

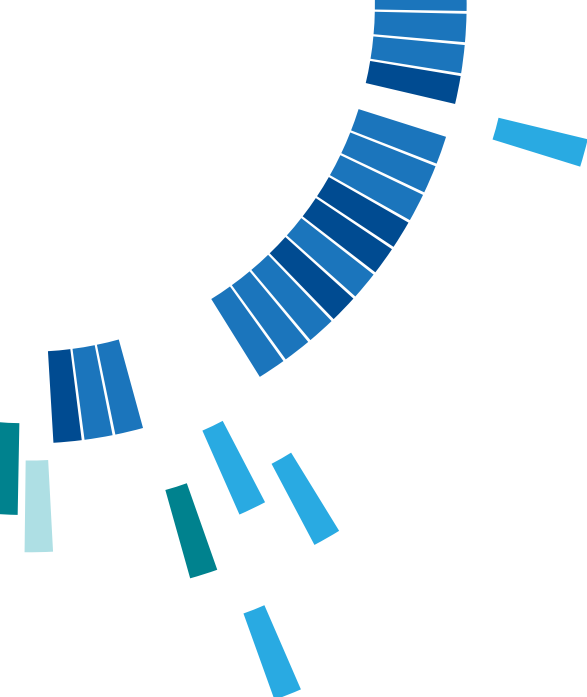
# UNCOUPLED

How our Singles are Reshaping  
Jewish Engagement



**STEVEN M. COHEN and ARI Y. KELMAN**

The Jewish Identity Project of Reboot  
Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies



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**OVERVIEW**

At first glance, most young adult, non-Orthodox Jews in America seem rather unengaged in Jewish life. This seems especially true of single Jews between the ages of 25 and 39. Few of them join synagogues or JCCs, even fewer contribute to Jewish federation campaigns, and with the exception of attending Passover Seders or High Holiday services, not many young adults outside of Orthodoxy practice Jewish rituals.

What exactly do these patterns mean? Do they mean a total disengagement of Jews under 40 from all things Jewish and from other Jews? Are we, in fact, seeing the emergence of a “lost generation” of American Jews? Is this generation destined to remain totally uninterested, unengaged and uncoupled from Judaism and Jewishness?

In exploring these questions, our analysis of recently collected national survey data finds some rather surprising answers. We start with the critical observation that at least half of non-Orthodox, American Jews aged 25-39 are single, primarily because Americans are getting married much later than in the past. In fact, never in Jews’ demographic history have we seen so many young adults unmarried, or “uncoupled.” And they are uncoupled in two senses of the term: they are unmarried, and

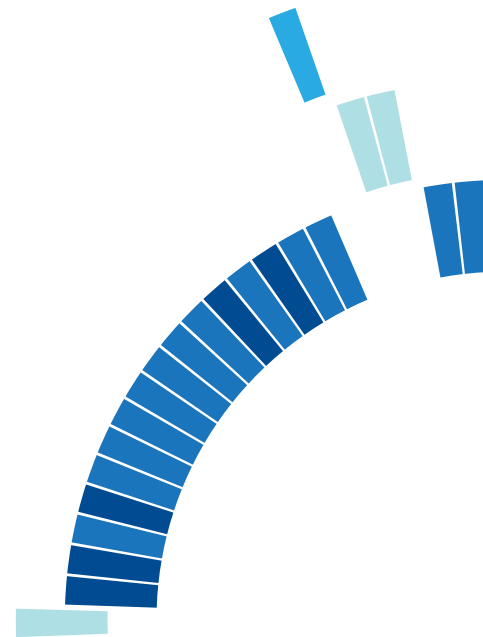
they are unconnected to organized Jewry – and the two phenomena are related.

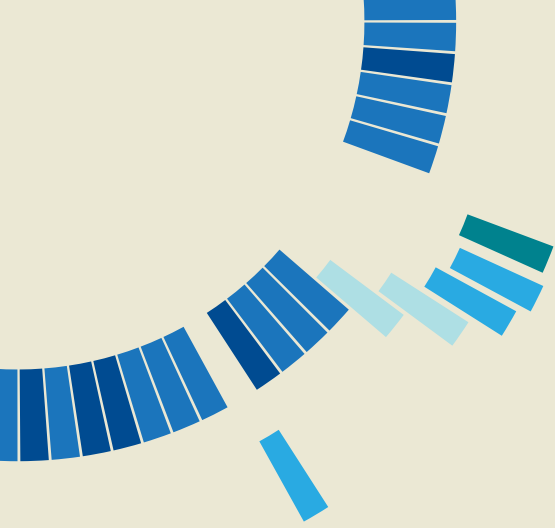
As compared with the in-married (Jews married to other Jews), single Jews score sharply lower on measures of communal affiliation and ritual observance. Many single, non-Orthodox Jews are indeed both unaffiliated and non-observant. Nevertheless, single Jews match married Jews in several other critical measurements of Jewishness. As many as 67% of these non-Orthodox singles agree, “I am proud to be a Jew,” slightly surpassing the 66% of in-married Jews who agree. More broadly, single Jews express Jewish pride in many different ways, they are widely and deeply connected to Jewish friends, and they express keen interest in self-directed ways of expressing and exploring their Jewish identities.

Like their married counterparts, single Jews share similar interests in connecting Jewishly, but they shy away from available Jewish institutions in part because congregations, JCCs and federations remain geared to the conventional family unit. Therefore, lack of visible involvement in Jewish life by single young adults ought not to be construed as distancing from being Jewish. Their relatively low levels of measurable Jewish behavior have

more to do with the available options for expressing engagement than with the putative absence of interest in things Jewish.

Given the high level of Jewish interest and low rate of communal and ritual involvement among young adult, single Jews, this uncoupled population represents the greatest opportunity and the greatest risk to Judaism in the United States. Single Jews are akin to “swing voters” – they can go either way. How they “vote,” how they make Jewish (or non-Jewish) choices, will determine the future of Jews, Judaism and Jewishness in the United States.





**D**ozens of Jewish population studies point to the same disturbing phenomenon: non-Orthodox Jews under the age of 40 report notably lower rates of affiliation and participation in Jewish institutional life than have their counterparts in the past. Compared to their elders and predecessors, fewer younger Jews adhere to the classical benchmarks that define Judaism in the eyes of their parents and grandparents: belonging to synagogues, attending services, or identifying with a major denomination (particularly Conservatism). Fewer younger Jews belong to Jewish organizations (or are even familiar with them), donate to Jewish federations or profess to care about Israel. In addition, as compared with their elders, younger Jews report fewer Jewish spouses, fewer Jewish friends and fewer Jewish neighbors. What might explain these signs of withdrawal from Jewish life, and what might they mean? Do they in fact signal an across-the-board disinclination to engage with Jews and Judaism? Or alternatively, do they amount simply to resistance to selective, traditional forms of Jewish engagement, the kind that are more appropriate for and popular with middle-aged people with children?

To gain some perspective on this question, we can turn to other American religious groups, as Jews are by no means alone in exhibiting diminished engagement in religious life. Overall, religious involvement in the United States has been in a period of decline. Robert Wuthnow, a leading sociologist of American religion, recently observed:

The future of American religion is in doubt.... Younger adults are already less actively involved in their congregations than older adults are. Not only this, younger adults are currently less involved than younger adults were a generation ago. The demographics behind this declining involvement also do not bode well for the future. (2007: 17)

Other relevant evidence comes from the most recently published major study of American Catholics. The authors conclude that today's Catholics "are not as attached to the Church as previous generations have been" (D'Antonio et al. 2007: 148).

