

2023 JEWISH SOUTH JERSEY COMMUNITY STUDY




Jewish Federation
of Southern New Jersey
& OUR FAMILY OF AGENCIES



BACKGROUND

The 2023 Jewish Community Study is an initiative of the **Jewish Federation of Southern New Jersey (JFSNJ)** with assistance provided by Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA). JFNA launched a Community Study program in 2022 to equip local federations with more information about their communities. JFNA contracted Benenson Strategy Group to administer the studies, asking qualitative and quantitative questions to learn more about our community and how we compare to others. JFSNJ was the 5th community to pilot this Community Study model.



METHODOLOGY

Benenson conducted a community study assessing participants' values and attitudes, Jewish engagement, local Federation perceptions, community awareness and needs, and market-specific questions from April 23 - June 14, 2023. Benenson solicited participants via text messages, which were sent to members of the Jewish community at random. Data from the study, such as demographic information and community needs, will help guide funding allocations and identify programming gaps and opportunities. A total of 313^[1] people were surveyed across the three counties: Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester.

Because JFSNJ collaborates in many ways and overlaps constituents with the Federation of Atlantic and Cape May counties (ACM), the study collected data from both communities. This report highlights key findings from both Federations in 2023 and changes from 2013 – the last time JFSNJ conducted a Community Study – with the 2023 study.^[2]

[1] The number of participants in the study provides a statistically significant sample size and is similar to the number of participants in several other studies around the country.

[2] Anecdotally, we see the attack on Israel on October 7, 2023 appears to have led to a marked change in the personal beliefs and values of the Jewish community. This report's findings were prior to Oct 7, as such we believe there is already a shift in attitudes and beliefs.

SOUTHERN NJ DEMOGRAPHICS

We have a vibrant Jewish community.

- An estimated 51,000 Jewish individuals (including minors) are in the catchment area of Southern New Jersey (SNJ) (Camden, Burlington, and Gloucester counties).[3]
- This is a possible decrease from the Population Study conducted in 2013, where there were an estimated 56,700 Jewish household members in the SNJ catchment area.[4]
- There was equal representation of male and female-identifying respondents.
- Most respondents indicated that they were older than 50 (63%).
- 30% of respondents indicated they have a child under 18 living in their home.
- The most reported religious denominations were conservative (38%), reform (29%), and just Jewish (23%). 54% reported that someone in their household belongs to a synagogue.

GEOGRAPHICAL COMMUNITY

We have deep roots in our local area.

- 61% of residents have lived in our community for more than 10 years.
- 78% of residents who moved to this area within the past 10 years moved from NJ or PA.
- 67% of community members plan on staying within the area for at least the next three years, demonstrating a need to continue building infrastructure to support adults as they age in place.
- Among the 13% who have multiple homes, over half of SNJ primary residents have a second residence within Atlantic or Cape May counties, indicating overlap within these Jewish communities.
- 23% indicated their vacation home is in Florida, and 12% are in Pennsylvania.

FINANCIAL DEEP DIVE

There are financial needs within our community:

- 59% of respondents reported making less than \$200,000 annually.
- 17% of respondents indicated that in the past year, they were unable to pay their rent/mortgage.
- 16% of respondents report they are unable to pay a utility bill.
- 14% of respondents report they are unable to buy the food they need.
- 14% of respondents report they are unable to pay for needed medical care.
- 3% of respondents reported their income level to be below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).
- 59% of respondents reported their income to be at 250% of the FPL.[5]
- 13% of community members reported that their household could not pay an unexpected \$400 emergency expense with cash, money currently in a bank account, or on a credit card they could pay in full.

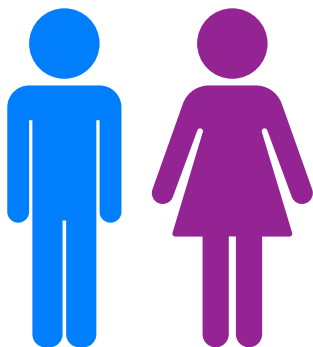
[3] This population estimate comes from combining Civis Analytics' data with The American Jewish Population Project (AJPP) out of the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University.

[4] Anecdotally, we have seen a decrease in the Jewish population through our work; however, we cannot use these numbers to definitively claim that the Jewish population has decreased due to different surveying methods used for these population numbers and margins of error.

