Starting a Conversation: A Pioneering Survey of Those Who Have Left the Orthodox Community

An exploration of journeys, practices, beliefs, identity, community and relationships – across Chasidic, Yeshivish and Modern Orthodox Segments

June 19, 2016

NISHMA RESEARCH

Marketing Research for the Jewish Community

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Preface

Many studies have been done among Jewish and Orthodox populations, but there has not been any valid quantitative research among those who have left the Orthodox world. And while there have been quite a few excellent memoirs written by people who have left the Chasidic and other Orthodox groups, the old saying "the plural of anecdote is not data" still rings true.

After reading several of the memoirs, I took a shot at Facebook messaging Shulem Deen, author of his amazing memoir and 2015 National Jewish Book Award Winner "All Who Go Do Not Return." I want to thank Shulem for taking the time to meet with my wife and me for lunch, for his appreciation of the research concept, and especially for his help in promoting this research via his contacts and insights.

The goal of this survey was to give this group – a fledgling segment of the Jewish community that has not been quantitatively studied – a voice. We wanted to better understand the experiences of those who have transitioned away from their Orthodox community of origin, or who are grappling with the related issues.

To that end, we have included the broad swath of segments in the Orthodox world: Chasidic, Yeshivish and Modern Orthodox.

The survey was funded by Nishma Research, a Connecticut-based market research firm serving the Jewish world. In addition to providing customized research services to clients, Nishma's mission includes conducting one pro bono study annually on a topic of interest and value to the Jewish people – specifically, research that will promote more listening, appreciation and cooperation among the diverse strands of the Jewish world. Nishma means "listen" … and we hope to promote more listening to each other.

This survey was guided and assisted by knowledgeable subject matter and research experts:

- Tsivia Finman, Rachel Berger and Executive Director Lani Santo of Footsteps;
- Professor Steven M. Cohen of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion;
- Author and Footsteps board member Shulem Deen;
- Rabbi Pesach Sommer and Mindy Schaper of Jew in the City / Project Makom;
- Prof. Mark Rosen of Brandeis University and Zalman Newfield, Ph.D., New York University.

It has been a pleasure working with you all and I can't thank you enough.

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June 19, 2016

Summary of Key Findings

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Summary of Key Findings – An exploration of the experiences, beliefs, practices, community and challenges facing those who have left the Chasidic, Yeshivish or Modern Orthodox segments of Orthodox Jewry

Introduction

Many of us have heard of the phenomenon of people venturing forth from the Orthodox world and trying to find a place in American society. Scorned by their communities for having gone OTD ("off the derech" - off the path), they become strangers in a strange land – and their stories, as told in a number of recent memoirs, have been gripping.

What has been missing until now is solid, quantitative data on this trend. Nishma Research, a Connecticut-based research firm that focuses on the Jewish community, has just completed the first-ever large-scale survey of this demographic.

With 885 responses from across the Orthodox spectrum, this survey gives voice to a growing segment of the Jewish community. Respondents provided deeply personal and poignant responses about the journey they have taken, their identity, practices, beliefs and relationships. They told us what they went through, what they might have done differently, and gave advice to others who are considering leaving their Orthodox community for a different lifestyle.

Survey Sample

Included in this survey were people who had an Orthodox upbringing, but who no longer consider themselves to *fully* be a member of the Orthodox community in which they were raised. Analysis was done for all 855 respondents combined, and separately for four segments:

- the formerly Chasidic excluding Chabad,
- the formerly Chabad,
- the formerly Yeshivish and
- the formerly Modern Orthodox.

Community of Origin	Responses
Chasidic (excl. Chabad)	216
Chabad	97
Yeshivish	221
Modern Orthodox	230
Other	118
Total	**885**

Notes Regarding Nomenclature (see page 16 for more detailed descriptions of our segments):

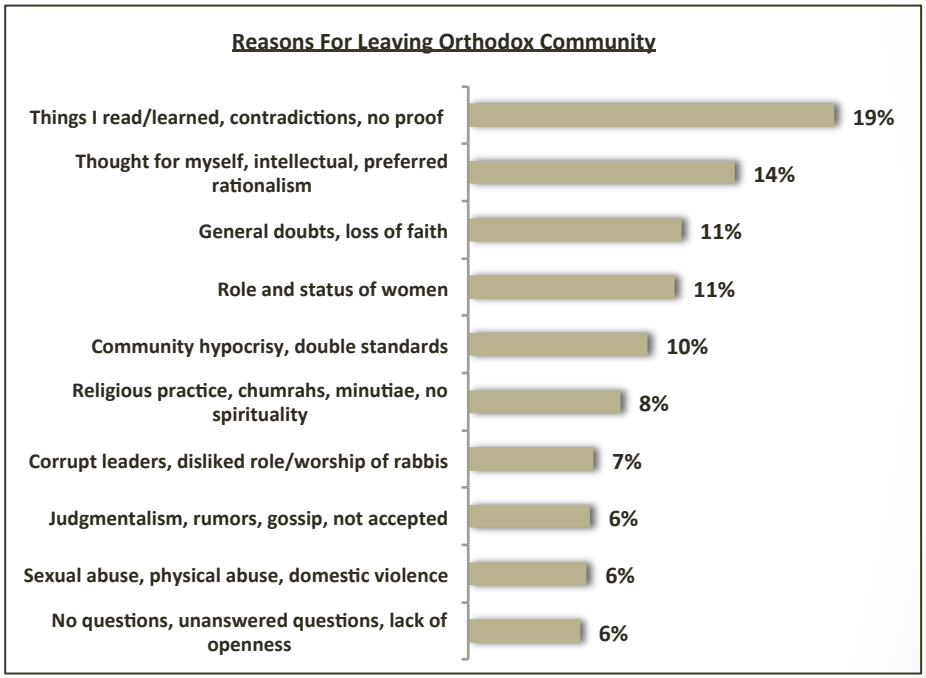
- Those who have left Orthodoxy are often referred to as "OTD" and they sometimes refer to themselves that way. Some people like the term and some do not like it so much; but it's become widely used and so we adopt it in this report as appropriate, as a shorthand appellation.
- The survey questionnaire spelled Chasidic as Chasidish, which is the spelling more familiar to those who have been part of that community. We will use the spelling *Chasidic*.
- The survey identified those who were members of the Lubavitch Chasidic sect. They are also known widely as *Chabad*, and we will use that more generally familiar term. See pages 15-16 for explanation of why Chasidic excluding Chabad and Chabad were analyzed separately.
- The *Yeshivish* group is also known as Litvish (a term used in the questionnaire), Litvak or Lithuanian.

Summary of Key Findings *(Continued)*

Why People Left Their Orthodox Community

The questionnaire included an open-ended question asking why people left their community, and the responses were analyzed and coded against a list of 50+ reasons that were identified in the responses. Many reasons were given. Some people were alienated by flaws they saw in the community or its leaders, and these "community internal factors" were more influential in *pushing* people out than "societal outside factors" were in *pulling* people from the community.

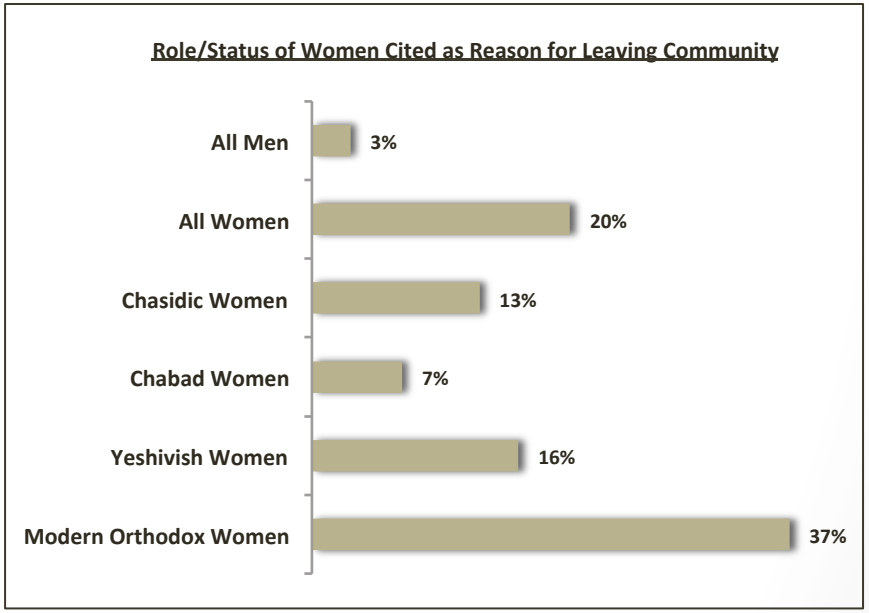
- By a 3-to-2 margin in terms of reasons why people left, it appears that they are not so much going off the derech as they are being pushed off the derech, with many different communal and religious factors being named as having an impact.
- For many people, the push and pull factors were both at work. Personal curiosity and openness to the world often created a gradual process of grappling with modernity and knowledge that was in conflict with their previously held beliefs.
- Respondents in all segments ranked very highly the influence of outside knowledge, obtained by reading or otherwise learning things that contradicted their beliefs.



- Surprisingly, only 2% mentioned the Internet, which has been the focus of much fear within these communities. Many more mentioned science, books or people outside their community with whom they had spoken. So it may well be that general interactions with outside society are more impactful than the Internet.
- Other key factors were the status and role of women, communal "hypocrisy" (an often-used term) and double standards, and the scope and stringent nature of the religion as practiced in their community.

Summary of Key Findings *(Continued)*

- The status and role of women was the #4 reason overall (11%), but it was the #1 reason among Modern Orthodox (22%) and it was the #1 reason among all women (20%), although cited by only 3% of men. Further, 37% of Modern Orthodox women cited it as a reason why they left the community.
- Surprisingly (because it has been the focus of much vocal criticism and publicity), only 2% mentioned weak secular education as a reason for leaving the community, although 9% of the formerly Chabad did so.
- Abuse and domestic violence are mentioned by 6% overall, but by a notably higher 13% of Chasidic women.
- The respondent's sexual orientation ranked as the #13 factor overall (5%), but it was much higher among the Modern Orthodox (ranking #4 at 11%).
- Men and women are different in their motivations for leaving their community, with the biggest difference being the status and role of women, as noted above. Additionally:
  - Men tended to somewhat more often give reasons relating to "learning" (e.g., things they read or learned, contradictions with what they had been taught, lack of proof, etc.),which was cited by 21% of men vs. 15% of women.
  - Women tended to somewhat more often give reasons relating to social or personal conditions; e.g., judgmentalism, rumors, not being accepted was cited by 9% of women vs. 3% of men; community hypocrisy, double standards was cited by 12% of women vs. 7% of men.

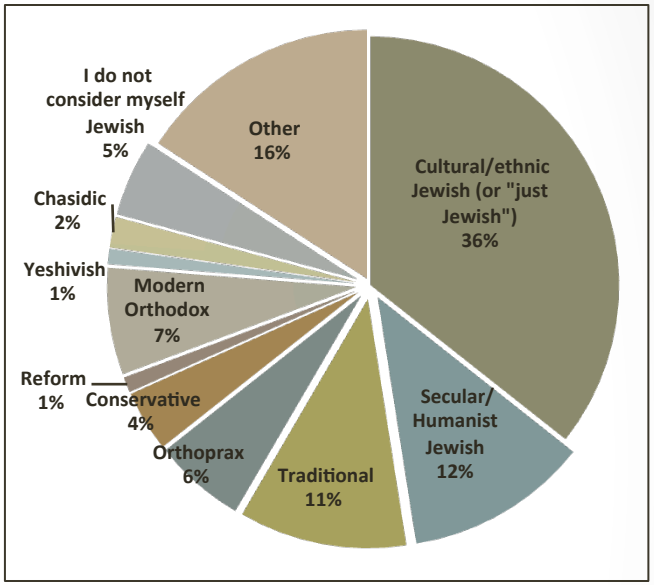


Summary of Key Findings *(Continued)*

How Do They Now Identify Jewishly?

OTDers are "post-denominational," by which we mean that they do not label themselves with the typical Jewish world denominations. Nearly 60% view themselves as culturally Jewish, traditional, secular/humanist Jewish or "just Jewish." In contrast, the 2013 Pew Survey found that 70% of U.S. Jews identified with a denomination.

- A majority (62%) stated that being Jewish was very or somewhat important to them.
- Across numerous survey questions, the formerly Modern Orthodox have retained more positive feelings toward Jewishness than other groups, perhaps because their departure may have been less traumatic (as they already lived somewhat in secular society, spoke the language and dressed more modernly). For example, 36% of Modern Orthodox keep kosher vs. 30% of all other respondents; and 78% of Modern Orthodox say being Jewish is important to them vs. 59% of all other respondents.



	Survey Respondents	U.S. Orthodox Jews (Pew)	All U.S. Jews (Pew)
Believe in God	21% (strongly agree)	89% (believe with absolute certainty)	34% (believe with absolute certainty)
Light Sabbath candles	53% (regularly or sometimes)	90% (always or usually)	23% (always or usually)
Keep kosher	31% (mostly or somewhat)	92% (kosher at home)	22% (kosher at home)
Sense of belonging to the Jewish people	61% (very or somewhat strong)	99% (strong sense of belonging)	75% (strong sense of belonging)

Jewish Beliefs, Practices and Connections

- Our survey respondents are not strong believers in God. Interestingly, belief in God is inversely related to the prior rigor of their practice, and is slightly higher among the formerly Modern Orthodox (36%) than among Yeshivish (32%) or Chasidic (30%).
- They do, however, like to keep a connection to Jewishness, and maintain some practices at

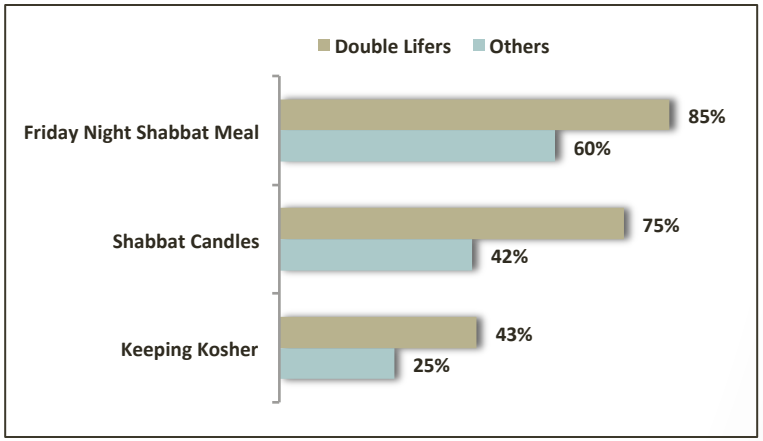
Summary of Key Findings *(Continued)*

levels not substantially different from those of all U.S. Jews.

- For example, 31% keep kosher, a level that is comparable to that of all U.S. Conservative Jews.
- 61% had a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people (46% among Chasidic and 76% among Modern Orthodox), and 51% said that being in a Jewish community was important to them. On the other hand, 40% would not be upset if their child intermarried.
  - Being part of a Jewish community was more important to women (56%) than it was to men (46%).
- In terms of community connections, fewer than half feel connected to any type of Jewish community, and more than half (54%) say they feel something is missing from their community connections.

Double-Lifers

Those who are no longer "believers" but still live in the community are an interesting group.



- Dubbed "double-lifers," many are resigned to that polarized state, but others are drifting slowly toward departure; 39% say it is likely they will leave their community at some time in the future.
- Not surprisingly, double-lifers have higher levels of participation in practices that are externally more visible, e.g., Friday night Shabbat meal (85% for double-lifers vs. 60% for all others), Shabbat candles (75% for double-lifers vs. 42% for all others), keeping kosher (43% for double-lifers vs. 25% for all others). However, for practices that are not externally visible, there is little difference between double-lifers and others who have left Orthodox belief.

Summary of Key Findings *(Continued)*

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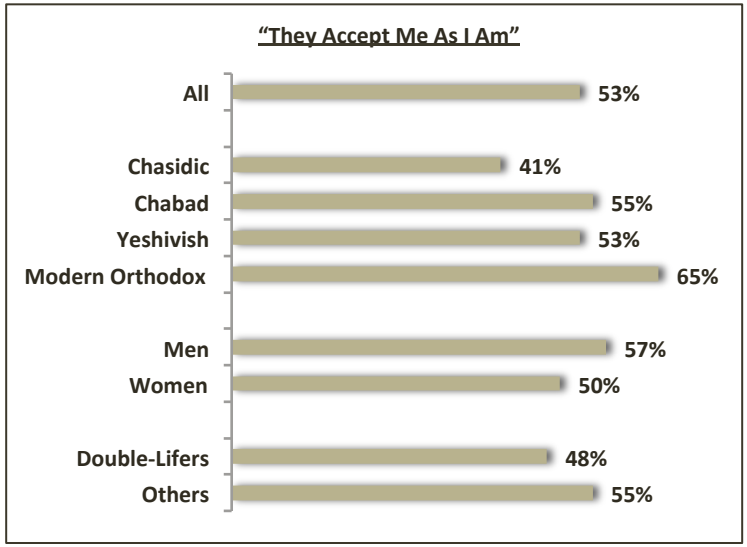
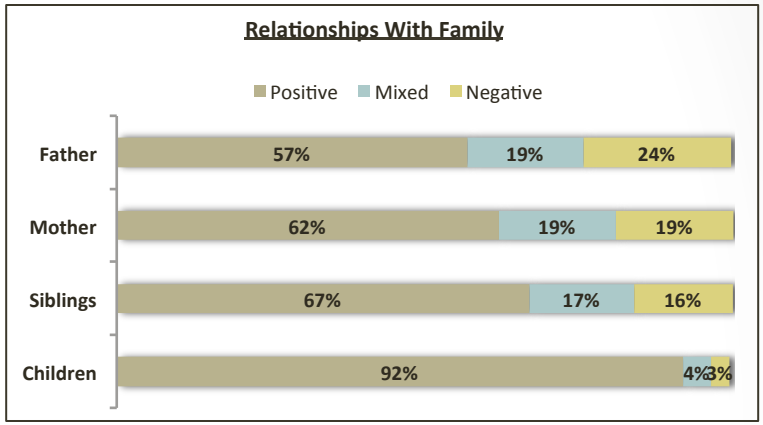
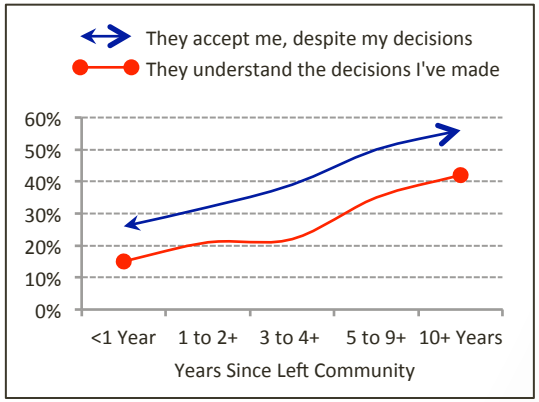
Family Relationships and Acceptance

- Family relationships are challenging, but a majority have a positive relationship with their families (57% with their fathers, 62% with their mothers and 67% with siblings).
- Men have better family relationships than women: better with their father (65% vs. 49%); their mother (70% vs. 55%) and their siblings (76% vs. 64%). Relationships with their children are about the same (93% vs. 91%).
- Just over half (52%) say their families have come to accept them. Acceptance is lower among the Chasidic (41%) and higher among Modern Orthodox (65%). It is also higher among men (57%) than women (50%).





