



# 2025 Greater Boston Jewish Community Study.



Accessibility  
and barriers.

# Table of contents.

Introduction .....	3
Accessibility and barriers in the Greater Boston Jewish community .....	5
Demographic characteristics .....	6
General barriers to participation .....	7
Barriers to joining a synagogue .....	9
Barriers to Jewish education for children .....	11
Financial barriers and constraints on communal participation .....	13
Conclusion .....	14
Notes .....	15

Sponsored by: Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston

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[cjp.org/CommunityStudy2025](http://cjp.org/CommunityStudy2025)

*Published February 2026*

# Introduction.

## 2025 Greater Boston Jewish Community Study

This study is an independent research initiative sponsored by Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP). The mission of CJP is to inspire and mobilize the diverse Greater Boston Jewish community to engage in building communities of learning and action that strengthen Jewish life and improve the world.

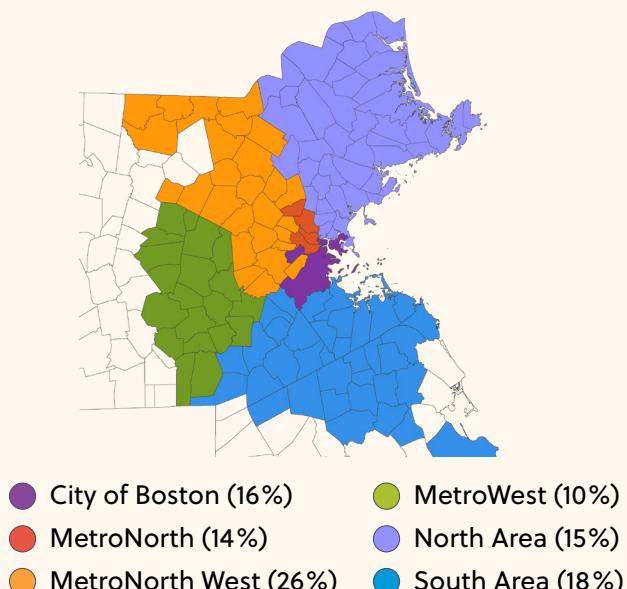
The goal of this study is to provide a transparent, fact-based picture of the community today. Conducted once every decade, this study gives the community the chance to step back and ask: Who are we today? Where are we thriving? And what does our community need to build a strong and safe future?

The research is based on 4,776 responses from a probability survey of a randomly selected sample of Jewish households across Greater Boston and is supported by follow-up interviews and focus groups. These reports remind us that every

data point represents a real person—a life, a story, and a lived experience in our community. Readers are encouraged to approach the findings with curiosity and openness to the diverse experiences they represent. The reports present two types of data: estimates of the number of Jewish households and the people in them, and percentages describing their characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors. As with all probability-based surveys, these estimates are not exact and include a margin of error of about  $\pm 2.6$  percentage points for the full sample. For smaller groups, the margin of error is wider. Throughout the reports, estimates are rounded to whole numbers and populations to the nearest hundred, so categories may not equal the total.

To read all the reports and access a detailed explanation of the survey methodology, visit [cjp.org/CommunityStudy2025](http://cjp.org/CommunityStudy2025).

## Map of Jewish households



For a detailed map, visit: [cjp.org/regionalmap](http://cjp.org/regionalmap)

### Population estimates of Greater Boston

Jewish households	138,200
Individuals in Jewish households	333,100
Adults	277,900
Jewish	184,500
Not Jewish	93,400
Children	55,200
Jewish	44,000
Not Jewish	10,800
Unknown	400

# Glossary

## Terms used in the reports

**Jewish household:** A home in which one or more Jewish adults reside. All Jewish households have at least one Jewish adult living in them. About half of them are also home to one or more adults or children, or sometimes both, who are not Jewish.