From still another quarter we learn of the worsening image of Christianity in

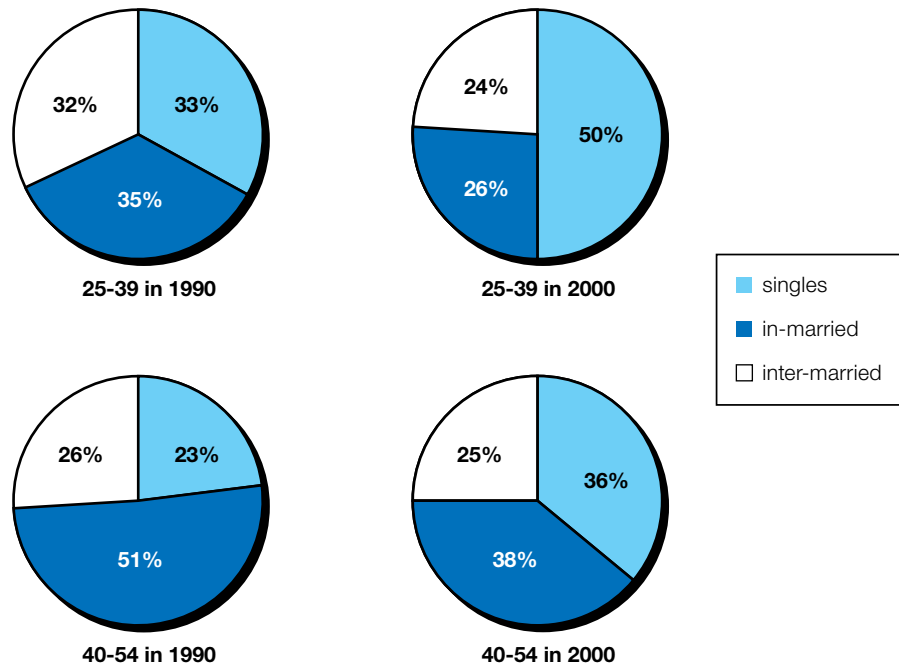
America. Drawing upon years of national survey data, David Kinnaman, a committed Evangelical Protestant analyst, reports on young adult “outsiders” to born-again Christianity (outsiders are members of other faiths or former adherents of Christian religious groups). He concludes that outsiders have grown more antagonistic to Christianity, amounting to “a growing tide of hostility and resentment toward Christianity” (2007: 24). Although Christianity enjoyed considerable popularity in the mid 1990s, “[n]ow, a decade later... our most recent data show that young outsiders have lost much of their respect for the Christian faith.... Hard-core critics represent a minority of

young outsiders, [but] this group is at least three times larger than it was just a decade ago” (2007: 24).

What explains younger American adults’ declining participation in conventional religious life? Wuthnow (2007) attributes much of the decline to the later age at marriage and child-bearing. Married couples with children comprise the hard-core demographic base of church-goers and church-members. The shrinking number of married couples in the young adult years translates directly into lower levels of participation in church life.

Jews are also experiencing similar demographic trends. In 1990, just 33%

**Growth in singles and decline in in-married between 1990 and 2000, for non-Orthodox Jews, 25-39 and 40-54.**



of non-Orthodox Jews aged 25-39 were single. By 2000-01, the comparable number had grown to 50%. Those aged 40-54 experienced a similar shift from 23% single in 1990 to 36% in 2000-01. In all likelihood, the proportion of single young adults has continued to grow since 2000-01. For adult Jews under 40, singlehood is now not at all the isolated exception or the socially deviant status, but the general rule, if not the socially acceptable norm.

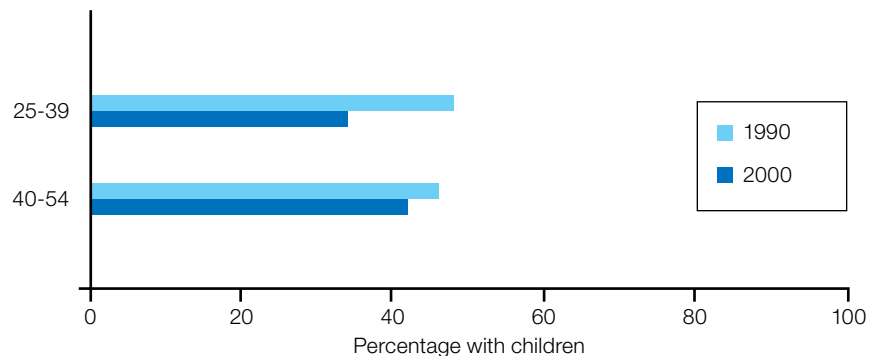
As a corollary of later marriage and increased non-marriage, or what we may call “extended singlehood,” far fewer young adults have had children, and when they do have children, they have them later in life than did their parents and older siblings. In 1990, among non-Orthodox Jews aged 25-39, 48% reported living in households with children; by 2000, the comparable figure had dropped to 34%. Those aged 40-54 experienced the same slide, albeit less precipitous, from 46% in 1990 to 42% in 2000.

As much as for other religious and ethnic groups, the growth over the years in singlehood and “non-parenthood” among Jews has driven down the aggregate

levels of religious and ethnic engagement. Fewer young adult Jews with children mean that fewer young adult Jews have immediate reasons to join synagogues, JCCs and other institutions that provide child-oriented services. The post-war Baby Boom not only fueled the growth and expansion of these institutions, it heavily influenced their organizational cultures. Given the shift toward extended singlehood, Jews are facing a disjuncture between child-oriented institutions and a heavily childless younger Jewish population. The very perception that these institutions are child-oriented undoubtedly contributes to the alienation felt by childless young adults.

This new, longer-lasting period of extended adult singlehood constitutes a genuinely novel development. In the course of modern Jewish demographic history, never have so many adults spent so much time with so few children of their own. For years to come, thousands of Jewish young adults will remain single for many years and will remain without children for even longer. No longer a temporary phase of five to seven years in between college and marriage, this

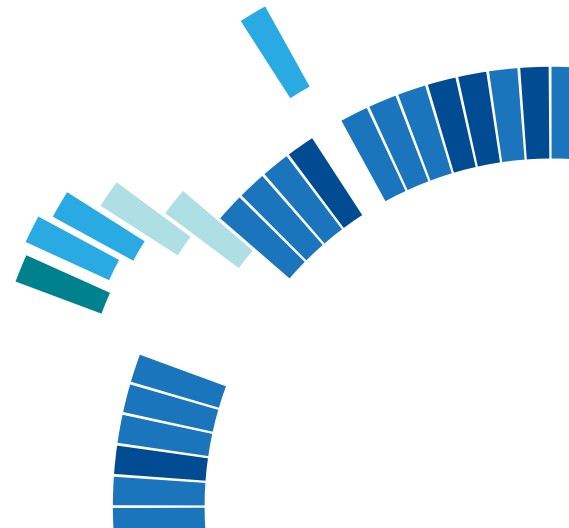
**Decline in young adults with children between 1990 and 2000, for non-Orthodox Jews, 25-39 and 40-54.**





period often lasts between 10 and 15 years, and thus represents a significant period in the lives of American Jews. Absent major shifts in marital patterns or the available options for Jewish engagement, young adult Jews in the years ahead are unlikely to enter Jewish institutional life.

This circumstance argues for a better understanding of the Jewish identities of single young adults and demands that we seriously address one key question: does lack of institutional affiliation imply lack of interest in all manner of things Jewish? If Jews who remain single for decades (if not forever) widely lack any such interest, then engaging them poses a seemingly insurmountable challenge. If, on the other hand, some points of Jewish engagement emerge among these largely unaffiliated and non-observant, single young adults, then potentially fruitful policy directions emerge. **Accordingly, the central objective of this research is to uncover distinctive signs of Jewish life among the single, young adult population, a population not particularly given to institutional affiliation and ritual practice, at least not at this stage of life.**





## THE SAMPLE AND METHOD

To address these issues, we have analyzed data from the 2007 *National Survey of American Jews* (NSAJ), a mail-back and web-administered survey of self-identified Jews, conducted by Synovate, Inc. (successor to Market Facts, Inc.). This sampling frame somewhat overstates levels of Jewish involvement largely because it does not include Jews with no religion.

