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Greater El Paso Jewish Demographic Study

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GREATER EL PASO JEWISH DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY

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2021

GREATER EL PASO JEWISH DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY

by

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THESIS

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Abstract

Although the history of the Jewish community in Greater El Paso has been documented, there is a lack of understanding of the basic demographic structure of the Jewish population in this region. This study aims to develop a demographic portrait of the local Jewish community through an online survey (n=448). The results show that the Jewish community in Greater El Paso (El Paso TX, and Las Cruces, NM) is experiencing population aging, and many community members have resided in the region for over twenty years. More than half of respondents self-identify as Reform. The Jewish community in Greater El Paso is also highly engaged in volunteer work with both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. While the community is inclusive, respondents believe that more diverse programming and kosher options are needed in the region. As the first Jewish Demographic study in Greater El Paso, this research contributes to scholarship on Jewish community studies in the Southwest.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The total Jewish population in the U.S. was estimated to be between 6.8-6.9 million in the year of 2018, according to American Jewish Year Book (Sheskin and Dashefsky, 2018). In their 2018 Study, Sheskin and Dashefsky (2018) estimated that in the year of 2018, 5,500 Jews lived in the Greater El Paso area, and around 500 of them residing in the Las Cruces area. In fact, the Jewish population in this region has remained at this population estimate since 1970 (Institute of Jewish Life, 2020). The Greater El Paso region in this study refers to the cities of El Paso, Texas and Las Cruces, New Mexico.

While earliest Jews in Texas were mostly merchants in the 1800's, other Jews had diverse occupations such as lawyers, notaries, linguists, doctors, and educators (Weiner, 1997, p.302). As the Jewish presence began to expand in Texas, Jewish synagogues, and cemeteries were built to meet the needs of the growing Jewish communities. The El Paso Jewish community began to see its first Jewish settlers around 1850's. In El Paso, the Jewish community established themselves and made their way up in the political arena, becoming mayors and holding political positions (Weiner, 1997, p.308).

Jewish Americans have different religious denominations and affiliations. According to Kertzer (1996) and Telushkin (2008), there are three major Jewish religious denominations: Orthodox Judaism, Conservative Judaism, and Reform Judaism. Reform Judaism is more liberal, Conservative Judaism is more traditional, and Orthodox is the most traditional of the three denominations. The Pew research center (2013) reported that in terms of religion and religious affiliation of U.S Jews, 78% reported that they were Jews by religion, and only 22% said they had no religion. Moreover, 62% of U.S. Jews believed being Jewish was about ancestry, while 23% said it was about religion and ancestry, and 15% said it was about religion (Pew Research Center,

2013). Currently, there are several synagogues in the Greater El Paso region corresponding to the different religious faith-based beliefs and practices. For example, in El Paso, Temple Mt Sinai is the Reform synagogue; Congregation B'nai Zion is the Conservative synagogue, and Chabad Lubavitch which corresponds to the Hasidic movement. Ft. Bliss Chapel #3 meets the needs of Jewish individuals in the armed forces stationed at Ft Bliss, Texas— their families, and veterans. Additionally, Temple Beth-El and the Alevy Chabad Jewish Center de Las Cruces meet the needs of Jewish individuals residing in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

The research questions this study will be addressing are the following: What is the demographic profile of Jews in Greater El Paso? How salient is Jewish Identity in the border region? What is the community engagement within and outside the Jewish community? How does the Jewish population (or community) in Greater El Paso compare to other Jewish communities in the U.S and to the overall U. S Jewish population?

Although the history of the Jewish community in Greater El Paso has been documented, there is a lack of basic understanding of the basic demographic structure of Jewish population in this region. We are not clear about the size, geographical distribution, and social-demographic characteristics of the Jewish population in Greater El Paso. To better understand the Jewish population in this region, this study aims to develop a demographic portrait of the local Jewish community by collecting survey data. This research will contribute to scholarship on Jewish community studies in the Southwest, and in the U.S. The data collected in this study will also become valuable resources for the community, as local Jewish organizations can use the data to make informed decisions and implement various programs.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Geographical Location

In the U.S., the largest Jewish communities include New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, Florida, Atlanta, and Boston (Jewish Virtual Library, 2020). The Pew 2013 study reported that in the U.S., 43% of the Jewish population live in the Northeast, 23% live in the South, 23% live in the West, and the remaining 11% live in the Midwest regions of the U.S. (Pew Research Center, 2013). Additionally, about 49% of the Jewish population live in Urban areas, 47% of them live in the suburbs and about 4% of Jewish population live in rural areas (Pew Research Center, 2013). In Texas, larger population of Jews live in Austin, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. Also, smaller Jewish communities can be found in other parts of Texas including, Abilene, Brownsville, Corpus Christi, Lubbock, and most importantly, El Paso (Jewish Virtual Library, 2020).

2.2 Education

Jews in the U.S. are highly educated and find it very important to have a formal education. When it comes to educational attainment, the Pew 2013 study found that 58% of Jews in the U.S have college degrees whereas 29% of the U.S adult population have college degrees. Further about 28% of the U.S. Jewish population is said to have post graduate degrees compared to 10% of U.S adult population (Pew Research Center, 2013, p.15). About 17% of Jewish adults in the U.S have at least attained a high school education or less. Also, based on another study done by the Pew in 2016, Jewish adults in the U.S. approximately average 14.7 years of education (Pew Research Center, 2016, p.100).

2.3 Age

The Jewish adult population in the United States is considerably older than the overall population of U.S. adults. According to Rebhun and DellaPergola & Tolts (1999) the older adult

Jewish population pertaining to the ages of 75 and older is estimated to be “half a million by the year 2020” (Rebhun, DellaPergola, and Tolts, 1999, p.43). Based on the Pew 2013 Study, 51% of Jewish adults were of age 50+ and about 44% of U.S. adults were over age of 50, a 7% difference between the U.S. Jewish population and the overall adult population. (Pew Research Center, 2013, p.38). In the U.S. the median age for adults is lower than the median age for American Jews. The median age of U.S. adults is 46 years and the median age for U.S. Jewish adults is 50 years of age. (Pew Research Center, 2013).

2.4 Religion, Religious affiliation, Jewish Identity

The Pew research center (2013) reported that in terms of religion and religious affiliation of U.S Jews, 78 % said they were Jews by religion, and only 22 % of Jews said they had no religion. Furthermore, 35 % of Jews in the U.S. belong to Reform Judaism and 18% belong to Conservative Judaism while 10% belong to Orthodox Judaism and 6% belong to “other” Jewish denominations, whereas 30% have no Jewish religious denomination (Pew Research Center, 2013, p.10). The majority of American Jews identify with the larger Reform movement. Moreover, when it comes to Jewish identity 62% of U.S., Jews believed being Jewish was about ancestry, 23% said it was about religion and ancestry, and 15% said it was about religion (Pew Research Center, 2013, p.8). Identifying as Jewish differs from person to person. Some individuals may identify as being culturally Jewish while others may not. In some cases, being Jewish is more about culture and ancestry, and not necessarily about religion. For others being Jewish encompasses all these aspects as one: religion, ethnicity, and culture.

Moreover, religious observance is based on how closely Jewish Individuals follow Jewish law and religious practices. However, the levels of religious observance differ from religious denominations and from individual to individual. The Pew’s 2013 study found that: “19% of the

Jewish adults surveyed say observing Jewish law (halakha) is essential to what being Jewish means to them” (Pew Research Center, 2013, p.10). On the other hand, attendance to religious services is higher on special events like weddings, Yom Kippur, and other high holidays among Conservative, Reform, and secular groups (Pew Research center, 2013). According to the Pew 2013, about 79 % Orthodox Jews reported that observing Jewish laws is an important part of being Jewish while, 24 % Conservative and 11% Reform Jews who say observing Jewish law is part of what it means to be Jewish (Pew Research Center, 2013, p.57). Also, religious observance varies among the different groups, as well as within the same group; individuals decide how observant they are. Typically, those who belong and identify with Orthodox Judaism are more observant than Conservative, and Reform. At the same time, individuals choose the level of religious observance and adherence. For instance, Some Jews decide to keep kosher at home and not outside. Others try to keep kosher as much as possible, whereas, other individuals might only avoid eating pork (Kertzer, 1996, pp.88-89). Furthermore, in Reform Judaism the individual chooses to keep Kosher or not, and the extent they keep Kosher.

2.5 Jewish Community Studies

In this section, I review three Jewish demographic studies that have been conducted in other communities in the US, which include the Greater Washington area (2017), South Palm Beach (2018), and New Mexico (2014). Several National Jewish Population Surveys have been conducted in the U.S., but these national surveys are no longer being conducted. The 2000-01 NJPS was the last national survey that was performed in the U.S. The National Jewish Population (NJPS) has conducted several surveys in previous decades, that date to 1971, 1990, and in 2000 (Sheskin, 2009). The Pew’s 2013 study is the most recent study which gives insight about American Jewry and allows for comparisons to be made between local community studies to U.S

Jews. According to Sheskin (2009) about 54 Jewish community studies have been conducted since the early 1990's (Sheskin, 2009, p.128). Local community studies are therefore important for Jewish community planning purposes, as well as to know the composition of each community.

The 2017 Jewish Community in the Greater Washington DC Demographic Study was conducted in the Greater Washington area which is comprised of the District of Columbia, Suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia (Aronson et al. 2018). In total, 2,118 respondents participated in the survey. The study found that from 155,000 households surveyed, there were 300,000 Jewish adults and children living in the Greater Washington area (Aronson et al. 2018, p.13). Among all Jewish adults included in the study, the median age was 45 years; 22% did not plan to move out from this area (Aronson et al. 2018). Additionally, about 29% of the Jewish adults living in Greater Washington area identified with the Reform denomination, 21% identified as conservative, 5% identify as Orthodox and most Jewish adults 39% did not identify with any of the Jewish denominations. About 34% of respondents felt very connected to Israel in the Greater Washington Jewish community and close to 68% have visited Israel (Aronson et al. 2018).

The second Jewish community study was conducted in the South Palm Beach County, Florida by Boxer, Brookner, Krasner Aronson, & Saxe in 2018. The counties included in South Palm Beach are: South Palm Beach and Broward counties (Boxer et al. 2018, p.33). In total, 2,118 respondents participated in the survey, and there are approximately 134,200 Jewish adults and children in this area (Boxer et al. 2018, p.13). The average age of Jewish adults is 58 and the median age is 61 years of age. The survey results suggest that the Jewish population in South Palm Beach County is older in age, as the majority are of ages 65 years of age and older (Boxer et al. 2018). Further, about 37% of the Jewish adults living in South Palm Beach identified with the Reform denomination, and 70% identified with a formal Jewish denomination (Boxer et al. 2018).

In the third study, conducted in New Mexico, Koppersmit & Arbetman- Rabinowitz (2015) found that one-third of New Mexico's Jewish population was over the age of 65. Also, 59% of Jews living in New Mexico said that being Jewish was "very important," and 87% reported they were Jewish by religion (Koppersmit & Arbetman- Rabinowitz, 2015). Also 48% identified as Reform and 18% Conservative, and 2% are Orthodox. This study also found that approximately 26% of households have children under the age of 18. According Koppersmit & Arbetman- Rabinowitz, the majority of the participants (76%) do not intend to leave this region. In terms of connections to Israel, 40% of Jewish adults reported feeling very attached to Israel and 38% feel somewhat attached. Furthermore, 1,691 respondents participated in this statewide survey.

Chapter 3: Data and Methods

3.1 Data Collection

The data for this project was collected through an online survey that was distributed with the help of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso Region (JFED). Specifically, the survey link was sent out to community members through JFED's monthly and weekly email blasts. Question Pro was used as an online software tool to administer the survey. The survey opened December 2019 and closed February 2021. The present study uses descriptive statistics and was approved by the Institutional Research Board (IRB) at The University of Texas at El Paso. Participation in this study was completely voluntary. Survey respondents had the option to complete the survey at their own time, and for those participants who had limited access to technology, they were able to complete the survey via telephone. In addition, other approaches were also used to promote this study. For example, from January 2020 to July 2020, survey information was advertised on four issues of The Jewish Voice, which is a local Jewish newspaper. A brochure containing the information about the study was advertised and distributed via email blast and social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram). Finally, to reach out to community members who were not affiliated with the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso (JFED), I attended various holiday events, met in person and had contact via email with potential members of the Jewish community between January to early March 2020.

