

# AJC SURVEY OF LATINO JEWS IN UNITED STATES

April 7, 2016 – New York – An AJC survey of Latino Jews in the United States offers fresh insights into a portion of the American Jewish and U.S. Latino communities that until now has received scant attention. Estimates of the number of Latino Jews in the U.S. range from 200,100, or 3 percent, to 227,700, or 5 percent, of the U.S. Jewish population of 6.7 million.

The survey, carried out by Latino Decisions, a leading public opinion firm in the U.S., provides the first-ever detailed picture of Latino Jews in the U.S. It is based on a series of 10 focus groups composed of Latino Jews in cities with significant Latino Jewish populations, including Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, and New York. The focus groups discussed the ways that Latino Jews understand their identity, their engagement with the Jewish and Latino communities in the U.S, and their attachment to Israel and to Latin American countries. [Read the survey report.](#)

“The study provides useful insights into the world of Latino Jews,” said Dina Siegel Vann, director of AJC’s Arthur and Rochelle Belfer Institute for Latino and Latin American Affairs (BILLA), who is originally from Mexico City.

“Jews from Latin America feel both connected to and distinct from the larger U.S. Jewish and Latino communities,” she said. “They are looking for a space of their own to articulate their multiple identities, to forge a sense of belonging to the global Jewish community and to their Latin American native countries, while expressing their deep ties to Israel.”

Two-thirds of the focus groups participants were born in Argentina, Mexico or Venezuela. Eighty-one percent are U.S. citizens and 13 percent are permanent residents.

One arresting finding is that most Latino Jews in the U.S. do not use the term “American” to identify themselves, preferring to refer to their country of origin. Latino Jews, even those born in the U.S., maintain strong ties to countries in Latin America that welcomed their families in two waves, after the First and Second World Wars.

The survey found that Latino Jews in the U.S. are highly educated and economically successful. Ninety-two percent hold college degrees and 68 percent have graduate degrees.

As to household income, 67 percent of the participants earn \$100,000 or more a year, as compared to 30 percent of all American Jewish households.

The median age of Latino Jews in the U.S. is 48, while it is 50 for all American Jews.

Latino Jews consider Israel, more than synagogue affiliation, central to their identity, and regularly travel there.

“Latino Jews in the U.S. are well-positioned to help advance relations between Jewish and Latino communities in the U.S., and also between American Jews and Latin American countries,” said Siegel Vann. “Their commitment to Israel serves well to reinforce understanding of Israel among Latin American countries and Latino communities in the U.S.”

In addition to the focus groups report, AJC and Latino Decisions produced a companion report examining [contemporary research](#) on Latino Jews in the U.S.

The survey of Latino Jews in the U.S. was underwritten by a Ford Foundation grant. It is the second Latino Decisions project for AJC. The first, released in 2012, probed U.S. Latino attitudes towards Jews.

In 2009, AJC’s BILLA created the first Latin American Task Force in the U.S. Comprised of Latino Jews in Miami, the group engages south Florida's Hispanic communities and Latin American diplomatic corps. BILLA is in the process of establishing similar groups in other U.S. cities.