Using its Global Opinion Sample, Synovate fielded the NSAJ between December 20, 2006 and January 28, 2007, eliciting 1,828 Jewish respondents. Of these, 703 derived from the Internet sample (with a 48% response rate) and 1,125 derived from the mail sample (with a 59% response rate). This paper focuses on the 1,704 non-Orthodox respondents (1,828 – 124 Orthodox = unweighted N of 1,704 non-Orthodox respondents).

Notwithstanding the general impression of diminished Jewish engagement among younger Jews, American Orthodox Jews are growing in number and are maintaining, if not increasing, their levels of Jewish engagement. However, informed observers largely concur that Orthodox Jews represent contrary tendencies. If there is concern about the future of young adults' Jewish involvement, the concern

centers upon the 90% or so outside of Orthodoxy; accordingly, this research excludes from the analysis those who identify as Orthodox so as to focus upon the others who constitute the policy-relevant population.

The questionnaire (reproduced in the Appendix with additional information on the sampling and methods) covers a wide range of Jewish identity-related issues. The large number of questions provides numerous and diverse ways of measuring how strongly respondents relate to being Jewish.

We have used the characteristics of in-married young adults (those married to other Jews) as the benchmark against which to assess relative levels of Jewish engagement among the single population. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has called the in-married population the “gold standard” of Jewish involvement. They are the demographic center of the Jewish institutional world and score highest on measures of conventional Jewish engagement.

Relative to others in their age groups, in-married Jews report higher levels of Jewish education and socialization as youngsters. For obvious reasons, when compared with single Jews, the in-married are more likely to be raising children at home. They also live in households with

more Jewish family members. All of these factors (Jewish education, Jewish child-rearing and Jewish household members) lead to the expectation that the in-married will substantially surpass the single on measures of Jewish engagement, as indeed they do. In many areas of Jewish life, single young adults markedly trail their in-married counterparts.

Yet despite these considerations, in other areas of Jewish engagement the single population approximates the in-married segment and even surpasses them in a few ways. This pattern suggests areas of Jewish identity where singles are particularly engaged as Jews. It also points to ways in which young adults who are single (or non-parents) can and do become involved in Jewish concerns and activities.



## THE FINDINGS

### Unaffiliated with Institutions

Not surprisingly, among non-Orthodox adults aged 25-39, single Jews substantially trail the in-married on all measures of institutional affiliation. For example, just 19% of the singles belong to synagogues as opposed to 51% of the in-married. We find similar patterns for attending a JCC (20% vs. 44%), contributing to a UJA/federation campaign (15% vs. 32%) and volunteering with a Jewish organization (8% vs. 28%).

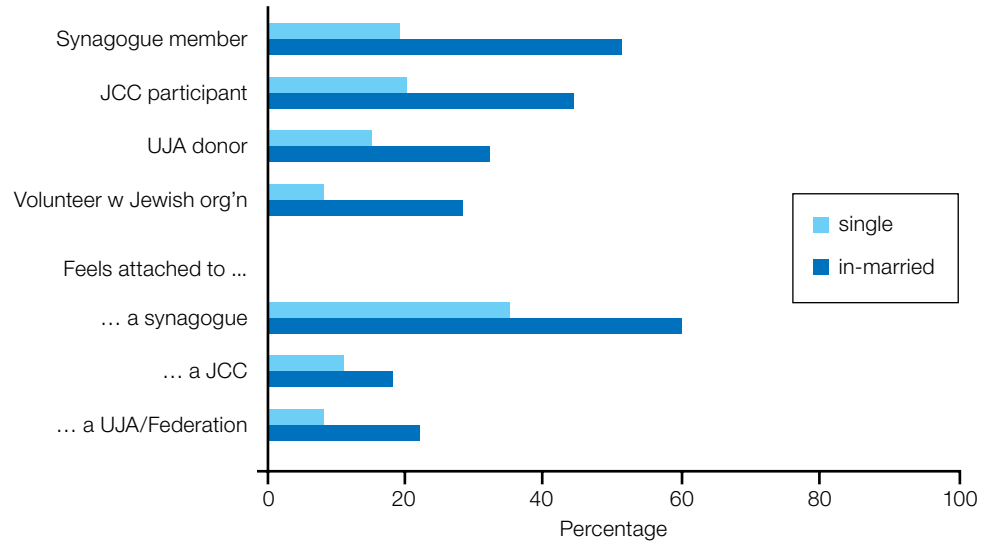
These gaps extend beyond formal belonging. With respect to emotional attachment to a variety of institutions, the single also substantially trail the in-married. Just 35% of singles say they feel at least “somewhat attached” to a synagogue, as compared with fully 60% of the in-married. Similar patterns may be seen with respect to attachment to JCCs and federations. The single are indeed relatively unaffiliated both in terms of formal membership and in terms of emotional attachment to Jewish institutions.

One explanation for this alienation from institutional life entails the high rates of mobility (geographic, professional and familial) in the lives of young adults. People who move (physically or socially) exhibit lower rates of affiliation and association

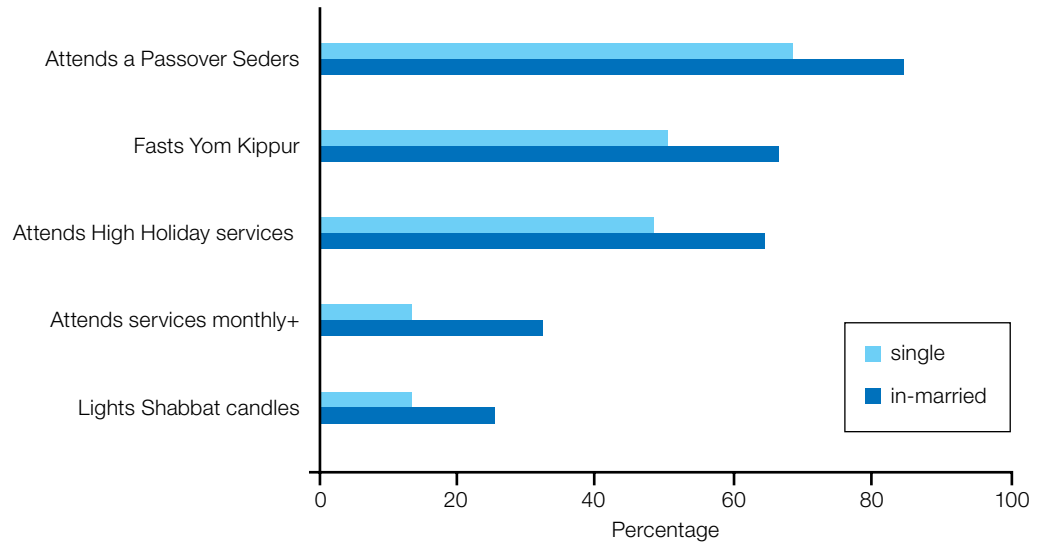
with all manner of institutions and social networks. In contrast, those whose lives are more rooted and predictable tend to join institutions and develop social networks of all kinds. Accordingly, younger Jewish adults, especially the single, experience rather high rates of change and mobility along several dimensions, thereby impeding Jewish (and other) institutional affiliation.

At the same time, part of the explanation for singles’ feelings of alienation from conventional institutions goes beyond their personal characteristics and lies with the very character of the institutions themselves. The organized Jewish community, like other religious communities in America, is heavily structured around and built for (and by) married couples with children. When single young adults observe the types of people who populate synagogues, JCCs, federations and other Jewish organizations, they see a population that differs from them in a variety of ways, not only culturally and geographically, but also regarding life concerns and, not least, affluence. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that younger adults, largely unmarried and without children, find such institutions and the activities they sponsor less than fully attractive.