### Adults

- **Jewish adults:** A person who identifies as Jewish by religion, ethnicity, culture, parentage, or how they were raised, so long as they do not also identify with another religion.
- **Adults who are not Jewish:** Adults living in Jewish households who do not identify as or consider themselves Jewish by religion, ethnicity, culture, parentage, or how they were raised.

### Children

- **Jewish children:** A person ages 0-17 who is being raised Jewish by religion, or Jewish and another religion, or is considered Jewish aside from religion, including ethnically or culturally Jewish.
- **Children who are not Jewish:** Children ages 0-17 who are living in Jewish households who are not being raised Jewish by religion, or Jewish and another religion, or considered Jewish aside from religion.

## Index of Jewish Connection

A system to measure how Jewish adults connect with Jewish life in Greater Boston

Contemporary Jewish life is multidimensional. There is a wide range of different and diverse ways to connect to it. To measure and categorize this diversity among Jewish adults in Greater Boston, an Index of Jewish Connection was developed and is used throughout the series of reports about the study.

The index—which is based on a statistical procedure called latent class analysis—captures the primary ways that five segments of Jewish adults connect to Jewish life in Greater Boston. It is not designed to place the groups in a hierarchy of engagement, with some doing “more” and some doing “less.”

Instead, it highlights what makes each group distinctive in how they connect in ways that are personally meaningful to Jewish life, distinctions that are reflected in the names given to the groups.



### Seeking the Social - 29%

The *Seeking the Social* group is similar to *Family Focused* and, additionally, is more active in communal and organizational events, activities, and programs.



### Tenuously Tethered - 27%

The *Tenuously Tethered* group is minimally involved in Jewish life, with infrequent participation in personal, home, and family-based Jewish activities or organizational events and programs.



### Family Focused - 17%

The *Family Focused* group is focused on personal, home, and family-based Jewish activities and holiday observances.



### Deeply Devoted - 15%

The *Deeply Devoted* group is similar to *Enthusiastically Engrossed* and, additionally, is more focused on synagogue involvement and religious observance.



### Enthusiastically Engrossed - 12%

The *Enthusiastically Engrossed* group has a wide range of family, personal, home, organizational, and cultural connections to Jewish life.

# Accessibility and barriers in the Greater Boston Jewish community.

A wide range of barriers can hinder residents from connecting with a Jewish community, and more specifically, with the offerings and services of Jewish communal organizations—both of which are crucial to creating a sense of Jewish peoplehood in Greater Boston.

This report describes factors that impact accessibility and create barriers to Jewish participation, including: social, informational, financial, programmatic, and logistical.

Other specific barriers affect fewer people overall, but they are no less important for those experiencing them:

- Feeling political views are unwelcome
- Lack of confidence in Jewish knowledge
- Health limitations
- Safety concerns
- Not enough accommodations for disabilities
- Lack of reliable childcare

**The findings in this report are based on a survey question in which 54% of Jewish adults said that being part of a Jewish community is important to them.** The other 46% of Jewish adults said it is not important to them.<sup>1</sup>

By focusing on those who want to participate in Jewish life and who face various challenges and limitations, this report identifies opportunities that can serve the Greater Boston Jewish community.

Here, we examine the 54% of Jewish adults who are further divided between those who feel like they are part of a Jewish community (35%) and those who do not (20%). Additionally, other segments within this group of adults are highlighted when issues of barriers and accessibility are particularly relevant to them.

## Key takeaways



### Barriers limit some children from Jewish education

A number of parents choose not to send their children to Jewish educational programs or experiences, including early childhood programs, Hebrew school or day school, and summer camp. Their decision is often because of location, cost, and a general lack of awareness regarding opportunities.



### Most face the same barriers to Jewish engagement, regardless of connectivity to community

Jewish adults, whether they feel connected to a Jewish community or not, face many barriers when trying to engage with a Jewish community. Those who feel connected cite different barriers than those who do not.



### For economically vulnerable adults, cost limits engagement

For most adults, cost is not one of the main barriers to participation in Jewish life. However, for economically vulnerable adults, cost is a significant factor that limits access to Jewish programs, services, and experiences in the community.

