

**Brandeis**

COHEN CENTER FOR  
MODERN JEWISH STUDIES

STEINHARDT SOCIAL  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE



## 2020 Greater MetroWest NJ **Jewish Community Study**



# Israel Experiences and Connections

Revised 12/23/21

© 2021 Brandeis University Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies  
[www.brandeis.edu/cmjs](http://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs)

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.

Recommended Citation:

Aronson, J.K., Brookner, M.A., Saxe, L. (2021). *2020 Greater MetroWest Jewish Community Study*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies and Steinhardt Social Research Institute, Brandeis University.  
[www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/greater-metrowest-nj-report.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/greater-metrowest-nj-report.html)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	2
Key Findings: Israel Experiences and Connections .....	5
Feelings of Connection to Israel.....	6
Israelis in GMW .....	7
Israel travel .....	7
Israel-directed philanthropy.....	9
News about Israel.....	9

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Feelings of connection to Israel .....	6
Table 2. Frequency of Israel travel.....	7
Table 3. Differences in Israel travel experiences.....	8
Table 4. Travel to Israel and feeling of connection .....	8
Table 5. Types of Israel travel.....	9
Table 6. Sought news about Israel in the past year.....	9
Table 7. Following Israel-related news and connection to Israel .....	9

# 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 report<sup>1</sup> 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 community's connection to Israel. Related reports cover:

- Community connections
- Finances
- Geography
- Jewish children
- Jewish engagement
- Philanthropy/Volunteering
- Seniors/Health and disability

More details about each item are available in the report appendix and through analysis of the dataset.

## 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

---

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

provide a demographic and attitudinal portrait of the stable characteristics of the community. The 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 RR4<sup>2</sup>).

### 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 “—”.
- Comparisons across subgroups: When there is a statistically significant difference among subgroups, we are 95% confident that at least some of the differences in estimates reflect actual differences and are not just the result of random chance. In the tables in this report, we designate these differences by shading them light gray. Findings that are not statistically significant are not shaded. Even in cases where there are statistically significant differences in a full set of responses, it is unlikely that there are statistically significant differences between every pair of numbers. As noted above, even when a table is statistically significant, differences between any two numbers of less than 10 percentage points may not reflect true differences in the population.
- 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.

---

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

- 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](http://ajpp.brandeis.edu)) and the Pew Research Center report, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> 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:

## ISRAEL EXPERIENCES AND CONNECTIONS

- About one-in-three Jewish adults (34%) feel very connected to Israel. Most Jewish adults feel some level of connection to Israel; only 11% of Jewish adults feel no connection to Israel
- Among the Jewish adults in the Personal engagement group, half feel very connected to Israel. Although those in the Personal group do not engage in many aspects of Jewish life to the degree that those in the Involved and Immersed groups do, it is clear that Israel is a particular area of interest.
- A majority of Jewish adults have been to Israel at least once, and 22% have been to Israel at least four times or have lived there. More than one-in-three Jewish adults (37%) have never been to Israel.
- A larger share of younger Jewish adults in GMW have been to Israel than older adults. About 40% of Jewish adults under age 50 have been to Israel multiple times or have lived there.
- Travel to Israel and feeling of connection to Israel are correlated. Fifty-eight percent of Jewish adults who have been to Israel multiple times feel very connected to Israel, compared to 17% of Jewish adults who have never been to Israel.
- Four-in-ten Jewish adults ages 40 and under (41%) have been on a Birthright Israel trip. In addition, three-in-ten Jewish households (30%) include a Birthright Israel participant or a parent of a participant.
- One-in-five Jewish adults (22%) consider Israel to be one of the top three causes they care about most.

# FEELINGS OF CONNECTION TO ISRAEL

About one-in-three (34%) Jewish adults feel very connected to Israel. Most Jewish adults feel some level of connection to Israel; only 11% of Jewish adults feel no connection to Israel (Table 1). As a whole, the GMW Jewish community feels more strongly connected to Israel than does the US Jewish community: Nationally, 25% of Jewish adults are “very” and 32% are “somewhat” emotionally attached to Israel.<sup>4</sup>

Jewish adults in the Immersed and Personal Jewish engagement groups<sup>5</sup> demonstrate a similar pattern of connection to Israel, compared to those in the other engagement groups. Jewish adults in the Immersed group have the strongest connection to Israel, with 60% feeling very connected. Despite differences in many other Jewish behaviors, a similar share of the Personal group (50%), feel very connected to Israel.

Table 1. Feelings of connection to Israel

Connection to Israel	Not at all connected (%)	A little (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very connected (%)	Total (%)
<b>All Jewish adults</b>	11	22	32	34	100
<b>Age</b>					
18-34	14	22	20	44	100
35-49	13	21	34	33	100
50-64	13	20	31	35	100
65-74	8	26	37	29	100
75+	9	21	39	32	100
<b>Region</b>					
Essex	16	24	28	32	100
Union	10	29	28	33	100
Morris	12	17	40	31	100
Western GMW	5	16	32	47	100
<b>Jewish engagement</b>					
Minimally Involved	25	24	32	19	100
Familial	22	27	32	19	100
Personal	2	14	34	50	100
Involved	11	34	34	22	100
Immersed	1	11	27	61	100
<b>Financial situation</b>					
Struggling	6	18	20	55	100
Enough	9	21	35	34	100
Extra	23	21	35	20	100
Well-off	9	24	33	34	100

<sup>4</sup> Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”

<sup>5</sup> See report on Jewish engagement for an explanation of these groups.