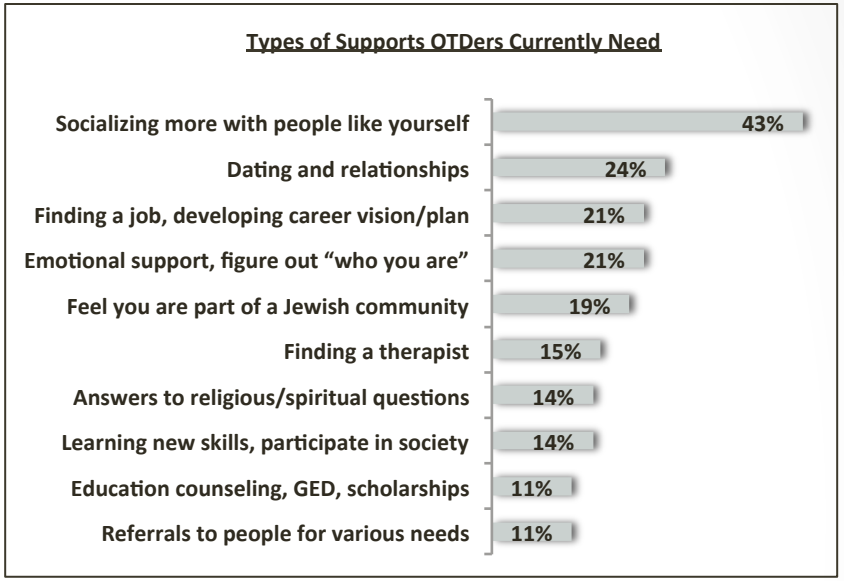
- Fewer than half (40%) say their families understand the decisions they have made relating to their religious practices and beliefs. Understanding is much lower among Chasidic (19%). Both understanding and acceptance do grow substantially over time.

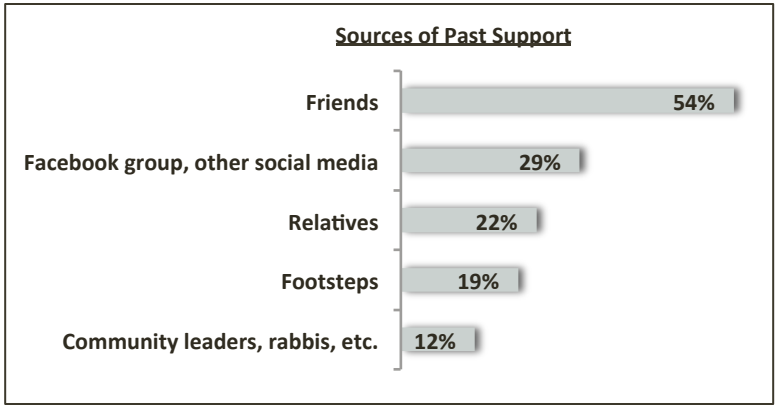


Summary of Key Findings *(Continued)*

Support Needs

- Those who have left their Orthodox community continue to face challenges. Their most often expressed needs were in areas of overall socializing (43%), dating and relationships (24%), and employment (21%).
- The need to socialize more with people like themselves ranked #1 across every segment.
- The most frequent sources of past support have been friends (54%), Facebook groups or other social media (29%), relatives (22%) and Footsteps (19%).





- 67% of respondents indicated they would have wished for additional support. The desired support sources most often mentioned were:
  - Footsteps 16%
  - Friends 5%
  - Therapists 3%
- 72% of Chareidi* would have wanted additional support, vs. 55% of Modern Orthodox.

* **Chareidi** – Chareidi (also spelled Haredi) encompass the Chasidic, Chabad and Yeshivish segments combined. While Chareidi originated as an Israeli term, it is also used to refer to American Jewish groups known collectively as "Ultra-Orthodox." We use the term in this report to refer to the three groups combined: Chasidic, Chabad and Yeshivish.

Survey Distribution and Respondents

Survey Distribution

- Those who have left the Orthodox world are challenging to reach. No census (or "member list") exists for this group, and its size and characteristics are the subject of speculation. Many of these people have had traumatic experiences in leaving their communities; some are reluctant to announce themselves as having gone OTD while others are less accessible as they have distanced themselves from their community of origin. A survey of larger Jewish populations seeking to screen for these individuals would require an extremely large sample.
- Opt-in surveys (which are are presented to a large group and respondents opt to participate) are not ideal, but sometimes they are the only viable approach. We believe that that is the case here. Our approach centered around very broad outreach via physical and virtual communities. We cast a wide net through agencies that service this segment (including all members of Footsteps, an agency in the NY area with over 1,000 members, and Project Makom, another NY-area support organization) and through social media (including well-known Facebook pages with many thousands of OTD members).
  - The survey was distributed by both organizations (Footsteps and Project Makom) to all of their members, including follow-up mailings and announcements at their events.
  - Links to the survey were pinned to the top of a half dozen Facebook group pages and the Facebook pages of "OTD community leaders" frequented by our target audience.
  - The survey had no mandatory questions (except for initial screeners), to minimize drop-outs caused by triggering questions.
  - The message that the survey was being done to hear this segment's voice for the first time was emphasized.
  - The online survey was compatible with PCs, laptops, tablets and smartphones (our target group skews younger than the overall Jewish population and we have observed a high level of smartphone/device usage among them). An email address was provided to participants to report any difficulties in accessing or completing the survey. No calls were received reporting any such problems.
- We follow the guidance of AAPOR (American Association for Public Opinion Research) to the effect that opt-in surveys are not ideal … but if there are no other options, they may be the best approach at the time. [See https://www.aapor.org/ AAPOR_Main/media/ MainSiteFiles/AAPOROnlinePanelsTFReportFinalRevised1.pdf.]
- Consistent with our understanding and acceptance of AAPOR's policies, we stipulate that respondents to this survey were selected from among those who are members of relevant organizations and social media groups. The data have not been weighted to reflect the demographic composition of the overall target population of Orthodox OTD, inasmuch as such target population is unknown in terms of both size and composition. Because the sample is based on those who self-selected for participation rather than a probability sample, sampling error cannot be calculated. When we report on the statistical significance of differences between segments, we do so under the assumption that we are unaware of any reasons why self-selection bias should differ significantly among the segments, given that the same approach was used to reach all segments. Finally, all sample surveys and polls may be subject to multiple sources of error, including, but not limited to sampling error, coverage error and measurement error.
- The survey questionnaire is available at http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html

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Survey Audience – This survey was aimed at people who (1) had an Orthodox Jewish background and (2) no longer fully considered themselves members of their Orthodox community of origin, in terms of their beliefs and practices.

(All respondents)

Q. Raised as Orthodox?	Percent	Count
Yes - I was raised fully Orthodox	86%	758
Partially - Spent part of my life as Orthodox	14%	127
No	*Excluded from survey*	
Total		885

Q. This survey is aimed at people who have had an Orthodox Jewish background. In your opinion, did your background include being Orthodox?

- Yes – I was raised fully Orthodox
- Partially – Spent part of my life as Orthodox
- No – TERMINATE

The two questions shown below (the first two questions in the survey) were the only survey questions to which a response was mandatory. Our approach of making responses optional was taken due to the sensitivity of this group, and a reluctance to require responses to potentially triggering questions.

(All respondents)

Q. Still Member of Orthodox Community?	Percent	Count
Fully	*Excluded from survey*	
Somewhat	45%	398
Not at all	55%	487
Total		885

Q. Thinking about your current beliefs and practices, to what extent do you consider yourself to still be a member of the Orthodox community in which you were raised … or that you were a member of?

- Fully - TERMINATE
- Somewhat
- Not at all

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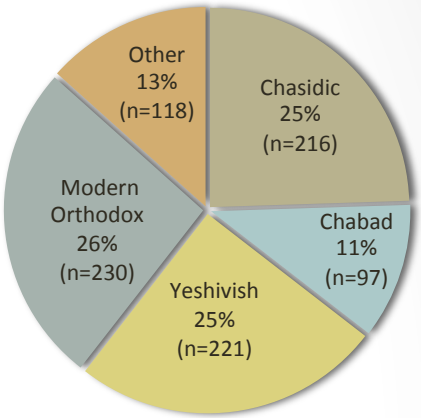
Survey Respondents



- **The total survey response was 885, as shown in the graph to the right.**
- **This report breaks out results by four Community of Origin segments: the formerly Chasidic excluding Chabad, formerly Chabad, formerly Yeshivish and formerly Modern Orthodox. When we refer to Community of Origin segments, we are always doing so in that ("formerly") context.**
- **There is no census of the formerly Orthodox, so the population distribution across segments is unknown. Therefore, data for all respondents combined should be used with that caveat, and we believe it more informative to view the segments separately.**
- **We have divided Chasidic into two segments: (1) the formerly Chasidic excluding Chabad (which will be referred to as Chasidic" in this report); and (2) the formerly Chabad. We did this because of significant differences between these groups in some important areas, such as the extent of their insularity, the nature of how they practice the religion and family backgrounds. The term "Chareidi" refers to the combined Chasidic and Yeshivish groups – also sometimes referred to as ultra-Orthodox.**
- **This study also includes the Modern Orthodox segment. They differ in many ways from the Chareidi, and a separate report will analyze the survey findings for the Modern Orthodox segment in greater detail.**
- **See the table on the following page for more information on the differences among segments.**
- **Throughout this report, the symbols ⬆ and ⬇ will be used to denote findings for a segment that are significantly higher or lower, respectively, than those of all other segments. References to statistical significance throughout this report indicate a minimum of a 95% level of confidence.**

* The "Other" category includes 2% Orthoprax, and the balance was open-ended responses typically describing themselves in terms of gradations among the specified categories, e.g., heimish or black hat (usually described as somewhere between Chasidic and Yeshivish), modern Chasidic, modern Yeshivish, just very frum, etc.

Q. What type of Orthodox community were you a member of? Chasidish; Yeshivish/Litvish; Modern Orthodox; Orthoprax; Other – Please describe (n=885)
Asked of those who responded "Chasidish":
Q. What type of Chasidish community were you a member of? Belz; Bobov; Lubavitch / Chabad; Ger; Satmar; Skver; Vizhnitz; Other Chasidish– Please describe (n=216)

Summary Descriptions of Community of Origin Segments

	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox
Summary	Attached to a particular charismatic leader and named after village where they originated. Education generally limited to religious study. Traditional Chasidic ideology is taught or emphasized less than stringent religious practice. Primary language is often Yiddish, although some speak English. Distinctive 18th century garb for men and extremely modest attire for women.	Chasidic group that differs from the other Chasidic groups due mainly to its mission of outreach to less religious (usually secular) Jews, resulting in far less insularity, and its decentralization. Traditional Chasidic ideology is taught more often than among other Chasidic groups. Primary language is English. Distinctive garb for men and modest attire for women.	Originally known as *mitnagdim* (opponents of Chasidism), focus is on Torah study and stringent adherence to *halachah* (Jewish law). Communities center around institutions of higher learning. Primary language usually English, with a bit of Yiddish. Men dress formally (black suits and hats); women modestly (less stringent than Chasidic).	Adhere to *halachah* (Jewish law) but participate in the broader society, educationally, culturally and in the workplace. A heterogeneous group, covering a wide range of religious practice, from "Conservadox" to near-Yeshivish. Primary language is English. Men wear kippot, but some may eschew them in the workplace, and most women dress modestly (no pants, hair covering).
Insularity	Extremely insular and authoritarian, exposure to secular society is extremely proscribed to protect against outside influences.	Less insular than Chasidic, given its mission of outreach and the necessary interactions with other Jewish segments. Maintains active network of religious institutions world-wide.	Somewhat insular and subject to rabbinic guidance in many aspects of life. Exposure to secular society is limited, although there is some through the workplace as well as newspapers, TV, etc.	Much more integrated into modern society and culture. Far less stringent than the other (Chareidi) groups, and more amenable to *halachic* leniencies.
Role of Women	There is in the more stringent groups much separation of the genders, including in day-to-day interactions. Women receive limited educations, and their roles are usually limited to being wives and mothers.	Separation of genders, but less than in the Chasidic groups. Women receive limited educations, and their roles are as wives and mothers, but some are involved in the Chabad outreach movement.	Women are often key breadwinners, as many husbands pursue religious studies in lieu of employment (some for a few years after marriage; some for many years).	An expensive lifestyle, many women work as part of two-income households. They may have more prominent communal roles, and more women are seeking to "break glass ceilings" in religious roles.
Demographics College, income, family size	Many live in poverty, with very large families (often 6+ children) and typical household income in the $20,000 a year range. Men are the primary breadwinners, although incomes are limited due to weak secular educations and limited workplace skills.	Many live in poverty, with very large families (often 6+ children). Incomes a bit higher than other Chasidic, helped by their greater integration with society (including fund-raising among secular Jews, being active in many pulpits and politically).	Low household incomes (median typically around $35,000), with large families (4-6 children not uncommon). Women often balance a breadwinner role with that of raising many children.	Most attend college, and many pursue professional occupations. High incomes, but accompanied by a high-cost lifestyle (more expensive communities, day schools, summer camps, etc.). Families typically with 2-4 children.

Perceptions of Their Membership in Community of Origin; Double-Lifers

Thinking About The Current Relationship to Orthodox Community of Origin

- **An early question in the survey ["Thinking about your current beliefs and practices, to what extent do you consider yourself to still be a member of the Orthodox community in which you were raised … or that you were a member of? Responses: Fully (survey terminated), Somewhat, Not at all" – See page 14] got respondents to start thinking about the extent to which they were still members of their community or origin or not, and the reasons why.**
- **The next page presents a sample of the verbatim responses. This early articulation in the survey of how people saw themselves with respect to their original community of origin not only categorized them in terms of their current status with respect to their community, but also helped to set the stage in their thinking for later questions that more deeply explored the reasons why they left their community. Those will be presented in the next section.**

Perceptions of Their Membership in Community of Origin

Those who saw themselves as
somewhat a member of their original community

They often cited connections to or respect for family, and appreciation of the community and/or its values, while at the same time having lost their beliefs and practices.

Sample Verbatim Responses *

- *I am tied to the community because of my children.*
- *I still identify with many of the values and beliefs. I value the culture, but I don't practice.*
- *Because I don't follow some stuff that I feel that are extra and old fashioned.*
- *I'm a chasid on the outside, an Atheist on the inside.*
- *I'm more or less culturally connected to a Jewish community, but I feel more connected to all of humanity.*
- *I feel more comfortable in the orthodox world than any other Jewish community. I belong to a synagogue, and I follow most of the major public precepts. However, I don't really believe, nor do I pray or learn.*
- *Disenchanted. Bored and feel disenfranchised. No longer find meaning in orthodox practice.*
- *Married to an Orthodox woman. Send kids to Orthodox school. Member of Orthodox shul. I wear a kippa too. But, I don't believe in god, halakha, have no faith in rabbinical leadership or judgement. I am open about this to all friends and family including my wife and kids. Orthodoxy is habit, not belief.*

Those who saw themselves as
not at all tied to their original community

They often explained why they saw themselves this way through a factual statement of their non-belief and non-practice, sometimes providing assorted reasons – personal attitudes or reactions to Orthodoxy or the community.

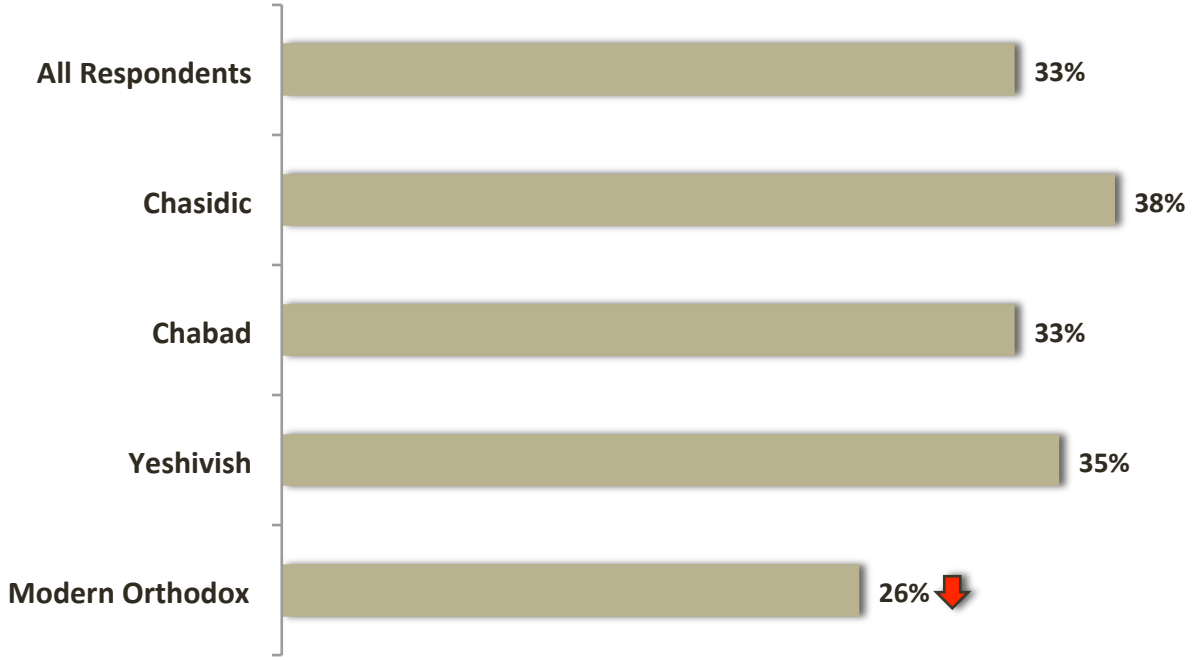
Sample Verbatim Responses *

- *I don't believe in God or orthodoxy.*
- *I'm openly atheist. Enough said.*
- *I don't believe nor follow in any of their religious teachings. I've changed my religious dress code. I basically live the life I chose for myself.*
- *Because as a woman I cannot tolerate the exclusionary practices.*
- *I have moved on physically, mentally and emotionally. I consider myself a Humanist. While it's a difficult task, given my ingrained upbringing, I work very hard on myself to see every human being as an equal. As such, I no longer consider myself a member of my former community … I see my former community members as no better or worse than any other human being.*
- *I have slowly gone away from the concept of a punishing God and more towards a God that is loving and accepting. I am also the parent of a gay son, which brings me even further away from Orthodox life.*
- *Externally, I may seem MO or similar, but internally, I consider myself unreligious and not part of the Orthodox community; this means I have independent values, beliefs, and opinions*

Based on response to Q Thinking about your current beliefs and practices, to what extent do you consider yourself to still be a member of the Orthodox community in which you were raised … or that you were a member of?
Q. You indicated that you currently consider yourself to somewhat be a member of the Orthodox community in which you were raised. Can you explain why you say that? (n=398, of which 345 provided comments)
Q. You indicated that you currently consider yourself to not at all be a member of the Orthodox community in which you were raised. Can you explain why you say that? (n=487, of which 443 provided comments)

* See http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html for additional verbatim responses.

Double-Lifers – 33% of all respondents and 38% of the Chasidic group said they were leading a "double life" (outwardly still a member of the community in terms of appearances and visible actions, but internally they no longer viewed themselves that way).



Q. Would you say that you are leading a "double life" – meaning that you are outwardly still a member of the community (e.g., in terms of appearances and visible actions), but internally you do not view yourself that way?

- Yes – Why do you say that? How do you see yourself internally? (Comments offered were very similar to those offered in response to Q: You indicated that you currently consider yourself to somewhat be a member of the Orthodox community in which you were raised. Can you explain?
- No

(n – Total=879, Chasidic=215, Chabad=97, Yeshivish=220, Modern Orthodox=228)

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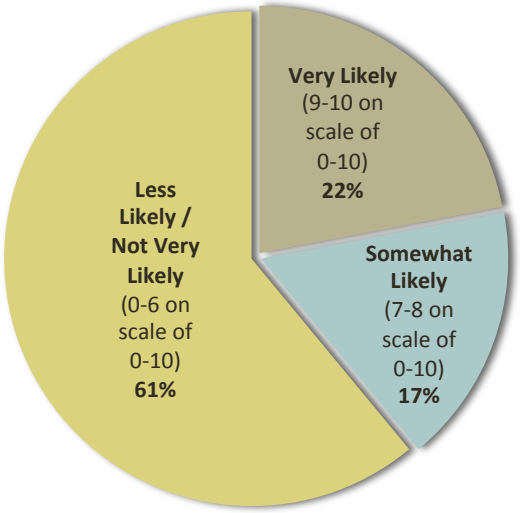
Marketing Research for the Jewish Community

Double-Lifers' Likelihood of Leaving the Community in the Future – 39% say it is very likely or somewhat likely they will leave the community at some time in the future, with significantly more of the Chabad (48%) stating that.