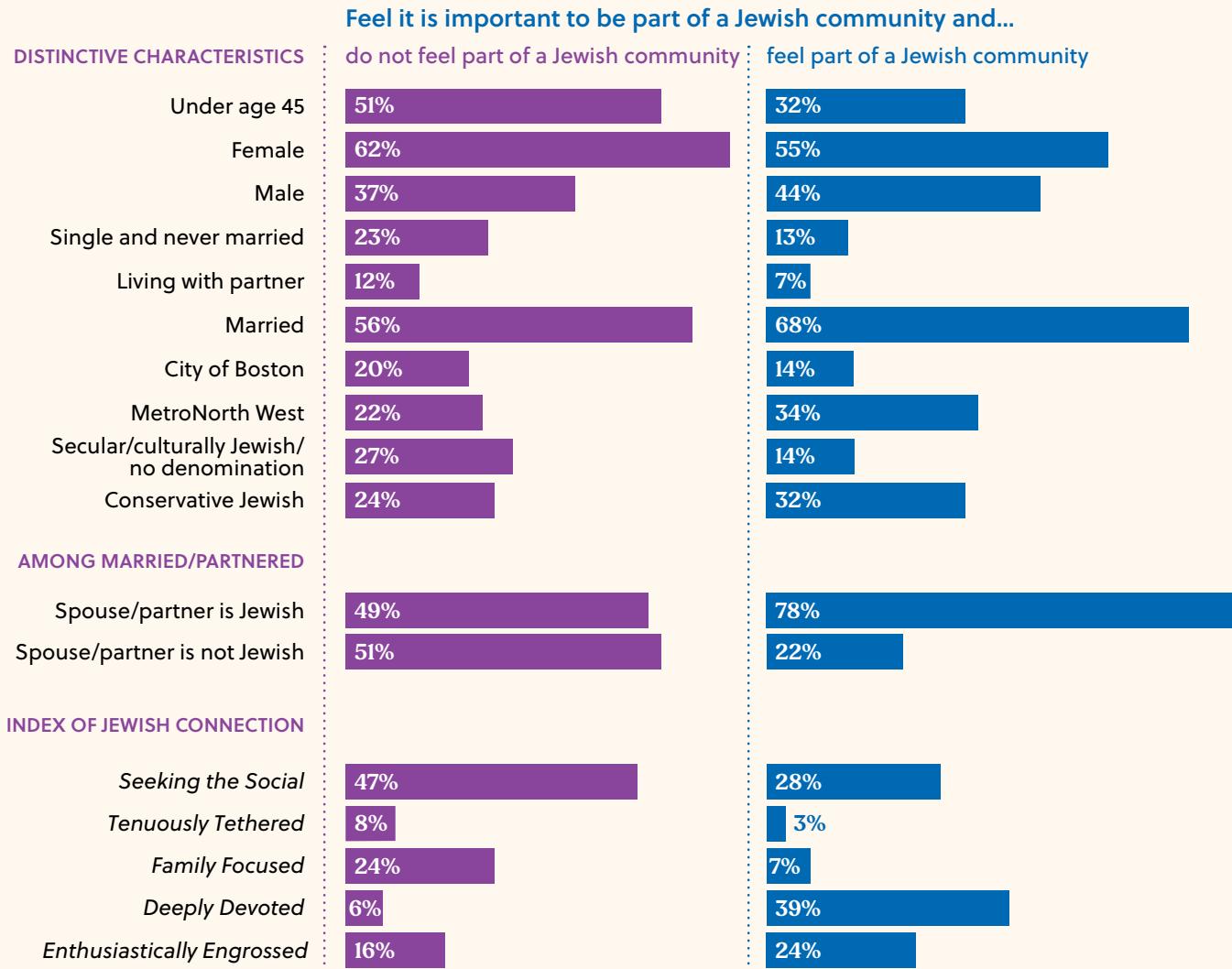
# Demographic characteristics.

