

# **Jewish Community Study of Greater Milwaukee 2011**

***Revised March 2015 - Executive Summary***

**Commissioned by the Milwaukee Jewish Federation**

**Research Conducted with Research Partner:  
Center for Urban Initiatives and Research  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
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**Revised Report Produced in Partnership with:  
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*This study was supported through grants made by  
the Helen Bader Foundation and the Daniel M. Soref Charitable Trust.*

## Preface to the Revised Report

This revised report is issued by the Milwaukee Jewish Federation in partnership with the Berman Jewish DataBank @ The Jewish Federations of North America.

In 2011, the Milwaukee Jewish Federation issued an original report on findings from the Jewish Community Study of Greater Milwaukee 2011. In 2013, when staff at the Berman Jewish DataBank were preparing the Milwaukee study datafile for archiving and posting on the DataBank website, they discovered the study's original researchers had left the telephone survey data unweighted and the original report reflected the unweighted telephone survey data.

Weighting telephone survey data is a standard procedure that corrects for the fact that some people have a better chance of being in the sample than others and that some people contacted for the survey are more likely to complete the survey than others. By using unweighted telephone survey data, the original report over-represented those most engaged in Jewish community and life and under-represented those with more tenuous connections.

To provide a more accurate picture of the entire Milwaukee Jewish population under study, the Federation and the DataBank agreed that DataBank staff would 1) use information available from the telephone interview process to weight the completed telephone interview data, 2) produce new statistics using the weighted data, and 3) revise, where necessary, corresponding language describing the findings. Due to the weighting, statistics from the telephone survey reported in this revised edition of the study report differ from statistics in the original report. By agreement, DataBank staff have kept narrative revisions to a minimum.

Technical details on how the telephone survey data were weighted for this revised report can be found in Chapter 2, "Estimating the Size and Residential Location of the Jewish Population in Greater Milwaukee" of the full report.

The data from Internet survey respondents remains unweighted in this report because no sufficient methodology exists to weight it. Consequently, findings from the Internet survey in this revised report are the same as those in the original report, with two exceptions. The original report issued percentages with one decimal point, while this revised report rounds percentages to the nearest whole percentage. In a few instances, statistics from the Internet survey that were erroneously reported in the original report have been corrected.

## Executive Summary

### Purpose

The Jewish Community Study of Greater Milwaukee 2011 was undertaken to provide the community with current information related to the size and composition of the Jewish population, perspectives on Jewish affiliation, religious practices and interconnectivity; assessment of past and future programming; and insight about the community's charitable giving. The study was commissioned by the Milwaukee Jewish Federation and was funded by the Helen Bader Foundation and the Daniel M. Soref Charitable Trust.

### Target Geographic Area of Study

The target geographic area of the study is designed to capture as much of the Jewish population in the greater Milwaukee area as possible. The target area includes all of the communities in Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties as well as communities in the southern half of Ozaukee County. This is a larger geographic area of study as compared to earlier Jewish Community Studies conducted in the greater Milwaukee area.

### Survey Methodologies

This study of the Jewish Community of Greater Milwaukee is based upon two surveys, one conducted by telephone and the other through the Internet. The telephone survey was conducted with randomly selected households in the greater Milwaukee area using random telephone numbers as well as telephone numbers contained in the Milwaukee Jewish Federation's database of Jewish individuals and families in the region. A total of 534 telephone interviews were conducted with adults in households where at least one adult was identified as being Jewish. Interviews were conducted with all respondents who either considered themselves to be Jewish or were born or raised Jewish.

Taking advantage of modern technology, an Internet-based survey was created for this project with the intent that all Jewish adults who wished to participate in the study could complete a survey. The opportunity to participate in this survey was publicized through many outreach methods coordinated by the marketing staff of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation. A total of 1,141 individuals completed the Internet-based survey.

The Internet-based survey is not as scientific as the telephone survey. On some variables, responses from the telephone survey respondents and the Internet questionnaire respondents were similar; on other variables, the responses were different. The largest areas of difference centered on Internet-survey respondents being more connected to Jewish people and institutions in the greater Milwaukee community. This is not surprising given that those with more connections to the community were more likely to learn about the opportunity to participate, given the publicity for the Internet survey. In general, the Internet survey responses reflected a more Jewishly and Jewish-community connected sample than did the weighted randomly-based telephone interviews.

