

# 2021 STUDY OF *Jewish* LA



THE  
ISRAEL  
REPORT

Brandeis

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NORC at the University of Chicago

Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS)  
at Brandeis University and NORC at the University of Chicago

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# 2021 STUDY OF *Jewish* LA

**Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) at Brandeis University and NORC at the University of Chicago**

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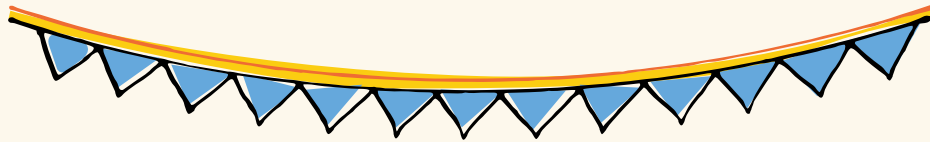
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## PREFACE

This is one of a series of reports describing findings from the 2021 Study of Jewish LA. The study was conducted by the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University and NORC at the University of Chicago. For an introduction to the study, along with additional reports and material, visit [www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/los-angeles-report.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/los-angeles-report.html) or [studyofjewishla.org](http://studyofjewishla.org)

### JEWISH POPULATION ESTIMATES OF LA, 2021

JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS	294,200
PEOPLE IN JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS	737,900
NON-JEWISH INDIVIDUALS	173,800
JEWISH INDIVIDUALS	564,700
<b>ADULTS</b>	
JEWISH	462,900
NON-JEWISH OR UNKNOWN	143,900
<b>CHILDREN</b>	
JEWISH	101,800
NON-JEWISH OR UNKNOWN	29,900

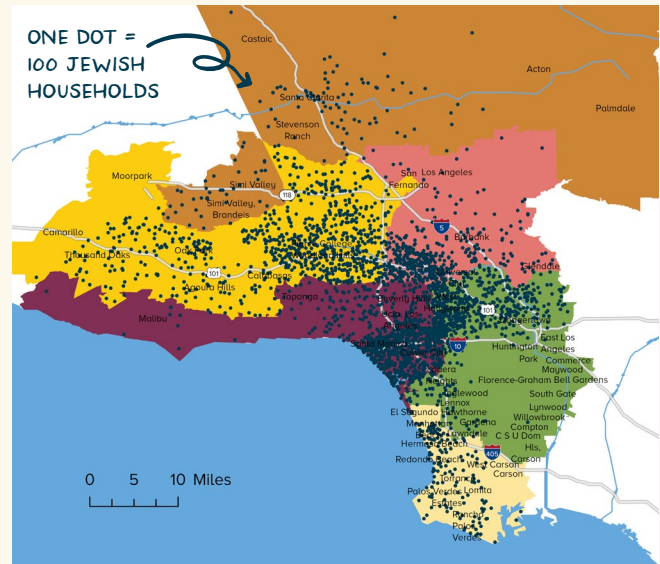
Note: Numbers do not add up to total due to rounding.

### How many Jewish people in Los Angeles?

As of 2021, it is estimated that the Los Angeles catchment area is the home to nearly 300,000 Jewish households. These households include almost 740,000 individuals, of whom 564,700 are Jewish.

For this study, Jewish individuals are those who identify as Jewish, whether by religion or ethnicity, and who either have a Jewish parent or converted to Judaism. Jewish households are any households that include at least one Jewish adult.

### MAP OF JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS IN LA



### PERCENTAGE OF JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS IN EACH REGION:

4% NORTH COUNTY VALLEYS	26% WEST VALLEY
15% EAST VALLEY	24% CENTRAL/METRO/MID
26% WESTSIDE	5% SOUTH BAY

### What are the boundaries of Jewish LA?

The Los Angeles Jewish community encompasses all cities and neighborhoods

- East from the coastline
- West from Silver Lake/Downtown/the 710 freeway
- North from San Pedro, including the San Fernando, Conejo, Simi, Santa Clarita, and Antelope Valleys.

For analysis purposes, this report divides the community into six regions: West Valley, East Valley, Westside, Central/Metro/Mid, South Bay, and the North County Valleys.

## Index of Jewish Engagement

Jewish life is complex and multidimensional and includes cultural and religious behaviors that are practiced at home, with friends and family, as well as with formal and informal organizations and institutions. Jewish engagement is associated with attitudes, such as feelings of attachment to the Jewish people, and with beliefs, such as valuing social justice.

The 2021 Study of Jewish LA uses a typology of patterns of Jewish engagement as one of its primary analytic tools for understanding Jewish life in LA. LA Jews were categorized into five groups using a statistical analysis (latent class analysis) of levels of participation across 20 different Jewish behaviors, including ritual and cultural behaviors. The names of the five groups reflect the primary ways in which each group engages in Jewish life. This typology is unique to the LA Jewish community and is used throughout this report to highlight the diversity of expressions of Jewish life.

## Overview of Methodology

This study is based on analysis of a rich set of data collected from 3,767 eligible households between June and September 2021. Survey respondents were randomly selected from all households in the Los Angeles catchment area (see map). The study design integrated an Address Based Sample (ABS) with known households on Jewish organizational lists. Households were contacted by mail, email, and telephone and invited to complete the survey online or by telephone. Responses were statistically weighted to represent all LA Jewish households. The response rates for the main sample were 11.2% unweighted and 10.2% weighted (see Technical Appendix for details).

Although some survey responses were likely influenced by the special circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in March 2020, the questions were designed to provide a demographic and attitudinal portrait of the stable characteristics of the community. As necessary, questions were modified to account for changes in usual patterns of behavior during the pandemic.

