



## **Beyond the Count:**

Perspectives and Lived Experiences of Jews of Color

Commissioned by the  
**Jews of Color Initiative**

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This research presents an intersectional account of American Jewish life by exploring the ways in which the ethnic, racial, and cultural identities of Jews of Color (JoC) influence and infuse their Jewish experiences. *Beyond the Count* was commissioned to inform the work of the Jews of Color Initiative (JoCI), a national effort focused on building and advancing the professional, organizational, and communal field for JoC. This study provides valuable insights to help Jewish communities and organizations reckon more directly and effectively with the racial diversity of American Jewry.

In this research, “Jews of Color” is understood as an imperfect, but useful umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of identities and meanings. Those who self-identified as JoC in this study used the term in a multiplicity of ways: as a racial grouping (e.g. Black, Asian, and multiracial Jews); to indicate national heritage (e.g. Egyptian, Iranian, and Ethiopian Jews); to describe regional and geographic connections (e.g. Latina/o/x, Mizrahi, Sephardic Jews); and to specify sub-categories (e.g. transracially adopted Jews and Jewish Women of Color).

This study, which was housed at Stanford University, collected the largest ever dataset of self-identified JoC to date. Survey data from 1,118 respondents present a broad portrait of respondents’ demographic characteristics, backgrounds, and experiences. Sixty-one in-depth interviews provide texture and bring respondents’ own words to the forefront.

This report integrates survey and interview data as interwoven threads of a complex fabric of JoC identities, lived experiences, and perspectives. Taken together, these parallel indicators work in conversation to tell a story of joy, persistence, isolation, and self-discovery.

In the context of the national conversation about race in the United States, this study seeks to enhance American Jews’ understanding of their own racial and ethnic diversity and provides an opportunity to reflect on how systems of inequality are perpetuated in our own community. By raising awareness about the lived experiences of JoC, the research findings are shared in the service of building a more just, equitable, and inclusive American Jewish community.

### Survey Participant Characteristics

- Almost half of respondents (45%) selected two or more racial categories. A majority (66%) identify as “biracial, mixed, multi-racial” or some combination of those identities.
- Most survey respondents (64%) have at least one Jewish parent: 42% have one and 22% have two Jewish parents.
- More than one-third of respondents (40%) indicated they converted or were converted to Judaism.
- The majority of respondents (65%) were raised Jewish (49%) or raised Jewish and something else (16%).
- Respondents were asked if they identify with any of the following religious traditions. Most respondents (77%) said they identify as Jewish exclusively. Another 21% said they identify as Jewish and with one or more other religions.
- More than one-third of respondents (42%) identify as Ashkenazi.

## Jewish Experiences and Expressions

Respondents have actively expressed their Jewishness in numerous ways. Working for justice and equality is the most common expression of Jewish identity. They described their connections with a wide variety of social justice, environmental, spiritual, and educational Jewish organizations and communities. More than half of respondents (60%) said they are currently (29%) or have previously (31%) been a regular volunteer at a Jewish organization or synagogue. Respondents' most common expressions of Jewish identity were focused on preserving collective memory and Jewish values across generations.

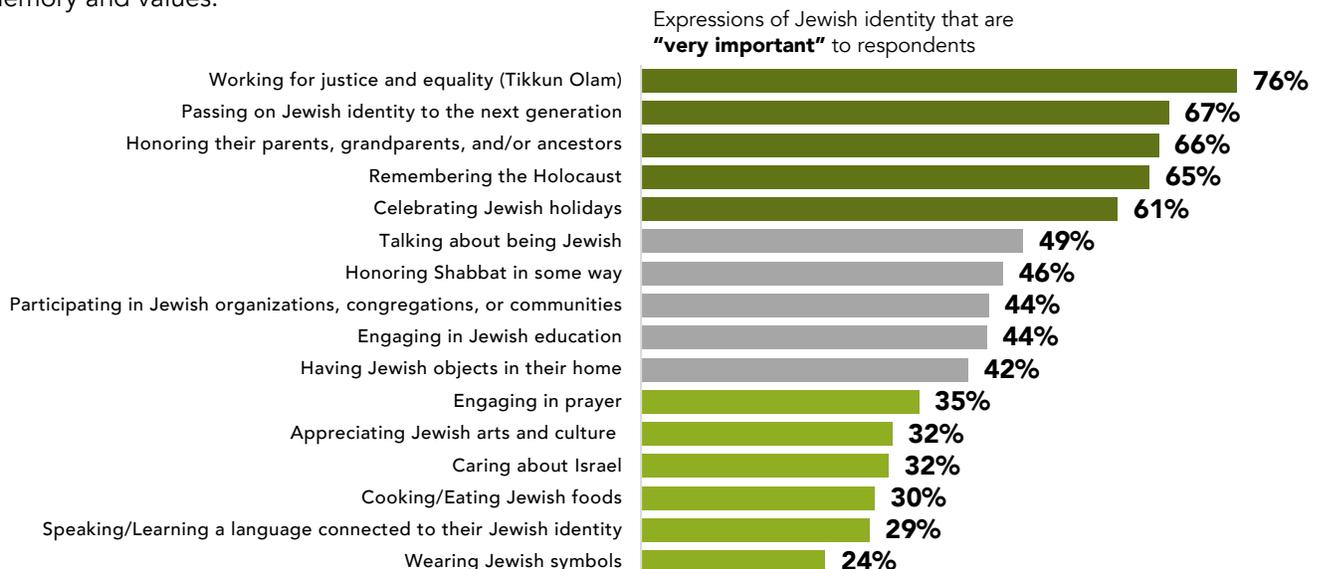
Respondents' thinking about what being Jewish means is informed by their various identities. They widely acknowledged a deep sense of themselves as Jews and spoke of their powerful connections to ritual, family, values, and tradition. Most respondents think of being Jewish as belonging to a culture or a people.

When asked about significant influences, respondents mentioned how both Jewish and non-Jewish friends, family, and mentors have contributed to the development of their Jewish identities.

Respondents' observance of Jewish rituals and traditions varies. Some are carrying on family traditions and other are inventing new ways to connect Jewishly. Some strictly follow Jewish law, some are more flexibly and creatively observant, and some engage in Jewish traditions with no connection to Jewish law. Their relationships with God are similarly varied.

Many respondents described how they actively embrace the complexities of their identities. More than half (61%) agreed they have been able to find ways to connect to their Jewish identity that also honor their racial/ethnic identities. They integrate customs and traditions from various aspects of their racial, ethnic, and religious heritages. In addition to their Jewish identities, respondents have deeply-rooted connections with Black, African, African American, Indigenous, Japanese, Chinese, Chicano, Latinx, Filipino, Christian, Catholic, and Muslim identities, among others. Some have been deeply connected to the identities inherited from their families throughout their lives and others are exploring formerly unexamined aspects of their identities for the first time. Still others have little connection with one or more parts of their background.

**Respondents' expressions of Jewishness are most frequently connected to a sense of justice and connection with the past and the future.** The five most popular expressions are focused on collective memory and values.



## Social Perspectives

In both interviews and in responses to open-ended survey questions, people offered nuanced perspectives about how the intersection of race, ethnicity, and class shapes their sense of self as Jews. They shared social analyses developed through their formal and informal education, their socialization as BIPOC, and their lived experiences as Jews. For many respondents, this process was intertwined with a growing awareness of the political dimensions of identity.

### Double Consciousness

Respondents described a heightened sense of awareness about how they are seen by others. They mentioned feeling scrutinized because of their race in some settings and because of their Jewishness in others. This can be usefully understood through W.E.B. Du Bois' concept of "double consciousness." The term describes the way that marginalized people, specifically Black/African American people, navigate the hazards of American racism by "looking at one's self through the eyes of others."

Many respondents shared how they consciously compartmentalize parts of themselves in order to reduce the stress of double consciousness. They recounted stories in which mentioning they are Jewish in non-Jewish BIPOC spaces evoked unwelcome provocations about Israel-Palestine, micro-aggressions, overt anti-Semitism, and pronouncements about the consequences of not accepting Jesus.

Respondents find it more difficult for their identities to co-exist in predominantly white Jewish spaces than in BIPOC spaces. They feel more comfortable expressing their full selves with Jewish family members than with non-Jewish family members.

### Colorism

Many interview respondents also mentioned their experiences of colorism: how social hierarchy is assigned to people of different skin tones, with greater privilege and access to social capital afforded to those who have lighter skin compared to those who are darker. They described how the nuances of racial identity politics and light skin

privilege have played out within Jewish and non-Jewish communities of color. Encounters with colorism reinforce the dualities that characterize JoC lived experiences.

### Terminology

Respondents had nuanced perspectives about their identities as JoC. Some respondents described how the label can be a barrier to belonging. Many others recognized it as a flawed, but nevertheless useful shorthand for identifying and describing people whose experiences have been largely overlooked and unacknowledged in discourse on American Jewish identity. Some expressed concerns about how the term JoC obscures the wide array of distinctions among people in the population it aims to describe.

### Israel-Palestine

Study participants represented a range of perspectives about how their relationships with Israel factor into their identities as Jews of Color. Some said they felt more at home in Israel, given its relative distance from American racial politics. Others described how living in Israel helped them better understand their experience as JoC in the United States. Still others shared painful personal stories of racism they endured while visiting or living in Israel.

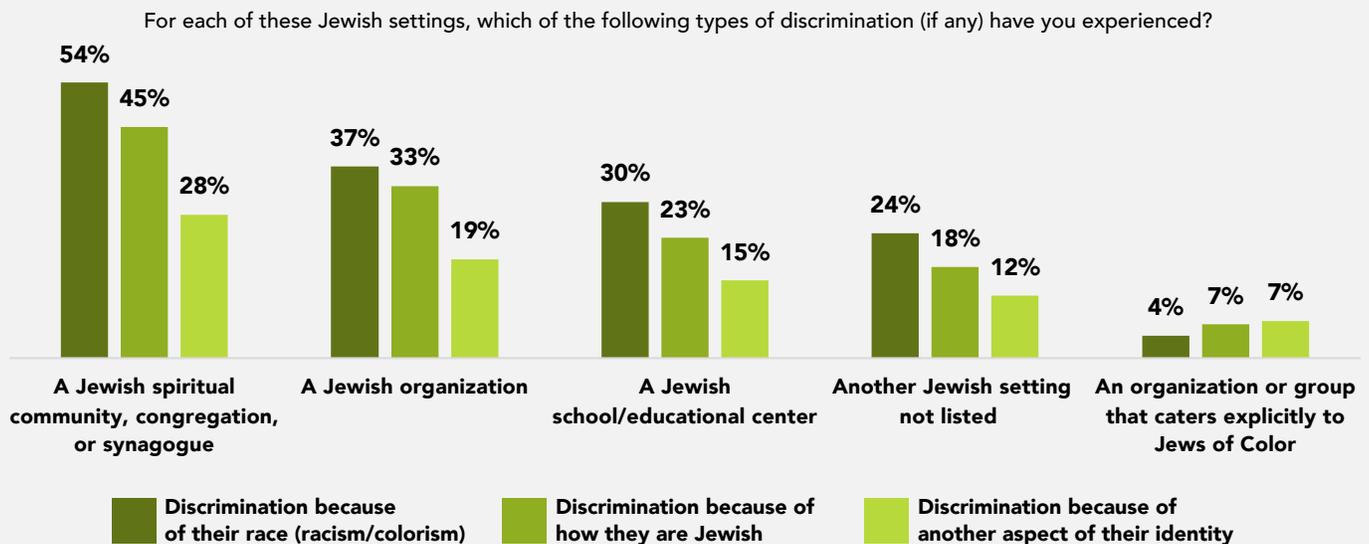
Respondents' perspectives on Israel-Palestine have also resulted in their feeling marginalized by both their non-Jewish BIPOC communities and their Jewish communities. For many JoC, regardless of their political perspectives or the tenor of their relationships with Israel, the racialized politics of Israel-Palestine force them to make choices about when or how to speak out.

## Racism and Discrimination

In data gathered from both the survey and interviews, JoC reported being personally subjected or witnesses to racist and discriminatory treatment in Jewish organizations, from synagogues and schools to professional settings. Their experiences took the form of both microaggressions and overt challenges to the validity of their Jewish identities. In Jewish communal settings, JoC have been ignored and also showered with unwanted attention.

Respondents described the variety of assumptions made about them. They have been repeatedly mistaken for security guards or nannies and presumed to be the non-Jewish partner or guest of a white Jewish person. In misguided efforts to make their community more accessible and welcoming, JoC have been offered unsolicited explanations about Jewish rituals and practices. Many have been asked intrusive questions about how they became Jewish.

**A vast majority of survey respondents (80%) agreed they have experienced discrimination in Jewish settings.** More than half reported experiencing discrimination in a Jewish spiritual community, congregation, or synagogue. Just 20% have not experienced discrimination in Jewish settings.



Overall, respondents do not feel that American Jewish leaders are adequately addressing racism and white supremacy in the American Jewish community. Almost two thirds (65%) of survey respondents indicated that American Jewish leaders were either “poorly” (41%) or “very poorly” (24%) addressing racism in the American Jewish community. A comparable 66% provided a similar assessment of efforts to address the need for greater racial/ethnic diversity in Jewish organizational leadership. Respondents recognized real change will require greater awareness of the intersection of race and socioeconomic status in the wider Jewish community.

Interview participants mentioned how some predominantly white Jewish organizations and communities have begun awakening to aspects of institutional racism and prejudice, but more significant efforts are required to effect lasting change. Many were skeptical of what they perceived as Jewish leaders’ focus on superficial change efforts. Sometimes, highlighting problems of racism in Jewish communities is even seen as an act of betrayal. All of these experiences threaten the ability and willingness of Jews of Color to engage fully in Jewish communal life.

## Belonging

Experiences of racism and discrimination have not precluded respondents' sense of belonging in predominantly white Jewish communities. Many interview respondents mentioned that they are actively involved in Jewish communities where they are in the minority or where they are the only BIPOC. More than half of respondents (54%) indicated there is not a lot of racial/ethnic diversity in their Jewish communities.

The lack of diversity in their Jewish communities was not a barrier for some JoC. Fifty-one percent agreed

they have felt a sense of belonging among white Jews and 41% agree they have been able to find opportunities to express all sides of themselves in predominantly white Jewish spaces. Even as they described positive experiences of belonging in predominantly white Jewish communities, respondents also expressed their awareness of the pervasive dynamics of racialization.

51%  
agree:

**They have felt a sense of belonging among white Jews.**

11% strongly agree and 40% agree

## Seeking Community

Experiences of intersectionality and marginalization have become a galvanizing force for some respondents. In many cases, such experiences have inspired respondents to lean further into their own anti-racist and anti-bias values. They are actively contributing to the work of transforming predominantly white Jewish communities into places where they and others from typically-marginalized populations can feel a sense of belonging. Some respondents mentioned that they have proactively sought out predominantly white Jewish communities that have shown an established commitment to racial equity and social justice.

Many articulated their vision for a vibrant American Jewish community that authentically celebrates the full diversity of ways to be Jewish. They are seeking

and creating opportunities to participate that do not require them to compartmentalize.

Respondents expressed a strong desire for opportunities to come together with other JoC along with the importance of achieving greater equity in predominantly white Jewish organizations. Despite the connective potency of creating and sustaining space with other JoC, this opportunity remains largely out of reach for many.

