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Jewish Federation[®]
OF GREATER METROWEST NJ

2020 Greater MetroWest NJ **Jewish Community Study**



Children and Jewish Education

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The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS), 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 sociodemographic data on the Jewish community.

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INTRODUCTION

The 2020 Greater MetroWest Jewish Community Study, conducted by the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) at Brandeis University, employed innovative state-of-the-art methods to create a comprehensive portrait of the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of the Jewish community in Greater MetroWest New Jersey (GMW). The principal goal of this study is to highlight data and findings that will be useful for the Greater MetroWest Jewish Federation and other community organizations and funders for communal planning. This study is intended to promote an understanding of the community and to aid strategic planning, program development, and policies to support and enhance Jewish life.

The study overview report¹ serves as an introduction to all of the topic reports. It provides key findings, terminology, and a summary of the methodology used in the study.

This topic report focuses on children in Jewish households and their formal and informal Jewish education. Related reports cover:

- Community connections
- Finances
- Geography
- Jewish children
- Jewish engagement
- Philanthropy/Volunteering
- Seniors/Health and disability

More details about the study are available in the report appendix and through analysis of the dataset.

Greater MetroWest Jewish Population, 2020

Total Jewish households	56,800
Total people in Jewish households	155,000
Total Jews	122,300
Adults	
Jewish	96,900
Non-Jewish	26,600
Children	
Jewish	25,400
Non-Jewish	4,300

Numbers do not add up to total due to rounding.

The present study provides a portrait of the Greater MetroWest Jewish community as it was in the fall of 2020, six months into the COVID-19 pandemic. Although some survey responses were likely to be influenced by the special circumstances of the pandemic, the questions were designed to

¹ View at <<https://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/greater-metrowest-nj-report.html>>

provide a demographic and attitudinal portrait of the stable characteristics of the community. The survey questionnaire was developed by CMJS in consultation with the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ. As necessary, questions were modified to account for changes in usual patterns of behavior during the pandemic.

In total, 3,295 eligible households completed surveys between October 1 and December 11, 2020. The response rate for the primary sample, which was designed to be representative of the entire community, was 33.4% (AAPOR RR4²).

Notes on this report:

- In order to extrapolate respondent data to the entire community, individual respondents were assigned a “survey weight” so that their survey responses represent the proportion of the overall community that has similar demographic characteristics. Unless otherwise specified, this report presents weighted survey data in the form of percentages or proportions. Accordingly, these data should be read not as the percentage or proportion of respondents who answered each question in a given way, but as the percentage or proportion of the population that we estimate would answer each question in that way if each member of the population had been surveyed.
- Because estimates are based on a probability survey, no one estimate should be considered an exact measurement. As a guideline, the reader should assume that all estimates have a range of plus or minus five points; therefore, reported differences between any two numbers of less than 10 percentage points may not necessarily reflect true differences in the population.
- When a percentage is between 0% and 0.5% and would otherwise round down to 0%, the number is denoted as < 1%. When there are insufficient respondents in a particular subgroup for reporting reliable information, the estimate is shown as “—”.
- Comparisons across subgroups: When there is a statistically significant difference among subgroups, we are 95% confident that at least some of the differences in estimates reflect actual differences and are not just the result of random chance. In the tables in this report, we designate these differences by shading them light gray. Findings that are not statistically significant are not shaded. Even in cases where there are statistically significant differences in a full set of responses, it is unlikely that there are statistically significant differences between every pair of numbers. As noted above, even when a table is statistically significant, differences between any two numbers of less than 10 percentage points may not reflect true differences in the population.
- When reporting qualitative or open-ended data, sample verbatim quotes from respondents appear in italics. These responses are not representative of the views of all community members but add context and depth to the representative quantitative data included in the report. Comments may have been edited for clarity and to remove any identifying information. When the number of respondents who mentioned a particular theme is shown, that number indicated the actual number of respondents and not the weighted share of the population they represent.

