

**Brandeis University**  
Steinhardt Social Research Institute

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# **The 2013 Greater Buffalo Jewish Community Study**



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The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, 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 socio-demographic data on the Jewish community.

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## Executive Summary

The Greater Buffalo Jewish community of 5,770 households includes a core group that is tightly knit and highly affiliated with its Jewish institutions, a disengaged and unaffiliated group, and households situated between these two extremes. The most affiliated group primarily consists of older adults without children, yet families with children remain a part of this core. The unaffiliated group includes households from throughout the demographic spectrum, young to old.

The community is diverse. It includes both families identifying with one of the major denominations as well as families that do not affiliate with any particular branch of Judaism. On average, the community is older than the US Jewish population as a whole, but it also includes families with children of preschool and day care age, multiple options for supplementary and day schools, and Jewish Community Center family activities.

Many Jewish households are deeply rooted in the community due to their long residence in the area and their geographical concentration in key locations. These close connections create a community that is stable and loyal, and thereby supportive of community members and institutions. One consequence of stability and longevity, however, is that newcomers may find it difficult to integrate, connect with individuals, and become involved in institutions. Another consequence can be resistance to change on an institutional level.

The opportunities and challenges that lie ahead for the leadership of the Greater

Buffalo Jewish community are to find ways to maintain the loyalty of long-standing members while being welcoming to those less involved, whether they are newcomers to the area or newly seeking connections to the Jewish community. Segments of the community that deserve particular attention in the coming decade will include families, young adults, and the elderly.

Key findings of the study include:

### Community Size

- As of 2013, there are approximately 12,050 Jewish individuals in Western New York living in 5,770 households. This number is composed of 9,800 Jewish adults and 2,250 Jewish children (age 17 and under).
- An additional 1,000 non-Jewish adults and 200 non-Jewish children live in those Jewish-connected households.

### Demographics

- Just over 70% of the adult Jewish population of Western North York is aged 50 or older. The median age of the adult population (aged 18 and over) is 60 years old, meaning that half of adults in the Greater Buffalo Jewish community are 60 years old or older.
- Children aged 17 and under compose 19% of the population.
- Just under two-thirds (62%) of Jewish-connected households in Western New York include a married couple. Of those who are married, 21% are interfaith couples.
- About one-third (37%) of households are

composed of Jewish married couples with no children.

### Children

- 20% of Jewish-connected households in Western New York include children.
- 12% of households include Jewish married couples with Jewish children.
- Nearly half (46%) of the children of interfaith couples are being raised exclusively as Jews, with an additional 19% being raised Jewish and something else and 19% being raised in no religion.
- Four percent of all households include Jewish children with single or unmarried parents.
- In 88% percent of households with children, the children are being raised exclusively Jewish.

### Jewish Education of Children

- 27% of preschool-age children currently attend Jewish preschool, and 56% of all children have ever attended Jewish preschool.
- 47% of school-age children currently attend Jewish supplementary school, and 69% of children have ever attended Jewish supplementary school.
- 20% of school-age children currently attend Jewish day school, and 25% of children have ever attended Jewish day school.
- Children of inmarried couples participate more fully in Jewish education than do children of interfaith couples. The rate of participation is higher for all forms of Jewish formal and informal education.
- Rates of participation in formal Jewish education for synagogue members exceed those of non-members, but plans to attend camp in the coming year were higher among non-members.

### Religious Practice

- The largest denomination of Jewish adults is Reform, representing 41% of the community. 21% identify as Conservative, and 9% as Orthodox.
- Three-quarters identify with a specific denomination (Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, or Reform).
- 38% say they attend services at least once a month.
- 88% attend a Passover Seder and light Hanukkah candles, with this behavior nearly universal among synagogue members and households with children.
- 44% observe some degree of Kashrut law.

### Synagogue and JCC Membership

- 65% of households include at least one synagogue member. 69% of respondents from inmarried Jewish households were members of synagogues, compared to 46% of respondents from interfaith households.
- 34% of all households are current dues-paying members of the JCC. An additional 5% consider themselves to be members but do not pay dues. 73% of households are current or past members of the JCC.
- Of respondents who reported that they were currently dues-paying JCC members, over half are aged 60 or older. 73% of JCC member households have no children.

### General Philanthropy

- Nearly all households (95%) made philanthropic donations other than membership dues in the past year.
- Twelve percent of households have made donations to Jewish organizations

via donor-advised funds. Just 5% of respondents have designated a Western New York Jewish organization in their wills.

- 30% donated mostly or exclusively to Jewish causes (40% among synagogue members vs. 13% among non-members; 35% among respondents from inmarried Jewish couples vs. 9% among respondents from interfaith couples).
- 33% donated mostly or exclusively to non-Jewish causes (23% among synagogue members vs. 52% among non-members; 27% among respondents from inmarried Jewish couples vs. 68% among respondents from interfaith couples).

### **Connection to Local Jewish Community and to Israel**

- Three-quarters of respondents are “somewhat” or “very much” connected to their Jewish peers, 68% feel connected to their local Jewish community and 82% feel connected to the worldwide Jewish community.
- Just over three-quarters of respondents

are “somewhat” or “very much” connected to Israel. This proportion rises to nearly 90% for synagogue members and respondents who are aged 65 or older, and it drops to about half of respondents who are not synagogue members, who are from interfaith households, or who are under the age of 40.

### **Social Welfare**

- Over 90% of households reported that they were living comfortably or were prosperous.
- 74% have household incomes higher than \$50,000, greater than the median Erie County household income.
- 26% are uncertain or not confident that they will have sufficient retirement savings.
- 14% of households receive at least one public benefit other than Social Security or Medicare.
- 23% of adults age 80+ indicated that they were in fair or poor health.
- 66% would prefer social services that are offered through a Jewish agency.





## Introduction

Local demographic studies of Jewish communities are designed to help local Jewish agencies learn about the demographics of their communities, community members' interest in services, synagogue and other organizational affiliations, as well as a host of topics that may inform communal planning. The data gleaned from these studies are critical to making informed and effective decisions about programming, allocation of resources, goals, and the impact of the community's efforts in recent years. The Jewish community of Greater Buffalo has conducted three prior demographic studies, in 1938, 1984, and 1995. As the community evolves, these studies need to be repeated to ensure that the community has actionable data and up-to-date planning information. Eighteen years have passed since the last demographic study of the Greater Buffalo Jewish community and the present study was conducted to understand the needs and challenges faced by the Buffalo Jewish community in a new era.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Buffalo articulated several goals for the study:

1. An estimate of the size and geographic distribution of the Jewish community;
2. A current portrait of the community's characteristics;
3. A baseline against which to judge future trends and to address how the community is changing; and
4. Frameworks to help the community use the data gleaned from the study to assist in communal endeavors.

The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS)/Steinhardt Social Research Institute (SSRI) at Brandeis University were engaged to conduct the study. Informed by previous research and in consultation with the Federation, its community study technical committee, and leaders of a wide array of Jewish organizations in Western New York, CMJS/SSRI developed a research strategy and survey instrument to meet the community's needs. Our hope is that this study will bear fruit for the Western New York Jewish community for many years.

### How to Read This Report

Throughout this study, we use the term "Western New York," but it is more precise to say "Greater Buffalo." We use the terms interchangeably, though we recognize that they do not necessarily refer to identical geographic areas. The Buffalo Jewish community draws members not only from Erie County but from several adjacent counties and one Canadian regional municipality as well. These areas may all be considered part of "Greater Buffalo," but not necessarily part of "Western New York." Further, "Western New York" may refer geographically to areas as far east as Wayne County, east of Rochester, as well as the Southern Tier and includes other distinct Jewish communities in this area.

Determining exactly what territory is part of one Jewish community and what territory should be designated as part of another is always difficult around the borders. We determined that any respondent who claimed

membership in the Jewish community of Greater Buffalo/Western New York would be included as part of the study.

Household surveys are designed to represent the views of an entire community by interviewing a randomly selected sample who stand in for segments of that community. In order to extrapolate survey data to the population as a whole, a method known as weighting is used to adjust the survey responses. This technique adjusts each respondent's answers for the probability of having been selected into the survey as well as the probability of participating in the survey, yielding what is known as "weighted" data. Each individual response is weighted to represent the proportion of the overall population it was selected to represent. (For more details on the weighting process, see the methodological appendix.) Unless otherwise specified, this report presents survey data in the form of weighted percentages or proportions. These data should be read, therefore, not as the percentage or proportion of respondents who answered each question in a particular way, but as the percentage of the population that it is estimated would answer the questions in that way if the entire population had been surveyed.

The subgroupings for our analyses are synagogue members vs. non-members, respondents from endogamous Jewish households (i.e., married couple, both adults are Jewish) vs. interfaith households (i.e., one Jewish and one non-Jewish partner), age categories (adults aged 18-39, 40-64, and 65 and older), and households with children. Charts and figures refer to the number of respondents who answered the relevant question (n=#) and note statistical

significance where appropriate for comparisons between subgroups.

When a measure is statistically significant, it is unlikely that the distribution between the variables being tested has happened by chance. The significance value represents the amount of error present in the analysis. Following the standard practice of social science research, this report relies on a standard of 5% or less error (i.e.,  $p < .05$ ), which means we can be 95% confident that findings of differences between subgroups for a particular variable are not the product of chance but rather a result of actual difference between the subgroups. Statistically significant differences will be noted in tables in this report by shading in the cells and estimates printed in bold type. Statistical significance will be denoted in figures and bar charts with an asterisk next to the relevant variable label.

Numerical and statistical data in this report are supplemented with and enriched by summaries of free-text comments provided by respondents in open-ended questions on the survey. When such data are reported, the numbers of respondents indicated in each section represent the actual number of survey respondents who answered each question or who gave a specific response. As is standard for such qualitative data analysis, these sections are not weighted to match the population. The number of responses should not be considered to represent a proportion of the population; rather, it should be understood to represent the views of a specific number of survey participants who chose to answer the question. Aside from edits for clarity and to protect privacy, respondents' words are quoted directly in order to capture the thoughts and feelings of community members themselves.

## Study Design

The study was conducted by CMJS/SSRI researchers on behalf of the Jewish Federation of Greater Buffalo. To conduct the study, the research team drew a stratified random sample of 2,600 households. Of these, 1,225 households completed the survey, including 680 with at least one Jewish adult who lived in Western New York for at least part of the year. These 680 households are the achieved sample upon which the study is based.

The study sampling frame consisted of households on the membership and mailing lists of the Jewish Federation of Greater Buffalo, the Bureau of Jewish Education, Congregation Beth Abraham, Congregation Shir Shalom, the Holocaust Resource Center, the Jewish Community Center of Greater Buffalo, the Jewish Discovery Center, Jewish Family Service of Buffalo and Erie County, Kadimah School of Buffalo, Kehillat Ohr Tzion, Ohr Temimim, Temple Beth Tzedek, and Temple Beth Zion.<sup>1</sup> An additional mailing list, an ethnic names frame from AccuData, a commercial data broker, was added to the sample, consisting of households that were identified as ethnically or religiously Jewish or of Russian or Belarussian descent and had lived for at least part of the year in Erie County. These households represented the “unknown” Jewish community—households that are not affiliated with any participating Jewish organization but that may nevertheless have some Jewish members. Because many households appeared on multiple lists, CMJS/SSRI researchers cleaned the lists to remove duplicates wherever possible to ensure that no household would have more than one entry on the combined list. The combined list included 21,202 households.

In order to estimate total population size, two methods were utilized. Initial population estimates were derived from the CMJS/SSRI meta-analysis project that estimates the size of the Jewish community by synthesizing data across hundreds of extant surveys. Because of the small size of the Buffalo Jewish community, estimates of the size of this community through meta-analysis are not guaranteed to be reliable. However, for the Buffalo metropolitan area, the meta-analysis estimates the number of adults who identify as Jewish by religion to be within the range 3,700-12,000 with a point estimate of 7,950.<sup>2</sup> Using a standard estimate of an additional 25% of adults who identify as Jewish not by religion, the adult Jewish population of Greater Buffalo is estimated to be 9,750.

Due to the imprecision of this estimate, we also developed population estimates based on the response to the entire survey, using the Ethnic Names Frame to represent the unaffiliated Jewish population. This method produced an estimate of 9,800 Jewish adults, nearly identical to the meta-analysis derived population estimate. For the analysis in this report, weights used were derived from the survey response rates. However, an analysis using weights derived from the meta-analysis would be expected to yield essentially identical results.

Although our goal was to be comprehensive in understanding the Jewish population, some groups are likely undercounted in this study; in particular, residents of hospitals, nursing homes, or other institutional settings, as well as Jewish adults who do not affiliate with any Jewish organization in Western New York. Nevertheless, we do not believe that these undercounts introduce any significant bias into our estimates.





## Demographics

### Community Size

Three previous demographic studies of the Jewish community of Greater Buffalo or Erie County have been conducted. In terms of community size, the 1938 study<sup>3</sup> estimated the Jewish population of Buffalo at 18,000 people. The 1984 study<sup>4</sup> yielded a similar estimate of 18,200 people. The 1995 study<sup>5</sup> estimated the Jewish population of Erie County at 26,400 people, but this estimate was not universally accepted<sup>6</sup> and was revised downward to 20,000 in 2000<sup>7</sup> and to 18,500 in 2001.<sup>8</sup> A more recent published figure, based on the best information available from informants in the Buffalo Jewish community, estimated the Jewish population at 13,000 people.<sup>9</sup> The SSRI American Jewish Population Map estimates Erie County to include 7,230 adults who identify as Jewish by religion; this figure does not include either adults who identify as Jewish by some means other than religion or Jewish children.

This study focused primarily on Erie County because the vast majority of households affiliated with the Jewish community of Western New York reside there. However, a small number of households residing in surrounding counties or in the vicinity of Fort Erie, Ontario, also affiliate with this community and are included in this study.

The overall size of the Western New York Jewish community can be measured as the number of Jewish-connected households in which at least one self-identified Jewish person resides, as well as the number of individual Jews in those households. It is estimated that as of 2013, there are

approximately 12,050 Jewish individuals in Western New York living in 5,770 households. This number is composed of 9,800 Jewish adults and 2,250 Jewish children (aged 17 and under).

Of the 12,050 individuals, approximately 11,750 are residents of Erie County. Based on a 2011 population estimate of 918,028 for Erie County,<sup>10</sup> we estimate that the Jewish community constitutes approximately 1.3% of the Erie County population.

### What is a “Jewish-Connected Household”?

A Jewish-connected household was defined as any household in which at least one adult (age 18 or above) who usually resides in the household considers him- or herself to be Jewish in any way (religiously, ethnically, culturally, etc.). Answering “no” to this question screened those households in which no members were Jewish out of the survey.

### Who Counts as a Jew?

Not everyone who lives in a Jewish-connected household is Jewish. Any respondent who self-identified as a Jew and any adults identified by respondents as Jews were counted, while respondents who did not identify as Jewish in any way and adults identified by respondents as non-Jews were not counted. If there were any children in the household, the respondent was asked if they were being raised exclusively as Jews, Jewish and something else, or exclusively as non-Jews; children who were identified in either of the first two categories were

counted as Jews for the purposes of this study. An additional 990 non-Jewish adults and 195 non-Jewish children live in those Jewish-connected households.

**Age and Sex Composition**

The data reveal an aging Jewish population in Western New York. The median age of the adult population (age 18 and over) is 60 (n=613). We estimate that 24% of the adult Jewish population of Western North York is aged 55-64. An additional 40% of Western New York adult Jews are aged 65 or more. Children aged 17 and under comprise 19% of the total Jewish population. The overall gender composition is 51% female and 49% male (n=655).

The shape of the age-sex distribution, or population pyramid, of Jewish residents of Western New York, shown in Figure 1, is similar to that of other Jewish communities around the United States. Its goblet-like shape—widest at the top, narrowest in the

middle, and in between at the bottom—reflects a sizeable middle-aged population.<sup>11</sup>

**Marital Status, Children, and Intermarriage**

Just under two-thirds (62%) of Jewish-connected households in Western New York include a married couple. Of those who are married, 21% are interfaith couples.<sup>13</sup> As shown in Table 1, the lowest rates of intermarriage are found in the older couples, ages 65 and over.

Table 1. Intermarriage Rate for Married Respondents by Age of Respondent (weighted estimates, %; n=405)

Age	% intermarried
18-39	29
40-64	25
65+	6
Overall	18

Rate among those who reported age information.