### INDEX OF JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

Jewish engagement groups and primary activities of each group



23%

#### MINIMALLY INVOLVED

Few Jewish activities



27%

#### HOLIDAY

Passover seder, Hanukkah candles, occasionally mark Shabbat



16%

#### COMMUNAL

Passover seder, Hanukkah candles, High Holiday services, attend Jewish programs, donate to Jewish causes, partake in Jewish books/TV/music



16%

#### RITUAL

Passover seder, Hanukkah candles, High Holiday services, mark Shabbat regularly, follow some Kosher rules, donate to Jewish causes, half are congregation members



17%

#### IMMERSED

All holidays, mark Shabbat weekly, attend Jewish programs, donate to Jewish causes, read Jewish publications, most are congregation members

## HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

### AS YOU READ THIS REPORT, KEEP IN MIND THE FOLLOWING:

**TERMS:** Unless otherwise specified, references to “all Jewish adults” or “all Jewish households” refer to Jewish adults and Jewish households in Los Angeles.

Throughout this report, the term “couples” includes those who are legally married and those who are partnered and living together. Unless otherwise specified, “children” refers to minor children under age 18.

**RESPONSES:** Information in this report is based on over 3,700 survey responses. Responses to survey questions are often subjective and reflect respondents’ interpretation of survey questions. Data presented in this report reflect an estimate of the distribution of responses to a particular question if every member of the community had been interviewed.

**ESTIMATES:** 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 “—”.

**QUOTES** in this report may have been edited for clarity and to protect privacy. While representing an individual experience, the quotes illustrate the themes identified in the numeric data.

**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. However, 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, as a rule of thumb, differences between any two numbers of less than 10 percentage points may not reflect true differences in the population.

**DIFFERENCES THAT ARE NOT STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT** are indicated in this report by gray text in tables. This means that even though the numbers are different, these differences are the result of random chance and are not meaningful.



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*Each report brings a fresh analysis of the data in the hope of stimulating community members to ask new questions, engage in strategy conversations, and consider the implications for our community. These thematic reports are intended to act as a starting point and designed to spark curiosity.”*

RABBI NOAH FARKAS, PRESIDENT AND CEO  
JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER LOS ANGELES

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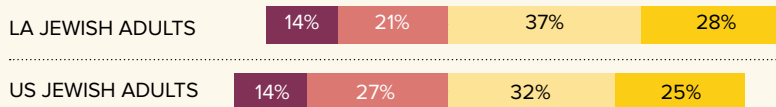
# Israel in the LA Jewish Community

Israel plays a central role in the Jewish identity of the majority of LA Jewish adults. More than half of LA Jewish adults have been to Israel, 65% feel somewhat or very attached to Israel, and 80% of Jewish adults consider Israel to be an important or essential part of being Jewish. At the same time, there are noteworthy differences among community members with regard to their views about Israel and their level of support for Israel. For some Jewish adults in LA, differences in attitudes about Israel can lead to feelings of alienation from the Jewish community.

To understand the importance of Israel to the Jewish identity of LA Jewish adults, we assessed how emotionally attached Jewish adults are to Israel and whether Jewish adults believe caring for Israel is an important part of being Jewish. More than half of Jewish Angelenos feel emotionally attached to Israel: 37% are somewhat attached, and 28% are very attached. Taken together, the proportion who are somewhat or very attached to Israel (65%) is higher than among all US Jewish adults (58%).<sup>1</sup>

## ATTACHMENT TO ISRAEL

■ NOT AT ALL ATTACHED ■ NOT TOO ATTACHED ■ SOMEWHAT ATTACHED ■ VERY ATTACHED

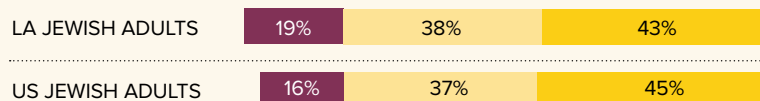


Question text: How emotionally attached are you to Israel?

Most Jewish Angelenos think that caring for Israel is an important (38%) or essential (43%) part of being Jewish. This share is similar to that among all US Jewish adults, of whom 37% consider caring for Israel important, and 45% consider it essential. As another indicator of Israel connection, one third of Jewish adults list Israel as one of their top causes when asked about volunteering and philanthropy.<sup>2</sup>

## IMPORTANCE OF CARING FOR ISRAEL AS PART OF BEING JEWISH

■ NOT IMPORTANT ■ IMPORTANT BUT NOT ESSENTIAL ■ ESSENTIAL



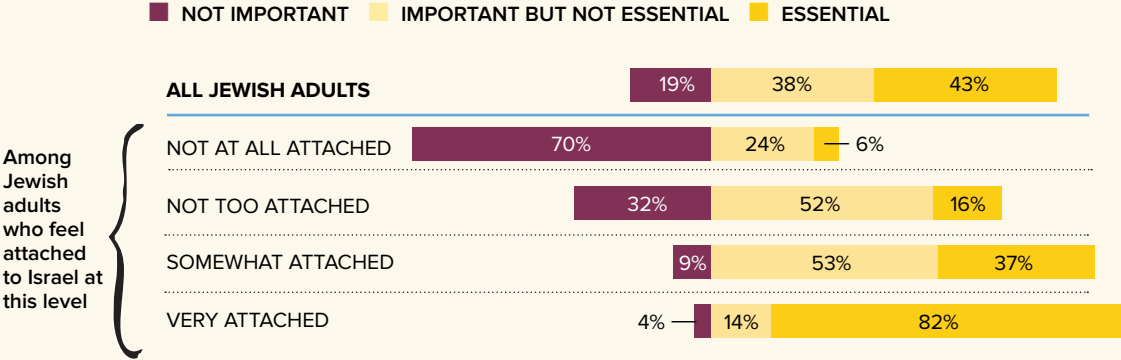
Question text: Thinking about what being Jewish means to you personally, how important is ... caring about Israel? [Asked with other aspects of being Jewish]

<sup>1</sup>Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020."

<sup>2</sup>Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020." See "2021 Study of Jewish LA: Jewish Engagement Report" for the full set of questions about the meaning of being Jewish. See "2021 Study of Jewish LA: Jewish Activities and Organizations Report" for the full list of philanthropic causes.