**46%** of respondents said talking about the experience of being a JoC with other JoC is very important to them.

**36%** of respondents said they have no close friends who are JoC.

## JoC Spaces

While acknowledging the challenges of fostering a sense of belonging among members of this multifaceted population, respondents emphasized the importance of opportunities that validate, support, and connect Jews of Color.

Participation in events and communities exclusively for and by JoC has been transformative for many. Respondents have developed influential relationships with peers and mentors as participants in JoC-centered fellowships, conferences, and educational

programs. Further, their involvement in gatherings for JoC has prompted respondents to reflect on and enrich their identities. Some respondents highlighted the value of creating smaller affinity spaces where they can commune with others who share more specific identity markers.

Gatherings of JoC provide a sense of belonging and solidarity that is unavailable in other areas of Jewish communal life. Many described these experiences and relationships as profoundly healing.

## Concluding Thoughts

*Beyond the Count* illustrates many of the beautiful and challenging ways that race and Jewish identity intersect for the Jews of Color whose voices are gathered in this research. With equal passion, they described their love of Jewish ritual, family, values, and tradition, along with the experience of being asked to defend and explain their Jewishness. Respondents spoke powerfully about their desire for Jewish communities that could honor their whole selves and shared the pain of encounters with racism and prejudice in Jewish contexts. They revealed common strategies for managing friction, avoiding conflict, and maintaining the integrity of their selfhood both in and outside of Jewish communities.

The findings reported from both interviews and survey data focus on broad themes. These create a dynamic narrative, unearthing many questions that were beyond the scope of this preliminary research. There is still much to learn about the nuances, parallels, and distinctions that exist among and between Jews of Color. Future research could focus on the specific experiences of various sub-populations of JoC, such as biracial JoC, those who are unaffiliated, have converted, have a disability, are Orthodox, and/or are queer and trans, among many other possibilities. A stratified sampling method could be employed to include a greater number of respondents who are not women (men and nonbinary people). In addition, to better understand the generalizability of the findings presented in *Beyond the Count*, follow-up analyses of the data could explore differences in perspectives and experiences between and among JoC.

Responses could be compared across variables such as socio-economic status, race and ethnicity, gender, Jewish parentage, religiosity, and geographic location.

While accentuating numerous areas of inquiry still in need of attention, *Beyond the Count* presents a rich and complex portrait of a vital and vibrant segment of American Jewry that has been previously overlooked and excluded. In doing so, this research offers a corrective to the problematic social norms that have long minimized the experiences of JoC and marginalized their very existence. By amplifying the voices of JoC and acknowledging their variety, *Beyond the Count* can be used to move the Jewish communal discourse toward a more accurate understanding and portrayal of American Jewish life in all of its complexity.

Looking beyond the count means recognizing the inherent and perennial diversity, intersectionality, and multiplicity of Jewish people. This acknowledgement presents an opportunity for American Jews to reckon with traumas faced by JoC and pursue a much needed process of healing and repair. *Beyond the Count* can serve as a catalyst for pushing American Jews to confront their individual and collective role in American racial structures and empower Jewish leaders to create just, enriching, accessible, and welcoming experiences for all. Done with care, this will contribute to a more equitable alignment of individual and communal values, needs, and actions.

## Recommendations

Creating an American Jewish community that honors all American Jews requires introspection and change at every level—individual, organizational, and structural. Drawn from interview and survey data, the following recommendations highlight four strategies for intervention:

- 1. Support organizations and initiatives led by and serving Jews of Color.** The research strongly illustrates the value and power of JoC-centered communities. Participating in retreats, study groups, holiday celebrations, social justice circles, and leadership training cohorts has had a profound impact on JoC, who found in them support, validation, and ease that had eluded them elsewhere. Increased capacity building, leadership development, and funding for current initiatives and efforts is needed, along with support for the expansion and development of additional opportunities for JoC to enrich their Jewish lives and communities.
- 2. Shift organizational leadership to more accurately reflect the diversity of American Jews.** Professional and lay leadership in most American Jewish organizations remains largely, and in many cases exclusively, white. Organizations need to evaluate and change their hiring and recruitment processes to increase racial equity so they can better serve all American Jews. The effort to diversify leadership must come with appropriate support and mentorship for Jewish leaders of color. Elevating JoC to positions of communal leadership is not only a question of representation, but of making room for a broader array of influence and adapting organizational aims and cultures around a more expansive understanding of American Jewry.
- 3. Prioritize creating spaces and places for discourse and dialog with and among JoC.** Productively reckoning with the impact of racism in American Jewish life requires organization- and community-wide reflection and action. This communal priority must be supported at all levels: funders need to invest in racial justice within and beyond the Jewish community; leaders need to encourage difficult conversations and be prepared to adapt to emerging narratives of American Jewry; and individuals need to be equipped to be effective allies. These conversations must be guided by the experiences and needs that JoC themselves articulate.
- 4. Promote further research by and about JoC.** The findings from this report contribute to a nascent body of research that requires further attention. Additional research conducted by and about JoC is needed to advance our understanding of a more holistic and diverse American Jewish community. Moving forward, including questions about racial and ethnic identities and experiences must become standard in research and evaluations of all kinds. The ability of Jewish communal organizations to serve the full range of American Jews requires the intentional incorporation of a broader range of voices in the production and content of future research.

## Introduction

On a summer evening, we spoke with a Japanese American Jew in her 20s who told us about her recent experience at a virtual retreat for Jews of Color (JoC). As the group marked the end of Shabbat with *havdalah*, the facilitator asked participants to search their homes for something fragrant that elicited associations with their cultural background. She chose miso, soy sauce, and toasted sesame seeds, which reminded her of her mother's cooking. She explained what this opportunity meant for her,

🗨 **Being able to do a whole *havdalah* ritual with those things was really, really powerful for me because it was one of the first times when I felt like there was actually a part of myself and my history in the ritual.**

This story illustrates how the lives of JoC are simultaneously shaped by their experiences as Jews and as members of marginalized American communities, capturing a complex interplay of privilege and marginality.

For generations, representations of American Jewry have been incomplete. National and local Jewish population studies, typically commissioned to inform communal organization and resource allocation, have been inconsistent when asking about the racialized identities of American Jews. This has resulted in a limited understanding of the entirety of the American Jewish population and the marginalization of people who identify, or are perceived, as non-white in the U.S. (including Black/African American, Latinx, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Native American/Indigenous, and mixed-race Jews as well as Mizrahi, Sephardi, and mixed-heritage Jews).<sup>2</sup> This has been both a cause and an effect of the widespread misconception that American Jews are either "white ethnics" or that they have "become white."<sup>3</sup> While acknowledging American Jews' complex relationships to whiteness, both of these narratives disregard the presence of JoC.

This research begins with the premise that the marginalization and invisibility of JoC in dominant

narratives has negatively affected the lives, experiences, and identities of JoC, and is detrimental to the American Jewish community at large. With this work, we join a growing chorus of voices that has begun to catalyze a conversation that honors the racialized diversity of American Jewry. *Beyond the Count* contributes to the emergent body of literature that has sought to account for the perspectives and experiences of JoC in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

Central to this project is the knowledge that peoples' racialized identities are inseparable from their Jewish identities. This insight is based on the concept of intersectionality, which Black feminist scholars have long used to describe the interconnectedness of racism and sexism.<sup>5</sup> Awareness of the intersectional nature of identities is key to understanding how the convergence of people's various social positions affects their access to power, resources, and opportunity and shapes how they see themselves and the world.<sup>6</sup> This research presents an intersectional account of American Jewish life by exploring the ways in which respondents' ethnic, racial, and cultural identities influence and infuse their Jewish experiences.

*Beyond the Count* was commissioned to inform the work of the Jews of Color Initiative (JoCI), a national effort focused on building and advancing the professional, organizational, and communal field for JoC. This study provides valuable insights to help Jewish communities and organizations reckon more directly and effectively with the racial diversity of American Jewry. *Beyond the Count* complements national and local demographic studies by contributing vital descriptive data and first person accounts. However, findings are not directly comparable to such studies because of significantly different methodological approaches.

Housed at Stanford University, this study collected the largest ever dataset of self-identified JoC to date. Survey data from 1,118 respondents present a broad portrait of respondents' demographic characteristics, backgrounds, and experiences.

Sixty-one in-depth interviews provide texture and bring respondents' own words to the forefront. Respondents were invited to opt in based on their self-identification as JoC, following best practices in feminist research design.<sup>7</sup> This approach enabled the project to be modeled around a parsimonious and respondent-driven identity claim.

One of the earliest uses of the term "Jews of Color" in print was in the 2001 issue of *Bridges: A Journal for Jewish Feminists and Our Friends*. Shahanna McKinney-Baldon notes that using JoC can "be a reminder for some that there are Jews who are Black, Latino/a, Asian, and/or Native" and "can help people think about how some Jews have been targeted by racism both outside and within the Jewish community."<sup>8</sup> The framework for the term JoC is itself rooted in Black feminist activism and scholarship, as is the phrase "Women of Color," which was first advanced by a group of Black women activists at the National Women's Conference in 1977. According to women's rights leader Loretta Ross, naming themselves was a political act used to communicate solidarity and commitment to collaboration among non-white women.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, the term JoC can provide a lens through which to share life stories and support healing around the divisiveness of racism.<sup>10</sup> It can also be used to prompt conversations about the personal and political significance of labeling oneself and being labeled, and it can encourage critical thinking about white identity among Jews in the United States and in other places.<sup>11</sup> In this way, JoC is similar to the political identity "People of Color" (POC), which has been used since the 1980s for coalition-building among all those targeted by racism as non-white people.<sup>12</sup> In the second decade of the 21st century, the acronym "BIPOC" (Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color; sometimes Black and Indigenous People of Color) has emerged as a more precise designation meant to "build solidarity, undo Native invisibility and anti-Blackness, dismantle white supremacy, and advance racial justice."<sup>13</sup>

Collectively, this language provides a valuable way to name and give voice to experiences of a diverse population of Jews whose racial identities have been historically marginalized and excluded in the race-based structures of the United States. In this research, "JoC" is understood as an imperfect, but useful umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of identities and meanings. Those who self-identified as JoC in this study used the term in a multiplicity of ways: as a racial grouping (e.g. Black, Asian, and multiracial Jews); to indicate national heritage (e.g. Egyptian, Iranian, and Ethiopian Jews); to describe regional and geographic connections (e.g. Latina/o/x, Mizrahi, Sephardic Jews); and to specify sub-categories (e.g. transracially adopted Jews and Jewish Women of Color).<sup>14</sup>

While the term productively highlights the intersectional experiences of some, it can also be exclusionary and obscure differences between those who identify as JoC. Not all individuals who self-select into JoC spaces necessarily feel a sense of belonging or are unconditionally welcome.<sup>15</sup> Some who identify as JoC may benefit from the effects of colorism, proximity to whiteness, and/or "pass" or "present" as white in social settings. They may be perceived and even see themselves as both "white Jews" and/or JoC depending on the context. Among Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews, some self-identify as JoC and some do not.

Along with "Jews of Color," the terms "white Jews" and "predominantly white Jewish institutions" were included in the survey and interview questions and were used repeatedly by respondents across both sets of data. In the context of this research, "white Jews" is primarily used to describe Jewish people of European descent whose physical features and lived experiences align most with the collective racial category "white" and who may benefit from white privilege in the United States. However imprecise, the terms "Jews of Color" and "white Jews" provide language to differentiate between two populations whose experiences of Jewishness often differ as a result of American racial hierarchies.

Because of the inconsistent nature of racial assignments in the United States, “white” has not been a historically stable status for Jews of European descent. Racial categorizations are contingent on the social and political climates in which they are used, and meaning can shift based on context. Over the past century and a half, Jews have been variously designated as white, non-white, or as some scholars have noted, “off-white” or “not-quite-white.”<sup>16</sup> While white-presenting or white-passing Jews may not be targeted by and subject to overt discrimination on the basis of their skin tone, they may still experience systemic institutional marginalization, social prejudice, a sense of being outsiders, and anti-Semitic violence.

The challenge of terminology reflects the historical moment in which this study was conducted. The murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, and the national movements that gained momentum in

their wake, advanced a conversation about race in American politics, culture, and history and sparked a reckoning with the role of racism in the United States. In the context of the national conversation about race in the United States, this study seeks to enhance American Jews’ understanding of their own racial and ethnic diversity and provides an opportunity to reflect on how systems of inequality are perpetuated in our own community. By raising awareness about the lived experiences of JoC, the research findings are shared in the service of building a more just, equitable, and inclusive American Jewish community.

*Beyond the Count* employs a mixed methods approach to bring JoC perspectives and experiences to the forefront based on in-depth interviews conducted with 61 JoC and survey findings are based on 1,118 respondents. Interview participants were selected using a purposive sampling method designed to reflect a broad range of perspectives and included: JoC professionals and lay leaders (n=39), key stakeholders (n=9), and a selected sample of Count Me In survey respondents (n=13).<sup>17</sup>

Survey respondents were recruited using a non-probability, referral sampling technique.<sup>18</sup> This approach is particularly useful with small populations that are hard to reach through conventional probability sampling. JoCI aided recruitment with a social media campaign and by sharing the survey link with organizations and individuals within and across their networks. Without more extensive demographic data about the larger population of JoC for context, it is not possible to confirm that the sample is representative. The study includes input from more than 1,000 respondents who shared a broad range of experiences.<sup>19</sup>

The survey findings highlighted in the report were included because they capture particularly interesting and salient themes, trends, and recurring narratives. Survey respondents were not required to answer any questions after the screeners, so the number of respondents who answered each question differs and is indicated with "(n=#)."