Figure 1. Age-Sex Distribution of Jewish Residents of Western New York (weighted estimates; n=611)<sup>12</sup>

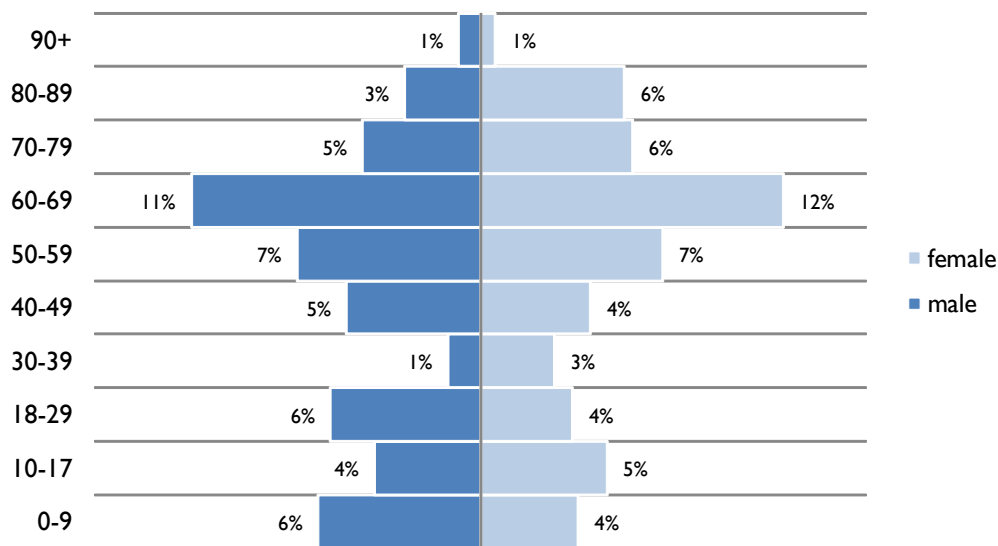


Table 2. Jewish-Connected Household Composition (weighted estimates, %; n=680)

Children in household	Jewish marriage	Interfaith marriage	No married couple	Total
Jewish children	12	3	4	18
Non-Jewish children	0	2	0	2
No children	37	9	34	80
Total	49	13	38	100

It is estimated that 20% of Jewish-connected households in Western New York include children. The composition of families based on the marital status of their parents is shown in Table 2. One-third of households are Jewish married couples with no children, and 12% of households include endogamous Jewish couples with children. All endogamous Jewish couples are raising their children as Jewish. Among interfaith couples, 70% have no children, 23% have Jewish children, and 15% have non-Jewish children. Nearly half (46%) of the children of interfaith couples are being raised exclusively as Jews, with an additional 19% being raised Jewish and something else and 19% being raised in no religion. Four percent of all households include Jewish children with single or unmarried parents. Of the households without married couples or children, 90% are composed of an adult living alone.

In 88% percent of households with children, the children are being raised exclusively Jewish. In an additional 4% of households with children, the children are raised as

Jewish and another religion. In the remaining 8% of households with children, children are being raised in another religion, no religion, or the parents have not yet decided.

### Denomination

It is estimated that 9% of the adults in Jewish-connected households in the Western New York Jewish community are not Jewish. As shown in Table 3, of the Jewish adults in these households, the largest denominational group is Reform (41%), followed by Conservative (21%), and those who identify as “just Jewish” (15%).

Table 3. Denominational Affiliation (weighted estimates, %; n=680)

Denomination	% of individuals
Orthodox	9
Conservative	21
Reform	41
Reconstructionist	5
Secular/Culturally Jewish	9
Just Jewish	15

Just under one-third of children live in households with a respondent who is Reform (32%) or Orthodox (30%), as shown in Table 4. Among high school children, the largest proportion (58%) is Reform, followed by Conservative (25%). In contrast, among pre-K children, the largest proportion of Jewish children is Orthodox (34%) followed by secular/cultural, Reform, and Conservative.

### Educational Attainment

Jewish residents of Western New York display patterns of very high educational

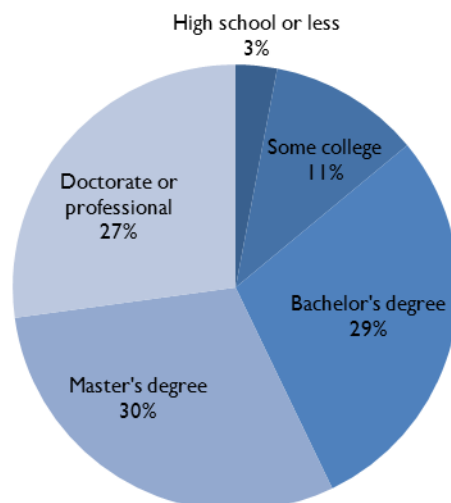
attainment. Overall, 86% report having received at least a bachelor's degree and 57% have attained an advanced degree (Figure 2).

An analysis of educational attainment among those aged 25 or older, who are likely to have finished their education, is nearly identical. These numbers reflect only the educational attainment of survey respondents, not of all adults in each household. It is likely that many of the adult children in the households, ages 18-24, are enrolled in higher education at the time of the survey.

Table 4. Jewish Children by Grade and Respondent Denomination  
(weighted estimates, %; n=152)

Grade	Orthodox	Conservative	Reconstructionist	Reform	Secular/ Cultural	Just Jewish	Total
Pre-K	34	11	<1	22	28	5	100
K to 4	37	16	22	23	1	2	100
5 to 8	35	20	3	35	4	4	100
9 to 12	5	25	4	58	3	6	100
Total	30	17	9	32	7	4	100

Figure 2. Educational Attainment of Adult Jewish Residents of Western New York  
(weighted estimates, n=652)



**Table 5. Labor Force Participation**  
(weighted estimates, %; n=538)

<b>Employment status</b>	<b>%</b>
Employed full-time	45
Employed part-time	13
Retired	28
A homemaker	4
A student	8
Unemployed and looking for full-time work	1
Unemployed and looking for part-time work	<1
Unemployed, not looking for work	1
Disabled and/or unable to work	<1

### **Employment**

Data were collected on the labor force participation of all adults in the household (Table 5). Only 2% of the population are currently unemployed; among these, 37% have been unemployed for more than two years, 36% have been unemployed for between six months and two years, and the remaining 27% have been unemployed for less than six months (n=29). Thirteen percent of the population consider themselves to be underemployed (n=321). Respondents were asked to identify the occupations of all adults in their households. The results were qualitatively coded and are presented in Table 6. The largest occupational category is medicine (18%), followed by primary and secondary education (13%).

### **Household Income**

Because of the sensitivity inherent in inquiring about income, a set of questions

**Table 6. Occupations**  
(weighted estimates, %; n=339)

<b>Occupation category</b>	<b>%</b>
Medicine	18
Education (through grade 12)	13
Sales and retail	9
Business and management	8
Academic (college and university)	8
Law	7
Finance	6
Administrative	5
Arts	4
Engineering and science	4
Other non-professional	4
Jewish professional	4
Other professional	3
Construction and real estate	2
Self-employed	2
Non-profit and government	2

were used to determine respondents' perception of their income and standard of living. Respondents were asked whether their household income fit into one of ten categories, ranging from "less than \$10,000" per year to "\$200,000 or more," with an additional option for respondents who specifically indicated that they preferred not to divulge such information; 43% of respondents selected this option. To compensate for this challenge, the survey also included questions about respondents' perceptions of their standard of living and the degree to which they were confident they would have enough resources to sustain them through retirement.



**Table 7. Household Income**  
(weighted estimates, %; n=330)

Income level	%
Less than \$10,000	5
\$10,000 to \$14,999	2
\$15,000 to \$24,999	2
\$25,000 to \$34,999	5
\$35,000 to \$49,999	11
\$50,000 to \$74,999	14
\$75,000 to \$99,999	17
\$100,000 to \$149,999	21
\$150,000 to \$199,999	8
\$200,000 or more	14

Responses indicate a fairly prosperous community. Of those who responded to the income question, 31% report household income between \$50,000 and \$99,999 and an additional 43% report incomes over \$100,000 (Table 7); the median household income in Erie County is estimated at \$48,805 by the United States Census Bureau.<sup>14</sup>

Over 90% of respondents consider themselves to be living at least reasonably comfortably (Table 8). Three-quarters (75%) report that they are somewhat or very confident that they will have enough money to live comfortably through their retirement years; 20% are uncertain and six percent are not very or not at all confident (Table 9). The vast majority of households (94%) live in homes that they own, with only 6% renting a home (n=632).

On the other end of the economic spectrum, 2% of households report that they skipped needed prescription medications because of

**Table 8. Self-Reported Standard of Living**  
(weighted estimates, %; n=526)

Standard of living	%
Prosperous	7
Living very comfortably	43
Living reasonably comfortably	41
Just getting along	8
Nearly poor	1
Poor	<1

**Table 9. Confidence in Having Sufficient Retirement Savings**  
(weighted estimates, %; n=532)

Confidence level	%
Very confident	30
Somewhat confident	45
Uncertain	20
Not very confident	4
Not at all confident	2

inability to afford them (n=535), and 3% were forced to cut the size of meals or skip meals due to lack of money (n=534).

Table 10 indicates the percentage of households that receive various types of public economic benefits. The most common benefits received were Social Security (43%) and Medicare (40%), neither of which can be regarded as a reliable measure of economic insecurity. No other public economic benefit was claimed by more than 6% of respondents. Nevertheless, it is apparent that there are households in the Western New York Jewish community that are living in need; 14% of households claim at least one benefit other than Social Security or Medicare.

Table 10. Recipients of Public Benefits  
(weighted estimates)

<b>Benefit type</b>	<b>% receiving</b>	<b>n</b>
Social Security	43	530
Medicare	40	529
Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)	6	526
Medicaid	5	527
SNAP (Food Stamps)	3	528
SSI (disability assistance)	2	523
Public Assistance (Cash Benefit)	1	529
Day Care Assistance	1	527
Unemployment Benefits	1	521



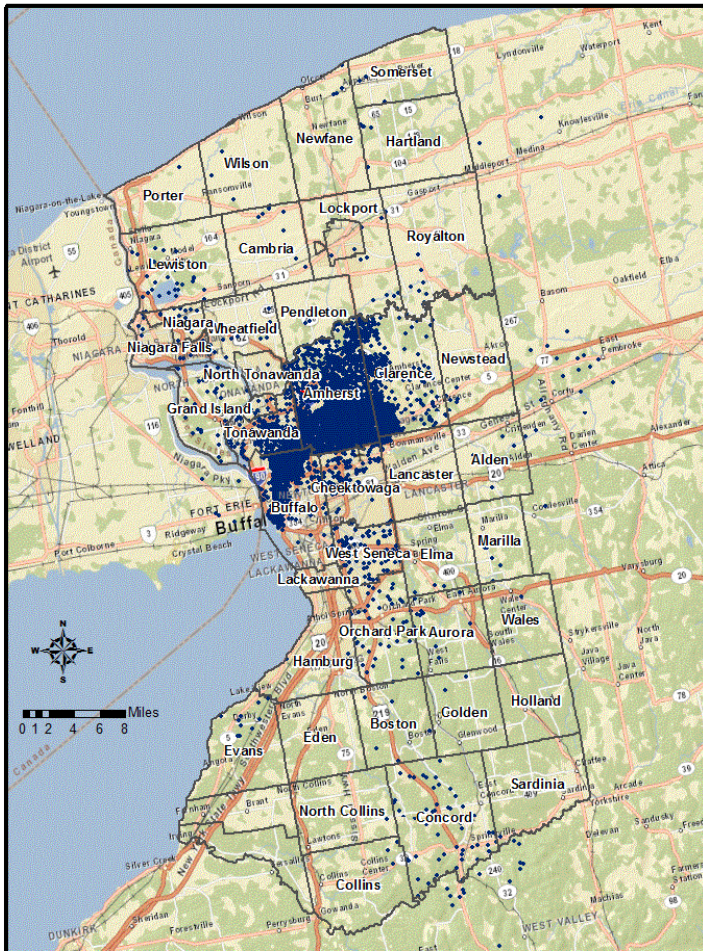
## Geographic Profile

### Where in Western New York are the Jewish-Connected Households?

It is estimated that 97% of the Jewish-connected households in Western New York are located in Erie County, with the remainder spread between Niagara, Wyoming, Genesee, Cattaraugus, and Chautauqua Counties, as well as the Regional Municipality of Niagara, Ontario. Figure 3 illustrates the residential density of Jewish-connected households in Western

New York. Each dot is randomly placed within a ZIP or postal code to identify a single Jewish-connected household residing there; the dots do not represent exact addresses. About one-third of households (34%) reside in ZIP code 14221 (primarily Williamsville). Other common ZIP codes include 14216 (10%; North Buffalo), 14051 (8%; East Amherst), 14226 (8%; Amherst), 14223 (7%; primarily Tonawanda), and 14222 (6%; Buffalo).

Figure 3. Dot Density Map of Jewish-Connected Households in Western New York (1 dot = 1 household) (NOTE: Full size map appears at the end of this report)



## Tenure of Residence

The Jewish population of Western New York is distinguished by the long tenure of its residents. Nearly half of respondents (43%) indicated that they were born in the area. Approximately three-quarters of households (74%) have lived in Western New York since the 1970s or earlier and 50% have lived in the area for at least 50 years (Table 11). On average, Jewish-connected households have resided in Western New York for 47 years.

Table 11. Tenure of Residence in Western New York by Decade (weighted %, n=593)

Decade	%
Pre-1960	43
1960s	20
1970s	11
1980s	8
1990s	8
2000s	9
2010 to date	1

Table 12. Residence of Families with Children by ZIP Code (weighted %, n=145) (partial list, numbers do not add up to 100%)

ZIP code	Neighborhood	% of households
14032	Clarence Center	3
14051	E. Amherst	16
14068	Amherst/Getzville	4
14094	Lockport	2
14214	N. Buffalo/Central Park, University	2
14216	N. Buffalo	8
14221	Williamsville/Amherst	28
14222	Buffalo/Elmwood Village	11
14226	Snyder/Egbertsville	4
14228	West Amherst	8

The three most common ZIP codes for Jewish-connected households that moved to the area since 2000 are 14222 (Buffalo; 24%), 14216 (North Buffalo; 18%), and 14221 (Williamsville; 16%). The available data do not allow for effective assessment of the degree to which other Jewish-connected households have moved out of Western New York from these or other ZIP codes in the area, nor do they permit examination of the degree to which households move between ZIP codes while remaining in the area. Nevertheless, they do suggest that the primary areas of growth for the Jewish community are in specific parts of the City of Buffalo, the Elmwood Village and North Buffalo neighborhoods, and Williamsville, which has long been known as a central node of the Western New York Jewish community.

## Residences of Families and Seniors

The distribution of ZIP codes and neighborhoods for families with Jewish children is shown for all ZIP codes in which at least 2% of families reside (Table 12).

The neighborhoods with the greatest numbers of families are East Amherst, Williamsville/Amherst, and Buffalo/Elmwood Village.

The distribution of ZIP codes and neighborhoods for senior residents is shown for all ZIP codes in which at least 2% of households with a person age 65 or greater resides (Table 13). The households are classified according to the age of the oldest resident. Approximately 44% of households that include a senior are located in Williamsville/Amherst.

### Plans to Move Away

Not only do the Jewish-connected households tend to have lived in Western New York for a long time, most expect to remain in the area. Only 14% of households reported having plans to move away. Of these, 7% planned to move in the next year, another 22% in the next five years, and 12% in six years or more. Most respondents with plans to move away from the area (59%) had no specific time frame in mind for their migration.

Respondents who planned to move indicated a wide array of likely destinations. Twenty-seven percent said they planned to move to Florida, 22% to Israel, and 13% to other places in New York State. Other common destinations included California (8%), Massachusetts (6%), Arizona (5%), and Virginia (5%).

Sixty-five respondents explained why they planned to move away from Western New York; several provided more than one reason. Common reasons included to be near family (23 respondents), to live in a place with a more favorable climate (22 respondents), pursuit of better job opportunities (9 respondents), a desire to live in a larger and/or more vibrant Jewish community (7 respondents), and retirement (7 respondents).

### Parents and Children in Other Western New York Households

Sixty-three percent of respondents indicated that they had children who lived outside their households. These children, a total of approximately 6,630 people, range in age

Table 13. Residence of Households with a Senior Member by ZIP code (weighted %, n=320) (partial list, numbers do not add up to 100%)

ZIP code	Neighborhood	65-74	75-84	85+	Total 65+
14051	E. Amherst	11	4	5	8
14068	Amherst/Getzville	<2	<2	2	2
14141	Springville	6	<2	<2	3
14150	Tonawanda	2	<2	4	2
14214	Buffalo/Central Park, University	7	<2	<2	3
14216	N. Buffalo	5	2	4	4
14221	Williamsville/Amherst	40	58	31	44
14222	Buffalo/Elmwood Village	3	8	3	5
14223	Tonawanda	2	9	22	8
14226	Snyder/Eggertsville	5	9	15	8
14228	West Amherst	6	<2	3	4

from 3 to 73. Approximately one-third (33%) live in other households in Western New York.

Additionally, 30% of respondents have a parent living in another household in Western New York, including 28% of respondents under age 40, 33% of respondents between the ages of 40 and 64, and 18% of respondents who are aged 65 or older. Forty-five percent of respondents from households with children have a parent living in another Western New York household.