The two groups of adults who value being part of a Jewish community—those who feel part of a Jewish community and those who do not—are somewhat distinctive from each other based on: age, gender, relationship status, children, residence, and Jewish connections.

For example, those who do not currently feel part of a community are more likely to be under the age of 45 (51%), single (23%), living with a partner (12%), and reside in the City of Boston (20%). They are also more likely to identify as secular or cultural Jews, to have a spouse or partner who is not Jewish, and be *Tenuously Tethered*, *Family Focused*, or *Seeking the Social*.

In contrast, those who do feel part of a Jewish community are more likely to be 45 or older, married, and reside in MetroNorth West. They are also more likely to identify denominational as Conservative, have a spouse or partner who is Jewish, and be *Enthusiastically Engrossed* or *Deeply Devoted*.

## Characteristics of Jewish adults who feel it is important to be part of a Jewish community



# General barriers to participation.

When the two groups were asked about barriers or limits to their Jewish participation, they differed in the share that cited each barrier and, in some cases, which barriers are more or less important.

Those who **do not feel** part of a Jewish community named the following barriers, which are numbered in order of importance:

1. Not knowing many people to participate with
2. Not being aware of opportunities to participate
3. Not prioritizing participation
4. Traffic or location
5. Lack of interesting events, activities, and programs

Those who **do feel** part of a Jewish community named the following barriers, which are numbered in order of importance:

1. Traffic or location
2. Not prioritizing participation
3. Not knowing many people to participate with
4. Inconvenient times of activities
5. Lack of interesting events, activities, and programs

Notably, social connections and event awareness distinguish the two groups from each other the most. Substantially more people who do not feel they are part of a community said the greatest barriers they face are not knowing many people to participate with and not being aware of opportunities to participate.

In a follow-up interview after taking the survey, one person attributed his lack of communal participation in part to an absence of social networks:

“

*I don't know how much of it is the fault of the organizations and how much it's just I'm not on anybody's radar for whatever reason. I didn't grow up in the community, I don't have kids that go to the schools. So in terms of [not] having those networks, maybe that's part of it.*

Other differences between the two groups are less pronounced. Traffic and location, for example, were cited as barriers by about a quarter of each group.

One young adult who does not feel connected to a Jewish community said:

*I live in Cambridge right now, not in Boston, so some of the events that are downtown, they're a bit hard for me to get to, especially after work. And you know how Boston traffic is.*

Another person who does feel connected to a Jewish community pointed to the same barrier:

*We live in Dover and so to drive to the JCC or to drive into Boston is very difficult. There have been a lot of programs that we would love to go to, but when you have a soccer game to get to afterwards, to drive an hour with traffic into the city and to come back out, it's very difficult.*

## Top barriers to participation in the Greater Boston Jewish community



Among the top limits to participation, some groups are especially likely to cite these barriers. For example, people who live in households with people who identify as a Jew of color or person of color (JPOC),<sup>2</sup> adults under age 45, and Jews who are *Family Focused* are more likely than others to say they do not know many people to participate with.

Although not in the top barriers, there are some groups who are especially likely to say the community does not feel welcoming to people like them: households where someone identifies as LGBTQIA+<sup>3</sup> JPOC, or as having a disability; adults under 30; and people who are financially struggling.

### Groups that are especially likely to cite each barrier to communal access

Top barriers	%	Groups most likely to cite barriers
You don't know many people	34%	Households with JPOC Adults under 45 <i>Family Focused</i>
It is not a priority for you at this time	26%	<i>Tenuously Tethered</i> <i>Family Focused</i>
Traffic or location make it difficult to attend	27%	Adults under 45 North Area
You haven't found events, activities, or programs that interest you	23%	<i>Seeking the Social</i> Adults under 30 <i>Family Focused</i> Households with JPOC
You are not aware of opportunities to participate	23%	<i>Tenuously Tethered</i> <i>Family Focused</i> Adults under 30

# Barriers to joining a synagogue.

Most Jewish adults in Greater Boston (69%) live in households that **do not** belong to or regularly participate in a Jewish congregation, *shul*, *minyan*, or other Jewish religious community.

