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Jewish Federation[®]
OF GREATER METROWEST NJ

2020 Greater MetroWest NJ **Jewish Community Study**



Senior Adults and Health

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The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS), founded in 1980, is dedicated to providing independent, high-quality research on issues related to contemporary Jewish life.

The Cohen Center is also the home of the Steinhardt Social Research Institute (SSRI). Established in 2005, SSRI uses innovative research methods to collect and analyze sociodemographic data on the Jewish community.

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INTRODUCTION

The 2020 Greater MetroWest Jewish Community Study, conducted by the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) at Brandeis University, employed innovative state-of-the-art methods to create a comprehensive portrait of the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of the Jewish community in Greater MetroWest New Jersey (GMW). The principal goal of this study is to highlight data and findings that will be useful for the Greater MetroWest Jewish Federation and other community organizations and funders for communal planning. This study is intended to promote an understanding of the community and to aid strategic planning, program development, and policies to support and enhance Jewish life.

The study overview report¹ serves as an introduction to all of the topic reports. It provides key findings, terminology, and a summary of the methodology used in the study.

This topic report focuses on the focuses on Jewish senior adults and health concerns in the GMW Jewish community. Related reports cover:

- Community connections
- Finances
- Geography
- Israel
- Jewish children
- Jewish engagement
- Philanthropy

Greater MetroWest Jewish Population, 2020

Total Jewish households	56,800
Total people in Jewish households	155,000
Total Jews	122,300
Adults	
Jewish	96,900
Non-Jewish	26,600
Children	
Jewish	25,400
Non-Jewish	4,300

Numbers do not add up to total due to rounding.

The present study provides a portrait of the Greater MetroWest Jewish community as it was in the fall of 2020, six months into the COVID-19 pandemic. Although some survey responses were likely to be influenced by the special circumstances of the pandemic, the questions were designed to provide a demographic and attitudinal portrait of the stable characteristics of the community. The

¹ View at <<https://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/greater-metrowest-nj-report.html>>

survey questionnaire was developed by CMJS in consultation with the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ. As necessary, questions were modified to account for changes in usual patterns of behavior during the pandemic.

In total, 3,295 eligible households completed surveys between October 1 and December 11, 2020. The response rate for the primary sample, which was designed to be representative of the entire community, was 33.4% (AAPOR RR4²).

Notes on this report:

- In order to extrapolate respondent data to the entire community, individual respondents were assigned a “survey weight” so that their survey responses represent the proportion of the overall community that has similar demographic characteristics. Unless otherwise specified, this report presents weighted survey data in the form of percentages or proportions. Accordingly, these data should be read not as the percentage or proportion of respondents who answered each question in a given way, but as the percentage or proportion of the population that we estimate would answer each question in that way if each member of the population had been surveyed.
- Because estimates are based on a probability survey, no one estimate should be considered an exact measurement. As a guideline, the reader should assume that all estimates have a range of plus or minus five points; therefore, reported differences between any two numbers of less than 10 percentage points may not necessarily reflect true differences in the population.
- When a percentage is between 0% and 0.5% and would otherwise round down to 0%, the number is denoted as < 1%. When there are insufficient respondents in a particular subgroup for reporting reliable information, the estimate is shown as “—”.
- When reporting qualitative or open-ended data, sample verbatim quotes from respondents appear in italics. These responses are not representative of the views of all community members but add context and depth to the representative quantitative data included in the report. Comments may have been edited for clarity and to remove any identifying information. When the number of respondents who mentioned a particular theme is shown, that number indicated the actual number of respondents and not the weighted share of the population they represent.
- Comparisons across surveys: As part of the goal to assess trends, we made comparisons of answers to data from national studies (in particular, the CMJS/SSRI American Jewish Population Project (ajpp.brandeis.edu) and the Pew Research Center report, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”³

² American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) is a professional organization that sets standards for survey research.

³ Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020” (Washington DC: Pew Research Center, 2021). <https://www.pewforum.org/2021/05/11/jewish-americans-in-2020/>

KEY FINDINGS: SENIOR ADULTS

- There are 28,200 Jewish adults ages 65+ living in Greater MetroWest. Thirty-eight percent of Jewish senior adults are under age 70, and 21% are ages 80 or older.
- Just over half of Jewish households in which seniors live include a married/partnered couple without children, and seniors living alone account for about one third (34%) of senior Jewish households.
- Eight percent of senior Jewish households are located in an assisted living facility, nursing home, or independent senior living building or community. An additional 13% of Jewish seniors are considering moving to some type of senior living residence within the next five years.
- The financial well-being of Jewish seniors is similar to that of all GMW Jewish households. However, Jewish seniors reported significantly fewer financial worries, compared to other Jewish households in GMW.
- All age groups have similar shares of Jewish adults who are in the Immersed engagement group. However, one third (32%) of Jewish adults ages 65-74 fall in the Minimally Involved group, a larger share than among younger and older adults.

KEY FINDINGS: HEALTH AND DISABILITY

- Nearly one-in-five GMW Jewish households includes someone who has a chronic health issue, special need, or disability that limits work, school, or activities. Chronic illness is the most common health issue followed by physical disability. Older Jewish adults have significantly higher rates of health issues, special need, or disability.
- Seventeen percent of GMW Jewish households include someone who provides or manages the care of a close relative or friend on a regular basis (aside from routine childcare). Two thirds of these Jewish households provide or manage the care for a parent or in-law.
- Among Jewish households in which someone has a health issue or disability, half indicated that Jewish organizations are not at all accommodating to their health condition.
- Of Jewish households that require a service for a health issue, special need, or disability, 9% sought and received services from Jewish-sponsored organizations. The majority of these households (89%) did not seek services from Jewish organizations.

SENIOR JEWISH ADULTS

There are 28,200 Jewish adults ages 65+ who live in Greater MetroWest and another 6,000 adults ages 65+ who are not Jewish who live in GMW Jewish households (Table 1).

Table 1. Age distribution of senior adults in Jewish households

Age	Jewish seniors		Non-Jewish seniors	
	Number	Percentage of Jewish seniors	Number	Percentage of non-Jewish seniors
65-69	10,800	38%	3,300	55%
70-74	5,400	19%	1,600	26%
75-79	6,300	22%	500	9%
80-84	2,400	9%	500	8%
85+	3,300	12%	100	2%
Total	28,200	100%	6,000	100%

Among all Jewish adults in Greater MetroWest, 17% are ages 65-74 and 12% are ages 75 or older (Table 2). This is similar to the age pattern found among Jews nationally.

Table 2. Age of Jewish adults in Greater MetroWest 2020

Age	GMW Jewish adults (%)	US Jews ⁴ (%)
Gen Z		
Age 18-24	5	11
Millennial/Gen X		
Age 25-34	12	15
Age 35-44	10	13
Age 45-54	21	13
Baby Boomers		
Age 55-64	24	19
Age 65-74	17	16
Greatest/Silent		
Age 75+	12	14
Total	100	100

Where do seniors live?

Similar to that of all Jewish adults in GMW, the largest share of Jewish seniors live in Essex and East Morris. However, differences by region are not statistically significant. Thirty-six percent of Jewish

⁴ American Jewish Population Project, <https://ajpp.brandeis.edu/>

adults ages 75 and up live in Essex County, and 32% of Jewish adults ages 75 and up live in East Morris (Table 3).

Table 3. Regional distribution of senior Jewish adults

	All Jewish adults (%)	Jewish adults 65-74 (%)	Jewish adults 75+ (%)
Essex	38	37	36
Union	15	11	18
East Morris	27	33	32
Western GMW	20	19	14
Total	100	100	100

Just over half of Jewish households in which seniors live (53%) include a married or partnered couple without children, and seniors living alone account for about one third (34%) of senior Jewish households (Table 4). Ten percent of Jewish households with a senior include other adults who are not a spouse (primarily adult children). Just 3% of Jewish households with seniors also include minor children.

NOTE: In this report, a senior Jewish household is defined as one in which a person age 65+ lives alone or with a spouse. Jewish households in which a senior lives with married adult children are not counted as senior Jewish households.

Table 4. Household composition of senior Jewish adults

	Jewish households in which a senior resides (%)
Minor child	3
Couple no child	53
Single no child	34
Multiple adults	10
Total	100

Eight percent of GMW senior Jewish households reside in an assisted living facility, nursing home, or independent senior living building or community (Table 5). An additional 13% of GMW Jewish households are considering moving to some type of senior living residence within the next five years.