**Lower levels of affiliation among single Jews as compared with in-married, non-Orthodox, age 25-39.**



**Lower levels of ritual observance among single Jews as compared with in-married, non-Orthodox, age 25-39.**



### Variable gaps in ritual observance

On five measures of observance, single young adults trail the far higher scoring in-married. High Holiday service attendance provides an illustrative pattern. Among singles aged 25-39, 48% attend High Holiday services, as compared with 64% of in-married young adults. We find equal gaps with respect to Seder attendance (68% vs. 84%) and fasting on Yom Kippur (50% vs. 66%), as well as with respect to the more demanding practices of attending services monthly (13% vs. 32%) and Shabbat candle lighting (13% vs. 25%). In all instances, the single trail the in-married with respect to ritual practice, although these gaps are smaller than those associated with communal affiliation.

In sum, not only are single young adults relatively unaffiliated and unconnected with Jewish institutions, they are relatively unobservant as well. Many expect to elevate their observance when they marry and have children, but for now, as single people, they seemingly have little need to practice some of the more widely observed rituals of American Judaism.

In terms of the most visible behavioral markers of Jewish engagement – communal affiliation and ritual practice – the unmarried appear fairly distant from Jewish life. To their parents and elders, they seem unengaged in Judaism, the Jewish community or with being Jewish. But as a group, single young adults do exhibit several signs of engagement in Jewish life.

### Strong social networks

For people who are single, friends take on an order of significance generally not experienced by married people and parents of young children. Writing about contemporary, American young adults, Kinnaman notes, “Relationships are a driving force... [Young adults] have a strong need to belong, usually to a tribe of other loyal people who know them well and appreciate them” (2007: 24).

In fact, single adult Jews exhibit relatively high levels of association with Jewish friends. With rates of association that rival those of the in-married, the behaviors and attitudes of single young adults display the importance they place on Jewish friendship circles.

Of single Jews aged 25-39, fully 42% claim that half or more of their friends are Jewish, approaching a comparable rate of 52% among the in-married. This small gap is even more significant in that in-married individuals’ friendships with other Jews are undoubtedly furthered by their Jewish spouses and children, with whom they live. In that same vein, the single population relies on friendship networks to a greater extent than do the in-married, thus the relatively high concentration of Jews within these networks may not accurately convey the strength of those ties.

Moreover, the single and in-married populations relate very positively to their Jewish friends. In both cases, the majority agrees that it is important to have friends

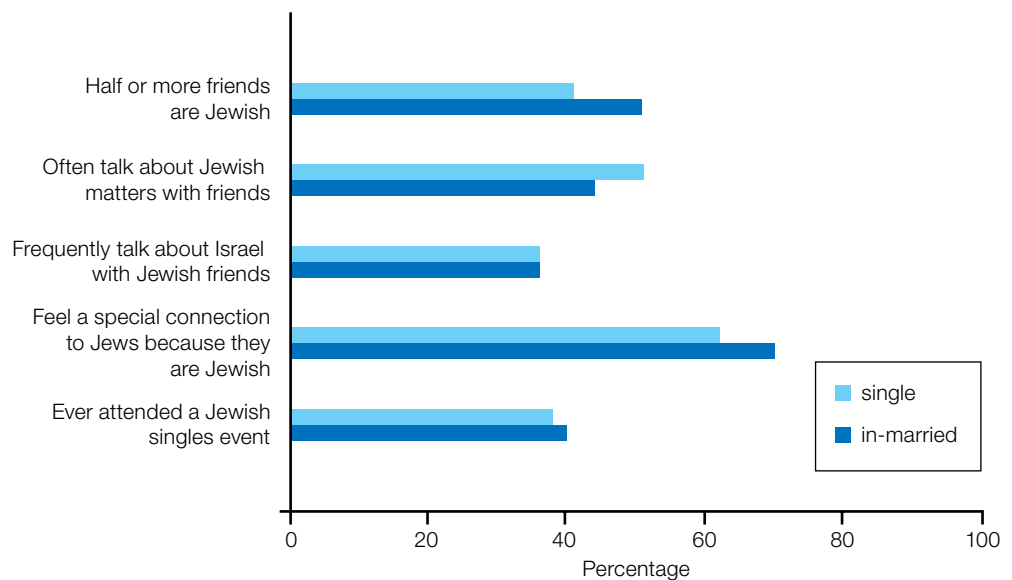
who are Jewish (57% for the single and 72% for the in-married). We find a similar pattern with respect to whether they talk to their friends about Jewish matters: 51% for the single young adults, as against just 44% for the in-married. With respect to talking to friends about Israel, the single and the in-married actually report the same levels (36%). Asked whether they feel a special connection to Jews they meet because they are Jewish, the singles agree almost as often as the in-married (62% vs. 70%).

Patterns of attendance at Jewish singles' events also point to the importance of Jewish social networks to this population. Both those who are currently single and the in-married report nearly identical rates of having at one point attended a Jewish singles' event (38% and 40% respectively). Even though perhaps half of the singles who eventually marry will marry non-Jews,

for the moment, many seem interested in finding a Jewish life-partner.

In sum, most single, Jewish young adults report that at least half their friends are Jewish, that they feel a special connection to people they meet because they are Jewish, and that they talk about Jewish matters with their friends, including a substantial minority who talk with friends about Israel. These results suggest that Jewish friends play an important role in the identities of the single population, particularly in the absence of spouses and children of their own. Moreover, given that single Jews affiliate with Jewish institutions less often than their in-married counterparts, the role of informal social networks cannot be underestimated. Connections to other Jews largely persist among the single population, consistent with reports of Jewish life taking place within informal networks

**Measures of Jewish social networks among single Jews approach those reported by in-married, non-Orthodox, age 25-39.**



of Jewish friends, rather than within formal institutions with which single young adults are generally not affiliated.

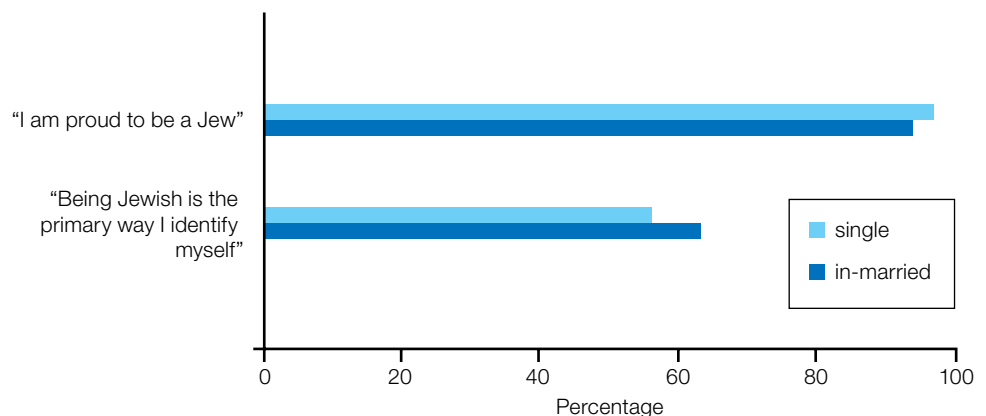
### Proudly Jewish and Jewishly self confident

The matter of Jewish pride, maintaining a positive and confident attitude toward being Jewish, has long been at the heart of Jews' negotiating their place in American society (Prell 1999). Like other minority groups, Jews in 20th century America have ranged widely in the extent to which they value their ethnic identities. For some, being Jewish is seen as an important and salient part of their personal identities; for others, it is an acknowledged, although minor, part of how they see and construct their social identities. Those for whom being Jewish is salient, the salience varies with respect to the degree to which they value (or de-value) their identities as Jews. Those who express pride in being Jewish, then, combine high salience with high valuation.

