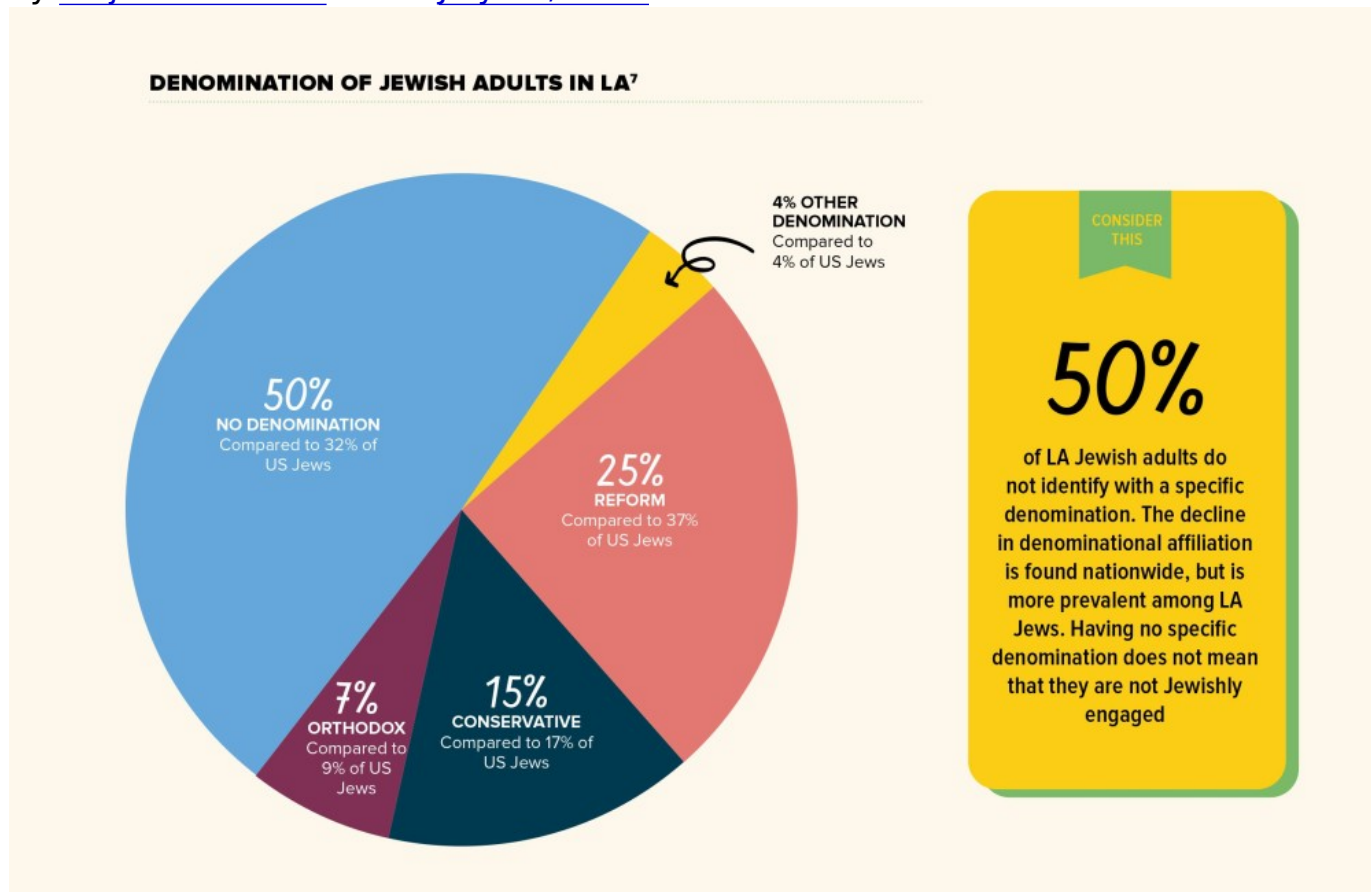


A study of Jewish LA finds a growing and diverse community

by [Alejandra Molina](#) in the [July 27, 2022](#) issue



(Courtesy image)

About half of Jewish households in Los Angeles include an immigrant to the United States or someone whose parent is an immigrant, according to a new demographic report released by the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles. These Jewish immigrants to the Golden State come from a range of countries, including Russia, Israel, Iran, Europe, and across Latin America.

“LA has always been, as West Coast Judaism has been, more diverse than Jewish life on the East Coast,” said Noah Farkas, chief executive officer of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles.

The Eastern European Jewish experience, Farkas said, has been seen as primary for a long time, but LA’s Jewish population shows that other communities “are rising in

both their experience and their engagement with Jewish life.

“The trend that we’re seeing really previews the future diversity of the Jewish community. So what happens here, and is cutting edge here, will lead the cultural evolution of Jewish life across the country,” Farkas said.

The 2021 Study of Jewish LA comes 25 years after the last LA Jewish community study. It’s based on data collected from 3,767 households between June and September 2021.

Researchers found there are more than 560,000 Jewish people in LA, the second-largest Jewish community in the United States, making up 294,200 Jewish households in the city. This represents a 25 percent growth of Jewish households since 1997.

The report shows 8 percent of Jewish adults in LA identify as LGBTQ, and 14 percent of Jewish households have a member (who may or may not be Jewish) who identifies as LGBTQ. Nationally, 4 percent of US Jewish adults identify as gay or lesbian, and another 5 percent describe themselves as bisexual, according to the report.

Additionally, 6 percent of LA Jewish adults identify as a person of color. More than 60 percent who identify as such are age 40 or younger.

“These age patterns suggest that the racial diversity of the LA Jewish community is likely to increase over time,” says the report.

The report also found that half of all LA Jewish adults have no denomination and identify either as secular/cultural Jews or as “just Jewish.” One-quarter of Jewish adults in LA live in households in which someone is a member of a Jewish worshipping community, a rate the report notes is significantly lower than the national average.

Farkas found it revealing to see the level of Jewish engagement among younger people. The study’s “Index of Jewish Engagement” factors in not only denominational and synagogue affiliation but also the participation in Jewish rituals, like Shabbat, and the expression of Jewish practices through the arts and clothing.

More than half of Jewish adults age 22–30 talk about Jewish topics frequently, and almost one-quarter read, watch, or listen to Jewish-themed books, films, or music frequently, the study found.

However, the report also highlights that one-quarter of Jewish adults who are between 55 and 64 years old are “minimally involved” with Jewish activities, as are 30 percent of those ages 65–74 and 39 percent who are 75 and older.

Farkas said the federation needs to “focus some energy” on that segment of Jewish Angelenos.

“They’re still relatively young in terms of their life span. Maybe they finally have more time because they’re exiting the crush of child rearing . . . to explore Jewish life differently,” he said.

The role of the federation, said Farkas, is to help synagogues and other legacy institutions shift their “models to meet the new emergent trend in Jewish life.” This data will help do that, he said.

“We care about those traditional institutions. They’ve been a hallmark of Jewish life for thousands of years,” Farkas said. —Religion News Service