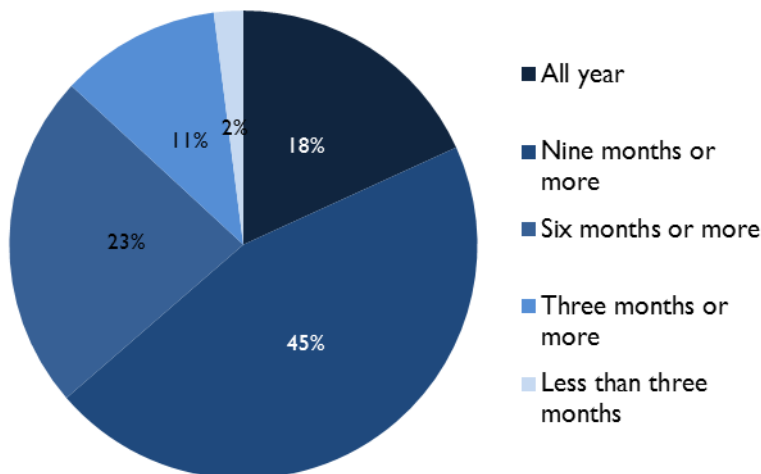
### Multiple Residences

Fifteen percent of Jewish-connected households in Western New York have a secondary residence. Of these, about one-quarter (27%) are also in Western New

York, primarily in Chautauqua County, and another 4% are in Ontario in the vicinity of Fort Erie. Most of the remaining seasonal residences are either in other parts of New York State (20%) or in Florida (18%), with others located in Arizona, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, the Caribbean, Europe, and Israel. For 92% of respondents with multiple residences, Western New York is their primary home.

Eighteen percent of Jewish-connected households with multiple residences spend the entire year in Western New York (Figure 4). Another 45% spend at least nine months of the year in the area. Only 13% live in Western New York for less than half the year.

Figure 4. Proportion of Year Spent in Western New York by Jewish-Connected Households with Multiple Residences (weighted estimates, n=88)





## Religious Life

### Synagogue Membership

Sixty-five percent of respondents indicated that they were members of at least one synagogue.<sup>15</sup> Of synagogue members, 93% were members of one synagogue and the remainder were members of two, three, or four synagogues. Respondents claimed membership in 16 congregations in Western New York: Congregation Beth Abraham, Congregation Havurah, Congregation Shir Shalom, Congregation B’nai Shalom, the Family Shul, Hillel, the Himmel Family Chapel, the Jewish Discovery Center, Kehillat Ohr Tzion, Knesset Center, Saranac Synagogue, Temple Beth El (Niagara Falls),<sup>16</sup> Temple Beth Israel,<sup>17</sup> Temple Beth Tzedek, Temple Beth Zion, the Yankale Shul, and Young Israel of Greater Buffalo.

indicate that they, or someone in their household, are a member of a synagogue. Synagogue membership was nearly universal among Orthodox respondents, while approximately three-quarters of respondents who identified as Conservative, or Reform currently belonged to at least one synagogue. This table utilizes respondents’ denominations rather than synagogue denomination because their self-reported denominations do not always match the denomination of the synagogues in which they are members.

Table 15 shows the proportion of respondents who are synagogue members for those in Jewish and interfaith marriages, for three age categories, and for families with Jewish children.

Table 14 shows the proportion of respondents of each denomination who

Table 14. Synagogue Membership by Respondent Denomination (weighted estimates, %, n=653)

Orthodox	96
Conservative	77
Reconstructionist	81
Reform	76
Secular/culturally Jewish	2
Just Jewish	33
Overall	65

Note: Classified by respondent denomination if respondent is Jewish; otherwise by second adult’s denomination

Table 15. Synagogue Membership by Marriage Type, Respondent Age, and Households with Jewish Children (weighted estimates, %)

Overall (n=660)	Marriage (n=439)		Age (n=597)			HH with Children (n=145)
	Jewish	Interfaith	18-39	40-64	65+	
65	69	46	61	63	71	75

Respondents were also asked the length of time they had been members of each synagogue. The mean tenure of synagogue membership was 26 years. The distribution of length of membership is shown in Table 16.

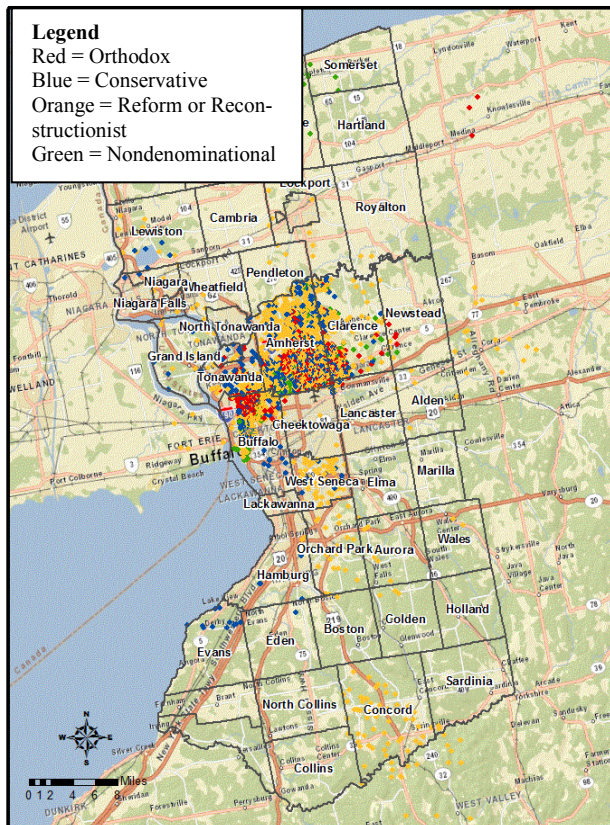
represented by more than one dot on the map.

Table 16. Years of Synagogue Membership (weighted estimates, %, n=505)

Membership Length	%
1 year	9
2 to 4 years	10
5 to 9 years	9
10 to 14 years	9
15 to 19 years	8
20 to 29 years	14
30 to 39 years	18
40 to 49 years	7
50+ years	19

The map shown in Figure 5 visually depicts the geographic distribution of synagogue members. Each dot represents a single household that belongs to a synagogue of a specific denomination. Each dot is randomly placed within the ZIP code in which the household resides and does not represent the exact location of the residence. Because a household can belong to more than one congregation, households that belong to more than one type of congregation may be

Figure 5. Dot Density Map of Synagogue Membership by Synagogue Denomination (1 dot = 1 household) (NOTE: Full size map appears at the end of this report)



Synagogue members indicated their primary reasons for joining a congregation; 404 respondents answered the question. It was evident that synagogue members have a strong sense of belonging, with 125 mentioning the connection to community and friends, 113 mentioning a feeling of belonging, and 74 valuing family and childhood connections. One respondent said, “I have always belonged to a congregation, and felt a strong need to continue when relocating from [former community] to Buffalo.” Another provided three reasons: “1) Wanted to meet Jewish people; 2) Wanted Jewish identification; 3) Wanted to support Jewish causes.” A third respondent said that belonging to a congregation was part of a natural progression of a relationship that began in childhood: “I was brought up in the temple, I went to Sunday school there, and I stayed with it.”

Another common theme was the importance of providing Jewish education for one’s children (116 respondents) or preparing them to have a bar or bat mitzvah (14 respondents). Others mentioned their attraction to synagogue activities including prayer and services (18 respondents), celebration of holidays (18 respondents), religious beliefs and practice (41 respondents), or liking a specific rabbi (16 respondents). Thirteen respondents mentioned the location as a factor. As one respondent said, “It is the best fit for me locally and it is a very open, warm, and diverse, and accepting community. I felt comfortable [there].”

Ninety-eight respondents who indicated that they were not members of any local synagogue were asked about their primary reasons for not joining a congregation. Of these, the most common reason given was the lack of interest in or need for a

synagogue in general (24 respondents) or because the person is not religious (13 respondents). Cost was cited as a reason by 18 respondents, location by five, and lack of time by four. Many were former synagogue members who left because of a specific problem they had encountered with the synagogue or the rabbi (14 respondents), because the synagogue moved or closed (3 respondents), or because they were no longer active (2 respondents). For example, one respondent noted, “I was upset over what was happening with the administration and have not yet joined another synagogue.” Five respondents indicated that they were planning to join a congregation in the future, and five indicated that they had not found a synagogue that was appropriate to their needs. One respondent said, “I’ve lived in Western New York for 3 years and I haven’t quite found the right fit.” Another respondent noted “a feeling of a lack of belonging to the Jewish people of Buffalo.”

### **Attendance at and Perceptions of Religious Services**

Thirteen percent of respondents never attend religious services and 27% attend only once or twice a year (Table 17). Thirty-eight percent say they attend at least once a month. Not surprisingly, synagogue members attend more frequently than non-members; only 20% of members attend never or once or twice a year, compared with 75% of non-members, and 53% of members attend at least once a month, compared with 11% of non-members. Similarly, respondents from endogamous Jewish households attended more frequently than respondents from interfaith households.

Of those who ever attend services, 78% attended High Holiday services in the past year (Table 18). Ninety-three percent of

synagogue members attended High Holiday services compared to about half of non-members, and respondents from endogamous Jewish households attended at higher rates than did respondents from interfaith households.

Eighty-two percent of respondents who ever attend services felt warmly welcomed the last time they attended (Table 19); the figure rises to 91% for synagogue members (61% for non-members) and 94% for families with children, but shrinks to 61% for interfaith families. Seventy percent of respondents felt connected to the other people at services, including 79% of synagogue members (53% for non-members), 75% of inmarried

couples (54% for interfaith couples) and 72% of families with children.

### Home-Based Ritual Behavior

Respondents were asked about their current levels of observance of selected Jewish religious rituals. Eighty-eight percent hold or attend a Passover seder and light Hanukkah candles with higher rates for synagogue members (94%) compared to non-members (Table 20). Twenty-five percent light Shabbat candles usually or always, and 44% never light Shabbat candles. Thirty percent of synagogue members never light Shabbat candles compared to 70% of non-members (Table 21).

Table 17. Attendance at Religious Services Once a Month or More Frequently (weighted estimates, %, n=651)

Overall	Synagogue Member(s)		Marriage		Age			HH with Children
	Yes	No	Jewish	Interfaith	18-39	40-64	65+	
38	53	11	44	17	31	43	36	43

Table 18. Attendance at High Holiday Services in Past Year of Those Who Ever Attended Services (weighted estimates, %, n=557)

Overall	Synagogue Member(s)		Marriage		Age			HH with Children
	Yes	No	Jewish	Interfaith	18-39	40-64	65+	
78	93	49	86	67	63	81	78	87

Table 19. Perceptions of Religious Services (weighted estimates, %)

	Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Strongly agree
I was warmly welcomed. (n=551)	1	2	15	19	63
I did not understand what was going on. (n=548)	64	13	9	7	8
I was bored. (n=551)	53	14	14	15	4
I was inspired or emotionally involved. (n=548)	9	13	18	25	36
I felt connected to the other people there. (n=550)	3	9	17	25	45

Table 20. Participation in Holiday Rituals in a Typical Year (weighted estimates, %, n=660)

	Overall	Synagogue Member(s)		Marriage		Age			HH with Children
		Yes	No	Jewish	Interfaith	18-39	40-64	65+	
Attend or hold a Passover Seder	88	94	77	94	89	78	91	85	99
Light Hanukah candles	88	94	76	95	92	75	95	79	100

Table 21. Usually or Always Lighting Shabbat Candles (weighted estimates, %, n=660)

Overall	Synagogue Member(s)		Marriage		Age			HH with Children
	Yes	No	Jewish	Interfaith	18-39	40-64	65+	
25	36	4	31	8	28	31	20	27

Table 22. Keep Kosher Only at Home or Always (weighted estimates, %, n=562)

Overall	Synagogue Member(s)		Marriage		Age			HH with Children
	Yes	No	Jewish	Interfaith	18-39	40-64	65+	
23	29	10	26	5	15	29	18	23

Table 23. Usually or Always Makes Decisions based on a Kosher Certification (weighted estimates, %, n=567)

Overall	Synagogue Member(s)		Marriage		Age			HH with Children
	Yes	No	Jewish	Interfaith	18-39	40-64	65+	
22	27	12	27	6	16	26	20	24

## Kashrut

Fifty-six percent of the overall community does not follow any kosher rules and this behavior is similar across all subsets of the community (Table 22). The proportion who keep kosher at home or always (i.e., also outside the home) is 23% overall but is

lower (5%) within interfaith households, although this difference is not significant. A similar proportion, 25%, usually or always makes decisions about food purchases based on their kosher certification (*hechsher*), and that proportion is significantly higher when comparing endogamous households (27%) with interfaith households (6%) (Table 23).



## Programming

### JCC Membership

Overall, 73% of households are current or past members of the JCC. The membership rate is higher for synagogue members (79%) than for those who are not part of synagogues (61%). Figure 6 represents the proportion of all households who are currently JCC members. Approximately one-third of households are current dues-paying members, and an additional 5%

consider themselves to be members but do not pay dues.

Figure 7 shows that the majority of JCC members (72%) primarily utilize the Benderson building, 21% use the Holland building, and 7% use both equally. Other than for interfaith families, which are evenly distributed between Benderson (46%) and Holland (41%), all groups make more use of Benderson than of Holland.

Figure 6. JCC Current Membership (weighted estimates, %, n=679)

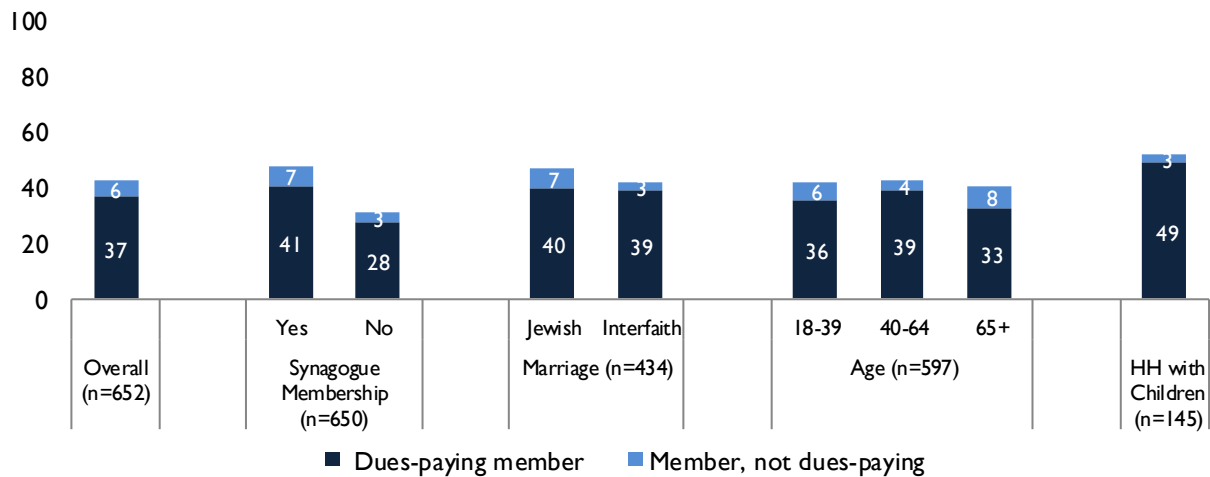
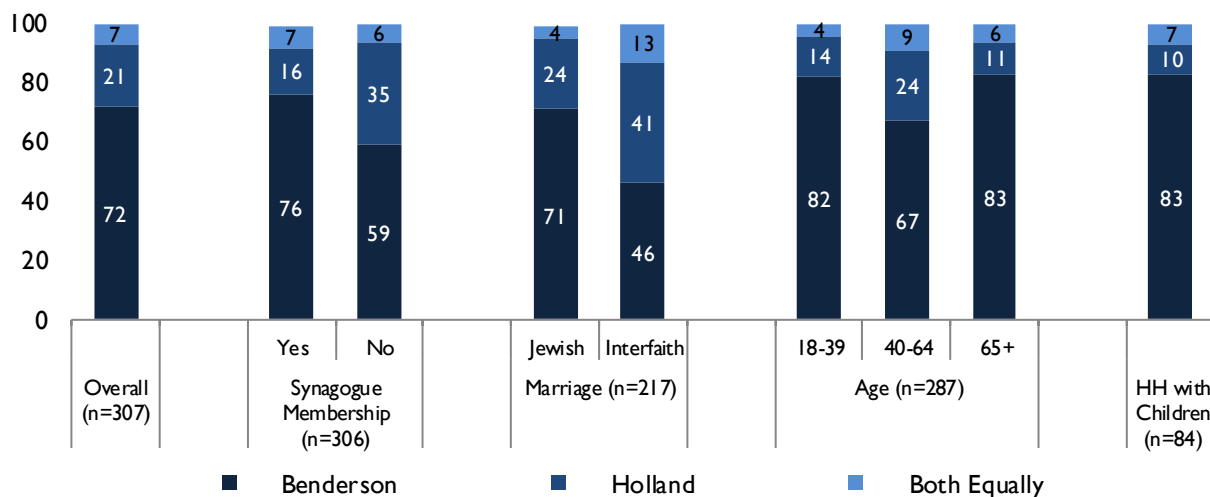


Figure 7. JCC Building Use Among Current Members (weighted estimates, %, n=492)





Of respondents who reported that they were currently dues-paying JCC members, over half are aged 60 or older (Figure 8). Seventy-three percent of JCC members are also synagogue members (n=491). Seventy-three percent of JCC member households have no children, 26% have Jewish children, and 1% are Jewish-connected households raising non-Jewish children (n=492). Thirty-two percent of JCC member households do not include a married couple, 55% include a couple in an endogamous marriage, and 13% include a couple in an interfaith marriage.