² American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) is a professional organization that sets standards for survey research.

- Comparisons across surveys: As part of the goal to assess trends, we made comparisons of answers to data from national studies (in particular, the CMJS/SSRI American Jewish Population Project (ajpp.brandeis.edu) and the Pew Research Center report, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”³

³ Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020” (Washington DC: Pew Research Center, 2021). <https://www.pewforum.org/2021/05/11/jewish-americans-in-2020/>

KEY FINDINGS: CHILDREN AND JEWISH EDUCATION

- Approximately 29,700 children live in Jewish households in GMW. An estimated 25,400 of these children are considered Jewish by their parents (86%), including 19,200 who are considered Jewish only (65%) and 6,200 who are considered Jewish and another religion (21%). There are 4,300 children in GMW Jewish households who are not considered Jewish by their parents. This group includes children with no religion (9%) and those with a religion other than Judaism (5%).
- Just under half of Jewish children (45%) are being raised by inmarried parents, and the same share are being raised by intermarried parents. About 8% of Jewish children are being raised by single parents.
- Among GMW's Jewish children, 30% of preschool-age Jewish children were enrolled in a Jewish preschool in the 2020-21 academic year; 20% of K-12 Jewish children were enrolled in a Jewish part-time school, such as a Hebrew school, religious school, or Sunday school, and 7% of K-12 Jewish children were enrolled in a Jewish day school or yeshiva.
- K-12 Jewish school enrollment is significantly higher among the age-eligible Jewish households of Essex County, compared to Jewish households in other regions.
- Schedule and location are the most common reasons cited for choosing both Jewish and non-Jewish preschools.
- Cost is the primary reason for not enrolling children in Jewish day schools or yeshivot. However, among Jewish households who had at least one child in day school, the vast majority agreed (50%) or strongly agreed (36%) that their children's day school education is a good value, given the cost.
- Among Jewish households that had at least one child in day school and moved to the area within the past ten years, about half agreed (21%) or strongly agreed (30%) that GMW day school and yeshiva options were a reason to move to the area.
- Eighteen percent of K-12 Jewish children enrolled in Jewish overnight camp in 2019 or 2020 and 8% of K-12 Jewish children enrolled in a Jewish day camp in 2019 or 2020.
- Among Jewish households with a child who attended Jewish overnight camp in summer 2019 or 2020, 48% were very likely to send a child to camp in summer 2021, but 44% were not at all likely to do so. In contrast, among households with no child in camp in 2019 or 2020, 85% said they were not at all likely to send their child to camp in 2021.
- Inmarried households participate in PJ Library at a significantly higher rate (39%) than intermarried households (22%).

CHILDREN IN JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS

Approximately 29,700 children live in Jewish households in GMW (Table 1).⁴ An estimated 25,400 of these children are considered Jewish by their parents (86%), including 19,200 who are considered Jewish only (65%) and 6,200 who are considered Jewish and another religion (21%). There are 4,300 children in GMW Jewish households whose parents do not consider them to be Jewish. This group includes children with no religion (9%) and those with a religion other than Judaism (5%).

Table 1. Counts and proportion of children in Jewish households

	Estimate	Percentage
Jewish	25,400	86%
Jewish alone	19,200	65%
Jewish and another religion	6,200	21%
Not Jewish	4,300	14%
No religion	2,900	9%
Another religion	1,400	5%
Unknown	100	< 1%
All children	29,700	100%

** For an additional 100 children, religion was not specified

Table 2 shows the age distribution of Jewish children and children who are not Jewish. Table 3 shows the regions where the children reside.