In this context we ask, to what extent are young adult Jews proud to be Jewish? Do their low levels of communal affiliation and ritual practice reflect a lack of pride in their identities as Jews? Certainly, among those Jews who are married with children, failure to join a synagogue or any other Jewish institution and to simultaneously abjure engagement with the major Jewish holidays would indicate a lack of psychic engagement in being Jewish. To what extent does the same logic apply to single adults, particularly those under the age of 40? For them, do low levels of affiliation and observance also mean low levels of pride in being Jewish?

In point of fact, the survey results demonstrate that single, Jewish young adults report relatively *high* levels of pride in being Jewish. When asked to respond to the straightforward statement, "I am proud to be a Jew," single young adults actually slightly out-score the in-married – one of the few cases where single Jews surpass the in-married on a Jewish engagement indicator. As many as 67% of singles strongly agree that they are proud to be Jews, and

Measures of Jewish pride among single Jews equal those reported by in-married, non-Orthodox, age 25-39.





31% agree, as compared with 66% and 29% among the in-married. This means that, among the single, only 2.5% do not strongly agree or agree.

A related question asks respondents whether they agree with the rather demanding expression, “Being Jewish is the primary way I identify myself.” As many as 63% of the in-married agree with this statement, but so do 56% of the singles, constituting a very small gap between the singles and the “gold standard” set by the in-married.

The results for both questions point to the salience of Jewish identity and testify to the extent to which the majority of single young adults feel positively about being Jewish. For most, being Jewish is a matter of pride and constitutes the primary way in which they identify themselves.

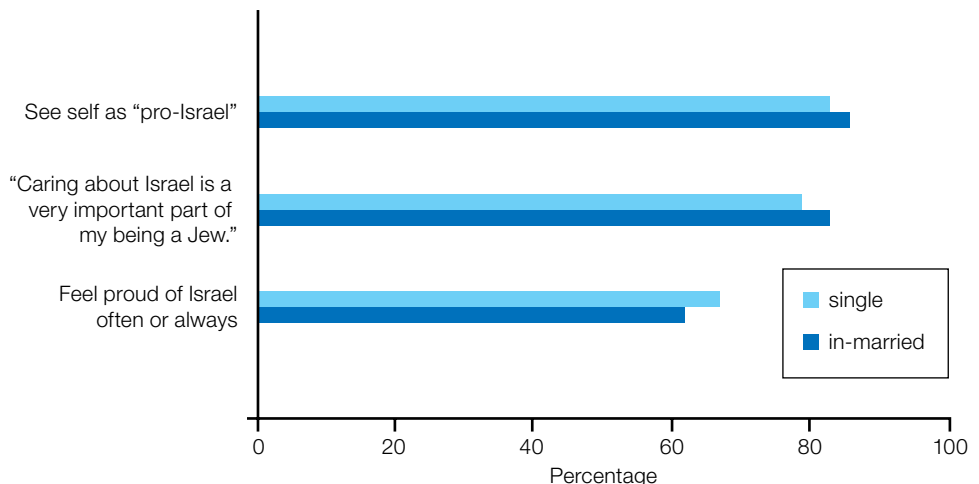
Therefore, lack of visible involvement in Jewish life by single young adults ought not to be construed as a reflection of uncoupled from being Jewish. Singles are just as proud of being Jewish as their in-married

counterparts, demonstrating that the relatively low levels of measurable Jewish behavior among singles have more to do with the available options for expressing Jewish engagement through communal institutions than with the putative absence of interest in being Jewish.

### Israel engagement as a matter of Jewish pride

As we reported earlier (Cohen and Kelman 2007), on all available measures of Israel engagement, adults in their younger years score lower than their elders, reflecting a long-term slide in Israel engagement that extends over the entire age spectrum, from old to middle-aged to young. The key factor contributing to and linked with the disaffection of the young from Israel is intermarriage. As intermarriage has grown among younger cohorts, feelings of attachment to Israel have diminished, reflecting both the background

Measures of Israel engagement among single Jews approach those reported by in-married, non-Orthodox, age 25-39.



factors that increase intermarriage and the net impact of intermarriage.

However, while the intermarried are distinguished by *low* levels of Israel attachment, singles, in turn, are distinguished by relatively *high* levels of Israel attachment, largely resembling those found among the in-married. The results for several key indicators attest to this inference. For example, among those under 40, 86% of the in-married call themselves “pro-Israel,” and so do 83% of the single. When presented with the statement, “Caring about Israel is a very important part of my being a Jew,” fully 79% of the single respondents agree, as do 83% of the in-married. Of the in-married, 62% feel proud of Israel at least often (if not always), as do even more – 67% – of the singles.

These results point to the relatively high levels of interest in Israel that single, Jewish adults express. It seems that the overall decline in attachment to Israel is due largely to the increasing number of intermarried Jews and their feelings of detachment from Israel. Among the single, in contrast, positive feelings about Israel still endure and provide an entry point for Israel-oriented programming of an appropriate nature.

### Quest for Empowerment

Several developments have combined to make Americans, especially younger Americans, keener to engage in personal exploration,

experimentation and development. Young adults have been leading the way in taking increasing control of their lives, and they now take greater roles in defining who they are and who they want to be. Increased interest in personally directed exploration may be difficult to define and measure, but it is real and observable nonetheless, apparent in phenomena as diverse as the wide variety of self-help movements, the world-wide explosion of special purpose non-governmental organizations, the development of “pro-am” (professional-amateur) cultural endeavors, fan ‘zines and websites, blogs and the “long-tail” phenomenon. All point to increasing specialization, customization, and the expectation of ease of access to goods, services and resources. Correlatively, single young adults (among others) have both the time and the interest to connect with media and cultural events of various sorts. “Technologies connect young people to information and each other – and power their self-expression and creativity.... [They] engage in a nearly constant search for fresh experiences and new sources of motivation” (Kinnaman 2007:23).

In like fashion, younger adult Jews who are unmarried seem keen to explore their Jewish identities as well as find meaning in and give expression to being Jewish outside of communal institutions, often informally. The evidence for this observation is certainly diverse and loosely connected, but it all points in the same direction.

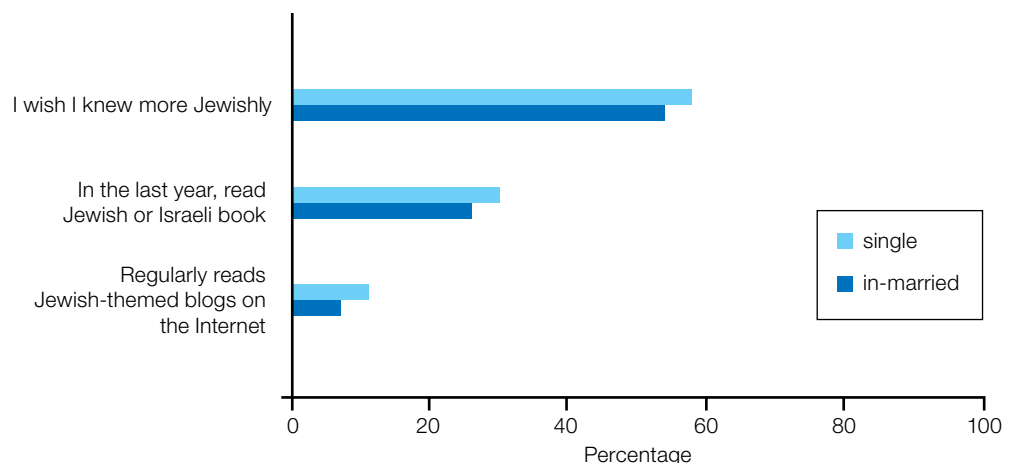
More often than the in-married, the single say, “I wish I knew more Jewishly.”