The results from both surveys are reported separately in this report. Those interested in the perspectives of Jews with relatively strong ties within the Jewish community should find the Internet-based results of particular interest. Those most concerned with a portrait of the entire Jewish community of Greater Milwaukee — including the disconnected as well as the connected — will pay

close attention to the telephone survey results.

### **Key Findings**

The full report of the Greater Milwaukee Jewish Community Study provides extensive empirical information resulting from the administration of the telephone and Internet survey components of the overall study. The selections below provide some key findings from the study but do not include the full set of findings and analysis provided in the full report, most notably, the geographically based variations on questions such as religious practices and feelings of connectivity and inclusion. The survey findings reported below are organized by major topics included in the survey.

#### **The Size and Residential Location of the Jewish Community in Greater Milwaukee**

This carefully designed study yielded substantial findings about the demographic composition and residential location of Jewish households in the greater Milwaukee area—some of which ran contrary to common understandings about the demography of the regional Jewish community.

##### ***Estimated Size of the Jewish Population:***

Using data collected through the telephone survey as well as data from the 2010 United States Census, it is estimated that approximately 15,000 households in the greater Milwaukee region have one or more Jewish adults in residence. These households contain 25,800 Jewish persons and another 9,600 non-Jewish persons; thus, a total of 35,400 individuals – adults and children - live in these Jewish households.

##### ***Regional Distribution of the Jewish Population:***

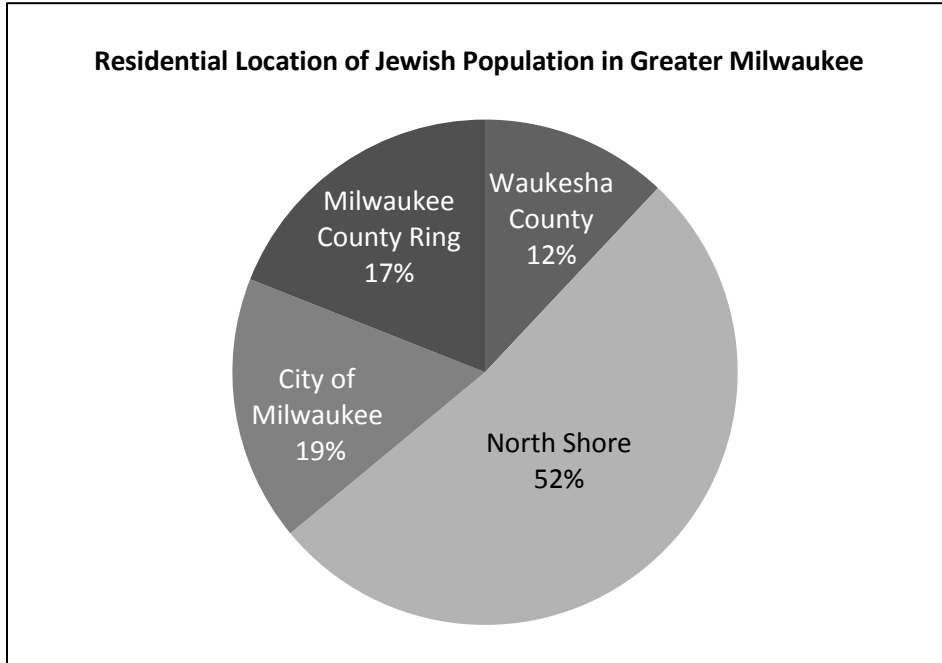
The geographic area with the largest Jewish population is the North Shore, including (but not limited to) the very northeastern tip of the City of Milwaukee, Glendale, Shorewood, Whitefish Bay, Bayside, Fox Point, Mequon, and Cedarburg (see figure below).

The North Shore contains an estimated 52% of the 25,800 Jewish persons in the study area.

The remainder of the City of Milwaukee has 19% of all Jewish persons in the study area — an estimated 4,900 Jewish persons.