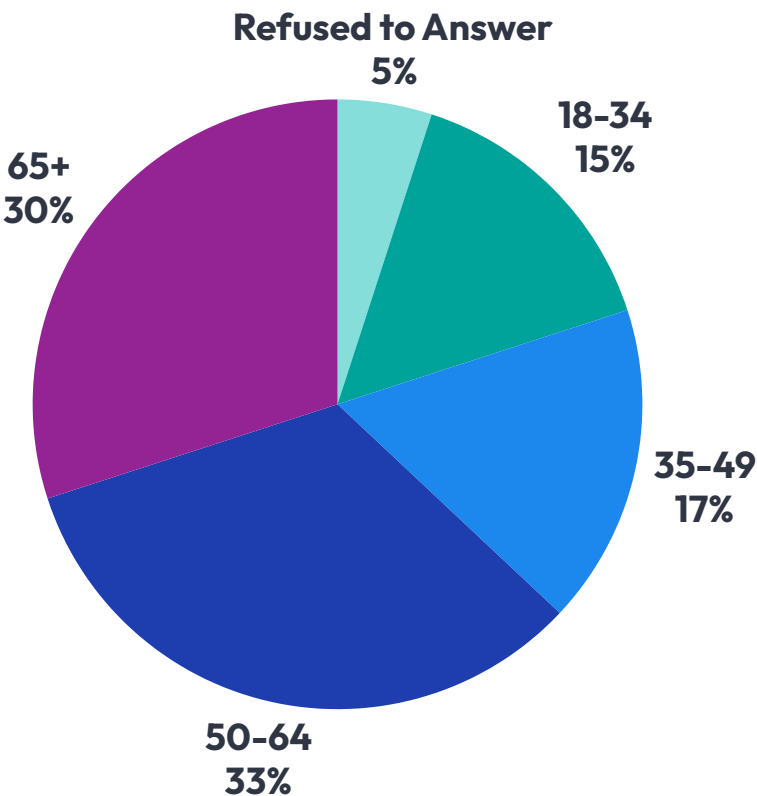
[5] FPL is \$75,000 for a family of four.