3.2 Measures

The online survey consisted of a series of 144 questions and took on average 14 minutes to complete. The online active survey period was from December 2019 to February 2021. 448 people took the survey, and 383 of them completed the survey. 8 surveys were conducted via telephone. There were 65 dropouts survey completion rate 85.49%.

The topics covered in the survey include demographics, household composition, synagogue and ritual life, social and community life, mobility and migration, connections to Israel.

Demographics

The survey asked participants several sociodemographic questions such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, marital status, level of education, and employment status, and country of birth.

Respondents actual age is measured in years. Respondents gender is measured as female, male, or other, and coded as (“0” for male, “1” female, “2” other). Marital Status is measured and coded as: (“1” for married,”0” Not married). Educational attainment is measure by the highest level of education completed by the respondents and coded as (“1” Never went to school , “2” Primary school , “3” Some high school “4” High school diploma or equivalent (GED), “5” Some college “6” College degree, “7” Masters, Doctorate, or other professional degrees). Employment Status is measured as (1” employed, “2” retired , “3” home maker, “4” a student who does not work,” 5” Unemployed and looking for work , “6” Unemployed and not looking for work, “7” Other (please specify). Race and ethnicity of respondent are measured as (1” Hispanic or Latino, “2” Black or African American Non-Hispanic, “3” White non-Hispanic, “4” Asian, on-Hispanic ; “5” American Indian/Alaskan Native non-Hispanic; “6” Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Non- Hispanic; 7” Other (Please specify).

Household Composition

In this section, participants were asked about the number of adult household members and their relationships with each member in their households. Additionally, participants were asked whether they have children at home and to indicate the number of children and the ages of the children residing in the household.

Participants were asked if there are adults over the age of 18 in their household and options include yes and no and it is measured (Yes “1” or No “0”). And If they responded yes to having adults in households, they are asked to indicate how many adults reside in their households from a list of values (0, 1, 2, 3, 5, more than 5).

The second household composition is related to children in households. This section asked participants if they have children under 17 in their households and options are yes, if they have children and no, and are coded (Yes “1”, or “0” No). To know about fertility and fertility intention, participants were asked how many children they have ever had. Fertility intention is measured through questions: Do you intend to have children in the future? Options include yes if they intend to have children and no if they do not, and is coded as (Yes “1”, or “0” No). Pertaining to children in households: if respondents have children at home the options include yes, and no and are coded (Yes “1” or “0” No). If respondents have children in their household, the following is asked: How many children age 17 or younger currently live in their household and can select from the following list of values (0, 1, 2, 3, 5, more than 5).

Synagogue and Ritual Life

Synagogues are places of worship, and study, which foster social relations between members of the community. For many Jews, synagogues play an important role in their lives as these places of worship are the “focal point of all Jewish community life...serve as the home of religious education, youth activities, social action, and communal affairs” (Kertzer, 1996, p.174). To get a better understanding of Jewish religious patterns, religious involvement at home and in synagogues participants are asked questions such as membership to congregation. Participants were also asked to list the names of each congregation they are members of.

To many Jews, the home is a “religious sanctuary with domestic rituals that are as important as communal worship: lighting of the Sabbath candles...kindling Chanukah candles, the Passover Seder with friends and family” (Kertzer, 1996, p.169). Therefore, this survey asked participants questions regarding ritual life including; if they partake and attended Passover Seder, and if they keep kosher inside and outside the home. Questions regarding the observance of Kosher laws such as: Do you keep Kosher in your home were coded as (“1” yes, “0” No), Do you keep Kosher outside of your home? (“1” Yes, “0” No). Participants were also asked if they fast on Yom Kippur given 4 options: Do you fast during Yom Kippur? (“1” all day, “2” part of the day, “3” I do not fast, “4” I cannot fast due to health problems/ age/pregnancy/nursing.

Jewish identity will be measured through Jewish denomination, what it means to be Jewish, and ritual practices. For example, participants were asked what being Jewish means to them personally— whether it’s a matter of religion, culture, ancestry or don’t know, the following four options and given option to check all boxes that apply, and are coded as (“1” mainly a matter of religion, “2” mainly a matter of ancestry, “3” mainly a matter of culture, “4” don’t know).

Social and Community Life

Many Jews are active in their communities through volunteer work in a way to keep with the notion of Tikkun Olam- “reparation of the world” and putting their faith, religion into action to help others (Kertzer, 1996, p.31). This survey section gathers information on the participant’s volunteering experiences. The survey asked participants about their volunteer work within the community and if this volunteer work is for either Jewish or local non-Jewish organizations. For example, the survey asks participants, during the past year, have you done any volunteer work for, or sponsored by a synagogue, Federation or other Jewish organization? and if so, how many hours did you volunteer for a synagogue, Federation or other Jewish organization, in an average month?

The survey also collects information on community members' anti-Semitism experiences. Specifically, participants were asked if they have experienced anti-Semitism, and what types of anti-Semitism they have experienced or encountered in this region.

Connections to Israel

Israel is important to many in the Jewish community and for many Jewish adults Israel is central to their Jewish identity. In this section of the survey, participants were asked questions about the emotional connections, and attitudes towards Israel, travel to Israel and the frequency of their travels. Participants are asked if they seek news about Israel and the frequency in which they do so.

Mobility and Migration

The survey asked participants how long they have lived in the Greater El Paso area, if they have plans to move away from this region and if so, they are asked to indicate when they plan to do so. Participants were also asked to indicate the reason why the plan on moving.

3.3 Analyses

Descriptive statistics were used for quantitative data, and qualitative (respondents' comments) were also analyzed. Furthermore, analysis in this study was done at the individual level and the present study used QuestionPro, Excel and SPSS to analyze data.

In addition, three local U.S Jewish communities and the U.S. Jewish population in general were chosen to compare to the Greater El Paso Jewish community. The Jewish communities included in this study are New Mexico, South Palm Beach County in Florida, and the Greater Washington DC Jewish community. Both New Mexico and South Palm Beach County communities were chosen as they seemed to have a similar population structure as the Jewish community in El Paso, Tx. Furthermore, I chose to include New Mexico as it is a neighboring state

to Texas, and because Las Cruces is part of the Greater El Paso region and is included in the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso. The Greater Washington Metro DC community was chosen as it is one of the largest Jewish communities in the U.S. and the Jewish community in El Paso is one of the smallest communities in the U.S.

Chapter 4: Results & Discussion

Based on survey data collected from 448 respondents and descriptive statistical analyses, this chapter provides insight into the demographic profile of Jewish community in Greater El Paso, identity of Jewish adults in the border region through synagogue and ritual life, and social and community life. I have also compared the Greater El Paso Jewish population to three other Jewish communities: Greater Washington D.C, South Palm Beach County Florida, and New Mexico, and to the U.S. Jewish population.

4.1 Demographics

Age of Respondents

The population of Jewish adults in Greater El Paso is considerably older in age. Based on Table 4.1.1, the median age of Jewish adults is 66 years and the average age is 62 years. About 55% of respondents are over the age of 65 and 22% of respondents are below the age of 50. The median age of Jewish adults in this region is 66 whereas the median age of Jewish adults in the U.S. is 50 (Pew Research Center, 2013). The Jewish community in South Palm Beach county has an average age of 58 and a median age of 61, while in Greater Washington, the average age is 47 and median age is 45 (Boxer et al. 2018; Aronson et al. 2018). Based on Table 4.1.1 in Greater El Paso, there are more respondents ages 65-79 (44%) compared to (29%) in South Palm Beach County. (Boxer et al. 2018). Moreover, 20% of Jewish adults in South Palm Beach County are of ages 18-34 whereas only 6% are of ages 18-34 in Greater El Paso (Boxer et al. 2018).

Table 4.1.1: Age of Respondent

Age of Respondent	Count	Greater El Paso %	South Palm Beach County %	Greater Washington DC %
18-34	22	6%	20%	-
35-49	56	16%	16%	-
50-64	83	23%	22%	-

65-79	159	44%	29%	-
80-96 (80+)	41	11%	15%	
Total	361	100%		
Mean		62	58	47
Median		66	61	45

Gender

In terms of gender, the majority of respondents (60%) self-identified as female and 40% identified as male (Table 4.1.2). There are noticeably more females in the Greater El Paso Jewish community. This could be due to two things, either there are more females in the Greater El Paso Jewish community, or more females took the survey. In the Jewish Community in New Mexico, 50% were female and 52% of Jewish adults were female in South Palm Beach County (Kuppersmit & Arbetman- Rabinowitz, 2015; Boxer et al. 2018).

Table 4.1.2: Gender of Respondent

What is your gender?	Count	%	South Palm Beach County %	New Mexico %
Female	234	60%	52%	50%
Male	154	40%	48%	48%
Other	0	0%	< 1%	
Total	388	100%		

Race /Ethnicity of Respondents

Among the 396 respondents who reported their race/ethnicity, 82% identified as non-Hispanic white, 13% identified as Hispanic or Latino, 4% identified with “other” racial/ethnic category, 1% identified as Black, and 1% identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native (Figure 4.1.1). As shown in Table 4.1.3., less Jews self-identified as Hispanic in New Mexico (2%) and in Greater Washington DC (7%) (Aronson et al. 2018; Kuppersmit & Arbetman- Rabinowitz, 2015). At the national level, only 3% of Jewish adults in the U.S. identified as Hispanic and 94% identified as non-Hispanic white (Pew Research Center, 2013).

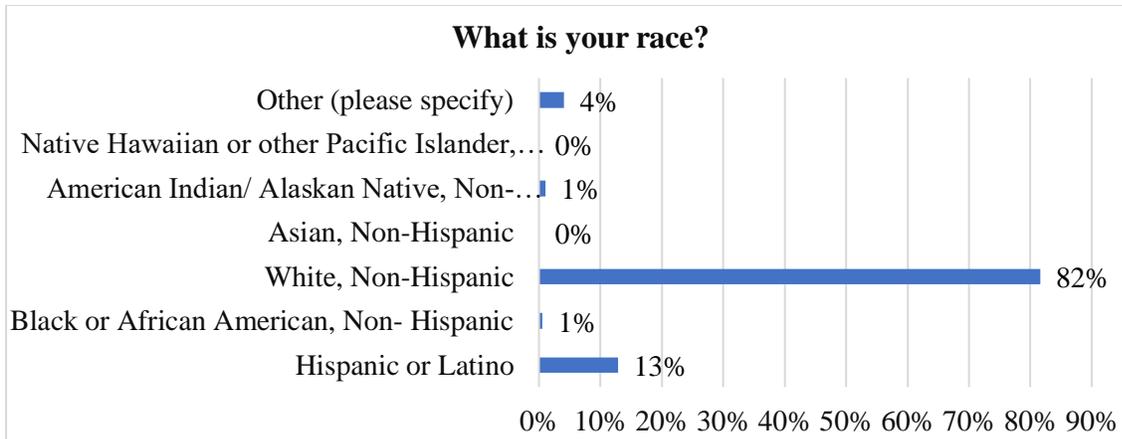


Figure 4.1.1: Race /Ethnicity of Respondents

Table 4.1.3: Race/Ethnicity of Respondents

What is your race? (Check all that apply)	Count	%	New Mexico %	U.S Jewish Adults %
Hispanic or Latino	51	13%	2%	3%
Black or African American, Non- Hispanic	2	1%	-	1%
White, Non-Hispanic	323	82%	89%	94%
Asian, Non-Hispanic	0	0%	-	-
American Indian/ Alaskan Native, Non-Hispanic	4	1%	-	-
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic	0	0%	-	-
Other (please specify)	16	4%	4%	1%
Total	396	100%		

Marital Status

In Greater El Paso, among the 385 respondents, 68% reported being currently married while 14% are divorced, and 8% never married (Figure 4.1.2 & Table). There is a higher proportion of married Jewish adults in Greater El Paso (68%) than the in the Jewish community in New Mexico (59%), and the proportion of widowed Jewish adults is also larger in Greater El Paso (10%) than in New Mexico (5%) (Kuppersmit & Arbetman-Rabinowitz, 2015).