## Israelis in GMW

Six percent of Jewish adults are Israeli citizens, and 5% of households include an Israeli citizen. Fifty-two percent of those holding Israeli citizenship are ages 35-49. Fifty-one percent of households that have an Israeli citizen have a K-12 child. Among all US Jewish adults, 3% were born in Israel themselves or have at least one parent who was born in Israel.<sup>6</sup>

## Israel travel

Almost two thirds of Jewish adults in GMW have been to Israel at least once, and 22% have been to Israel at least four times or have lived there (Table 2). More than one-in-three Jewish adults (37%) have never been to Israel. A greater share of Jewish adults in GMW have gone to Israel compared to all US Jews, with 45% of Jewish adults nationally having traveled to Israel at least once.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 2. Frequency of Israel travel**

Frequency of travel to Israel	All Jewish adults (%)
Never	37
Once	30
Twice	7
Three times	4
Four times or more	11
Previously lived in Israel	11
Total	100

A larger share of younger Jewish adults in GMW have been to Israel than older adults (Table 3). About 40% of Jewish adults under age 50 have been to Israel multiple times or have lived there.

As was seen above, Jewish adults in the Immersed and Personal engagement groups demonstrate a similar pattern of travel to Israel, compared to those in the other engagement groups. These two groups include the largest share of Jewish adults who have been to Israel once or multiple times.

Jewish adults who describe their financial situation as “having extra money” are less likely to have gone to Israel than those whose financial situation is less strong (“struggling” and “enough”) and those who are well-off.

There are no statistically significant regional differences in travel to Israel.

---

<sup>6</sup> Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”

<sup>7</sup> Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”

Table 3. Differences in Israel travel experiences

	Never (%)	Once (%)	Multiple/lived in Israel (%)	Total (%)
<b>All Jewish adults</b>	37	30	33	100
<b>Age*</b>				
18-34	27	34	40	100
35-49	32	28	41	100
50-64	44	25	32	100
65-74	39	38	24	100
75+	41	24	34	100
<b>Region</b>				
Essex	38	29	33	100
Union	44	25	30	100
Morris	32	37	31	100
Western GMW	41	21	38	100
<b>Jewish engagement</b>				
Minimally Involved	63	21	16	100
Familial	50	32	18	100
Personal	27	30	43	100
Involved	40	36	24	100
Immersed	11	23	66	100
<b>Financial situation</b>				
Struggling	36	31	32	100
Enough	34	32	34	100
Extra	48	25	27	100
Well-off	33	28	38	100

Travel to Israel and feeling of connection to Israel are correlated (Table 4). Fifty-eight percent of Jewish adults who have been to Israel multiple times feel very connected to Israel, compared to 17% of Jewish adults who have never been to Israel.

Table 4. Travel to Israel and feeling of connection

	Not at all connected (%)	A little (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very connected (%)	Total (%)
<b>All Jewish adults</b>	11	22	32	34	100
<b>Frequency of travel to Israel</b>					
Never	25	29	30	17	100
Once	7	27	41	26	100
Multiple	2	11	29	58	100
Lived in Israel	1	4	23	72	100

Four-in-ten Jewish adults ages 47 and younger (41%) have been on a Birthright Israel trip (Table 5). In addition, 30% of Jewish households include a Birthright Israel participant or a parent of a participant (not shown in table). Eighteen percent of all Jewish adults in GMW have traveled to Israel with a Jewish organization.

Table 5. Types of Israel travel

	All Jewish adults (%)
Birthright (among age eligible)	41
Educational or volunteer	14
Trip sponsored by a Jewish organization	18
Other	49

## Israel-directed philanthropy

Respondents were asked to list their top three philanthropic causes. About one-in-five Jewish adults (22%) listed Israel as a top cause (see Philanthropy report for details).

## News about Israel

About three quarters of Jewish adults reported having sought news about Israel at least once in the past year (Table 6). Thirty-eight percent of Jewish adults reported seeking news about Israel frequently (10 or more times) in the past year.

Table 6. Sought news about Israel in the past year

	All Jewish adults (%)
Never	24
1-3 times	23
4-9 times	16
10 or more times	38
Total	100

Jewish adults who sought news about Israel are more likely to feel strongly connected to Israel than those who did not seek out Israel-related news (Table 7). Thirty-nine percent of Jewish adults who never sought news about Israel do not feel at all connected to Israel.

Table 7. Following Israel-related news and connection to Israel

	Not at all connected (%)	A little (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very connected (%)	Total (%)
<b>All Jewish adults</b>	11	22	32	34	100
<b>Sought news about Israel in the past year</b>					
Never	39	33	20	8	100
1-3 times	9	36	37	18	100
4-9 times	3	15	48	34	100
10 or more times	<1	9	30	61	100

# 2020 Greater MetroWest NJ Jewish Community Study

 (973) 929-3198

 [info@jfedgmw.org](mailto:info@jfedgmw.org)

 @jfedgmw

 @jfedgmw

 @JewishGMW

 [jfedgmw.org](http://jfedgmw.org)

---



**Headquarters:**  
901 Route 10, Whippany, New Jersey 07981

**Regional Office:**  
1391 Martine Avenue, Scotch Plains, New Jersey 07076

(973) 929-3000 • Fax: (973) 884-7361