HOUSEHOLDS IN OUR COMMUNITY

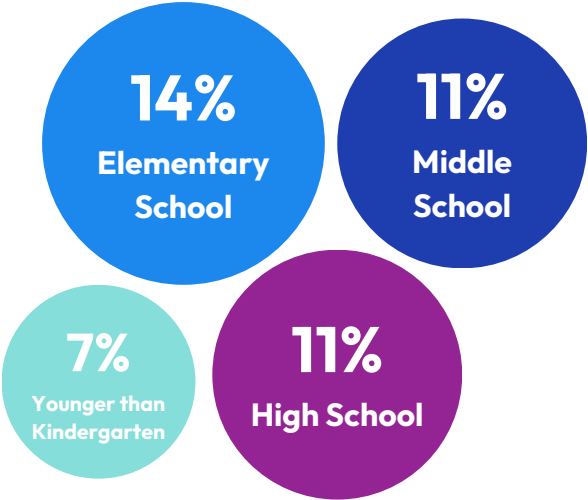
50/50
Gender



Adult Age

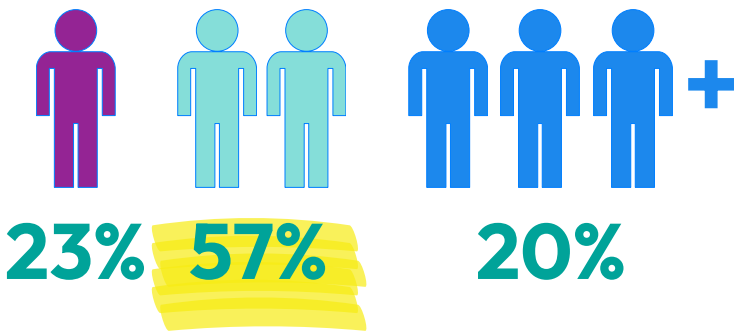


At least
1 Child in Household

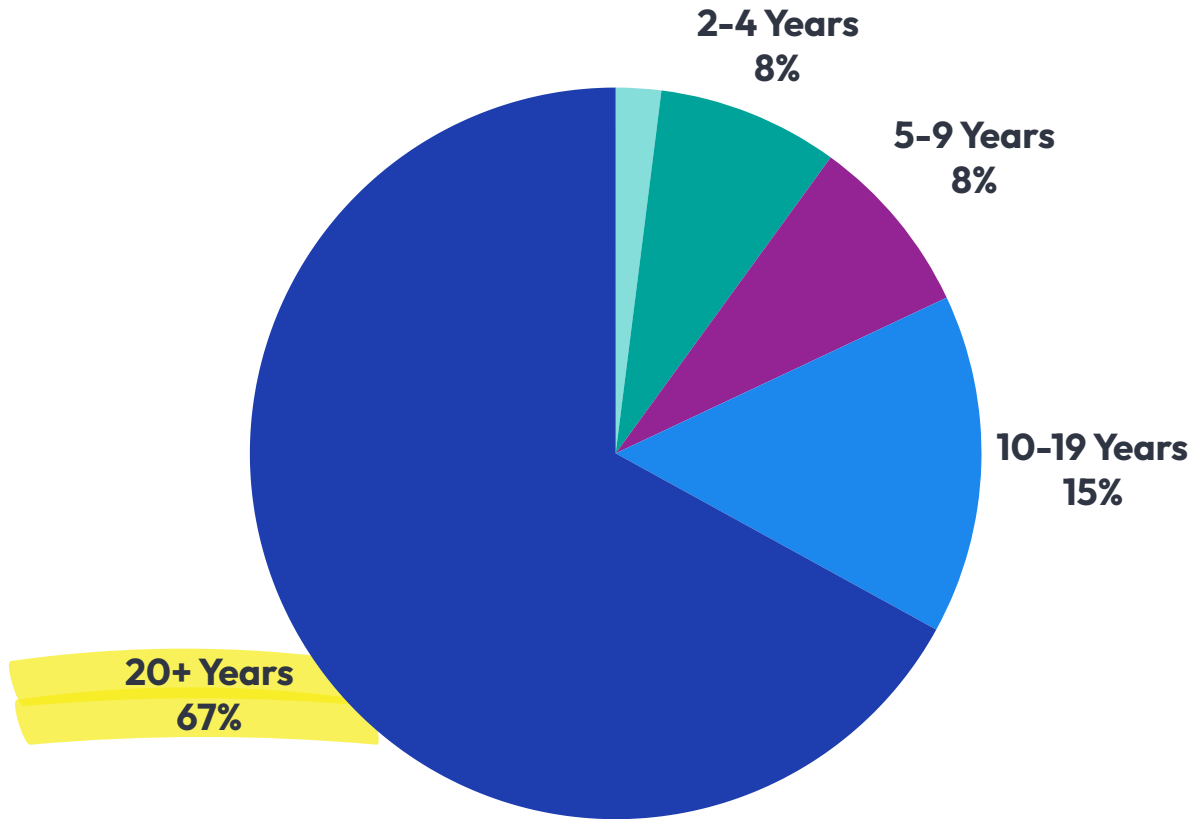


Household Size

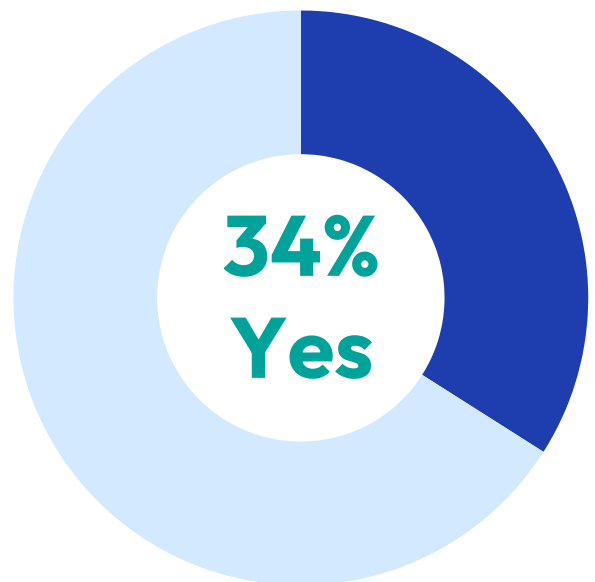
(adults >18)