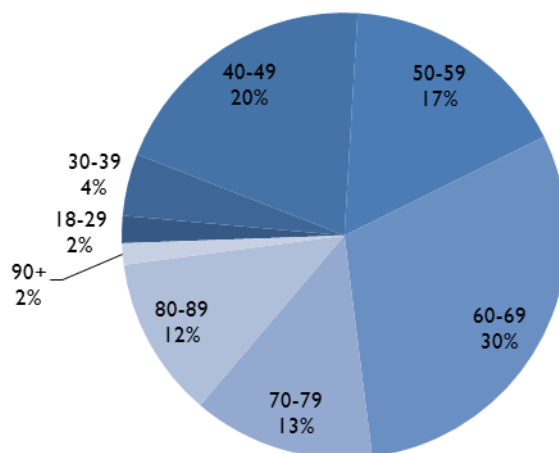
More than 200 respondents explained their reasons for their JCC membership, and most mentioned a combination of reasons. The majority mentioned the opportunity to exercise (133), general use of the facilities (13), and specifically use of the pool (31). For many respondents, the JCC provided an important connection to the community (49), a feeling of belonging (13), an opportunity for social contact (22), or a Jewish connection (16). One respondent wrote that “it’s awesome... it is a wonderful warm

community feel. It's so much more than a gym. Culturally and religiously, it is a hub of Jewish Buffalo.”

Children’s programs including preschool, camp, and afterschool programming were an attraction for 41 respondents, cultural programs were mentioned by 21, and other unspecified programs and activities were mentioned by 34. Five respondents indicated that they initially joined for children’s activities but maintained their membership after their children had grown.

Among the 250 respondents who provided reasons that they did not join the JCC, 76 had no interest in joining. Forty-six did not join because of the cost, 34 because of the location, and 21 did not have time to use the facilities. Thirteen exercised in another facility not affiliated with the JCC and 23 were not healthy enough to use the gym. Thirteen attended programs at the JCC but did so as non-members. Thirty respondents were former members who left for unspecified reasons, and 20 were dissatisfied with JCC programs or facilities.

Figure 8. Current JCC Members by Age of Respondent (weighted estimates, n=469)



## Participation in Jewish Programs, Events, and Activities

About one-quarter of the community overall attends a Jewish event at least once a month (Table 24). Another 26% indicate that they never attend community events, and 50% attend events once or twice a year or every few months. Synagogue members have much higher rates of attendance than do non-synagogue members, with 13% of members attending no events and 13% attending weekly, compared to 51% of non-members attending no events and 2% attending at least weekly. Similarly, those in endogamous marriages attend events more frequently than do interfaith families. Twenty-six percent of those in endogamous marriages never attend Jewish events compared to 45% of those in interfaith marriages; 12% of those in endogamous marriages attend Jewish events at least weekly compared to 3% in interfaith marriages.

Respondents provided specific information about the types of programs they attended (416). The most popular program appeared to be theater and plays (154), including 33 mentions of the Jewish Repertory Theater and three mentions of comedy productions. Other cultural events that were popular were musical performances and concerts (69); film, including the Jewish Film Festival (69); and book clubs and discussions, including the Jewish Book Fair (39). Art

exhibits and museum trips were mentioned by seven respondents. Thirty respondents indicated unspecified cultural events.

Educational programs in general were listed by 19 respondents. Specific programs included lectures and speakers (108) and study/discussion groups (20). Religious study, such as text study with a rabbi, was mentioned by 13.

Children's activities were mentioned by 38 respondents, including participation in Hebrew school and youth groups, family holiday programming, camp, and swim lessons. Use of the JCC for fitness, dance, or swimming was mentioned by 21.

Religious events mentioned included attending services, either daily, weekly, or on holidays (61) or for Bar/Bat Mitzvahs (11); and weddings or funerals (4). Sixty mentioned holiday celebrations, including Passover (9), the women's seder (2) and interfaith seder (2); Hanukkah (8); Purim (11); Lag B'Omer (2); and Sukkot (1). Yom HaShoah was mentioned by 23 respondents and Israel Independence Day was mentioned by 17.

Respondents also mentioned community events (18), social events (23), fundraising events (19) and meetings (24) for a variety of organizations, including synagogues (27), JCC (18), Hadassah (14), Sisterhood (14), and UJF (14).

Table 24. Attendance at Jewish Community Events Monthly or More (weighted estimates, %, n=648)

Overall	Synagogue Member(s)		Marriage		Age			HH with Children
	Yes	No	Jewish	Interfaith	18-39	40-64	65+	
23	32	7	27	6	19	24	26	20

Seventy respondents offered reasons why they did not attend any programs. The most common reasons cited were lack of interest (30) and lack of time (18). Nine respondents stated that they had not found any programs of interest, and four indicated that they were not aware of available programs. Five indicated that the time and/or location was inconvenient, five indicated that their health precluded participation, and two were kept away by costs.

### Communication about Programs

As shown in Table 25, preferences for communication methods were fairly evenly split among print, electronic, and no preference. However, younger members of the community strongly preferred electronic communication (60%) whereas older members strongly preferred print communication (54%).

A total of 468 respondents explained how they had heard about programs in the past.

The most cited way that people heard about programs was through their synagogues, either from announcements, newsletters, or mailings (151). The second most common method was through word of mouth (133). The third was mailings and flyers (131), followed by *The Buffalo Jewish Review* (123). *The Jewish Journal of Western New York*<sup>18</sup> was mentioned by 15, and other newspapers, not identified, were mentioned by 75. Advertisements and posters were mentioned by 24. One hundred seventeen respondents received information by email or through the internet, with 19 mentioning Facebook. In addition, information came through a number of organizations: the JCC (43), Federation (37), Hadassah (9), and Jewish Family Service (2).

### Interest in Programs

Table 26 indicates the level of community interest in various program types, with Israel advocacy programming being the most popular (47% interested). Not surprisingly,

Table 25. Preferred Communication Method (weighted estimates, %, n=552)

	Overall	Age		
		18-39	40-64	65+
In print	38	8	29	54
Electronically	27	60	31	17
No preference	35	32	40	29

Table 26. Program Types of Interest (weighted estimates, %, n=522)

Program Type	% Interested
Israel advocacy programming (n=524)	47
Jewish family programming (n=517)	36
Intergenerational programming (n=513)	30
Interfaith programming (n=522)	29
Elder care programming (n=519)	23
"Empty Nest" programming (n=505)	17
Programming related to people with disabilities (n=517)	16
GLBT programming (n=501)	8

interfaith families were more interested in interfaith programming (46%) than were households with endogamous marriages (22%). Conversely, 54% of endogamous families were interested in Israel advocacy programming compared to 29% of interfaith families. Twenty percent of 18-49 year olds were interested in GLBT programming compared to 7% among those age 50 and older. Twenty-two percent of synagogue members were interested in empty nest programming compared to 8% of non-members.

When asked about other types of programs that community members were interested in attending, 288 respondents expressed interest in a range of topics as well as targeted audiences. The greatest interest was in cultural programming (72), followed by music and theater (65) and Jewish learning (55). Specific topics mentioned included Israel (19), books (16), politics (14) and history. Six mentioned Hebrew classes, one mentioned Yiddish classes, and two were interested in trips. Sixty respondents had no particular suggestions. In addition to topics,

several mentioned programs oriented toward specific groups: nine for children, eight for families, four for singles, two for members of the community aged 70 or older, and one each for Holocaust survivors, widows/ widowers, and adults without children.

**Jewish Educational and Cultural Activities**

As shown in Table 27, just under one-third of respondents have studied *Tanakh* (the Hebrew Bible) or rabbinic texts occasionally or often in the past year; just over half have read Jewish literature, such as Jewish philosophy, poetry, essays and novels, or listened to Jewish music; and just over half have attended a Jewish play, film, concert, museum, or other Jewish cultural event. During the past year, 55% of the community never studied Jewish texts but 17% did so often. Twenty-seven percent never read any Jewish literature or attend any cultural events. Eighteen percent read Jewish literature often and 12% attend Jewish cultural events often.

Table 27. Participation in Jewish Learning and Culture Occasionally or Often in Past Year (weighted estimates, %, n=562)

	Overall	Synagogue Member(s)		Marriage		Age			HH with Children
		Yes	No	Jewish	Interfaith	18-39	40-64	65+	
Studied Jewish sacred texts	32	44	7	38	10	18	34	32	43
Read Jewish literature	52	61	37	60	45	32	51	59	45
Attended Jewish cultural event	52	61	32	57	48	18	49	60	43



## Philanthropy and Volunteering

### General Philanthropy

Nearly all households (95%) made philanthropic donations other than membership dues in the past year (Figure 9). Thirty percent donated mostly or exclusively to Jewish causes (40% among synagogue members vs. 13% among non-members; 35% among respondents from endogamous Jewish couples vs. 9% among respondents from interfaith couples), while 33% donated mostly or exclusively to non-Jewish causes (23% among synagogue members vs. 52% among non-members; 27% among respondents from endogamous Jewish couples vs. 68% among respondents from interfaith couples).

### Donations to Jewish Organizations

Of those households that made any philanthropic donations to Jewish organizations in the past year, approximately two-thirds contributed to the Jewish Federation of Greater Buffalo, including approximately three-quarters of synagogue members and respondents from endogamous Jewish couples, and over 80% of respondents aged 65 or older (Table 28). Similarly, two-thirds of households made financial contributions other than dues to a synagogue, including 80% of synagogue members. About half of households contributed to other Jewish organizations in Western New York.

Figure 9. Donations to Charities and Causes in Past Year (weighted estimates, %)

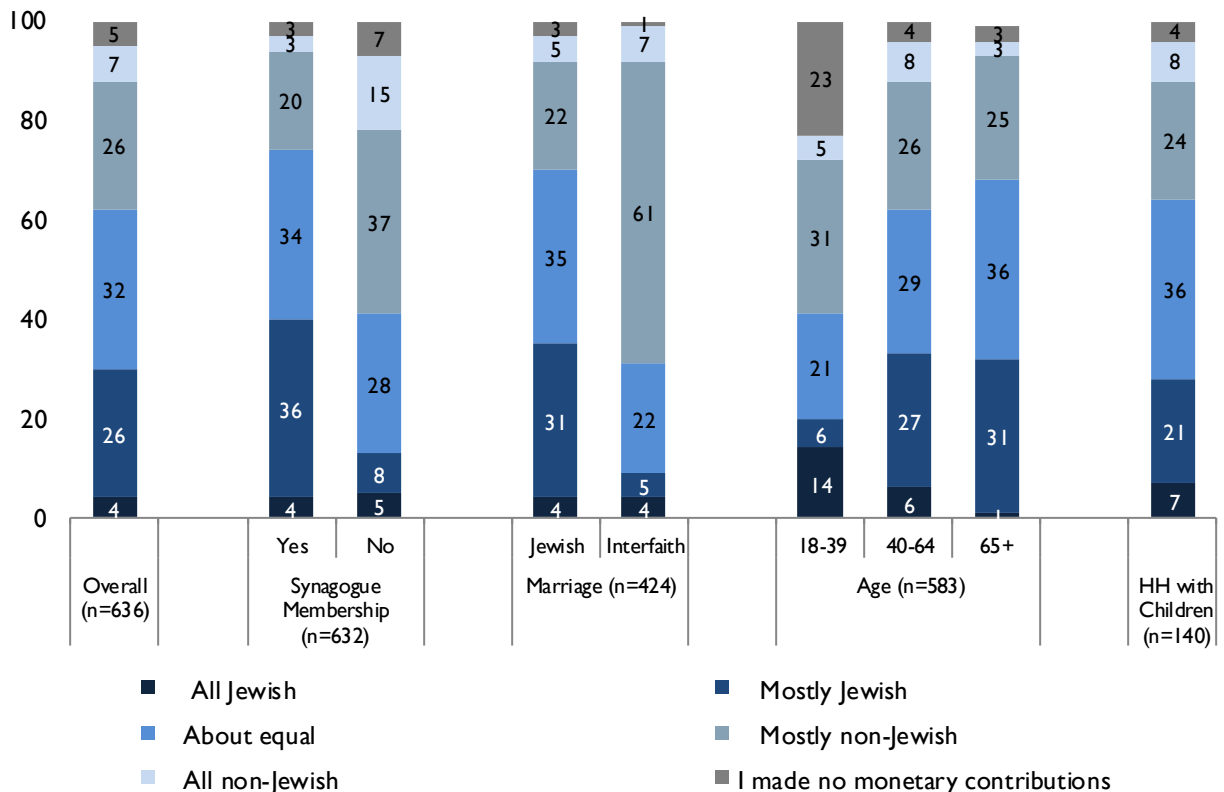


Table 28. Respondents Who Made Donations in Past Year (weighted estimates, %)

	Overall	Synagogue Member(s)		Marriage		Age			HH with Children
		Yes	No	Jewish	Interfaith	18-39	40-64	65+	
To the Jewish Federation of Greater Buffalo	67	75	46	73	58	50	57	83	61
To a synagogue (other than dues)	66	80	29	71	32	43	67	68	75
To another Jewish agency in Western New York	48	55	31	53	20	25	47	52	37
	n=548	n=545		n=367		n=521			n=117

Respondents were asked to identify the Jewish organizations to which they made donations; 163 respondents named at least one such organization. Common responses included the Holocaust Resource Center (43 respondents), Jewish Family Service of Buffalo and Erie County (33), a school (Kadimah, Ohr Temimim, the High School of Jewish Studies, or a synagogue-based Hebrew school; 31), the Bureau of Jewish Education (24), Hillel (18), Hadassah (14), the Buffalo Jewish Cemetery Corporation (14), the JCC (13), Yad B'Yad (13), and the Hebrew Benevolent Loan Association (11).

In addition, 43 respondents provided reasons for not donating to Jewish organizations. The primary reason was that they could not afford it (24 respondents). Sixteen cited that they did not feel any connections to the Jewish organizations. Four cited specific complaints that they had with community organizations, including “the community supported Obama,” “most Jewish organizations have a Zionist tilt,” “I don't like organizations,” and “I do not want to pay big salaries to executives.”

The vast majority of households, 85%, were solicited for donations to Western New York Jewish organizations in the past year. Twelve percent of households have made donations to such organizations via donor-advised funds. Just 5% of respondents have designated a Western New York Jewish organization in their wills.

### Volunteering

Members of Jewish-connected households in Western New York volunteer for a wide variety of causes (Table 29). Fifty-six percent of respondents report volunteering their time for at least one organization in the past month, though only 46% of respondents aged 65 or older volunteered.

Of respondents who volunteered for any organization in the past month, just over half (53%) volunteered for at least one Jewish organization. Older volunteers were more likely to have volunteered for a Jewish organization (62% of volunteers aged 65 or older vs. 31% of those under age 40), as were synagogue members (65% vs. 20% of



Table 29. Volunteered in Past Month for Any Organization (weighted estimates, %)

Overall	Synagogue Member(s)		Marriage		Age			HH with Children
	Yes	No	Jewish	Interfaith	18-39	40-64	65+	
56	61	45	58	55	61	63	46	62
N=548	N=545		N=367		N=536			N=117

non-members) and respondents from endogamous Jewish couples (60% vs. 37% from interfaith couples). Approximately two-thirds (66%) of respondents from households with children who volunteered for any organization in the past month did so for a Jewish organization.

Respondents who volunteered for at least one Jewish organization in the past month did so for an average of 9.6 hours. Older volunteers tended to serve for more hours (10.8 hours for volunteers aged 65 or older vs. 9.2 hours for volunteers aged 40 to 64 and 6.4 hours for volunteers under the age of 40). Similarly, synagogue members tended to volunteer for more hours than non-members (9.8 hours vs. 6.6 hours) and respondents from endogamous Jewish couples tended to volunteer for more hours than respondents from interfaith couples (10.0 hours vs. 4.8 hours). Respondents from households with children who volunteered for at least one Jewish organization in the past month served for an average of 8.0 hours.

Those who did any sort of volunteer work were asked to identify the kinds of volunteer activities in which they engaged; 182 respondents supplied answers. The most frequently mentioned volunteer activity for Jewish organizations was service on committees and boards of synagogues and other Jewish organizations (79 respondents). Others mentioned volunteering for specific programs in a synagogue (13), Hebrew

school (16), arts (9), and other programs (33). Several respondents classified their activities according to specific skills used, including food preparation and catering (16), fundraising (18), leading religious rituals (11), and other professional skills (7).