(All respondents)



Likelihood of Leaving – Current Double-Lifers	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox
% That Are "Double Lifers"	33%	38%	33%	35%	26% ↓
% Very Likely to Leave	22%	25%	33% ↑	18%	17% ↓
% Somewhat Likely to Leave	17%	16%	15%	19%	20%
Total % Very and % Somewhat Likely to Leave	39%	41%	48% ↑	37%	37%

Asked of those who responded Yes to Q. Would you say that you are leading a "double life" – meaning that you are outwardly still a member of the community (e.g., in terms of appearances and visible actions), but internally you do not view yourself that way?

Q. What is the likelihood that you will fully leave your community at some point in the future, on a scale from 0 (you definitely will never leave) to 10 (you definitely will eventually leave)?

(n – Total=265, Chasidic=75, Chabad=27, Yeshivish=72, Modern Orthodox=54)

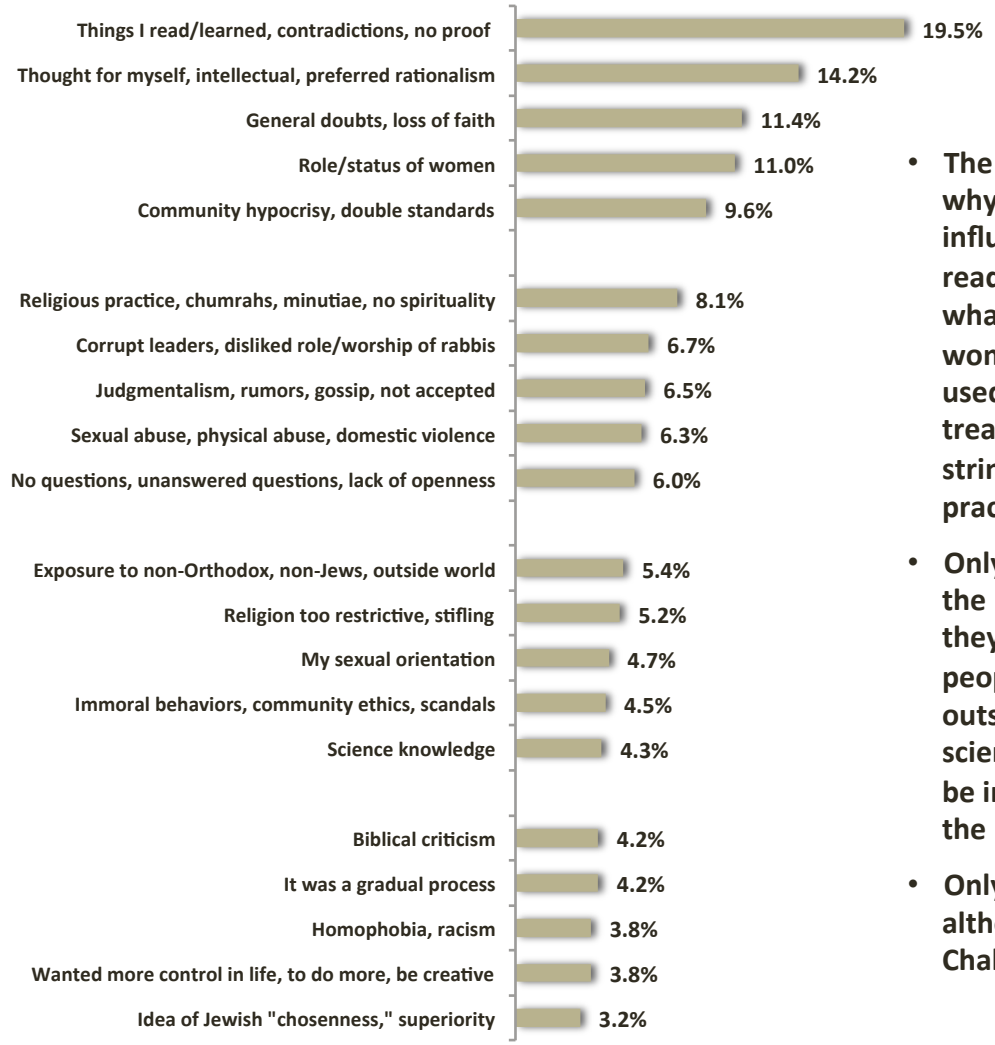
Why People Left Their Community of Origin

What Caused Beliefs and Practices to Change

- A major objective of this survey was to quantify the reasons why people left their Orthodox community. In order to avoid asking leading questions, we posed this as a fully open-ended question: "Please think back to when you started moving away in belief or practice from the Orthodox community in which you were raised. What were the key things that caused your beliefs and practices to change?"
- Taking the many hundred of subjective responses and "quantifying them" was a challenging but eye-opening exercise. We read the full text of the responses and categorized them against a list we developed of approximately 50 reasons that people were giving, some of which were subtle variations of overlapping themes. Many respondents offered multiple reasons in sometimes quite lengthy responses.
- This section shows the results of this analysis: both the quantified data and a sample of verbatim responses.

What Caused Beliefs and Practices to Change

(All respondents)

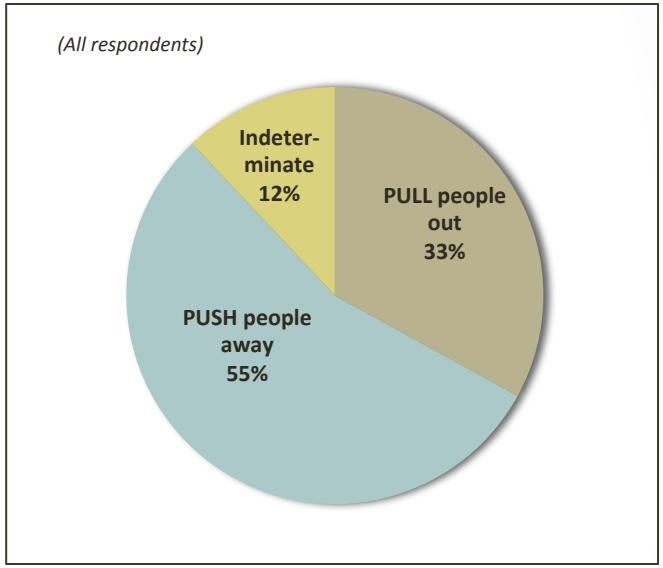


- **The most often given reasons by people as to why they left their community were the influence of outside knowledge, such as reading or learning things that contradicted what had been believed; the status and role of women; communal "hypocrisy" (a very often used word) and double standards in the treatment of people; and the scope and stringent nature of the religion as it was practiced in their community.**
- **Only 2% of respondents specifically mentioned the Internet. Many more mentioned things they had read or otherwise been exposed to, people they had spoken with (including Jews outside their community and non-Jews), science, etc. Exposure to the outside world can be influential, even when much of it is not via the Internet.**
- **Only 2% mentioned weak secular education, although it was more of a factor among the Chabad (9%) and Yeshivish (4%).**

Q. Please think back to when you started moving away in belief or practice from the Orthodox community in which you were raised. What were the key things that caused your beliefs and practices to change?
(n – Total=554, Chasidic=122, Chabad=58, Yeshivish=136, Modern Orthodox=141; percentages were categorized and are based on those responding to the open-ended question)

Leaving the Community – Push or Pull?

- We divided the reasons given for leaving the community into:
  - Push Factors – Internal conditions, perceptions or awareness that people dislike and that therefore "push" them away from their community, such as the role/status of women and community hypocrisy/double standards; and
  - Pull Factors – External conditions or sources of awareness that are attractive to people and therefore "pull" them out the community, such as scientific knowledge or reading things that contradict beliefs.



  - A few of the reasons given could not be definitively categorized, and are labeled as "indeterminate."
- The Push Factors exerted more of an influence overall on people leaving their community. Thus, we can conclude that, at some level, the community is pushing people out more than the people themselves are seeking to leave.

What Caused Beliefs and Practices to Change – Top Factors for Chasidic and Chabad Communities of Origin

Chasidic	%
Things I read/learned, contradictions, no proof	20%
General doubts, loss of faith	15%
Thought for myself, intellectual, preferred rationalism	14%
Community hypocrisy, double standards	11%
Corrupt leaders, disliked role/worship of rabbis	11% ↑
Sexual abuse, physical abuse, domestic violence	7%
Religion too restrictive, stifling	7%
Wanted more control in life, to do more, be creative	7% ↑
Immoral behaviors, community ethics, scandals	6%
Role and status of women	7% ↓

- The top reason why the Chasidic left their community was the influence of outside knowledge, such as reading or learning things that contradicted what had been believed.
- They more often said they left their community of origin because of corrupt leaders (11% vs. 7% among all respondents) and because of a desire to do more in life (7% vs. 4% among all respondents).
- They less often cited as factors the role and status of women (7% vs. 11% among all respondents) or the stringency of the religious practice, the chumrahs and minutiae (5% vs. 8% among all respondents).
- 2% cited the Internet and 1% cited weak secular education as driving factors – both similar to the overall response.

Overall: Push 52% / Pull 35% / Indeterminate 13%

Chabad	%
Thought for myself, intellectual, preferred rationalism	14%
Wanted more control in life, to do more, be creative	12% ↑
Things I read/learned, contradictions, no proof	10% ↓
General doubts, loss of faith	10%
Sexual abuse, physical abuse, domestic violence	10%
Community hypocrisy, double standards	9%
Weak secular education	9% ↑
Religious practice, chumrahs, minutiae, no spirituality	7%
Religion too restrictive, stifling	5%
Immoral behaviors, community ethics, scandals	5%

- The Chabad much more often said they left their community because they wanted more control over their lives (12% vs. 4% among all respondents) or because of a weak secular education (9% vs. 2% among all respondents).
- They had the fewest complaints about the role and status of women (3% vs. 11% among all respondents), but the highest level of complaints about parental pressure (5% vs. 1% among all respondents).

Overall: Push 60% / Pull 31% / Indeterminate 9%

Continued →

While we may express in our remarks that a segment's response was different from those of all respondents, the comparisons and statistical significance testing were done for each segment vs. *all others*.

What Caused Beliefs and Practices to Change – Top Factors for Yeshivish and Modern Orthodox Communities of Origin

Yeshivish	%
Things I read/learned, contradictions, no proof	21%
Thought for myself, intellectual, preferred rationalism	19% ↑
General doubts, loss of faith	14%
Community hypocrisy, double standards	12%
Religious practice, chumrahs, minutiae, no spirituality	11% ↑
Role and status of women	10%
Corrupt leaders, disliked role/worship of rabbis	7%
Science knowledge	7%
No questions, unanswered questions, lack of openness	6%
Religion too restrictive, stifling	6%

- The Yeshivish spend much time in study, so it may not be surprising that many cited as reasons why they left their thinking through issues and intellectualism (19% vs. 14% among all respondents). They also more often cited the stringency of how Judaism was practiced, i.e., chumrahs, minutiae and lack of spirituality (11% vs. 8% among all respondents).
- More cited the Internet (4% vs. 2% among all respondents), and far fewer cited abuse issues (1% vs. 6% among all respondents).

Overall: Push 54% / Pull 33% / Indeterminate 13%

Modern Orthodox	%
Role and status of women	22% ↑
Thought for myself, intellectual, preferred rationalism	17%
General doubts, loss of faith	11%
My sexual orientation	11% ↑
Religious practice, chumrahs, minutiae, no spirituality	9%
Judgmentalism, rumors, gossip, not accepted	9%
No questions, unanswered questions, lack of openness	9%
Things I read/learned, contradictions, no proof	9% ↓
Community hypocrisy, double standards	9%
It was a gradual change	8% ↑

- The reasons cited by the Modern Orthodox for leaving their community were different in several ways from those of the other groups. The #1 factor was the role and status of women (22% vs. 11% among all respondents). This may be due to their awareness and comfort with greater women's roles in outside society.
- Respondent's sexual orientation ranked #4 among the reasons given (11% vs. 5% among all respondents), and was among the top 10 reasons cited only in the Modern Orthodox segment.
- Additionally, more of the Modern Orthodox noted that their leaving was a gradual process (8% vs. 4% among all respondents).

Overall: Push 59% / Pull 25% / Indeterminate 16%

- The overall Push/Pull factors vary a bit among the segments. The Push factors are more influential among the Lubavitch and the Modern Orthodox, while the Pull factors are more influential among the Chasidish.

What Caused Beliefs and Practices to Change – Differences Between Men and Women

- **Men and women are different in their stated reasons for leaving their community, with four factors more often cited by men and six factors more often cited by women (at statistically significant levels):**
  - ✧ **<u>Men</u> – The four reasons more often given by men deal with learning and thought processes.**
  - ✧ **<u>Women</u> – Of the six reasons given by women, five are community or personal conditions that were negatively perceived. Their top reason overall is the role and status of women.**

Top 5 reasons given by men:
- Things I read/learned, contradictions, no proof – 21%
- Thought for myself, intellectual, preferred rationalism – 16%
- General doubts, loss of faith – 14%
- Community hypocrisy, double standards – 7%
- Religious practice, chumrahs, minutiae, no spirituality – 7%

Top 5 reasons given by women: *
- Role/status of women – 20%
- Things I read/learned, contradictions, no proof - 15%
- Community hypocrisy, double standards – 12%
- Judgmentalism, rumors, gossip, not accepted – 9%
- Thought for myself, intellectual, preferred rationalism – 9%

Differences Between Men and Women	% of Men Citing as Factor	% of Women Citing as Factor	Difference
<u>Factors Cited Significantly More Often by Men</u>			
Thought for myself, intellectual, preferred rationalism	16%	9%	Males 7%
Things I read/learned, contradictions, no proof	21%	15%	Males 6%
Biblical criticism	6%	2%	Males 4%
Science knowledge	6%	2%	Males 4%
<u>Factors Cited Significantly More Often by Women</u>			
Role and status of women	3%	20%	Females 17%
Judgmentalism, rumors, gossip, not accepted	3%	9%	Females 6%
Community hypocrisy, double standards	7%	12%	Females 5%
Shidduch, being single/isolated	<0.5%	5%	Females 4%
Exposure to non-Orthodox, non-Jews, outside world	3%	7%	Females 4%
No joy in religion	1%	5%	Females 4%

* The role/status of women is cited by 37% of Modern Orthodox; and 14% of Chasidic, 7% of Chabad, 16% of Yeshivish. Abuse/domestic violence is mentioned by 7% of women and is not among their top 5 reasons overall, but it is mentioned by a notably higher 13% of Chasidic women.

What Caused Beliefs and Practices to Change *(Sample Verbatim Responses)*

Sample Verbatim Responses *

- *Loss of belief due to conflicts between Torah and science.*
- *A small voice of doubt about the truth of Orthodox doctrines. The internet allowed me to explore those doubts fully and see arguments for and against. I watched many debates and read many articles exploring these issues.*
- *As I grew up it became very clear to me that despite teachings, men and women were certainly not considered or treated equally. Once I began questioning that, I questioned everything else I had been told. It also began to bother me that the written and oral Torah, as well as the general atmosphere of the community, preached racism, xenophobia, homophobia, etc., which contradicted that the Torah and the Jews were supposed to be the most moral in the world.*
- *I never felt that I fit in with the community and I resented the roles for women that I was shown. I resented censorship at school and home, the way we had to bend reality to fit our beliefs.*
- *Being overwhelmed by homophobia in yeshiva circles. I had many LGBTQ friends and struggled with reconciling that part of my life with my yeshiva life.*
- *Little explanation for many things. Overly extreme parents. Racism in the community, double standards, little or no respect for non-Jews or non orthodox Jews.*
- *Orthodox attitudes towards women, strict lifestyle, the community focus on petty things and not focusing on being decent humans who contribute positively to society.*
- *It started when I decided to truly engage with my doubt in god. The impetus for that was mainly my interaction with women's issues within the orthodox community. As a child the gender roles bothered me but only marginally. I was a tomboy so religion was largely restricting. However, I was often able to find ways around it. As I grew older these issues became much more intense. I started realizing that I was working so hard for a system that was rejecting me at every turn. I honestly don't know anything, but I know that I can not accept sexism as divine.*
- *A real need to leave all the fear behind. I believed that Hashem would understand whatever I needed to do for my sanity. I read through the books of Dawkins, Dennet, Harris and Hitchens. That did the trick, and the rest is a loooong process.*
- *A general disbelief in the historical and scientific accuracy of the Torah. Disillusionment with the corruption and hypocrisy of the entrenched community leaders and Rabbis. Horror at the tolerance for child abuse.*
- *Access to books and other worldviews. Questions on the logic and validity of religion. Quest for truth.*

* See http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html for additional verbatim responses..

Continued

What Caused Beliefs and Practices to Change *(Sample Verbatim Responses – Continued)*

Sample Verbatim Responses

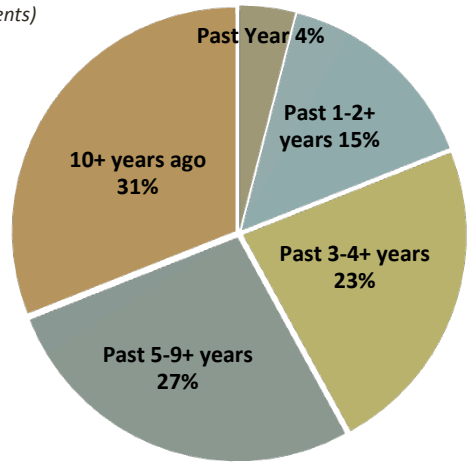
- *Discovering the online blogs of people who also didn't fit into the Orthodox Jewish communities they were raised in had a big impact on me. I didn't feel as crazy or alone. Other than that, there weren't many key things. It was more like the secular world seemed to make more sense to me and seemed more free and breathable so I naturally gravitated towards that world.*
- *My identity as a transgender person was ignored and denied by all the rabbis I reached out to. And seeing the rabbis constantly ignore abuse in the community. Plus the complete lack of checks and balances plus transparency amongst the hierarchy of the entire system. And so once I peeled away at the hierarchy. My entire belief system collapsed.*
- *The incongruity of science and Torah, increasing interest in science, realizing that my parents choice of schools robbed me of education, seeing that the chareidi community is a fake and objectifies women.*
- *Exposure to Jews who were not orthodox in University. Understanding that there are ways to be Jewish without feeling imprisoned by Orthodoxy.*
- *Nothing made any sense. There was no proof that any of the BS was real. It was too restrictive an environment to actually live in. It was no in line with my academic pursuits.*
- *Academic history and Bible, loss of respect for religious authorities, skepticism of the basic goodness of Orthodox people and an Orthodox life, boredom with the excessiveness of Orthodox ritual, particularly ever-increasing stringencies.*
- *It was the realization that orthodox Judaism is from a global perspective a tiny narrow-minded faction still adhering to old out fashioned beliefs. And the unfortunate fact that was born in that group is not a reason to accept them as the truth.*
- *It was kallah classes. For the first time I had someone knowledgeable who could answer my questions about why Halacha was how it was and how it got that way. That led to more questions. I was added to a FB group full of smart ModOx people who could provide sources for any question I had about Judaism. I started reading more books that I didn't know existed when I shopped at I had tons of questions I couldn't find answers to and I started writing them down. When my thesis hit 25 pages I realized something: I just didn't believe any more. I came to doubt that God ever intended anything like modern Judaism. Or that ancient Judaism could have been designed by our modern God. There are too many things that don't fit. The questions are better than the answers. So I gave up. Additionally, although I've enjoyed the Jewish community, praxis has never meant anything to me. It just doesn't do it for me. Davening, ceremony... It was all just something to get through. So it's not like I felt like I was losing anything. Rather, it was a relief to lose the stress that was plaguing me daily: am I doing what God wants? Who is right? What is truth? The moment I said, "I don't believe" it was like, to be cliched but accurate, a load just lifted off my shoulders. I could be happy.*

NISHMA RESEARCH
Marketing Research for the Jewish Community

Time Since Leaving Community – The median respondent left their community 6-7 years ago. But the median was longer ago among the Modern Orthodox (9 years), than it was among the Chasidic (5 years), suggesting that the latter phenomenon is more nascent.