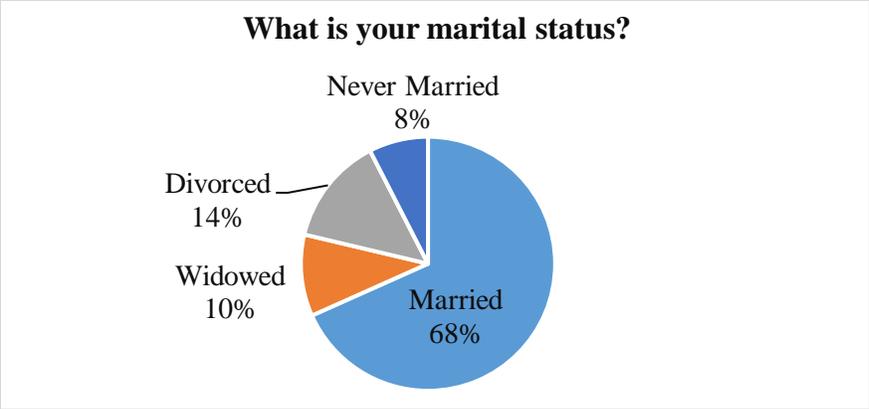


Figure 4.1.2: Marital Status of Respondents

Table 4.1.4: Marital Status of Respondents

What is your marital status?	Count	%	New Mexico %	U.S. Jewish Adults
Married	263	68%	59%	51%
Never Married	29	8%	15%	25%
Widowed	40	10%	5%	7%
Divorced	53	14%	13%	9%
Separated	0	0%	-	1
Total	385	100%		

Level of Education

My data suggests that the Jewish community in Greater El Paso is highly educated. Specifically, more than half of Jewish adults (55%) have a graduate or professional degree, 35% have a college degree, and 9% have some college or a high school diploma (Figure 4.1.3 & Table 4.1.5). In contrast, 58% of U.S Jewish adults have a bachelor’s degree and 28% have post graduate degrees (The Pew Research Center, 2013). Respondents in Greater El Paso have a higher percentage of post graduate degrees compared to the U.S. Jewish population. In Greater Washington-Metro DC, 61% of Jewish adults have at least a post graduate degree (Aronson et al. 2018). Overall, Jewish adults in the U.S, are highly educated, and the Jewish community in Greater El Paso exhibits similar characteristics.

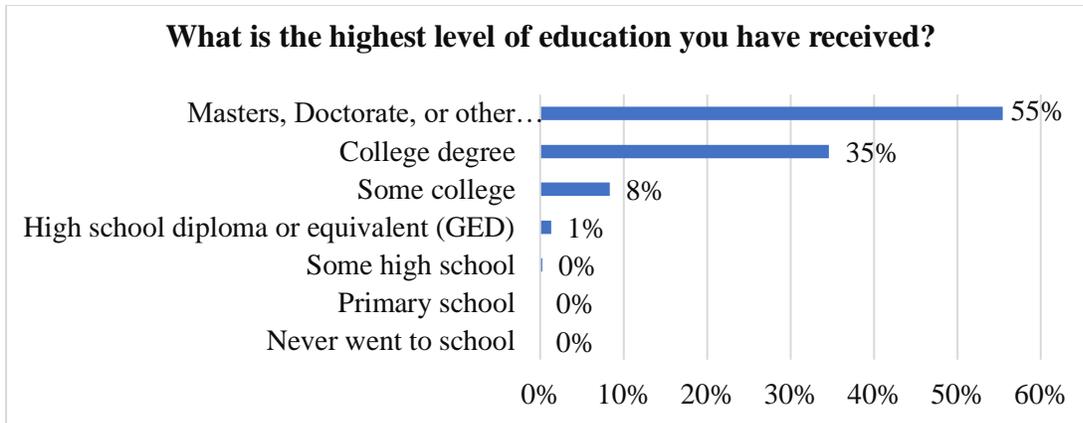


Figure 4.1.3: Highest Level of Education Received by Respondent

Table 4.1.5: Highest Level of Education Received by Respondent

What is the highest level of education you have received?	Count	%	South Palm Beach %	New Mexico %	Greater Washington DC %	U.S. Jewish Adults %
Never went to school	0	0%	-	-	-	
Primary school	0	0%	-	-		
Some high school	1	0%	7%			
High school diploma or equivalent (GED)	5	1%		8%		17%
Some college	32	8%	30%			25%
College degree	133	35%	63%	28%	58%	58%
Masters, Doctorate, or other professional degrees	213	55%	28%	58%	61%	28%
Total	384	100%				

Employment Status

In terms of employment status among 386 respondents (Figure 4.1.4), close to half (48%) of adults are currently employed, 38% are retired, 5% homemakers, and 5% said other. Nearly 2% of respondents reported that they are currently unemployed and looking for work, 1% are students who do not work, 1% are unemployed and not looking for work, and the remaining 1% are disabled and are unable to work.(Figure 4.1.4 & Table 4.1.6).

The percentage of employed adults is lower in the Greater El Paso community than in the Jewish community of Greater Washington-DC and the U.S. Jewish adult population. In the U.S. 65% of Jewish adults are employed (The Pew Research Center, 2013) and in Greater Washington 72% are employed (Aronson et al. 2018) A similar percentage of adults are retired in South Palm Beach County (37%) and Greater El Paso (38%). These similarities, in terms of retired adults, may be due to South Palm beach being a retiring destination while El Paso is generally an aging community. Therefore, there are more people over the age of retirement in both these communities, resulting in these numbers.

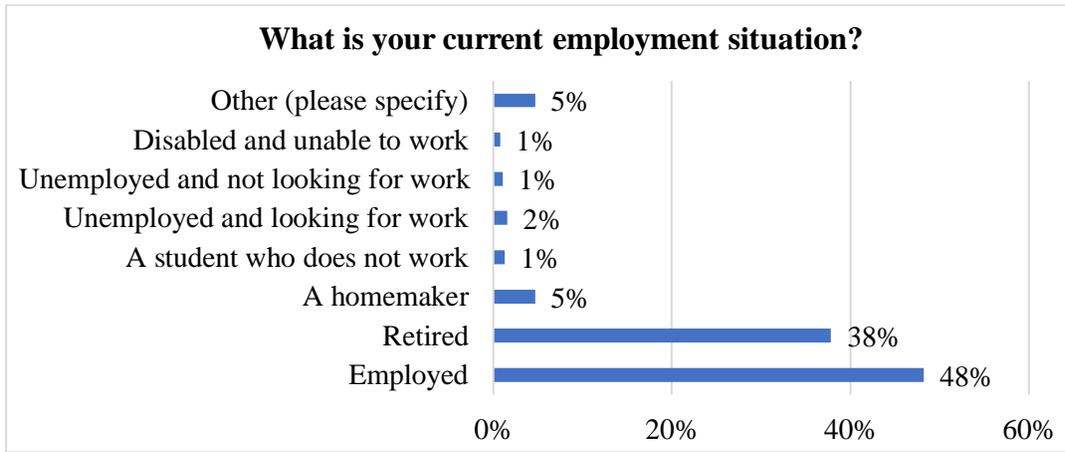


Figure 4.1.4: Current Employment Status of Respondents

Table 4.1.6: Current Employment Status of Respondents

What is your current employment situation?	Count	%	South Palm Beach County %	Greater Washington DC %	U.S. Jewish Adults %
Employed	186	48%	42%	72%	65%
Retired	146	38%	37%	28%	
A homemaker	18	5%	-		-
A student who does not work	5	1%	-	-	
Unemployed and looking for Work	6	2%	-	-	7%
Unemployed and not looking for work	4	1%	-	-	28%

Disabled and unable to work	3	1%	-	-	-
Other (please specify)	18	5%	-	--	-
Total	386	100%			

Nativity (Country of Birth)

Among the 388 respondents, close to 90% of Jewish adults in Greater El Paso were born in the U.S., while 13% were foreign born (Table 4.1.7). Among the respondent that are foreign born 30% (14) were born in Mexico, 13% (6) in Germany, 7% (3) in Argentina. About 7% (3) of respondents were born in France, 7% (3) Israel, and 7% (3) Russia. About 4% (2) were born in Chile and at least one respondent reported being born in the remaining countries (Figure 4.1.5). The percentage of foreign-born respondents in Greater El Paso 13% is similar to the percentage of the U.S. Jewish population (14%) that are foreign-born (The Pew Research Center, 2013).

Table 4.1.7: Respondents Born in the U.S

Were you born in the U.S.?	Count	%	U.S. Jewish Adults %
Yes	337	87%	86%
No	51	13%	14%
Total	388	100%	
Mean		1.13	

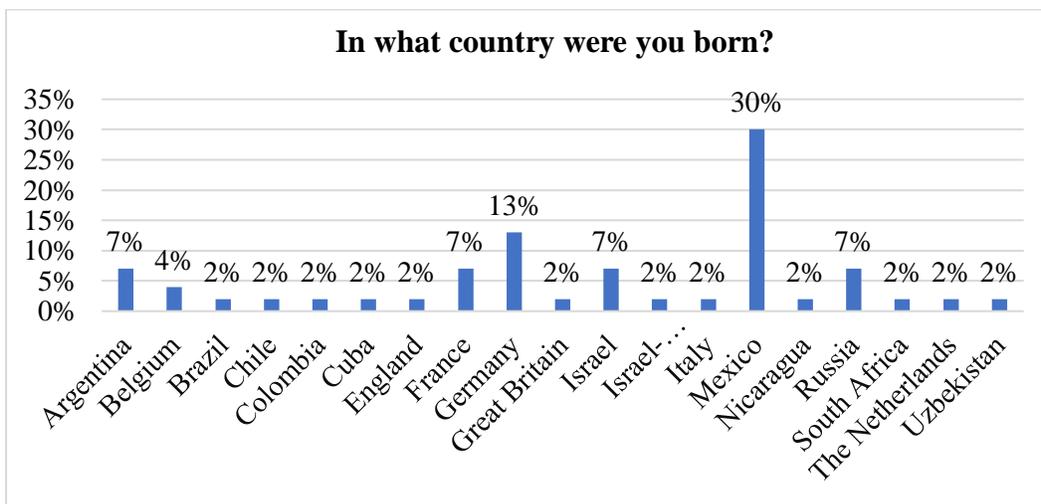


Figure 4.1.5: Respondents Country of Birth

4.2 Geographical Distribution/Location

The Geographical Distribution/Location of the Jewish community in Greater El Paso is based on respondents' zip codes. The Greater El Paso Region includes El Paso, Texas, and Las Cruces New Mexico, however, in this study some other cities in the vicinity are included. The following cities encompassed in this study in Texas include: El Paso, Canutillo, and Anthony. In New Mexico, the following cities were included: Truth and Consequence, Santa Teresa, and Alamogordo (Figure 4.2.1).

The majority (70%) of respondents reside in El Paso, Texas, and 29% reside in Las Cruces, New Mexico (Figure 4.2.1). Particularly, in El Paso Texas, three zip codes are the most populated, 79912, 79902 and 79922. Near these Jewish populated areas are three synagogues: Congregation B'nai Zion, Temple Mount Sinai, and Chabad of El Paso. In Las Cruces, New Mexico, the most populated zip codes are 88011, 88012, 88007, and 88005. The two synagogues located in the 88011 zip-code area are Temple Beth-El Las Cruces and Chabad of Las Cruces.

