

2014 Greater Miami Jewish Federation Population Study: A Portrait of the Miami Jewish Community

Study Shows Growth, Increased Diversity, Highly Connected Community

According to the study, the population of the Miami Jewish community has increased by 9 percent during the past decade, reversing about 30 years of decline. More than 123,000 Jews now live in Miami-Dade County, making Miami the eleventh largest Jewish community in the U.S.

“In the past decade, we have seen a flow of new Jewish residents, as well as an increase in the length of residency in Miami,” said Federation Chief Planning Officer **Michelle Labgold**. “This is significant news because Miami’s Jewish community experienced a steady decline in population between 1975 and 2004.”

The Country’s Most Diverse Jewish Population

The Federation’s study also found that Miami’s Jewish population has become increasingly diverse, with 33 percent of adults being foreign-born, the highest percentage of any American Jewish community. The number of Hispanic Jewish adults rose by 57 percent in the past 10 years, with the largest increases due to migration from Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia and Peru. The number of Israeli-born adults grew by 35 percent in the past decade.

While the percentage of Miami households identifying themselves as Orthodox grew from 9 to 11 percent over the past decade, the number of people residing in Orthodox Jewish households grew by 41 percent, mostly due to a significant increase in the average size of Orthodox households.

The study also reported that while the percentage of older adults in the Jewish community remained stable at 31 percent, there was an increase in the younger older adults as the Baby Boomers move into the 65- to 74-year-old age cohort. It also revealed that the largest growth (17 percent) occurred in the under-35 population with significant increases in the number of children and young adults.

The Miami Jewish community remains primarily concentrated in three main regions – North Dade, South Dade and The Beaches – with a new, emerging Jewish population center of 7,000, consisting mostly of young adults, in the Downtown Miami/Brickell/Midtown corridor. The Jewish population in North Dade increased by 19 percent in the past 10 years, while The Beaches’ Jewish population remained about the same, and South Dade decreased by 7 percent.

“There are so many exciting elements to this study,” said Amy Berger Chafetz, Chair of Federation’s Jewish Population Study Committee. “We are a growing, younger, stable Jewish community with longer periods of residency and a greater demographic distribution. We have new people coming here to stay and young people returning home, who contribute to the quality of Jewish life in Miami.”

Affinity to Jewish Identity and Israel

While the 2013 Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews found that just 46 percent of American Jews said that “being Jewish is very important” to them, 74 percent of respondents to the 2014 Greater Miami Jewish Federation Population Study reported feeling this way. Only 16 percent of couples in the Jewish community are intermarried. The 16 percent has not changed since 2004. It is one of the lowest intermarriage rates of all American Jewish communities, and compares with the 61 percent figure in the Pew Study.

Jewish connectivity is strong in Miami, with 95 percent of households involved Jewishly in some way: either by home religious practice; synagogue attendance; membership in synagogues, JCCs and other Jewish organizations; or via donations to Jewish charities.

Study results also placed Miami among the nation’s top Jewish communities in rates of Jewish preschool, Jewish day school, and Jewish day and overnight camp participation. Eight in 10 children have participated in some type of formal Jewish education. However, the study also revealed that cost remains a significant barrier to enrollment in Jewish day schools, Jewish summer camps and organized trips to Israel.

Sixty-two percent of respondents reported they are “very” or “extremely” emotionally attached to Israel. Seventy-one percent of Miami Jewish households include a member who has visited Israel, the highest rate of any U.S. Jewish community. This increased from 62 percent in 2004.

“The Miami Jewish community is extraordinary in the depth of its attachments to Judaism and Israel,” said **Robert G. Berrin**, Chair of the Board of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation. “We have much to learn from this study about increasing involvement in Jewish life and building a broader feeling of connection to the local Jewish community. The Population Study will help us find the necessary answers to a number of key issues, ultimately deepening affiliation and involvement, and enhancing services.”

Need for Social Services

Although a majority of the Miami Jewish community is relatively affluent, 29 percent report that they cannot make ends meet or are just managing financially. Fourteen percent of all Jewish households report incomes below \$25,000 per year; many of these people are in need of community support.

Thirty-five percent of households indicated that they had a need for some type of social services in the past year, with the types of needs most often cited including coordinating services for seniors, job counseling, and help or screenings for children with disabilities or special needs.

“These components of the Study are extremely important because they provide us with strategic guidance about growing needs, and the importance of wisely and responsibly allocating charitable donations,” explained Federation President and CEO **Jacob Solomon**. “The final data will help us find the best possible ways to engage future generations in the important work of building community and meeting Jewish needs, as well as advancing Jewish life in Miami, in Israel and the more than 70 other countries served by Federation-funded agencies. Our Jewish community continues to evolve, and we must be prepared to meet needs today and into the future, as well as embrace the diversity that makes Miami such a special Jewish community.”

Population Study Methodology

The Greater Miami Jewish Federation commissions a Jewish Population Study of Miami-Dade County once every 10 years. Working under the guidance of widely respected demographer Ira M. Sheskin, Ph.D., of the University of Miami, a team of trained callers employed a random-digit-dialing system to contact 590 Jewish households in Miami-Dade County via telephone landlines and cellular numbers. In addition, another 1,430 interviews were completed with known Jewish households, including cellular telephone numbers of local residents with out-of-state area codes. Weighting factors were used to combine the two samples so that the results would properly represent Miami’s Jewish population.

Once a caller reached a Jewish household, he/she conducted a survey of about 20 minutes, using a questionnaire designed with the input of a Federation committee and more than 15 focus groups of Miami Jewish residents. All individual responses were kept completely confidential, no personally identifiable details were linked to the answers, and no financial solicitations were made.

http://jewishmiami.org/news/extra/populationstudy_sharerresults/