Time since they felt they were no longer fully a member of the Orthodox community in which they were raised

(All respondents)



Median = 6.6 years ago

Years Since Left	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox
< 3 Years	19%	25% ↑	14%	19%	11% ↓
3 to <10 Years	50%	54%	53%	56% ↑	43% ↓
10+ Years	31%	21% ↓	33%	25% ↓	46% ↑
Median (Years)	6.6	5.0 ↓	6.8	6.3	9.2 ↑

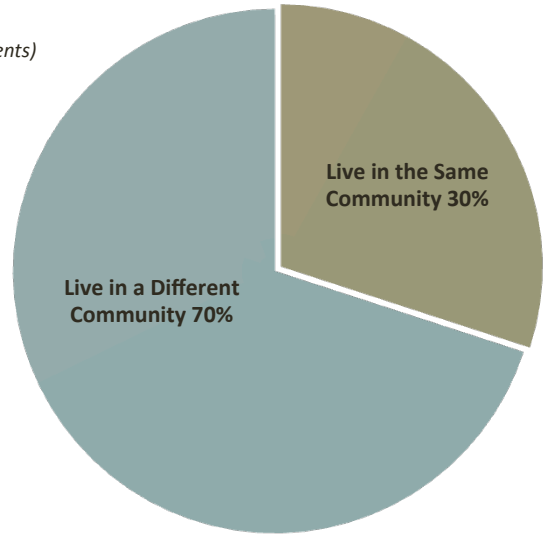
Q. At about what point did you feel that you were no longer fully a member of the Orthodox community in which you were raised?
- Within the past year; In the past 1 to 2+ years; In the past 3 to 4+ years; In the past 5 to 9+ years; 10 or more years ago

(n – Total=878, Chasidic=215, Chabad=97, Yeshivish=219, Modern Orthodox=229)

NISHMA RESEARCH
Marketing Research for the Jewish Community

More than two-thirds (70%) of respondents no longer live in the Jewish community where they grew up. More Chasidic people (44%) still live in their original communities, and far fewer Modern Orthodox (17%) do so.

(All respondents)



Lives in Same Community	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox
Yes	30%	44%	37%	30%	17%
No	70%	56%	63%	70%	83%

Q. Think of the Jewish community where you grew up (for example, Borough Park, Crown Heights, Williamsburg, New Square, Lakewood, etc.). Do you still live in the same Jewish Community?

- Yes; No

(n – Total=878, Chasidic=216, Chabad=97, Yeshivish=218, Modern Orthodox=228)

Q. Where do you currently live?

- In the USA; Outside USA – See data in Demographics section, pages 89-90.

Sources of Support to Those Who Left Their Community

Sources of Support Received People When They Started Moving Away From Their Community

- **55% of respondents indicated they received some sort of support at the time they started moving away from their community, most often from:**
  - **Footsteps 14%**
  - **Friends 12%**
  - **Family members 12%**
- **The Chareidi groups were similar to each other, but differed notably from the Modern Orthodox:**
  - **63% of Chareidi say they received some form of support vs. 36% of Modern Orthodox.**
  - **20% of Chareidi used Footsteps vs. 1% of Modern Orthodox.**

Sample Verbatim Responses *

- *Footsteps, JQY, and supportive friends that I made at those organizations.*
- *I ran away from Judaism as quickly as I could. I didn't need help.*
- *In general, meeting non Jews who were good and fun people. No organization helped me.*
- *Not a single soul.*
- *No organization, but some nice people I met along my journey helped me.*
- *No. I found organizations and people years after I had left.*
- *Nope, no help at all. Didn't even know others had tried to leave in the past.*
- *Spending time with completely secular people and seeing how much they have to offer.*
- *Footsteps greatly helped me in the later stages when I was over 18, but I left the system when I was only 15 and had to fib the way out on my own.*
- *Opening up to parents and a few close friends helped immensely, though it was very difficult. Then I founded a group of orthodox nonbelievers that meets up to share our beliefs and experiences. This group has been crucial for me.*

Q. Still thinking about the time when you started moving away from the Orthodox community, were there any organizations or people that helped you in making that transition?
(n=679 comments, representing 77% of all respondents; percentages cited above are based on the 679 responses)

* See http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html for additional verbatim responses.

Desired Additional Support People Wished They Had When They Started Moving Away From Their Community

- **67% of respondents indicated they would have wished for additional support. Those most often mentioned were:**
  - **Footsteps 16%**
  - **Friends 5%**
  - **Therapists 3%**
- **Again, the Chareidi groups were similar to each other, but differed notably from the Modern Orthodox:**
  - **72% of Chareidi would have wanted additional support vs. 55% of Modern Orthodox.**

Sample Verbatim Responses *

- *Any organization or help would've been amazing.*
- *I still don't have any resources that can help me right now but I wish I did.*
- *I wish that the internet was around then. The ability to be able to meet others like me would have been helpful.*
- *Footsteps would have been such an oasis for me. I'm often jealous of today's x-frum kids because they have that.*
- *I wish that there had been LGBT resources when I was in an ortho high school.*
- *Growing up modern Orthodox I found it easier to transition into greater American society. I had movies, music, TV, and other common Americana that helped me relate with others.*
- *Perhaps a therapist who really understands the situation that could have worked with my mother and me. We tried doing therapy together but could not find a professional that really understood the meaning and full ramifications of leaving orthodoxy and how it effects everyone involved.*
- *Being that my wife and I took the journey together we always wished we would have known other couples that went or were going through the same process and stayed married.*

Q. Are there resources (people, organizations, etc.) you didn't have available at that time, but wished you had?
(n=676 comments, representing 76% of all respondents; percentages cited above are based on the 676 responses)

* See http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html for additional verbatim responses.

Current Organizations and Support Groups – The most common support groups/organizations that respondents said they were associated with are the Off The Derech Facebook group (33%) and Footsteps (23%).

Current Sources of Support (All Respondents)	%
Off The Derech Facebook group	33%
Footsteps	23%
Other Facebook groups (besides OTD and Yiddishkeit?)	18%
OTD Meetup	12%
Other organizations or support groups (besides those listed)	9%
Yiddishkeit? Facebook group	8%
Eshel	5%
Other online support groups (besides Facebook)	5%
Thursday Night Chulent	4%
Project Makom	3%
Kava Shtiebel	2%
Total – Belong to one or more organization or support group	*38%*
Total – Belong to one or more online support group	*45%*

Differences across the Community of Origin segments:

- **The Chasidic were more often members of the OTD Facebook group (40%), Footsteps (38%) and Kava Shtiebel (8%).**
- **Chabad were more often members of Footsteps (30%).**
- **Yeshivish organizational membership patterns were similar to the overall patterns.**
- **Modern Orthodox were much less often members of Footsteps (8%), or any support groups at all (21%). They were also somewhat less likely to belong to any online groups (OTD Facebook 23%; any online support group 37%).**

Q. Are you currently a member of, associated with, or receive services from any of the following organizations or support groups that deal with Jewish community issues? Please check all that apply.
- Eshel; Footsteps; Kava Shtiebel; OTD Meetup; Project Makom; Thursday Night Chulent; Other organizations or support groups – Please describe; None of the above

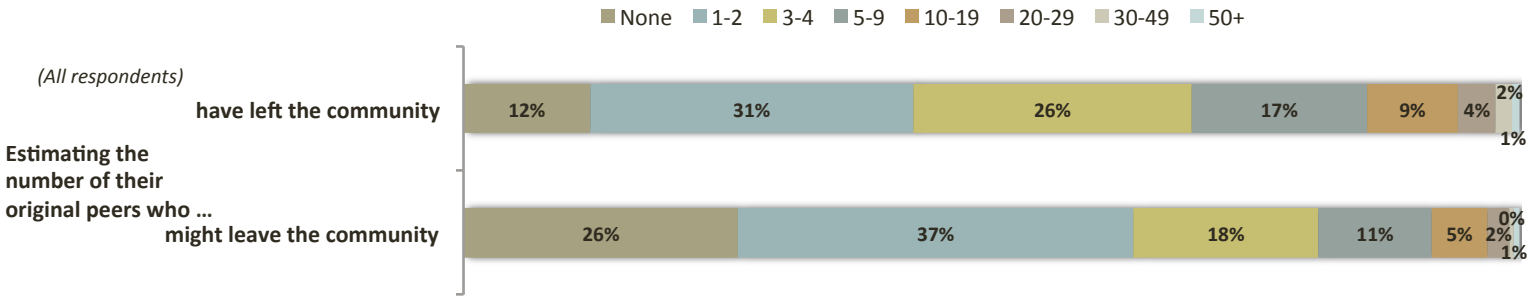
(n – Total=863, Chasidic=215, Chabad=95, Yeshivish=215, Modern Orthodox=222)

Q. Are you currently associated with or receive services from any of the following online groups that deal with Jewish community issues? Please check all that apply.
- Off The Derech Facebook group; Yiddishkeit? Facebook group; Other Facebook groups – Please describe; Other online support groups – Please describe; None of the above

(n – Total=856, Chasidic=212, Chabad=95, Yeshivish=215, Modern Orthodox=217)

Shared Experiences

- **In the context of possible emotional support, we sought a sense of shared experiences, i.e., did respondents know others of their close peer group growing up who had left their community, or might do so in the future?**
- **Respondents knew an average of 5.6 others who had left their community and 3.6 who might leave in the future, for a total of 9.2 others "in the same boat."**



MEDIAN Number of Close Peers Who …	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox	OVERALL MEAN (AVERAGE)
Have left the community	3	2	3.5	2.5	4	5.6
Might leave the community	2	2	2	2	1.5	3.6

While the mean was 9.2 others, we also show the medians in this table, to give an additional sense of typical experiences.

Q. Think back to your close original peer group growing up, for example your family, classmates, etc. How would you complete the following sentence? Among my close original peer group growing up, I would guess that ___ of them have left their Orthodox community. (Please enter your best estimate/guess.)
- None; One or two; Three or four; 5 to 9; 10 to 19; 20 to 29; 30 to 49; 50 or more; I have no idea

(n excludes those who responded "I have no idea" – Total=722, Chasidic=184, Chabad=83, Yeshivish=187; Modern Orthodox=175)

Q. Think back to your close original peer group growing up, for example your family, classmates, etc. How would you complete the following sentence? Among my close original peer group growing up, I would guess that ___ of them might leave their Orthodox community in the future. (Please enter your best estimate/guess.)
- None; One or two; Three or four; 5 to 9; 10 to 19; 20 to 29; 30 to 49; 50 or more; I have no idea

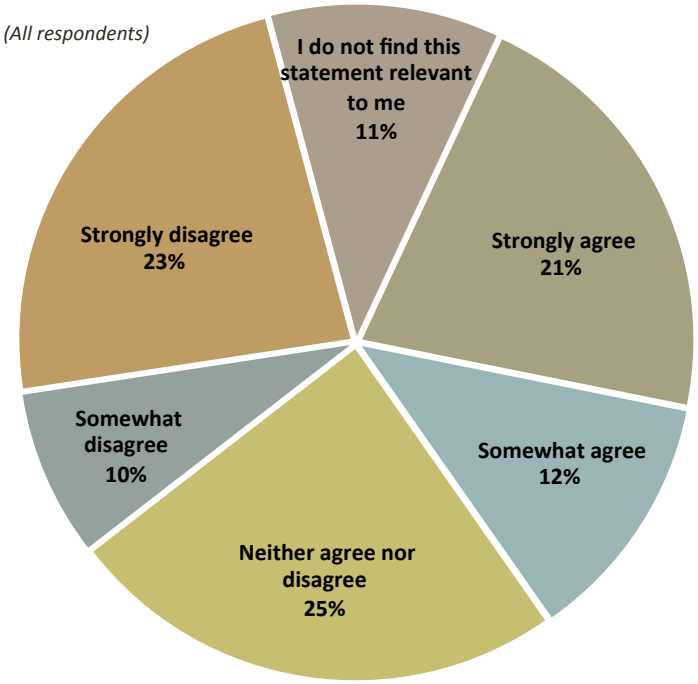
(n excludes those who responded "I have no idea" – Total=609; Chasidic=161, Chabad=72, Yeshivish=167, Modern Orthodox=139)

Jewish Beliefs and Practices

NISHMA RESEARCH
Marketing Research for the Jewish Community

Belief in God – 33% of respondents stated they believe in God (strongly or somewhat), while 44% did not believe in God (either disagreeing with the statement or saying it was not relevant to them).

(All respondents)



Belief in God varied a bit across the segments
(% that believe / % that do not believe)

- **All Respondents – 33%**
- **Chasidic – 29%**
- **Chabad – 34%**
- **Yeshivish – 31%**
- **Modern Orthodox – 36%**
- **Double-Lifers – 37%**

The 2013 Pew Survey * found:

- **92% of the U.S. general public believed in God**
- **72% of all American Jews believed in God**
  - 98% of Ultra-Orthodox (Chareidi)
  - 96% of Modern Orthodox
  - 87% of Conservative
  - 76% of Reform
  - 53% of Jews with no denomination

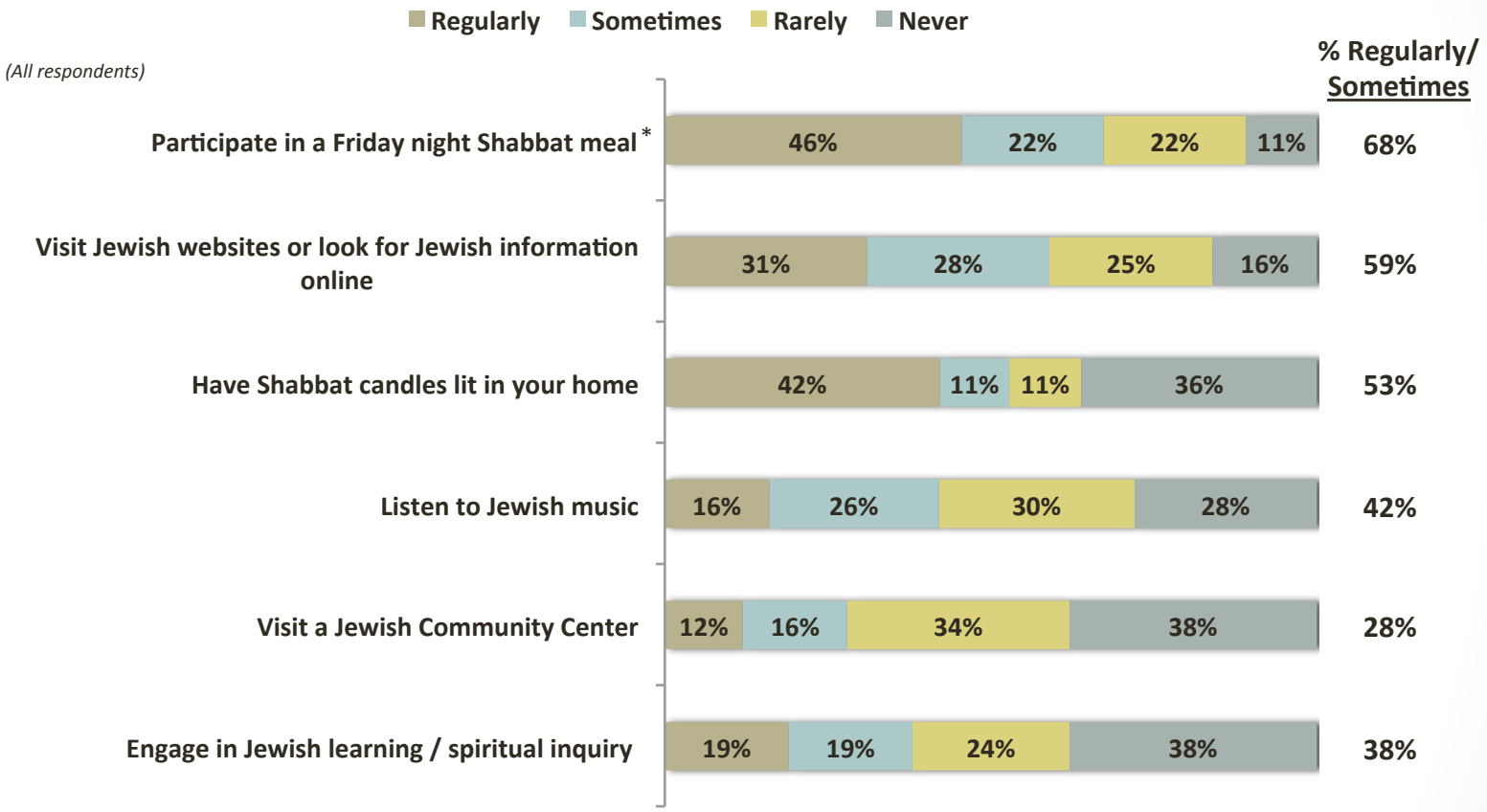
- **Our survey respondents had a lower level of belief in God than any of the Jewish population segments in the Pew Survey.**

Q. Do you agree with the statement: "God exists" ?
Strongly agree; Somewhat agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Somewhat disagree; Strongly disagree; I do not find this statement relevant to me
(n – Total=878, Chasidic=214, Chabad=95, Yeshivish=221, Modern Orthodox=229)

* Source: A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews, October 2013

NISHMA RESEARCH
Marketing Research for the Jewish Community

Jewish Practices – Those who are no longer fully Orthodox have retained some of its practices. A majority of our respondents participated in a Friday night Shabbat meal, visited Jewish websites and lit Shabbat candles.



* The survey questionnaire used the word "Shabbos," a term more familiar to respondents.

Q. How often do you …
- Participate in a Friday night Shabbos meal?; Visit Jewish websites or look for Jewish information online; Have Shabbos candles lit in your home?; Listen to Jewish music?; Visit a Jewish Community Center?; Engage in Jewish learning / spiritual inquiry?
- Scale: Regularly; Sometimes; Rarely; Never

(n – Total=848, Chasidic=203, Chabad=93, Yeshivish=211, Modern Orthodox=223)

Continued

Jewish Practices by Community of Origin – The Chasidic most often listen to Jewish music, while the Modern Orthodox most often look online for Jewish information.