Fully 58% of singles agree, as compared with 54% of the in-married, underscoring an interest in Jewish growth and exploration among singles. Further evidence of this interest can be seen in the extent to which younger adults turn to Jewish-oriented books. The single read Jewish-oriented books slightly more often than the in-married (30% vs. 26%). This difference may be attributable to the fact that married people (particularly those with children) have less leisure time in which to read, but the comparable levels of interest in books with Jewish content among the single suggest that interest in things Jewish is sustained among this population. These findings are especially significant in that, on the basis of communal affiliation and ritual observance patterns, one might expect the in-married to outscore the single on all other measures of Jewish engagement. The higher scores of the single, even if only by small margins, highlight an interest in learning and growing as Jews notwithstanding the distances they keep

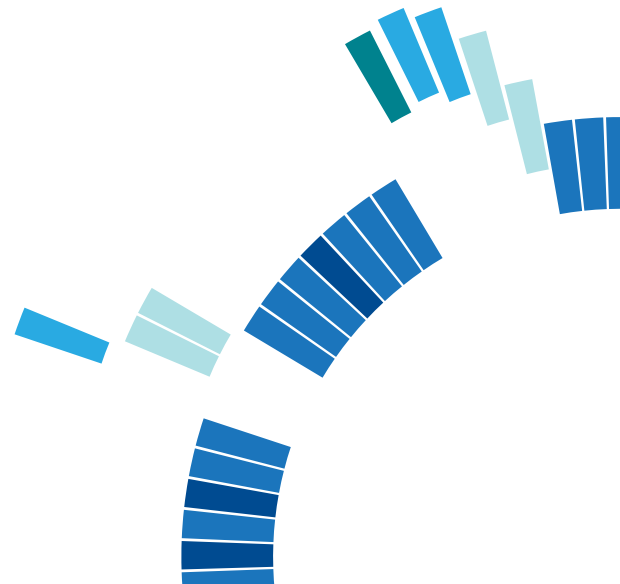
from organized Jewish life and private ritual practice.

Over the last few years, as the Internet has assumed a more valued presence in everyday life, so too has it become a resource for Jewish connections and engagement. As might be expected, younger people maintain some sort of web presence (such as a website or a profile on MySpace.com, Facebook.com or AOL) far more often than their elders. The frequency with which Jewish 25-39-year-olds do so is about double that of those aged 40-54. Significantly, among those aged 25-39, it is the single who most frequently maintain a web presence, perhaps owing to their greater time flexibility. In fact, a slim majority (53%) does so, as do 40% of the intermarried and 30% of the in-married. Moreover, while only small numbers regularly read Jewish-themed blogs on the Internet, such activity is somewhat more common among the single (11%) than the in-married (7%). Web-based Jewish engagement, then, may well constitute a vehicle with special appeal to the single

**Higher levels of pursuit of Jewish growth among single than among in-married Jews, non-Orthodox, age 24-39.**



consistent with the argument that single young adults are especially interested in undertaking Jewish exploration on their own terms, outside traditional channels of organized Jewish life. Websites and blogs are often the first place younger people check for events of all kinds and thus might indicate how younger Jews are seeking Jewish experiences in their own ways. Single young adults undertake a variety of cultural pursuits, both explicitly Jewish in nature and otherwise. Quite often, these entail activities that they can conduct on their own or with a few friends – reading books, going to the movies and connecting through the Internet.





## SUMMING UP

Single, young adult Jews outside of Orthodoxy, though largely unaffiliated with Jewish institutions and largely inactive in terms of ritual observance, are generally seeking out Jewish experiences and finding them in alternate ways and venues. Four areas in particular stand out as elements of Jewish engagement among single young adults:

- 1) Jewish **friends**;
- 2) **Pride** in being Jewish;
- 3) Interest in **Israel**;
- 4) Eagerness for personal Jewish growth and **empowerment**.

There is no evidence that singles are indifferent to things Jewish. Rather, they are generally and genuinely open to Jewish experiences and activities, provided those experiences are attractive and appealing. Certainly, the above list is far from exhaustive, and just as certainly, its depth and complexity go beyond the scope of this paper. All of this argues for the importance of enhancing existing options for the Jewish engagement of young adults, as well as expanding the range, number and diversity of those options.

The last few years have witnessed remarkable growth in self-initiated endeavors by and for Jews in their 20s and 30s. Most are

situated in the areas of culture, social justice, spirituality, learning and new media. Their very successes (ongoing interest, support, participation, use, attendance, etc.) further speak to the central contention of this paper: Jewish young adults, while displaying relatively little involvement in institutional life or ritual practice, nevertheless retain interest in things Jewish. We see this interest manifest in the importance that young adults attach to Jewish friends, Jewish pride, Israel and opportunities for self-directed exploration, experience, learning and growth.

Therefore, the challenge facing policy-makers, philanthropists, the Jewish creative class and Jewish connectors is to foster and build opportunities for engagement that speak to this population of Jews in America. The data illustrate a strong interest in things Jewish and a strong Jewish identity in combination with lower rates of affiliation and traditional behaviors. The interest is there, but the opportunities are not there yet. Given the new demographic reality highlighted by Wuthnow with respect to extended adult singlehood, Jewish organizations such as JCCs and synagogues that cater primarily to families will not be able to draw younger Jews who are uncoupled with any regularity. Instead, what appears to be

needed is the seeding, nurture and development of organizations that are created by and for this younger demographic.

Not long ago, most Jewish young adults could be expected to marry within five years of completing their university studies. Today, that period may extend to 10 or 15 years or more. This research shows that most single Jews, while institutionally unaffiliated, are Jewishly engaged. Even if they marry in time, many will spend decades of their adult lives outside of Jewish frameworks if only because the appropriate opportunities for engagement are too few and insufficiently varied. The challenge to policy makers is to recognize the true meaning of young adults' low rates of affiliation, the true opportunities and interest in Jewish engagement, and to facilitate the growth of more numerous, accessible, attractive and diverse forms of engagement that are, and will be, initiated and led by Jews under the age of 40.



**METHODOLOGICAL  
APPENDIX**

Synovate, Inc. maintains a “Global Opinion Sample,” a consumer access panel of approximately 1.3 million households that have agreed to participate in surveys by telephone, mail or online. Households are recruited by invitation through special mailings or intercepts on web sites. Key demographic variables about the household are captured when respondents complete their member forms. The information includes household composition, income, age, employment, employment type, etc. and is updated periodically. A Jewish respondent is determined by a question in the screening questionnaire that reads, “Please mark whether you are (or your spouse is): Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Other/None.”

For this study, respondents were weighted by the number of adult Jews in the household, age, sex, region and education to approximate the distributions found in the *2000-01 National Jewish Population Study* (Kotler-Berkowitz et al. 2003). We compared the Synovate sample after the application of sample weights with the *2000-01 National Jewish Population Study* results with respect to socio-demographic and Jewish engagement characteristics (see Cohen and Kelman 2007). With some exceptions, the gaps between the two surveys are small, suggesting that, with caution, we can rely upon the results from the Synovate sample.

That said, the Synovate sample under-represents unengaged Jews, specifically those who state their religion is “None” but who otherwise identify as Jews. This group constitutes about 20% in many surveys and consists disproportionately of those who are the children of intermarriage, those who themselves have intermarried, as well as young adults who have not (yet?) joined a congregation, an act that prompts some who have expressed no religious preference previously to think of themselves as Jewish by religion. The Synovate qualifying questionnaire asks only about current religious preference, making it impossible to identify Jews in other ways.

Members of the Global Opinion Panel are recruited to answer surveys concerned largely with goods and services. As a result, the procedure selects for people with an interest in consumer issues, those who may be more culturally conventional or have middle-brow cultural tastes. In fact, in part owing to its purposes, the unweighted sample also under-represents the unmarried.

In light of these methodological considerations and our substantive interests, the analysis focuses on one particular segment: non-Orthodox 25-39-year-olds who answer “Jewish” when asked for their religious preference (or are so characterized by their spouses).