Participant quotes were selected from both interview transcripts and survey free-response items based on how well they illustrate respondents' shared sentiments. Almost every quote is excerpted from a unique respondent; three people are quoted twice. Quotes were lightly edited for readability. (For more in-depth information about research methods, see Appendix A: Methods)

The study design draws on feminist<sup>20</sup> and participatory research methods<sup>21</sup> and was informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT)<sup>22</sup> in several ways. The research team's racial and ethnic composition, the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods, and the interview style were all influenced by CRT. A counter-storytelling approach was utilized.<sup>23</sup> This is a method of conducting and presenting research that is grounded in the racialized experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC),<sup>24</sup> which "generates knowledge by looking to those who have been epistemologically marginalized, silenced, and disempowered."<sup>25</sup>

The research team was assembled strategically so the inquiry would be shaped by a broad range of positionalities. The scholars that comprise the team come from a wide variety of racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, and are of diverse ages, genders, and areas of expertise. The composition of the team informed both how and what questions were explored.<sup>26</sup> (See Appendix B: Who We Are)

### About the Quotes

To give survey and interview respondents as much agency in self-definition as possible (within the limitations of survey design and analysis), both groups were able to provide a range of racial and ethnic identity terms to describe themselves. For the interviews, respondents were asked what words they use to describe their racial/ethnic identities and their gender. Survey respondents selected one or more racial and gender categories offered in the questionnaire and could also elect to provide additional language. **The identity terms that respondents chose to describe themselves are used wherever possible throughout this report.**

Throughout the report, quotes are labeled by data source:

 = Survey quote

 = Interview quote

## Overview

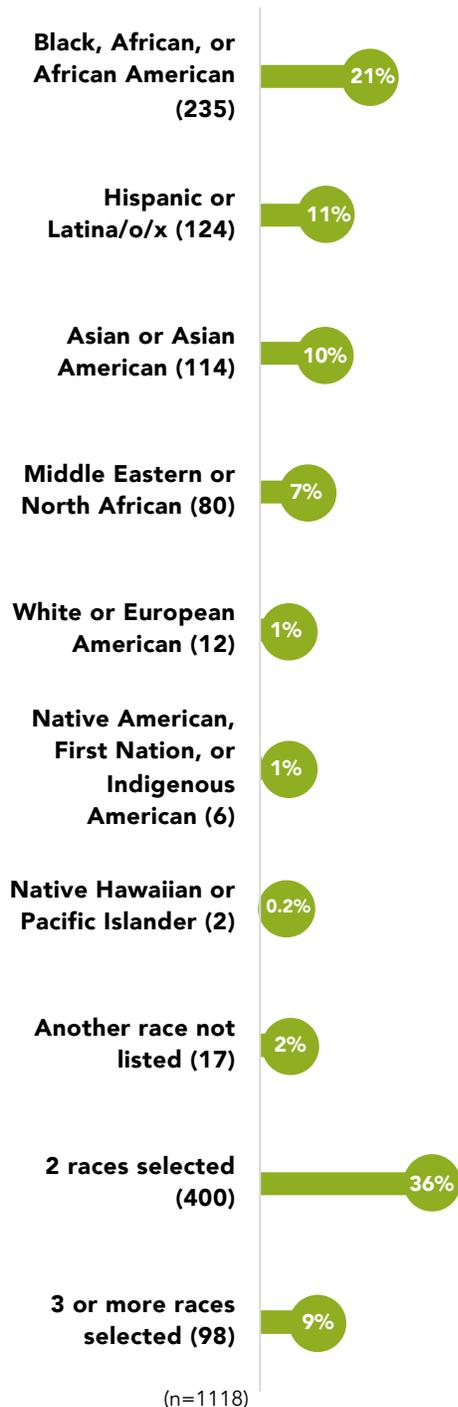
This report integrates survey and interview data as interwoven threads of a complex fabric of JoC identities, lived experiences, and perspectives. Taken together, these parallel indicators work in conversation to tell a story of joy, persistence, isolation, and self-discovery.

The first sections of the report (Participant Characteristics, Backgrounds, and Jewish Experiences) describe respondents' demographic information and family backgrounds. They also include information about respondents' foundational Jewish touchpoints and the relationships that influenced their Jewish identities. The next sections (Jewish Expressions and Social Perspectives) illustrate how respondents engage their identities as

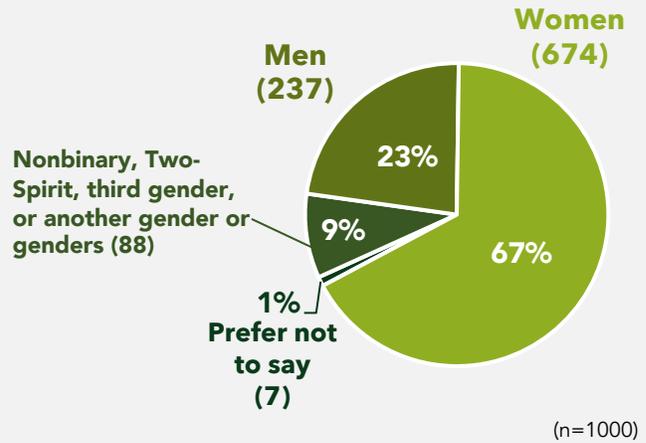
JoC, along with their understanding and reflections on the social and political contexts that impact their lives. In the Racism and Discrimination section, the report sheds light on the contexts in which respondents experience various types of prejudice and the role this plays in their social behavior and sense of self. Respondents' perspectives on how well Jewish institutions are addressing issues of racism and inequity in-house and more generally are shared in the Organizational Responses section. The Belonging section highlights the ways respondents have found nourishing Jewish community, especially with other JoC. *Beyond the Count* concludes with a synthesis of the broad implications of the study and offers guidance on strategic actions steps for organizational leaders.



**More than a third of respondents (45%) selected two or more racial categories.** When asked, 66% identify as “biracial, mixed, multiracial” or some combination of those identities.<sup>27</sup>



**The majority of respondents identify as women.**



**Respondents are highly educated.**

Most (80%) have completed college. Almost half (45%) have postgraduate or professional degrees. (n=997).



**While respondents have viewpoints across the political spectrum, the majority skewed liberal.**

Most described their political views as liberal (28%) or very liberal (36%). The remaining 17% of respondents are moderate (13%), conservative (3%), or very conservative (1%) (n=996).

**Most respondents (63%) are in a relationship.**

The other 36% are single, widowed, divorced, or separated (n=1003).

The majority (58%) identified as heterosexual/straight. A third (34%) identified with a different sexual/romantic orientation, such as homosexual/gay/lesbian or bisexual/biromantic (n=968). More than a third of respondents (42%) have children (n=1001).



**5% of respondents identified as transgender**

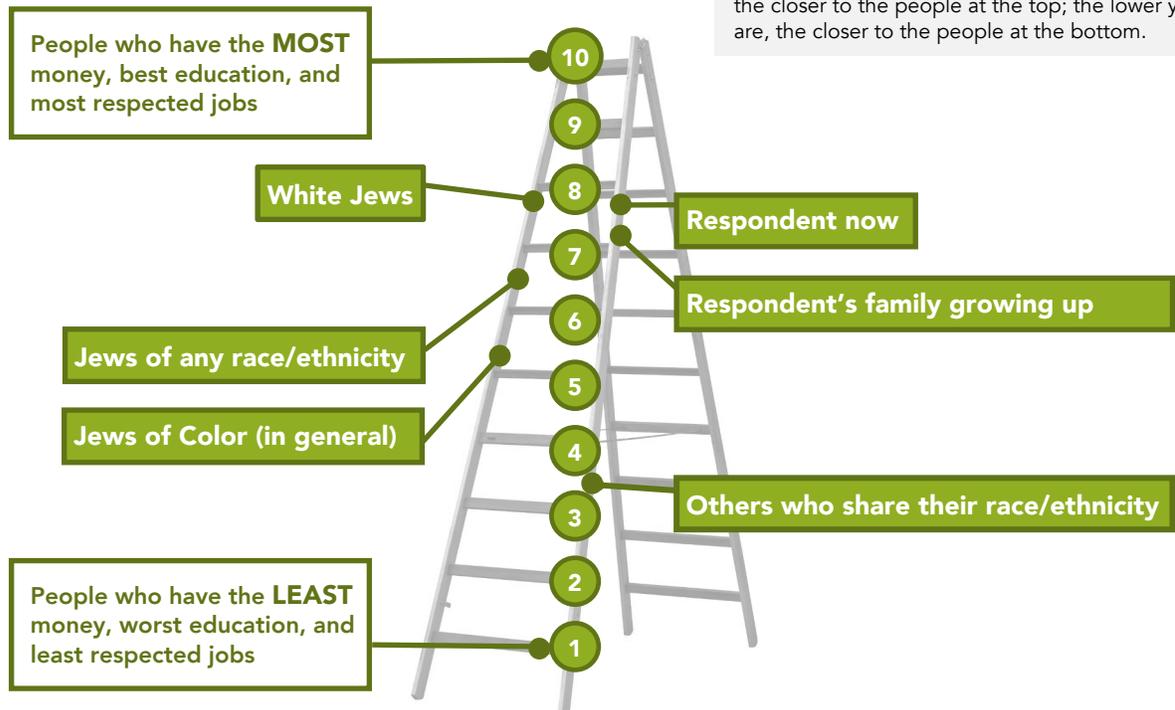
(n=993)

**14% of respondents indicated they are disabled or identify as a person with a disability**

(n=1000)

On a metaphorical social ladder, most respondents see themselves as slightly better off than their families growing up, and slightly worse off than white Jews. Most think of Jews of Color as better off than non-Jews who share their race/ethnicity, but not as well off as white Jews. Respondents think they are better off than other Jews of Color.

Respondents were asked to think of the ladder as showing where people stand in society in the United States. At the top of the ladder (10) are people who are the best off: those who have the most money, best education, and most respected jobs. Those at the bottom (1) are the worst off: those with the least money, worst education, and least respected jobs. The higher up on the ladder, the closer to the people at the top; the lower you are, the closer to the people at the bottom.



I had a lot of racist experiences growing up, but I thought, "this is just the way it is." I definitely woke up once I started to feel the economic exploitation of racism.

A Black man in his 20s

I am half Puerto Rican from my father's side and Ashkenazi Jewish from my mother's side. But I also grew up poor. The place where I feel most uncomfortable in Jewish circles is among wealthy non-observant Jews.

A Hispanic or Latina/o/x and mixed woman in her 20s

I went to inner city schools and my synagogue was in the suburbs. My religious practice and the difference in income and lifestyle and access to opportunities between the two were stark. I would literally go from my really underperforming public school to do my homework at my synagogue because my synagogue had more computers, more books, more resources, and more people around that were able to help.

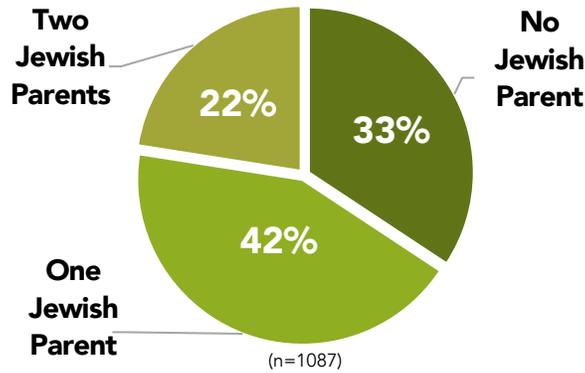
A Black woman in her 30

There is this assumption that being a BIPOC you are not wealthy. I think there is definitely a prejudice by white Jews against people perceived to not have economic and political capital.

A Hispanic or Latina/o/x, Native American, First Nation, or Indigenous American, and white or European American woman in her 40s

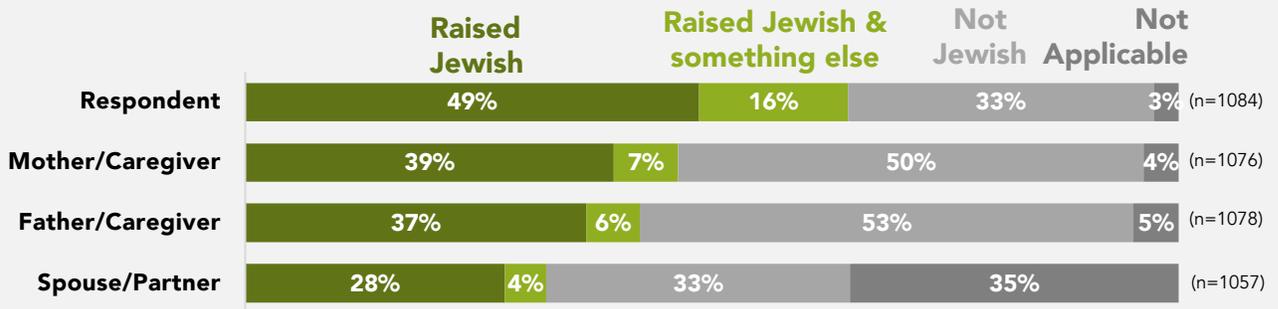
# Backgrounds

**Most respondents (64%) have at least one Jewish parent:**  
22% have two and 42% have one.

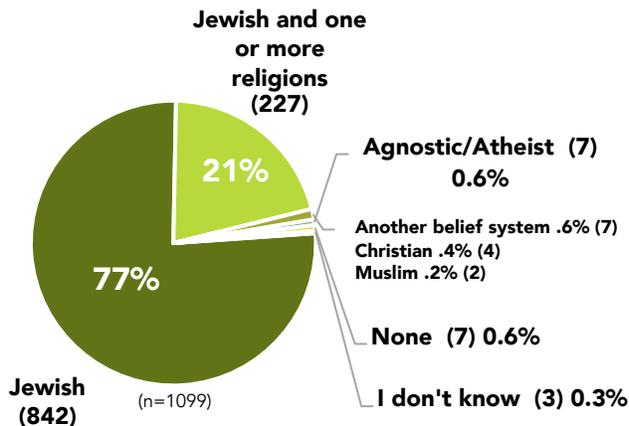


**40%** of respondents indicated they have converted or were converted to Judaism.

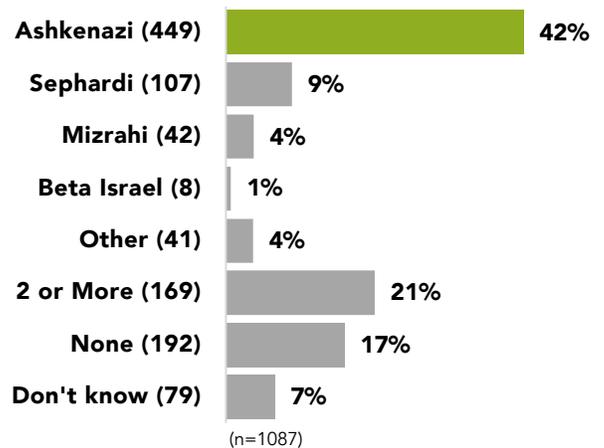
The majority of respondents (65%) were raised Jewish (49%) or raised Jewish and something else (16%).



Respondents were asked if they identify with any of the following religious traditions. Most respondents said they identify as Jewish exclusively.

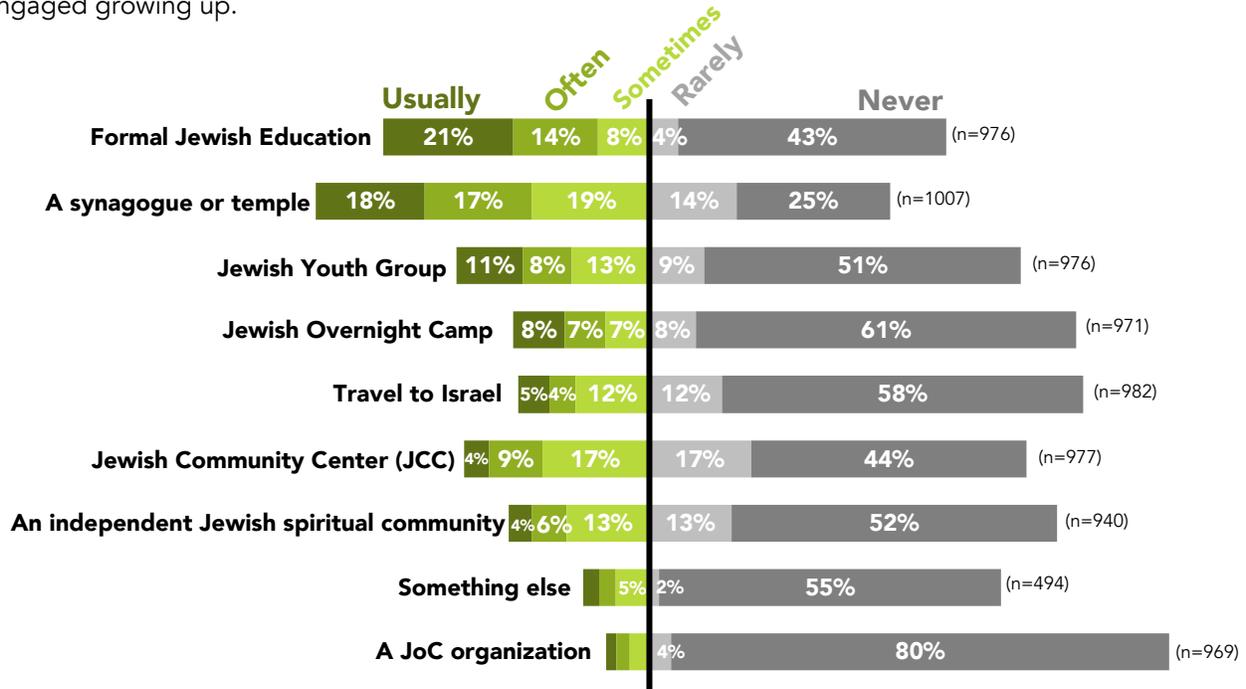


More than one-third of respondents identify as Ashkenazi.