Table 2. Ages of children in Jewish households

	Jewish children (%)	Children who are not Jewish (%)	All children (%)
Ages 0-5	18	25	19
Ages 6-12	38	17	35
Ages 13-17	43	51	44
Age unspecified	1	6	2
Total	100	100	100

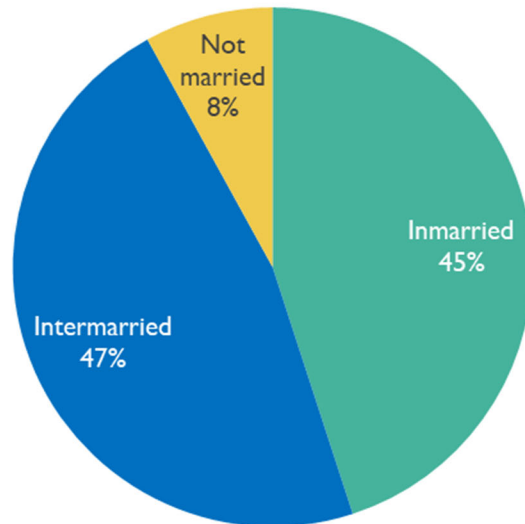
⁴ Children are defined as anyone under the age of 18 living in the household.

Table 3: Jewish children by region, count and distribution

	Essex	Union	East Morris	Western GMW	Total
Count					
Jewish children	9,600	4,300	7,400	4,100	25,400
Non-Jewish children	1,500	1,000	1,300	500	4,300
Distribution					
Jewish children	38%	17%	29%	16%	100%
Non-Jewish children	34%	23%	30%	12%	100%

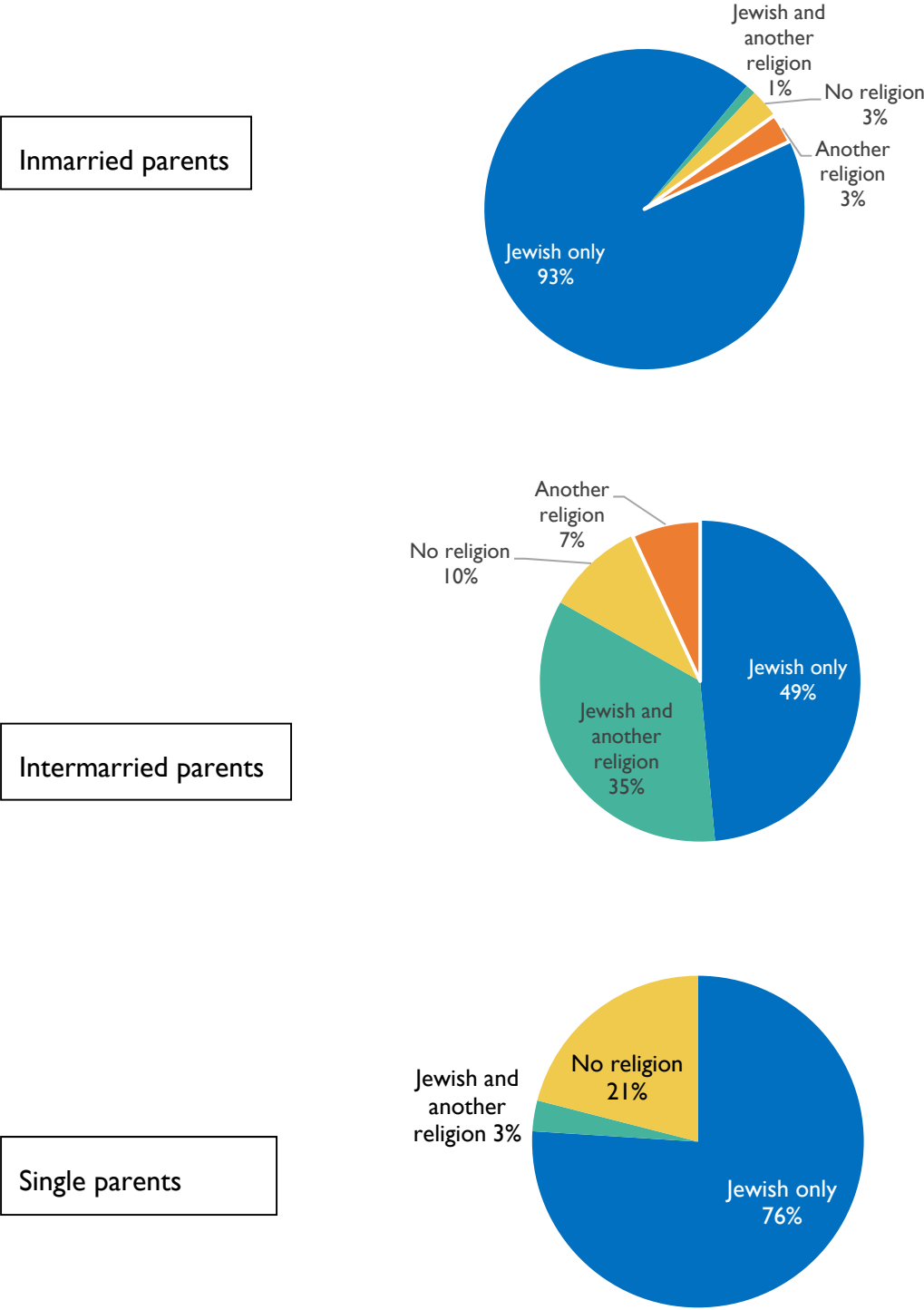
Among Jewish children in GMW, 45% have inmarried parents, and a similar share (47%) have intermarried parents. Eight percent are being raised by single parents (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Marital status of parents of Jewish children (% of Jewish children)



