



A PORTRAIT OF  
**BAY AREA JEWISH LIFE**  
AND COMMUNITIES

**Community  
Study Highlights**

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**Commissioned and supported by:**



**The Jewish Community Federation of  
San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin  
and Sonoma Counties**

# Foreword

The 2017 Portrait of Bay Area Jewish Life and Communities is the first-ever comprehensive study of the entire Jewish Bay Area—Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, and Sonoma Counties.

The Portrait seeks to answer a variety of questions about the Bay Area Jewish population: What is its size and location? Who comprises today's Bay Area Jewish households? How do different people connect to and engage in Jewish life? How is our community growing, changing, and evolving?

By exploring answers to these and many other questions, we garner vital information about Bay Area Jewish life today, the changing nature of Jewish identity, and the varied Jewish households in our region. More critically, this Portrait will help inform and advance the work of the broad array of Jewish institutions, philanthropists, innovators, and activists, toward the communal effort to create vibrant, diverse, inclusive, and secure Jewish communities.

We want to express sincere thanks to those who made the Portrait possible: Jim Joseph Foundation, Koret Foundation, Laszlo N. Tauber Family Foundation, Levine-Lent Family Foundation, Lisa & John Pritzker Family Fund, Newton and Rochelle Becker Charitable Trust, Sinai Memorial Chapel, Taube Philanthropies, Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund, Jewish Federation of Silicon Valley, and individual donors.

The study was prepared by a highly experienced and independent professional research team led by Professor Steven M. Cohen, Dr. Jacob B. Ukeles, and Dr. Ashley Grosse. Members of this team have completed 25 studies of local Jewish communities in the United States.

We were fortunate to have a distinguished group of academic advisors who provided guidance throughout the study: Professor Susan Folkman, University of California, San Francisco; Professor Ari Y. Kelman, Stanford University; Professor Shaul Kelner, Vanderbilt University; Dr. Laurence Kotler-Berkowitz, Jewish Federations of North America; Professor Aliya Saperstein, Stanford University; and Professor Lee Shulman, Stanford University. Julie Golde, Senior Director of Community Impact, led the study process on behalf of the Federation.

This document contains selected study highlights and important key findings. The complete analysis of the data set, anticipated to be released in Spring 2018, will provide additional detailed information, as we work together to build flourishing Jewish communities. The Bay Area Jewish Community Digital Portrait Tool, expected to complement the complete analysis of data, will include an interactive website that will display key aspects of the data, as well as a dynamic map of Jewish organizations and institutions, providing an opportunity to review and learn about Bay Area Jewish life.

Lastly, we are grateful to all who took part in the Portrait. We look forward to sharing these significant findings with you. This study is only as valuable as the action it leads to, and our hope is that more informed decisions will result in more meaningful Jewish life for more people. To that end, we hope the Portrait stimulates discussions about policy and practice that will deepen the vision of a thriving Jewish community that is a force for good.

Sincerely,



Richard Fiedotin  
Chair, Jewish Community Federation  
and Endowment Fund



Danny Grossman,  
CEO, Jewish Community Federation  
and Endowment Fund

# About the Study

## Goals

- ▶ To advance the work of Bay Area Jewish institutions, philanthropists, innovators, and activists in creating vibrant, diverse, and inclusive Jewish communities.
- ▶ To stimulate discussion on implications for policy, planning, and practice leading toward a thriving Jewish community.

## Objectives

- ▶ Estimate the number of Jewish persons and households in the ten-county Bay Area.
- ▶ Portray and analyze Jewish households' sociodemographic characteristics.
- ▶ Portray and analyze patterns of Jewish engagement, connection, and behavior.