Table 5. Senior living facilities and assisted living

	All Jewish households 65 and older (%)	Jewish households 65-74 (%)	Jewish households 75+ (%)
Currently reside in senior living facility	8	1	17
Not currently, but considering	13	9	18
No senior facility	79	90	65
Total	100	100	100

Six percent of Jewish households with adults under age 75 have a parent or close relative who resides in an assisted living facility, nursing home, or independent senior living building/community

within GMW. An additional 10% of Jewish households with adults under age 75 have close relatives who live in one of these facilities outside of GMW.

Financial status

The financial well-being of Jewish senior households is similar to that of all GMW Jewish households. There are no statistically significant differences in self-described standard of living, income, or assets (Tables 6, 7, and 8).

Table 6. Self-described household standard of living

Category	Response option	All Jewish households (%)	Jewish household 65-74 (%)	Jewish household 75+ (%)
Struggling	Cannot make ends meet	2	2	1
	Just managing to make ends meet	16	14	9
Enough	Have enough money	40	43	53
Extra	Have some extra money	24	22	20
Well-off	Well-off	18	20	16
	Total	100	100	100

Table 7. Pre-tax income in 2019

	All Jewish households (%)	Jewish household 65-74 (%)	Jewish household 75+ (%)
<100% FPL	1	1	1
100-149% FPL	1	<1	2
150-250% FPL	3	4	6
250% FPL-\$149,999	36	42	45
\$150,000-199,999	10	9	6
\$200,000-249,999	8	6	3
\$250,000-299,999	4	2	1
\$300,000 or more	12	6	2
Prefer not to answer	23	25	33
Don't know	2	4	1
Total	100	100	100

Table 8. Household assets

	All Jewish households (%)	Jewish household 65-74 (%)	Jewish household 75+ (%)
Less than \$1 million	23	17	29
\$1 million or more	27	36	18
Not asked (struggling/managing)	19	16	14
Prefer not to answer	27	28	34
Don't know	5	3	4
Total	100	100	100

Jewish seniors report significantly fewer financial worries compared to other Jewish adults in GMW. (Table 9). In particular, they are less worried about retirement expenses than Jewish adults ages 40-64 and less concerned about current savings and investments.

Comparing younger and older seniors, Jewish adults ages 75 and older are more worried about affording their basic living expenses than are Jewish adults ages 65-74. For all other worries, there are no statistically significant differences between younger and older seniors.

Table 9. Financial worries for adults (Somewhat/very worried)

	All Jewish adults (%)	Jewish adults 65-74 (%)	Jewish adults 75+ (%)
Any worry	59	37	40
Afford basic living expenses	20	9	18
Afford healthcare	20	14	12
Afford usual standard of living	33	22	23
Enough money for retirement (of age 40+)	43	23	20
Keep current savings	41	26	24
Afford synagogue membership	18	11	5

Jewish seniors reported similar levels of financial challenges as all GMW Jewish households (Table 10) and similar changes to Jewish life brought about by financial constraints (Table 11).

Table 10. Financial challenges for households

	All Jewish households (%)	Jewish household 65-74 (%)	Jewish household 75+ (%)
Cannot afford a necessity, past year	7	6	6
Cannot afford a necessity, past three years	10	8	8
>30% of income spent on housing	15	16	15
Cannot cover unexpected \$400 expense	3	2	3
Cannot cover three months of expenses	19	14	16
Received government benefit	26	38	31

Table 11. Change in Jewish life due to financial constraints

	All Jewish households (%)	Jewish household 65-74 (%)	Jewish household 75+ (%)
Any change in Jewish life due to financial constraints	14	13	13
Stop synagogue membership (of nonmembers)	1	<1	<1
Need financial aid for synagogue membership (of members)	3	3	1
Reduce donations to Jewish causes	7	7	11
Reduce participation in Jewish activities	5	5	4
Other	1	1	1

Jewish engagement of seniors

The Index of Jewish Engagement uses ritual, personal, individual, and communal behaviors to classify patterns of Jewish engagement in Greater MetroWest (see Jewish Engagement report for details). This typology indicates some differences in Jewish engagement by age. All age groups have approximately the same share of Jewish adults in the Immersed engagement group (Table 12). However, one third of Jewish adults ages 65-74 fall into the Minimally Involved group. Although there are differences in denomination by age, these differences are not statistically significant and are not shown here.