% that regularly or sometimes …	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox
Participate in a Friday night Shabbos meal	68%	72%	65%	65%	67%
Visit Jewish websites or look for Jewish information online	59%	49% ↓	61%	56%	68% ↑
Have Shabbos candles lit in your home	53%	54%	48%	50%	52%
Listen to Jewish music	42%	56% ↑	45%	29% ↓	38%
Visit a Jewish Community Center	28%	33%	29%	19% ↓	33%
Engage in Jewish learning / spiritual inquiry	38%	34%	26% ↓	35%	43%

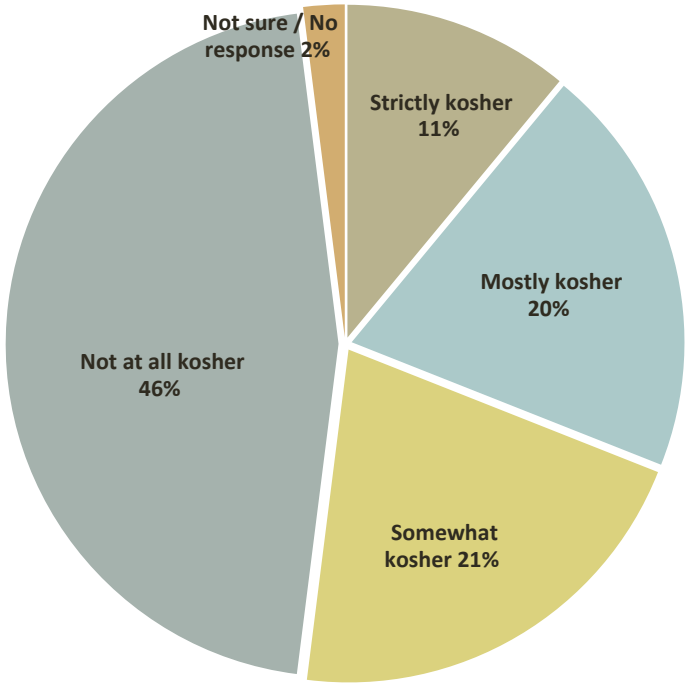
- There were few notable differences in practices among the segments: The Chasidic more often listened to Jewish music, while the Modern Orthodox more often visited Jewish websites and engaged in Jewish learning.
- Pew* found that 23% of U.S. Jews always or usually lit Sabbath candles; ranging from 99% of Ultra-Orthodox to 34% of Conservative and 10% of Reform.
- Our segments fell between the Pew Orthodox and Conservative in terms of adherence to this practice.

- Not surprisingly, double-lifers have higher levels of participation in the practices that are externally more visible, e.g., participating in Friday night Shabbos meal (85% for double-lifers vs. 60% for all others), having Shabbos candles lit (75% for double-lifers vs. 42% for all others). Interestingly, for practices that are not externally more visible, there is little difference, e.g., listening to Jewish music (41% for double-lifers vs. 42% for all others).

* Source: A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews, October 2013

Kosher – 31% of all respondents indicated they are strictly or mostly kosher. This is slightly more often (36%) true among the Modern Orthodox.

(All respondents)



- **Keeping kosher varied somewhat across the Community of Origin segments:**
  (% strictly or mostly kosher)
  - **All Respondents – 31%**
  - **Chasidic – 29%**
  - **Chabad – 23%**
  - **Yeshivish – 34%**
  - **Modern Orthodox – 36%**
  - **Double-Lifers – 43% (significantly higher than all others – 25%)**
- **The 2013 Pew Survey * found that 22% of all American Jews kept kosher at home:**
  - 98% of Ultra-Orthodox
  - 83% of Modern Orthodox
  - 31% of Conservative
  - 7% of Reform
  - 10% of Jews with no denomination
- **Our survey respondents' level of keeping kosher was comparable to that of American Conservative Jews.**

Q. Which of the following best describes you in terms of keeping kosher?
- Strictly kosher; Mostly kosher; Somewhat kosher; Not at kosher; Not sure / No response

(n – Total=850, Chasidic=203, Chabad=93, Yeshivish=213, Modern Orthodox=224)

* Source: A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews, October 2013

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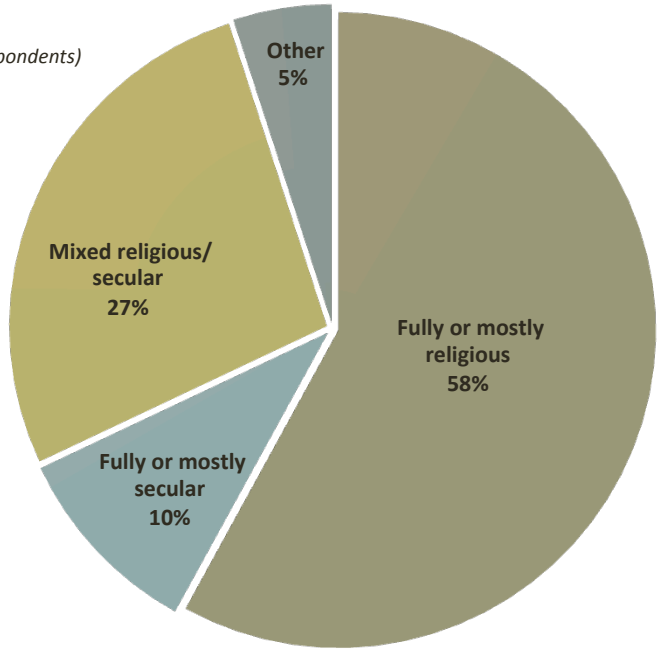
Children's Religious Orientation – Among those who had children at the time they left the community, 58% indicated their children were fully or mostly religious, although this was much lower (40%) among the Modern Orthodox.

(All respondents)



- **Children's religious orientation was virtually undifferentiated across the Chareidi groups, but less religious among the Modern Orthodox:**
  (% fully or mostly religious)
  - **All Respondents – 58%**
  - **Chasidic – 70%** ↑
  - **Chabad – 69%** ↑
  - **Yeshivish – 67%** ↑
  - **Modern Orthodox – 40% (37% of them report a mixed religious/secular orientation)** ↓

Asked of those who had children at the time they left the community (see appendix pages 93-94)
Q. How would you describe your child(ren)'s current religious orientation?
- Fully or mostly religious; Fully or mostly secular; Mixed religious/secular; Other – Please describe

(n – Total=275, Chasidic=106, Chabad=13, Yeshivish=54, Modern Orthodox=60)

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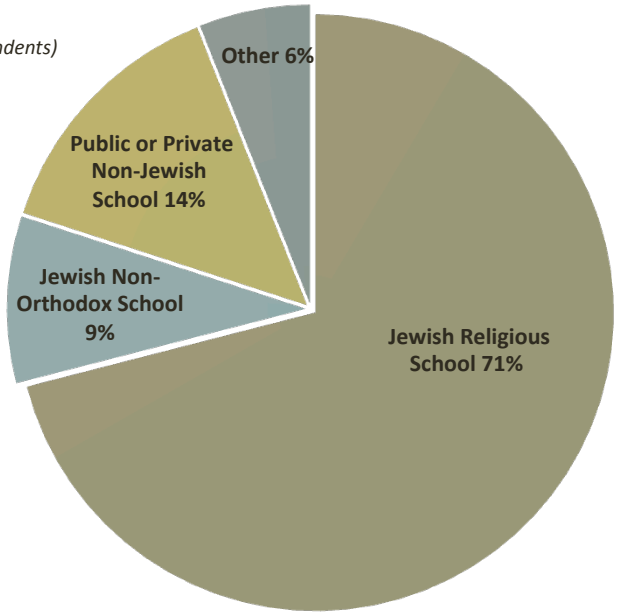
Children's School – Among respondents who had children at the time they left their community and who are currently school-age, 71% stated that they sent the children to a Jewish religious school, although Modern Orthodox did this much less often (50%).

(All respondents)

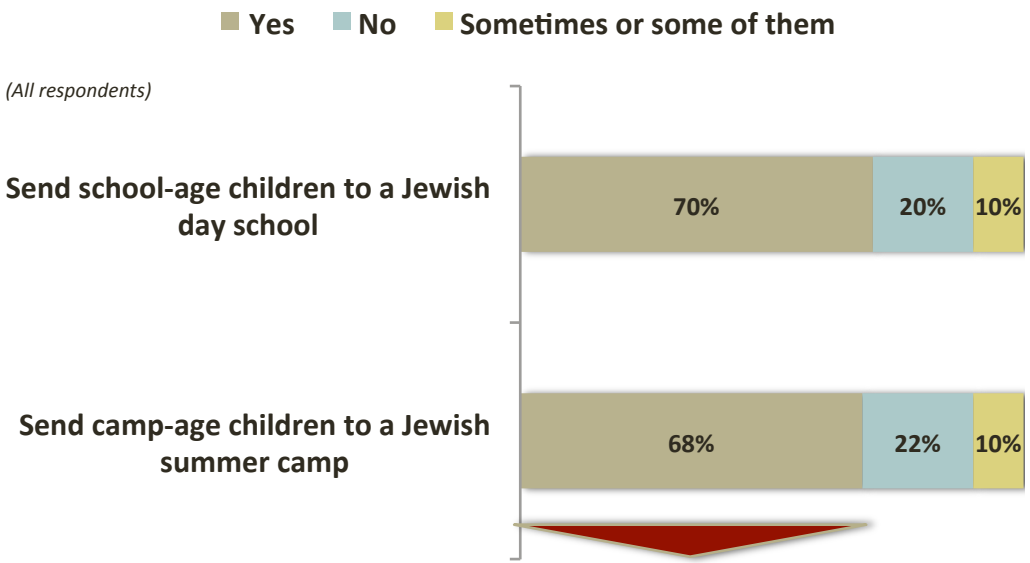


- **The Chareidi tended to send their children to a Jewish religious school much more often than the Modern Orthodox:**
  (% sending to Jewish religious schools)
  - **All Respondents – 71%**
  - **Chasidic – 84%** ↑
  - **Chabad – 82%** ↑
  - **Yeshivish – 90%** ↑
  - **Modern Orthodox – 50%** ↓

Asked of those who had children at the time they left the community (see appendix pages 93-94); Excludes those with no children currently school-age.
Q. What type of school(s) do your child(ren) currently attend? Please check all that apply.
- Jewish Religious School; Jewish Non-Orthodox School; Public or Private Non-Jewish School; None – they are not school age; Other – Please describe

(n – Total=259, Chasidic=102, Chabad=11, Yeshivish=51, Modern Orthodox=44)

Children's School and Summer Camp – Among respondents who currently have children, more than two-thirds stated that they sent their children to Jewish day school and Jewish summer camp (somewhat lower among the Modern Orthodox).



% sending to Jewish day school:

- All Respondents – 70%
- Chasidic – 75%
- Chabad – 76%
- Yeshivish – 74%
- Modern Orthodox – 59%

% sending to Jewish summer camp:

- All Respondents – 68%
- Chasidic – 69%
- Chabad – 71%
- Yeshivish – 72%
- Modern Orthodox – 61%

- This compares to the Pew* finding that 25% of U.S. Jews with at least one child at home have enrolled that child in a yeshiva or Jewish day school; among Orthodox, the percentage is 81%.

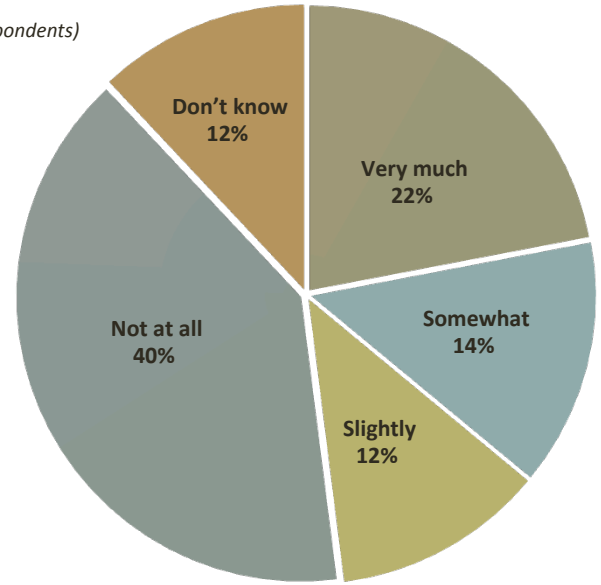
Q. Do you … (Excludes those with no children currently age-appropriate for the questions.)
a. Send your school-age child(ren) to a Jewish day school? Excludes those with no children currently age-appropriate for the questions.
b. Send your camp-age child(ren) to a Jewish summer camp?
- Scale: Yes; No; Sometimes or some of them; I do not have children of that age, or custodial decision-making

(n for part a – Total=323, Chasidic=111, Chabad=21, Yeshivish=66, Modern Orthodox=85)
(n for part b – Total=297, Chasidic=95, Chabad=17, Yeshivish=65, Modern Orthodox=83)

* Source: A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews, October 2013

Views on Intermarriage – About one-third of respondents (36%) indicated it would upset them if a child of theirs intermarried, while slightly more than one-third (40%) stated that it would not at all upset them. Intermarriage would upset the Modern Orthodox more often (46%) and the Chasidic less (26%).

(All respondents)



- **Upset over intermarriage was higher among the Modern Orthodox than among the Chareidi:**
  (% very/somewhat upset)
  - **All Respondents – 36%**
  - **Chasidic – 26%** ↓
  - **Chabad – 32%**
  - **Yeshivish – 32%**
  - **Modern Orthodox – 47%** ↑

Q. To what extent would it upset you if a child of yours married a non-Jew who did not convert to Judaism?
- Very much; Somewhat; Slightly; Not at all; Don't know

(n – Total=877, Chasidic=214, Chabad=96, Yeshivish=220, Modern Orthodox=228)

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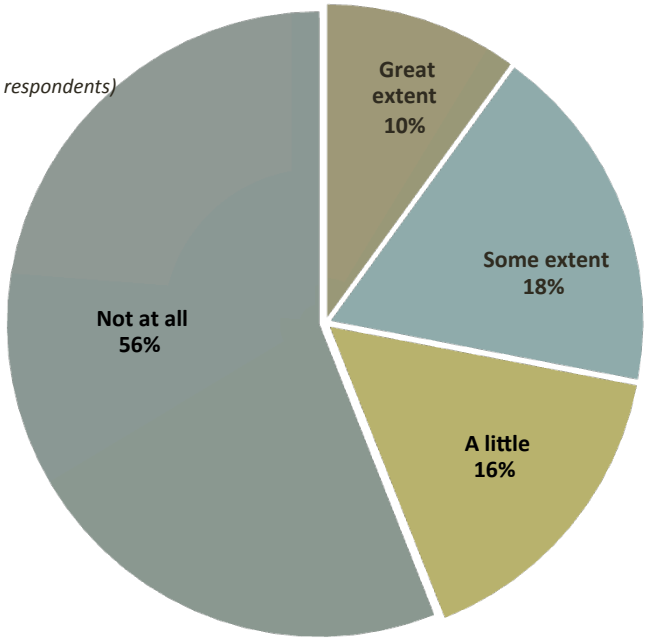
Current Dress – Among the Chareidi, 28% indicated that they still dress to a great extent or to some extent the same way as when they felt they were still members of their community of origin.

(All respondents)



- **There was little difference among the Chareidi segments:**
  (% to a great extent or to some extent)
  - **All Respondents – 28%**
  - **Chasidic – 29%**
  - **Chabad – 30%**
  - **Yeshivish – 25%**

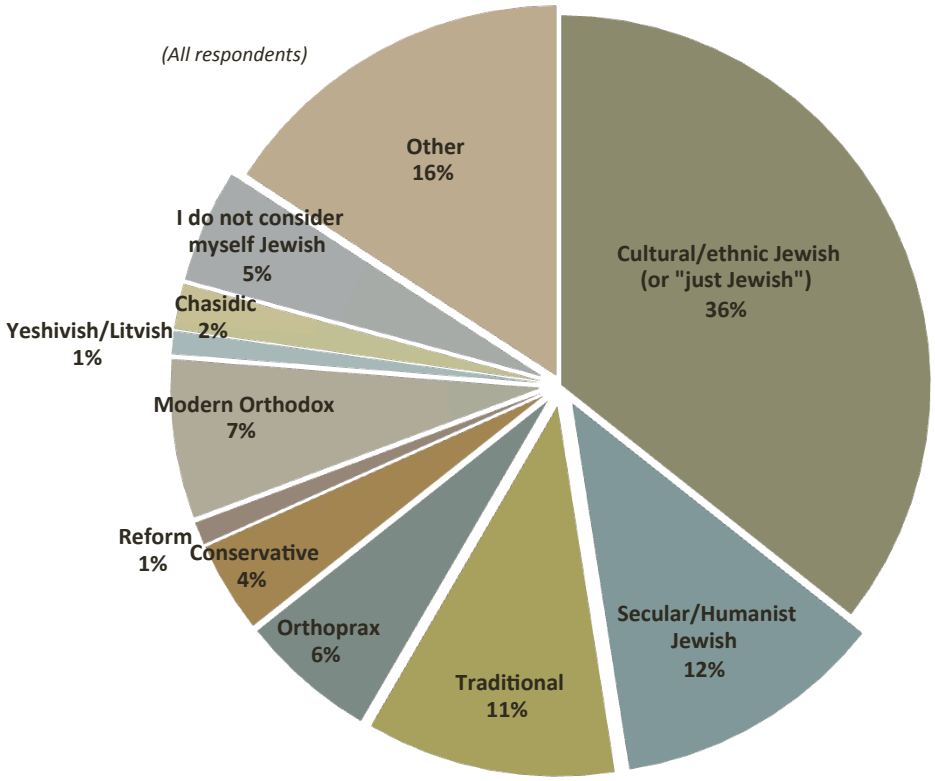
Asked of those who identified themselves as formerly Chasidish or Yeshivish/Litvish:
Q. To what extent do you currently dress the same way as when you were in the Orthodox community where you grew up?
- To a great extent; To some extent; A little; Not at all

(n – Total=532, Chasidic=215, Chabad=96, Yeshivish=220, Modern Orthodox=220)

Jewish Identity, Relationships and Community

NISHMA RESEARCH
Marketing Research for the Jewish Community

Current Jewish Self-Identification – Respondents' Jewish affiliations were more "self-defined" than conforming to the common denominations. Only about 20% identified themselves as members of a denomination.



- **Pew * found that 70% of U.S. Jews identify with a denomination (Reform 35%, Conservative 18%, Orthodox 10%, Other Denominations 6%, None 30%), a much higher percentage than among our respondents (21%).**

Q. Which of the following best describes how you see your Jewish affiliation at this time?
- Cultural/ethnic Jewish (or "just Jewish"); Secular/Humanist Jewish; Traditional; Orthoprax; Conservative; Reform; Modern Orthodox; Yeshivish/Litvish; Chasidish (spelled as Chasidic in the chart above); I do not consider myself Jewish; Other – Please describe

(n=880)

* Source: A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews, October 2013

Continued

Current Jewish Self Identification – by Community of Origin

Jewish Self-Identification	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox
Cultural/ethnic Jewish (or "just Jewish")	36%	40%	52% ↓	32%	35%
Secular/Humanist Jewish	12%	14%	9%	14%	8% ↓
Traditional	11%	6% ↓	9%	7% ↓	17% ↑
Modern Orthodox	7%	7%	8%	10%	5%
Orthoprax	6%	5%	3%	8%	6%
Conservative	4%	2%	4%	2%	8%
Chasidic	2%	6% ↑	4%	1%	0%
Reform	1%	1%	0%	0%	3%
Yeshivish/Litvish	1%	1%	0%	3%	0%
Other	16%	12%	8%	17%	15%
I do not consider myself Jewish	5%	6%	2%	6%	3%

(n – Total=880, Chasidic=216, Chabad=97, Yeshivish=219, Modern Orthodox=229)

There are interesting patterns in current religious self-definition across the Community of Origin segments:

- "Cultural/ethnic Jewish (or 'just Jewish')" was the most frequent self-definition for every group; but significantly more of the Chabad defined themselves this way. (Fewer – 27% – of the double-lifers do so).
- The Modern Orthodox more often defined themselves as "Traditional."
- Interestingly, 7-10% of the Chareidi defined themselves as currently Modern Orthodox; while only 5% of the Modern Orthodox defined themselves that way.
- 6% defined themselves as Orthoprax, up from the 2% that originally saw themselves that way (how they saw themselves when they were in their community of origin)
- 6% of the Chasidic and 4% of the Chabad defined themselves as still Chasidic.
- 2-3% of the Chareidi and 8% of the Modern Orthodox stated that they are now Conservative.