# Jewish Experiences

**Respondents who were raised Jewish or Jewish and something else participated in a wide variety of Jewish activities and organizations with varied frequencies.** Most had multiple Jewish touchpoints growing up: 63% of respondents participated in two or more Jewish activities. Just 15% did not have any Jewish touchpoints. Formal Jewish education and synagogue/temple were the most prevalent ways they engaged growing up.



The experience of feeling like an outsider on the inside was pervasive for many interview participants, whose Jewish communities were predominantly white when they were growing up. Some spent years during their childhoods feeling like they were “outsiders” and “the only one.” Just 7% were involved in JoC organizations. Some met other JoC for the first time as adults.

Several interviewees described how their parents taught them to navigate predominantly white Jewish settings based on their own experiences of subtle and overt racism.

I was raised within a very white Jewish community where I stuck out very much. My dad and I were always two of the only people of color in the space. So I was always very aware of my not whiteness.

*A Mexican and white woman in her 20s*

My parents told me that there were going to be people who questioned me because I'm Chinese and that there were going to be people who are going to tell me that I'm not as Jewish because my mom converted. So I was never surprised when it came up. They equipped me with tools, sort of like a fire drill, early on.

*A Cantonese and Ashkenazi woman in her 40s*

I grew up in the American Jewish institutions, day school and camps and Hillel, and I feel like I have a particular perspective that's from the inside, but also always having felt just on the outside.

*A mixed, Middle Eastern, Mizrahi, Arab, and Ashkenazi woman in her 30s*

## Influential People

When asked about significant influences, respondents mentioned how both Jewish and non-Jewish friends, family, and mentors have contributed to the development of their Jewish identities. In some cases, a non-Jewish parent was a driving force in the development of their Jewish sense of self. Some had Jewish families that were profoundly influential in both helpful and harmful ways. Many mentioned the strong impact their grandmothers had on their sense of self as Jews. Others have found Jewish role models outside of their families. Almost half of respondents (49%) indicated that about half or more of their closest friends are Jewish (n=1087).

I've talked with my mom about the fact that my dad's parents were against their marriage. My grandma always talks about how she wants me to date a Jewish person. And I'm like, 'if you're saying that to me, how did you feel about my [Chinese] mother dating your son?' I've grown up with my mom being really uncomfortable around my dad's family. That's been upsetting and hard to deal with.

🗨️ A white and Chinese woman in her 20s

My grandma was a huge role model to me. She was super Jewish and really exemplified Jewish values in such a positive, inspiring way. The fact that I came from her really made me feel Jewish, and help me combat feelings about not being a real Jew or only being a half Jew. I don't check all the boxes, but I descend from my grandma, who's the best Jew ever.

🗨️ A mixed Chinese and white Ashkenazi woman in her 20s

I'm from a mixed faith background. My mother was a secular Jew whose parents were also a mixed marriage. My father's not Jewish, but perhaps has been the most influential person in my relationship to Judaism.

🗨️ A Peruvian, Chilean American woman in her 30s

The first time I was with a group of more than one or two JoC, it was profoundly influential for me. One of the JoC women leaders I met has become such a profound auntie and mentor and warrior of liberation and equity. She has deeply guided my thinking in just the past several years.

🗨️ A multiracial, Black and Indigenous woman in her 30s

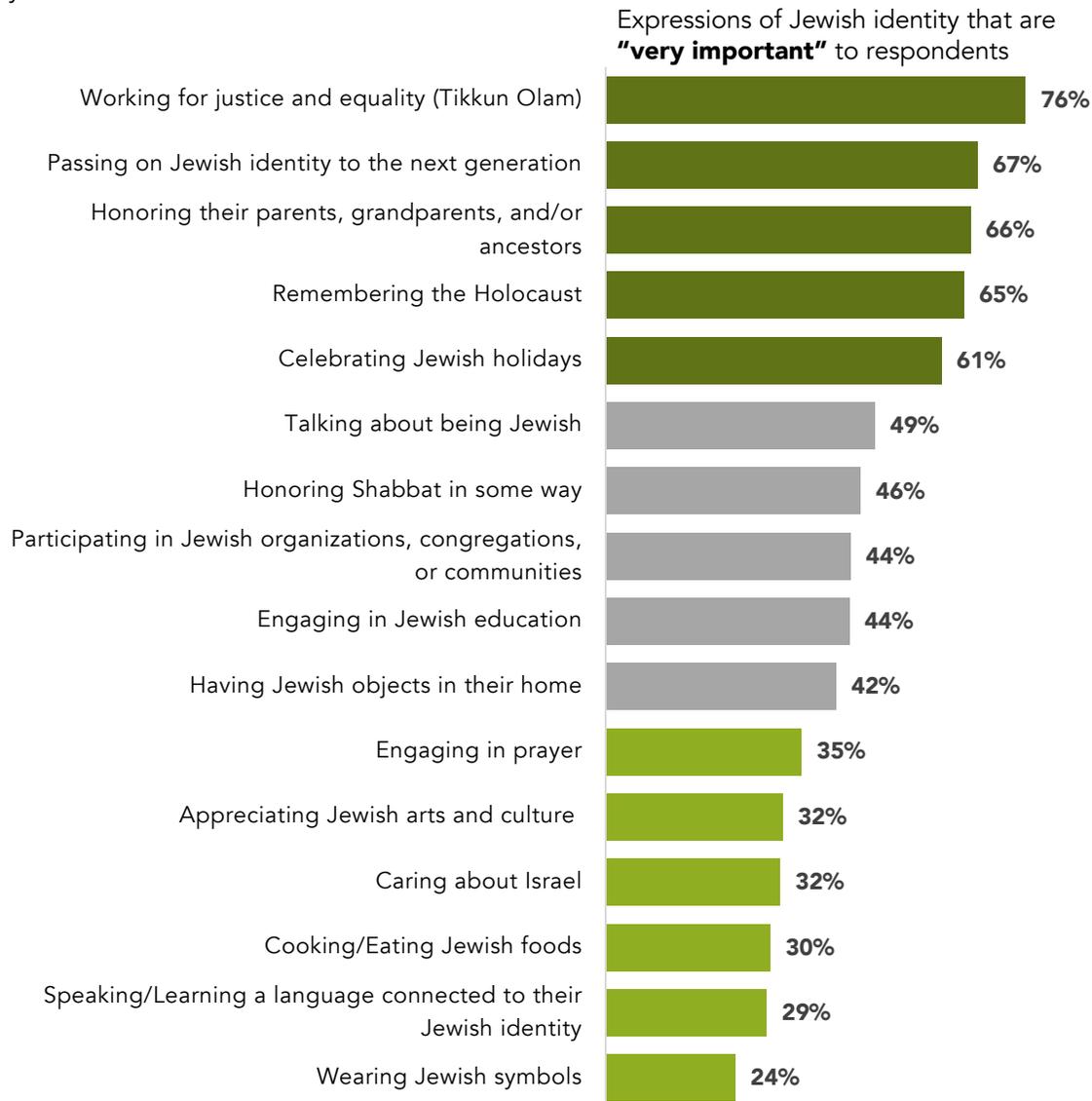
**Almost half of respondents (49%) indicated that at least half of their closest friends are Jewish.**

What proportion of your close friends would you say identify as Jewish?



(n=1087)

**Respondents' expressions of Jewishness are most frequently connected to a sense of justice and connection with the past and the future.** The five most popular expressions are focused on collective memory and values.



As adults, respondents have actively expressed their Jewishness in numerous ways. Working for justice and equality is the most common expression of Jewish identity. They described their connections with a wide variety of social justice, environmental, spiritual, and educational Jewish organizations and communities. More than half of respondents (60%) said they are currently (29%) or have previously (31%) been a regular volunteer at a Jewish organization or

synagogue. About one-third have contributed to Jewish organizations as professionals: 36% of respondents said they are currently (16%) or have previously (20%) been employed by a Jewish organization or synagogue.

Respondents' most common expressions of Jewish identity were focused on preserving collective memory and Jewish values across generations.

## Rituals and Traditions

Respondents' observance of Jewish rituals and traditions varies. Some are continuing family traditions while others are inventing new ways to connect Jewishly. Some strictly follow Jewish law, some are more flexibly and creatively observant, and some engage in Jewish traditions with no connection to Jewish law. Their relationships with God are similarly varied.

Moving to the South was an interesting change. Keeping kosher at first was so hard because folks don't really understand it and kind of equate it to Halal. There's nothing wrong with Halal, but it's just not the same.

🗨️ An Indian, Indian-American, and South Asian woman in her 20s

I read a lot about Jewish history and I cook. Also honoring my ancestors and leaving my descendants a legacy is important. When I go outside, if there's wind rustling the leaves or I see birds or animals.... Nature grounds me that there's a creator responsible for all of this.

🗨️ A mixed, Black, white, Native, woman in her 40s

My parents really taught me a lot about how I want to have a Jewish life. We always had Shabbat dinner and I still do that. That's a tradition that I continue with my husband and two daughters.

🗨️ An Israeli/Iraqi American and Sephardi woman in her 40s

Many respondents described how they actively embrace the complexities of their identities. More than half (61%) agreed they have been able to find ways to connect to their Jewish identity that also honor their racial/ethnic identities. They integrate customs and traditions from various aspects of their racial, ethnic, and religious heritages. In addition to their Jewish identities, respondents have deeply rooted connections with Black, African, African American, Indigenous, Japanese, Chinese, Chicanx, Latinx, Filipinx, Christian, Catholic, and Muslim identities, among others. Some have been deeply connected to the identities inherited from their families throughout their lives and others are exploring formerly unexamined aspects of their identities for the first time. Still others have little connection with one or more parts of their background.

I'm blossoming right now in how I show up as my full self. I'm embracing Jewish and earth-based Indigenous traditions and Senegalese-based practices. I'm bringing together aspects of myself that were very siloed.

🗨️ A Black and mixed woman in her 30s

I'm finding a lot of ways to bring my Jewish identity together with my Asian and multicultural identities. Shabbat practice can really be a great way to bring together my community, and to talk about these kinds of things. Just last week I hosted a Bollywood themed Shabbat. That's something I definitely want to continue doing both for myself, for my future family and for my community

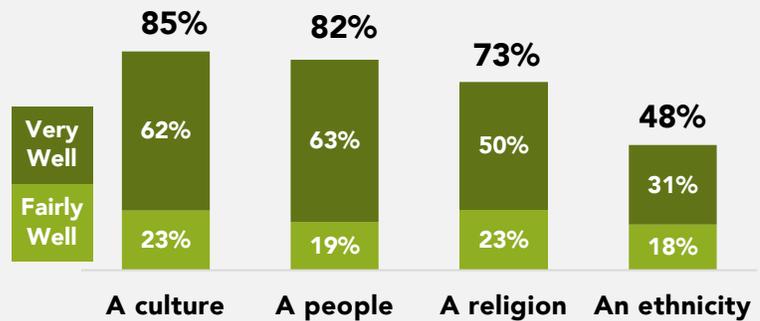
🗨️ An Asian-American woman in her 20s

## Being Jewish

Respondents' Jewish values, as well as their thinking about what being Jewish means, are informed by their various identities. They widely acknowledged a deep sense of themselves as Jews and spoke of their powerful connections to ritual, family, values, and tradition.

### Most respondents think of being Jewish as belonging to a culture and a people.

How well do each of the following terms describe what being Jewish means to you?



I feel compelled from inside to make things morally and ethically better. I'm wired with the belief that it doesn't matter what you think, it matters what you do. These are things that I just believe in my fiber. And when I learned that there is 6,000 years of tradition that also believed the same thing, I thought, 'Wow. I can root myself and tether myself to a religion, a tradition, and a community that supports and believes in the same things I do.' That was so incredibly powerful. It strengthens, magnifies, supports, reinforces, and codifies my beliefs. That's why I became Jewish.

A Korean American woman in her 50s

Growing up, my mom always tied a lot of Jewish values to human rights. I ask myself sometimes, 'Why am I doing this? For me, it's very much tied to the legacy of my family and that value system. I don't want Jews to stop being Jewish. I want Jews to be accountable, much in the way that Judaism prescribes. We are all responsible for one another. I hold that dear to my heart. I hold it dear to my soul.

A multiethnic and multiracial man in his 30s

My biggest passions, the things I love most are every day *davvening* in the morning, saying *brachas* before we eat, washing our hands. Those are the things that I just enjoy and that I get to easily share with my daughters by doing every day. My two year-old daughter already gets it. She started saying *Modi Ani* in the morning when she gets up.

A Hispanic, El Salvadoran, Native American man in his 30s

## Social Perspectives

In both interviews and in responses to open-ended survey questions, people offered nuanced perspectives about how the intersection of race, ethnicity, and class shapes their sense of self as Jews. They shared social analyses developed through their formal and informal education, their socialization as BIPOC, and their lived experiences as Jews. For many respondents, this process was intertwined with a growing awareness of the political dimensions of identity.

I was not born socially-conscious overnight. It took a lot of personal work and a lot of personal learning for me to get to the viewpoints and the place that I am today. Generally speaking, American Jewish institutions are just a little bit slower themselves.

🗨️ A Black, East Indian and Ashkenazi man in his 30s

In college I learned about what it means to be a feminist and how I had internalized a lot of patriarchy. I tried to show up to a couple of Jewish things at college but they didn't have any real frame for a Black kid showing up, so I stopped participating in Jewish communal life until my 20s. Graduate school was about realizing that I was Black in a lot of ways. I went from identifying as mixed to identifying as Black, as an intentional political choice. The fact that I was a Black woman and I was Jewish did not intersect at all during that time.

🗨️ A white and African American woman in her 30s

### Colorism

Many interview respondents also mentioned their experiences of colorism: how social hierarchy is assigned to people of different skin tones, with greater privilege and access to social capital afforded to those who have lighter skin compared to those who are darker.<sup>28</sup> They described how the nuances of racial identity politics and light skin privilege have played out within Jewish and non-Jewish communities of color. Experiences of colorism reinforce the dualities that characterize the lived experiences of Jews of Color.

I'm pretty passing; I'm pretty ambiguous. I can look white to certain people, so I didn't get the same kind of invasive questioning or security called on me the way that Black Jews experience, because I have privilege. That being said, it doesn't mean that I don't feel erased and unseen as an Asian American.

🗨️ A Chinese and Ashkenazi woman in her 20s

As a white passing Latinx Jew, I am often in liminal spaces both in predominantly white spaces and JoC spaces. I totally understand the white skin privilege that I have and also understand how racialization works to make me feel like I don't belong in either white or JoC spaces. I was recently questioned about my claim to a JoC identity by another white passing Latinx person in very uncomfortable ways.