# The Big Picture

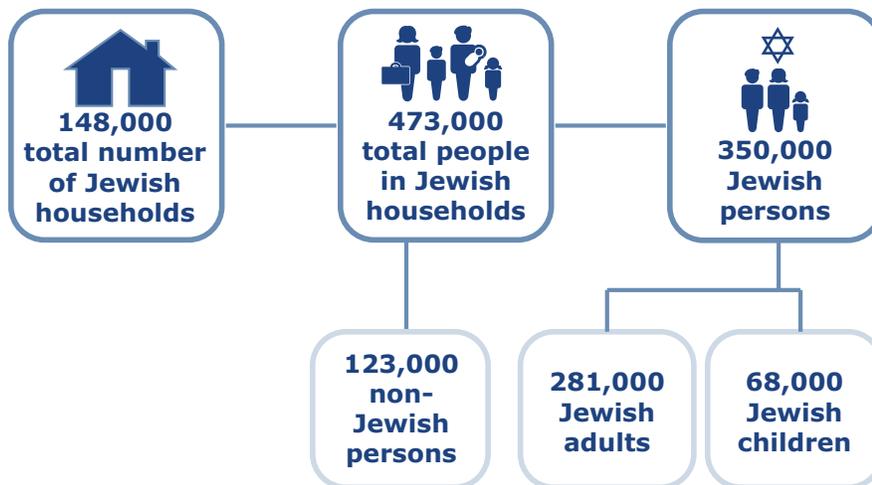
- ▶ The Bay Area contains the 4th largest concentration of Jewish people in the U.S.
- ▶ The size of the Jewish population of the Bay Area has been relatively stable over recent years.
- ▶ The Bay Area Jewish population is diverse, very mobile within the region, and highly educated.
- ▶ Young adults and Boomers are the largest age cohorts among adults in Jewish households.
- ▶ Pockets of poverty, need, and economic vulnerability exist in the midst of affluence.
- ▶ A relatively small, highly engaged affiliated population is offset by a much larger unaffiliated population that is substantially less engaged.
- ▶ Younger Jews are less likely to be very attached to Israel. So are liberals, intermarried, and the unaffiliated.

Creating vibrant, diverse, and inclusive Jewish communities.

The size of the Jewish population in the Bay Area has been relatively stable over recent years.

# Bay Area Jewish Household and Population Estimates

## Three Different Measures of the Bay Area Jewish Population



*Note: Numbers may not add to total due to rounding.*

## Definitions for the Study

### Who is counted as Jewish?

- ▶ Respondents (age 18 and older) who view Judaism as their religion or who say that “aside from religion” they consider themselves to be Jewish or partly Jewish.
- ▶ Respondents who identify as Jews, and consider their religion not Jewish.
- ▶ Spouses defined by respondents as Jewish either by religion or by self-definition.
- ▶ All other adults in the household the respondent views as Jewish or partly Jewish.
- ▶ Children being raised as Jewish or as partly Jewish.

### Who is considered a non-Jewish person?

- ▶ Respondents, spouses, and other adults who are NOT Jewish—either by religion or by self-definition.
- ▶ Children NOT being raised Jewishly—they are being raised in another religion, or without a religion and not Jewish, or the respondent says their status is “undecided.”

### What is considered a Jewish household?

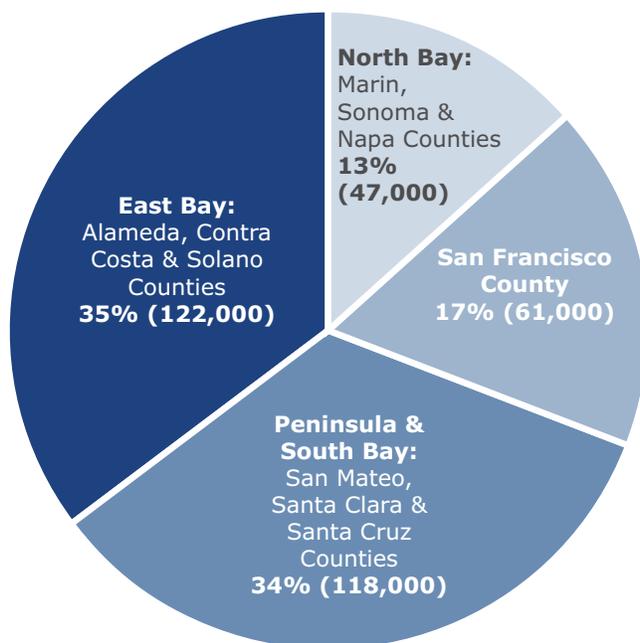
A Jewish household includes at least one Jewish adult, be it the respondent or other people (usually the spouse/partner).