Every sample is biased in some way. Researchers need to identify and assess the biases, understand their likely effects, and structure the analysis to minimize the likelihood of misinterpretation owing to sample biases. The most relevant and important effect of the biases in this study is to present younger Jewish adults as more engaged with being Jewish than the universe from which they are drawn. Those who are married (especially at a young age), who are more culturally conventional and who are Jewish by religion (rather than saying they have no religion), hold more positive attitudes toward being Jewish than those who are single, culturally off-beat and see their religion as “None.” Consequently, insofar as the results point to low attachment to Jewish institutions and ritual practice among younger adults, this particular sample works to *under*-state the low levels. If, in this sample, one has to presume that the “real” levels of attachment are lower than those reported in this sample.

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## THE 2007 NATIONAL SURVEY OF AMERICAN JEWS

1. How important is being Jewish in your life? .....
- | <b><u>Very<br/>Important</u></b> | <b><u>Fairly<br/>Important</u></b> | <b><u>Not Very<br/>Important</u></b> | <b><u>Not At All<br/>Important</u></b> | <b><u>Not<br/>Sure</u></b> |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| 45%                              | 39%                                | 12%                                  | 3%                                     | 1%                         |
2. Do you see yourself as:
- |                                   | <b><u>Yes</u></b> |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. Religious? .....               | 35%               |
| b. Secular? .....                 | 44%               |
| c. Spiritual? .....               | 61%               |
| d. Observant (religiously)? ..... | 31%               |
| e. Jewish by religion? .....      | 89%               |
| f. Jewish by ethnicity? .....     | 82%               |
| g. Culturally Jewish? .....       | 78%               |
| h. Pro-Israel? .....              | 82%               |
| i. A Zionist? .....               | 28%               |
3. With respect to your belief in God, which term best applies to you?
- |               |               |             |               |
|---------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| Believer: 67% | Agnostic: 14% | Atheist: 6% | Not sure: 13% |
|---------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
4. How much anti-Semitism do you think there is in the United States today? Is there...
- |                   |                        |               |                 |
|-------------------|------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| A great deal: 38% | A moderate amount: 48% | A little: 13% | None at all: 0% |
|-------------------|------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
5. Looking ahead over the next several years, do you think that anti-Semitism in the United States will increase, decrease, or remain the same?
- |               |              |                      |
|---------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Increase: 47% | Decrease: 6% | Remain the same: 47% |
|---------------|--------------|----------------------|
6. How much anti-Semitism do you think there is in Europe today? Is there...
- |                   |                        |              |                 |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| A great deal: 62% | A moderate amount: 32% | A little: 5% | None at all: 0% |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
7. Looking ahead over the next several years, do you think that anti-Semitism in Europe will increase, decrease, or remain the same?
- |               |              |                      |
|---------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Increase: 62% | Decrease: 4% | Remain the same: 34% |
|---------------|--------------|----------------------|

### YOUR BELIEFS & OPINIONS

8. Do you agree or do you disagree with each of the following statements?	<b>Agree Strongly</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree Strongly</b>
a. The Holocaust has deeply affected me.....	39%	46%	8%	6%	0%
b. I am proud to be a Jew.....	64%	31%	4%	1%	0%
c. I have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people.....	49%	34%	11%	6%	1%
d. Being Jewish is the primary way I identify myself.....	25%	30%	10%	29%	5%
e. It is important to me to have friends who are Jewish..	21%	40%	13%	22%	4%
f. I wish I knew more Jewishly.....	15%	34%	24%	24%	4%
g. I want any Jewish community that I'm a part of to include non-Jews.....	22%	48%	19%	8%	2%
h. I feel part of a number of communities.....	22%	48%	18%	12%	2%
i. I have a Jewish responsibility to care for people in trouble (as with Darfur or Katrina).....	18%	39%	24%	16%	3%
j. I feel as moved by the oppression of non-Jews as by the comparable oppression of Jews.....	27%	47%	16%	9%	2%
k. I have a special responsibility to take care of Jews in need around the world.....	20%	39%	23%	16%	2%
l. If I were marching for a social cause where the march had a Jewish contingent, I'd march with it....	15%	33%	37%	13%	3%
m. It bothers me when people try to tell me that there's a right way to be Jewish.....	41%	39%	11%	8%	1%
n. Most synagogue services are not interesting to me.	11%	31%	14%	35%	8%
o. I find some synagogue services appealing to me.....	15%	55%	14%	12%	3%
p. Even if I don't observe every aspect of the Sabbath, I do try to make it a special day.....	12%	27%	16%	36%	8%
q. Jewish charities place too much emphasis on helping only Jews.....	6%	20%	27%	36%	10%
r. Jewish organizations stifle productive conversations about Israel.....	5%	11%	42%	32%	10%
s. I find Jewish organizations largely remote and irrelevant.....	6%	23%	27%	34%	11%
t. Jews should marry whoever they fall in love with, even if they're not Jewish.....	29%	34%	13%	14%	9%
u. I would be upset if a child of mine were to marry a non-Jew who did not convert to Judaism.....	13%	17%	14%	29%	28%
v. I am concerned that the number of Jews in the U.S. will diminish over the next couple of generations..	23%	39%	19%	16%	3%

## ISRAEL &amp; YOU

9.	Do you agree or do you disagree with each of the following statements?	<b><u>Agree Strongly</u></b>	<b><u>Agree</u></b>	<b><u>Not Sure</u></b>	<b><u>Disagree</u></b>	<b><u>Disagree Strongly</u></b>
	a. Caring about Israel is a very important part of my being a Jew.....	26%	44%	12%	15%	3%
	b. I am worried the United States may stop being a firm ally of Israel.....	17%	37%	16%	25%	5%
	c. If Israel were destroyed, I would feel as if I had suffered one of the greatest personal tragedies of my life.....	34%	30%	18%	13%	5%
	d. I would call myself a supporter of Israel.....	34%	48%	12%	5%	1%
	e. I am sometimes uncomfortable identifying myself as a supporter of Israel.....	3%	11%	15%	44%	27%
	f. Israel occupies lands that belong to another people.....	3%	10%	17%	32%	36%
	g. Though I don't condone terrorism, I am sympathetic with the Palestinians' drive for national liberation.....	4%	21%	21%	24%	30%
	h. American Jews should not publicly criticize the policies of the government of Israel.....	6%	20%	23%	39%	13%
	i. Given my views on tolerance, diversity and pluralism, I am uncomfortable with the idea of a "Jewish State" of Israel.....	4%	8%	18%	34%	36%
10.	Below are different ways people may feel about Israel. In each case, how often would you say that you feel this way about Israel – never, sometimes, often, or always?	<b><u>Never</u></b>	<b><u>Sometimes</u></b>	<b><u>Often</u></b>	<b><u>Always</u></b>	
	a. Proud.....	6%	29%	33%	32%	
	b. Excited .....	12%	40%	28%	20%	
	c. Ambivalent .....	38%	46%	12%	3%	
	d. Ashamed .....	71%	27%	2%	1%	
11.	How emotionally attached are you to Israel?	<b><u>Very Attached</u></b>	<b><u>Somewhat Attached</u></b>	<b><u>Not Very Attached</u></b>	<b><u>Not At All Attached</u></b>	
		25%	43%	24%	8%	

12. Answer ...	<b>Yes</b>
a. Do you frequently talk about Israel with Jewish friends?.....	44%
b. Do you frequently talk about Israel with non-Jewish friends?.....	31%
c. Do you find it hard to criticize Israel when talking with Jewish friends? .....	16%
d. Do you find it hard to criticize Israel when talking with non-Jewish friends? .....	27%
e. When reading the news, are you drawn to stories about Israel? .....	66%
f. Do you understand simple sentences in spoken Hebrew? .....	28%
g. Do you have any immediate family or close friends living in Israel? .....	35%
h. Are you planning to visit Israel in the next 3 years?.....	22%
i. Do you regularly read Israeli newspapers on the Internet?.....	9%