**Among those who feel being part of a Jewish community is important but do not currently feel part of one**, the percentage is slightly higher: 80% live in households that do not belong to or regularly participate in a synagogue, while 20% do.

**Among those who feel they are part of a Jewish community**, the pattern is nearly reversed: 71% live in households that do belong to or regularly participate in synagogues, while 29% do not.

**Both groups cite varying degrees of the same top barriers to participation:** express Jewishness in other ways, high cost of membership, difficulty finding a good religious or social fit, and lack of interest or not a priority.

There is a strong association between feeling part of a Jewish community and synagogue membership and participation.

## Barriers to synagogue membership and participation



One community member, who does not feel part of a Jewish community, reflected on their experience looking for a synagogue:

*“It is a little bit difficult to break into the organizations and then become accepted. Searching for a synagogue when I got here I found to be very difficult, very closed and cold. In some of them, not all.*

Cost emerged in interviews as a substantial barrier. One woman explained:

*Synagogue dues are unrealistic when we can barely afford the cost of housing or daycare. I spent \$27,000 a year on daycare. ... I can't spend \$5,000 on synagogue dues. It's just not there.*

Even those who are financially comfortable sometimes find membership costs too high:

*I think as someone who makes a good salary and has a comfortable living, I find membership dues generally prohibitively expensive. ... I struggle to make that a priority in my life.*

Other community members said the time it takes to commute to a synagogue makes it difficult to participate:

*We're not going to drive 30-35 minutes to Shabbat services every week. That's just not happening.*

Another person added:

*I mean, it's like half an hour to get ... to the synagogue, so we just can't go as much or be involved in committees. And it [the commute] has really cut back on a lot of things like that.*



# Barriers to Jewish education for children.

Among all Jewish children, 39% were enrolled in at least one type of Jewish educational program or experience during the summer of 2024 or the 2024-2025 school year. More specifically:

- 27% of children in grades K-12 were enrolled in a part-time program like Hebrew or religious school in 2024-2025
- 19% of age-eligible children went to Jewish overnight camp in the summer of 2024
- 16% of children ages 0-5 were enrolled in a Jewish early childhood education program in 2024-2025
- 12% of children in grades K-12 went to Jewish day camp in the summer of 2024
- 11% of children in grades K-12 attended Jewish day school or *yeshiva* in 2024-2025

Like belonging to a synagogue, feeling part of a Jewish community is associated with having children enrolled in Jewish educational programs or attending Jewish camp.

## Enrollment in Jewish education for children



Parents of other age- and grade-eligible children were asked to identify the barriers to enrolling their children in these four kinds of Jewish educational programs or experiences. **For parents who do not feel like they are part of a Jewish community**, location, cost, and being unaware of educational opportunities are among the top five barriers across all forms of Jewish education for their children.

Though not as critical as other reasons, preferences for either non-Jewish programs or other activities are common barriers across all four types of education as well.

One parent explained in a follow-up interview:

*The number one competitor with Jewish programming is youth sports. If there were Jewish sports leagues, we'd probably lean towards that as the option, but we don't have them.*

Conflicts with parent and child schedules, a poor fit for children, and little interest on the part of children for summer camp round out top barriers for these parents.

### Top barriers to Jewish education for children, among parents who do not feel they are part of a Jewish community

Top barriers					
Early childhood education	Awareness	Cost	Other program preference	Distance/location	Parent schedule conflict
Part-time Jewish education	Awareness	Cost	Other activities	Distance/location	Parent schedule conflict
Jewish day school	Awareness	Cost	Other school preference	Distance/location	Parent schedule conflict
Jewish camp	Awareness	Cost	Other activities (preference or conflict)	Child not interested	Poor fit for child

In contrast, for parents who feel like they are part of a Jewish community, many of the same barriers exist for them, but in somewhat different ways. Cost is the only top barrier across each of the four forms of Jewish education. Awareness is only a top barrier for early childhood education and part-time programs.