Respondents who indicated that they did not volunteer in the past month were asked to provide the primary reasons why they did not do so; 207 respondents provided answers. The primary reason cited was lack of time or energy (114). Thirty-five respondents indicated they had no interest in volunteering. Fifty-five were precluded from volunteering for health reasons. Another six did not volunteer because they lacked transportation. Nine respondents said they did not volunteer simply because they had not been asked to do so.

### Social Justice Interests

Respondents were asked to identify the social justice issues that concerned them the most; these were defined as “problems that society faces on the local, national, or international level, like poverty, education, health, and the environment.” Overall, 411 respondents responded to the question. Given the framing, it is perhaps not surprising that these issues were among the most frequently cited; poverty (including homelessness and affordable housing) was mentioned by 128 respondents, education by 144, health by 154, and the environment by 122. Other commonly cited issues included

gay rights and gay marriage (28 respondents), Judaism and the Jewish people (27), Israel (25), women's rights (24), gun control (22), violence and terrorism (20),

hunger (19), abortion or reproductive rights (14), children's welfare (13), immigration (11), civil rights (11), and politics and government (10).

## Attitudes

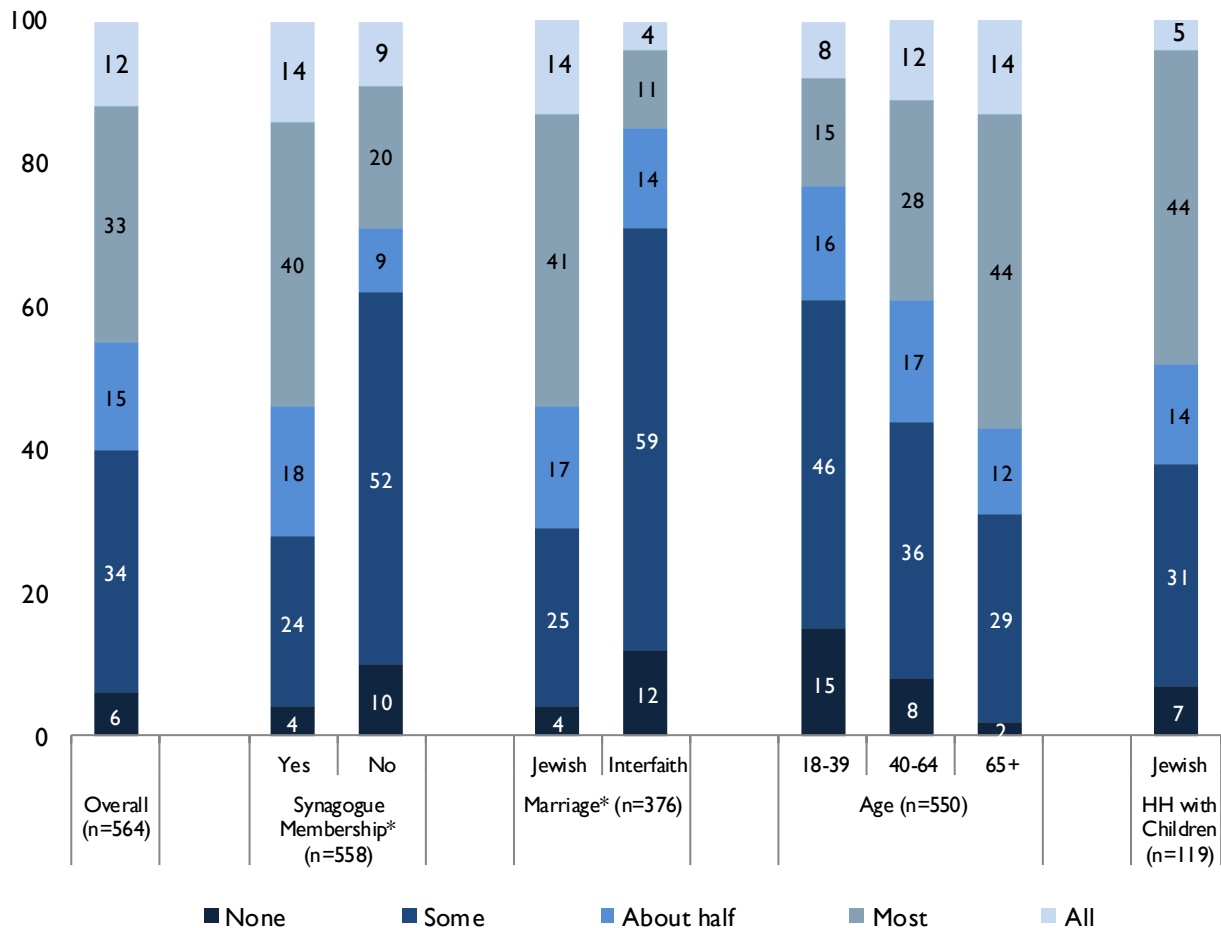
### Social Networks

The proportion of one’s closest friends who are Jewish is often an indicator of engagement in the Jewish community. There are two key reasons for this. First, most of the people with whom one may interact in a Jewish organization are Jewish. And second, the norm of homophily dictates that people tend to seek to spend their time with others who substantially share their interests and values. In short, those people who are most inclined to engage in Jewish life and culture

tend to seek out like-minded friends and participate more actively in Jewish organizations.

Overall, 45% of respondents indicated that all or most of their closest friends are Jewish (Figure 10). The proportion was far higher among synagogue members (54% vs. 29% for non-members) and among respondents from endogamous Jewish households (55% vs. 15% for respondents from interfaith households).

Figure 10. Proportion of Closest Friends Who Are Jewish (weighted estimates, %)



These findings are reinforced by respondents' self-reported connection to the Jewish community (Table 30). Overall, 75% of respondents report feeling "somewhat" or "very much" connected to Jewish peers, including 85% of synagogue members (vs. 55% of non-members). Sixty-eight percent of respondents felt "somewhat" or "very much" connected to the local Jewish community, including 85% of synagogue members (vs. 33% of non-members) and about three-quarters of respondents from endogamous Jewish households (vs. about half of respondents from interfaith households). Respondents felt even more connected to the worldwide Jewish community; overall, 82% of respondents felt

"somewhat" or "very much" connected. This connection was particularly strong among synagogue members, respondents from endogamous Jewish households, and respondents aged 65 or older.

Given respondents' close feelings of connection to the worldwide Jewish community, it is not surprising that they also feel closely connected to Jewish history and Jewish customs and traditions (Table 31). Overall, over three-quarters of respondents felt "somewhat" or "very much" connected to both, with even higher rates among synagogue members and respondents from endogamous Jewish households.

Table 30. Feeling Somewhat or Very Connected to Jewish People (weighted estimates, %)

	Overall	Synagogue Member(s)		Marriage		Age			HH with Children
		Yes	No	Jewish	Interfaith	18-39	40-64	65+	
Jewish peers (n=553)	75	85	55	83	65	63	75	78	82
Local Jewish community (n=558)	68	85	33	77	53	51	63	78	65
Worldwide Jewish community (n=555)	82	90	66	90	62	66	80	88	80

Table 31. Feeling Somewhat or Very Connected to Jewish Culture (weighted %)

	Overall	Synagogue Member(s)		Marriage		Age			HH with Children
		Yes	No	Jewish	Interfaith	18-39	40-64	65+	
Jewish history (n=560)	83	90	71	88	84	63	84	88	84
Jewish customs and traditions (n=559)	79	88	58	87	65	65	82	76	87

## Israel

### Travel to Israel

Just over half of respondents have visited Israel at least once (Table 32), including nearly two-thirds of synagogue members, about three-quarters of respondents between the ages of 40 and 64, and about three-fifths of respondents aged 65 or older.

Respondents aged 40 and under were asked if they had applied to or participated in a Taglit-Birthright Israel trip. Only 13% had applied, but two-thirds of those did go on a Taglit trip (n=52).

Over 300 respondents provided the primary purpose or purposes of their trips to Israel. The most common reason given was for sightseeing or tourism. Eighty-seven respondents went for fun or for vacation, 82 visited family, and 80 participated in an organized group trip. Thirty-four went to an event such as bar/bat mitzvah or a wedding. Twenty-five went for professional reasons, 24 to study, and 10 to volunteer.

### Connection to Israel

Just over three-quarters of respondents are “somewhat” or “very much” connected to Israel (Figure 11). This proportion rises to nearly 90% for synagogue members and respondents who are aged 65 or older, and it drops to about half of respondents who are not synagogue members, who are from interfaith households, or who are under the age of 40.

Two measures commonly associated with connection to Israel are the frequency with which one actively seeks news about Israel or discusses Israel with friends and family (Table 33). Overall, over half of respondents report seeking news about Israel at least once a week, and over one-third discuss Israel with friends and family at least once a week.

Table 32. Ever Visited Israel (weighted estimates, %)

Overall	Synagogue Member(s)		Marriage		Age			HH with Children
	Yes	No	Jewish	Interfaith	18-39	40-64	65+	
52	62	38	62	31	43	48	60	53
n=561	n=555		n=374		n=547			n=561

Figure 11. Connection to Israel (weighted estimates,%)

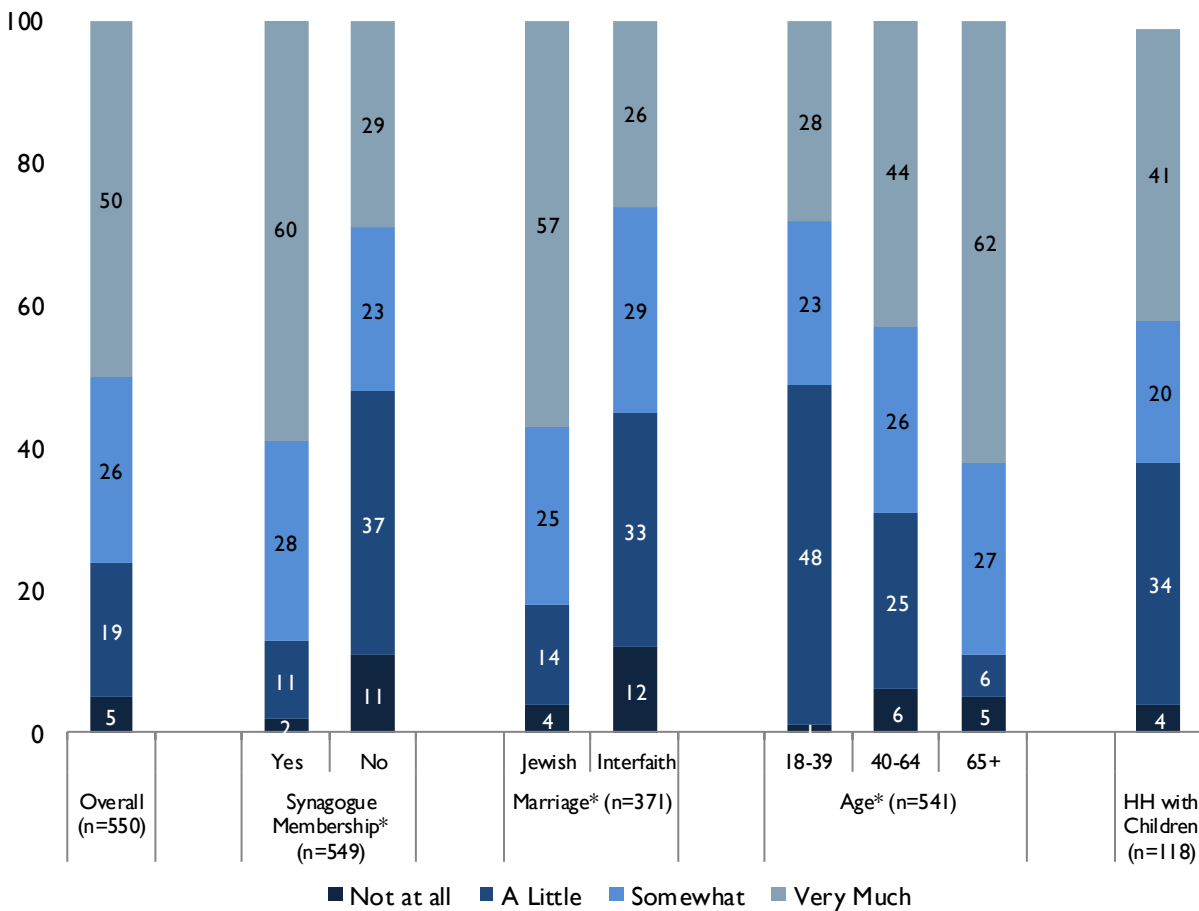


Table 33. Frequency of Israel-Related Activities (once a week or more, weighted estimates, %)

	Overall	Synagogue Member(s)		Marriage		Age			HH with Children
		Yes	No	Jewish	Interfaith	18-39	40-64	65+	
Sought news about Israel (n=532)	56	61	44	59	45	34	52	63	52
Discussed Israel with friends and family (n=556)	37	41	27	44	21	22	37	39	36

## Jewish Education

### Jewish Education of Respondents

To understand the Jewish background of the survey respondents, questions were asked regarding their Jewish educational background (Table 34). Overall, 74% had attended Jewish supplementary school, about half had attended a Jewish overnight camp, and about half had participated in a Jewish youth group. It is unsurprising that the rate of day school attendance is higher among those married to Jews (13%) than among those married to non-Jews (3%). However, it is surprising that day camp attendance among respondents from

interfaith households is higher (58%) than among those in endogamous marriages (37%). Participation in day school and day camp is greater among young respondents, suggesting increased availability of those opportunities in recent years.

### Jewish Education of Children<sup>19</sup>

We estimate that 20% of households include children. The grade levels of the children are shown in Table 35. Twenty percent of the children are not yet in kindergarten, 35% are in grades K-4, 27% in grades 5-8, and 17% in grades 9 to 12.

Table 34. Jewish Educational Background of Respondents (weighted estimates, %, n=638)

Respondent Jewish Education	Overall	Synagogue Member(s)		Marriage		Age			HH with children
		Yes	No	Jewish	Interfaith	18-39	40-64	65+	
Supplementary school	74	76	70	75	72	72	71	76	76
Day school	8	7	8	13	3	15	11	3	19
Jewish day camp	36	33	42	37	58	65	42	19	38
Jewish overnight camp	48	47	50	55	49	66	48	44	44
Youth group	54	59	45	57	44	65	47	58	49

Table 35. Grade Level in 2012-13 of Jewish Children (weighted estimates, %, n=140)

Grade level	%
Not yet in kindergarten	20
Elementary: K - 4th grade	35
Middle School: 5th - 8th grade	27
High School: 9 <sup>th</sup> - 12th grade	17



Tables 36 and 37 describe the percentage of children who currently participate in various forms of formal and informal Jewish education, as well as those who have participated in the past or plan to do so in the future. The percentage refers to the proportion of children who are eligible to participate—for example, 27% of preschool-age children currently attend Jewish preschool, but 56% of all children of any grade either currently attend Jewish preschool or attended in the past. Table 36 shows children’s Jewish education by parents’ marriage type. As would be expected, children of Jewish marriages participate more fully in Jewish education than do children of interfaith couples. The rate of participation in day school (29% compared to 4%) and overnight camp (18% vs. 4%) is far greater for children of endogamous parents compared to interfaith parents. Regarding supplementary school

(55% vs. 39%) and day camp (19% vs. 17%), children of two Jewish parents participate at a higher rate but the gap between them and children of interfaith parents is narrower.

Table 37 compares Jewish education between synagogue members and non-members. Rates of participation in Jewish education for synagogue members far exceed that of non-members with the exception of camp. Although reported participation in both day and overnight camp during the previous summer was higher for synagogue members, plans for attendance the next summer were nearly equal for overnight camp; interest in day camp was higher (36%) for unaffiliated families than for synagogue members (27%). This finding suggests an opportunity to engage non-synagogue members in the community by providing camp opportunities.