Nearly all children of inmarried parents (93%) are considered to be exclusively Jewish (Figure 2). Among children of intermarried parents, about half (49%) are considered to be exclusively Jewish, and another third (35%) are considered to be Jewish and another religion. Among children of single parents, three-quarters (76%) are considered exclusively Jewish.

Figure 2. Religion of children by parent marriage type



Eighty-six percent of Jewish households with children consider their children to be Jewish in some way (Table 4). Among most Jewish engagement groups, the vast majority of Jewish households consider their children Jewish in some way. Although the lowest share is among the households in the Minimally Involved group, about half (49%) of those households consider their children Jewish.

Table 4. Children’s religion by Jewish engagement

	Jewish in some way (%)	Jewish only (%)	Jewish and another religion (%)	No religion (%)
All households with children	86	66	20	9
Jewish engagement				
Minimally Involved	49	36	13	40
Familial	92	53	39	5
Personal	87	78	9	4
Involved	100	96	4	0
Immersed	98	97	2	1

JEWISH EDUCATION

Among GMW’s Jewish children, 30% of preschool-age Jewish children were enrolled in a Jewish preschool in the 2020-21 academic year; 20% of K-12 Jewish children were enrolled in a Jewish part-time school, such as a Hebrew school, religious school, or Sunday school, and 7% of K-12 Jewish children were enrolled in a Jewish day school or yeshiva (Table 5). In total, 27% of Jewish children in K-12 were enrolled in either a full-time or part-time Jewish school.

While 7% of Jewish children in grades K-12 were enrolled in a Jewish day school, 88% of Jewish children were enrolled in a public school, and the remaining 5% were enrolled in a secular or non-Jewish private school. Less than 1% of Jewish children were homeschooled or enrolled in some other type of school (not shown in table).

Table 5. Enrollment in Jewish schools during 2020-21

	Age-eligible children (%)
Jewish preschool, ages 0-5	30
Part-time Jewish school, grades K-12	20
Full-time schooling, K-12	
Jewish day school	7
Public school	88
Secular/non-Jewish private school	5

In addition to the 30% of preschool-age Jewish children in Jewish preschool, another 30% were enrolled in a home-based early childhood program or an early childhood program operated by a non-Jewish organization (not shown in table). Fewer than 100 children in Jewish households who are not Jewish attend Jewish preschools (not shown in table).