Years lived in Southern New Jersey



Diagnosed Disability in Household



KEY FINDINGS IN 2023

- Jews who live in Southern New Jersey and Atlantic and Cape May counties feel strongly about the importance of the Jewish community, but more can be done to encourage and build a deeper engagement in both communities.
- 2 in 10 report high levels of engagement
 - 3 in 10 report a strong feeling as part of the Jewish community.
 - 4 in 10 report they were engaged with JFed recently.
- Although cost is a recurring theme, Jews in SNJ tend to have incomes above the median, which leads us to believe it is more about the value proposition.
- Most Jews in SNJ feel a strong connection to where they live.
- 67% of SNJ primary residents have been living in SNJ for over 20 years.
- 67% of SNJ primary residents plan to stay in the community for at least the next three years, hinting at satisfaction with the region at large and presenting an opportunity to keep this base of residents engaged.
- There is an overlap between SNJ and ACM that can be leveraged for further community growth; 57% of those in SNJ with multiple homes indicate they have a vacation home somewhere in ACM.
- 79% reported overall satisfaction with their local community at large.
- 70% of parents send children to Jewish summer camps and 69% send their children to some additional form of a Jewish education program. The most common ways children do this are Jewish summer camps, Jewish education programs, and youth groups.
- Jewish preschool is important to our community, 55% send children to a Jewish Early Childhood Center.
- The majority of our community are college educated. 83% reported having a college or advanced degree.



COMMUNITY NEEDS

- There is a desire to see more options being offered to engage with the Jewish community, including increased social gatherings, cultural or educational events.
- Respondents are seeking more care offered for the elderly (ACM, in particular).
- There is a request to provide comfort and address feelings of isolation.



The Center for Impact & Innovation, a department of JFSNJ conducted Community Conversations which shed more light on the current community needs. Results will be shared in the fall of 2024.

COMPARISON 2013 TO 2023

Although the studies did not ask the same questions, we were able to extract some key points that are similar to show how our community has changed over the past 10 years.

Financial Need

In 2013, we asked if respondents or anyone in their household have experienced needing to choose between paying for healthcare, food, medicine, or rent, 4.7% of respondents said yes. When broken down by age, 13.5% of respondents who answered in the affirmative were aged 18-29, and 20.4% reported an annual income below \$50,000. We also asked if respondents or anyone in their household obtained food or housing support through an assistance program. 2.9% of respondents said yes. Of those who responded in the affirmative, 10% were 75+.

In contrast, in 2023 we asked several questions about whether respondents or anyone in their household did not have enough money to (1) buy the food you/they needed (14% answered yes), (2) pay for medical care/medicine (14% answered yes), (3) pay rent/mortgage (17% answered yes), or (4) pay a utility bill (16% yes). As noted above, 13% of respondents indicated that they would not be able to pay for an unexpected \$400 emergency expense with cash/bank account/credit card in full.

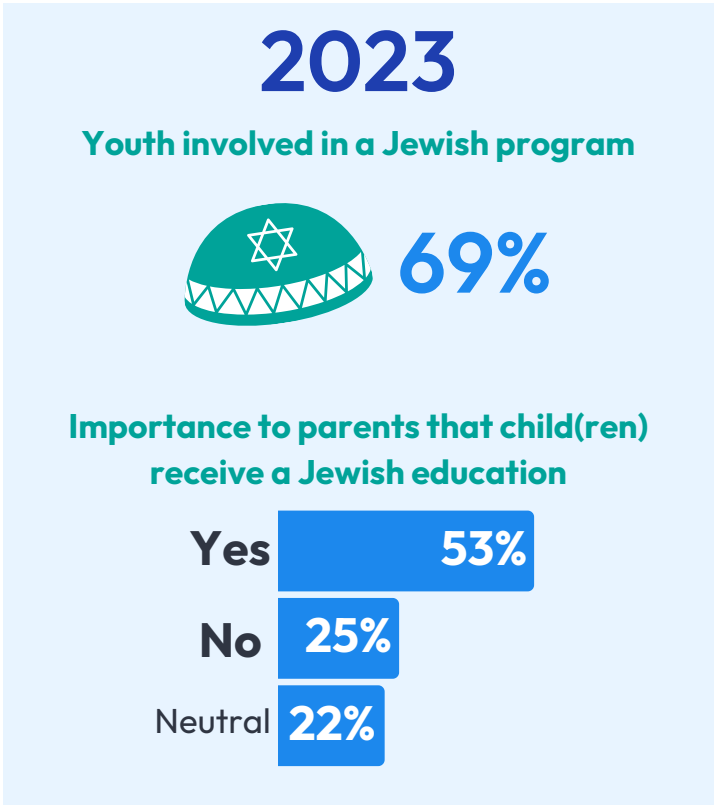
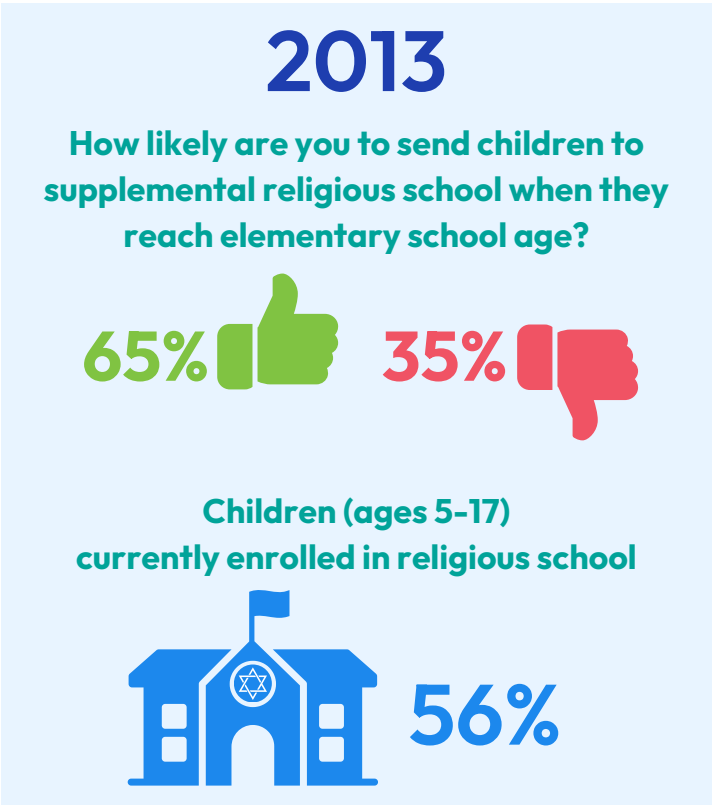
► These results show an increase in reporting of financial need in 2023 compared to 2013.