Distance and location are barriers for all educational opportunities, except for part-time Jewish education. For day schools in particular, other school-related and other Jewish educational opportunities are barriers.

Being a poor fit for children is also important for three of the four types. Scheduling conflicts, insufficient financial aid, and a lack of interest from children make up the remaining reasons why children are not enrolled in specific types of Jewish educational experiences.

### Top barriers to Jewish education for children, among parents who feel they are part of a Jewish community

Top barriers					
Early childhood education	Cost	Distance/location	Awareness	Parent schedule conflict	Insufficient aid
Part-time Jewish education	Cost	Other activities	Poor fit for child	Awareness	Other Jewish education selected
Jewish day school	Cost	Distance/location	Other school preference	Poor fit for child	Other Jewish education selected
Jewish camp	Cost	Distance/location	Other activities	Poor fit for child	Child not interested

# Financial barriers and constraints on communal participation.

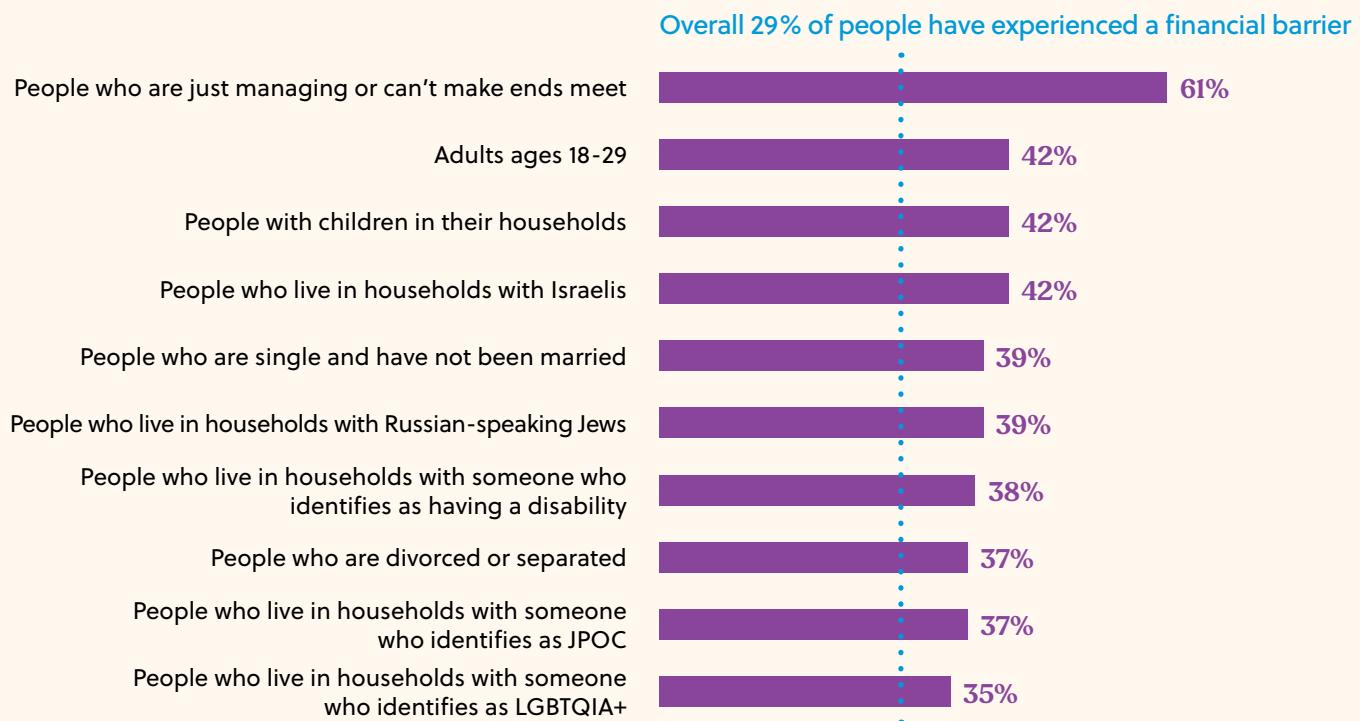
Numerous questions in the survey touched on financial barriers to participation in Jewish communal life. The survey found that 29% of Jewish adults said cost has constrained their Jewish communal participation in one or more ways or required them to seek financial assistance in order to participate.