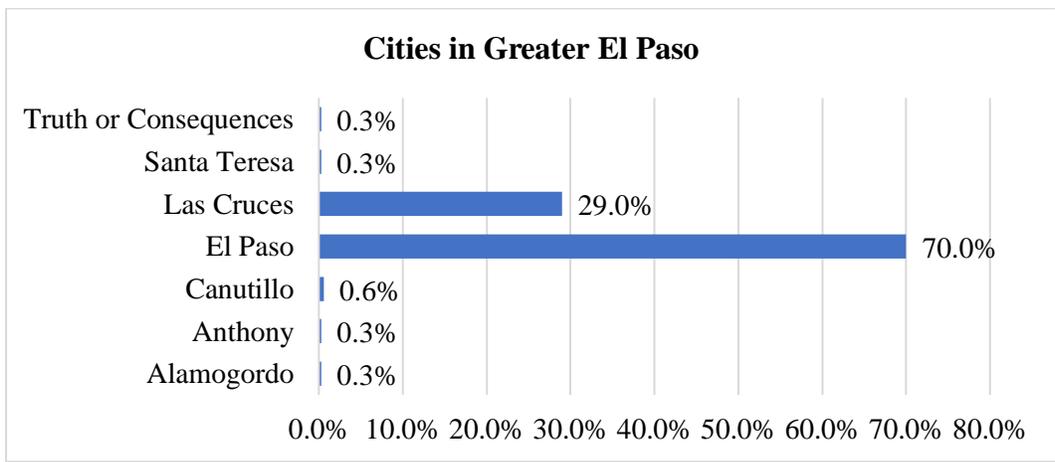


Figure 4.2.1: Cities in Greater El Paso

4.3 Household Composition

Adults in Households

Close to 60% of respondents reported that they currently live with another adult, while 22% said they live alone. About 17% of respondents have 2 adults living in their households, and 2% have 3 adults residing in their households (Figure 4.3.1).

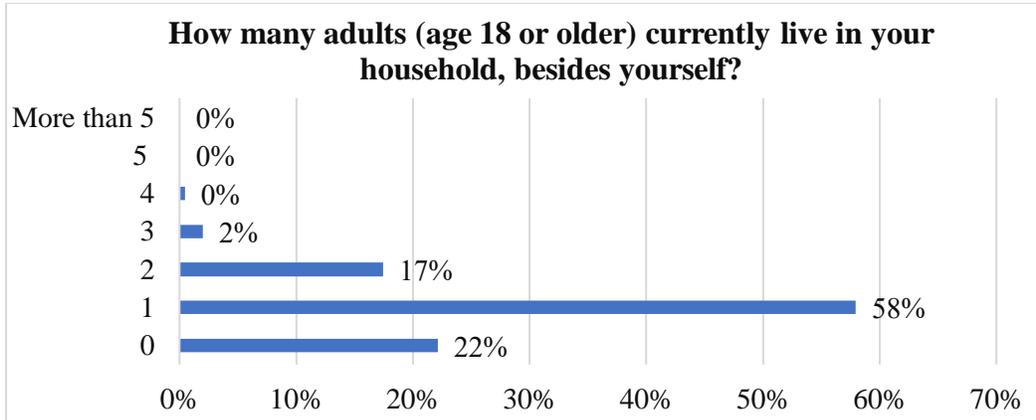


Figure 4.3.1: Adults (18 or older) Living in Households

Holocaust Survivors and Refugees from Nazism in Greater El Paso

Among the 447 respondents who answered this question, six Jewish adults (1%) reported that they are Holocaust survivors or refugees from Nazism (Figure 4.3.2), and 29 Jewish adults (7%) reported that they have household members who are Holocaust survivors or refugees from Nazism (Figure 4.3.3). In contrast, the Greater Washington- DC Jewish community has 2,400 (1%) Jewish adults that are Holocaust survivors and 1% of households have Holocaust survivors (Aronson et al. 2018). Even though Greater El Paso is a smaller Jewish community, there are some Jewish adults in the community that experienced the Holocaust.

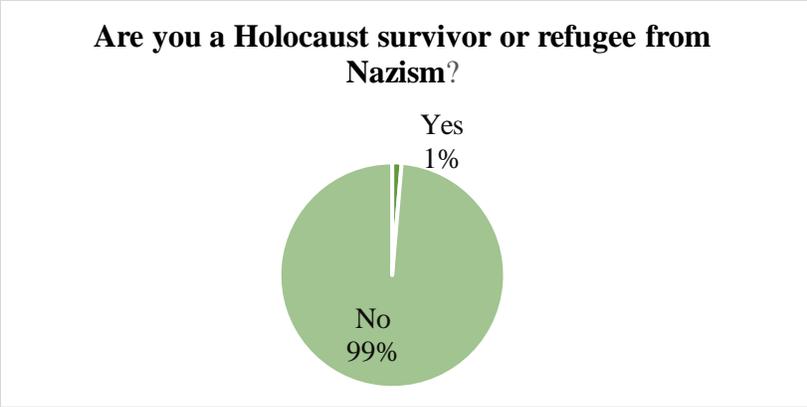


Figure 4.3.2: Respondents that are Holocaust Survivors or Refugees from Nazism

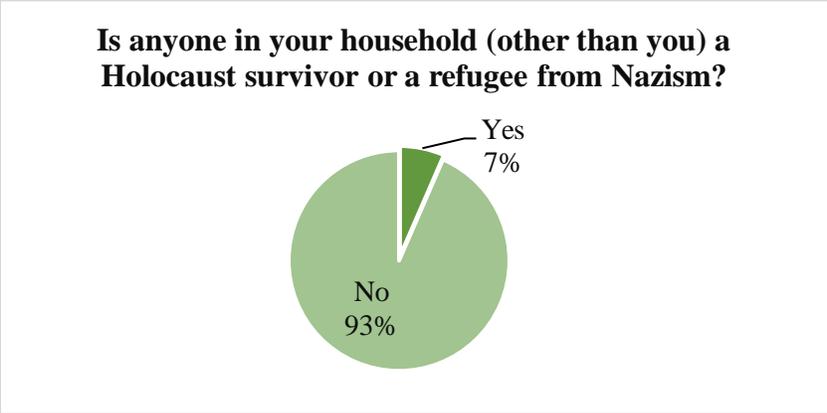


Figure 4.3.3: Holocaust Survivors or Refugees from Nazism in Households

4.4 Children in Households

Children Ever Had and Intentions to Have Children

Among 401 respondents about 18% reported that they do not have children, 16% have had one child, and about 65% have 2-5 children. Furthermore, most respondents 93% do not intend to have children in the future (Figure 4.4.1).

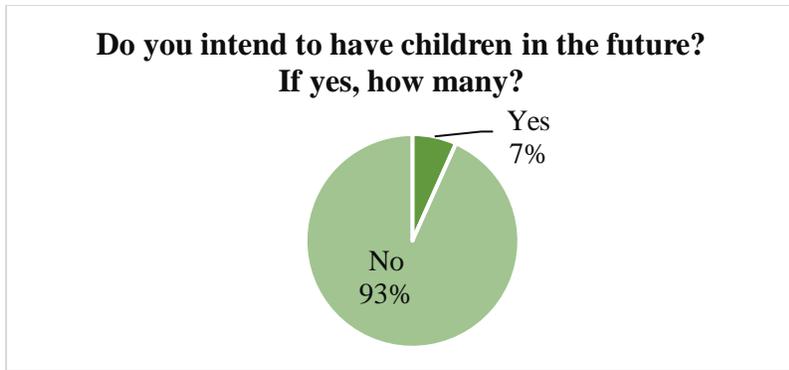


Figure 4.4.1: Intention to Have Children

Current Number of Children in Households

The majority of the households in Greater El Paso (80%) do not have children, 7% have one child, and 13% have two children or more (Figure 4.4.2). This might be because Jewish adults living in Greater El Paso are older in age. Similarly, 73% of households in the Jewish community of New Mexico do not have children (Kuppermist & Arbetman-Rabinowitz, 2015).

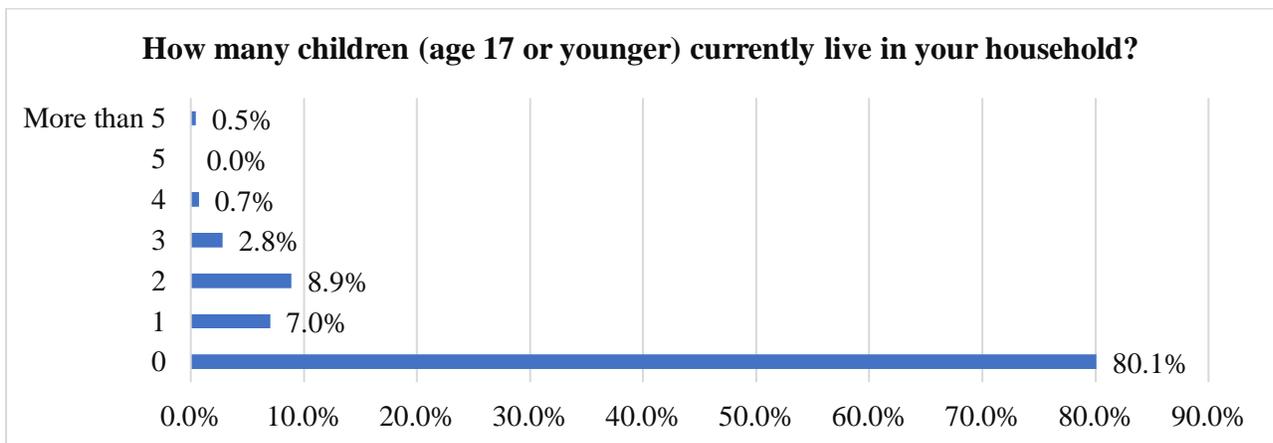


Figure 4.4.2: Number of Children Under Age 17 in Households

Among those households with children, approximately 70% of children are between ages 6-18 years old. Specifically, 42% of children in households are ages 6-11, 12% are infants and toddlers, and about 16% are preschoolers between ages 3-5 (Table 4.4.1). Although the Jewish population is relatively old in this region, there are considerable number of school-aged children.

Similarly, in South Palm Beach County, 79% of children are ages 6-17 and 20% are of ages 0-5 (Boxer et al. 2018). However, Greater El Paso has more children under the age of 5, than the Jewish community in South Palm Beach County.

Table 4.4.1: Ages of children in households

Group		Age	Count	%
Infants & Toddlers		0-2 years	19	12%
Preschoolers		3-5 years	25	16%
School-aged Children	Middle Childhood	6-11 years	42%	65
	Young Teens	12-14 years	16%	25
	Teenagers	15-18 years	12%	18
Adult children		>18 years	3	2%
Total			155	100%

4.5 Synagogue and Ritual Life

Jewish denominations

Many studies have long used Jewish religious denominations as indicators to measure Jewish identity of local communities (Aronson et al. 2018, national and global level. Among the 430 respondents who reported their Jewish denominations, the majority self-identified as Reform 51%, 33% Conservative, 7% Secular/Culturally Jewish and 3% identified as orthodox. (Figure 4.5.1). In Greater El Paso, more Jewish adults identify as Reform and Conservative, while in Greater Washington-Metro DC, only 29% are Reform and 21% are conservative. Similarly, in the South Palm Beach County Jewish community 37% of adults are Reform and 25% Conservative (Boxer et al. 2018). For the US Jewish population 35% identified as Reform and 18% conservative (Pew Research Center, 2013). Though the recruitment of participants was carried out at several

synagogues, events at the Reform synagogue had larger attendance numbers, and more showed interest in the survey. Perhaps that is why more respondents identified as Reform in this study.