## The Bay Area Jewish population has likely been stable in size.

There are no strictly comparable historical data to the 2017 study data. The total number of Jewish adults in the San Francisco and East Bay federation service areas in 2017—250,000—is the same as the sum of the number of Jewish adults in the 2004 San Francisco study and the 2011 East Bay study. As there has been no previous study of the entire Silicon Valley federation service area—the 2004 San Francisco study included Sunnyvale and Cupertino—it is not possible to be certain about change in Silicon Valley. The best conclusion is that the total Jewish population in the Bay Area has been relatively stable over recent years.

## Geography

### Jewish Population Breakdown by Region

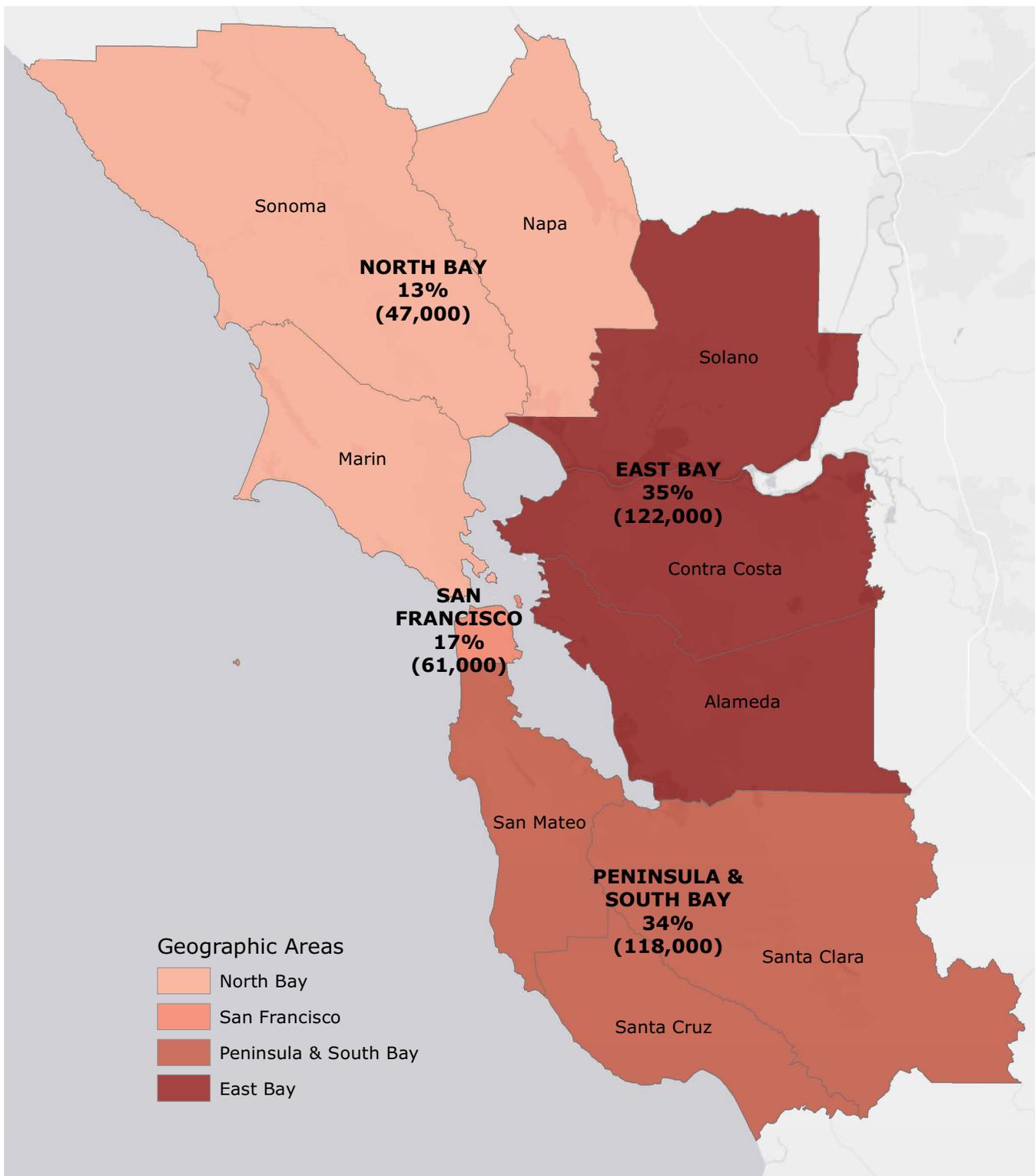


Of all Jews living in the Bay Area, 1/3 live in the East Bay, 1/3 live in Peninsula & South Bay, and 1/6 live in San Francisco County.

*Note: Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.*

- ▶ Santa Clara County's Jewish population of 73,000 is the largest of the ten counties in the Bay Area.
- ▶ Of all Jews living in the Bay Area, 1/3 live in the East Bay, 1/3 live in Peninsula & South Bay, and 1/6 live in San Francisco County.
- ▶ Almost two out of five respondents moved into their current residence in the last five years.
- ▶ Overall, 29% will definitely or probably move in the next two years. Of those planning to move, 45% will move within the Bay Area, the rest will move out of the Bay Area or are not sure.

## Four Areas and Ten Counties in the Community Study



## Demography

- ▶ 19% of people in Jewish households are children (under 18); and 19% are 60 and older.
- ▶ Boomers are booming—34% of adult respondents in Jewish households are in their 50s or 60s.
- ▶ Young adults are an even larger cohort—37% of adult respondents are between 18 and 34.
- ▶ Of respondents 18–34, 53% are single, 26% are married, 21% are partnered.