Diversity

In 2013, we did not ask any questions about diversity. For 2023, we added questions related to diversity as we have continued to see a shift in demographic makeup of our Jewish community. 94% of respondents identified as white, 2% as Hispanic, 1% as black, and 3% as other.

Jewish Education

Jewish education and engagement for our youth continues to be important in our community. As data from other communities becomes available, we will see how we compare to others.



ENGAGEMENT WITH JEWISH COMMUNITY

Using these two studies as comparisons, we see a decline in the engagement levels in our community. This may be attributable to COVID-19 and presents an opportunity, and a need, to reconnect with our Jewish community members.

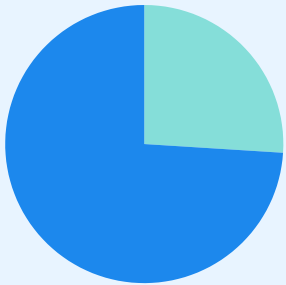
2013



**Being a part of a
Jewish community is
important**

91%

Agree



**I feel I am part of the
Jewish community
where I live**

74%

Agree

2023

**How would you describe your current
engagement level with your local
Jewish community, Jewish
organizations, or Jewish groups in
your community?**

45%

Engaged



55%

Not Engaged



OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Inclusive outreach to under-engaged members can help make Jews in SNJ feel at home.
- Opportunity exists to strengthen engagement with the Federation as only 2 in 5 of SNJ and ACM residents have engaged with the Federation in the past year.
 - Of those who have engaged, most are not participating in programs (56% are donating/volunteering, but fewer are reporting attending programs 34%).
 - The opportunity to strengthen engagement is especially strong after October 7.
- Awareness of the Jewish Federation is relatively high,
 - 86% are familiar with the Katz JCC, and 73% with JFCS.
 - The Voice, Lions Gate, and Aleph also scored above 60% and JCRC scored 54%
 - PJ Library and Lifelong Learning had 50% awareness.
 - Jewish parents feel it is crucial that their child or children learn more about the Jewish heritage and being Jewish. Yet 12% of children do not participate in any Jewish youth social or education programs.
- 74% feel a responsibility to ensure there is a strong community for future generations.
- 50% feel it is important to donate time or money to Jewish charities and organizations.
- Community members seek engagement in ways that the Federation is actively seeking to fulfill or already offers. There is high awareness of general Federation offerings but less awareness of specific opportunities for engagement, which could be mitigated through education/marketing.



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THE **STRENGTH** OF A PEOPLE.
THE **POWER** OF COMMUNITY.

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