The two measures of connection to Israel that are used in this report evaluate highly correlated, but distinct, dimensions. Among Jewish adults who are very attached to Israel, 82% consider caring for Israel to be an essential part of being Jewish. In contrast, among those who are not at all attached, 70% consider caring for Israel not important to being Jewish.

**IMPORTANCE OF CARING FOR ISRAEL BY ATTACHMENT TO ISRAEL**



Although there is a commonly held perception that young adults are less attached to Israel, feelings of attachment do not significantly vary between different age groups. On average, about one quarter of Jewish adults of all ages are very attached to Israel, and about one third are somewhat attached.

There are, however, differences between age groups regarding the importance of Israel for what it means to be Jewish. Among Jewish adults ages 22-30, about two thirds consider caring about Israel to be essential (38%) or important (28%) to being Jewish; another third (34%) think that caring about Israel is *not* important to being Jewish. Among all LA Jewish adults, about 80% think that caring about Israel is essential or important to being Jewish.

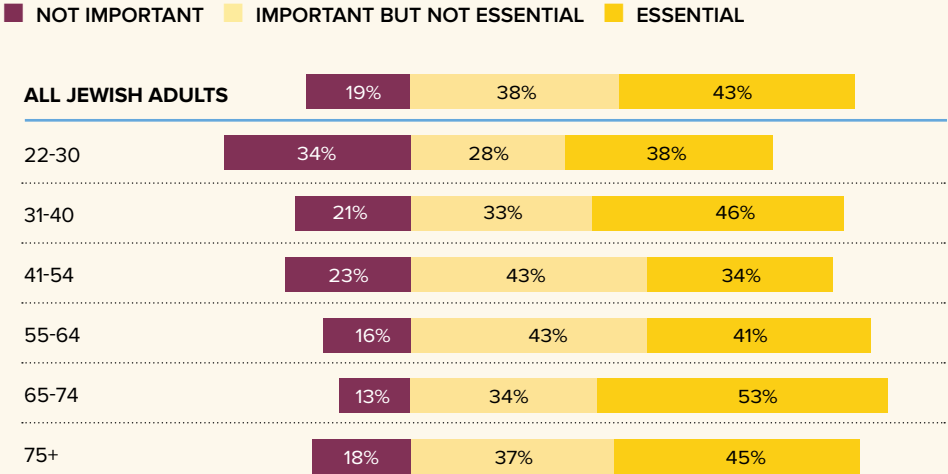
80%

of Jewish adults of all ages think that caring about Israel is essential or important to being Jewish

66%

of Jewish adults ages 22-30 think that caring about Israel is essential or important to being Jewish

**IMPORTANCE OF CARING FOR ISRAEL BY AGE**

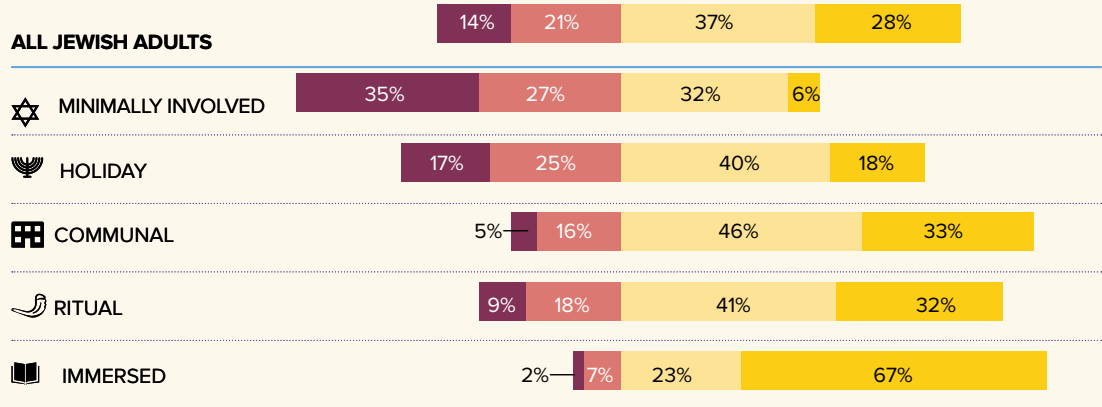




Emotional attachment to Israel and viewing Israel as an important part of being Jewish are highly correlated with Jewish engagement. Among those in the Immersed group, nearly all (90%) feel somewhat or very attached to Israel, and three quarters (73%) believe that caring for Israel is an essential part of being Jewish. In contrast, among those in the Minimally Involved group, 38% feel somewhat or very attached to Israel, and 17% believe that caring for Israel is essential to being Jewish. However, 46% of those in the Minimally Involved group feel that caring for Israel is an important but not essential part of being Jewish.

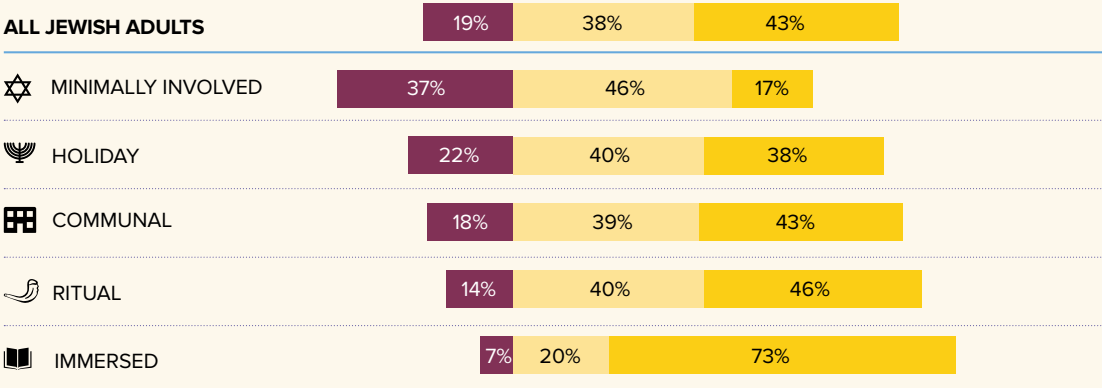
**ATTACHMENT TO ISRAEL BY JEWISH ENGAGEMENT**

