

2022 Delaware and Brandywine Valley Jewish Community Study

Highlights for Synagogues

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2022
COMMUNITY
STUDY of
JEWISH DELAWARE
& THE BRANDYWINE VALLEY



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Size of the Delaware and Brandywine Valley Jewish Community

The 2022 population estimate

Jewish individuals	25,900
Jewish households	12,600
People in Jewish households	34,000
Adults in Jewish households	
Jewish adults in Jewish households	22,400
Non-Jewish adults in Jewish households	6,000
Children in Jewish households	
Jewish children in Jewish households	3,500
Non-Jewish children in Jewish households	2,100

DEFINITIONS

Jewish households: Households with at least one Jewish adult

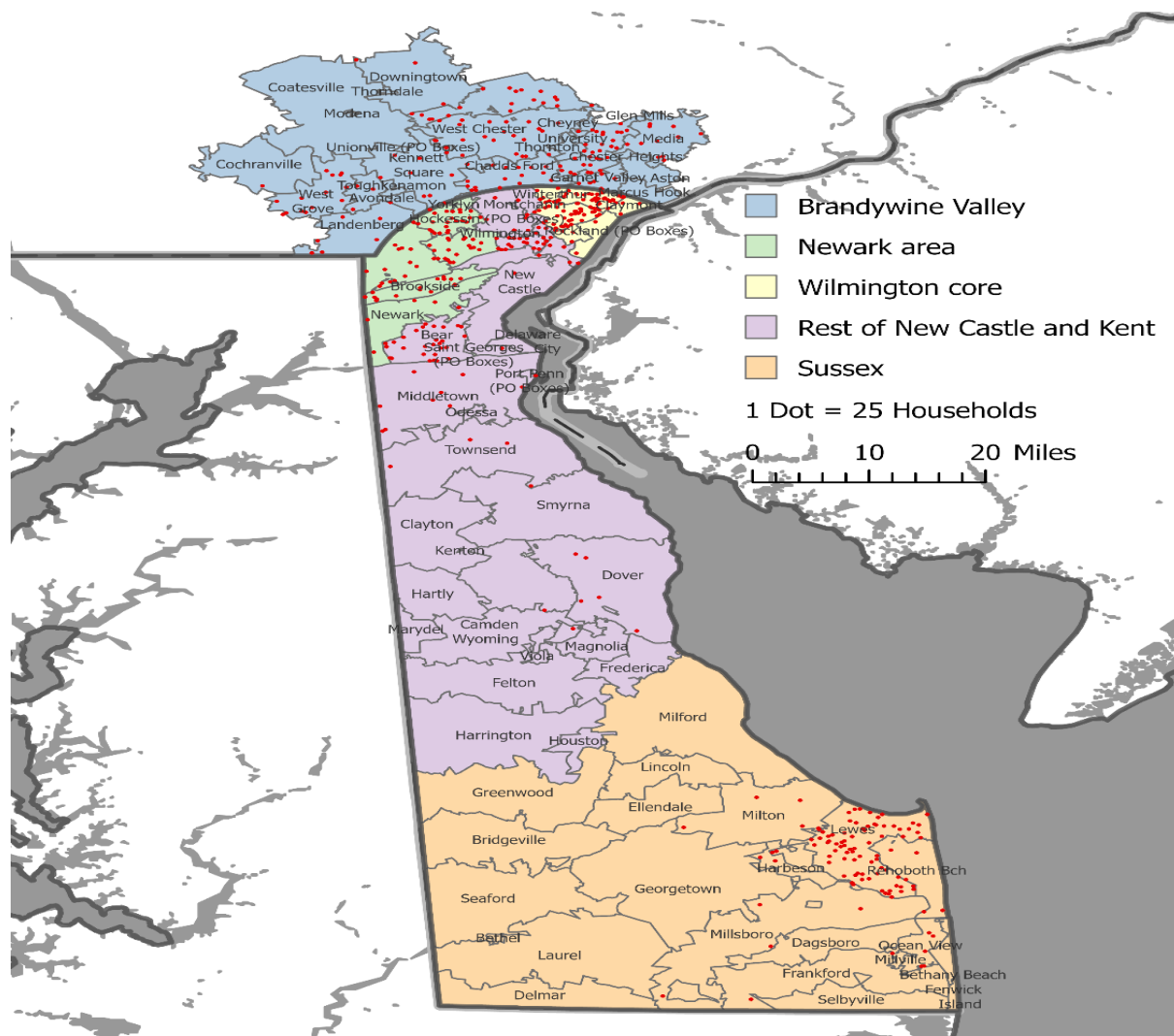
People in Jewish households: Includes non-Jewish people in Jewish households

Jewish adults: Consider themselves Jewish by religion or culturally/ethnically, AND have at least one Jewish parent, were raised Jewish, or converted
Includes Jewish and another religion

Jewish children: Considered Jewish by their parents
Includes Jewish and another religion

Note: Rounded to the nearest 100.