Because Table 6 describes enrollment by household characteristics, it compares proportions of families rather than proportions of children. Among families with Jewish children in grades K-12, 5% have at least one child enrolled in a Jewish day school or yeshiva, and 19% have at least one child enrolled in part-time school, such as a Hebrew school, religious school, or Sunday school.

Enrollment in K-12 Jewish schools is higher for households in the Immersed Jewish engagement category, with over half of K-12 aged children (56%) in a Jewish school. Inmarried households have higher rates of K-12 Jewish school enrollment, compared to intermarried and single-parent households. K-12 Jewish school enrollment is significantly higher among the age-eligible Jewish households of Essex County (31%) and Union County (26%), compared to Jewish households in other regions.

Table 6. Jewish school enrollment rates by type of household

	Any Jewish school, K-12 (%)	Jewish day school, K-12 (%)	Jewish part-time school, K-12 (%)
All age-eligible Jewish households	24	5	19
Jewish engagement			
Minimally Involved	--	--	--
Familial	--	--	--
Personal	18	3	16
Involved	37	2	35
Immersed	56	24	34
Region			
Essex	31	7	25
Union	26	6	20
East Morris	9	2	7
Western GMW	--	--	--
Parent marital status			
Inmarried	37	10	28
Intermarried	13	1	12
Not married	--	--	--

Due to the disruption of school during the COVID-19 pandemic, we asked parents of children who were not enrolled in a Jewish part-time school in 2020-21 their likelihood of enrolling in the future. Seventeen percent of these families were at least a little likely to enroll their child in an in-person program when it is safe to do so.

Reasons for choosing Jewish education

Asked their primary reasons for selecting any early childhood program, whether Jewish-run or not, parents most often chose schedule and location (Table 7).

Table 7. Reasons for selecting preschool

	All early childhood programs (%)	Jewish-run programs (%)
Schedule	75	78
Convenient location	73	88
Warm and loving environment	53	42
Jewish values	n/a	41
Jewish content	n/a	41
Teacher and staff quality	47	38
Educational quality and philosophy	48	30
Attentiveness to health and safety	40	30
Cost	21	18
Quality of distance learning	13	1

Among parents of children in grades K-12 whose children are not in a Jewish day school, 15% had considered day school at some point (not shown in table).

Parents who do not send their children to a Jewish day school or yeshiva were asked the reasons why they did not choose one of these Jewish schools. Cost is the most common barrier for parents (54%), followed by lack of a good social fit (28%) and academic fit (27%) for their children (Table 8).

Table 8. Reasons for not enrolling children in Jewish day school or yeshiva

	Jewish households that considered Jewish day school (%)
Cost	54
No good social fit	28
No good academic fit	27
Location or transportation	25
Concerns about health and safety	18
No good religious fit	8
Not important	2
Concerns about distance learning	<1

Among Jewish households that had at least one child in day school, the majority agreed (50%) or strongly agreed (36%) that their children’s day school education is a good value, given the cost (Table 9).

Table 9. Value of Jewish education given cost

To what extent do you agree that the education they receive is a good value, given the cost of tuition?

	Jewish households with K-12 child in day school (%)
Strongly disagree	1
Disagree	14
Agree	50
Strongly agree	36

Among Jewish households that had at least one child in day school and moved into the area in the past ten years, about half agreed (21%) or strongly agreed (30%) that Greater MetroWest day school and yeshiva options were a reason to move to the area (Table 10).

Table 10. Jewish education as reason to move to GMW

To what extent were the Greater MetroWest day school and yeshiva options a reason for your decision to move the area?