The suburban Milwaukee County Ring has 4,300 Jewish persons, 17% of the community total.

Waukesha County includes just over 12% of the Jewish Community, 3,200 Jewish persons.



**Demographic Characteristics of the Jewish Population**

**Age: The Milwaukee Jewish community is an older Jewish community.** Approximately 10% of all currently Jewish persons (including those who are Jewish and something else) are under the age of 18, another 15% are 18-29, 5% are 30-39, 10% are 40-49, 22% are 50-59, 19% are 60-69 and 18% are 70 years of age or older.

**Current Marital Status of Adults in Jewish Households:** married or partnered, 66%; divorced, 4%; widowed, 9%; separated, less than 1%; single, 21%.

**Employment Status of Adults in Jewish Households:** employed full time, 40%; employed part time, 10%; unemployed, 6%; retired, 28%; stay at home parent, 3%; student, 9%.

**Educational Achievement of Adults in Jewish Households:** some high school/high school graduate, 15%; technical/trade school or some college, 21%; two-year college degree, 6%; four-year college degree, 25%; master’s level degree, 21%; doctoral or advanced degree, 10%.

**Residency Patterns of Jewish Households**

**Length of Residence in Current Home:** Over half of respondents in both the telephone and Internet surveys said that they have lived in their current home for eleven or more years.

**Length of Residence in Greater Milwaukee Area:** 80% of telephone survey respondents and 73% of Internet survey respondents have lived in the greater Milwaukee area for more than 20 years.

**Moving Plans:** About 12% of respondents in both the telephone and Internet surveys said that they plan to move within the next year or two. The majority of those expecting to move reported that they would remain in the greater Milwaukee area: 69% of telephone respondents and 60% of Internet respondents.

**Perspectives on Being Jewish**

**Jewish Religious Affiliation:** 42% of respondents in the telephone survey identified their affiliation as Reform Judaism; 18% are Conservative and 5% identify with the various Orthodox movements; 32% of telephone respondents categorized themselves as “Just Jewish” or a secular or cultural Jew either on the first question on identification or in details provided in a follow-up question.

In the last randomly-dialed telephone survey of the community in 1996, 2.5% of respondents identified as Orthodox, 22% as Conservative, 39% as Reform, and 34% as “Just Jewish,” patterns essentially replicated in the 2011 telephone survey. The Internet survey respondents have a much higher rate of Jewish denominational identification than do the telephone respondents, whose answers provide the most accurate portrayal of the entire Jewish community in Greater Milwaukee.

Orientation to Jewish Religion	Telephone Survey % of Respondents	Internet Survey % of Respondents
Orthodox	3%	8%
Modern Orthodox	2	6
Conservative	18	22
Reconstructionist	2	3
Reform	42	44
Just Jewish/Secular Jew/Cultural Jew	32	12
Miscellaneous Answers	<1%	5
Total	100%	100%

**Importance of Being Jewish:** 60% of telephone survey respondents reported that being Jewish was “very important” to them (88% of Internet respondents).

**Jewish Friends:** 31% of telephone survey respondents and 69% of those in the Internet survey said that “most” of their friends were Jewish. 13% of telephone respondents reported no Jewish friends and another 14% “a few.”

**Connection to Other Jews:** 40% of telephone survey respondents said that they felt “very connected” to other Jews while another 38% were “somewhat connected.” Further, about 27% of respondents in the telephone survey said that they feel “very” included in the local Jewish community, while another 25% felt “somewhat” included.

**Importance of Children Being Connected to Other Jews:** 35% of those responding to the telephone survey compared to 84% of those who participated in the Internet survey said that it was very important for their child or children to be connected with other Jews.

### Adult Children Raised in Local Jewish Families

**Residential Location of Adult Children:** Many Jewish families in the greater Milwaukee area have adult children who now live outside of their childhood home. A large number of these adult children currently live in locations outside of the greater Milwaukee region.

**Adult Children Not Returning to the Area:** Over three-quarters of the respondents in both the telephone and Internet surveys said that it is unlikely that these adult children will return to live in the greater Milwaukee area in the next few years.