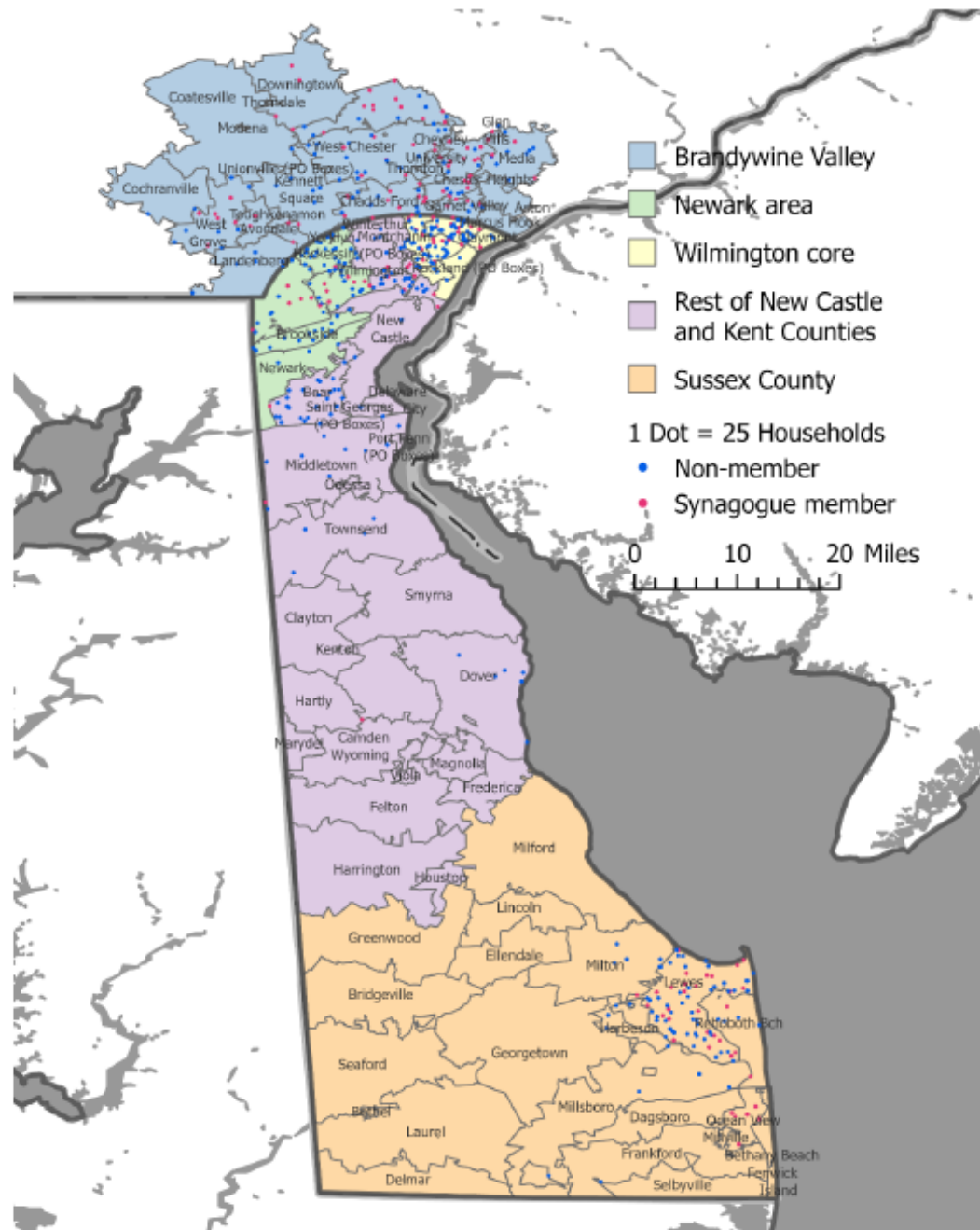
Where do Jewish households live in Delaware and the Brandywine Valley?