For the people who do not feel like they belong to a Jewish community, 38% have faced cost constraints. For those who do feel like they belong to a Jewish community, cost constraints stand at 24%. Balancing the costs of communal participation with daily expenses is a constant calculation for some community members. One person said:

*I feel like every choice I make is driven by finances. And so whether it's a Jewish activity or not, I have to really think ... [for example,] the thing we went to at the JCC last weekend was 20 bucks, and in the grand scheme of things, what's 20 bucks? But 20 bucks is half a box of diapers. And so every decision is driven by finances. If I really want to go to something that has a one-time cost, more likely than not, we're going to make it happen. But I am much more likely to seriously consider something if the cost is lower or if it's free.*

Among the Jewish adults included in this report, specific groups are even more likely than others to experience financial barriers to communal participation. Those who are struggling financially are the most likely to say their communal participation has been constrained by costs.

## Specific groups who have experienced financial barriers to communal participation



# Conclusion.

Accessibility is key to participation of all kinds in the Greater Boston Jewish community.

For many Jewish adults who feel that being part of a Jewish community is important, access is compromised by barriers that limit their communal participation. This is especially true for those who do not feel they are part of a Jewish community. They are less likely to access synagogues and Jewish educational experiences for their children than those who do feel part of a Jewish community. At the same time, they cited barriers more often and more consistently than those who do feel part of a Jewish community.

But even as they differ in magnitude, several kinds of barriers emerge as the most prevalent for each group:

- Social barriers: not knowing many people to participate with and a poor fit for children's needs
- Financial barriers: costs of memberships and tuition
- Informational barriers: not being aware of opportunities to participate
- Programmatic barriers: lack of interesting events, activities, and programs
- Logistical barriers: location, time, traffic, and scheduling conflicts

Developing strategies to reduce barriers and make it easier for people to connect with Jewish organizations and with one another is essential for increasing engagement and building a stronger community, both for those already involved and for those not yet connected.

## Did you know?

This report is part of a series of 13 reports across a range of topics that are important to the Greater Boston Jewish community. To explore insights, access additional resources, and read the other reports, visit [cjp.org/CommunityStudy2025](https://cjp.org/CommunityStudy2025).

# Notes.

1. The single biggest difference between these Jewish adults: 61% of those who said being part of a Jewish community is not important to them also said it is not one of their priorities. This is more than twice the share of Jewish adults who said it is important (26%).
2. The survey asked respondents if they or someone else in their household identify as a Jew of color or a person of color. Respondents could select one, both, or neither of the identities, and could indicate whether the identities applied to themselves only, to others, or to both themselves and others in their household. This approach draws on research and recommendations from sources such as the Jews of Color Initiative (JOCI) as well as consultation with those who have lived experience as people who identify as Jews of color, people of color, or both. In this report, Jewish respondents who self-identified as a Jew of color or as a person of color, or with both identities are described as JPOC. Similarly, households in which respondents reported one or more people identify as a Jew of color or a person of color are described as a JPOC household. As noted in "Beyond the Count" (Belzer, et al., Jews of Color Initiative, 2021) these terms may be understood as imperfect but useful ways to encompass a variety of identities and meanings.
3. This report uses the more inclusive acronym of LGBTQIA+. However, the survey referred to this group as LGBTQ+ and was defined in survey questions as "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer."