and to structure priorities in the Jewish community.

► | The study was conducted by Dr. Ira M. Sheskin, Ph.D., from the University of Miami, for the Jewish Federation of Omaha. Dr. Sheskin has conducted more than 45 similar studies in Jewish communities around the country. All reports are available at www.jewishdatabank.org