- ▶ Of respondents under age 65, 80% are working; over age 65, 38% are working; overall, about one in five are self-employed.
- ▶ Fully, 42% of respondents have a graduate degree—far more than U.S. Jews elsewhere. Women slightly lead men in graduate degrees.
- ▶ Only 28% of respondents were born in the Bay Area. 5% were born in the Former Soviet Union (FSU), 3% in Israel.

Boomers are booming—millennials are booming too.

## Diversity

- ▶ 25% of Bay Area Jewish households include a respondent or spouse who is Hispanic, Asian-American, African-American, or of mixed or other ethnic or racial background (other than white). For those age 18 to 34, the corresponding percentage is 38%; for those age 35 to 49, it is 27%.
- ▶ One-in-ten households include a respondent who is lesbian, gay or bisexual. Lesbian, gay or bisexual respondents are most numerous in San Francisco—one in five.

## Poverty, Human Service Needs, and Economic Vulnerability

- ▶ 22% of households report they are “just managing” financially or “cannot make ends meet,” while 17% say they are “well off.”
- ▶ Those age 35–49 are most likely to report “just managing” or “cannot make ends meet.” Seniors are most likely to feel “well off.”
- ▶ 30% of respondents sought assistance in the prior year for at least one of five human service needs specified in the survey (jobs, child’s special needs, elder services, housing, or disability). 9% sought two services.
- ▶ Those earning under \$40,000 are the most likely to seek services.
- ▶ 2,000 Jewish seniors age 75 and older living alone are much more likely to report health problems than those 75 and older living with someone else.

## Inter-group and In-group Households

- ▶ Inter-group marriage rates vary widely by age, from a low of 42% among those 65 and older to a high of 66% among those under 35.
- ▶ Just 26% of inter-group couples report they are raising their children as fully Jewish compared with 45% of single parents and 96% of in-group couples.

Inter-group marriage rates vary widely by age.

### Defining In-group and Inter-group Couples

“In-group” and “inter-group” refer to both married and partnered couples. Partnered couples—in-group or inter-group—are about as engaged in Jewish life as married couples—in-married or intermarried respectively.

**In-group Jewish Couples.** Both spouses/partners identify as Jewish. In-group couples include “conversionary” couples where one member converted or came to identify as Jewish.

**Inter-group Jewish Couples.** One spouse/partner identifies as Jewish, the other does not.

*Inter-group couple rates are calculated for currently married and partnered respondents and spouses/partners, and does not include the very few marriages of other adults in the households.*

## Jewish Engagement

- ▶ Based on a wide range of measures, Jewish people in the Bay Area are less Jewishly engaged than Jewish people in the rest of the West (including Los Angeles) and far less Jewishly engaged than Jews in the rest of the U.S.
  - *For example, 26% of respondents in the 2017 Bay Area Study say that it is very important to be Jewish compared with 38% in the rest of the West (Pew Research Center data) and 48% in the rest of the U.S. (Pew Research Center data).*

In-group couples are much more active in Jewish life than inter-group couples or singles.

- ▶ A relatively small, highly engaged affiliated population is offset by a much larger unaffiliated population that is substantially less engaged.
  - *For example, fewer than one in ten of the unaffiliated respondents have a Shabbat meal sometimes or more, compared with more than half of the highly affiliated. The unaffiliated are 43% of total respondents and the highly affiliated and leaders are 17% of respondents.*
- ▶ In-group couples are much more active in Jewish life than inter-group couples or singles.
  - *For example, 26% of inter-group couples participate in Jewish cultural events a few times a year or more for Jewish purposes, compared with 32% of singles and 44% of in-group couples.*
- ▶ Overall, feeling “unwelcome” at Jewish events and activities is rare. Both inter-group couples and singles are only a little less likely to feel “very welcome” at Jewish activities than in-group couples.
- ▶ Four out of ten respondents identify as Reform; another four out of ten do not identify with any denomination.
- ▶ Denomination is strongly related to Jewish engagement.
- ▶ Belonging to a synagogue is strongly related to Jewish engagement.
- ▶ Very few respondents are “very interested” in increasing their Jewish connections.
- ▶ Lower income households are much less likely to be Jewishly engaged than higher income households.
- ▶ Young adults (18–34) score higher on participating in Shabbat meals and on attending High Holiday services, and lower on importance of being Jewish, having Jewish friends, and giving to the federation and other Jewish causes than older respondents (50 and older).
- ▶ Young adults are as likely as older respondents to participate in Jewish cultural events and any form of volunteering (e.g., hands-on service or advocacy).

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## Israel

- ▶ Just over 40% of Jewish respondents have been to Israel, somewhat higher than the 34% in the West as a whole (Pew Research Center data). Of respondents age 35–49, most have been to Israel.
- ▶ Equal numbers of Jewish respondents are VERY attached to Israel as are NOT at all attached.
- ▶ Most respondents feel a Jewish state's existence is very important, but 22% say it is not important or are not sure.
- ▶ Younger Jews are less likely to feel very attached to Israel. So are liberals, inter-group couples, and the unaffiliated.
- ▶ Fewer young adults than their elders...
  - see the Jewish state as very important;
  - are comfortable with the idea of a Jewish state;
  - sympathize with Israel more than with the Palestinians.

Most respondents feel a Jewish state's existence is very important, but 22% say it is not important or are not sure.

## Conclusion

The more than 3,000 people who participated in the survey have contributed to a much better understanding of the Jewish people and Jewish communities of the Bay Area. This understanding will be used to guide decisions and actions to improve the quality of Jewish life in the Bay Area.

## Study Methods

For a full description of the methods used to conduct this study, please refer to the methodology report at the Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund website at: [www.jewishfed.org/communitystudy](http://www.jewishfed.org/communitystudy)

# Acknowledgments

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