	Jewish households with K-12 child in day school (%)
Strongly disagree	34
Disagree	14
Agree	21
Strongly agree	30

Informal Jewish education

GMW’s children and teens participate in informal Jewish education—private classes, day camp, overnight camp, youth group, and teen trips to Israel (Table 11). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, summer 2020 was not representative of past Jewish summer camp enrollment, so these numbers are combined with participation in 2019. Among Jewish children in grades K-12, 38% enrolled in one of these forms of informal education program in 2019 or 2020. Overnight camp had the highest participation rate of the different types of informal education, with 18% of K-12 Jewish children enrolled in 2019 or 2020. Note that participation in Jewish camp may be overestimated because it is based on responders' definition of Jewish camp rather than the Federation definition (see below).

Table 11. Enrollment in informal Jewish education

	Age-eligible Jewish children in 2019 or 2020 (%)
Any informal education	38%
Private classes, K-12	12%
Youth group, 6-12	11%
Teen trip to Israel, 9-12 (ever)	9%
Jewish day camp, K-12	8%
Jewish overnight camp, K-12	18%

Because Table 12 reports on enrollment by household characteristics, it includes proportions of families rather than proportions of children. As one might expect, there are differences in informal Jewish education participation by Jewish engagement categories. About half of Jewish households in the Immersed group have children who participate in Jewish informal education (49%), compared to 32% of Jewish households in the Involved group, and 22% of Jewish households in the Personal group.

There are also significant differences in informal education participation by region and by parent marital status. East Morris has lower rates of overall participation compared to other areas of GMW. Inmarried households have higher rates of participation compared to intermarried households.

Table 12. Enrollment in informal Jewish education by household type

	Jewish informal education, K-12 (%)	Private classes, K-12 (%)	2019 or 2020 Day camp, K-12 (%)	2019 or 2020 Overnight camp, K-12 (%)	Youth group, 6-12 (%)	Israel trip, 9-12 (%)
All age-eligible Jewish households	22	13	7	15	15	10
Jewish engagement						
Minimally Involved	--	--	--	--	--	--
Familial	--	--	--	--	--	--
Personal	22	11	10	12	--	--
Involved	32	14	9	23	22	6
Immersed	49	30	22	25	40	16
Region						
Essex	30	13	11	20	22	8
Union	27	13	14	16	27	6
East Morris	9	6	2	7	9	--
Western GMW	--	--	--	--	--	--
Parent marital status						*
Inmarried	36	18	16	24	23	10
Intermarried	11	6	2	5	14	--
Not married	--	--	--	--	--	--

Among Jewish households with a child who attended Jewish overnight camp in summer 2019 or 2020, 48% were very likely to send a child to Jewish overnight camp in summer 2021, but 44% were

not at all likely to do so (Table 13). Of those Jewish households with no child in camp in 2019 or 2020, 85% said they were not at all likely to send their child to Jewish overnight camp in 2021.

Table 13. Likelihood of sending children to Jewish overnight camp in summer 2021

	All Jewish households with age-eligible children (%)	Jewish households with child who attended Jewish camp in 2019 or 2020 (%)	Jewish households with no child who attended Jewish camp in 2019 or 2020 (%)
Not at all	79	44	85
A little	8	2	9
Somewhat	2	7	1
Very much	11	48	4

Jewish and nonsectarian summer camps

Given that few Jewish children attended camp during the COVID-19 pandemic in summer 2020, the survey asked about day and overnight camp attendance in summer 2020 *or* summer 2019. As shown above in Table 11, 8% of Jewish children in grades K-12 attended Jewish day camp in 2019 or 2020 and 18% attended Jewish overnight camp in 2019 or 2020.

Survey respondents provided additional information about the types of Jewish and nonsectarian camps that their children attended. For this survey, a Jewish overnight camp was defined as *“an overnight camp sponsored by Jewish organizations, such as JCCs, a local federation, a religious movement, a Zionist youth group, an individual synagogue and other Jewish organizations, or where Judaism is an integral part of the program throughout the week, not only on Friday and Saturday.*

Nonsectarian camps were defined as *“a camp that is not affiliated with a Jewish organization or movement and does not have an explicit Jewish education mission, although it may attract Jewish campers and staff (and could also have Jewish aspects such as a Shabbat service or kosher meals).*

Nearly one quarter (23%) of households with K-12 children sent at least one child to a Jewish camp in summer 2019 or 2020; 52% sent a child to a nonsectarian camp, and 36% did not send any children to camp⁵ (Table 14). Seventeen percent of Jewish households sent children to both Jewish and nonsectarian camps (not shown in table).