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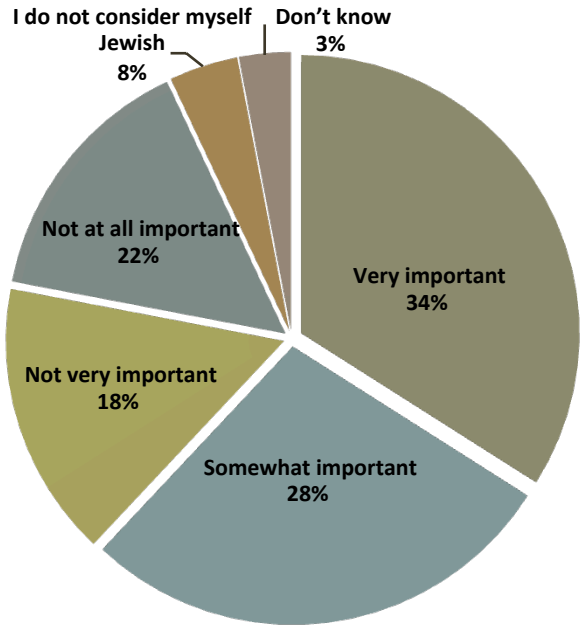
Importance of Being Jewish – A strong majority (62%) of survey respondents stated that being Jewish was very or somewhat important to them. Modern Orthodox (78%) felt the most strongly about this.

(All respondents)



- **Being Jewish was significantly more important to the Modern Orthodox than to the Chareidi:**
  (% very or somewhat important)
  - **All Respondents – 62%**
  - **Chasidic – 49%** ↓
  - **Chabad – 66%**
  - **Yeshivish – 56%** ↓
  - **Modern Orthodox – 78%** ↑
  - **Double-Lifers 66%**

- **The 2013 Pew Survey * found that 82% of all American Jews said that being Jewish is very or somewhat important to them.**
  - 99% of Ultra-Orthodox
  - 99% of Modern Orthodox
  - 93% of Conservative Jews
  - 86% of Reform Jews
  - 58% of Jews with no denomination

- **Our survey respondents were thus comparable in terms of the importance of being Jewish to U.S. Jews with no denomination.**

Q. Right now, how important is being Jewish in your life?
- Very important; Somewhat important; Not very important; Not at all important; I do not consider myself Jewish; Don't know

(n – Total=877, Chasidic=215, Chabad=95, Yeshivish=220, Modern Orthodox=228)

* Source: A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews, October 2013

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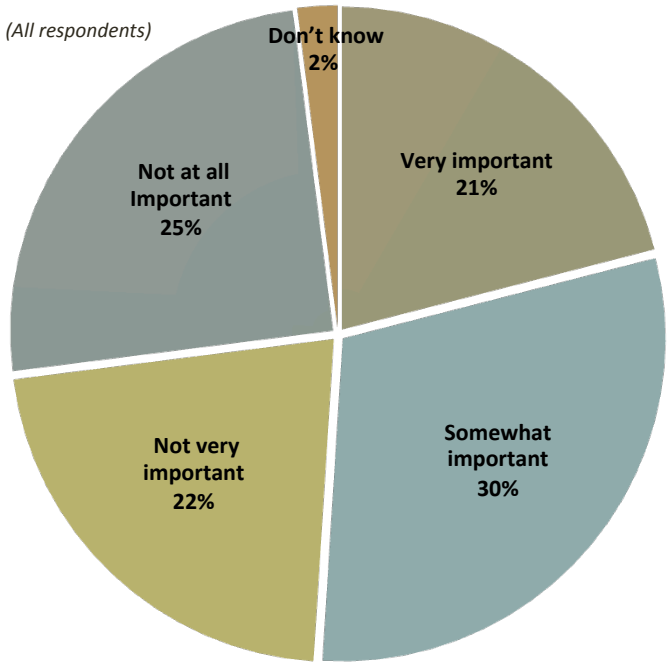
Importance of Being in a Jewish Community – Half of respondents (51%) stated that being in a Jewish community was very or somewhat important to them. Importance was lower among the Chasidic (41%), higher among Modern Orthodox (61%).



- **Being part of a Jewish community was more important to the Modern Orthodox and to Double-Lifers, and less important to the Chareidi:**
  (% very or somewhat important)
  - **All Respondents – 51%**
  - **Chasidic – 41%**
  - **Chabad – 51%**
  - **Yeshivish – 49%**
  - **Modern Orthodox – 61%**
  - **Double-Lifers 61%**
- **It was also more important among women (56%) than among men (46%).**

- **The 2013 Pew Survey * found that 70% of American Jews said being part of a Jewish community was an essential or important part of what being Jewish means to them.**
  - 99% of Ultra-Orthodox
  - 99% of Modern Orthodox
  - 93% of Conservative Jews
  - 86% of Reform Jews
  - 58% of Jews with no denomination

- **Sense of community importance was a bit lower among our survey respondents.**

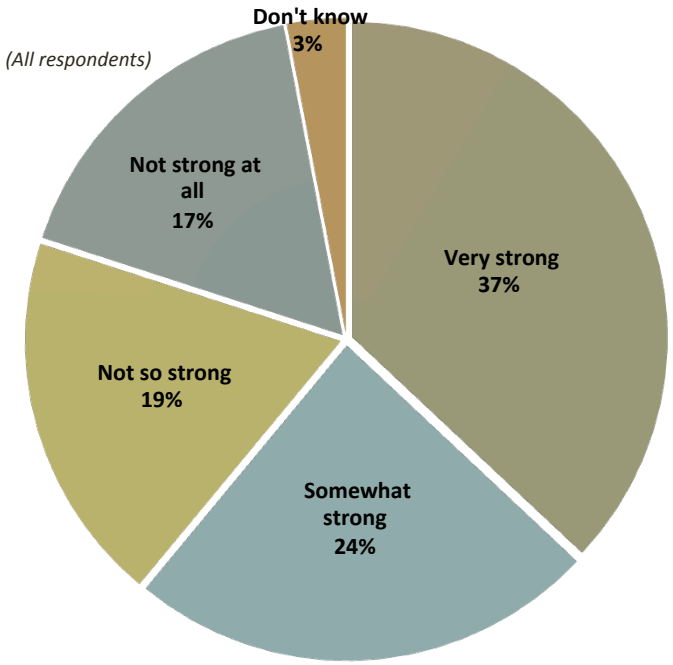
Q. Right now, how important is it to you to be part of a Jewish community?
- Very important; Somewhat important; Not very important; Not at all important; Don't know

(n – Total=876, Chasidic=215, Chabad=95, Yeshivish=219, Modern Orthodox=228)

* Source: A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews, October 2013

NISHMA RESEARCH
Marketing Research for the Jewish Community

Sense of Belonging to the Jewish People – A substantial majority (61%) stated they have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people. This sense was weaker among Chasidic (46%) and stronger among Modern Orthodox (76%).



- **The sense of belonging to the Jewish people was strongest among the Modern Orthodox:**
  (% very or somewhat strong)
  - **All Respondents – 61%**
  - **Chasidic – 46%**
  - **Chabad – 65%**
  - **Yeshivish – 59%**
  - **Modern Orthodox – 76%**
  - **Double-Lifers 61%**

- **The 2013 Pew Survey * found that 75% of all American Jews agreed that they have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people. (The question had agree, disagree and don't know options.)**
  - 99% of Ultra-Orthodox
  - 100% of Modern Orthodox
  - 92% of Conservative Jews
  - 78% of Reform Jews
  - 53% of Jews with no denomination

- **Sense of belonging to the Jewish people was a bit lower among our survey respondents.**

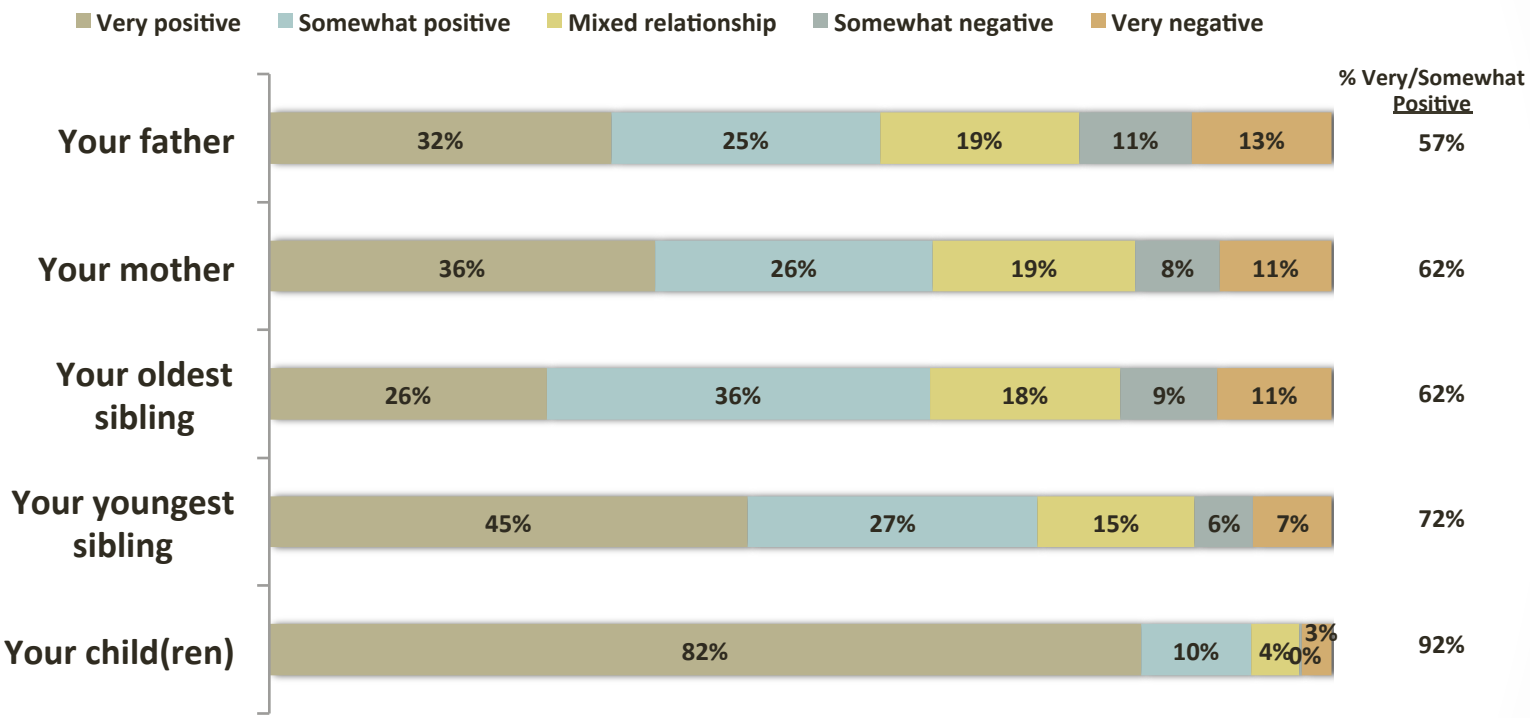
Q. Would you say your sense of belonging to the Jewish people is:
- Very strong; Somewhat strong; Not so strong; Not strong at all; Don't know

(n – Total=869, Chasidic=213, Chabad=95, Yeshivish=215, Modern Orthodox=227)

* Source: A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews, October 2013

Family Relationships – Respondents' relationships with their family were more positive than negative, especially with children and younger siblings.

(All respondents)



Q. How is your current relationship with each of the following? (Percentages exclude those responding "Not relevant / no such person in my life")
- Your father; Your mother; Your oldest sibling; Your youngest sibling; Your child(ren)
- Scale: Very positive; Somewhat positive; Mixed relationship; Somewhat negative; Very negative; Not relevant / no such person in my life

(n – Total=872, Chasidic=213, Chabad=95, Yeshivish=215, Modern Orthodox=227)

Continued

Family Relationships by Community of Origin – Relationships were most negative among the Chasidic and most positive among Modern Orthodox; men generally have better relationships with their family than do women.

% Very or Somewhat Positive – Relationship with …	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox
Father	57%	49% ↓	53%	61%	69% ↑
Mother	62%	57%	53%	63%	74% ↑
Siblings (average)	67%	64%	75%	69%	75% ↑
Children	92%	90%	96%	92%	98% ↑

- Men who have left their community have maintained better family relationships than have women: better with father (65% vs. 49% positive); with mother (70% vs. 55% positive) and with siblings (76% vs. 64% positive). Relationships with children are about the same for men (93%) and women (91%).
- Interestingly, Double-Lifers' relationships with their family are virtually the same as those of all others (father 60%, mother 58%, siblings 74%, children 93%). Perhaps this is because their families are aware of their double-life status?

NISHMA RESEARCH
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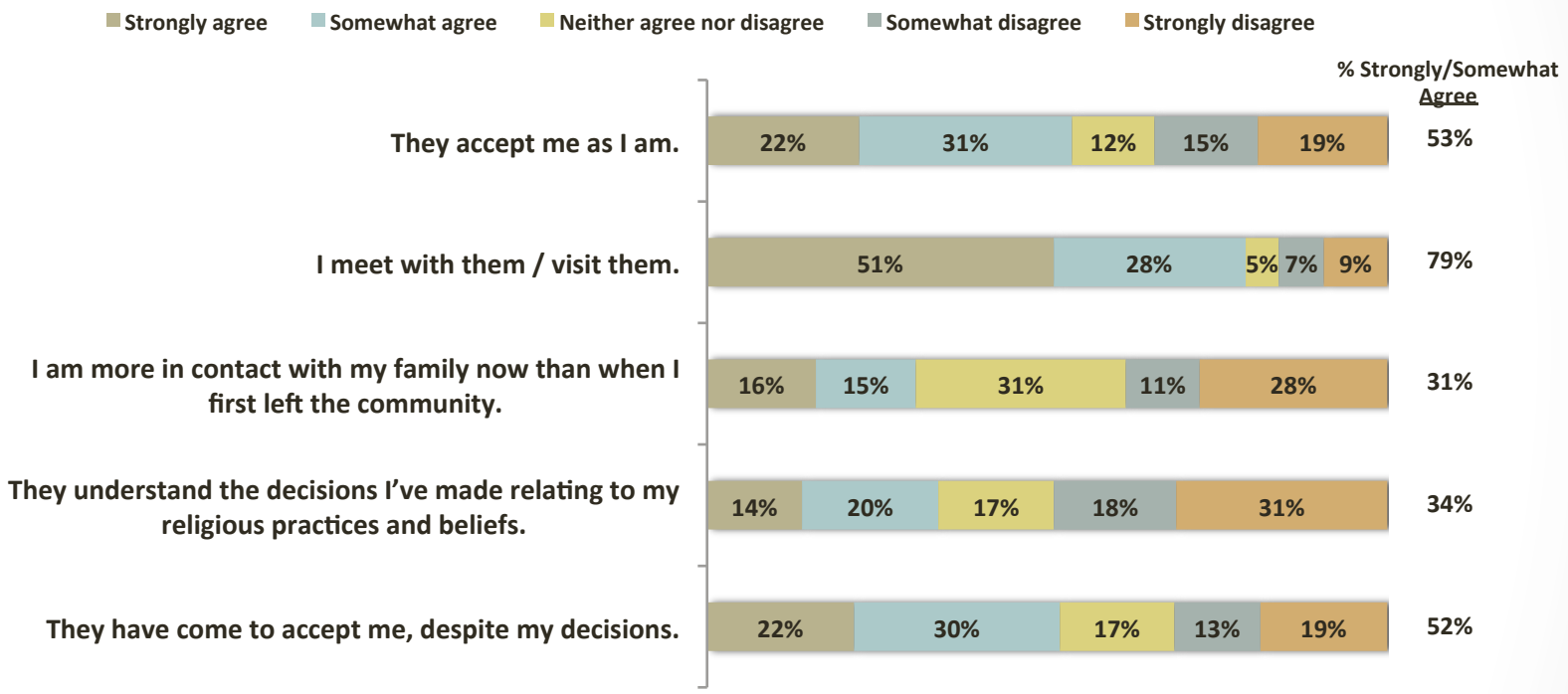
Family Acceptance – Respondents indicated that they do visit their families, and while they have seen some growing acceptance, there is little understanding of their decisions.

(All respondents)



Q. Thinking of your birth family, to what extent do you agree with the following statements? (Percentages exclude those responding "Statement not relevant to me")

- They accept me as I am; I meet with them / visit them; I am more in contact with my family now than when I first left the community; They understand the decisions I've made relating to my religious practices and beliefs; They have come to accept me, despite my decisions.
- Scale: Strongly agree; Somewhat agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Somewhat disagree; Strongly disagree; Statement not relevant to me

(n – Total=872, Chasidic=214, Chabad=96, Yeshivish=218, Modern Orthodox=228)

Continued

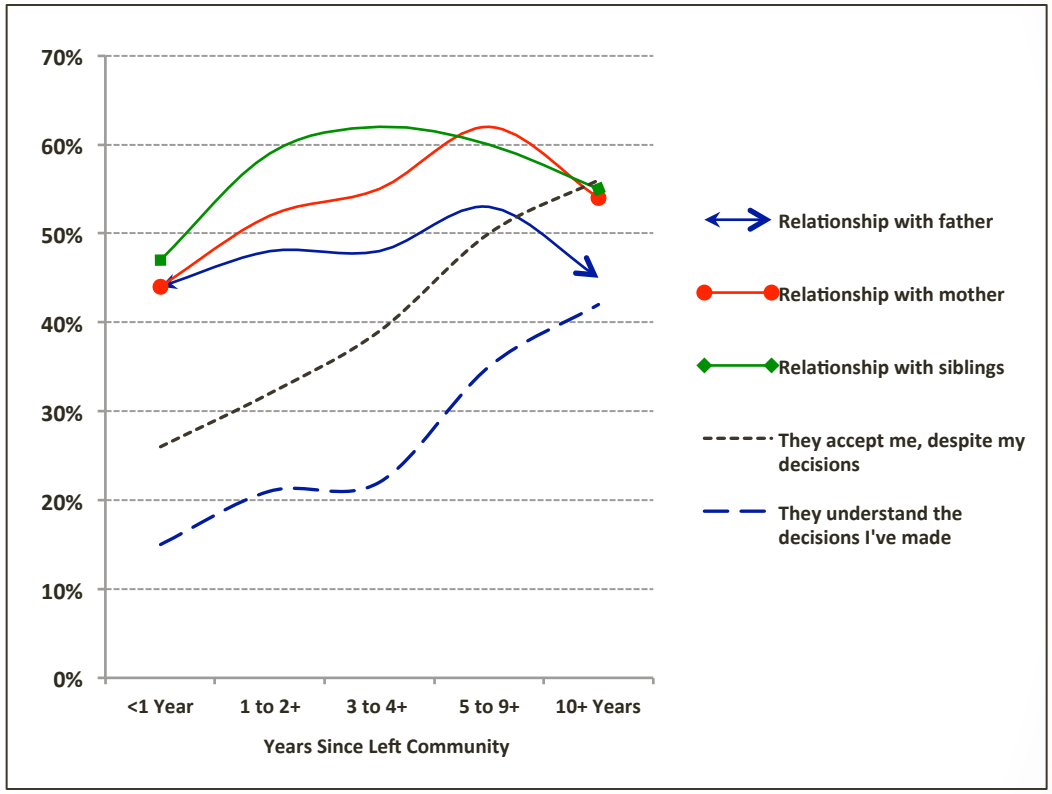
Family Acceptance by Community of Origin – Respondents' acceptance by and understanding of their families were most negative among the Chasidic and most positive among the Modern Orthodox.

% Strongly or Somewhat Agree	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox
They accept me as I am.	53%	41% ↓	55%	53%	65% ↑
I meet with them / visit them.	79%	72% ↓	81%	79%	84% ↑
I am more in contact with my family now than when I first left the community.	31%	31%	36%	36%	28%
They understand the decisions I've made relating to my religious practices and beliefs.	34%	19% ↓	37%	37%	45%
They have come to accept me, despite my decisions.	52%	42% ↓	59%	52%	61% ↑

- Men who have left their community are more often accepted and understood by their families than are women.
  - They accept me as I am – Men 57%, women 50%.
  - They understand the decisions I've made relating to my religious practices and beliefs – Men 38%, women 32%.
- Double-Lifers acceptance by their family is lower than those who have left the community, perhaps confirming the hypothesis that their families are aware of their status combined with the fact that the individual is still living in the same community as the family.
  - They accept me as I am – Double-Lifers 48% vs. Others 55%.
  - They understand the decisions I've made relating to my religious practices and beliefs – Double-Lifers 22% vs. Others 40%.