🗨️ A Hispanic or Latina/o/x and nonbinary/Two-Spirit/third gender person in their 30s

## Double Consciousness

Respondents described a heightened sense of awareness about how they are seen by others. They mentioned feeling scrutinized because of their race in some settings and because of their Jewishness in others. This can be usefully understood through W.E.B. Du Bois' concept of "double consciousness."<sup>29</sup> The term describes the way that marginalized people, specifically Black/African American people, navigate the hazards of American racism by "looking at one's self through the eyes of others."

Many respondents shared how they consciously compartmentalize parts of themselves in order to reduce the stress of double consciousness. They recounted stories in which mentioning they are Jewish in non-Jewish BIPOC spaces evoked unwelcome provocations about Israel-Palestine, micro-aggressions, overt anti-Semitism, and pronouncements about the consequences of not accepting Jesus.

When I moved, I started going to a new synagogue and trying to integrate into the local Jewish community. At times, I've had to compartmentalize sides of myself because it's just so mentally exhausting facing the 'What are you?' questions.

☑ A mixed, Native American, Indigenous, and Navajo woman in her 30s

66% agree:

**They have felt disconnected from their Jewish identities at times.**

24% strongly agree and 42% agree

45% agree:

**They have altered how they speak, dress, or present themselves in predominately white Jewish spaces.**

16% strongly agree and 29% agree

Among white people, I have to have my defenses up so in white dominant spaces, when I prayed or celebrated, I was too defended to really have a full spiritual experience. But among JoC, I can do that.

🗨️ A mixed Black and Jewish man in his 30s

As a mixed person/biracial person, it's sometimes easier to cover up one identity and just go with whichever identity seems the most privileged.

🗨️ An African American and white woman in her 20s

**Respondents find it more difficult for their identities to co-exist in predominantly white Jewish spaces than in BIPOC spaces.** They feel more comfortable expressing their full selves with Jewish family members than with non-Jewish family members

How often, if at all, is it difficult for your various identities to co-exist when you are...



## Israel-Palestine

Study participants represented a range of perspectives about how their relationships with Israel factor into their identities as Jews of Color. Survey respondents were fairly evenly divided with respect to how important they felt “caring about Israel” was to their Jewish identities. Nearly one third of survey respondents indicated that “caring about Israel” was “very important” (32%). Another third responded that it was “moderately important” (16%), or “somewhat important” (19%). The final third indicated “caring about Israel” is “not too important” (14%) or “not at all important” (18%). A survey respondent who is an Asian or Asian American, white or European American, biracial, multiracial, and mixed man in his 40s volunteered a comment to clarify that when he indicated that “caring about Israel” was “somewhat important,” he meant,

**I care about Israel like I care about the US, as a site where there are injustices happening that I care about.**

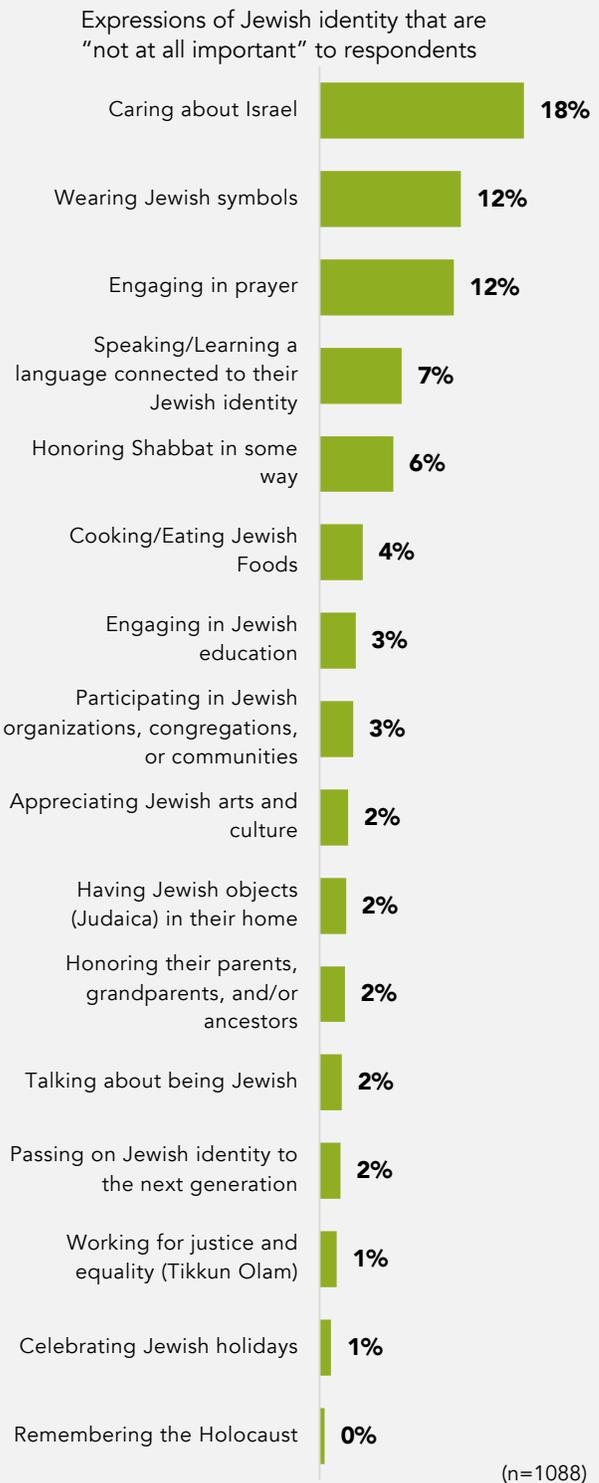
Interviews provided richness and depth which elucidated this range of perspectives. Some said they felt more at home in Israel, given its relative distance from American racial politics. Others described how living in Israel helped them better understand their experience as JoC in the United States. A Hispanic or Latina/o/x, Native American, First Nation or Indigenous American, and mixed woman in her 70s explained,

**I was always like two people – Jewish and Chicano – even as a volunteer leader in my shul. Then I made aliyah and in Israel, I never felt anything other than Jewish.**

Still others shared painful personal stories of racism they endured while visiting or living in Israel. With dismay, a Black woman in her 70s mentioned that she was unsure how she would be received in Israel, clarifying,

**If things get much worse in this country and my wife and I had to move for our safety, I'm not sure I could get into Israel because of the racial thing. That's a reason I've been looking for Jews of Color. If we can't be admitted to Israel in a time of crisis, at least we'll have each other.**

### For 18% of respondents, “Caring about Israel” is a not at all important expression of their Jewish identities



## Israel-Palestine

Respondents' perspectives on the Israel-Palestine conflict have also resulted in their feeling marginalized by both their non-Jewish BIPOC communities and their Jewish communities. A mixed, Native American/Indigenous, Navajo woman in her 30s explained,

- ☑ **A lot of Native Americans in general are pro-Palestinian. And so the idea of me supporting Israel as a Jewish state is really hard for a lot of people to accept.**

At times, simply mentioning their Jewish identity prompted uncomfortable and unwanted debates about Israel-Palestine. Some respondents actively avoided the awkward conversations they anticipated by not sharing their Jewish identity in certain settings. Yet some also described how not mentioning their Jewish identity had exposed them to criticisms of Israel laced with anti-Semitic tropes.

Still others drew a strong connection between their solidarity with Palestinians and their JoC/BIPOC identities. A Hispanic or Latina/o/x, white or European American, biracial, multiracial, and mixed woman in her 40s asserted,

- ☑ **My anti-Zionism is definitely tied to my status as a person of color.**

In predominantly white Jewish contexts, many respondents chose to censor their critical perspectives about Israel-Palestine for self-protection. A Japanese and white woman in her 20s said she avoided talking about Israel-Palestine with Jewish colleagues, explaining,

- ☞ **I get really uncomfortable talking about Israel. The politics are so closely ingrained with their identity, so any critique of the politics is seen as a critique of who Jews are.**

**I don't want to actively avoid Israel as part of my Judaism, but it's uncomfortable, so it hasn't been part of my life so far.**

Several described how in some circles, support for the State of Israel felt like a "litmus test" that would determine whether or not they were "good Jews" or "Jewish enough." Out of fear she would be further marginalized in her predominantly white Jewish community, a Black, African, or African American woman in her 30s shared how she felt pressured to keep her politics about Israel-Palestine to herself. She explained,

- ☑ **I'm a convert and not fully white, so I don't "look" Jewish. As a leftist Jew, I feel a lot of solidarity with the people of Palestine, but in predominantly Zionist spaces, I have to hide what I believe, lest I be called out as a fake, insincere convert.**

Another sentiment expressed by several respondents was the experience of feeling overlooked across communities. A Black and mixed-race woman in her 30s shared her experience of feeling doubly marginalized,

- ☞ **When Black Lives Matter put out their policy platform, it said something about Palestine, and the Jews flipped out. Black people were all of a sudden fighting with Jews. And nobody thought to say, 'Hey, Black Jews. What do y'all think? Can y'all help us?'**

For many JoC, regardless of their political perspectives or the tenor of their relationships with Israel, the racialized politics of Israel-Palestine force them to make choices about when or how to speak out.

## Terminology

Respondents had nuanced perspectives about their identities as JoC. Some respondents described how the label can become a barrier to belonging. An Asian or Asian American, white or European American, biracial, and mixed man in his 30s explained,

- I often feel like I'm not 'of color' enough to talk about being a Jew of Color, though I am one. It's hardest for my identities to coexist in those moments when I'm classified into a group whose experiences I'm not sure I share and in whose marginalization I worry I inadvertently participate.**

Many others recognized the term as a flawed, but nevertheless useful shorthand for identifying and describing people whose experiences have been largely overlooked and unacknowledged in studies of American Jewish identity. An Asian or Asian American, white or European American, multiracial person in their 20s with their gender not listed explained,

- I think that the category of Jew of Color is an important one but also a limited one. I think it is a politicized identity within Jewish spaces especially, but that it should be theorized more as a coalition of many different groups who share certain similar experiences and political struggles. I hesitate to reify it as a solid and concrete category.**

Some expressed concerns about how the term JoC obscures the wide array of distinctions among people in the population it aims to describe. A Black, African, or African American and Hispanic or Latina/o/x man in his 30s admonished,

- "People of Color" and "Jew of Color" are uselessly broad terms to combine completely unrelated experiences. I am an Afro-Latino convert and my experience is vastly and fundamentally different from a Mizrahi Jew, yet we're collapsed into the same category.**

An Ashkenazi and Filipina woman in her 20s articulated how this complexity can manifest in JoC spaces:

- I've been in a lot of JoC situations where it really feels like 'Oh my gosh, we're so alike. This feels so good.' And then you walk out of the room and you're like, 'Oh, except for when that person said that really fucked-up anti-Black or transphobic or ableist thing.'**

A Hispanic or Latina/o/x and mixed woman in her 30s cautioned:

- I find the term quite honestly divisive. I am Hispanic and I am Jewish. Words matter and the discourse, I believe, has gone from a place of good intention to potentially causing further divisions and harm.**

Respondents objected to the implication of unity or uniformity based on a reductive sense of shared "non-whiteness." Several noted that dividing Jews into two populations – "Jews" and "Jews of Color" – implies whiteness as "normative," and thus reinforces American racial hierarchy. A Black, African, or African American, white or European American, biracial, multiracial, and mixed woman in her 40s challenged,

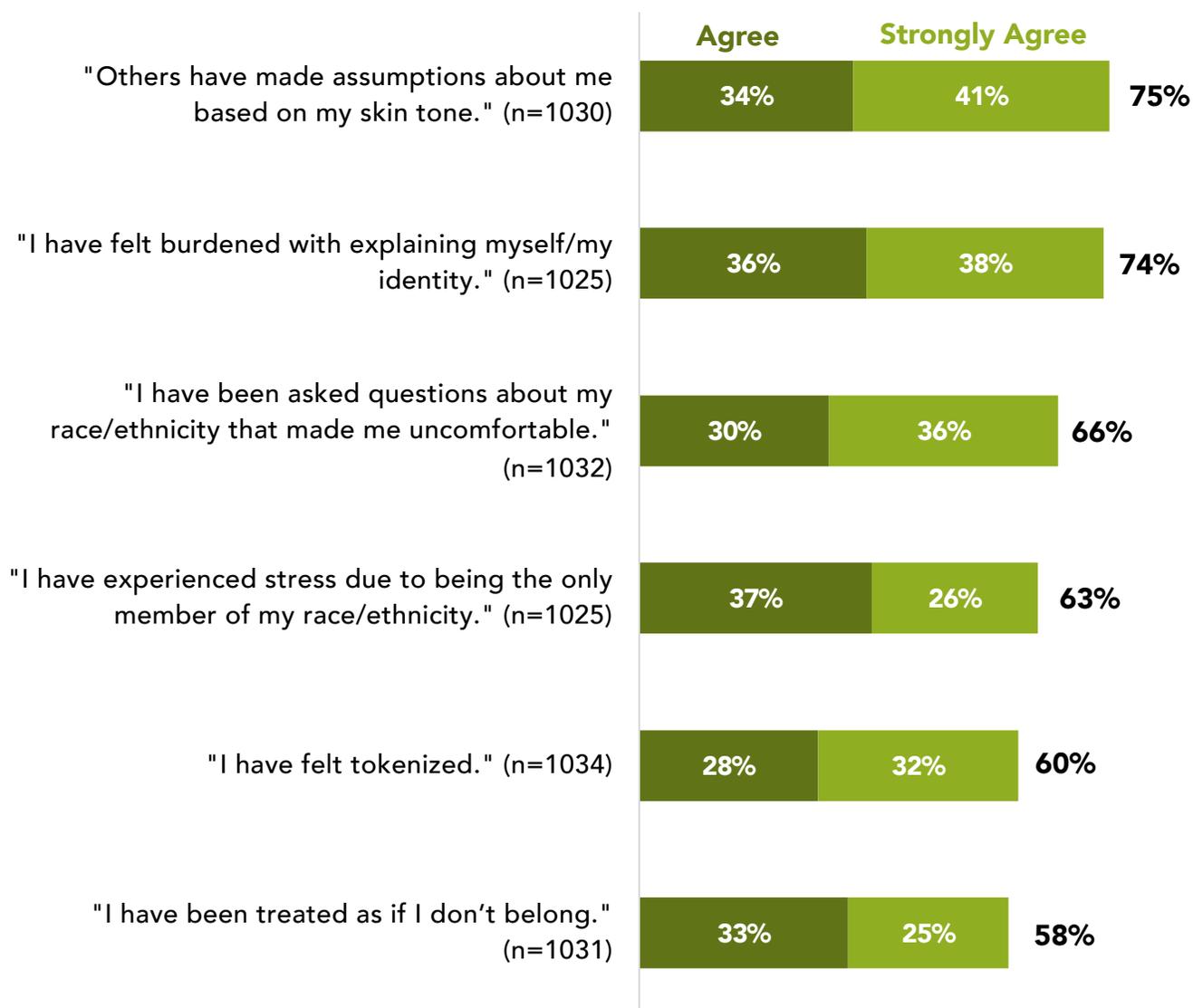
- I hate being included by negation because I am other than... Other than what? Real Jews? I am just a Jew and I don't feel like I should need an adjective to define it any more than white people do. Are whites 'Jews of whiteness'? Of course not because they're white so people just accept it. But because my skin color isn't white I'm something other than just a Jew.**

## Racism & Discrimination

In data gathered from both the survey and interviews, JoC reported being personally subjected or witnesses to racist and discriminatory treatment in Jewish organizations, from synagogues and schools to professional settings. Their experiences took the form of both microaggressions and overt challenges to the validity of their Jewish identities. In Jewish communal settings, JoC have been ignored, or conversely, showered with unwanted attention.