■ NOT AT ALL ATTACHED ■ NOT TOO ATTACHED ■ SOMEWHAT ATTACHED ■ VERY ATTACHED



**IMPORTANCE OF CARING FOR ISRAEL BY JEWISH ENGAGEMENT**

■ NOT IMPORTANT ■ IMPORTANT BUT NOT ESSENTIAL ■ ESSENTIAL








# Travel to Israel

The majority (59%) of Jewish adults in LA have been to Israel: 25% have been to Israel once, 24% have traveled to Israel multiple times, and 10% have lived in Israel. The share of Jewish Angelenos who have traveled to Israel is higher than among US Jews in general, of whom 45% have traveled to Israel at least once, and 26% have been multiple times or lived there.<sup>3</sup>

Israel travel is associated with patterns of Jewish engagement. Among Jewish adults in the Immersed group, nearly all (90%) have been to Israel, and the next highest share is found in the Ritual group (77%). The Immersed group also has the highest proportion of Jewish adults who have lived in Israel. The Minimally Involved group has the lowest share of Israel travel, with the majority of Jewish adults (81%) reporting they have never been to Israel.

## FREQUENCY OF TRAVEL TO ISRAEL BY JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

	NEVER	ONCE	MORE THAN ONCE	LIVED IN ISRAEL
<b>ALL JEWISH ADULTS</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>10%</b>
 MINIMALLY INVOLVED	81%	13%	5%	2%
 HOLIDAY	47%	32%	14%	8%
 COMMUNAL	32%	23%	30%	14%
 RITUAL	23%	34%	31%	12%
 IMMersed	11%	17%	50%	23%

<sup>3</sup>Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020."

Frequency of Israel travel differs across age groups. Young adults ages 22-30 include the largest share who have been to Israel only once (41%), and those ages 31-40 include the largest share who have traveled to Israel multiple times but have not lived there (37%). Similar shares of all age groups under age 75 have lived in Israel.

**FREQUENCY OF TRAVEL TO ISRAEL BY AGE**

	NEVER	ONCE	MORE THAN ONCE	LIVED IN ISRAEL
<b>ALL JEWISH ADULTS</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>10%</b>
22-30	22%	41%	23%	13%
31-40	22%	26%	37%	16%
41-54	47%	19%	21%	13%
55-64	55%	15%	21%	9%
65-74	44%	24%	21%	12%
75+	44%	30%	25%	1%

There are no significant differences in frequency of travel to Israel or emotional attachment to Israel by financial situation.

# TYPES OF ISRAEL TRAVEL

One third of Jewish adults have been to Israel on vacation, and 28% have traveled to Israel to visit family or friends. Among Jewish adults who, based upon their age, were eligible for a Birthright Israel trip (those currently under age 50), 41% traveled to Israel through Birthright. This share is equivalent to 16% of all LA Jewish adults. About one quarter of Jewish adults ages 31-40 have been to Israel on a trip sponsored by a Jewish federation, synagogue, or other Jewish organization.

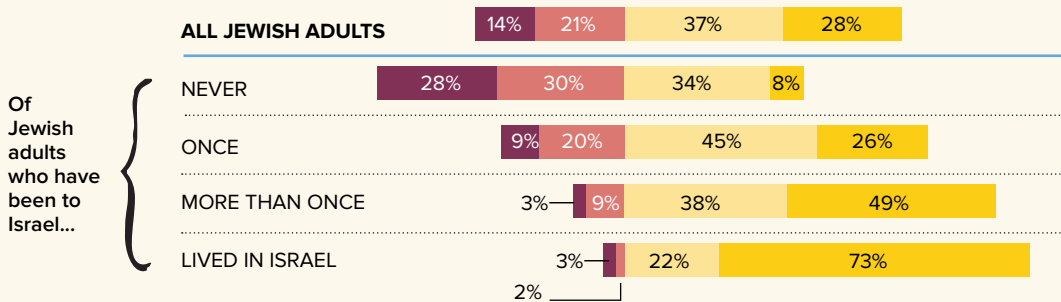
**TYPES OF TRAVEL TO ISRAEL BY AGE**

	BIRTHRIGHT (AGE ELIGIBLE)	VACATION	VISIT TO FAMILY/FRIENDS	EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM OR VOLUNTEER TRIP	TRIP SPONSORED BY A JEWISH ORGANIZATION	LONG-TERM PROGRAM	BUSINESS TRIP
<b>ALL JEWISH ADULTS</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>5%</b>
22-30	59%	25%	28%	14%	16%	18%	1%
31-40	44%	44%	36%	25%	24%	14%	10%
41-54	8%	35%	32%	14%	11%	9%	4%
55-64	N/A	34%	27%	12%	11%	9%	4%
65-74	N/A	40%	29%	9%	12%	8%	5%
75+	N/A	37%	19%	8%	14%	1%	2%

Experiences of Israel travel are strongly associated with attachment to Israel. About half of Jewish adults who have been to Israel multiple times feel very attached to Israel, compared to 8% of those who have never been to Israel. Among people who have been to Israel more than once or lived in Israel, at least 60% feel that caring about Israel is essential to being Jewish.