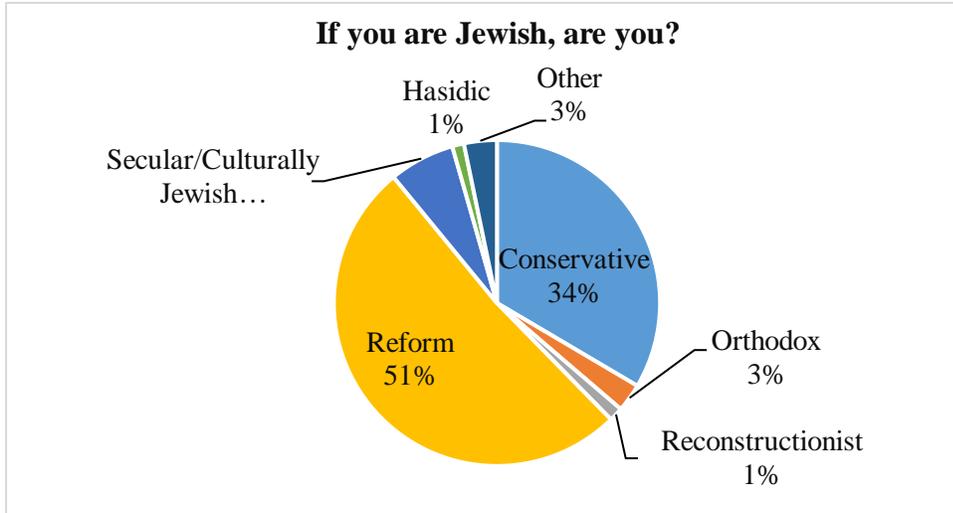


Figure 4.5.1: Jewish Denomination of Respondent

Table 4.5.1: Jewish Denomination of Respondent

If you are Jewish, are you:	Count	%	South Palm Beach County %	New Mexico %	Greater Washington DC %	U.S. Jewish Adults %
Conservative	144	33%	25%	18%	21%	18%
Orthodox	12	3%	8%	2%	5%	10%
Reconstructionist	6	1%		3%	3%	
Reform	221	51%	37%	48%	29%	35%
Secular/Culturally Jewish	28	7%	28%			30%
Hasidic	5	1%				
Other	14	3%	1%	6%		6%
Total	430	100%				

Jewish Background and Upbringing

Based on Figure 4.5.2, 85% of Jewish adults in Greater El Paso have at least one Jewish parent and 15% of respondents indicate that they do not have Jewish parents. About 76% of

respondents were raised Jewish by religion (Figure 4.5.3). In general, the vast majority of respondents have at least one Jewish parent and were raised Jewish by religion.

The percentage of adults that were raised Jewish is higher in New Mexico (84%) than Greater El Paso (77%) (Kuppersmit & Arbetman-Rabinowitz, 2015; Jewish Federation of New Mexico, 2015). Greater El Paso has a similar number of Jewish adults that were raised Jewish by religion to the overall U.S. Jewish adults (77%) (Pew Research Center, 2013). Additionally, 85% of Jewish adults in this region have either or both parents who are Jewish in contrast to 96% of the U.S Jewish adult population who have either or both parents who are Jewish (Pew Research Center, 2013).

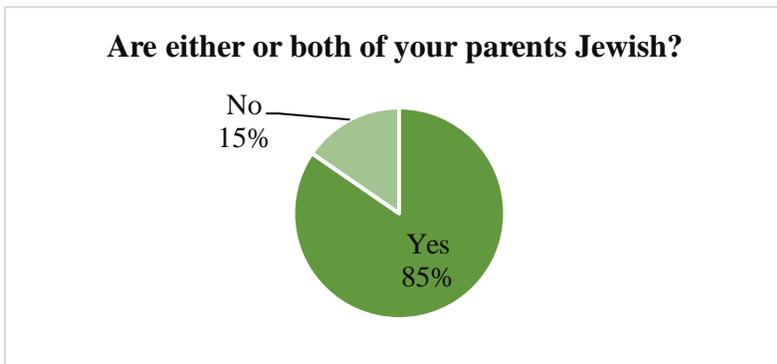


Figure 4.5.3: Jewish Background Respondents with Either or Both Jewish Parents

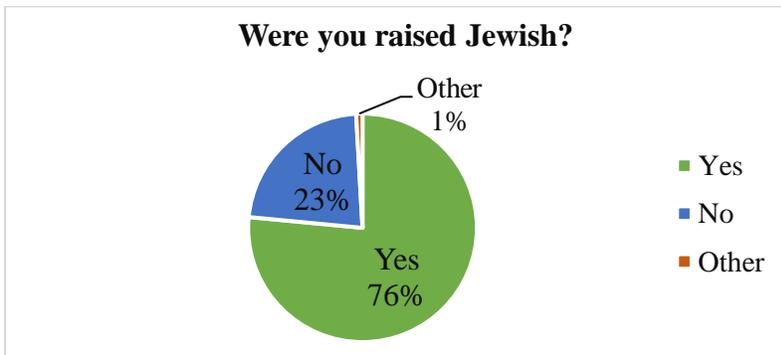


Figure 4.5.3: Respondents Raised Jewish

Religious Life- Congregations

Among 337 respondents, 34% belong to Temple Mount Sinai, 31% belong to Congregation B'nai Zion, and 6% belong to Chabad El Paso. In Las Cruces, 25% of respondents belong to Temple Beth-El, and 4% belong to Chabad of Las Cruces (Table 4.5.2). Only one respondent belongs to Chapel # 3 in Ft. Bliss, Texas.

Table 4.5.2: Jewish Adults Belonging to Congregations in Greater El Paso

Congregations in Greater El Paso	Count	%
Chabad El Paso	21	6.2%
Chabad of Las Cruces	13	3.9%
Chapel #3 Ft. Bliss	1	0.3%
Congregation B'nai Zion	104	30.9%
Temple Beth-El Las Cruces	85	25.2%
Temple Mount Sinai	113	33.5%
Total	337	100.0%

Synagogue Attendance

In terms of synagogue attendance, the majority of respondents (90%) attend Jewish religious services, while 10% indicate they do not attend any type of Jewish religious services (Table 4.5.4). Among those who attend Jewish religious services, about 36% attend Jewish services a few times a year, 25% attend at least once a month and 18% attend at least once a week (Figure 4.5.4). Generally speaking, Jewish adults in Greater El Paso are more likely to attend Jewish services a few times a year.

Compared to U.S. Jewish adults, in Greater El Paso, more respondents 55% attend religious services a few times a year (including High Holidays, weddings, and Bar Mitzvahs) in contrast to 35% of U.S. Jewish adult population and 46% in South Palm Beach County (Pew Research Center, 2013; Boxer et al. 2018).

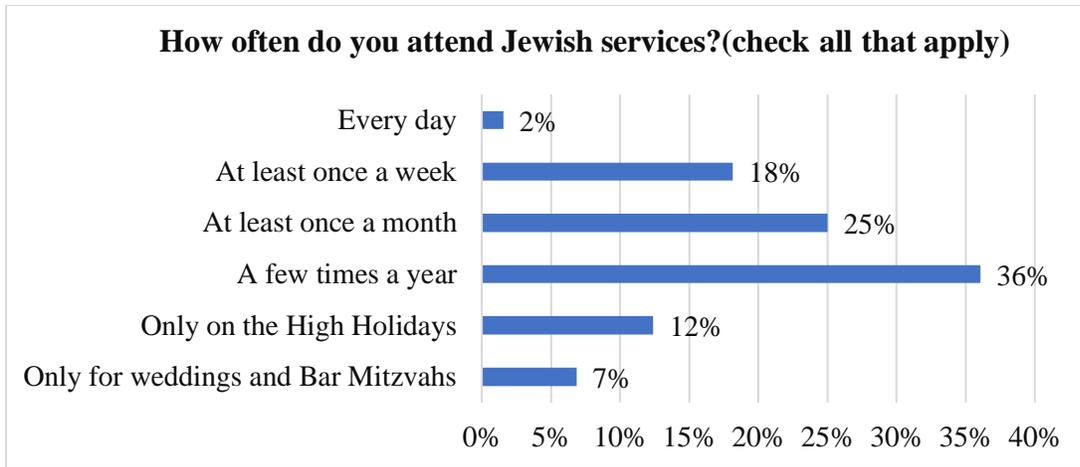


Figure 4.5.4: How Often Attend Religious Service

Ritual Practices and High Holidays

Among 416 respondents, about 87% reported that they held or attended a Seder last Passover and the remaining 13% did not (Table 4.5.3). Among U.S Jewish adults 70% attended a Seder (Pew Research Center, 2013). In New Mexico 79% of Jewish adults attended a Seder, and 21% did not (Kuppersmit & Abertman- Rabinowitz 2015). Significantly more adults attended a Seder in Greater El Paso compared to Jewish adults in the U.S and in New Mexico.

In terms of observing the High Holidays such as Yom Kippur, more than 60% of respondents in Greater El Paso fasted part of the day or all-day during Yom Kippur (Figure 4.5.5 & Table 4.5.4). 48% of respondents fasted all day during Yom Kippur, 20% could not fast due to health problems, 18% do not fast and only 14% of respondents said they fasted part of the day during Yom Kippur (Figure 4.5.5 & Table 4.5.4). In Greater El Paso more respondents fasted (all day or part of the day) during Yom Kippur (62%) compared to 51% in South Palm Beach County and (53%) of U.S Jewish adults that fasted during Yom Kippur according to the Pew 2013 Study.

Table 4.5.3: Respondents Held or Attended Seder Last Year

Last Passover, did you hold or attend a Seder?	Count	%	New Mexico %	U.S. Jewish Adults %
Yes	360	87%	79%	70%
No	56	13%	21%	30%
Total	416	100%		

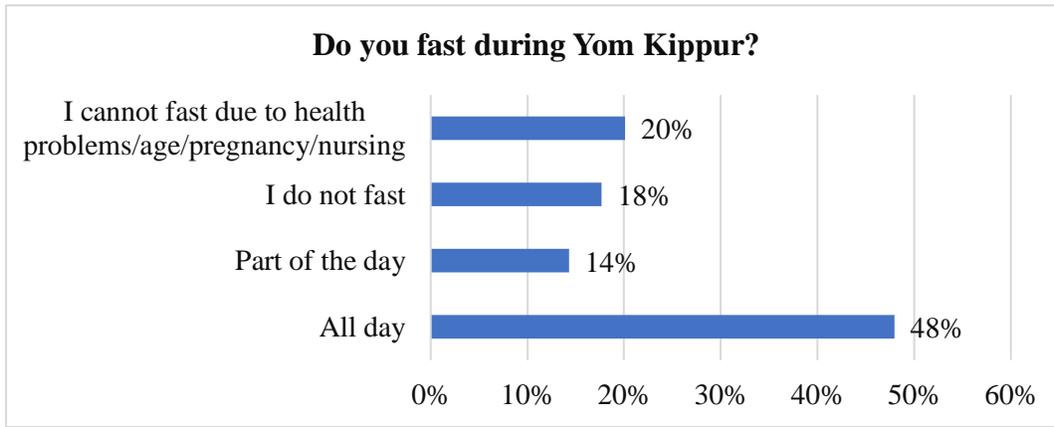


Figure 4.5.5: Respondents that Fasted During Yom Kippur

Table 4.5.4: Respondents that Fasted During Yom Kippur

Do you fast during Yom Kippur?	Count	%	South Palm Beach County %	U.S. Jewish Adults %
All day	198	48%	42%	40%
Part of the day	59	14%	9%	13%
I do not fast	73	18%	34%	-
I cannot fast due to health problems/age/pregnancy/nursing	83	20%	15%	43%
Total	413	100%		

Among 418 respondents, 79% said they do not keep Kosher inside of the home (Figure 4.5.6 & Table 4.5.5). Among 415 respondents, 84 % said they do not keep Kosher outside of the

home and 16 % keep Kosher outside of the home (Figure 4.5.7). In South Palm Beach County 16% of adults keep kosher in their home (Boxer et al. 2018) compared to 21% in Greater El Paso. When compared to the U.S Jewish population, a similar proportion keep Kosher in their homes in Greater El Paso (21%) compared to (22%) of U.S. Jewish adults that keep kosher at home. (Pew Research Center, 2013).