Table 12. Jewish engagement of Jewish seniors

	All Jewish adults (%)	Jewish adults 65-74 (%)	Jewish adults 75+ (%)
Minimally Involved	16	32	16
Familial	27	18	26
Personal	27	25	38
Involved	15	10	7
Immersed	14	15	12
Total	100	100	100

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Nearly one-in-five GMW Jewish households (19%) include someone who has a chronic health issue, special need, or disability that limits work, school, or activities (Table 13). Chronic illness is the most common issue (9% of all Jewish households) and represents nearly half of Jewish households that have any health issue, special need, or disability. Physical disability is the next most common health issue, present in 8% of all Jewish households and 42% of Jewish households with a health issue.

NOTE: In this report, we consider a Jewish household as having a disability if any adult or child has a chronic health issue, special need, or disability. There were insufficient responses to report on adult and children disability separately.

Table 13. Jewish households with a chronic health issue, special need, or disability that limits work, school, or activities

	Jewish households with a chronic health issue, special need, or disability (%)	All Jewish households (%)
Chronic illness	46	9
Physical disability	42	8
Mental illness/behavioral health	22	4
Developmental disability	17	3
Intellectual disability	4	1
Other	10	2
Any health issue, special need, or disability	100	19

Older Jewish adults have significantly higher rates of health issues, special need, or disability (Table 14). Twenty-seven percent of those Jewish adults ages 65 to 74 and 27% of those ages 75 and older have a health issue in the household, compared to 12 to 17% of the younger age groups.

Table 14. Health issues by age

	Any health issue, special need, or disability (%)	Physical disability in the household (%)	Chronic illness in the household (%)
All Jewish households	19	8	9
Age			
18-34	12	3	9
35-49	12	4	6
50-64	17	5	5
65-74	27	10	17
75+	27	18	8

Few Jewish adults reported that they have no one living nearby who they can rely on (Table 15). However, Jewish seniors 75 and older were less likely to report that they have a lot of people they can rely on.

Table 15. Support networks

“Thinking about your personal support network—relatives and friends living nearby who you can rely on for help or support—how many people would you say you can rely on?”

	All Jewish adults (%)	Jewish adults 65-74 (%)	Jewish adults 75+ (%)
No one	4	7	4
Just a few people	50	59	70
A fair amount of people	32	22	23
A lot of people	14	12	3

Caregiving

Seventeen percent of GMW Jewish households include someone who provides or manages the care of a close relative or friend on a regular basis (aside from routine childcare) (Table 16). Two thirds (66%) of these Jewish households provide or manage care for a parent or in-law.

Table 16. Managing and providing care

	All Jewish households (%)	Caregiver households (%)
Provide any care	17	100
Parent or in-law	11	66
Spouse/partner	2	9
Adult child	1	7
Minor child	<1	<1
Someone else	3	19

Health services

Of the 19% of Jewish households in which someone has a health issue, almost half (43%) received all necessary services (Table 17), 23% did not receive all required services, and one third (33%) of Jewish households with a health issue did not need any services. About one-in-four (24%) older Jewish adults did not receive necessary services. In all, 13% of all Jewish households needed a service for a health issue, whether or not they received it.

Table 17. Health services

	All Jewish households with a health issue (%)	Jewish household 65-74 with a health issue (%)	Jewish household 75+ with a health issue (%)
All needed services received	43	37	54
Not all needed services received	23	20	24
No services needed	33	43	23
Total	100	100	100

Very few Jewish adults (3%) reported that lack of transportation was a barrier in accessing appointments or activities (Table 18). This finding was the same for Jewish seniors.

Table 18. Barriers to accessing transportation

“In the past year but prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, how often were you unable to get to an appointment or activity because you did not have transportation?”

	All Jewish adults (%)	Jewish adults 65-74 (%)	Jewish adults 75+ (%)
Never	97	98	98
Rarely	2	2	2
Sometimes	1	<1	<1
Often	<1	<1	<1
Total	100	100	100

Services provided by Jewish organizations

Of the 13% of Jewish households that required a service for a health issue, special need, or disability in the past year, 9% sought and received services from Jewish-sponsored organizations (Table 19). The majority of these Jewish households (89%) did not seek services from Jewish organizations.