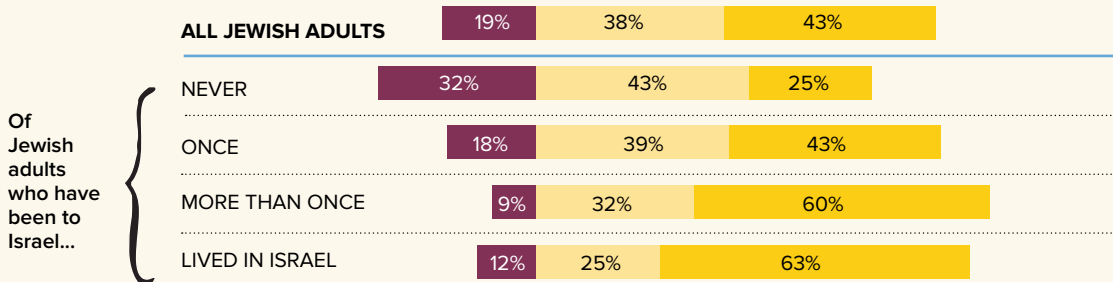
### ATTACHMENT TO ISRAEL BY ISRAEL TRAVEL

■ NOT AT ALL ATTACHED ■ NOT TOO ATTACHED ■ SOMEWHAT ATTACHED ■ VERY ATTACHED



### IMPORTANCE OF CARING FOR ISRAEL BY ISRAEL TRAVEL

■ NOT IMPORTANT ■ IMPORTANT BUT NOT ESSENTIAL ■ ESSENTIAL

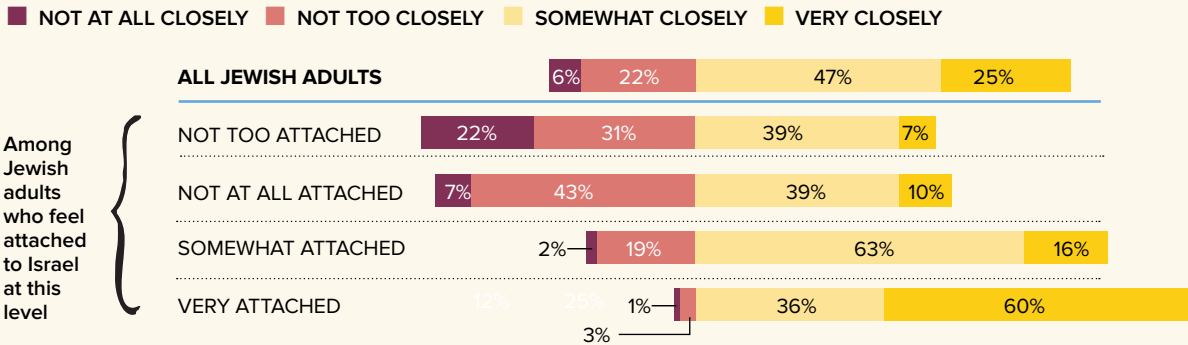


# Following News About Israel

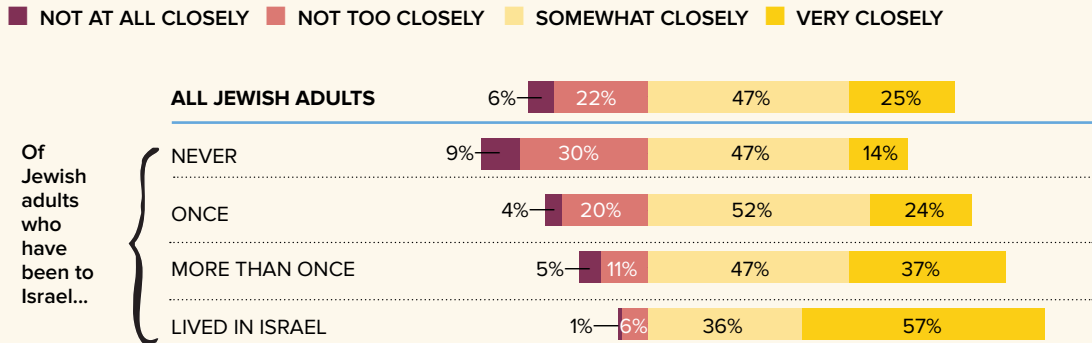
One quarter of Jewish Angelenos follow news about Israel very closely, and another half follow news about Israel somewhat closely. Nationally, a smaller share of US Jews follows news about Israel.<sup>4</sup>

Jewish adults who are more emotionally attached to Israel follow news about Israel more closely than those who are less attached. Those who have been to Israel more than once also follow news more closely than those who have been to Israel only once or not at all.

## FOLLOWING NEWS ABOUT ISRAEL BY ATTACHMENT TO ISRAEL



## FOLLOWING NEWS ABOUT ISRAEL BY TRAVEL FREQUENCY



<sup>4</sup> Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020."

# Attitudes About Israel

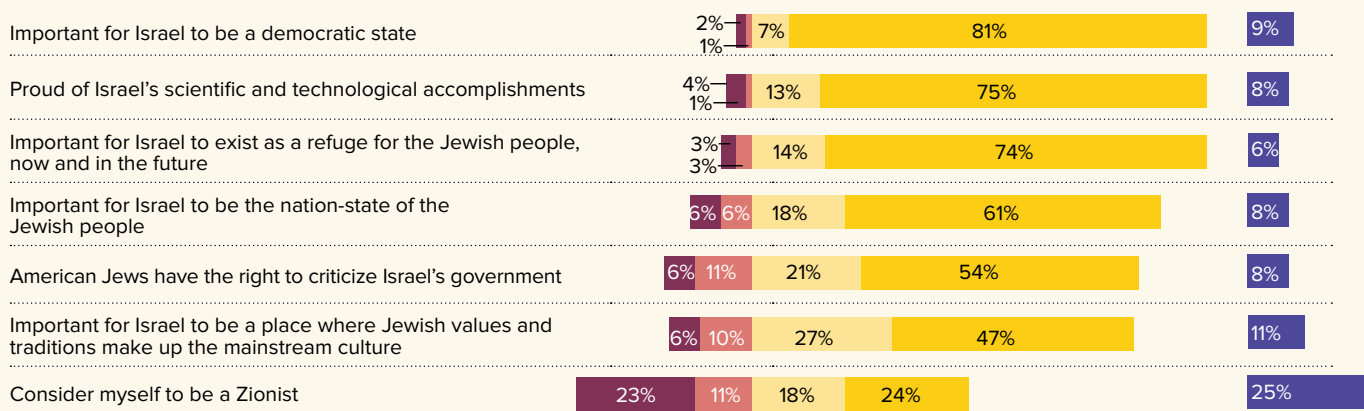
LA Jewish adults were asked about their level of agreement with a series of statements about Israel. The vast majority strongly agree that it is important for Israel to be a democratic state (81%), that they are proud of Israel's scientific accomplishments (75%), and that it is important for Israel to exist as a Jewish refuge (74%).