Family Relationships and Acceptance – "It gets besser!"* – Relationships with parents and siblings, as well as family acceptance and understanding improve over time.

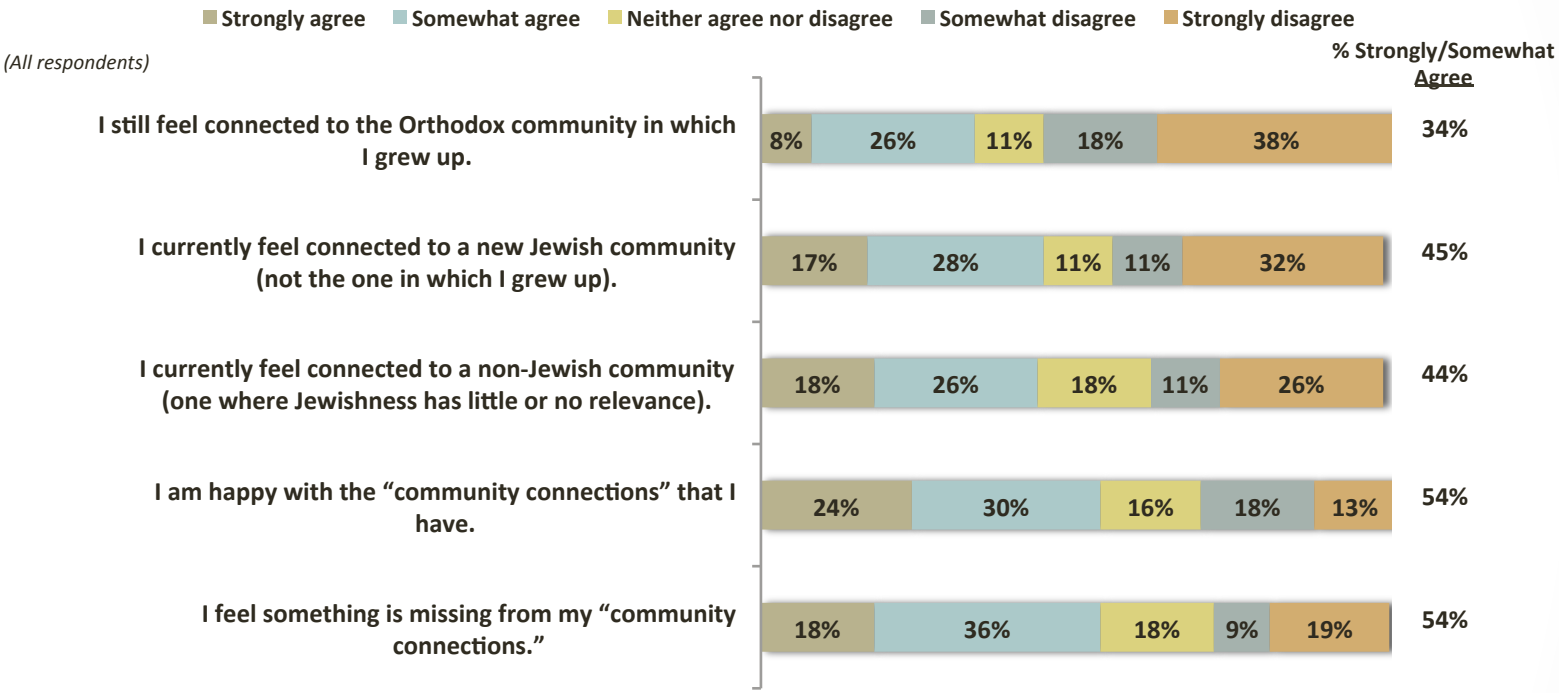
- Relationships with parents and siblings improve over the first 5 to 9 years, although they then plateau and even drop back a bit. Relationships with children are not shown in the chart; they are high for all time periods.
- Family acceptance and understanding both continue to increase substantially over time.



* "Besser" is the Yiddish word for "better." It gets besser! was a 2011 video program highlighting the success stories of some people who had left their Orthodox community.

NISHMA RESEARCH
Marketing Research for the Jewish Community

Community Connections – One-third of respondents stated that still feel connected to their Orthodox community of origin, and nearly half indicated they have connections to new communities. While slightly more than half were happy with their current community connections, about as many felt something missing from those connections.



- **Double-Lifers' assessments of their community connections are not surprising, since they are still in their community: e.g., connection with Orthodox community in which they grew up is stronger (41% vs. 31% for all others), that with a new Jewish community is weaker (39% vs. 48% for all others), as is that with a non-Jewish community (31% vs. 50% for all others) … but 60% feel something is missing from their community connections (vs. 51% of all others).**

Q. Do you agree with the following statements? (Percentages exclude those responding "Statement not relevant to me")
- I still feel connected to the Orthodox community in which I grew up; I currently feel connected to a new; Jewish community (not the one in which I grew up); I currently feel connected to a community where being Jewish has little or no relevance; I am happy with the "community connections" that I have; I feel something is missing from my "community connections."
- Scale: Strongly agree; Somewhat agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Somewhat disagree; Strongly disagree; Statement not relevant to me

(n – Total=855, Chasidic=210, Chabad=93, Yeshivish=212, Modern Orthodox=223)

Continued

NISHMA RESEARCH
Marketing Research for the Jewish Community

Community Connections by Community of Origin – Chabad respondents felt more connected to their original community, while the Chasidic formed the fewest connections with non-Jewish communities.

% Strongly or Somewhat Agree	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox
I still feel connected to the Orthodox community in which I grew up.	34%	31%	46% ↑	25% ↓	34%
I currently feel connected to a new Jewish community (not the one in which I grew up).	45%	37% ↓	38%	46%	54% ↑
I currently feel connected to a community where being Jewish has little or no relevance.	44%	29% ↓	46%	53%	46%
I am happy with the "community connections" that I have.	54%	47% ↓	58%	55% ↑	57%
I feel something is missing from my "community connections."	54%	51%	47%	54%	53%

Asked of those who responded Strongly Agree or Somewhat Agree to Q. Do you agree … I feel something is missing from my "community connections."
Q. You say that you feel something is missing from your community connections. Can you explain why you say this? (n=435)

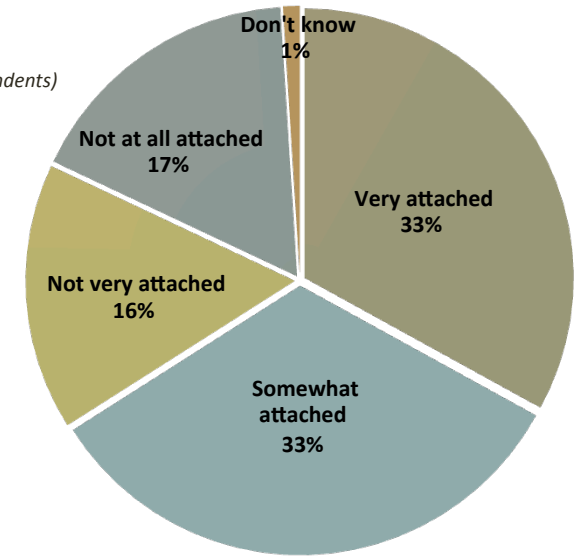
Sample Verbatim Responses

- *I haven't found a community of likeminded individuals, and don't feel as connected as I would like in terms of socializing, being seen as part of a community, etc.*
- *I don't feel part of any community – not the Orthodox one I grew up in, not the one of people who left the community, and not any non-Jewish community. Becoming part of a community is something I'm working on.*
- *I still strongly feel the pain of having lost my community of origin and biological family.*
- *I miss the good times when they were good. I miss having a busy schedule in the community and being helpful to them. I miss talking to people. … Now I feel like a very little person and not important to anyone.*
- *I would like to develop a bigger circle of friends within the secular Jewish community which, while irreligious, has a strong Jewish identity.*
- *I am still searching for an observant community that has no issue with my same sex partner and our children. I don't just want a shul that will allow us to come. I would like to be "real" members.*

* See http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html for additional verbatim responses.

Attachment to Israel – Respondents' attachment to Israel was lower among the Chasidic and higher among the Modern Orthodox.

(All respondents)



- **Attachment to Israel was strongest among the Modern Orthodox:**
  (% very or somewhat attached)
  - **All Respondents – 66%**
  - **Chasidic – 51%**
  - **Chabad – 73%**
  - **Yeshivish – 63%**
  - **Modern Orthodox – 81%**
- **The 2013 Pew Survey * found that 69% of all American Jews were very or somewhat attached to Israel.**
  - 86% of Ultra-Orthodox
  - 99% of Modern Orthodox
  - 88% of Conservative Jews
  - 70% of Reform Jews
  - 49% of Jews with no denomination
- **Attachment to Israel among our survey respondents was comparable to that of all U.S. Jews.**

Q. How emotionally attached are you to Israel?
- Very attached; Somewhat attached; Not very attached; Not at all attached; Don't know

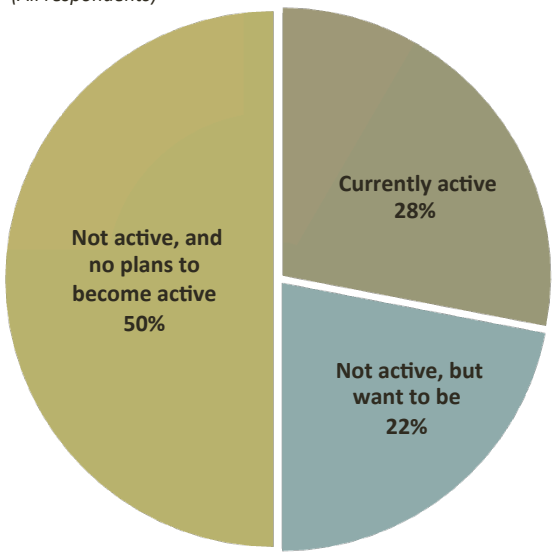
(n – Total=851, Chasidic=203, Chabad=90, Yeshivish=213, Modern Orthodox=225)

* Source: A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews, October 2013

NISHMA RESEARCH
Marketing Research for the Jewish Community

Jewish Community Social Activism – Slightly more than one-fourth of respondents were active on Jewish communal social issues, and another fourth were not active but want to become so.

(All respondents)



% Strongly or Somewhat Agree	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox
Currently active	28%	15% ↓	31%	27%	38% ↑
Not currently active, but want to become active	22%	27% ↑	24%	18%	17% ↓
Not active, and no plans to become active	50%	58% ↑	45%	55%	45%

Q. Are you currently active in, or do you want to be active in, social issues that affect the Jewish community?
- I am currently active on Jewish communal social issue(s); I am currently not active, but I want to become active; I am currently not active, and have no plans to become active

(n – Total=872, Chasidic=212, Chabad=95, Yeshivish=218, Modern Orthodox=229)

Continued

NISHMA RESEARCH
Marketing Research for the Jewish Community

Jewish Community Social Activism – Respondents were most often active in Jewish education, the OTD community, LGBTQ issues and Israel advocacy. Those not yet active most often wanted to become active in supporting the OTD community, Jewish education, abuse and sexual abuse issues, and secular education reform.

Area Currently Active	%
Jewish education	23%
OTD community	16%
LGBTQ	15%
Israel advocacy, issues	14%
Jewish issues, community policy	12%
Jewish organizational involvement	12%
Synagogue	12%
Abuse, sexual abuse	9%
Women's role, issues	9%
Secular educational reform	8%

Sample Verbatim Responses *

- *Supporting aguna rights, reducing the 'power' of the rabbinate, and other similar issues.*
- *Active efforts to revitalize marginalized Jews. Jewish ideas in a community that tries exceptionally hard to minimize real difference.*
- *Fighting for ethics, getting rid of rabbinical sexual predators, fighting for agunot, fighting sinat chinom, fighting antisemitism and teaching the Holocaust.*
- *Promoting acceptance of the LGBT community as well as in crease in outreach and inreach to the special needs community.*
- *I volunteer with organizations that combat sexual abuse, and would like to do more to combat other forms of abuse specifically in the religious community (get abuse, for instance).*
- *The fight for secular education and the fight against child abuse in the Hasidic community.*
- *A Facebook platform to educate and advocate on behalf of agunot. LGBTQ Chabad and Allies.*

Area Wanting to Be Active	%
OTD community	13%
Jewish education	13%
Abuse, sexual abuse	12%
Secular educational reform	8%
LGBTQ	6%
Women's role, issues	6%
Counseling, mental health	5%
Israel advocacy, issues	4%
Agunot	4%
Chesed, poverty	3%

- *Child abuse; Secular education; OTD issues.*
- *Education, Feminism, Aguna, treatment of survivors of abuse.*
- *Education, women's rights and equality, acceptance.*
- *Israel advocacy, OTD help, LGBT help.*
- *Reforming education in the orthodox world.*
- *Women's rights. The rights of haredi children to adequate secular education.*
- *Education, OTD Support especially for those in the closet, Charedi awareness of their own social issues, non-orthodox awareness of the struggles of OTD.*
- *I want to help victims of abuse receive the support and help they need and raise awareness about the effects of emotional and physical abuse. Mental health awareness and more support for people to get over traumatic experiences.*
- *Secular education advocacy.*

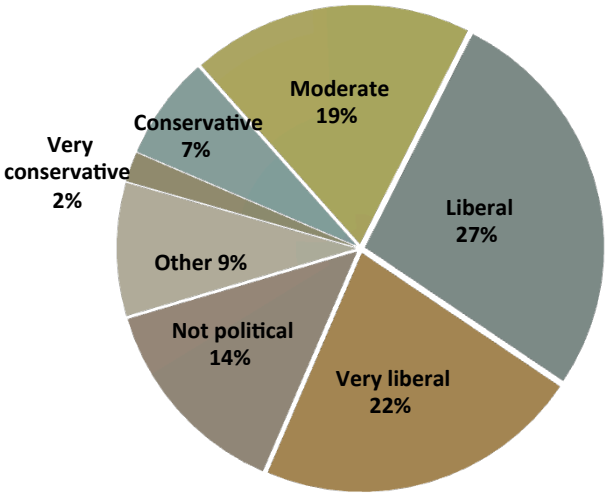
If responded to prior question: "I am currently active on Jewish communal social issue(s)", Asked Q. In what Jewish communal social issue(s) are you currently active?
(n=214 responses, out of 244 eligible to respond. Percentages are based on the 214 responses.)
If responded to prior question "I am currently not active, but I want to become active", Asked: Q. In what Jewish communal social issue(s) do you want to become active?
(n=144 responses, out of 189 eligible to respond. Percentages are based on the 214 responses.)

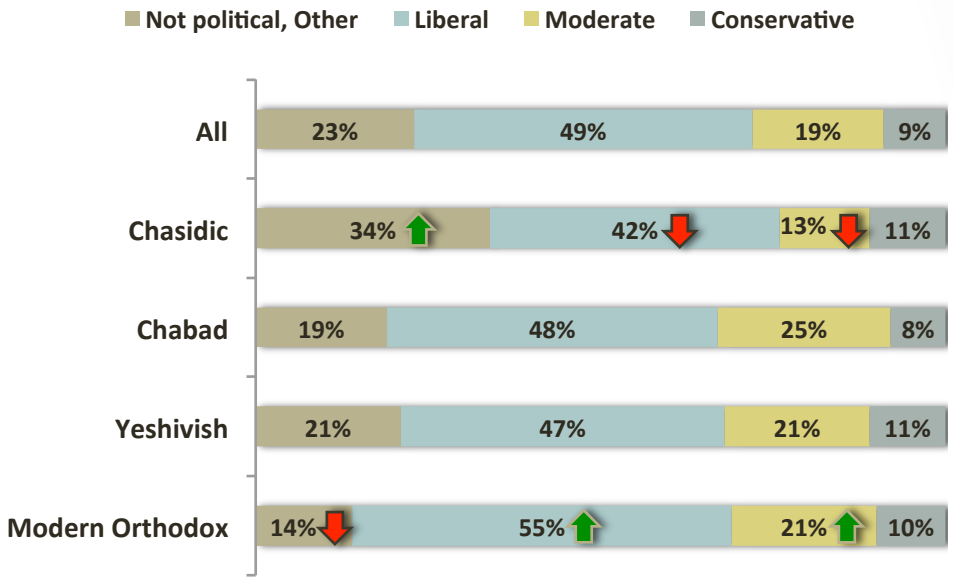
* See http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html for additional verbatim responses.

NISHMA RESEARCH
Marketing Research for the Jewish Community

Political Leanings – Respondents across all segments were much more often politically liberal (49%) than conservative (9%). The Chasidic were more often not political at all.

(All respondents)





- "Other" is usually a mix of alignments..

- **Respondents were a bit more more liberal that all American Jews, as was shown in the Pew Survey*. That study found 49% of all American Jews liberal, 29% moderate and 19% conservative.**

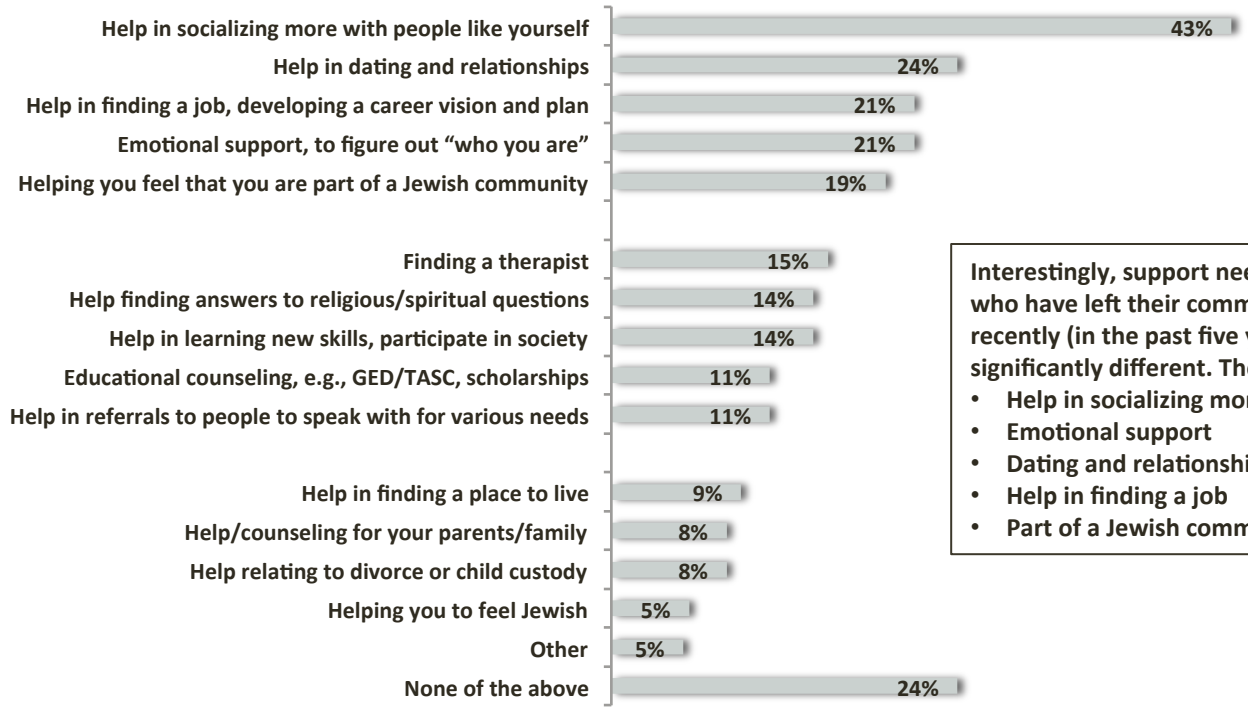
Q. In general, how would you describe your political views?
Very conservative; Conservative; Moderate; Liberal; Very liberal; I am not political; Other – Please Describe
(n – Total=851, Chasidic=203, =95, Yeshivish=213, Modern Orthodox=225)

* Source: A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews, October 2013

Current Support Needed
Sources of Support Used

Current Needs – Respondents' top needs relate to socializing: the top specific area of need by a wide margin is in getting opportunities to socialize more with people like themselves (43%).