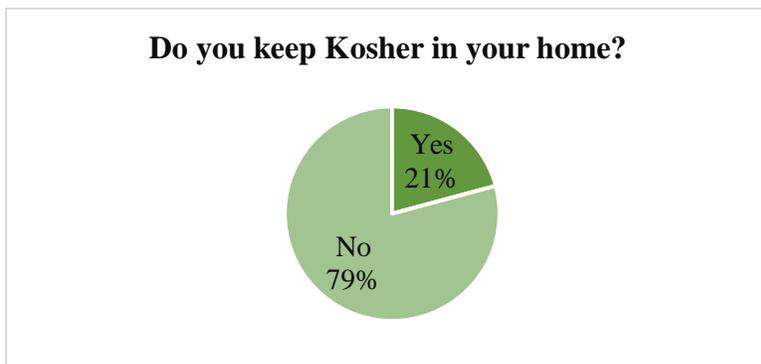


Figure 4.5.6: Keep Kosher in the Home

Table 4.5.5: Respondents that Keep Kosher in the Home

Do you keep Kosher in your home?	Count	%	South Palm Beach County %	U.S. Jewish adults %
Yes	87	21%	16%	22%
No	331	79%	74%	76%
Total	418	100%		

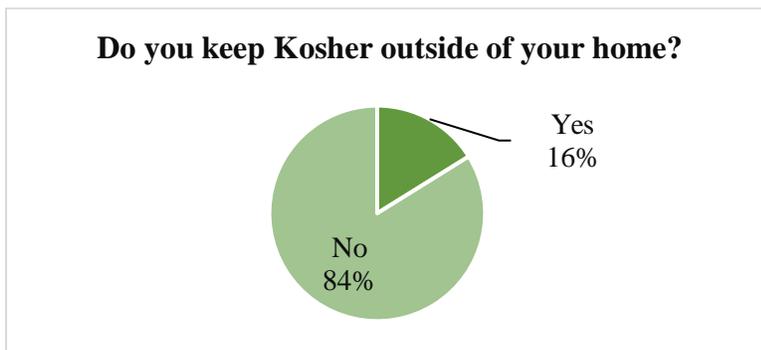


Figure 4.5.7: Respondents that Keep Kosher Outside of the Home

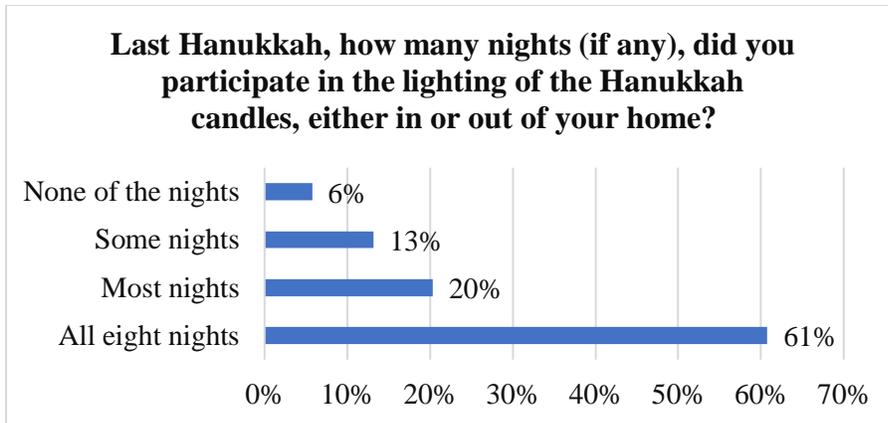


Figure 4.5.8: Lighting of the Hanukkah Candles

About 94% of respondents participated in the lighting of Hanukkah candles in Greater El Paso (Figure 4.5.8). Furthermore, 61% of respondents participated all eight nights in the lighting of Hanukkah candles and 20% participated most nights. 13% participated some night and 6% did not participate in the lighting of Hanukkah candles (Figure 4.5.8). More Jewish adults participate in lighting of Hanukkah candles in Greater El Paso compared to 62% of Jewish adults in Greater Washington-Metro DC Jews, and 85% of Jewish adults that participated in the lighting of Hanukkah Candles in South Palm Beach County (Aronson et al. 2018; Boxer et al. 2018).

Attitudes About Being Jewish

In Greater El Paso, about 34% Jewish respondents feel that being Jewish is mainly a matter of religion, 33% feel it is a matter of culture, and 32% feel it is a matter of ancestry (Figure 4.5.9). For the U.S. Jewish population, 27% believe being Jewish is a matter of ancestry, 26% believe it is matter of culture, and 26% a matter of religion based on the Pew 2013 study.

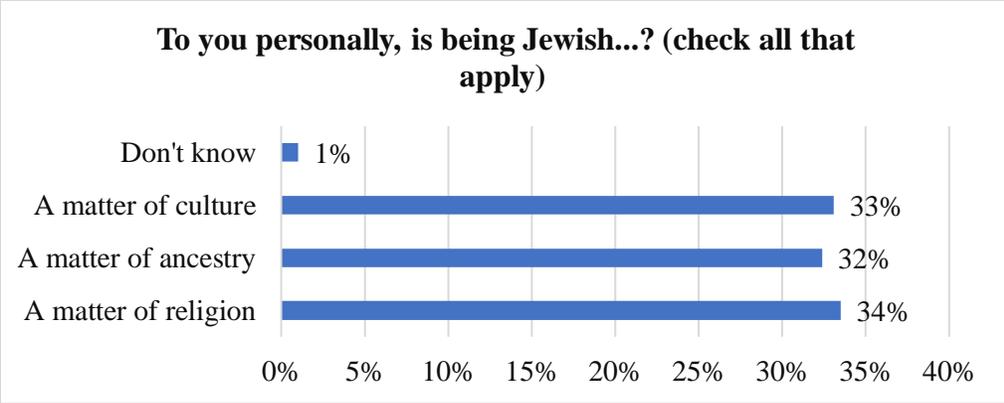


Figure 4.5.9: Being Jewish

Anti-Semitism in Greater El Paso

Most Jewish adults (96%) living in Greater El Paso believe that there is a little to a great deal of anti-Semitism (Figure 4.5.9). Further, 35% of respondents reported to have personally experienced anti-Semitism in this region. In contrast to other Jewish communities in the U.S., 13% of Jewish adults personally experienced anti-Semitism in South Palm Beach County and 15% experienced anti-Semitism in Greater DC (Boxer et al. 2018; Aronson et al. 2018).

In terms of the types of anti-Semitism respondents have experienced in this region, 50% have heard people talking despairingly about Jews or using Jewish slurs, 21% have been called offensive names because of their Jewish background (table 4.5.6). About 13% have been snubbed in a social setting or left out of social activities because of their Jewish background.

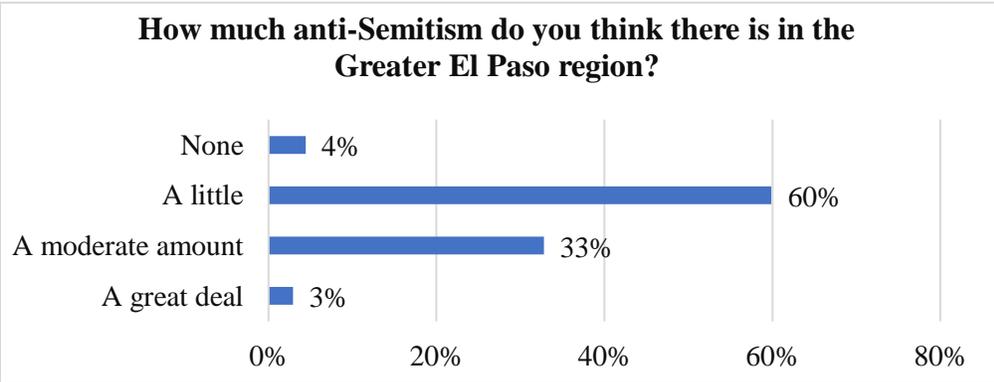


Figure 4.5.9: Perceived Anti-Semitism in Greater El Paso

Table 4.5.6: Types of Anti-Semitism Respondents Experienced in Greater El Paso

What types of anti-Semitism did you experience? (Check all that apply)	Count	%
You have been called offensive names because of your Jewish background.	49	21%
You have been snubbed in a social setting or left out of social activities because of your Jewish background.	31	13%
You have heard people talking disparagingly about Jews or using Jewish slurs.	115	50%
Other (please specify)	36	16%
Total	231	100%
Mean		2.60

According to the Anti-Defamation League (2021), there were 2,107 anti-Semitic incidents in 2019, and 2,204 incidents in 2020 in the U.S. As cases of anti-Semitic incidents in the U.S. have been on the rise, there have also been local incidents in Greater El Paso. For example, in 2018, Congregation B’nai Zion’s Cemetery was tagged and vandalized with anti-Semitic messages, as reported by the El Paso Times (Gonzalez, 2018). Further, in April 2020 some cars, houses and signs were spray painted with swastikas in Northeast El Paso (Borunda, 2020). Therefore, it is important to know that anti-Semitism still exists in this region.

4.6 Social and Community Life

Volunteering for Organizations

The results show that Greater El Paso Jewish community is very engaged in volunteer work for both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. When it comes to volunteer work for Jewish organizations, almost 70% of respondents actively engage with the Jewish community through

volunteering (Figure 4.6.1). Among the respondents that volunteered for local Jewish organizations, 56% volunteered on average less than 5 hours a month (Figure 4.6.2).

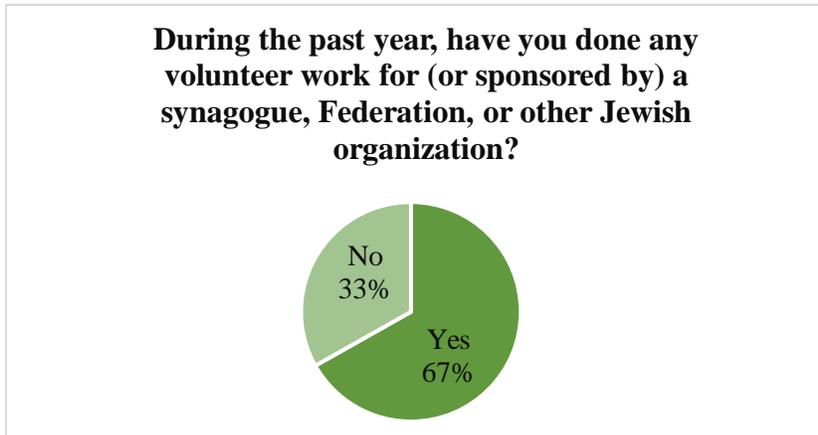


Figure 4.6.1: Volunteer Work for Jewish Organizations in the Past Year

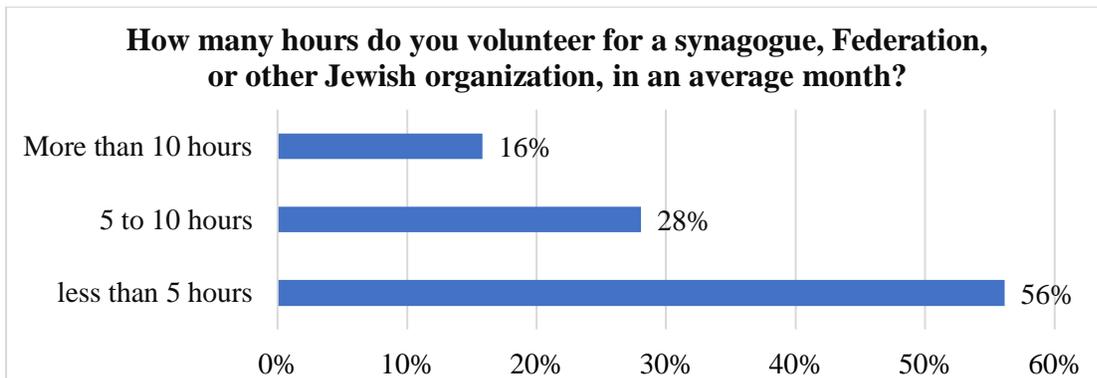


Figure 4.6.2: Hours Volunteered in an Average Month for Jewish Organization in the Past Year

More than half of respondents (54%) actively engage with their local community through volunteering for non-Jewish organizations (Figure 4.6.3). Among 221 respondents that volunteer for non-Jewish organizations, 38% volunteered more than 5 hours for non-Jewish organizations (Figure 4.6.4). In South Palm Beach County, 23% of Jewish adults volunteered for non-Jewish organizations (Boxer et al. 2018). Respondents in Greater El Paso volunteer more for non-Jewish organizations compared to South Palm Beach