The statement with the most divergent responses concerns whether respondents consider themselves Zionists. About one-in-four Jewish adults strongly agree that they consider themselves Zionists, and one-in-four strongly disagree. It is noteworthy that a similar share has no opinion or is not sure, which may suggest the complexity of interpreting the label "Zionist."

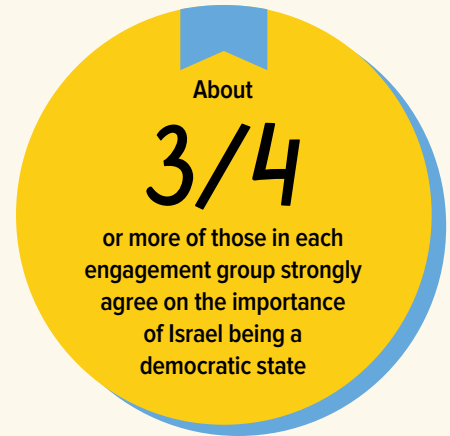
## AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT ISRAEL

Percent of Jewish adults

■ STRONGLY DISAGREE 
 ■ SOMEWHAT DISAGREE 
 ■ SOMEWHAT AGREE 
 ■ STRONGLY AGREE 
 ■ NO OPINION / NOT SURE



The level of agreement with these statements about Israel is highly correlated with overall Jewish engagement. About three quarters or more of those in each engagement group strongly agree on the importance of Israel being a democratic state. There was more variation on other statements. For example, 71% of Jewish adults in the Immersed group strongly agree that it is important for Israel to be a place where Jewish values and traditions make up the mainstream culture. About half of Jewish adults in the Communal and Ritual groups strongly agree with this statement, and about one third of those in the Minimally Involved and Holiday groups strongly agree. The engagement groups also vary significantly in the share of its members who consider themselves Zionists.



### AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT ISRAEL BY JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

Percent of Jewish adults within each engagement group who strongly agree

	ALL JEWISH ADULTS	MINIMALLY INVOLVED	HOLIDAY	COMMUNAL	RITUAL	IMMERSED
Important for Israel to be a democratic state	81%	74%	85%	88%	75%	80%
Proud of Israel's scientific and technological accomplishments	75%	56%	74%	76%	75%	87%
Important for Israel to exist as a refuge for the Jewish people	74%	56%	75%	70%	76%	87%
Important for Israel to be the nation-state of the Jewish people	61%	39%	61%	54%	65%	80%
American Jews have the right to criticize Israel's government	54%	57%	57%	62%	45%	43%
Important for Israel to be a place where Jewish values and traditions make up the mainstream culture	47%	31%	37%	48%	45%	71%
Consider myself to be a Zionist	24%	7%	16%	24%	28%	57%

Emotional attachment to Israel is also strongly connected to Jewish adults' views on the statements about Israel. Among the 28% of LA Jewish adults who are very attached to Israel, nearly all strongly agree that it is important for Israel to exist as a refuge for the Jewish people and that they feel proud of Israel's scientific and technological accomplishments. Nearly as large a share of this group strongly agree that it is important for Israel to be a democratic state and to be the nation-state of the Jewish people. In contrast, among the 14% of Jewish adults who are not at all emotionally attached to Israel, preserving the Jewish nature of Israel is less of a priority: 30% strongly agree it is important for Israel to exist as a refuge for the Jewish people, and 20% strongly agree that it is important for Israel to be the nation-state of the Jewish people.

**AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT ISRAEL BY ATTACHMENT TO ISRAEL**

Percent of Jewish adults at each level of attachment who strongly agree

	ALL JEWISH ADULTS	NOT AT ALL ATTACHED	NOT TOO ATTACHED	SOMEWHAT ATTACHED	VERY ATTACHED
Important for Israel to be a democratic state	81%	63%	79%	85%	84%
Proud of Israel's scientific and technological accomplishments	75%	30%	69%	78%	93%
Important for Israel to exist as a refuge for the Jewish people	74%	30%	63%	79%	92%
Important for Israel to be the nation-state of the Jewish people	61%	20%	41%	64%	86%
American Jews have the right to criticize Israel's government	54%	69%	57%	56%	40%
Important for Israel to be a place where Jewish values and traditions make up the mainstream culture	47%	18%	27%	46%	71%
Consider myself to be a Zionist	24%	2%	6%	15%	63%



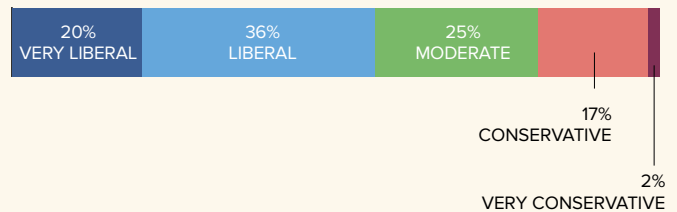
# Political Views and Israel

Despite the widespread feelings of emotional attachment to Israel and the large share of Jewish adults who have traveled to Israel, Jewish Angelenos are divided in their views about the country and its role in Jewish life. Among Jewish adults in LA, travel to Israel and level of attachment to Israel are highly correlated with US political views.