### Jewish Practices at Home

**Mezuzah on Front Door:** About 61% of telephone sample respondents and 87% of Internet sample respondents indicated that they have placed a mezuzah on their front door.

**Light Candles on Friday Evenings:** 17% of the telephone respondents and 41% of Internet respondents said that they light candles “most of the time” or “always” on Friday evenings; 47% of telephone respondents “never” light Shabbat candles and 15% “seldom” do so.

**Participate in Seder on Passover:** Significant proportions of respondents in both surveys (54% of telephone and 85% of Internet) said that they always participate in a Seder on Passover.

**Light Hanukah Candles:** 56% of telephone respondents report always lighting Hanukah candles (73% of Internet respondents).

**Shabbat Meal:** While 41% of Internet respondents reported sharing a Shabbat dinner with family members most of the time or always, among the more randomly-interviewed telephone survey respondents only 13% always or usually had a Shabbat dinner.

**Keeping Kosher:** 13% of telephone survey respondents reported some level of keeping kosher in 2011 (including partially kosher); in 1996, a similar 13% kept kosher, either at home only or at home and outside the home. A quarter (24%) of the Internet respondents reported that they keep Kosher.

**Adult Jewish Study:** 33% of the telephone sample and 45% of the Internet sample said that at least one adult member of the household attends Jewish study.

### Synagogue Attendance and Membership

**Synagogue Membership:** 54% of telephone survey respondents and 83% of Internet respondents said that they belong to at least one synagogue. (Note: The survey question which focused on synagogue membership asked respondents if they were a member of one or more synagogues. Membership was not further defined and respondents were not asked if they were dues paying members.)

**Synagogue Attendance:** 24% of telephone sample and 7% of Internet sample never attend synagogue services. Conversely, 10% of telephone respondents and 21% of the Internet respondents reported attending synagogue services one or more times per week.

**Attend Synagogue Services on High Holidays:** 41% of telephone survey respondents (and 73% of Internet sample respondents) said that they always attend synagogue services on the High Holidays; 33% of telephone respondents replied that they never attended Holiday services and 10% “seldom” attended.

### Jewish Education

**Day Care and Preschool:** Households that reported having children were asked if they had any children attending either preschool or day care. Of those who responded affirmatively, 50% of the telephone survey respondents and 81% of those from the Internet survey indicated that their children were attending a day care or preschool program offered by a Jewish organization.

**K-12 School:** Of the households that reported having children in any grades from Kindergarten through high school, about 20% of telephone survey respondents and 48% of Internet survey respondents said that they had one or more children enrolled in a Jewish Day School.

### Jewish Experiences of Adults When They Were Younger

**Jewish Day Camp:** 39% of telephone respondents said that they attended or worked at a Jewish day camp when younger.

**Jewish Overnight Camp:** Similarly, 38% attended or worked at a Jewish overnight camp.

**Jewish Youth Organization:** Over half of the telephone respondents reported having participated in a Jewish youth organization when they were younger.

### Jewish Inter marriage and Jewish Life

**Inter marriage Rate of Households:** Over half (about 58%) of surveyed households contained a married couple or domestic partners. Of these, 44% reported that one spouse or partner was not Jewish, constituting inter marriage across faiths.

**Raising Children:** Among households with children, all with two Jewish spouses (partners) and 41% with interfaith spouses (partners) report they were raising their children in the Jewish religion only. Households with intermarried couples also reported raising their children in both the Jewish and another religion (27%), with no religion (30%), or in another religion (1%).



### Knowledge of Jewish Organizations

**Knowledge Levels:** Respondents in both surveys were most familiar with the Jewish Community Center, followed in rank order by the Milwaukee Jewish Federation, Jewish Family Services, and Jewish Home and Care Center. In general, Internet survey respondents were more familiar with these Jewish communal organizations.

### Impact of Economic Downturn

**Impact on Family Finances:** 23% of telephone respondents and 13% of Internet respondents rated the economic downturn as having a serious impact on family finances. About another third of each group rated the impact as moderate. In general, the economic impact of the Great Recession of 2008 and beyond was most serious for those households with the lowest annual incomes in 2011.