Jewish households are fairly evenly distributed across the five key regions of Delaware and Brandywine Valley

	Jewish households (%)	Jewish individuals (%)
Newark area	15	13
Wilmington core	18	16
Rest of New Castle and Kent Counties	17	18
Sussex County	21	18
Brandywine Valley	29	35

Figure F.3. Synagogue member and non-member households in Delaware and the Brandywine Valley



Where do synagogue members and non-members live?

Jewish denominations

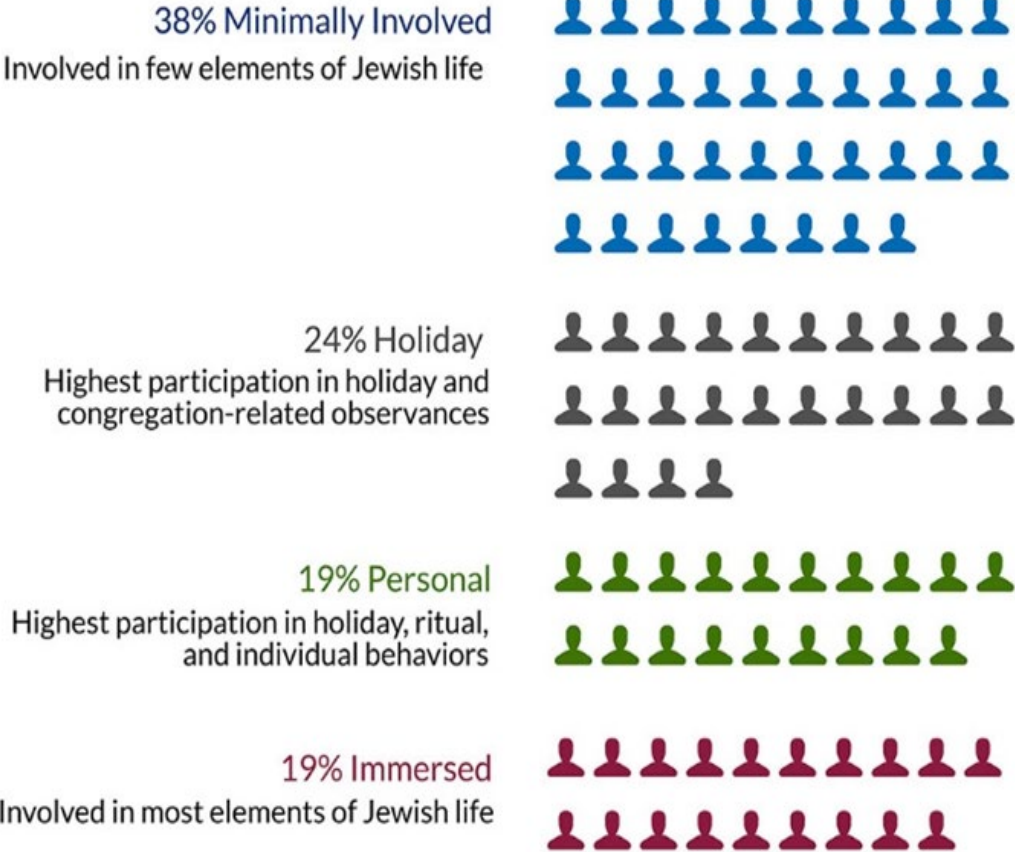
More Delaware and Brandywine Valley Jewish adults identify with no denomination than any other grouping.

	Delaware/BV 2022 (%)	US Jews 2020 (%)
Orthodox	1	9
Conservative	18	17
Reform	30	37
Other denomination	9	4
Reconstructionist	4	n/a
Traditional	2	n/a
Other	3	n/a
No denomination	43	32
Total	100	100

Index of Jewish Engagement

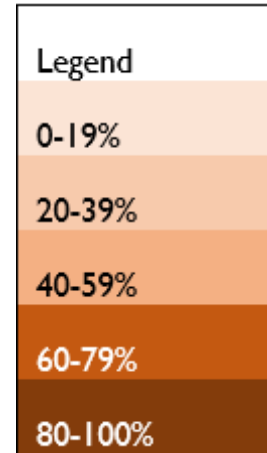
Nearly all Jewish adults are engaged in some aspects of Jewish life

- Captures multiple dimensions of Jewish life: ritual, cultural, individual activities, and organization involvement
- Statistically derived categories specifically developed for Delaware and Brandywine Valley
- Based on behavior rather than on self-identification