⁵ Survey respondents supplied actual camp names. Federation staff categorized each camp as Jewish or nonsectarian, affiliation, and type, as shown in tables in this report.

Table 14. Jewish and nonsectarian camp attendance, 2019 or 2020

	Households with Jewish K-12 child(ren) (%)
Any Jewish camp	23
Jewish overnight camp	15
Jewish day camp	7
Any nonsectarian camp	52
Nonsectarian overnight camp	26
Nonsectarian day camp	27
No camp	36

Note: Totals to more than 100% as some households have children in multiple types of camps.

PJ Library

PJ Library and PJ Our Way are two programs, partially funded by the GMW Jewish Federation, that send free Jewish children’s books to families with young children across the United States, including GMW. Nearly three-in-ten age-eligible Jewish households of GMW (28%) receive books through one or both programs (Table 15). The Jewish households in the Involved and Personal engagement groups have the highest rates of PJ Library program participation (42% and 38%, respectively), followed by Immersed (27%) group. Inmarried households participate in PJ Library at a significantly higher rate (39%) than intermarried households (22%).

Table 15. PJ Library participation

	Receive books (%)
All age-eligible Jewish households	28
Jewish engagement	
Minimally Involved	--
Familial	--
Personal	38
Involved	42
Immersed	27
Region	
Essex	36
Union	29
East Morris	--
Western GMW	--
Parent marital status	
Inmarried	39
Intermarried	22
Not married	--

B’nai Mitzvah

Of Jewish children who have reached bar or bat mitzvah age, 61% have already had a bar or bat mitzvah ceremony, and another 7% expect to have one in the future. Among children being raised exclusively Jewish, 77% have had or will have a bar or bat mitzvah, compared to 1% of children being raised Jewish and another religion.

GRANDPARENTS AND GRANDCHILDREN

Parents of minor children in Jewish households were asked if the child has living grandparents. Of those families, 40% indicated there are grandparents who live in GMW, and 41% noted grandparents who live outside of GMW. The remainder of these parents, 19%, indicate that their child does not have living grandparents.

About 29% of parents whose children have living grandparents reported that the grandparents help with regular babysitting or childcare (Table 16). As would be expected, local grandparents provide more help than non-local ones, but both provide similar levels of financial support. One quarter (25%) of parents report their children’s grandparents provide financial assistance for childcare or educational costs, with similar rates for grandparents in GMW and outside of GMW.

Table 16. Grandparents helping grandchildren, reported by parents

	All parents of children with grandparents (%)	Grandparents in GMW (%)	Grandparents outside of GMW (%)
Regular babysitting or childcare	29	40	20
Expenses for childcare or education	26	25	25

Adults ages 50 and older were asked if they have any grandchildren younger than age 22. While 68% do not have grandchildren under 22, 17% have a grandchild living outside of GMW, and 14% have a grandchild living in another household in GMW.

Among grandparents, 37% regularly babysit or provide childcare for their grandchildren (Table 17). About half of the grandparents with local grandchildren provide care, compared to 22% of those whose grandchildren do not live in GMW. Thirty-nine percent of grandparents report helping pay for childcare or educational expenses for their grandchildren.

Table 17. Grandparents helping grandchildren, reported by grandparents

	All grandparents with grandchildren < 22 (%)	In GMW (%)	Outside of GMW (%)
Regular babysitting or childcare	37	51	22
Expenses for childcare or education	39	47	33

2020 Greater MetroWest NJ Jewish Community Study

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