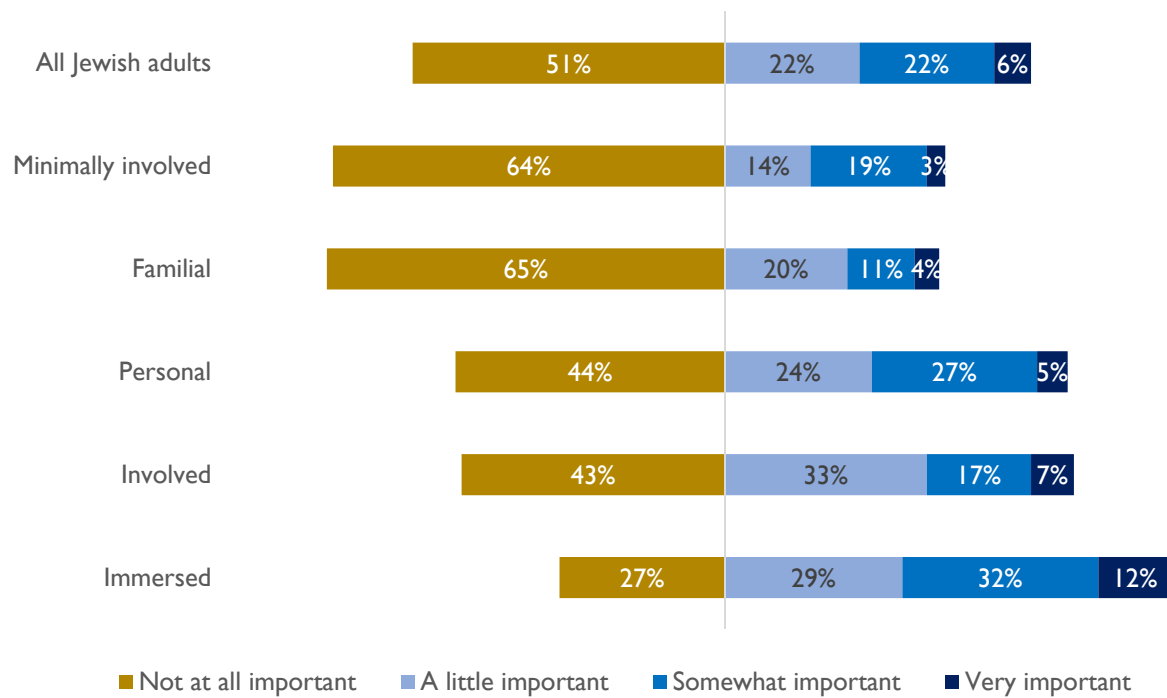
Table 19. Service needs met by Jewish-sponsored organizations

“In the past year, have you sought or received any services from Jewish-sponsored organizations related to this health issue, special need, or disability?”

	Jewish households that required a service (%)
Received services	9
Sought but did not receive services	2
Sought from non-Jewish organizations only	89
Total	100

Regardless of whether Jewish households currently need services, about half of Jewish households stated that it is at least a little important that they receive any services from a Jewish organization, and half of Jewish households indicated it is not at all important (Figure 1). Jewish adults who are more engaged with Jewish life think it is more important to receive services from a Jewish organization.

Figure 1. Importance of receiving services from a Jewish organization by Jewish engagement



Jewish adults who are financially struggling think it is more important to get services from Jewish organizations, compared to those who are more financially stable (Table 20).

Table 20. Importance of receiving services from a Jewish organization by financial situation

	Not at all/A little important (%)	Somewhat/Very important (%)	Total
All Jewish adults	73	27	100
Financial situation			
Struggling	59	41	100
Enough	74	26	100
Extra	82	18	100
Well-off	74	26	100

Jewish households in which someone has a health issue or disability were asked how accommodating they found Jewish organizations to be to their health condition. About half (51%) of these households indicated that Jewish organizations were not at all accommodating of the health issue or disability, 10% reported they were a little accommodating, 22% indicated they were somewhat accommodating, and 17% found Jewish organizations very accommodating.

2020 Greater MetroWest NJ Jewish Community Study

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