Table 36. Children’s Jewish Education by Parent’s Marriage Type (weighted estimates, %) (all children included unless otherwise specified)

Jewish Education Type	Overall	Parents’ Marriage		Not Married
		Jewish	Interfaith	
Pre-K now (of pre-K age, n=42)	27	33	<1	<1
Pre-K plans (of not in pre-K, n=22)	56	73	<1	<1
Pre-K now/ever (n=231)	58	66	41	35
Supplementary school now/ever (n=186)	69	76	52	65
Current supplementary school (n=158)	47	55	39	32
Plans to attend supplementary school (of K-11, never attended, n=46)	15	18	9	13
Current day school (n=156)	20	29	4	<1
Current WNY day school (of K-8, n=111)	22	32	6	<1
Day school now/ever (n=112)	25	36	4	10
Plans to attend day school (of K-8, never attended, n=78)	1	1	<1	<1
2012 day camp (n=140)	15	19	17	<1
2013 day camp plans (of K-11, n=140)	28	32	27	6
2012 overnight camp (n=164)	14	18	4	11
2013 overnight camp plans (of K-11, n=140)	30	36	18	19
Youth group last year (of 5-12, n=98)	39	44	29	34
Youth group plans (of 4-11, n=103)	42	46	27	37

Table 37. Children's Jewish Education by Synagogue Membership (weighted estimates, %)

Jewish Education Type	Overall	Synagogue Member(s)	
		Yes	No
Pre-K now (of pre-K age, n=42)	27	45	3
Pre-K plans (of not in Pre-K, n=22)	56	77	27
Pre-K now/ever (n=231)	58	66	36
Supplementary school now/ever (n=186)	69	81	33
Current supplementary school (n=158)	47	61	<1
Plans to attend supplementary school (of K-11, never attended, n=46)	15	18	8
Current day school (n=156)	20	23	3
Current WNY day school (of K-8, n=111)	22	27	4
Day school now/ever (n=112)	25	29	3
Plans to attend day school (of K-8, never attended, n=78)	1	1	<1
2012 day camp (n=140)	15	18	7
2013 day camp plans (of K-11, n=140)	28	27	36
2012 overnight camp (n=164)	14	17	5
2013 overnight camp plans (of K-11, n=140)	30	30	29
Youth group last year (of 5-12, n=98)	39	47	4
Youth group plans (of 4-11, n=103)	42	49	<1

Respondents whose children did not attend Jewish day school, Jewish supplementary school, Jewish day camp, and Jewish overnight camp were asked the primary reasons why their children did not participate in these programs. Reasons provided by 81 respondents for not attending day school included preference for public schools (25), cost (24), lack of interest (18), and the desire for diversity (13). One respondent “felt the public school was a better place for [her child]. The Jewish day school was limited academically, insular and somewhat elitist.” Another wrote: “We like our local public school and want him to meet children from other backgrounds and religions.”

Thirty-six respondents provided reasons for nonparticipation in supplementary school. The primary reason was that the children were enrolled in day school (19) but several mentioned (4) that the non-Jewish spouse was not interested.

Twenty-nine respondents gave reasons for lack of participation in Jewish day camp and 52 for nonparticipation in Jewish overnight camp. In both cases, the primary reason was lack of interest or preference for another camp or program (19 for day camp, 21 for overnight camp), followed by cost (6 for day camp, 8 for overnight camp). In addition, some children (15) were not old enough for overnight camp.



## Health and Social Services

Respondents were asked about the needs of themselves and their family members for support services of various kinds. Table 38 shows the proportions of each group that indicated service needs. Nine percent of households have a family member in an assisted living facility, with the great majority (80%) being in the Western New York Area. Older members of the community do not appear to be significantly

more in need of services than are younger members; in fact, those under age 65 are more in need of mental health services. It is important to note, however, that these data reflect self-reported assessment of needs; they likely underrepresent the true community needs due to respondents' reluctance to report their needs in the context of a survey.

Table 38. Health and Well-Being (weighted estimates, %)

	Overall	Synagogue Member(s)		Marriage		Age			HH with children
		Yes	No	Jewish	Interfaith	18-39	40-64	65+	
You or family member in an assisted living facility (n=542)	9	10	8	10	9	5	11	7	5
Of those, is the facility in WNY area? (n=58)	80	81	77	86	67	100	81	78	100
Someone in household requires special needs services (n=536)	5	6	2	5	3	2	4	6	8
Housekeeping and maintenance assistance needed (n=535)	14	15	13	10	6	11	12	18	15
Counseling/mental health services needed (n=535)	10	12	5	12	13	15	14	4	20
Parent outside HH in WNY needing elder care services (n=105)	26	35	32	22	28	13	30	10	18
Provide regular caregiving to adult family members (n=533)	11	7	17	9	19	4	10	13	5

In response to a question about what services were needed to support the household, 35 responses included assistance with transportation, including the need for a wheelchair (7); school and educational services (6); and therapy services, including occupational, physical, and speech therapy (2). Specific conditions that indicated need for services included medical conditions (5) and developmental disabilities (5), including Parkinson’s disease, Asperger’s, autism, and mental illness. Two respondents mentioned personal care such as shopping and cleaning, and two mentioned family members living in residential facilities.

Figure 12 shows the degree of respondents’ preference for social services to be offered through Jewish agencies. Overall, 66% would be more likely to utilize services through a Jewish agency. Interfaith families have the lowest preference for Jewish agency services compared to the other groups, though a majority still report preference for a Jewish service provider.

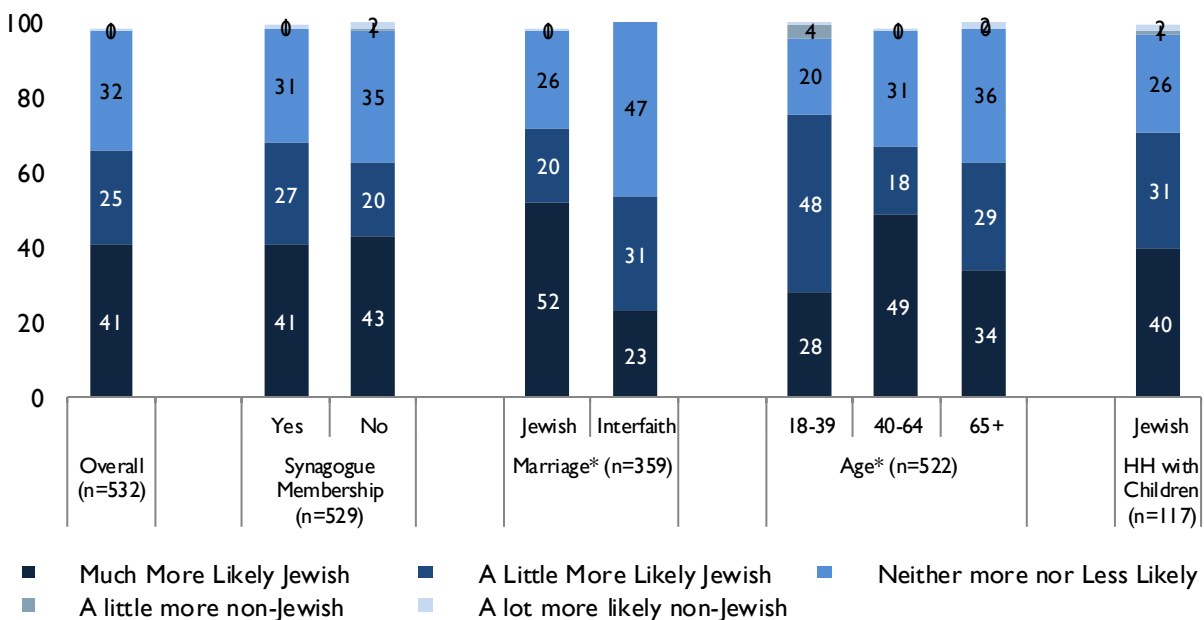
### Health of Adults and Children

Respondents rated each member of the household regarding their overall health: excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor (Table 39). Only 1% of children were reported as having fair or poor health. Among adults, 7% had fair or poor health, with the number increasing with age, as expected. Twenty-three percent of adults aged 80+ indicated that they were in fair or poor health.

Table 39. Adults in Fair or Poor Health by Age (weighted estimates, %, n=582)

18-29	<1
30-39	2
40-49	1
50-59	3
60-69	7
70-79	10
80-89	23
90+	23
Overall	7

Figure 12. Preference for Social Services Provider (weighted %, n=532)



## A Community Portrait

Combining information about community demographics and organizational affiliation yields a portrait of the 5,770 households in the community and the degree to which they are connected to the community's institutions. Table 40 classifies the households according to their composition. Households with children aged 17 or under are categorized as including Jewish children with inmarried parents, Jewish children with intermarried parents, Jewish children with single or unmarried parents, and non-Jewish children regardless of parentage. Among those without children, households are classified by whether or not they include a married couple as well as by the respondent's age: under 65, 65 to 84, and 85+. Institutional affiliation is measured as

belonging to a synagogue, belonging to the JCC (dues-paying or not), and donating to Federation. Those in the "all" category belong to all three, and those in the "none" category belong to none. To avoid overly precise estimates, all values reported in Table 40 have been rounded to the nearest 5; accordingly, totals may not add up perfectly.

This analysis indicates that the highly affiliated segment of the community is made up of all family types, not only of older people. However, the 65-84 age group is by far the largest segment. On the other hand, the unaffiliated households also run the gamut of demographic categories. To the extent that the study has undercounted unaffiliated households, we would

Table 40. Household composition by organizational affiliation  
(weighted estimates, number of households, n=680)

HH composition	Institutional Affiliations: Synagogue (Syn), JCC, Jewish Federation (Fed)								Total
	None	Syn only	JCC only	Fed only	JCC + Syn	Fed + Syn	Fed + JCC	ALL	
<b>HH with kids</b>									
Inmarried, Jewish kids	180	95	15	<10	145	50	<10	195	690
Intermarried, Jewish kids	20	30	25	<10	25	40	<10	15	155
Single, Jewish kids	<10	90	10	<10	20	<10	<10	90	215
Non-Jewish kids	60	15	15	<10	<10	<10	<10	<10	105
<b>HH without kids</b>									
Married age <65	130	100	90	100	135	225	70	130	980
Single age <65	195	225	20	65	45	45	25	15	635
Married age 65-84	265	55	25	65	65	340	45	360	1,220
Single age 65-84	145	95	85	35	50	75	40	220	745
Married age 85+	165	70	95	25	50	25	<10	25	455
Single age 85+	250	65	<10	<10	40	145	10	55	565
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,410</b>	<b>845</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>5,770</b>

expect them to be similar to the “none” category; that is, they cross all demographics.

Tables 41 and 42 combine the households that are affiliated with one institution, with two institutions, and with three institutions to indicate the level of affiliation by household type. The first two columns show the total proportion of affiliated and unaffiliated; the next three columns indicate the proportion affiliated at each level. Table 41 shows the row totals; that is, for each household type, what proportion of households participate in each level of affiliation. Table 42 shows column totals; that is, for each level of affiliation, what is the household composition.

### In the Words of Community Members

At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to provide open-ended responses to questions about the

strengths and weaknesses of the community, as well as the reasons for their current level of involvement in the community. In all, 570 respondents provided answers to at least one of the three questions. An additional 14 responses incorporated into this analysis were submitted as part of an open-access survey that was available after data collection was complete for members of the Greater Buffalo Jewish community who wanted to participate in the study but were not selected at random to complete the survey. All responses were coded and analyzed for common themes. This section discusses the most dominant themes that were discussed. It gives an approximate count of the number of respondents who mentioned each theme, explains the nature of the comments, and then provides some examples of quotations from comments. Quotations have been edited for clarity as well as to protect the anonymity of the respondent by removing names of synagogues and individuals.

Table 41. Affiliation by household composition (weighted %, n=680)

HH composition	Unaffiliated	Affiliated	Total	Affiliation Level		
				1 org	2 orgs	3 orgs
<b>HH with kids</b>						
Inmarried, Jewish kids	26	74	100	16	30	28
Intermarried, Jewish kids	13	87	100	36	42	9
Single, Jewish kids	<1	>99	100	47	12	41
Non-Jewish kids	56	44	100	31	11	<1
<b>HH without kids</b>						
Married age <65	13	87	100	29	44	13
Single age <65	31	69	100	49	18	3
Married age 65-84	22	78	100	12	37	29
Single age 65-84	19	81	100	29	22	30
Married age 85+	37	63	100	42	17	5
Single age 85+	44	56	100	13	34	9
Overall	25	75	100	27	30	19



Table 42. Household composition by affiliation (weighted %, n=680)

HH composition	Unaffiliated	Affiliated	Overall	Affiliation Level		
				1 org	2 orgs	3 orgs
<b>HH with kids</b>						
Inmarried, Jewish kids	13	12	12	7	13	18
Intermarried, Jewish kids	1	3	3	4	4	1
Single, Jewish kids	<1	5	4	7	2	8
Non-Jewish kids	4	1	2	2	2	<1
<b>HH without kids</b>						
Married age <65	9	19	17	19	26	12
Single age <65	14	10	11	20	10	2
Married age 65-84	19	22	22	10	13	33
Single age 65-84	10	14	13	14	14	20
Married age 85+	12	7	8	12	13	2
Single age 85+	18	7	10	5	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

This section represents the perceptions of members of the community about Jewish life in Western New York. Although the data presented earlier in this report may not be consistent with members' perceptions, it is nevertheless important to understand what the community is thinking and the degree to which their perceptions reflect empirically observable trends in the community or diverge from them. The divergence between trends and perceptions may point to opportunities for the Jewish community of Western New York to examine the community's awareness of their successes, as well as avenues for future planning.

As discussed in the introduction, the numbers of respondents indicated in each section represent the actual number of survey respondents who answered each question or who gave a specific response rather than the weighted proportions of respondents. As such, the number of

responses should not be considered to represent a proportion of the population; rather, it should be understood to represent the views of those survey participants who chose to answer each question. Nonetheless, comments in the community members' own words are intended to enhance and add nuance to the statistical information provided above.

### A Warm and Caring Community

The community was described by 122 respondents as generous, caring, and close-knit, and by 56 as engaged and dedicated. As one community member described the community, "It is very warm, accepting of Jews of all backgrounds and even those non-Jews who want to participate in the community, and non-judgmental." There is a "tremendous commitment to helping friends and neighbors."

Many members of the community value their long history in the area. “Many Buffalonians, including me, are ‘old Buffalo’ and have been well-known here for generations. There is a feeling of being at home here.”

Community members express satisfaction with the shared values of the community. One describes “cultural availability and awareness, intellectualism, activism with a liberal sensitivity, and a high regard and respect for education and volunteerism.” Community members describe their neighbors in the Jewish community as “down-to-earth; good people” and “a very charitable group of people. They are loyal to one another. They rally around one another.”

Of course there is not universal agreement. Two respondents summed up the opposite view: “There is some snobbishness but I think that has always been the case. It reminds some of us of a high school mentality when it comes to socializing.” “Everyone knows everyone’s business!”

### **Friendly and welcoming to many...**

Many respondents found the Buffalo Jewish community to be warm and welcoming (24). One newcomer wrote, “I am just getting into this but it seems to be a fairly cohesive community. The temple I’ve joined has been very welcoming unlike the temple of my childhood which was extremely unwelcoming. I don’t see the prejudice here that I saw when I was growing up.”

### **...but insular and cliquish to others**

Thirty-three respondents did not have the same perception of a friendly community. One writes, “While people know each other,

they are not always friendly to each other. People tend to group in cliques.” Another wrote, “As a newcomer it’s sometimes difficult to break into the community.”

### **Community Size**

The perception of the shrinking size of the community was the most pervasive theme of the comments, with 175 respondents mentioning it. This trend is attributed primarily to two causes:

First, the economic conditions and lack of job opportunities were mentioned by 28 respondents. “The loss of Jewish numbers, both through loss of employment opportunities with the younger generations moving to where the jobs are; as well as declining interest in joining Jewish temples and organizations.”

And second, there is also clear recognition of the aging population. “The young people move out, and the old are dying out.” In addition, the community shrinks annually with the loss of the snowbirds: “There’s a mass exodus every November, anyone who can afford it is gone half the year.”

On the other hand, many people recognized the advantages of a small community, which was widely described as “close-knit.” “Being small, you can get to know people better and feel closer to them. Overall I feel it is a very caring and warm community.” “Because we are small in number, we know each other better.”

One concern about the decline in population is that the community has become too small to sustain its institutions. Many respondents see the closure and merger of synagogues as evidence of this trend. “Not enough people

are participating in synagogues. Membership is down so temples are merging. Younger citizens don't want to participate.”

### **Lack of Affiliation**

Not only is the size of the community declining, but many respondents believe the problem is compounded by a simultaneous decline in the rate of affiliation with synagogues and other institutions. They cite in particular low rates of affiliation among young adults. “We don't have a young vibrant Jewish community and that's depressing to me... A lot of the young couples don't have a need to affiliate and aren't affiliated with the temples and that creates a burden on the temples financially.” One respondent feels that the response to this trend should be greater outreach: “I think we need to search out people who want to participate more in our Jewish community – we need to show them that there is a value to be involved and that we are not just looking to them for contributions.”

One reason cited by 40 respondents for the lack of participation is the decline in Jewish identity, particularly due to assimilation and intermarriage. One says that the community is “fading away because of intermarriage” and another remarks that “Jewish identity is very weak and assimilated.”

### **Geography**

Twenty-six respondents mentioned problems that arose from the geographical distribution of the community. They mentioned the divide between downtown and the suburbs. Several felt that there was “very little communication/outreach/presence in the city. It seems insular and confined to older northern suburban residents.”

## **Institutions and Leadership**

### *Community Leaders*

Forty-one respondents speak highly of the dedication and commitment of community leaders, remarking that they “are highly dedicated to the welfare and maintenance of the local Jewish community.” Praise is extended to both volunteers and professional leadership, including “good agencies with good executive directors.” However, an additional 19 respondents express concern about leadership. One remarked that there was “too much emphasis on raising dollars and not enough effort in articulating how dollars raised are being used.” Several mentioned the importance of cultivating new leaders. “The new generation has to be able to take over. The Federation is too inbred.”