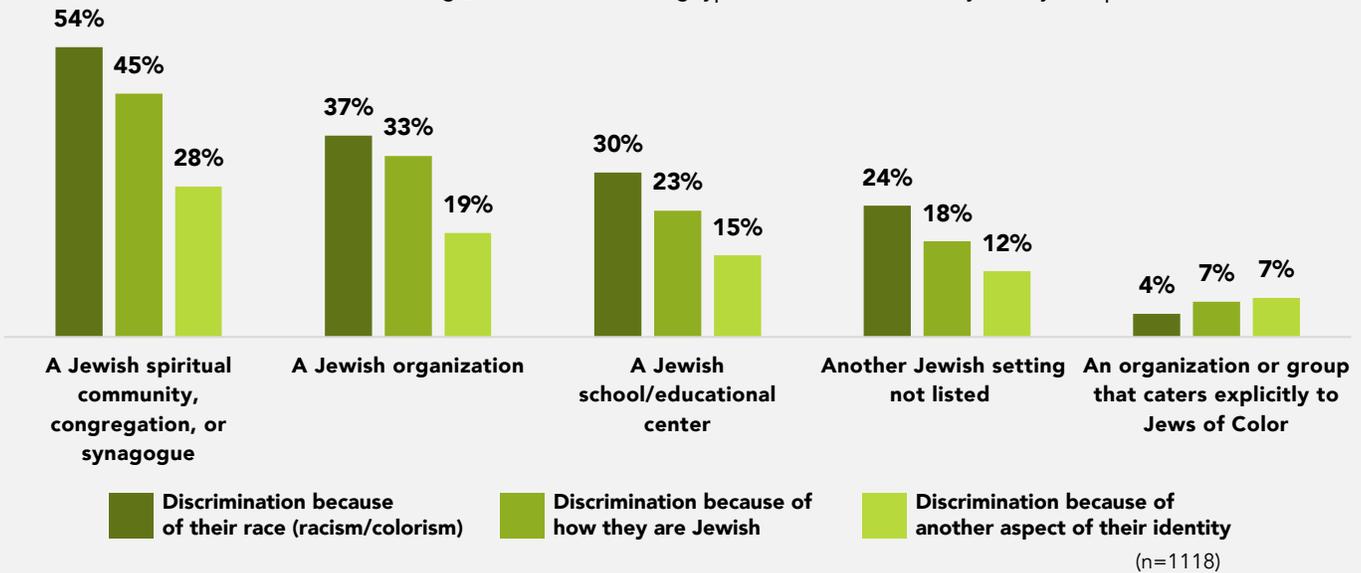
Respondents described the variety of assumptions made about them. They have been repeatedly mistaken for security guards or nannies and presumed to be the non-Jewish partner or guest of a white Jewish person. In misguided efforts to make their community more accessible and welcoming, JoC have been offered unsolicited explanations about Jewish rituals and practices, or have been asked intrusive questions about how they became Jewish.

**The majority of survey respondents agreed they have had a wide range of negative experiences in Jewish communal settings.**



**The vast majority of survey respondents (80%) agreed they have experienced discrimination in Jewish settings.** The largest percentage of respondents reported experiencing discrimination in a Jewish spiritual community, congregation, or synagogue. Just 20% have not experienced discrimination in Jewish settings.

For each of these Jewish settings, which of the following types of discrimination (if any) have you experienced?



For years, I refused to belong to a formal congregation because of my experiences with racism within formal Jewish spaces. After 20 years away, now I have a Jewish community where there are a lot of adoptees of color, which means that the community has had to negotiate race/racism in ways that have been productive for the sake of the next generation. The congregation and the rabbi are incredibly conscientious and the commitment to anti-racism is part of the organization's work. This has been the first formal Jewish space where I have felt comfortable in years. Even so, I have had to deal with some racism from some members of the congregation, which sometimes keeps me at home.

A Black, African, or African American, Hispanic or Latina/o/x, Native American, First Nation or Indigenous American, multiracial and mixed woman in her 40s

I am often treated like a person just learning about Judaism instead of a Jew who is active in many communities. I went to Shabbat services recently, and a woman came up to me and said, without introducing herself, 'Shabbat Shalom. So are you here for a religion class? Did you convert?'

An African American and Black man in his 30s

When I was doing Jewish leadership training, there was this guy who asked me twice if I could get him something and I told him, 'I don't work here, I'm attending.' And 20 minutes later, he asked me the same question. And I told him to stop and really look at me, because this is the second and last time I'm saying this: I'm here. I'm a participant. I'm a Jew.

An African American and Cherokee woman in her 60s

# Organizational Responses

**Respondents do not feel that American Jewish leaders are adequately addressing racism and white supremacy within the American Jewish community.**

In general, how well do you think Jewish community leaders are addressing the following issues?

	Very Well	Well	Fairly	Poorly	Very Poorly	I don't know
<b>The specific needs of members/participants who are Jews of Color</b>	3%	3%	19%	41%	24%	9%
<b>The need for greater racial/ethnic diversity in Jewish organizational leadership</b>	4%	4%	16%	39%	27%	10%
<b>Racism/white supremacy within the American Jewish community</b>	6%	7%	19%	35%	25%	8%
<b>Racism/white supremacy outside of the American Jewish community</b>	12%	19%	26%	21%	15%	7%

Respondents recognized that equity in Jewish communities will require institutional change that will not result from one-off programs or inclusion efforts that are primarily focused on the optics of inclusion. Real change requires greater awareness of the intersection of race and socioeconomic status in the wider Jewish community.

If you're really serious about wanting to change the narrative about Jews and race and involving Jews of Color, you can't just keep on saying, 'Well, this funder wanted us to do it this way.'

 A Mexican and white woman in her 20s

Almost two thirds (65%) of survey respondents indicated that American Jewish leaders were either "poorly" (41%) or "very poorly" (24%) addressing racism in the American Jewish community. A comparable 66% provided a similar assessment of efforts to address the need for greater racial/ethnic diversity in Jewish organizational leadership.

How race and whiteness apply differently to different groups, and how that affects our perceptions of the Jewish people, needs to be discussed by prominent community members in appropriate settings so we can have a more nuanced understanding of race in the Jewish community and in the wider US.

A Hispanic or Latina/o/x and mixed man in his 20s

Interview participants mentioned how some predominantly white Jewish organizations and communities have begun awakening to aspects of institutional racism and prejudice, but more significant efforts are required to effect lasting change. Many were skeptical of what they perceived as Jewish leaders' focus on superficial change efforts. An African American woman in her 50s asserted,

**My Black face does not now make an organization diverse. If it's just me or me and one other person, and if that's what they're calling diversity, they've got a much bigger problem. Because let's look at your board, at your employees, at the people you serve. None of the people who have power in this organization look like me.**

A Black, African, or African American, white or European American and biracial woman in her 20s shared,

**I've been involved with white Jewish-run institutions that say they want more JoC involved and enveloped into the fold, yet when those of us who are already there try to speak up about how best to help the JoC community, they completely disregard and shut us down. I was asked to be the only person of color in a group of 10 to roll out a Jewish-led racial justice program. No JoC worked on the program nor did they contribute to writing the script we had to read. The community is truly only concerned with outside racism and not the racism that occurs within Jewish spaces.**

A nonbinary/Two-Spirit/third gender and Black, African, or African American person in their 20s described how their efforts to begin a conversation about addressing racism within the Jewish community have been received,

**I usually get one of three responses: 1) There's no such thing as Black or white Jews and why do you keep talking about race?; 2) Thank you for speaking up, you're really inspirational, teach me all you know; and 3) Complete ignorance of any kind of discrimination. I think many white Jews are afraid to acknowledge and/or take responsibility and it's easier to judge other people than be critical of themselves.**

Sometimes, highlighting problems of racism in Jewish communities is seen as an act of betrayal. A Black, African, or African American, Hispanic, Latina/o/x, white, European American, another race, racially-mixed, Indigenous, multiracial, and mixed woman in her 50s similarly shared,

**I have found that every time I make a suggestion or point out a problem, I've been treated as disloyal or like an ungrateful guest in Jewish spaces. People react vehemently that there is no racism: that the problem is with bad-intentioned people and not with policies or lack of policies that impact Jews of Color.**

All of these experiences threaten the ability and willingness of Jews of Color to engage fully in Jewish communal life. A Hispanic or Latina/o/x, nonbinary/Two-Spirit/third gender, and another gender person in their 20s explained,

**Often it feels like white Jewish culture suffocates the space that allows me to be fully a person of color. The times I've attempted to make my identity as a POC more visible in large Jewish groups, I've been met with significant tokenism or racism. So I choose to be very selective about where is safe for me to show all of me.**

## Belonging

Experiences of racism and discrimination have not precluded respondents' sense of belonging in predominantly white Jewish communities. Many interview respondents mentioned how they are actively involved in Jewish communities where they are in the minority or where they are the only BIPOC. More than half of respondents (54%) indicated there is not a lot of racial/ethnic diversity in their Jewish communities.

The lack of diversity in their Jewish communities was not a barrier for some JoC. Fifty-one percent agreed they have felt a sense of belonging among white Jews and 41% agree they have been able to find opportunities to express all sides of themselves in predominantly white Jewish spaces.

51%  
agree:

**They have felt a sense of belonging among white Jews.**

11% strongly agree and 40% agree

I live in a community that is predominantly white with a Jewish community that has only a very few Jews of Color. It has been a welcoming place and inclusive not only to Jews of Color (even though very few), but also to people with other diverse identities. I feel fully a part of this congregation since we moved here forty years ago, and have been fully accepted and respected through the entire time.

An Asian or Asian American and something else woman in her 70s

I feel a ton of support from the [Jewish] white people around me. I feel deep investment. I feel very seen as a person of color.

A Japanese American woman in her 30s

I don't know many other Jews of Color... although my Jewish community is overwhelmingly white, we connect based on our shared Jewishness.

A Hispanic or Latina/o/x and multiracial woman in her 20s

**Even as they described positive experiences of belonging in predominantly white Jewish communities, respondents also expressed their awareness of the pervasive dynamics of racialization.**

There have certainly been Jewish spaces where, despite the ever-present reality of being other, I formed very meaningful relationships and was nurtured by those spaces. Some of my access though, certainly was facilitated greatly by the fact that my mom was a white, Ashkenazi Jew.

An Asian American woman in her 40s

I'm a pretty active member of my synagogue. And it's a majority white synagogue. It's maybe 500 families, so it's vibrant and big, and it's still very few Jews of Color who actually get to be engaged. I think the fact that I wasn't racialized in the U.S. honestly gives me more energy to participate and organize and be in community in majority white spaces.

A Mexican woman in her 30s

## Seeking Community

Experiences of intersectionality and marginalization have become a galvanizing force for some respondents. In many cases, such experiences have inspired respondents to lean further into their own anti-racist and anti-bias values. They are actively contributing to the work of transforming predominantly white Jewish communities into places where they and others from typically marginalized populations can feel a sense of belonging.

Some respondents mentioned how they have proactively sought out predominantly white Jewish communities that have shown an established commitment to racial equity and social justice. A Black man in his 30s shared,

**🗨 My current congregation has been working on being anti-racist since before it was fashionable and we had language to talk about it. They had a race working group and were seeking out Jews of Color to be in leadership positions.**

Many articulated their vision for a vibrant American Jewish community that authentically celebrates the full diversity of ways to be Jewish. They are seeking and creating ways to participate that do not require them to compartmentalize. A multiracial, Black and Indigenous woman in her 30s explained,

**☑ I'm exploring Jewish communal spaces that will meet my need and be a space where I can fully contribute without feeling like: because I don't have kids or because my husband isn't Jewish or because I'm a person of color, I'm an afterthought in the program or service or whatever.**

Respondents expressed a strong desire for opportunities to come together with other JoC along with the importance of achieving greater equity in predominantly white Jewish organizations. Capturing this duality, a Black, African, or African American woman in her 20s asserted,

**☑ Jews of Color definitely need our own defined spaces outside of the online world, created for and by Jews of Color, while at the same time, larger organizations such as Hillel and even Chabad need to hire Jews of Color leadership, not just as tokenization, but to build equity in the community.**

Despite the connective potency of creating and sustaining space with other JoC, this opportunity remains largely out of reach for many. While nearly half (46%) of survey respondents say that talking about the JoC experience with other Jews of Color was very important, more than a third (36%) report that they have no friends who are Jews of Color.

## JoC Spaces

While acknowledging the challenges of fostering a sense of belonging among members of this multifaceted population, respondents emphasized the importance of opportunities that validate, support, and connect JoC.

Participation in events and communities exclusively for and by JoC has been transformative for many. Their involvement in gatherings for JoC has prompted respondents to reflect on and engage with their identities. Respondents have developed influential relationships with peers and mentors as participants in JoC-centered fellowships, conferences, and educational programs. Some highlighted the value of creating smaller affinity spaces where they can commune with others who share more specific identity markers.

JoC gatherings provide a sense of belonging and solidarity that is unavailable in other areas of Jewish communal life. Many described these experiences and relationships as profoundly healing.

**46%** of respondents said talking about the experience of being a JoC with other JoC is very important to them.

**36%** of respondents said they have no close friends who are JoC.

Participating [in a JoC organization] pushed me to express and emote and learn more about what my backgrounds mean to me, what feels authentic, and how to bring them together."

 An Asian-American woman in her 20s

It was amazing to be in a space where there were so many Jews of Color, with darker skin than mine and all levels of Judaism. It was an amazing experience that really helped me work on my liberation as a Black person, and really get more awoken to the ways that white supremacy lives in me and how to actively, mindfully, and intentionally break that stuff down and get it out.

 A Black and white woman in her 50s

Being in JoC community spaces – whether it's conferences or cohorts – adds value and meaning to being Jewish for me. Going to synagogue fills my need for my Jewish spirituality, and there is another spiritual need that I have to be in JoC-only spaces.

 A Mexican-American & Iranian-American woman in her 30s

When I was in a space with Jews of Color I realized so many things that I thought were just me were sociological patterns and trends around the capacity and the potential Jews of Color have for immense compassion as people who grew up with multiple racial and cultural identities.

 A biracial woman in her 30s

## JoC Connections

**Connecting with other JoC provides opportunities for respondents to feel seen and affirmed.**

I don't think it can be overstated the alienation and potential for disconnect for young people of color who grow up in predominantly white Jewish communities, especially someone like myself who is mixed race and attended an Ashkenazi, majority-white synagogue growing up. I never had JoC role models growing up and I didn't think it was possible to be non-white and Jewish. Only through my own journey have I met and been able to join other Jews of Color in community and reclamation of Jewish practice and culture.