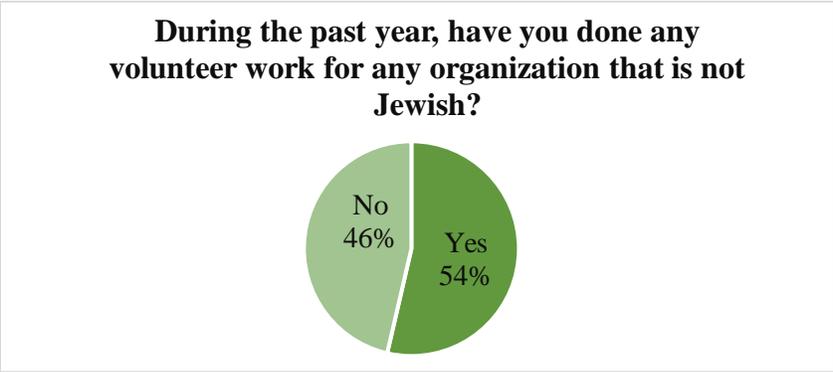


Figure 4.6.3: Volunteer Work for Non-Jewish Organization

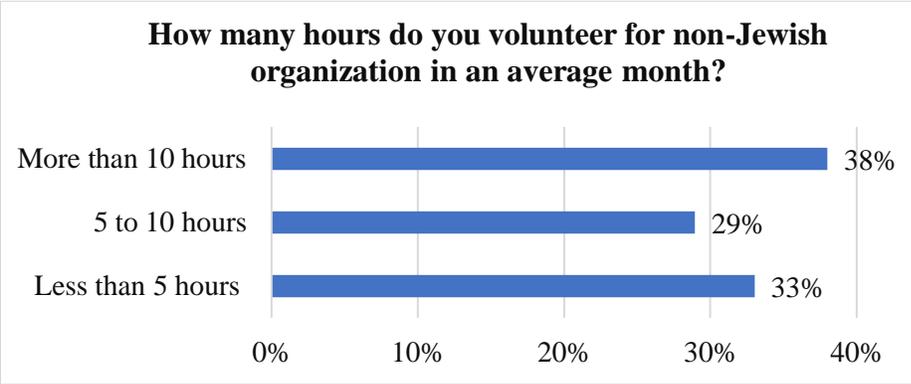


Figure 4.6.4: Hours Volunteered a Month for Non-Jewish Organizations

For many Jewish individuals, volunteering is important as it allows them to further connect, care and engage with others by providing aid through diverse forms and methods. In keeping with “tikkun olam” reparation of the world (Kertzer,1996), many Jews find ways to volunteer and be active in social action. According to Berkowitz & Rieger, volunteerism is an important part of Jewish life, community, and tradition, since volunteerism requires active participation and is an extension of “gmilut chasadim acts of loving kindness” that further enrich the community (Kotler-Berkowitz & Rieger, 2005, p.3).

4.7 Mobility and Migration

In terms of mobility and migration, 61% of respondents have lived in Greater El Paso for more than 20 years and 17% for 10-20 years (Figure 4.7.1 & Table 4.7.1). In contrast, only 35% of Jewish adults in New Mexico and 36% of Jewish adults in South Palm Beach County have lived in the same community for more than 20 years (Boxer et al. 2018; Kuppersmit & Arbetman-Rabinowitz, 2015). Among 412 respondents, 90% consider the Greater El Paso areas as their home base.

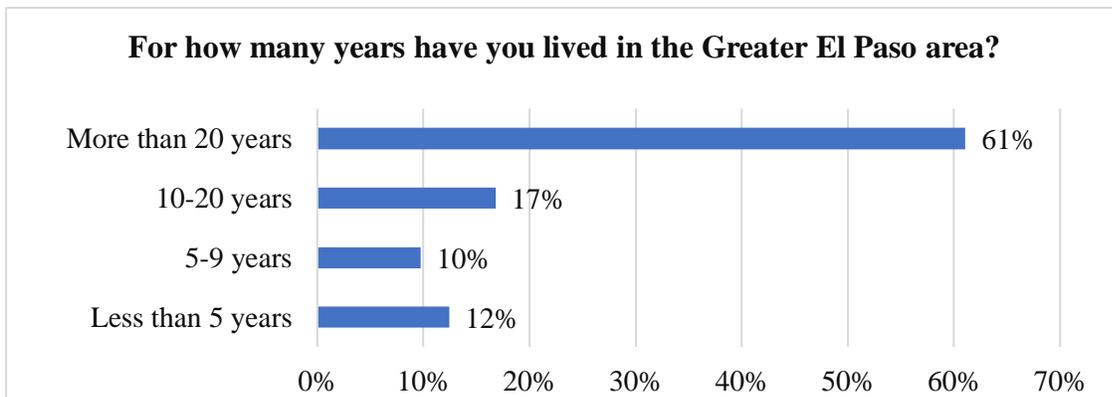


Figure 4.7.1: Number of Years lived in Greater El Paso

Table 4.7.1: Number of Years Lived in Greater El Paso

For how many years have you lived in the Greater El Paso area?	Count	%	South Palm Beach County %
Less than 5 years	51	12%	-
5-9 years	40	10%	-
10-20 years	69	17%	-
More than 20 years	251	61%	36%
Total	411	100%	

Most respondents (88%) do not intend to move out of this region (Figure 4.7.2). For those respondents who have intentions to move, close to 60% plan to move in 1-5 years. In Greater El Paso a lower proportion of respondents' plan to move out from this region (12%) compared to 17% of Jewish adults in New Mexico that plan to move out of New Mexico (Kuppersmit & Arbetman-Rabinowitz, 2015). This study shows the majority of respondents have no intentions leaving Greater El Paso and they consider the area as their home base.

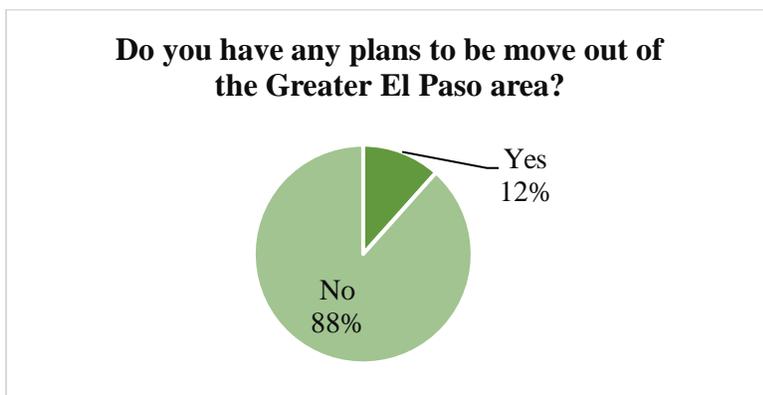


Figure 4.7.2: Respondents Plans to Move Out of the Greater El Paso Area

Table 4.7.2: Respondents Intention to Move Out of the Greater El Paso Area

When do you plan to move?	Count	%
Within the next year	8	17%
In 1-5 years	27	59%
In 6-10 years	7	15%
In more than 10 years	4	9%
Total	46	100%

4.8 Connections to Israel

Visits to Israel

In Greater El Paso, 66% of respondents have been to Israel (Figure 4.8.1) Furthermore, 51% of respondents have been to Israel twice or more, 42% have been to Israel once and 7% have

lived in Israel (Figure 4.8.2). In South Palm Beach County, 69% of Jewish adults have been to Israel (Boxer et al. 2018) and 66% in Greater Washington. Also, in Greater Washington, 31% have been to Israel more than once, 30% of Jewish adults have been to Israel once, and 7% lived in Israel (Aronson et al. 2018). Overall, more Jewish adults have been to Israel in Greater El Paso than in the Greater Washington-DC Jewish community.

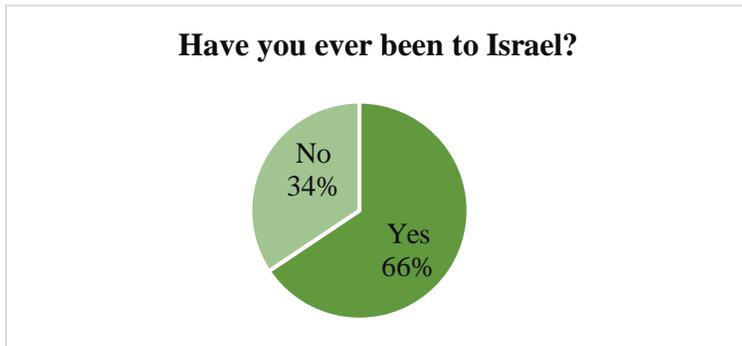


Figure 4.8.1: Been to Israel

Table 4.8.1: Been to Israel

Have you ever been to Israel?	Count	%
Yes	271	66%
No	142	34%
Total	413	100%
Mean		1.34

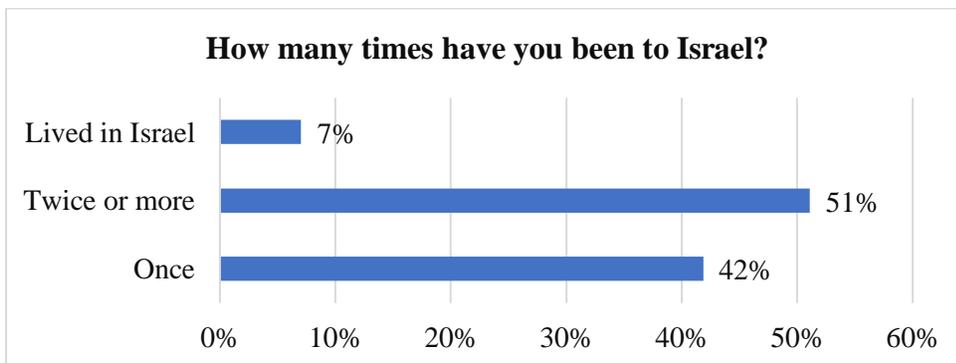


Figure 4.8.2: Number of Times Visited Israel

Pro-Israel and News about Israel

Among 410 respondents, the majority 86% of respondents consider themselves to be Pro-Israel (Figure 4.8.3). When participants were asked how often they seek out news about Israel in the past month, among 408 respondents, 32% seek out news about Israel once or twice in the past month, 19% every few days, 13% once a day, 8% several times a day in the past month, and 15% never actively seek out news about Israel (Figure 4.8.2 & Table 4.8.2). About 45% of respondents seek news about Israel weekly compared to 22% of Jews in South Palm Beach County (Boxer et al. 2018). Twice as many adults seek out news about Israel weekly in Greater El Paso than the Jewish adults in South Palm Beach County and Greater Washington. The proportion of Jewish adults that seek out new about Israel is lower in Greater El Paso compared to Greater Washington and South Palm Beach Jewish communities. In Greater Washington, 30% never seek news, and 29% seek news weekly (Aronson et al. 2018). In South Palm Beach County 24% never seek out news, and 22% weekly, and 53% seek news about Israel at least once a week (Boxer et al. 2018).

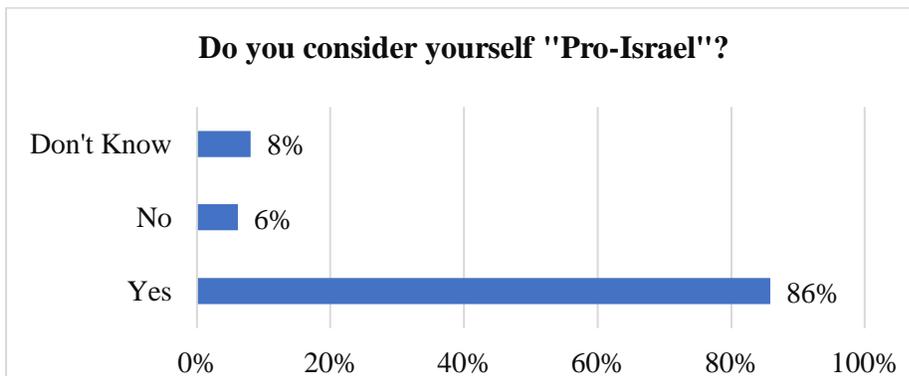


Figure 4.8.3: Respondents that Consider Themselves Pro-Israel

Table 4.8.2: Seek Out News About Israel in the Past Month

In the past month, how often did you actively seek out news about Israel?	Count	%
Never	62	15%

Once or twice	131	32%
Once a week	52	13%
Every few days	79	19%
Once a day	51	13%
Several times a day	33	8%
Total	408	100%

Emotional Attachment to Israel

Among 405 respondents, the majority (78%) of respondents feel connected to Israel in Greater El Paso (Figure 4.8.4). More specifically, 43% (173) of Jewish adults in Greater El Paso feel very attached to Israel, 35% feel somewhat attached, 14% not very attached, 5% feel not at all attached to Israel, and the remaining 3% don't know.