18 behaviors used to create the index

	Minimally Involved	Holiday	Personal	Immersed
Holiday Behaviors				
Attended seder, 2021	41	84	98	100
Lit Hanukkah candles, 2021	68	97	83	99
Fast on Yom Kippur, 2021	17	84	30	72
Ritual Behaviors				
Shabbat meal/candles in past year, ever	10	55	60	95
--almost always or always	2	7	18	50
Services in past year, ever	1	100	38	100
--monthly or more	0	8	0	51
Attended High Holiday services, 2021	0	100	0	98
Follow any kosher rules	1	17	20	65
Organization Behaviors				
Congregation member	0	67	27	91
Member of Jewish organization	0	22	29	26
Member of informal Jewish group	0	1	11	20
Participated in program, ever	26	92	87	99
--often	1	2	23	49
Volunteered for Jewish organization in past year	0	14	27	65
Donated to Jewish organization in past year	33	81	79	95
Individual Behaviors				
Study Jewish texts (sometimes/often)	0	16	25	68
Eat Jewish foods (often)	10	2	18	51
Read Jewish publications (sometimes/often)	12	36	82	93
Engage with Jewish-focused culture (sometimes/often)	16	31	79	99
Follow news about Israel (very closely)	3	5	11	31



Jewish engagement and denomination

Members of all denominations in all engagement groups

	Orthodox (%)	Conservative (%)	Reform (%)	Other (%)	None (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	1	18	30	9	43	100
Minimally Involved	0	7	20	1	72	100
Holiday	1	15	55	12	17	100
Personal	<1	20	32	5	42	100
Immersed	4	42	21	24	9	100

Synagogues and services

- 31% of Delaware and Brandywine Valley Jewish households are members of a Jewish congregation
- These households include 34% of Jewish adults, similar to the share of the US Jewish adult population (35%) who are members of a congregation
- 52% of Jewish adults attended a service in-person or online within the previous year, but only 12% did so at least once a month

	All Jewish households (%)
Any congregation member in household	31
Of members, pay dues to local synagogue	47
Of members, belong to a synagogue outside Delaware and the Brandywine Valley	31

Services	All Jewish adults (%)
Services during past year, ever	52
Services during past year, monthly	12
Attended High Holiday services, 2021	41

Congregation membership by engagement group

About 43% of Jewish adults never belonged to a congregation

	Congregation member (%)	Delaware/BV congregation member (%)
All Jewish households	31	17
Minimally Involved	<1	<1
Holiday	62	30
Ritual	25	12
Immersed	89	58

Reasons for not belonging to a congregation

Table 5.3. Reasons for not belonging to a congregation

	All congregation non-member households	Former congregation members	Never congregation members
Not a priority	28	51	21
No children at home	13	19	6
Cost	14	29	9
Location	16	16	10
No good fit	39	26	40

Note: Columns do not total to 100% as more than one option could be selected.

Comparison charts

Appendix B. Comparison Charts

About

The Comparison Charts provide details on various subgroups in the Delaware and Brandywine Valley Jewish community. These charts include data for all response options for all survey questions included in the study. In each section, characteristics are reported for the overall population on the top row, as well as for subgroups of the population, with each subgroup appearing in its own row.

The comparison charts can be downloaded here:

<https://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/delaware-report.html>

There is a separate Excel file for each topic area.

Comparison charts

2022 Delaware and Brandywine Valley Jewish Community Study

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February 2023

The *2022 Community Study of Jewish Delaware and the Brandywine Valley* is the first in-depth assessment of the size and characteristics of the Jewish community in Delaware since 1995, and the first to include a section of the Brandywine Valley in Pennsylvania. The study provides a comprehensive portrait of the community's 25,900 Jews; their families; their Jewish attitudes, affiliations, and behaviors; their health and financial well-being; and other measures of their engagement in Jewish life.

[Read the report](#)

[Read the executive summary](#)

[Read the technical appendices](#)

[Download the comparison charts](#)

[Download the public dataset](#)