### ORGANIZED JEWISH LIFE

13. To what extent do you feel attached to each of the following local Jewish groups and organizations?	<b>Extremely Attached</b>	<b>Somewhat Attached</b>	<b>Not Very Attached</b>	<b>Not Attached</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>
a. A synagogue or temple .....	22%	23%	18%	35%	0%
b. A Jewish Community Center (or YMHA) .....	6%	13%	25%	55%	1%
c. The local Jewish federation/UJA .....	5%	18%	26%	51%	0%
d. Another Jewish organization .....	11%	20%	20%	46%	3%

14. As you know, some Jews are active in synagogues, JCCs, Jewish federations and other Jewish organizations – what some people call the “organized Jewish community.” While it is always hard to generalize, each question below asks you to choose between two alternatives. **Choose the one that most fits the way you feel.**

a. With respect to the people who are active in Jewish community life, <b>in general</b> , do you feel that	
You share much in common with them .....	50%
OR, you share little in common with them .....	50%
b. Do you feel, in general, that	
They are fairly bland and boring to you.....	30%
OR, you find them diverse and interesting .....	70%
c. Do you feel, in general, that	
They expect other Jews to believe and behave in certain ways .....	50%
OR, they genuinely welcome Jews with different ways of being Jewish .....	50%
d. Do you feel, in general, that	
They place too much emphasis on distinguishing Jews from others .....	39%
OR, they have a healthy distinction between Jews as a group and others .....	61%

- e. Do you feel, in general, that
- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| They place too much emphasis on that which divides Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews .....                                   | 41% |
| OR, they maintain a healthy respect for the distinctive approaches and philosophies of the various movements in Jewish life ..... | 59% |

### YOUR JEWISH BACKGROUND

15. Have you been to Israel?

No, never.....	60%
Yes, once .....	21%
Yes, 2 or more times .....	15%
Yes, I have lived in Israel .....	4%

16. What is the main type of Jewish education you received as a child? **(MARK ONE)**

None .....	17%
Sunday School .....	20%
Hebrew School or other part-time Jewish school .....	51%
An Orthodox Yeshiva or Day School .....	5%
A non-Orthodox Day School.....	2%
Private tutoring.....	3%
Any other type .....	3%

17. Were you raised Jewish, converted to Judaism, or are not Jewish? What about your spouse or partner, and your parents?

	<b><u>Raised Jewish</u></b>	<b><u>Converted to Judaism</u></b>	<b><u>Not Jewish</u></b>
a. You.....	95%	4%	1%
b. Your spouse (or your partner) .....	65%	5%	30%
c. Your mother.....	92%	3%	5%
d. Your father.....	91%	1%	8%

18. Referring to Jewish religious denominations, in which of the following were you raised, and what do you consider yourself now? **(MARK ONE IN EACH COLUMN)**

	<b><u>Raised</u></b>	<b><u>Now</u></b>
a. Orthodox.....	14%	7%
b. Conservative.....	37%	26%
c. Reform.....	25%	30%
d. Reconstructionist.....	1%	3%
e. Secular Jewish.....	3%	5%
f. Culturally Jewish.....	6%	7%
g. Just Jewish.....	11%	22%
h. Not Jewish.....	3%	0%

19. Among the people you consider your closest friends, would you say that:
- |                                    |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| None are Jewish .....              | 10% |
| Some are Jewish .....              | 41% |
| About half are Jewish .....        | 16% |
| Most are Jewish .....              | 24% |
| All or almost all are Jewish ..... | 8%  |
20. **Yes**
- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| a. Did you have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah?.....   | 61% |
| b. Did you participate in a Jewish youth group as a teenager? .....   | 52% |
| c. Did you ever attend a Jewish sleep-away camp during the summer?.....   | 37% |
| d. Last Passover, did you hold or attend a Seder?.....  | 72% |
| e. During the last Yom Kippur, did you personally fast all or part of the day? .....  | 57% |
| f. Does your household usually light candles on Friday night? .....   | 25% |
| g. In the last year, have you had a significant spiritual experience in a Jewish context?.....  | 27% |
| h. In the last year, have you had a significant spiritual experience in a non-Jewish context? .....                                       | 14% |
| i. Do you usually attend services on the High Holidays? .....   | 52% |
| j. Do you attend Sabbath services at least once a month? .....  | 24% |
| k. Are you currently a member of a synagogue or temple? .....   | 38% |
| l. Have you attended any program or activity at a Jewish Community Center during the past year?.....                                      | 32% |
| m. In the past two years, have you served on the board of a Jewish organization, synagogue or temple? .....                               | 11% |
| n. In the past two years, have you served on the board of another type of organization (one that isn't specifically Jewish)? .....        | 18% |
| o. During the past year, have you volunteered regularly for a social justice organization? .....  | 13% |
| p. In 2006, did you or anyone in your household make a financial contribution to a UJA-Federation campaign? .....                         | 37% |
| q. During the past year, have you done any volunteer work for or sponsored by a synagogue, Federation or other Jewish organization? ..... | 27% |
| r. Have you <u>personally</u> experienced any anti-Semitism in the past year? .....   | 21% |
| s. Do you often talk about Jewish matters with your friends?.....   | 50% |
| t. Do you feel a special connection to Jews you meet because they are Jewish? ..  | 63% |
| u. Do you regularly read any Jewish magazines or newspapers? .....  | 34% |
| v. In the last year, have you attended any concerts or musical performances with a specifically Jewish or Israeli orientation? .....      | 22% |
| w. In the last year, have you listened to any kind of Jewish or Israeli music?.....   | 54% |
| x. In the last year, have you seen any movie with a Jewish or Israeli orientation? ..   | 41% |
| y. In the last year, have you read any books with a Jewish or Israeli orientation? ..   | 38% |
| z. In the last year, have you taken any classes with a Jewish or Israeli theme? ....  | 13% |

- aa. At any point in your adult life, did you ever attend a Jewish singles event? ..... 31%
- bb. Do you maintain some sort of “web presence,” such as a web site or a profile on MySpace.com, Facebook.com or AOL? ..... 23%
- cc. Do you regularly read Jewish-themed blogs on the Internet?..... 9%
- dd. Do you regularly check out Jewish web sites on the Internet? ..... 22%
- ee. At any point in your life, did you ever have a romantic relationship with someone who was Jewish? ..... 84%
- ff. At any point in your life, did you ever have a romantic relationship with someone who was not Jewish?..... 70%
21. Do you think that you would undertake more Jewish activities in your life if the following circumstances were different? **Yes**
- a. If you had more time ..... 44%
- b. If the available options were more attractive or interesting to you ..... 64%
- c. If the Jewish community were more open and welcoming of people like you.... 39%
- d. If there were more people like you involved in Jewish life ..... 50%

### YOUR PERSONAL BACKGROUND

22. Are you: Male: 49% Female: 50%
23. Are you (MARK ONE):  
 Married: 57% Divorced or Separated: 11%  
 Never Married: 23% Widowed: 9%
24. (OPTIONAL QUESTION) Do you regard your sexual orientation as:  
 “Straight” (heterosexual): 90% Gay or lesbian: 4% Bisexual: 1% No answer: 5%
25. How many children do you have?  
 None .....34%  
 One .....16%  
 Two .....29%  
 Three or more .....21%
26. What is your age as of your last birthday?  
 Under 25 ..... 3%  
 25 – 34 .....22%  
 35 – 44 .....13%  
 45 – 54 .....23%  
 55 – 64 .....13%  
 65 and over .....26%

**YOUR POLITICAL BACKGROUND**

27. With respect to your political views on most issues, do you regard yourself as (MARK ONE):

Liberal: 42%

Moderate: 42%

Conservative: 16%

28. With regard to political party identification, do you regard yourself as (MARK ONE):

A Democrat: 63%

An Independent: 23%

A Republican: 14%