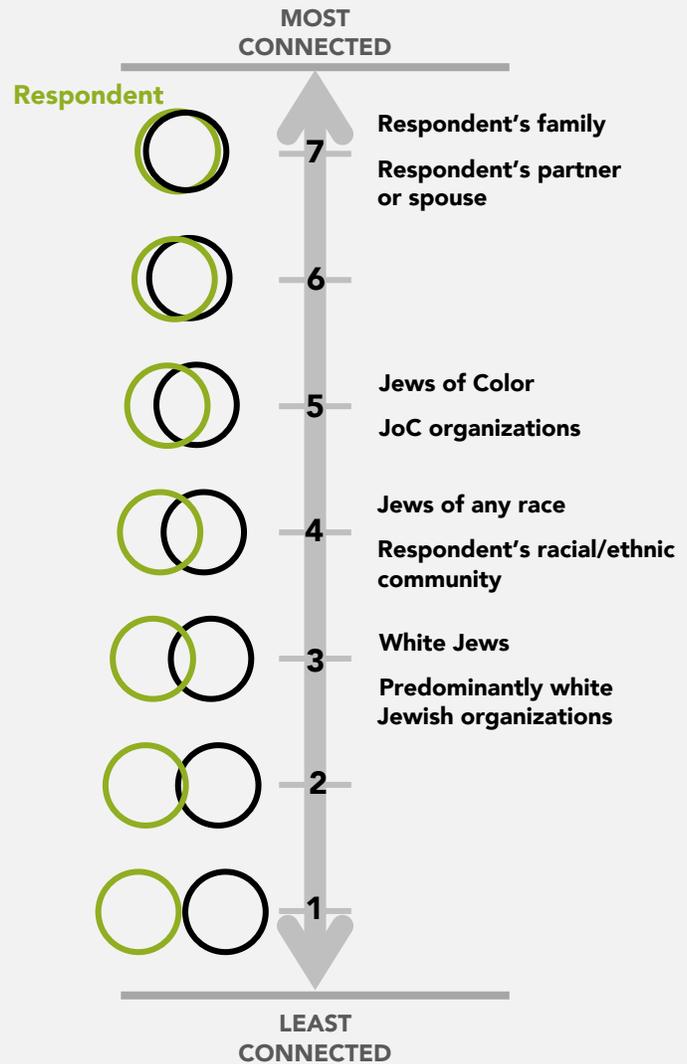
An Asian or Asian American, white or European American, multiracial and mixed woman in her 20s

As a brown Salvadoran Jew, I often feel lonely in predominantly white Jewish spaces because white Jews either make assumptions about me or never engage to get to know me. When meeting other JoC, there is an instant bond and friendship without having to force it or explain how we are Jewish. We can simply be and feel comfortable. I wish my local Jewish synagogue/community made more effort to create safe spaces for Jews of Color and/or have JoC voices be raised more instead of white Jews speaking over or for us.

A Hispanic or Latina/o/x woman in her 20s

**Respondents reported feeling a greater sense of connection with other JoC than with white Jews.<sup>30</sup>**

Respondents were asked to select the number for the picture that best matches how connected they feel to each of the following individuals or groups of people.



I'm coming from being burned, so when I go into these groups, there's always a sigh of relief that, 'Oh my God, we exist'.

A Black woman in her 20s

## Concluding Thoughts

*Beyond the Count* illustrates many of the beautiful and challenging ways that race and Jewish identity intersect for the Jews of Color whose voices are gathered in this research. With equal passion, they described their love of Jewish ritual, family, values, and tradition, along with the experience of being asked to defend and explain their Jewishness. Respondents spoke powerfully about their desire for Jewish communities that could honor their whole selves and shared the pain of encounters with racism and prejudice in Jewish contexts. They revealed common strategies for managing friction, avoiding conflict, and maintaining the integrity of their selfhood both in and outside of Jewish communities.

The findings reported from both interviews and survey data focus on broad themes. These create a dynamic narrative, unearthing many questions that were beyond the scope of this preliminary research. There is still much to learn about the nuances, parallels, and distinctions that exist among and between Jews of Color. Future research could focus on the specific experiences of various sub-populations of JoC, such as biracial JoC, those who are unaffiliated, have converted, have a disability, are Orthodox, and/or are queer and trans, among many other possibilities. A stratified sampling method could be employed to include a greater number of respondents who are not women (men and nonbinary people). In addition, to better understand the generalizability of the findings presented in *Beyond the Count*, follow-up analyses of the data could explore differences in perspectives and experiences between and among JoC.

Responses could be compared across variables such as socio-economic status, race and ethnicity, gender, Jewish parentage, religiosity, and geographic location.

While accentuating numerous areas of inquiry still in need of attention, *Beyond the Count* presents a rich and complex portrait of a vital and vibrant segment of American Jewry that has been previously overlooked and excluded. In doing so, this research offers a corrective to the problematic social norms that have long minimized the experiences of JoC and marginalized their very existence. By amplifying the voices of JoC and acknowledging their variety, *Beyond the Count* can be used to move the Jewish communal discourse toward a more accurate understanding and portrayal of American Jewish life in all of its complexity.

Looking beyond the count means recognizing the inherent and perennial diversity, intersectionality, and multiplicity of Jewish people. This acknowledgement presents an opportunity for American Jews to reckon with traumas faced by JoC and pursue a much needed process of healing and repair. *Beyond the Count* can serve as a catalyst for pushing American Jews to confront their individual and collective role in American racial structures and empower Jewish leaders to create just, enriching, accessible, and welcoming experiences for all. Done with care, this will contribute to a more equitable alignment of individual and communal values, needs, and actions.



## Recommendations

**Creating an American Jewish community that honors all American Jews requires introspection and change at every level—individual, organizational, and structural. Drawn from interview and survey data, the following recommendations highlight four strategies for intervention:**

- 1. Support organizations and initiatives led by and serving Jews of Color.** The research strongly illustrates the value and power of JoC-centered communities. Participating in retreats, study groups, holiday celebrations, social justice circles, and leadership training cohorts has had a profound impact on JoC, who found in them support, validation, and ease that had eluded them elsewhere. Increased capacity building, leadership development, and funding for current initiatives and efforts is needed, along with support for the expansion and development of additional opportunities for JoC to enrich their Jewish lives and communities.
- 2. Shift organizational leadership to more accurately reflect the diversity of American Jews.** Professional and lay leadership in most American Jewish organizations remains largely, and in many cases exclusively, white. Organizations need to evaluate and change their hiring and recruitment processes to increase racial equity so they can better serve all American Jews. The effort to diversify leadership must come with appropriate support and mentorship for Jewish leaders of color. Elevating JoC to positions of communal leadership is not only a question of representation, but of making room for a broader array of influence and adapting organizational aims and cultures around a more expansive understanding of American Jewry.
- 3. Prioritize creating spaces and places for discourse and dialog with and among JoC.** Productively reckoning with the impact of racism in American Jewish life requires organization- and community-wide reflection and action. This communal priority must be supported at all levels: funders need to invest in racial justice within and beyond the Jewish community; leaders need to encourage difficult conversations and be prepared to adapt to emerging narratives of American Jewry; and individuals need to be equipped to be effective allies. These conversations must be guided by the experiences and needs that JoC themselves articulate.
- 4. Promote further research by and about JoC.** The findings from this report contribute to a nascent body of research that requires further attention. Additional research conducted by and about JoC is needed to advance our understanding of a more holistic and diverse American Jewish community. Moving forward, including questions about racial and ethnic identities and experiences must become standard in research and evaluations of all kinds. The ability of Jewish communal organizations to serve the full range of American Jews requires the full and intentional incorporation of a broader range of voices in the production and content of future research.

<sup>1</sup> We worked collaboratively throughout the process and want to honor all contributions equally. Our names are listed alphabetically.

<sup>2</sup> Kelman, Ari Y., Aaron Hahn Tapper, Izabel Fonseca, and Aliya Saperstein. 2019. "Counting Inconsistencies: An Analysis of American Jewish Population Studies with a Focus on Jews of Color." For recent studies that include questions about race see: American Jewish Population Project. 2021. "American Jewish Population Estimates 2020: Summary and Highlights;" and Pew Research Center. 2021. "Jewish Americans in 2020."

<sup>3</sup> A rich body of literature has emerged that examines and historicizes the incorporation of Jews of Eastern, Central, or Western European heritage (Ashkenazim) into the racial category of white since the early 1900s in the United States. For discussions of the historical construction of Jews as "white ethnics," see Jacobson, Matthew Frye. 1998. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press; Goldstein, Eric L. 2006. *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; and Brodtkin, Karen. 1998. *How Jews Became White Folks and What that Says about Race in America*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Berry, Jacqueline Carol. 1978. *Black Jews: A Study of Malintegration and (Multi) Marginality*. Syracuse University; Gonzalez-Lesser, Emma. 2020a. "Bio-Logics of Jewishness: Media Constructions of the Nuances of Race and Ethnicity." *Identities* 27(5):517–36; Gonzalez-Lesser, Emma. 2020b. "Jewishness as Sui Generis: Extending Theorizations beyond the Debate of 'Race, Ethnicity, or Religion.'" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 43(3):479–500; Hahn Tapper, Aaron J. 2016. *Judaisms: A Twenty-First-Century Introduction to Jews and Jewish Identities*. Berkeley, CA: UC Press; Haynes, Bruce D. 2018. *The Soul of Judaism: Jews of African Descent in America*. New York, NY: New York University Press; Isaac, Walter. 2007. "Locating Afro-American Judaism: A Critique of White Normativity." Pp. 512–42 in *A Companion to African-American Studies*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.; Kaye/Kantrowitz, Melanie. 2007. *The Colors of Jews: Racial Politics and Radical Diasporism*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press; Kim, Helen Kiyong, and Noah Samuel Leavitt. 2016. *JewAsian: Race, Religion, and Identity for America's Newest Jews*. Lincoln, NB: U of Nebraska Press; Limonic, Laura. 2019. *Kugel and Frijoles: Latino Jews in the United States*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press; Parfitt, Tudor. 2013. *Black Jews in Africa and the Americas*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Soomekh, Saba. 2012. *From the Shahs to Los Angeles: Three Generations of Iranian Jewish Women between Religion and Culture*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press; Soomekh, Saba, ed. 2016. *Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews in America*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press; Tobin, Dianne, Gary A. Tobin, and Scott Rubin. 2005. In *Every Tongue: The Racial & Ethnic Diversity of the Jewish People*. San Francisco, CA: Institute for Jewish & Community Research. We can add to these studies a handful of memoirs including Delman, Carmit.

2003. *Burnt Bread and Chutney: Growing Up Between Cultures - A Memoir of an Indian Jewish Childhood*. New York; Gad, Marra B. 2019. *The Color of Love: A Story of a Mixed-Race Jewish Girl*. Chicago: Agate Bolden; Lester, Julius. 1988. *Lovesong: Becoming a Jew*. New York: Simon & Schuster; MaNishtana. 2012. *Thoughts From A Unicorn: 100% Black. 100% Jewish. 0% Safe*. Independently published; Pryor, Rain. 2007. *Jokes My Father Never Taught Me: Life, Love, and Loss with Richard Pryor*. Reprint edition. It Books; and Walker, Rebecca. 2002. *Black, White & Jewish: Autobiography of a Shifting Self*. First Paperback Edition edition. New York, NY: Riverhead Books.

<sup>5</sup> Collins, Patricia Hill. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: NY: Routledge; Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6):1241-1299; and Goodman, Diane J. 2014. "The Tapestry Model: Exploring Social Identities, Privilege, and Oppression from an Intersectional Perspective." Pp. 99–108 in *Intersectionality & Higher Education: Theory, Research, & Praxis*, edited by D. Mitchell, J. Marie, and T. L. Steele. Peter Lang Publishing Group.

<sup>6</sup> Goodman, Diane J. 2014. "The Tapestry Model: Exploring Social Identities, Privilege, and Oppression from an Intersectional Perspective." Pp. 100 in *Intersectionality & Higher Education: Theory, Research, & Praxis*, edited by D. Mitchell, J. Marie, and T. L. Steele. Peter Lang Publishing Group.

<sup>7</sup> Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy, and Patricia Leavy. 2007. *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer*. SAGE Research Methods. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

<sup>8</sup> McKinney, Shahanna. 2001. "Writing and Art by Jewish Women of Color: Introduction." *Bridges*, 9(1), 4-8. Retrieved June 25, 2021, p.4.

<sup>9</sup> Western States Center. February 15, 2011. "Loretta Ross on the origin of the phrase 'Women of Color.'" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82vl34mi4lw&t=6s>

<sup>10</sup> McKinney, Shahanna. (2001). "Writing and Art by Jewish Women of Color: Introduction." *Bridges*, 9(1), 4-8. Retrieved June 25, 2021, p.5.

<sup>11</sup> McKinney, Shahanna. (2001). "Writing and Art by Jewish Women of Color: Introduction." *Bridges*, 9(1), 4-8. Retrieved June 25, 2021 p.5.

<sup>12</sup> McKinney, Shahanna. (2001). "Writing and Art by Jewish Women of Color: Introduction." *Bridges*, 9(1), 4-8. Retrieved June 25, 2021 p.4.

<sup>13</sup> The BIPOC Project: A Black, Indigenous & People of Color Movement. "Our Mission." Retrieved from <https://www.thebipocproject.org/about-us>.

<sup>14</sup> Chapman, Imani. Jews of Color Community Landscape for JDC Entwine. Romney Associates Inc. (May 2020): 7.

<sup>15</sup> McKinney, Shahanna. 2001. "Writing and Art by Jewish Women of Color: Introduction." *Bridges*, 9(1), 4-8. Retrieved June 25, 2021, p.6.

<sup>16</sup> Jacobson, Matthew Frye. 1998. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press; Goldstein, Eric L. 2006. *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; and Brodtkin, Karen. 1998. *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

<sup>17</sup> In contrast to empirical or statistical approaches to sampling, theoretical or purposive sampling is a nonprobability approach in which participants are not chosen for how representative they are to the wider population (in this case, "all Jews"), but for their relevance to the research being conducted (here, "Jews of Color"). Schwandt, Thomas A. 2007. *The SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry (Vols. 1-0)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

<sup>18</sup> Referral/snowball sampling is a method of research sampling in which initial participants identify and/or recommend other potential participants in their social networks that would also be eligible. Snowball sampling is particularly useful in situations where the total size of the population being studied is unknown. Given, Lisa M. 2008. "Nonprobability Sampling." Pp. 562-3 in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

<sup>19</sup> The overall sample includes a larger proportion of women, which is consistent with research on both women's religious observance and research participation. Kwak, Nojin, and Barry T. Radler. 2002. "A Comparison between Mail and Web Surveys: Response Pattern, Respondent Profile, and Data Quality." *Journal of Official Statistics*, 18(2):257-273; Mulder, Joris, and Marika de Bruijne. 2019. "Willingness of Online Respondents to Participate in Alternative Modes of Data Collection." *Survey Practice*, 12(1):1-11; Pew Research Center. 2015. "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050."; Schnabel, Landon. 2018. "More Religious, Less Dogmatic: Toward a General Framework for Gender Differences in Religion." *Social Science Research*, 75:58-72; Trzebiatowska, Marta, and Steve Bruce. 2012. *Why are Women More Religious than Men?*. Oxford University Press; and Underwood, Daniel, Heather Kim, and Michael Matier. 2000. "To Mail or to Web: Comparisons of Survey Response Rates and Respondent Characteristics." Paper presented at the 40th Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research, Cincinnati, OH, May 21-24, 2000.

<sup>20</sup> Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy, and Patricia Lina Leavy. 2007. *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer*. SAGE Research Methods. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

<sup>21</sup> Kemmis, Stephen, Robin McTaggart, and Rhonda Nixon. 2013. *The Action Research Planner*. 2014 ed. Singapore: Springer Singapore Pte. Limited.

<sup>22</sup> Critical race theory (CRT) is an interdisciplinary set of research concepts and methodologies oriented towards the study and transformation of the relationships between race, racism, and power in society. Emerging from the Critical Legal Studies movement in the 1970s, CRT has developed into a broad umbrella for several research approaches to studying diverse racial and ethnic communities and the effects of racism on their treatment in society. For more on CRT, see: Delgado, Richard, and Jean Stefancic. 2017. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 3rd Edition, in *Critical America*. New York: New York University Press; and Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas, eds. 1995. *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*. New York: New Press.

<sup>23</sup> CRT has a rich history of demonstrating the power of counter-storytelling to challenge dominant narratives, stereotypes, and the underlying assumptions that form the background of mainstream discourse about race and racism. Latin American Critical Race (LatCrit) scholars working in Education Studies have persuasively argued that "Counternarrative-as-qualitative method...allows us to explore the breadth of what happens through the structures, processes, and discourses of higher education." Solorzano, Daniel G., and Tara J. Yosso. 2001. "Critical Race and LatCrit Theory and Method: Counter-Storytelling-Chicana and Chicano Graduate School Experiences," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14(4):471-495.

<sup>24</sup> Garcia, Sandra E. 2020. "BIPOC: What Does It Mean?" *The New York Times*, June 17. <https://www.nytimes.com/article/what-is-bipoc.html>

<sup>25</sup> Indeed, in some interviews, participants noted that they had struggled to make sense of their experiences of racism until they had vocalized it in the course of the interview. In this way, our research methods allowed for a participatory approach, inviting interviewees to participate with peer researchers in the analysis of their own stories. Solorzano, Daniel G., and Tara J. Yosso. 2001. "Critical Race and LatCrit Theory and Method: Counter-Storytelling- Chicana and Chicano Graduate School Experiences," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14(4):471-495; and Solorzano, Daniel G., and Tara J. Yosso. 2002. "Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research," *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8:23-44.

<sup>26</sup> Holmes, Andrew Gary Darwin. 2020. "Researcher Positionality - A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research - A New Researcher Guide." *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 8(4):1-10.

<sup>27</sup> Among 1,118 respondents who completed more than half of the survey, 12 individuals indicated only “white or European American” as their race. The specific racialized experiences of these self-identified JoC was unclear and these cases were kept in to preserve the ethic of self-definition in this work. More research is needed to better understand this pattern of identification.

<sup>28</sup> The term “colorism” is attributed to author and civil rights activist Alice Walker, who defined it as the “prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their color.” Walker, Alice. 1983. “If the Present Looks Like the Past, What Does the Future Look Like?,” in *In Search of our Mothers’ Gardens* 290. as cited by Norwood, Kimberly Jade. 2015. ““If You is White, You’s Alright...” Stories about Colorism in America.” *Washington University Global Studies Law Review*. 14(4):585–608.

<sup>29</sup> Meer, Nasar. 2019. “W. E. B. Du Bois, double consciousness and the ‘spirit’ of Recognition.” *The Sociological Review*. 67(1):47-62.

<sup>30</sup> Aron, Arthur, Elayne N. Aron, and Danny Smollan. 1992. “Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale and the Structure of Interpersonal Closeness.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63(4):596-612.

## Appendix A: Methods

The findings of this mixed-methods study are derived from two unprecedented data sources: the first national survey of Jews of Color and the largest dataset of interviews with self-identified Jews of Color to date. It also draws on secondary source research on Jews of Color and Jews and race in the United States. The Institutional Review Board of Stanford University approved and supervised this research.

### Interviews

Using a semi-structured interview protocol, we conducted 61 interviews with self-identified Jews of Color. Respondents were encouraged to share autobiographical narratives, an approach based on the work of social psychologist Dan McAdams, one of the leading theoreticians of the narrative-based, qualitative interview.<sup>1</sup> According to McAdams, the act of turning information into a story is fundamentally social, allowing a person to make sense of their life with both “internalized” and “external” audiences in mind.<sup>2</sup>

### Interviews sought to address the following five research questions:

- 1. What are the experiences, attitudes, feelings, voices, interests, and beliefs of JoCs?**
- 2. How have systems of racism impacted JoC experiences within Jewish spaces and organizations?**
- 3. What pathways support/allow for JoCs to thrive?**
- 4. What are the experiences, perspectives, and beliefs of Jews of Color in the United States?**
- 5. What are JoC’s racialized experiences within the broader, predominantly white, Jewish ecosystem?**

Data were drawn from in-depth interviews conducted via Zoom or by phone between October 2020 and May 2021. Interview participants were

selected using a purposive sampling method designed to reflect a broad range of perspectives. Interviews were conducted with members of three populations: JoCI key stakeholders (n=9), professionals and lay leaders (n=39), and selected respondents from the JoC survey (n=13). As an incentive, all interview participants received a \$20 online gift card. Email invitations were sent to a total of 97 people and interviews were conducted with the first 61 who responded. Most interviews lasted about one hour, though several lasted nearly two hours.

Contextualizing interviews with select key stakeholders in the JoCI network (n=9) were used to articulate learning goals and key issues, clarify the characteristics of the sample, and contribute to the development of research instruments. These individuals were identified by JoCI staff members. With the input of the key stakeholders and JoCI, a purposive sample of professionals and lay leaders was created with consideration to variables such as age, gender identification, geographic location, and Jewish background. The final question on the survey asked respondents to indicate their interest in participating in a follow-up interview. Respondents were selected from a group of those who opted in. They were randomly chosen from a subset of respondents’ whose demographic characteristics were underrepresented among the first 48 respondents interviewed. These interviews were conducted to support the interpretation of survey findings and offer a deeper understanding of the diversity of the population.

### Data Collection and Analysis

All of the interviews were conducted and recorded on Zoom. The audio was retained in a secure location and was transcribed automatically using the web-based platform, Temi.

<sup>1</sup> McAdams, Dan P. 2001. “The Psychology of Life Stories.” *Review of General Psychology* 5(2):100; McAdams, Dan P. 2005. *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By*. New York: Oxford University Press; & McAdams, Dan P. 1997. *The Stories We Live by: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self*, 1st ed. New York: The Guilford Press.

<sup>2</sup> McAdams, Dan P. 1997. *The Stories We Live by: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self*, 1st ed. New York: The Guilford Press.

<sup>3</sup> Glaser, Barney G., and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Transaction.

Interview transcripts were cleaned in Temi and collaboratively coded using the qualitative data analysis platform Dedoose. Transcribed interviews were analyzed using a grounded theory approach which was inductive, iterative, and collaborative.<sup>3</sup> Using this method, findings were derived from themes and outlying ideas that surface organically. Data was analyzed by grouping recurring ideas into a series of codes, which are then grouped into concepts. To reduce bias in coding, all members of the research team were responsible for coding primarily interviews which they themselves had not conducted.

### Survey

The Count Me In survey was designed to substantiate, challenge and/or expand upon findings from interviews. Data obtained from interviews and feedback from the JoCI advisory committee directly informed the creation and revision of the survey instrument. The survey was administered through nonprobability sampling methods, which are particularly useful with small populations that are hard to reach through conventional probability sampling. The survey enabled the systematic collection of perceptions and experiences from a large number of JoC respondents.

### Instrument design

Item creation was guided by feminist and participatory research principles and informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT). The overall aim of this approach was to create an instrument in which respondents felt seen and understood as holding complex identities that are not easily accounted for in a questionnaire. This was enacted at the item level through non-exclusive answer options wherever

applicable and the opportunity to provide an alternative (“Other”) response for many questions, including race, gender, discrimination setting, and Jewish expressions. Respondents were also invited to share open-ended feedback at multiple points of the survey, which yielded rich supplementary qualitative data.

The questionnaire is comprised of 3 thematic sections:

1. FAMILY & COMMUNITY
  - a. Jewish origins and practices
  - b. Social contexts and relationships
2. PERSPECTIVES & BELIEFS
  - a. Being Jewish, a Person of Color, and a Jew of Color
  - b. Expressing Identities
  - c. Jewish Organizational Experiences
  - d. Connectedness with Individuals and Communities
3. EXPERIENCES
  - a. Tension in the Experience of Intersectional Identity
  - b. Types of Discrimination
  - c. Treatment, Behaviors, and Affirmations
  - d. Importance of In-/Out-Group Dialog
  - e. Jewish Organizational Leadership

The 42-item questionnaire also included two eligibility screening questions. Information on respondents’ racial, ethnic, and Jewish background was additionally collected, as well as standard demographic characteristics, including age, gender, marital status, political views, location, LGBTQ, and disability identity.

<sup>4</sup> Friedlander, Myrna L., Michelle L. Friedman, Matthew J. Miller, Michael V. Ellis, Lee K. Friedlander, and Vadim G. Mikhaylov. 2010. “Introducing a Brief Measure of Cultural and Religious Identification in American Jewish Identity.” *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 57(3):345-60; Hartmann, Douglas, Penny Edgell, and Joseph Gerteis. 2003. “American Mosaic Project: A National Survey on Diversity.” Data file and codebook; Mayer, Egon, Barry Kosmin, and Ariela Keysar. 2001. *American Jewish Identity Survey*. New York: Center for Cultural Judaism; Paradies, Yin C., and Joan Cunningham. 2008. “Development and Validation of the Measure of Indigenous Racism Experiences (MIRE).” *International Journal for Equity in Health* 7:9; Pieterse, Alex L., Nathan R. Todd, Helen A. Neville, & Robert T. Carter. 2012. “Perceived Racism and Mental Health Among Black American Adults: A Meta-Analytic Review.” *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 59(1):1; and “Va’adat Teshuvah (Repair Committee) Survey” shared by the Kadima congregation in Seattle, WA, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Adler, Nancy, and Judith Stewart. 2007. “The MacArthur Scale of Subjective social status.” San Francisco: MacArthur Research Network on SES & Health; and Aron, Arthur, Elayne N. Aron, and Danny Smollan. 1992. “Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale and the Structure of Interpersonal Closeness.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63(4):596-612.

The creation of substantive items was informed by existing measures of identity.<sup>4</sup> Two validated items,<sup>5</sup> one measuring social status and the other social connectedness, were also included.

### Data Collection

The online survey was hosted on Qualtrics for 6 weeks between January and February, 2021. Nonprobability sampling methods were used to recruit respondents. The survey was promoted via social media, primarily on Facebook and Twitter, including the use of viral sharing and strategic post blasts using the hashtags #CountMeIn #JewofColor #Jews of Color #JoC #JoCsurvey. The survey link was also shared widely via email among established Jew of Color networks, including to all Hillel directors in the US. Additionally, as part of this referral/snowball sampling,<sup>6</sup> survey respondents were asked to forward the survey to others they thought might be interested.

The invitation to complete the survey was extended to those who self-identify as JoC. The survey was started 1,875 times. Of those, 1,512 individuals responded affirmatively (“Yes, I do” or “I’m not sure”) to the single screener question: “Do you identify as a Jew of Color, however you understand that term?” Of those, 1,474 also responded affirmatively (“Yes, I do” or “Not currently, but I used to”) to the second screening question: “Do you live in the United States?” Of the 1,474 screener eligible respondents, 1,089 completed the full survey, with 1,118 completing at least 50% of the survey (maximum reported n).

A small number of respondents who self-identified as Jew of Color identified as “white” in response to a question about their racial identity (n=12). Their contextual racialized experiences were indeterminate based on their responses. Those individuals were

retained in the sample in service to the complexity of self-identification and belonging. The responses for these individuals do not deviate notably from the larger sample.

### Data Analysis

Data were cleaned and analyzed using a combination of IBM SPSS and MS Excel. The primary analytic methods used were: filtering, aggregation, and cross tabulation. Filtering enabled the organization and visualization of subsets of data based on the isolation of select variables. Aggregation allowed for the summarizing of broader trends across items and groups. Cross-tabulation was used to explore possible relationships between two or more survey questions.

Neither design (sampling) nor post-stratification weights were applied to the data prior to analysis. Design weights could not be calculated due to the nonprobability sampling methods. Post-stratification weights could not be calculated because there are no known demographic population parameters for Jews of Color. As a result, the values presented reflect raw proportions of respondent answers.

In addition, nonprobability sampling methods do not support the calculation of statistical margins of sampling error (none are reported here) or the reliable generalizability of the sample to the broader JoC population. Within these limits, though, the survey findings are illustrative of broad themes of experience and perspective among respondents, and the strong patterns of response for key items suggests that the findings are robust and not merely an artifact of the unique sample.

<sup>6</sup> Referral/snowball sampling is a method of research sampling in which initial participants identify and/or recommend other potential participants in their social networks that would also be eligible. Snowball sampling is particularly useful in situations where the total size of the population being studied is unknown. Given, Lisa M. 2008. “Nonprobability Sampling.” Pp. 562-3 in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

## Appendix B: Who We Are

In every study, a researcher's positionality affects the subject of inquiry, the methods used, and how the data are analyzed. As social scientists, we are never separate from the social processes we study. We acknowledge that our cultural, historical, and political contexts influence our orientations toward this work. In doing so, we are purposefully rejecting the presumption of neutrality so often present in studies of American Jewry. By reflecting on and disclosing our roles in the power dynamics that are inherent in any research process, we aim to increase the transparency, validity, and ethicality of this work.

**Tobin Belzer PhD** is a queer, feminist sociologist and the cisgender daughter of two Christmas-celebrating, secular, white, Ashkenazi Jews. Her life has been profoundly shaped and enriched by her participation in predominantly white Jewish spaces since she joined a Conservative synagogue in the San Fernando Valley as a teen. Her interest in understanding and lifting up the perspectives and experiences of typically-marginalized voices animates her commitment to this work.

**Tory Brundage PhD** is a Black, atheist, cisgender man raised with complex family dynamics and an expansive notion of what family means, having spent formative time throughout California, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and Idaho. His research applies a critical race framework to identity development and study abroad learning in higher education while his work aims to support undergraduate men of color at a predominantly-white institution. His race centered, mixed methodological, and critical epistemological perspective informed this work.

**Vincent Calvetti MA** is a queer, working-class, Chicano, Jewish cisgender man and a first-generation graduate student and researcher of comparative religion, Critical Race Theory and Jewish histories. Born and raised in the Bay Area and currently living, working, and studying on Duwamish land, Vincent is deeply interested in understanding the intersections of race, ethnicity, and Jewishness in American and Israeli societies and the historical trajectory and liberatory social and political possibilities of the Mizrahi Struggle.

**Gage S. Gorsky PhD** is a half-Mexican, half-Ashkenazi, neurodivergent radical nonbinary trans queer Millennial interdisciplinary researcher raised by their single white Jewish mom in Chicago. Their intersecting marginal identities and feminist, activist spirit inform and shape their methodological approach to this deeply personal project.

**Ari Y. Kelman PhD** is an Ashkenazi, cisgender man, born and raised and living in California. His approach to research and scholarship is informed as much by the social histories of American Jewry as it is by the critical theories of Cultural Studies and American Studies. He has benefitted from his identity as a white American Jew, and is working to expand the access he has been afforded to others by probing the social and conceptual structures that govern American Jewish life.

**Dalya Perez PhD** lives and works on Duwamish and Coast Salish land and gives thanks to the first peoples. She is the daughter of an immigrant father from the Philippines and a refugee mother who is a Sephardi Jew from Egypt. She is a diversity, equity, and inclusion strategist, educator, and qualitative researcher with expertise in Critical Race Theories and frameworks. Her research has focused on the intersections of race and gender for men of color; historical consciousness and erasure for Filipinx Americans, and is currently researching equity and inclusive design for mixed reality technologies. Being a Jew and a person of color has informed all of her work and deeply called her to this project as a collaborator.