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Comparison charts

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
1		Synagogue Membership		Those who are not currently, were they ever synagogue members in their adult lives?		Attended any type of organized Jewish religious services in-person or online, past year						Of those who attended services in past year, attend any High Holiday services in-person or online, fall 2021			Light Shabbat candles on Friday night, past year						
2		Not synagogue member	Synagogue member		No	Yes		Never	Once or twice	Every few months	About once a month	Two or three times a month	Once a week or more		No	Yes		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always or almost always
3	Overall	69	31	Overall	63	37	Overall	48	25	16	3	4	5	Overall	21	79	Overall	63	14	9	14
4																					
5	Minimally Involved	100	<1	Minimally Involved	74	26	Minimally Involved	99	1	0	0	0	0	Minimally Involved	--	--	Minimally Involved	94	4	1	2
6	Holiday	38	62	Holiday	28	72	Holiday	0	53	39	2	4	2	Holiday	<1	100	Holiday	49	37	8	7
7	Personal	75	25	Personal	34	66	Personal	62	37	1	<1	<1	<1	Personal	100	0	Personal	52	19	18	11
8	Immersed	11	89	Immersed	--	--	Immersed	0	13	37	15	14	22	Immersed	2	98	Immersed	6	12	28	54
9																					
10	Newark area	70	30	Newark area	64	36	Newark area	45	15	25	7	5	3	Newark area	12	88	Newark area	54	13	17	16
11	Wilmington core	75	25	Wilmington core	79	21	Wilmington core	42	34	11	4	2	8	Wilmington core	34	66	Wilmington core	71	9	7	13
12	Rest of New Castle and	81	19	Rest of New Castle and	50	50	Rest of New Castle and	67	22	3	5	<1	4	Rest of New Castle and	31	69	Rest of New Castle and	51	22	19	9
13	Sussex County	67	33	Sussex County	--	--	Sussex County	36	37	12	5	4	5	Sussex County	39	61	Sussex County	69	7	8	16
14	Brandywine Valley	60	40	Brandywine Valley	41	59	Brandywine Valley	41	23	26	1	5	5	Brandywine Valley	7	93	Brandywine Valley	65	15	5	16
15																					
16	18-44	85	15	18-44	70	30	18-44	51	16	28	3	<1	1	18-44	24	76	18-44	64	15	8	13
17	45-64	61	39	45-64	53	47	45-64	33	42	13	3	6	4	45-64	22	78	45-64	56	16	13	16
18	65+	71	29	65+	69	31	65+	57	18	12	4	4	6	65+	19	81	65+	71	9	8	13
19																					
20	Inmarried	49	51	Inmarried	34	66	Inmarried	47	21	15	5	5	7	Inmarried	10	90	Inmarried	48	19	15	19
21	Intermarried	80	20	Intermarried	66	34	Intermarried	55	27	13	2	1	2	Intermarried	31	69	Intermarried	68	10	9	13
22	Not married	76	24	Not married	78	22	Not married	38	29	22	3	4	5	Not married	28	72	Not married	70	11	7	12
23																					
24	No child in HH	71	29	No child in HH	63	37	Not parent of minor child	53	19	16	3	3	6	Not parent of minor child	19	81	No child in HH	64	14	10	12
25	Child in HH	63	37	Child in HH	60	40	Parent of minor child	22	51	17	3	6	<1	Parent of minor child	28	72	Child in HH	58	9	10	23
26																					
27	Not synagogue member	100	0	Not synagogue member	63	37	Not synagogue member	70	23	7	<1	<1	<1	Not synagogue member	52	48	Not synagogue member	78	10	7	5
28	Synagogue member	0	100	Synagogue member			Synagogue member	11	28	30	9	10	12	Synagogue member	3	97	Synagogue member	27	20	17	36

Jewish rituals

The majority of Delaware and Brandywine Valley's Jews participate in at least one holiday or ritual observance

	Delaware/BV 2021 (%)
Hannukah candles	84
Seder	71
Keep kosher (any level)	21
Fast on Yom Kippur	45
<hr/>	
Light Shabbat candles, ever	37
Always or almost always	14
Special Shabbat meal, ever	36
Always or almost always	8

Synagogues as a strength of the community

People are friendly, and many families have affiliations with more than one synagogue (or at least that's how it used to be before COVID). – female, age 72, New Castle County

Close-knit, good leadership, different denominations freely coordinate and collaborate. Wide range of activities, opportunities, events, and synagogues for a community our size. – male, 51, New Castle County

It is a strong community that cares for one another. There were a number of wonderful people who supported us when [we went through a difficult time]. There are so many ways to feel like you're a part of the shul, including clubs, volunteering opportunities, and musical groups, without feeling like one has to read Hebrew or constantly donate. – male, 61, Brandywine Valley

Where synagogues might have some work to do

My family had to withdraw our children from a Hebrew school because [we could not afford dues and tuition]. – male, 49, New Castle County

I have not found many synagogues or Jewish organizations that are openly welcome to LGBTQ people. – non-binary, Brandywine Valley

Our synagogues need to do better with education past bar and bat mitzvah. – female, 46, New Castle County

Delaware is a very insular state. As newcomers to the community, we aren't as connected as many longstanding residents. Synagogues also feel very insular, especially with older membership. – female, 35, New Castle County

The culture at my synagogue is very focused on fundraising. – female, 69, New Castle County



THANK YOU TO

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