### *Organizational Structure*

Eighteen respondents wrote positively about the community's organizational structure, particularly on recent efforts to coordinate and consolidate agencies and services. For one respondent, the strength of the community was “the current movement toward cooperation among the various Jewish organizations and institutions to work together and maximize the effectiveness of limited resources.” However, 24 respondents remained dissatisfied with the organization of the community. Responses included the following complaints:

- “Even with the union of several synagogues in the past several years, there are too many buildings with too few people. Too many unaffiliated families. Too many youth groups for too few kids, creating a lackluster participation.”

- “JCC UJF's inability to bring the diverse aspects of Jewish community under a common umbrella with a sense of purpose and community.”
- “Poor decision making; lacking in creativity; non-innovative; disregards prior events that were deleterious to the Jewish community, too steeped in tradition and cannot change.”
- “Some disorganization, some stale community outreach systems/institutions, lack of overarching and long-term goals.”
- “Lack of true leadership with vision. Hard choices need to be made that will enable our community to bring agencies/synagogues together to collaborate in meaningful ways that reduce the financial and volunteer costs to the community while raising the quality of the programs/services and increasing overall participation.”

### *Unity and Division*

Thirty respondents find the community to be unified and cohesive. They point to programs planned by multiple synagogues and positive relationships among Jews of different denominations. As one respondent writes, “A lot of the temples and organizations work well together. We do things at different temples. Real harmonious community.”

However, 74 respondents expressed concern about the divisions and lack of cooperation within the community. One respondent noted “high levels of fragmentation, parochialism and general ugly/silly politics between organizations and institutions. There is so much pettiness and taking sides on issues and that prevents collaboration and progress.” Another lamented that “people and organizations are still living in the past,

and are not willing enough to cooperate and collaborate. Too many silos. People hold grudges, too.”

### **Institutions**

#### *Synagogues*

Many respondents spoke highly of specific synagogues and rabbis. One respondent, speaking about local clergy in general, noted, “Rabbis and cantors are dynamic, good with people of all ages, get along well with each other.” Another respondent, speaking of the dynamics at a particular synagogue, said, “I love the schul I belong to, because the population has grown smaller, we combined two schuls. At first it was a big adjustment. Now the members intermingled. The Rabbi is outstanding.” A third respondent specifically claimed that “the strength in the Jewish community is our temples.”

In addition, there was satisfaction with the variety of synagogues that are available. However, there was also disappointment with the difficulty in finding active synagogues with young families, as well as the cost of joining.

#### *Schools and Camps*

One respondent commended the “excellent High School of Jewish Studies,” and another cited the “very committed Jewish educators” at another school. A second respondent, however, mentioned the “lack of quality Jewish education at the high school level” and another recommended a “community wide religious school to tie people together.” Several mentioned the lack of local Jewish camps after the closure of Camp Lakeland, the JCC’s overnight camp, in 2009.

Twelve respondents were concerned about the lack of support for Jewish day schools, and in particular expressed that “Kadimah School is on the verge of disappearing.”

### *Other Institutions*

Respondents expressed satisfaction with the Jewish Community Center, “a seemingly sustainable, well maintained JCC” which is “very central to most Buffalo Jews.” Several respondents described the Federation positively, calling it a “Strong Federation that has its hand in all aspects of Jewish life.” Respondents were also generally complimentary toward Weinberg Campus, Jewish preschools, Hillel at SUNY Buffalo, the Buffalo Jewish Review, Hadassah, and “new monthly publication of Jewish Fed of Greater Buffalo” (i.e., *The Jewish Journal of Western New York*).

### *Activities and Programs*

Forty-four respondents wrote favorably of the activities and programs offered by the community. They described a diversity of opportunities with “something in it for everybody.” Activities mentioned ranged from synagogue services to exercise at the JCC. Programs included adult education, interesting speakers, and cultural activities, including the Jewish Repertory Theater and Jewish Film Festival. Mitzvah Day was mentioned as a particularly wonderful community event. Most respondents felt that the programs provided easy access, were open to non-Jews, and had “low or no barriers to participation.”

### *Money and Philanthropy*

Forty-eight respondents were concerned with the costs of participating in the community and the need for fundraising.

One respondent called the “dues obligation for ‘membership’ a roadblock to a welcoming climate.” Another discussed the divide between those who are able to provide financial support and those who cannot. “Many of the Jewish community organizations look to include people who have financial resources to help support the organization. I find many of the Jewish people that are part of Jewish Organizations (i.e., JCC, Jewish Federation, etc.) don’t wish to socialize with others who are not as financially connected.”

Respondents saw the role of philanthropists as a strength of the community. One respondent said that a “small number of families provide [the] majority of support for the community.” However, they were concerned that over time, less money will be available to support the community.

### **Specific Populations**

A total of 55 respondents mentioned the needs of segments of the Western New York Jewish community.

#### *Interfaith*

Some synagogues have been successful at integrating and embracing interfaith families. One respondent, however, noted the difficulty in becoming involved on her own: “My husband is not Jewish and does not attend with me, so it’s difficult to be too involved.”

#### *Special Needs and Disabilities*

One respondent feels very satisfied with the programs for people with special needs, including “the elderly, handicapped, home bound, infirmed,” while another feels that there is not enough outreach to the special

needs community and another requests more outreach to nursing home residents. One writes: “I would like to see... a continuity of essential programs and services for Jews with developmental disability, persons with frailty and other isolated and vulnerable populations.”

### *Youth and Families*

Four respondents would like to see more family programming, and nine would like to see more programming for youth and teens. Several suggestions were offered:

- “With the lack of numbers, having this age group so segregated within their synagogue youth groups limit their opportunities to get to know each other. There needs to be a very youth savvy adult (or group of adults) that can attract a great number of youth together.”
- “We need to combine youth groups from local temples so kids can meet new friends and interact in a social setting. JCC needs social activities, fitness classes geared to 11-14 year-olds. Programming is very limited to this age group- maybe one class available and it’s during religious school.”

### *Young Adults, Including UB Hillel*

Nine respondents offered suggestions for engaging young adults. As one wrote, “There is no networking events available towards college students and young professionals; thus, please provide such programs and make our college kids more inviting and involved.” A young adult respondent commented, “There are no young 20/30’s adults. I really like living in WNY, but it seems almost impossible for me to picture staying long term if I ever want to marry someone. For the few 20/30s

some things here, there is barely any programming for us.” This respondent added that the “Derek Jewlander” group, which runs occasional pot luck gatherings for Jewish young adults in Western New York, draws only a small number of participants to its events and does no outreach to try to recruit new members.

### *Older Singles, With and Without Children*

Several respondents noted a lack of programs for single adults beyond their 20s and 30s. “Many programs are too expensive; unless a program is targeted at children, no childcare provided.”

### *Adults 50+*

Several respondents requested programming for adults aged 50 or older, aged 65 or older, and adults with children past Hebrew school age.

### *Religiously Observant Jews*

Several respondents noted that the Orthodox community seems to be the only segment experiencing growth, and find it to be accepting and welcoming. However, 30 respondents remarked that the needs of the Orthodox and observant community are unmet. Many noted the absence of kosher restaurants and butchers. In addition, several felt that the community “is not concerned about Jewish traditions. Dinners are not always kosher and schedules do not conform with times of holidays.”

### **Progress and Change**

Respondents appreciated recent changes in the community and feel that the community has begun making strides in addressing its challenges:



- “I see the community trying to do more and more things together.”
- “I think we are getting better at doing things together with other synagogues too. It's bringing the communities together. When I came here... the synagogues were isolated. In the last five years there was a big effort to bring the synagogues together which I think is nice.”
- “Western New York as a whole is fairly provincial. The Jewish community is somewhat closed to newcomers as is most of Western NY (although people who are from Western NY don't see this). Things do seem to be changing a bit however.”

Much of the progress is attributed to the strength of new leaders and committed volunteers:

- “Professional leaders are much improved and are now a strength.”

- “A number of energetic people are working to create a new vitality and establish and prioritize goals which will serve the needs of the community.”

Finally, respondents feel hopeful about the future of the community and want to do what is needed to move forward:

- “I feel that Buffalo has a warm and friendly Jewish Community. We are very concerned about providing services for those who need some help and we also want to see our youth and young adults be involved so that we can keep a vibrant Jewish community alive in Buffalo.”
- “We need the next generation to stand up and be counted; to get involved; and to become leaders.”





## Looking Toward the Future: Opportunities and Challenges for the Greater Buffalo Jewish Community

The 2013 Greater Buffalo Jewish Community Study indicates that the Jews of Western New York are diverse, highly educated, largely financially secure, and engaged in Jewish life in a variety of ways.

The study indicates that the community has shrunk by about one-third in the past 12 years, from an estimated 18,500 people in 2001 to an estimated 12,050 in 2013. The current Jewish residents of Western New York are distinguished by their long tenure, with half of all households having lived in the area for at least 50 years and nearly three-quarters having lived in the area since before 1980. As might be expected of a community in which residential tenure is so long, the community is older, with nearly half of the population aged 60 or older. However, there are also a substantial number of young families; children constitute about one-sixth of the total population. The Jewish community will be challenged in the years ahead as it seeks to provide the care and services associated with an aging population while simultaneously maintaining and improving services for young families and Jewish educational programs.

Socio-demographically, the Jewish community of Western New York is relatively well educated and affluent. More than 80% report having at least a college education, and more than 40% of respondents who answered a question about income indicated a household income of \$100,000 or greater. Prosperity is not universal, however; nearly 10% of households indicated household income below \$25,000, just over one-quarter are uncertain or not confident that they will have

sufficient financial resources to live comfortably through their retirement years, and approximately one-seventh of households reported receiving at least one public benefit other than Social Security or Medicare. People are not always forthcoming about their financial difficulties and it may be a significant challenge for the Jewish community to identify member households that are struggling in order to assist them effectively and respectfully. Nevertheless, it is important for the Jewish community to make it known that resources are available for households in need.

The Western New York Jewish community includes a core group that is tightly knit and highly affiliated with its Jewish institutions, a disengaged and unaffiliated group, and households situated between these two extremes. The unaffiliated group includes households from throughout the demographic spectrum: young and old; single and married; empty-nesters and families with young children. Many of these households are not especially interested in engaging in Jewish communal life at this time, while some are seeking a niche for themselves within the Jewish community. It is important that the Western New York Jewish community continue to provide diverse programming and institutional options for these households if they are to find roles in which they are comfortable.

The most affiliated group primarily consists of older adults without children, yet families with children remain a part of this core. The close connections and typically long tenure of residence among this group create a community that is stable and loyal, and

thereby supportive of both individual community members and communal institutions. However, one consequence of stability and longevity is that newcomers to Western New York may find it difficult to connect with other individuals and integrate into institutions within the Jewish community. Another consequence can be resistance to change on an institutional level.

Community members, especially those who are highly connected, commented extensively about the aging and shrinking population and their perceptions of declining levels of affiliation. Yet it appears that affiliation remains strong. More importantly, community members recognize and appreciate recent changes in institutional structure and leadership as synagogues and organizations have consolidated and coordinated efforts, and a high degree of support is expressed for events and programs that cross organizational divides.

The vast majority of children are exposed to multiple forms of Jewish education, both formal and informal, but providing a variety of viable options remains a challenge. Increased consolidation of religious schools and youth groups has led to fewer options available for the youth of the Western New York Jewish community, but has also provided greater resources to the remaining options. The challenge for the community is to ensure that there are sufficient options available to satisfy a very diverse population.

Members of the Greater Buffalo Jewish community have a high rate of denominational affiliation and participation in religious rituals. Three-quarters identify with a specific denomination (Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, or Reform). Nearly 40% attend services at least once per

month, and a majority felt inspired or emotionally involved the last time they attended. Almost 90% lit Hanukkah candles and attended a Passover seder in the past year, and about one-quarter light Shabbat candles most or every week.

Similarly, members of the community are involved in a large number and variety of programs and institutions within the Jewish community. Diverse options exist, including religious, social, cultural, and educational programs. Nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated that they were members of a synagogue and partook of religious programming. Nearly three-quarters of households are current or former members of the JCC. About one-quarter of respondents indicated that they had attended a Jewish community program of some sort at least once a month, with popular programs including theater, concerts, films, lectures, and discussions. Community members indicated particular interest in programs associated with Israel advocacy and noted a need for additional options for family programming, programs that bridge across generations, and options for segments of the population that may feel excluded at times (e.g., the elderly, interfaith households, young adults, and people with disabilities).

Young adults in particular feel that there are few options available to them. They do not feel they have a niche in the Jewish community outside of the programs that specifically target them, but those programs do little to recruit new members and offer little variety. Families that include people with special needs or disabilities feel that not enough is done to help them integrate into Jewish organizations and programs and that few resources are devoted to their concerns. Newcomers are impressed with the closeness of the community but find it

difficult to break into longstanding social circles and become integrated into them.

Another programmatic challenge for the Greater Buffalo Jewish community is an apparent divide between the city and the suburbs. The Jewish community has significant pockets of concentration both within the City of Buffalo and in the northern suburbs (e.g., Williamsville, Amherst, Tonawanda), but respondents indicate that the city and suburbs sometimes feel like two separate communities. Improved communication across neighborhood lines, between congregations, and between users of the Holland and

Benderson buildings of the JCC may help bridge the gap.

The 2013 Greater Buffalo Jewish Community Study suggests that the community has a number of challenges to face in the coming years. The community has invested many resources in consolidating services, improving cooperation across institutions, and enhancing the quality of its programming, but not all households have been equally affected by these efforts. One of the great assets of the community is its cohesiveness; making previously unaffiliated groups feel more welcome can only add to this strength.





## Map Appendix

Figure 13. Dot Density Map of Jewish-Connected Households in Western New York (close-up; 1 dot = 1 household)

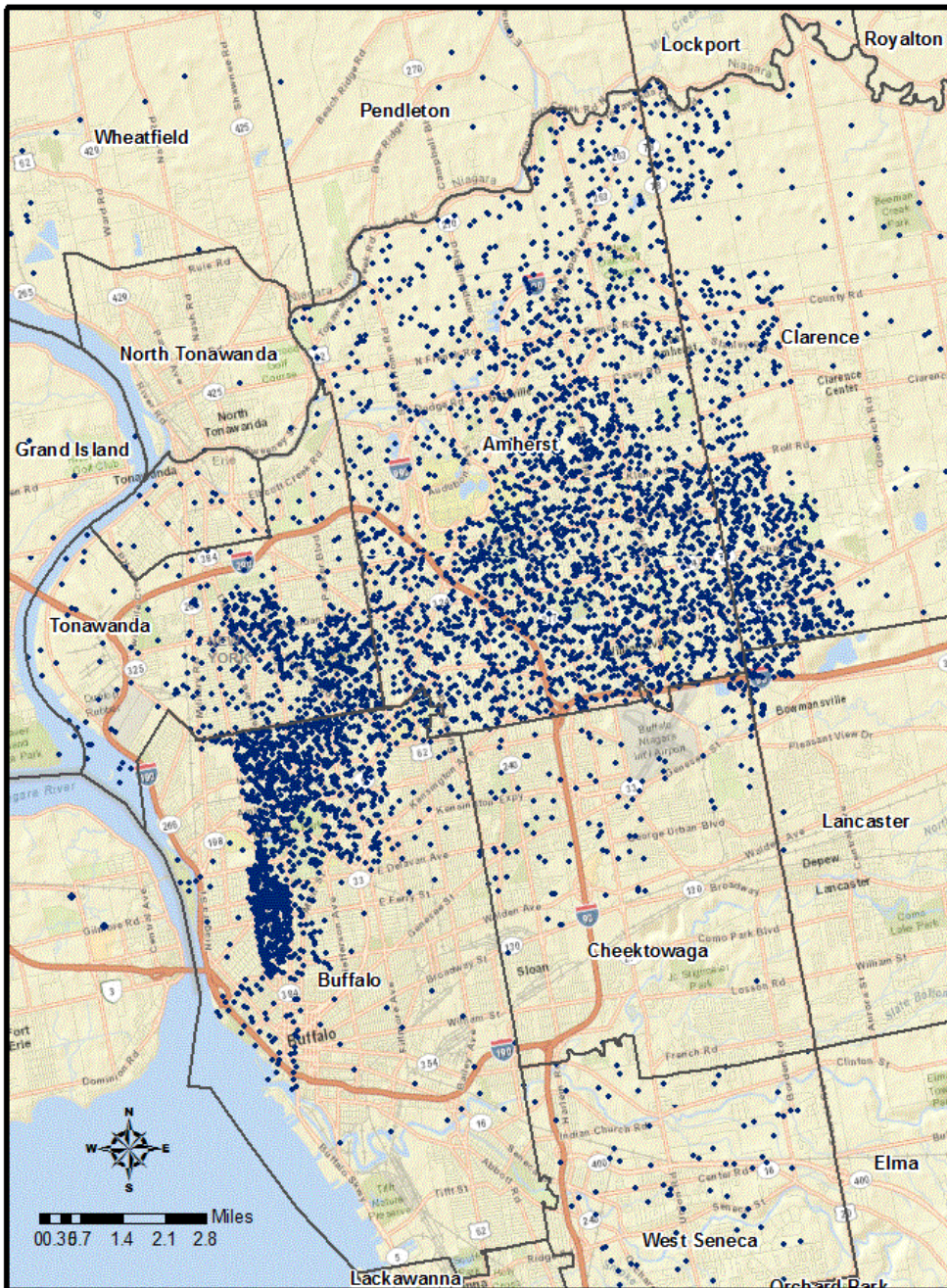




Figure 14. Dot Density Map of Jewish-Connected Households in Western New York (full area; 1 dot = 1 household)