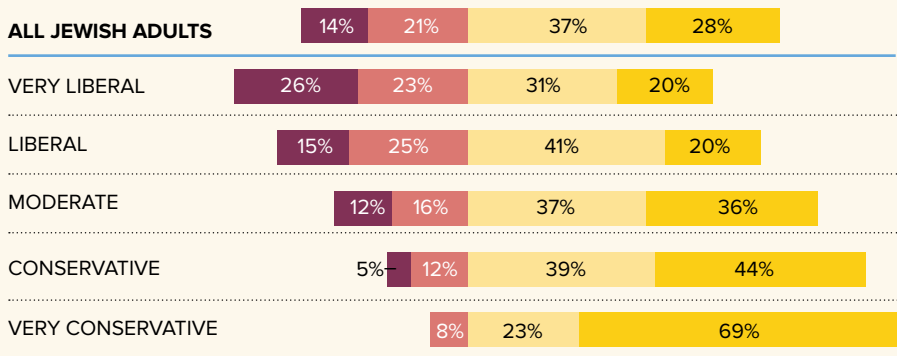
Among the one third (36%) of LA Jewish adults who describe themselves as politically liberal, 20% are very attached and 41% are somewhat attached to Israel. Among the quarter who are politically moderate, attachment is stronger, with 36% very attached and 37% somewhat attached to Israel. Attachment to Israel is lowest among the 20% of Jewish adults who are very liberal: 20% are very attached and 31% are somewhat attached to Israel.

## POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF LA JEWISH ADULTS



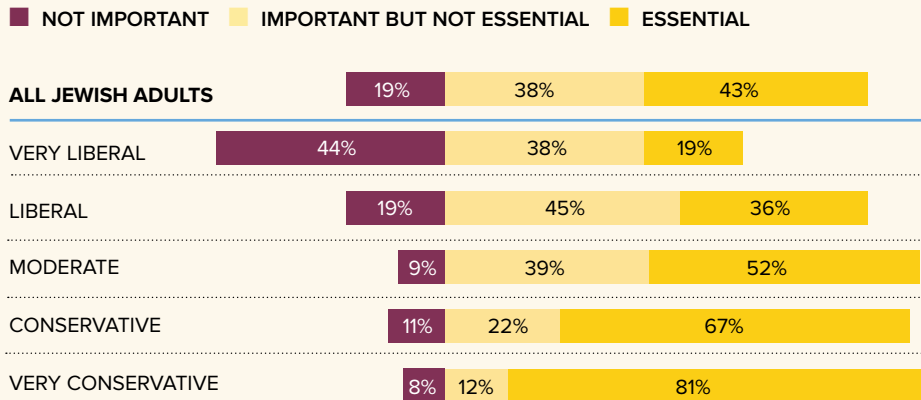
## ATTACHMENT TO ISRAEL BY POLITICAL VIEWS

■ NOT AT ALL ATTACHED
 ■ NOT TOO ATTACHED
 ■ SOMEWHAT ATTACHED
 ■ VERY ATTACHED



Among Jewish adults who are politically moderate, half (52%) consider caring about Israel to be an essential part of being Jewish, and this share is larger among those who are conservative (67%) and very conservative (81%). For liberal Jewish adults, Israel appears to be less central to their Jewish identity: 44% of those who are very liberal and 19% of those who are liberal consider caring about Israel to be not important to being Jewish.

### CARING ABOUT ISRAEL IS ESSENTIAL TO BEING JEWISH BY POLITICAL VIEWS



Among the 20% of LA Jewish adults who describe themselves as very liberal, half have never been to Israel, 18% have been to Israel multiple times, and 12% have lived in Israel.

### TRAVEL TO ISRAEL BY POLITICAL VIEWS

	NEVER	ONCE	MORE THAN ONCE	LIVED IN ISRAEL
ALL JEWISH ADULTS	41%	25%	24%	10%
VERY LIBERAL	50%	21%	18%	12%
LIBERAL	42%	28%	21%	9%
MODERATE	38%	22%	29%	10%
CONSERVATIVE	34%	25%	29%	12%
VERY CONSERVATIVE	27%	8%	50%	15%

A majority of Jewish adults holding each political viewpoint strongly agree that Israel should be a democratic state, that they are proud of Israel’s scientific and technological accomplishments, and that Israel should exist as a refuge for the Jewish people.

Politically liberal LA Jews are less concerned with maintaining the Jewish nature of Israel and more supportive of the right to criticize Israel’s government. For example, 84% of very liberal LA Jews strongly agree that they have the right to criticize Israel’s government, compared with about 20% each of politically conservative and very conservative LA Jews. Ninety-six percent of very conservative Jews believe it is important for Israel to be the nation-state of the Jewish people, compared to 31% of very liberal Jews.

### AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT ISRAEL BY POLITICAL VIEWS

Percent of Jewish adults with each political viewpoint who strongly agree

	ALL JEWISH ADULTS	VERY LIBERAL	LIBERAL	MODERATE	CONSERVATIVE	VERY CONSERVATIVE
Important for Israel to be a democratic state	81%	85%	84%	76%	77%	65%
Proud of Israel's scientific and technological accomplishments	75%	53%	75%	79%	86%	93%
Important for Israel to exist as a refuge for the Jewish people	74%	54%	71%	82%	85%	97%
Important for Israel to be the nation-state of the Jewish people	61%	31%	57%	71%	81%	96%
American Jews have the right to criticize Israel's government	54%	84%	61%	40%	19%	20%
Important for Israel to be a place where Jewish values and traditions make up the mainstream culture	47%	22%	38%	55%	73%	91%
Consider myself to be a Zionist	24%	13%	18%	32%	41%	58%

# Discussions About Israel

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## IN THE LA JEWISH COMMUNITY

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In their comments, a significant number of LA Jewish adults noted that discussions about Israel are frequently fraught with political tension and leave many feeling alienated from the Jewish community. These concerns are expressed by adults across the political spectrum.

The comment, “The polarization between left and right in the Jewish community vis-a-vis Israel and American presidential choices is too wide and uncivil,” reflects a view shared by many LA Jews. Others describe the community as “either too progressive and anti-Israel or too conservative” or as lacking a “middle ground.”



### **DIFFERING VIEWS ABOUT ISRAEL WITHIN THE LA JEWISH COMMUNITY**

Some individuals mentioned the difficulty of having a dialogue with those who hold different points of view about Israel. These divisions often occur between those with different political identities, but also appear along ethnic and religious lines.