**Impact on Family Activities:** Respondents in both surveys were asked how the economic downturn had affected the ability of household members to participate in recreational activities (e.g., arts and culture events, sports events, vacations) and in Jewish communal activities (e.g., enroll children in summer camp or in day school, join or remain a member of the Jewish Community Center). In general, the economic downturn affected recreational activities more than it did participation in Jewish communal activities.

### Perspectives on Charitable Giving

**Giving to Jewish Causes:** 13% of telephone survey respondents reported that their household gave more than three-quarters of their total charitable contributions to Jewish organizations and causes, and another 7% reported giving between half and three-quarters of their charitable dollars to Jewish causes.

Fewer than 5% of all intermarried households reported giving at least half of their charitable dollars to Jewish causes compared to 41% of inmarried Jewish respondents (telephone survey data).

**Giving through the Milwaukee Jewish Federation:** 37% of telephone survey respondents and 72% of Internet respondents said they made charitable donations to or through the Milwaukee Jewish Federation.

### Perspectives on Israel

**Travel to Israel:** About 41% of telephone respondents said that they had at some time in the past traveled to Israel (82% of Internet respondents).

**Importance of Israel:** Just over half (53%) of telephone survey respondents said that Israel was “very important” to them, while another 31% replied “somewhat important.” Among Internet respondents, 68% said Israel was very important while another 26% said it was somewhat important.

**Support for Israel and Overseas:** The proportion of respondents who thought that it was “very” important for the Jewish community of Milwaukee to “support Israel and Jews overseas” was the same in both studies —58% of telephone respondents and 58% of Internet respondents. Over half of the respondents in both surveys rated support for Israel and overseas causes as “very important.”

### Experiences of Jewish Teens

**Teens in Households:** 42% of telephone survey households include at least one teenager.

**Participation in Youth Groups:** Among telephone households with children, 40% indicate that one or more teenagers participate in a Jewish youth group.

## Introduction to the Study

During 2009, the Milwaukee Jewish Federation commissioned a strategic visioning group to explore how the Jewish community and the community's organizations might collaborate as a means of response to the economic downturn sweeping the nation. Among the many important ideas that flowed from this visioning work was the identification of the need for and value of a survey of the Jewish community to provide information on several topics including: (1) the demographic composition of the contemporary Jewish community in the Greater Milwaukee area, (2) a current understanding of the services and religious needs and interests of members of the community, and (3) ideas for strengthening the Jewish community in Milwaukee and surrounding areas.

In response, the Milwaukee Jewish Federation launched an effort to conduct a survey of the Jewish community in Greater Milwaukee during 2011. The Federation obtained funding from the Helen Bader Foundation and the Daniel M. Soref Charitable Trust to support planning and implementation of the survey as well as for distribution of survey findings.

The ultimate purpose of the Jewish Community Study of Greater Milwaukee 2011 is to provide the local Jewish community with knowledge and information that can inform planning and services related to many dimensions of Jewish life including, but not limited to, religious observance, social connection, Jewish education, service needs, and charitable giving.

The 2011 study was conducted by the Center for Urban Initiatives and Research at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, under the supervision of Stephen L. Percy, Professor of Political Science and Urban Studies. Project planning, implementation, and data interpretation were aided by several members of the Jewish community who participated in the planning and development stages of the survey as well in plans for dissemination of survey results. In the 2011 report, Dr. Percy acknowledged and thanked Laura Barnard and Dr. Jane Avner of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation for their editorial assistance in preparing the report. He also thanked all of the members of the local Jewish community that contributed ideas and feedback into the content of this study as it pertains to answering key questions related to planning for the Jewish community of Greater Milwaukee.

In January 2015, the Milwaukee Jewish Federation issued this revised report in partnership with the Berman Jewish DataBank @ The Jewish Federations of North America. As noted in the Preface (see p. 3), the 2015 revised report is based upon a data file weighted by Berman Jewish DataBank staff. The weighted data file is designed to correct the over-representation in the original 2011 report of telephone respondents who are most engaged in Jewish communal life in greater Milwaukee, especially those who live in the North Shore geographic sub-area. As also noted in the Preface, Internet survey responses remain as reported in 2011.