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Media Contact: Anna Schiller, (+1) 202-419-4514, aschiller@pewresearch.org

Jewish Americans in 2020

U.S. Jews are culturally engaged, increasingly diverse, politically polarized and worried about anti-Semitism

WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 11, 2021) – What does it mean to be Jewish in America? [A new Pew Research Center survey](#) finds that many Jewish Americans participate, at least occasionally, both in some traditional religious practices – like going to a synagogue, or attending a Passover Seder – and in some contemporary Jewish cultural activities, like baking challah, watching Israeli movies or reading Jewish news online. Among young Jewish adults, however, two sharply divergent expressions of Jewishness appear to be gaining ground – one involving religion deeply enmeshed in every aspect of life, and the other involving little or no religion at all.

Today at 3 p.m. ET, Pew Research Center will host a virtual presentation of the study's key findings and a conversation with **Rabbi Elka Abrahamson** (The Wexner Foundation), **Rabbi Marc Baker** (Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston), **Dr. Mijal Bitton** (Shalom Hartman Institute of North America) and **Eric Fingerhut** (The Jewish Federations of North America), moderated by **Meredith Jacobs** (Jewish Women International). If you would like to attend the event, [please register here](#).

For more virtual events about the new study, [go to JewishTogether.org](https://www.jewishtogether.org)

Overall, about a quarter of U.S. Jewish adults (27%) do not identify with the Jewish religion: They consider themselves to be Jewish ethnically, culturally or by family background and have a Jewish parent or were raised Jewish, but they answer a question about their current religion by describing themselves as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” rather than as Jewish. Among Jewish adults under 30, four-in-ten describe themselves this way (40%).

At the same time, Orthodox Jews are much more numerous among younger Jewish adults than among older Jews. Among Jews ages 18 to 29, 17% self-identify as Orthodox, compared with just 3% of Jews 65 and older. And fully one-in-ten U.S. Jewish adults under the age of 30 are Haredim, or ultra-Orthodox (11%), compared with 1% of Jews 65 and older.

Meanwhile, the two branches of Judaism that long predominated in the United States have less of a hold on young Jews than on their elders. Roughly four-in-ten Jewish adults under 30 identify with either Reform (29%) or Conservative Judaism (8%), compared with seven-in-ten Jews ages 65 and older.

In other words, the youngest U.S. Jews count among their ranks both relatively large numbers of traditionally observant, Orthodox Jews and an even larger group of people who see themselves as Jewish for cultural, ethnic or family reasons but do not identify with

Judaism – as a religion – at all. Many people in both groups participate, at least occasionally, in the same cultural activities, such as cooking traditional Jewish foods, visiting Jewish historical sites and listening to Jewish or Israeli music. Yet the survey finds that most people in the latter group (Jews of no religion) feel they have not much or nothing at all in common with the former group (Orthodox Jews).

Additional key findings include:

- **Politically, U.S. Jews on the whole tilt strongly liberal and tend to support the Democratic party.** When the new survey was fielded, from late fall 2019 through late spring 2020, 71% said they were Democrats or leaned Democratic. But Orthodox Jews are a notable exception: 75% were Republicans or leaned Republican.
- **The size of the Jewish population has been fairly stable in percentage terms, while rising in absolute numbers, roughly in line with the total U.S. population.** Pew Research Center estimates that as of 2020, 2.4% of U.S. adults are Jewish. In the Center's first major survey of U.S. Jews in 2013, by comparison, the estimate was 2.2%. In absolute numbers, the 2020 Jewish population estimate is approximately 7.5 million, including 5.8 million adults and 1.8 million children (rounded to the closest 100,000). The 2013 estimate was 6.7 million, including 5.3 million adults and 1.3 million children.
- **The study finds that about half of all U.S. Jews (54%) belong to the two long-dominant branches of American Judaism:** 37% identify as Reform and 17% as Conservative. Those figures are essentially unchanged from 2013, when a total of 54% identified with either the Reform movement (35%) or Conservative Judaism (18%).
- **While there are some signs of religious divergence and political polarization among U.S. Jews, the survey also finds large areas of consensus.** For instance, more than eight-in-ten U.S. Jews say they feel at least some sense of belonging to the Jewish people, and three-quarters say that "being Jewish" is either very or somewhat important to them.
- **In general, Jews are far less religious than American adults as a whole, at least by conventional measures of religious observance in Pew Research Center surveys.** For example, just one-in-five Jews (21%) say religion is very important in their lives, compared with 41% of U.S. adults overall. And 12% of Jewish Americans say they attend religious services weekly or more often, versus 27% among the general public.
- **There is also evidence that the U.S. Jewish population is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse.** Overall, 92% of Jewish adults identify as White (non-Hispanic), and 8% identify with all other categories combined. But among Jews ages 18 to 29, that figure rises to 15%. Already, 17% of U.S. Jews surveyed live in households in which at least one child or adult is Black, Hispanic, Asian, some other (non-White) race or ethnicity, or multiracial.
- **Although in many ways the U.S. Jewish population is flourishing, concerns about anti-Semitism have risen among American Jews.** Three-quarters say there is more anti-Semitism in the United States than there was five years ago, and roughly half (53%) say that "as a Jewish person in the United States" they feel less safe than they did five years ago.
- **Young U.S. Jews are less emotionally attached to Israel than older ones.** As of 2020, half of Jewish adults under age 30 describe themselves as very or somewhat emotionally attached to Israel (48%), compared with two-thirds of Jews ages 65 and older. In addition, among Jews 50 and older, 51% say that caring about Israel is essential to what being Jewish means to them, and an additional 37% say it's important but not essential; just 10% say that caring about Israel is not important to them.

- **Rates of intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews are higher among Jews who have married in recent years than among those who married decades ago**, a pattern broadly similar to what the 2013 survey found. But there has been no discernible rise in intermarriage rates since 2013.

These are among the key findings of Pew Research Center's new survey of U.S. Jews, conducted from Nov. 19, 2019, to June 3, 2020, among 4,718 Jews across the country who were identified through 68,398 completed screening interviews conducted by mail and online. The margin of sampling error for the 4,718 net Jewish respondents is plus or minus 3.0 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. For more information on how the survey was conducted, see the [Methodology](#).

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For more information about the study or to arrange an interview with the lead researchers, Senior Researcher [Dr. Becka A. Alper](#) and Director of Religion Research [Alan Cooperman](#), please email Anna Schiller at aschiller@pewresearch.org

To read the report, click here: <https://www.pewforum.org/2021/05/11/jewish-americans-in-2020>

To explore the findings through an **interactive data tool**, click here: <https://www.pewresearch.org/interactives/interactive-how-do-you-compare-with-jewish-americans-in-2020>

A **brief summary of the key findings** can be found here: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/05/11/10-key-findings-about-jewish-americans/>

Methodology: <https://www.pewforum.org/2021/05/11/appendix-a-survey-methodology-4>

Survey topline: https://www.pewforum.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2021/04/PF_05.11.21.Jewish_Survey_Topline.pdf