*I think political views take a big hit on the Los Angeles Jewish community. Very difficult to even have a conversation with people today if you might have views that don't align with the typical democratic/liberal diaspora. That's dangerous on many levels, one of which is it creates an echo chamber for people not able to practice free thought and expression.*

*It feels to me like the Los Angeles Jewish community is very segmented between Ashkenazi Jews who tend to be more politically liberal, link Judaism and social justice, and believe being supportive of Israel means both criticizing it when necessary and praising it when necessary. On the other hand, there appears to be another Los Angeles Jewish community that is predominantly Mizrahi, Persian, and Israeli who define Judaism as unconditional support of Israel and tend to be more politically conservative. This gap seems large, continues to grow larger, and has segmented the Los Angeles Jewish community.*

*I also believe that there is this cliquishness between Zionists and anti-Zionists, to the degree that either group would rather shun members of the other than actually try to get them to see a different point of view or have their own be changed.*

People on both ends of the political spectrum believe that their counterpart's viewpoint poses a risk to the safety of American Jews, locally and on a national level. One politically liberal respondent argued:

*[The LA Jewish community is] too beholden to right-wing Israel views that both harm Israel and harm American Jewish security. It shuts down speech and often ostracizes people who hold critical views of Israel, blatantly in conflict with its values of debate, critical thought, and loving the stranger.*

From the opposite end of the political spectrum, was the view that liberal stances on Israel, as expressed on a communal level, would lead to danger for American Jewry:

*The Jewish community in Los Angeles, and for that matter in the USA, has no sense of the importance of Israel. They sell out Israel all the time and identify and value positions that are to the detriment of Israel and will ultimately result in the demise of Judaism and actually create more antisemitism.*

*I don't like the fact that Jewish Americans tend to disrespect Israel and abuse the place that would provide them a safe haven in a very unsafe world.*

## **IMPACT ON JEWISH LIFE**

Some respondents expressed frustration with Jewish organizations that do not make space for different political viewpoints on Israel:

*There is, at the leadership level, a sense that you have to be in lockstep on Israel. Not all Zionists in Israel agree on politics, and not all Zionists here in Los Angeles agree either. But it doesn't mean we don't all love Eretz Yisrael. Our community leaders should think hard about their demands/expectations for allegiance to a particular political view, and whether more inclusivity will expand our community ... There has been too much pressure now from mainstream Jewish leaders to fall in line with the Israeli government's views.*

*I'm a Zionist to the core and have gone to Israel many times. I'm also pro-two-states and against the occupation of the West Bank and blockade of Gaza. I've had people in positions of power in the Jewish community tell me I'm not even a real Jew and that I'm 'trying to destroy Israel' for my beliefs.*

*Most mainstream Jewish organizations perpetuate pro-Israel narratives that weaponize Jewish inter-generational trauma against the Palestinians and against Jewish people ... who speak out in solidarity with the struggles of the Palestinian people. Many Jewish people in the Los Angeles area believe this pro-Israel rhetoric and do not understand how that stance ensures that everyone in the region will continue to be unsafe, and that this form of settler colonialism is being done in our name as Jewish people in ways that undermine our ability to work in service of true peace, justice, and democracy.*

*I hope for the Jewish people to be an example of justice and kindness, and for that reason, the Zionist emphasis of many Jewish organizations also needs to be reexamined, in my estimation.*

Some respondents also complained about what they perceived as one-sided attitudes about Israel being expressed by rabbis and other synagogue leaders, both on the political left and the right:

*Liberal politics has caused us to not participate in many activities and has caused us to leave as members of a synagogue ... [We] will not tolerate politics from the bimah from anyone, including rabbis.*

*As a child, teenager, and young adult, I participated in Jewish activities through several Jewish centers. As those centers transitioned to more temple-based activities, my comfort level within the Jewish community diminished. There is not much room for cultural, left-leaning Jews who believe Jewish rights don't supersede the rights of Palestinians.*

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## CONCLUSION:

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# Connections to Israel in Jewish LA

A majority of LA Jewish adults feel emotionally attached to Israel and have traveled there one or more times. For most LA Jewish adults, caring about Israel is an important or essential component of what it means to be Jewish.

Yet, along with this attachment, Jewish Angelenos expressed nuanced attitudes about their relationship with Israel. There is widespread agreement that it is important for Israel to be a democratic state, but also that it be a refuge for Jews and the nation-state of the Jewish people. There is overwhelming pride in Israel's scientific and technological achievements, but also a recognition that American Jews have the right to criticize Israel's government.

At the same time, attitudes about Israel reflect the underlying political divide across America. On the one hand, regardless of where LA Jews are on a scale of very liberal to very conservative, the majority express an emotional attachment to Israel. On the other hand, the level of attachment is somewhat lower among the majority who are politically liberal or very liberal. For some Jewish adults in LA, their stance toward Israel—on both ends of the political spectrum—leads to feelings of alienation from the Jewish community.

Looking ahead, the complex relationship between the LA Jewish community and Israel is likely to continue to be a central focus of communal efforts and resources. Jewish communal organizations should consider:

- ✓ Expanding opportunities for Israel travel, education, and advocacy that strengthen existing connections to Israel
- ✓ Recognizing the centrality of Israel to many members of the community across demographic groups and levels of Jewish engagement
- ✓ Strengthening ties among members of the LA Jewish community by ensuring that Jewish spaces are inclusive and welcoming of a wide spectrum of views about Israel
- ✓ Promoting dialogue that leads to mutual understanding and respect among those whose views differ

The *Study of Jewish LA* recognizes many dimensions of diversity within the LA Jewish community and demonstrates the ways in which communal organizations are challenged to meet the unique needs of different constituencies and, at the same time, foster connections between them. LA Jews have high levels of attachment and concern for Israel, while holding a wide variety of views about Israel. For many LA Jews, Israel connects and unifies them around a common purpose. In some cases, however, differences in views create barriers to mutual understanding and connection. The challenge for the LA Jewish community is to offer multiple avenues for members to come together and explore diverse interests and viewpoints as they relate to Israel.