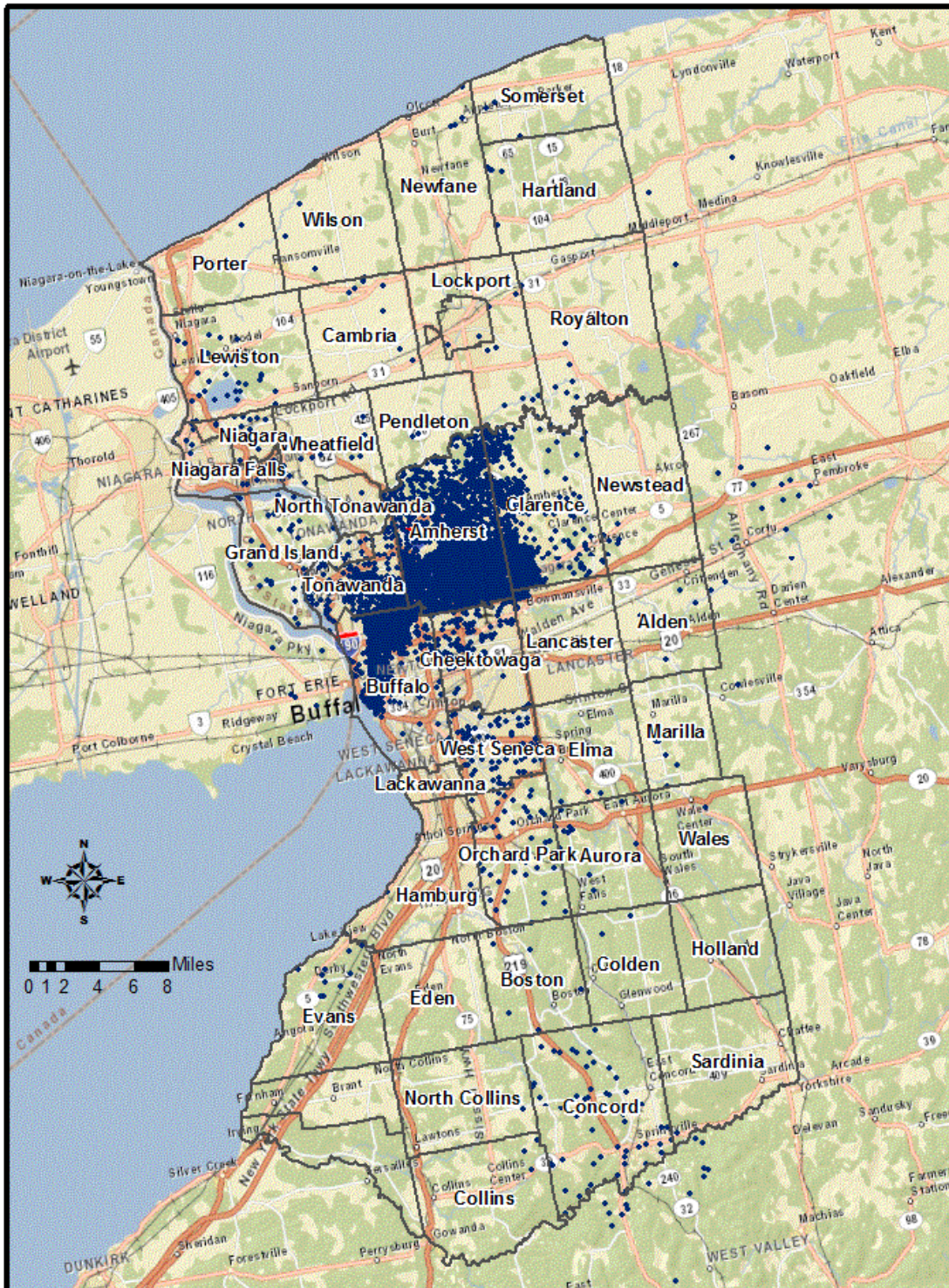




Figure 15. Dot Density Map of Synagogue Membership by Synagogue Denomination (close-up; 1 dot = 1 household)

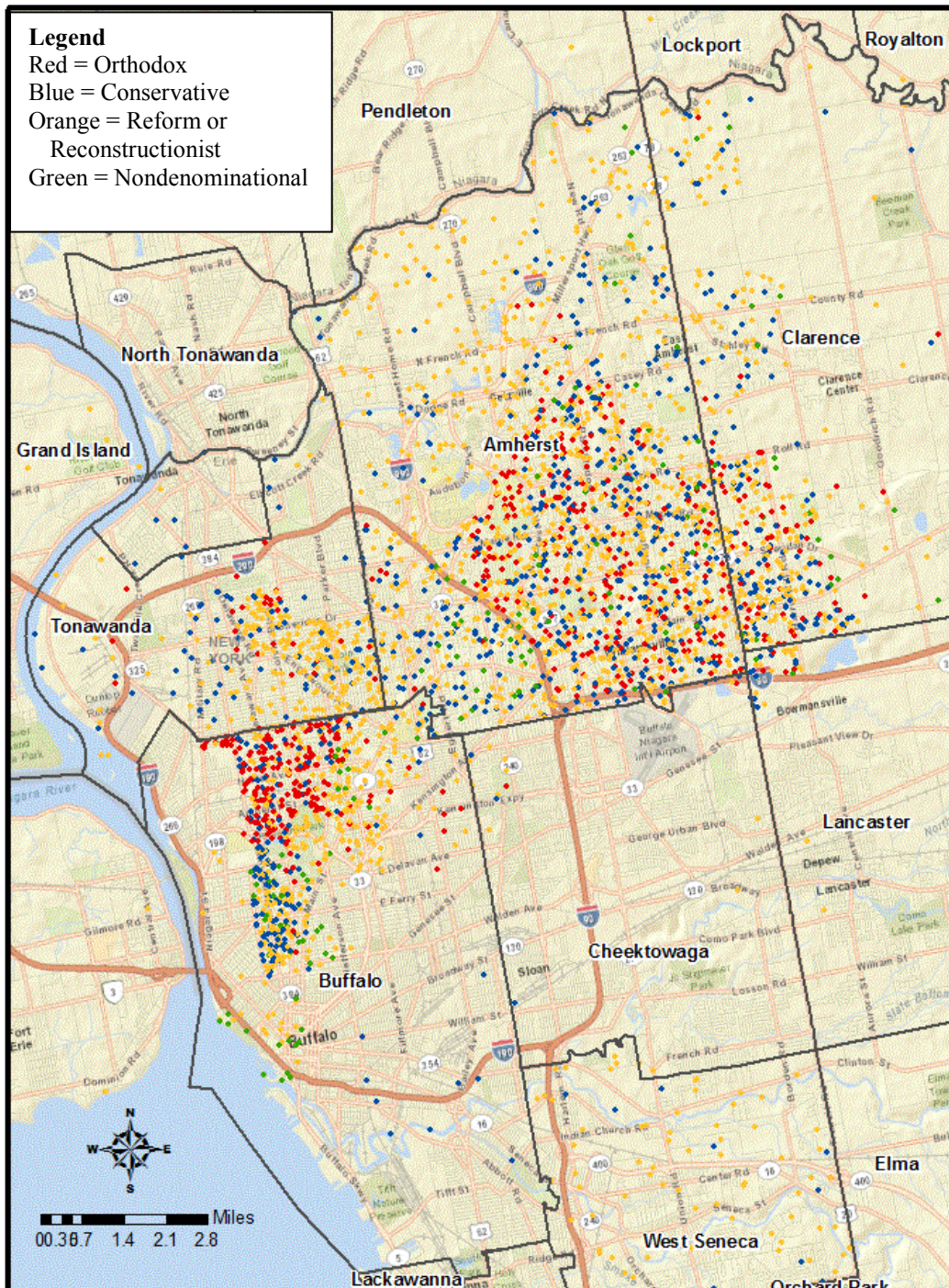
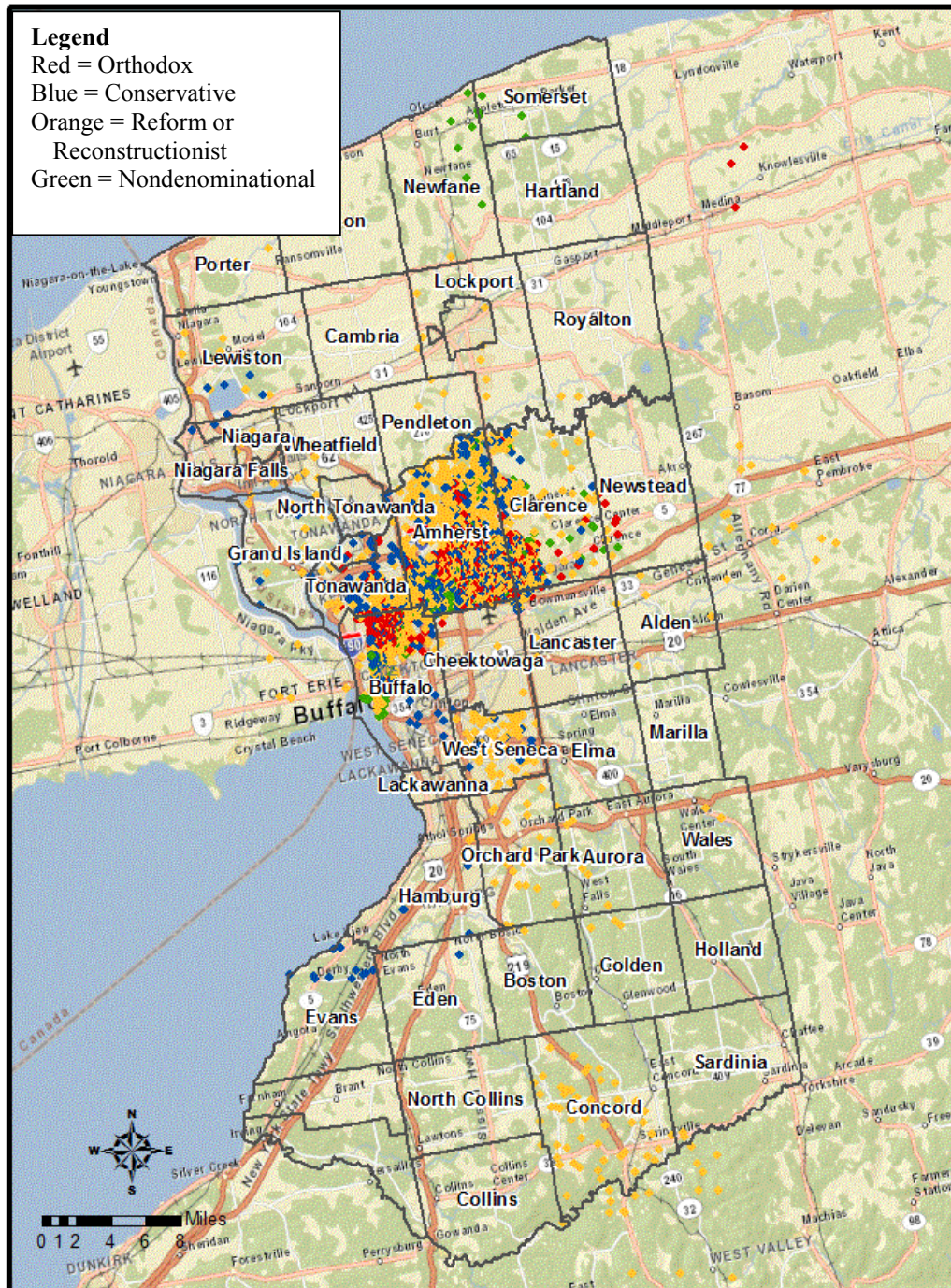




Figure 16. Dot Density Map of Synagogue Membership by Synagogue Denomination (full area; 1 dot = 1 household)



## Notes

<sup>1</sup>These are all the lists that were secured by the time the sample had to be prepared. Although attempts were made to secure additional lists, they were not successful. It is hoped that the diversity of the lists minimized the extent to which members of organizations whose lists were not provided for this study were excluded from the sample.

<sup>2</sup>SSRI estimates are derived from the American Jewish Population Project of the Steinhardt Social Research Institute (part of the Cohen Center of Modern Jewish Studies) at Brandeis University, <http://ajpp.brandeis.edu/index.php>.

<sup>3</sup>Engelman, U.Z. (1943). The Jewish population of Buffalo, 1938. In S.M. Robison (Ed.), *Jewish population studies*, New York: Conference on Jewish Relations.

<sup>4</sup>Rogers, K. A. (1984). Buffalo Jewish community study. Buffalo: Jewish Federation of Greater Buffalo.

<sup>5</sup>Goldhaber Research Associates. (1995). Jewish community study of the Jewish population in Erie County, NY. Buffalo: Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies and Jewish Federation of Greater Buffalo.

<sup>6</sup>As stated on the Berman Jewish Databank website in reference to this study: "Please note that the Data Bank, following a long series of contacts between the Federation and Dr. Ira Sheskin, estimates the number of Jewish persons in Buffalo to be 13,000 - - in its Current Jewish Population Reports series: Jewish Population in the United States: 2011 (as well as in 2010 and in the forthcoming 2012 edition) - - and not the 26,000 estimate in the 1995 Study Report, which was not unanimously accepted as accurate after its release." (<http://www.jewishdatabank.org/Studies/details.cfm?StudyID=335>).

<sup>7</sup>Schwartz, J., & Scheckner, J. (2001). Jewish population in the United States, 2000. In D. Singer and L. Grossman (Eds.), *American Jewish year book 2001* (pp. 253-280), New York: The American Jewish Committee.

<sup>8</sup>Schwartz, J., & Scheckner, J. (2002). Jewish population in the United States, 2001. In D. Singer and L. Grossman (Eds.), *American Jewish year book 2002* (pp. 247-274), New York: The American Jewish Committee.

<sup>9</sup>Sheskin, I.M., & Dashefsky, A. (2013). Jewish population in the United States 2012. In A. Dashefsky & I. Sheskin (Eds.), *American Jewish year book 2012*, New York: Springer.

<sup>10</sup>Erie County population estimate taken from <http://www2.erie.gov/index.php?q=erie-county-overview#population>

<sup>11</sup>By way of comparison, a population pyramid of the United States and other countries can be viewed at <http://populationpyramid.net/United+States+of+America/2010/>.

<sup>12</sup>Minor discrepancies between the age-sex pyramid depicted here and the results reported in the narrative of the report occur because not all respondents indicated the age or gender of all members of their household; the pyramid depicts the age-sex composition of members of the community for whom data on both age and gender were provided.

<sup>13</sup>The 21% intermarriage rate is for all households with married couples. The 18% overall rate shown in Table 1 is the rate among those who reported age information.

<sup>14</sup>This estimate is derived from the American Community Survey.

<sup>15</sup>There is a long history in surveys of religious communities of inflated proportions of respondents indicating that they are affiliated with houses of worship. Respondents often claim membership (or attendance at religious services) due to social desirability bias (see Hadaway, C.K., Marler, P.L., & Chaves, M. [1993]. What the polls don't show: A closer look at U.S. church attendance. *American Sociological Review*, 58, 741-752). Additionally, some people may claim membership on the grounds that they used to be members but are so no longer, or because they consider themselves at home in a particular congregation.

<sup>16</sup>Several respondents also claimed membership in Temple Beth El in Tonawanda. This congregation merged with Temple Shaarey Zedek in 2008 to form Temple Beth Tzedek. Respondents who claimed membership in Temple Beth El in Tonawanda were recoded as members of Temple Beth Tzedek.

<sup>17</sup>Temple Beth Israel closed in the spring of 2012.

<sup>18</sup>The Jewish Journal of Western New York was started in March, 2013, shortly before the launch of the survey.

<sup>19</sup>In order to minimize the burden on survey respondents, questions about children's education were only asked about the oldest child in each of four categories: those who had not yet started kindergarten as of the 2012-2013 academic year, those in kindergarten through fourth grade, those in fifth through eighth grades, and those in ninth through twelfth grades. Despite efforts to maximize the number of children about whom data would be available for analysis, the data in this section reflect children from a relatively small number of households. In statistical analysis, the smaller the number of respondents, the greater the margin of error for reported results. The results presented here are therefore less precise than the results throughout the rest of the report, which can rely on a larger sample for analysis.



The Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University is a multi-disciplinary research institute dedicated to the study of American Jewry and religious and cultural identity.

The Steinhardt Social Research Institute, hosted at CMJS, is committed to the development and application of innovative approaches to socio-demographic research for the study of Jewish, religious, and cultural identity.

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