According to the Pew 2013 Study about 30% of Jewish adults feel very attached to Israel, 39% somewhat attached, 33% not very attached, and about 9% are not very attached. Based on Figure 4.8.4, Greater El Paso has a higher proportion of Jewish adults that are very attached to Israel as 43% of respondents in Greater El Paso feel very attached to Israel compared to 30% of Jewish adults in the U.S. (Pew Research Center, 2013). In New Mexico 78% of Jewish adults feel attached to Israel which is similar in proportion to 78% of respondents in Greater El Paso that feel emotionally attached to Israel (Kuppersmit & Arbetman-Rabinowitz, 2015; Jewish Federation of New Mexico, 2015).

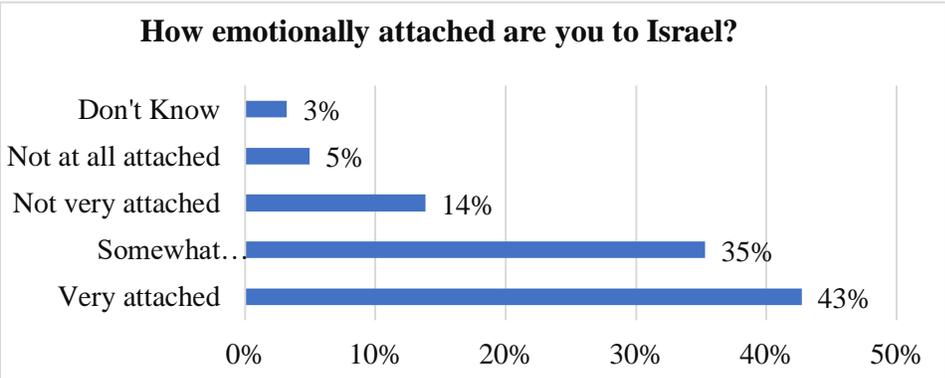


Figure 4.8.4: Respondents Emotional Attachment to Israel

4.9 Voice from the Community

Strengths of the Community

When it comes to the strengths of the community most respondents believe that the strengths of Jewish community lie in its cohesiveness—as close-knit, caring, diverse and generous community with the ability of “linking Jews from multiple communities.” These views and sentiments are reflected in the following comments:

“Cohesive, caring and welcoming.”

“Affiliated members closely knit, supportive, welcoming, philanthropic.”

Respondents also believe that another strength of Greater El Paso is its diversity and inclusivity:

“Diverse, supportive, inclusive”

Community Comments on Programs and Services Needed

While respondents empathized the inclusiveness of this community, respondents expressed the necessity of a Jewish Community Center and inclusive community programming along with viable and accessible kosher food options and services.

Also missing from the Greater El Paso region (EL Paso and Las Cruces) are Jewish Community Centers (JCC) with diverse activities for all age groups:

“I am not aware whether you have a JCC facility in El Paso. In any case, we live in Las

Cruces and I think we are not likely to have a JCC here.”

Further, the services needed to meet the dietary needs of the community are kosher options such as markets and restaurants in the region:

“Kosher restaurants and markets”

“Resources for Orthodox people including services, food, etc.”

Given that many members of the community are older in age, respondents would like to see more services and programming to assist those who are older in age. For example, the type of services they would like to see are Jewish senior housing and activities that incorporate adults of varying age groups and the elderly with the rest of the community.

“I am not aware of a Jewish home for independent, assisted living, nursing facilities”

“A coordination between our religious institutions. Programs for middle aged people. “

Although this is an aging community there is a need to accommodate children and families with children of varying age groups. As the community has 70% of children in households that are school aged children and teens between the ages of 6-18, respondents expressed the need Jewish education programs and activities for both children and teens.

“Programming for families that would bring the few young people we have together and would build a sense of community with those families.”

“I'm not really sure. Maybe a playgroup for younger school age children, or something military family oriented. Even play groups for parents with preschool age and younger. Something that brings together Jews more frequently! “

“Perhaps more encouragement programs for young singles, teens and up.”

Many respondents described that the community needs inclusive outreach programming that builds bridges between the Jewish and non-Jewish community. Further Jewish adults in Greater El Paso voiced the need for unity as some feel as outsiders within their own community.

“Overall community outreach and inclusion of Jews or Jew curious/friendly people of all backgrounds. “

“More programs that encompass the whole community instead of just each congregation.”

“More kindness to each other - after four years, I still feel like an outsider in 70 percent of the activities.”

This study shows that approximately 13% of respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino/a, the need for the inclusion of Spanish Jews in the region through “bilingual services/emails” was expressed.

Since the Jewish Community in Greater El Paso is actively engaged in volunteerism respondents surveyed conveyed the need for more social action and social justice initiatives in the community due to El Paso and Las Cruces being situated along the U.S-Mexico border.

“I am unaware of any Jewish social services available in this area. I am also unaware if the Federation is doing any work on their own or working with any immigration agencies.”

“Social justice initiative programs are needed. We live in a border, like the border between Palestine and Israel, the vast reservoir of solidarity remains untapped.”

Overall, the Jewish community in Greater El Paso finds its strength in being close-knit, inclusive, and welcoming. While it is a caring, and welcoming community this study finds that there is there is a need for inclusion and diversity, more attentiveness towards its members to foster a sense of togetherness. Jewish adults in the region want to be more connected and united across denominational lines.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This study, through an online survey, provides insight into the demographic profile of the Jewish community in Greater El Paso, Jewish identity, patterns of Jewish community engagement and volunteerism, while comparing this community to other Jewish communities in the U.S and to the broader U.S. Jewish population. My results first show that the Jewish community in Greater El Paso is an aging population. Jewish adults in this region are also highly educated as the majority have graduate or professional degrees. Also, most respondents surveyed live in the borderland communities of El Paso, Texas, and Las Cruces, New Mexico. When it comes to the Jewish identity of adults in Greater El Paso, this study finds that most respondents identified with Reform Judaism, and very few self-identified with the Orthodox/Hasidic movements. For most respondents being Jewish is similarly weighed between religion, ancestry, and culture. Based on this study, the Greater El Paso Jewish community is similar to the Jewish population in the U.S. in Jewish denomination, and kosher practices. In Greater El Paso, social and educational programming for families, the elderly, and kosher food options are some of the services respondents believe are needed in this region to further enhance Jewish life.

As the first demographic study of the Jewish community in the area, the present study was able to provide a descriptive overview into the composition of the community. However, being the first, there are some limitations such as recruitment, limited access to community, and lack of incentives. I had limited access to community members and relied on other members of the community to seek out potential participants. Also, as an outsider in this community gaining access to the community was challenging. While the community leader(s) helped obtain access to some events, there was still an existing need to attend more events to engage further with the community prior to March 2020 when COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown began in El Paso, Tx. Although

some weren't as receptive as others, the local religious leaders were of great help in this study as they encouraged members of their congregations to participate in the survey.

Further, the lack of incentives for participants to take the survey contributed to the low survey response rate, although an iPad raffle increased the response rate between December 2019 and May 2020. Another limitation was being unable to reach younger participants in this study through religious and cultural spaces inside and outside the Jewish communities. In addition, COVID-19 hindered how I could interact with the Jewish community, halting potential face to face events to distribute information such as study cards and brochures. Instead, I moved to an online format of the brochure to share with the community via email with the help of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso

Other limitations include selection bias and the exclusion of some questions. Selection bias extends to gender and age of participants as the majority were older in age and more willing to participate in the survey. Also, most respondents who took the survey were women. Most participants in this study were recruited with the help of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso based on who appeared on their email list. Therefore, participants were more likely to be affiliated with local synagogue(s) and Jewish organizations. Also, per the request of the community partner, questions about income had to be excluded.

In the future, researchers should consider expanding on questions excluded in this study such as inquiring about income. Future research also needs to examine individual level data on respondent's income and language spoken at home. Although questions about race/ethnicity were asked in this survey no questions regarding the language spoken at home were asked. Also, as many community members in the Greater El Paso region perceived a significant amount of anti-

Semitism in this community, future research should investigate cases or the consequences of anti-Semitism in the Greater El Paso Region.

From my findings and experience, I would suggest that those who are looking into conducting local community studies find more ways to engage with the local leaders as well as finding diverse and alternate ways to reach out to respondents who are not affiliated with local institutions. Also, I would advise others to attend as many face-to-face events, and community events to establish trust with the community and network with other Jewish organizations, cultural and religious leaders.

This study shows that 13% of respondents are Hispanic or Latino and 1% Black or African American, in a predominantly white non-Hispanic Jewish community. Therefore, future research should address the need for more diverse and inclusive spaces within religious and cultural institutions and organizations. Further recommendations are to incorporate qualitative data open ended responses and to conduct a more in-depth quantitative analysis.

For community organization, based on data on ages of children and adults, local organizations should prepare more services to meet the needs of an aging community while also incorporating them into activities. Additionally, more diverse services and programs geared towards children, teens, and families with children would be beneficial for the Jewish community in Greater El Paso. In Addition, including bilingual (Spanish/English) community newsletters and e-mails would promote inclusion and diversification within the community.

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Appendix

Demographic Study Card Information

Greater El Paso Jewish Community Demographic Study

You are being asked to take part in the Greater El Paso Jewish Community Demographic Study. Supported by the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso (JFED), and conducted by a research team at The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), the study aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of the size and character of the local Jewish population, and to provide valid data about the Greater El Paso Jewish community that can be used by communal organizations to design programs that support and enhance Jewish life. By taking this survey, you will provide valuable insights on the Jewish community, religious practices, Jewish life, Jewish identity, community and individual concerns, as well as challenges the community faces in the Greater El Paso region. Your answers will be kept confidential and only reported in aggregate form. Risks for taking part in this survey are minimal. All data will be held securely on a password protected file on password protected computers. In addition, your individual answers will be aggregated with other participants' answers for reports.

Participation in the study is voluntary; therefore, you have the option to not complete the survey, or to not answer specific questions. If you have questions/concerns about the study please contact the primary investigator, Dr. Danielle Morales (xdeng2@utep.edu) or the research assistant, Ms. Karla Martinez (kmartinez13@miners.utep.edu). If you have limited access to technology, you can also contact us (915-747-8471) to fill out the survey via telephone or to make other arrangements. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a survey participant, you may call Institutional Review Board at The University of Texas at El Paso (915-747-8841).

This study has been funded by the Aaron Wechter Annual Memorial Scholarship Fund with the El Paso Jewish Community Foundation.

Survey Link: <https://utep.questionpro.com/t/AOn1NZfQk3>

Online Survey Information Consent Form: Greater El Paso Jewish Demographic Study

Hello:

You are being asked to voluntarily take part in the “Greater El Paso Jewish Community Demographic Study” which aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of the size and character of the local Jewish population, and provide valid data about the Greater El Paso Jewish community that can be used by communal organizations and their leadership to design programs and services that support and enhance Jewish life. By taking this survey, you will provide valuable insights on the Jewish community, religious practices, Jewish life, Jewish identity, community, and individual concerns, as well as challenges the community faces in the Greater El Paso region. This study is funded by the Aaron & Sylvia Wechter Family Fund at The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) through the El Paso Jewish Community Foundation.

Your answers will be kept confidential and only reported in aggregate form. Risks for taking part in this survey are minimal. All data will be held securely on a password protected file on password protected computers. In addition, your individual answers will be aggregated with other participants' answers for reports.

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Thank you very much for your time and support. Please start with the survey now by clicking on the "Next" button below.

Vita

Karla Martinez received a B.S. in Mathematics from the University of Texas at El Paso in May 2019. In the Fall 2019, she entered the master's program in Sociology at the University of Texas at El Paso and was awarded the Aaron and Sylvia Wechter Excellence Fund scholarship. While pursuing her Master of Arts degree at the University of Texas at El Paso, where she worked as a research assistant in the Sociology and Anthropology department. As an undergraduate, she published in a book chapter with Dr. Amy Wagler, Associate Professor of Mathematical Sciences, featured in *Community Engagement and High Impact Practices in Higher Education*. Furthermore, as an undergraduate in the Spring of 2019 and as a graduate student in the Fall of 2019, she was an active participant of the UTEP Census 2020 Awareness Campaign with the CCE and Voto Latino. Her long-term goals are to obtain a Ph.D. and conduct community-based research.