(All respondents)



Interestingly, support needs among those who have left their community more recently (in the past five years) are not significantly different. The top needs are:

- **Help in socializing more 50%**
- **Emotional support 30%**
- **Dating and relationships 29%**
- **Help in finding a job 26%**
- **Part of a Jewish community 20%**

Q. In the list below, please check the most important needs you may have at this time (up to 5)

- Educational counseling, e.g., getting a GED/TASC high school degree, finding scholarship funding; Help in finding a job and/or developing a career vision and plan; Help in finding a place to live; Help in learning new skills and how to participate in society; Help in relating to dating and relationships; Help relating to divorce or child custody; Help/counseling for your parents/family; Finding a therapist; Helping you feel that you are part of a Jewish community; Help in giving you emotional support, to figure out "who you are"; Help in giving you referrals to people you could speak with for various needs; Help in giving you opportunities to socialize more with people like yourself; Helping you to feel Jewish; Help finding answers to religious and spiritual questions; Other – Please describe; None of the above;.

(n – Total=812, Chasidic=196, =90, Yeshivish=206, Modern Orthodox=206)

Continued

NISHMA RESEARCH
Marketing Research for the Jewish Community

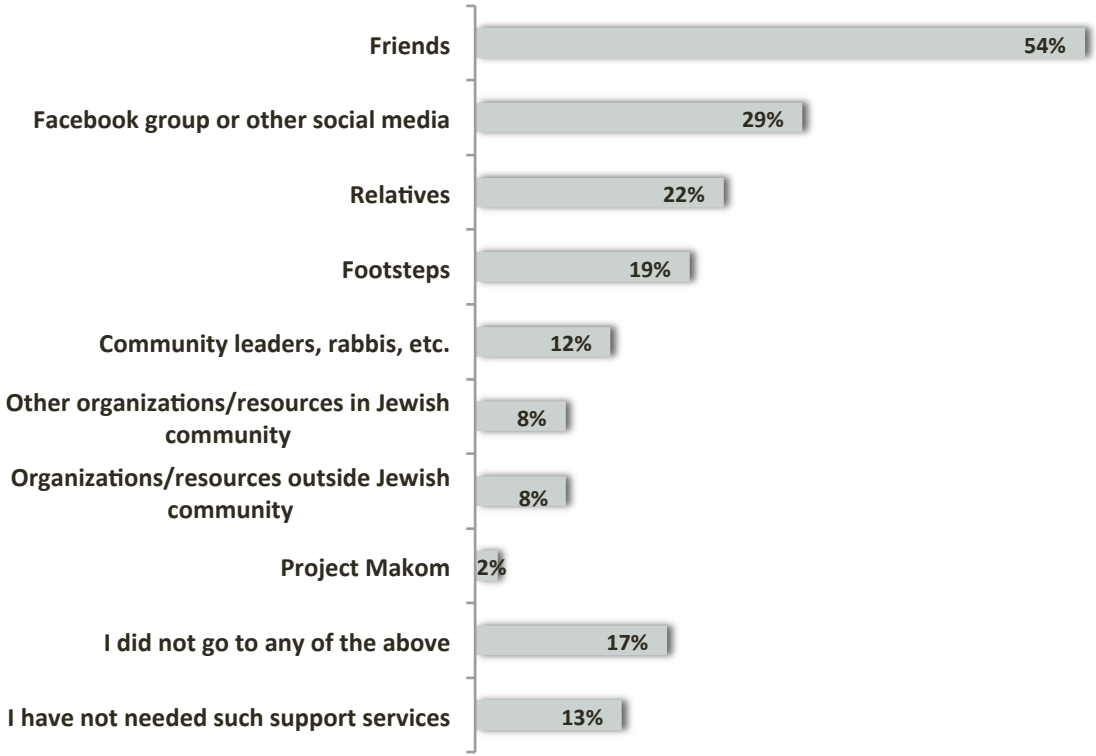
Current Needs by Community of Origin – The top need for all segments was help in socializing more with people like themselves. Beyond that, there were minor differences in needs among Chareidi groups, and fewer needs overall cited by Modern Orthodox.

Top 10 Needs	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox
1	Help in socializing more with people like yourself – 43%	Help in socializing more with people like yourself – 43%	Help in socializing more with people like yourself – 34%	Help in socializing more with people like yourself – 51%	Help in socializing more with people like yourself – 37%
2	Help in dating and relationships – 24%	Educational counseling, e.g., GED/TASC, scholarships – 26%	Help in dating and relationships – 32%	Help in dating and relationships – 30%	Helping you to feel that you are part of a Jewish community - 25%
3	Help in finding a job, developing a career vision and plan – 21%	Emotional support, to figure out "who you are" – 24%	Finding a therapist - 27%	Emotional support, to figure out "who you are" – 24%	Help in dating and relationships – 17%
4	Emotional support, to figure out "who you are" – 21%	Help in learning new skills, participate in society –23%	Help in finding a job, developing a career vision and plan – 24%	Help in finding a job, developing a career vision and plan – 23%	Emotional support, to figure out "who you are" – 17%
5	Helping you to feel that you are part of a Jewish community - 19%	Help in finding a job, developing a career vision and plan – 22%	Help in learning new skills, participate in society – 22%	Helping you to feel that you are part of a Jewish community - 18%	Help finding answers to religious/spiritual questions – 17%
6	Finding a therapist – 15%	Help in dating and relationships – 21%	Emotional support, to figure out "who you are" – 19%	Help finding answers to religious/spiritual questions – 16%	Help in finding a job, developing a career vision and plan – 15%
7	Help finding answers to religious/spiritual questions – 14%	Finding a therapist - 20%	Helping you to feel that you are part of a Jewish community - 18%	Help in learning new skills, participate in society – 14%	Finding a therapist - 13%
8	Help in learning new skills, participate in society – 14%	Help in referrals to people to speak with for various needs – 14%	Educational counseling, e.g., GED/TASC, scholarships – 13%	Finding a therapist – 12%	Help/counseling for parents/ family – 8%
9	Educational counseling, e.g., GED/TASC, scholarships – 11%	Help relating to divorce or child custody - 14%	Help finding answers to religious/spiritual questions – 12%	Help in finding a place to live - 10%	Helping you to feel Jewish – 6%
10	Help in referrals to people to speak with for various needs – 10%	Help in finding a place to live - 13%	Help in finding a place to live - 12%	Help in referrals to people to speak with for various needs – 10%	Help in finding a place to live – 5%
% Saying no support needed	24%	19%	16%	23%	34%

Indicates a current need that is cited statistically more often than it is overall.

Past Sources of Support – The most frequent sources of support have been friends (54%), Facebook groups or other social media (29%), relatives (22%) and Footsteps (19%).

(All respondents)



Q. Thinking of the various support services you may have needed since you started moving away from your community, where did you go for such services?

- Please check all that apply.; Friends; Relatives; Community leaders, rabbis, etc.; Facebook group or other social media; Footsteps; Project Makom; Other organizations/ resources in the Jewish community – Please describe; Organizations/resources outside the Jewish community – Please describe; I did not go to any of the above; I have not needed such support services

(n – Total=810, Chasidic=187, Chabad=89, Yeshivish=204, Modern Orthodox=207)

Continued

Past Sources of Support by Community of Origin – Friends were the top source of support for every segment. Footsteps was heavily used (36%) by the Chasidic, while the Chabad more often relied on relatives (32%).

Top 5 Sources of Support	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox
1	Friends – 54%	Friends – 55%	Friends – 63%	Friends – 52%	Friends – 53%
2	Facebook groups or other social media – 29%	Footsteps – 36% ↑	Relatives – 32% ↑	Facebook groups or other social media – 32%	Facebook groups or other social media – 24%
3	Relatives – 22%	Facebook groups or other social media – 33%	Footsteps – 27%	Relatives – 25%	Relatives – 22%
4	Footsteps – 19%	Relatives – 15% ↓	Facebook groups or other social media – 24%	Footsteps – 21%	Community leaders, rabbis, etc. – 16%
5	Community leaders, rabbis, etc. – 12%	Other organizations/ resources in the Jewish community – 12%	Community leaders, rabbis, etc. – 7%	Community leaders, rabbis, etc. – 12%	Organizations/resources outside the Jewish community – 6%
% drawing upon support	70%	76% ↑	71%	72%	61% ↓

Final Thoughts and Reflections

- Helping Others Understand You
- What You Might Have Done Differently
- Advice to Those Considering Leaving

Final Thoughts and Reflections – Introduction

- The objective of this survey was to give respondents a voice – a chance to communicate their thoughts to the larger Jewish population – and to start a conversation. The following three questions, dealing with final thoughts and reflections, were in the form of open-ended comment questions, and responses were not mandatory. The vast majority of respondents took the time to reply, often in poignant and very thoughtful language, indicating that respondents valued this opportunity to be heard.

- This section presents a broad sample of verbatim comments in response to the three questions. All of the verbatim comments will be made available in substantively unedited form (although we will do minor editing that might be needed to maintain total anonymity, i.e., anything that might lead to a concern about possibly being identified … as we have done to the comments shown on the following pages.) While differences between our Community of Origin segments in the nature of the comments offered are difficult to glean, we are presenting a sample of comments from each segment.

- We recommend that these comments be read, as they help create a better understanding of those who have left the Orthodox community.

Helping Others Understand You

The following four pages present a sample of verbatim responses to the question:

Q. Many people don't well understand those who have left, or may leave, their Orthodox community of origin. What do you want to tell people about this group?

Comments in this section may have been lightly edited to preserve anonymity.

(n – Total=562, Chasidish=134, Lubavitch=57, Yeshivish=149, Modern Orthodox=140)

Helping Others Understand You *(Continued)*

Sample Verbatim Responses *

Chasidic

- *I don't really care to tell them anything.*
- *I'm not a drug addicted prostitute with AIDS.*
- *It's a waste of time trying to explain they live in a different planet.*
- *The tales of corruption and discrimination in the community are not myths, they are happening here in the us, and this person may have experienced some, if not all forms of such discrimination, especially women. Believe their stories, their feelings are legitimate. People who leave are not ignorant of some things by choice for the most part, so they need to be, and usually want to be, educated. Explain if they don't understand something, don't shame.*
- *People think that the girls have it easy because they get a better secular education than the boys but that is not necessarily true. Unfortunately, people don't understand or realize that Satmar girls do not graduate high school with an accredited high school diploma or regents diploma … Sadly, there is no one advocating for Satmar Girls since the guys have a louder voice so the Satmar girls are being victimized over and over again and that sucks. It is a journey through hell and I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy.*
- *We are a searching, questioning group. We are sick of people judging us. And some of the LBGTQ folks would like more tolerance and acceptance so they don't "have" to leave Orthodox Judaism.*
- *Please be kind and generous to people who are leaving, understand that we are leaving, our family, our friends, our social network, our belief system and our understanding of the way life works. Please make us feel welcome even if you don't understand us, especially in the Jewish communities that are different then ours. Our community is nothing like you make it out to be. Please listen to our stories, ask us questions, but don't pry.*
- *You can't force faith, you either have it or don't. I changed my beliefs, I didn't change who I am for the worse, I'm still a good person I don't need help!!!! I'm not going through a hard time because I left my religion... There are many factors in life.. If you are reading this, I enjoyed taking this survey :)*
- *Don't generalize. EVERYONE has a story, and as much as you think you know, YOU never know the whole story.*
- *I was abused emotionally and physically, all in the name of religion, I'm still hurting, and my life is pretty messed up because of this, life is meant to live and not to be a slave to a few powerful people who want to control you with the excuse of religion. All I want is to have my own life, and make my decisions how I wanna live, by myself, and if religion is the right way I'll either follow it by seeing it myself, or I won't and bear the consequences, by putting people through pain and suffering in the name of religion, you're only proving that it's the wrong way.*

Continued

Helping Others Understand You *(Continued)*

Sample Verbatim Responses

Chabad

- *Don't feel a need to explain myself.*
- *Stop wondering "what went wrong" with us that we went "astray". Maybe something went right!!! It is VERY possible that we genuinely ARE happy. Maybe even happier now than we were before.*
- *You gotta look at people like people not puppets, and people make choices which are completely in their hands*
- *We do not regret leaving, in fact we feel more like we dodged a bullet- lucky beyond belief and just so very fortunate. I still sometimes baffled by how lucky I am, what a close call, how easily that could have been my life. Intellectual freedom has been the greatest gift in my life.*
- *Being Orthodox lead my family into a downwardly mobile, under privileged standard. As children, we felt insecure and knew we needed to make it on our own one day so we left. I still hold countercultural notions on capitalism, media, hollywood and so on. My upbringing holds certain cache which I am learning to lean in to (amongst renewal Jews).*
- *Both my parents are Baal Teshuvah. They had a right to make their decisions. I have a right to make mine. People need to be true to themselves and live authentic lives.*
- *I would not have left if I had not been gossipped about and ostracised. I would have eventually worked myself out, settled down, and stayed in the community.*
- *I believe many of us are deeply in pain from losing community and have different expectations from society than the norm.*
- *All we wanted was to feel like we belonged. We were surrounded by hundreds to thousands of people who looked alike and thought alike. We struggled with feeling out of place so much that we did the boldest thing we could have done and all we want is to be happy and to belong to something that we can be proud to belong to.*
- *We are normal. We are not crazy. The problem is not in us, the problem is in the orthodox community. Yes many people are happy and stay in the community. So why did we leave? That is precisely the issue. Orthodox Judaism allows a very narrow set of variety in their system, if you happen to fall within the confines then your life can be nearly perfect. However if you fall outside of those limitations life is pure hell and the only logical thing to do is to leave in order to find a community where being who you are is okay. I love Judaism and appreciate many aspects of Orthodoxy; if they would accept for who I am (gay) I would come back in an instant. It's their loss, really.*
- *The group is very varied in age, background and reasons for leaving or wanting to leave. But all share a common thirst for self determination, a curiosity about ideas and a drive to change and succeed.*
- *I'd like for people to know that you don't need to be religious to have a valid moral code, and that non-Jewish people have souls too, and real spirituality. I'd like for Orthodox people to be religious for positive reasons, and not because everyone else is much worse.*

Continued

Helping Others Understand You *(Continued)*

Sample Verbatim Responses

Yeshivish

- *You won't understand us, but please let us live our lives.*
- *Shivim panim latorah. Be as open minded as god.*
- *Sometimes, a person's emotional needs can't be met through an Orthodox life.*
- *We are not all disgruntled and angry at orthodoxy or Judaism.*
- *1. IT'S OKAY TO LEAVE :) 2. There is not "one reason" that people leave. 3. "Don't judge me for I sin differently than you" 4. Leaving is not "an issue" that needs a "solution". 5. Being jewish is awesome!*
- *I was treated horribly because my parents were BT. I needed mental health help but Judaism was put first.*
- *They are often more religious than the religious community they left. They are sensitive, and aren't interested in going with the flow. They therefore have to consider their religious identity and selves more closely, and are often hurt in the process, leading them to become very sensitive to injustice, themselves.*
- *That we have good reason to leave; the frum world isn't what it thinks it is; they aren't the smartest, their families aren't the happiest, their marriages aren't the healthiest, and their leaders aren't the wisest. There's a whole world out there, of people who are good, upright, and meaningful. The frum worldview isn't so logical once scrutinized.*
- *We are NOT a bunch of losers who had no friends as kids. We are NOT guys who couldn't learn gemara. I excelled at learning (I'm a freaking doctor for crying at loud). Most of us leave because we don't believe, not because we were all abused or other such reasons.*
- *Try living a Yeshivish or Chassidish life for a bit, and then see if you feel that way. If that's how you grew up, it is important to realize that not everyone has the same experience. Personally, I did not have a terrible experience with Orthodoxy but enjoy learning about and experiencing the world.*
- *The ultra-Orthodox "yeshivish" community is an extremely dangerous, insular cult. Dangerous because some of the beliefs, practices, values, and general outlook that are being taught to young impressionable kids are completely despicable and a bastardization of Judaism. These kids often go on to become racist, narrow-minded, uneducated, self-righteous adults who repeat the cycle. I have witnessed it on too many occasions. Make no mistake about it -- it is not Judaism -- it is a cult. I get no satisfaction or pleasure in saying any of this. To this day, I am involved in Jewish activities and am proud to be Jewish. The Orthodox community just represents one small subset of Jews out there and the Jewish world is fortunately overwhelmingly non-Orthodox.*
- *There must be a separation of halacha and customs - if you prevent clever motivated women from pursuing university studies and careers and other such attitudes that have little to do with halacha, there is a high chance that given the wherewithal, they will choose to leave the community.*

Continued

Helping Others Understand You *(Continued)*

Sample Verbatim Responses

Modern Orthodox

- *Leaving orthodoxy, even giving up a belief in God, does not mean giving up Judaism.*
- *I understand that going OTD may be a mistake. But the reason I did it was so that when I die I can claim that I've lived a varied life, and experienced as much as I possibly could.*
- *Community is great as long as you don't veer off set path- i.e. Go to same camp, school, synagogue, even vacation together. Non conformity is rejected Sheep following mindless herd.*
- *The idea of a Jewish God is simplistic, ignorant of both science and history, and most of all, false. Being proud of your traditions and heritage are fine as long as they don't contribute to evil in the world. Oppression of women, LGBT and belief in the "other" status of non-Jews is in my mind contributing to "evil." I don't think most orthodox people are evil but I don't think they face the reality that they do often believe evil things and contribute to hatred and oppression in the world … They are "off the derech" if by derech we mean a loving and moral world. People who leave simply choose to reject falsehood and immorality. Not to mention prosciutto is f-ing delicious.*
- *The universe is a far too complicated place to be explained away using bronze age mythology and moral lessons supposedly imparted by a deity but more likely conceived of and interpreted by intrinsically flawed humans. Some leave Orthodoxy as a means of resolving cognitive dissonance, others leave for emotional reasons. There is no one thing that unites everyone.*
- *We have realized that we were living a farce. The Bible was written by men, the laws are based on primitive ideas which for the most part are no longer applicable. There is no Messiah coming, there is no god watching over us.*
- *My faith and observance changes all the time. It's not fixed. My feelings about my Jewish identity as well as my Jewish desires is always in flux. But no matter where I am in that roller coaster, I always feel different and not ever quite a part of anything.*
- *I can't speak for all. It was excruciating. I miss it, but don't trust anymore. Domestic violence is a shonda.*
- *There is a noticeable schism between the values of the Orthodox world and the values of the greater society. Living in a large metropolis, I was constantly faced with either Jewish people who refused to accept modern ideas like that of LGBTQ pride or feminism, or secular people that pointed out the ridicule in believing that every word of commentary written by a French scholar hundreds of years ago was undisputable true (Rashi). When measured with a decent amount of objectivity, the Jewish value will lose to the secular one ten times out of ten.*
- *I don't know, I don't feel comfortable representing this group. I feel like this survey wasn't made for me. I feel really alone in that vein. I feel like I'm not supposed to be this way. Like I got caught up in a crack and was misassembled.*
- *We're not all abused or mentally ill, and we're not all looking to live a life of hefkerus. A lot of us feel fulfilled without Judaism. I feel much more fulfilled in life now more than ever. In terms of the mental illness and abuse thing: there are, yet, many abuse victims and people with mental illness in the OTD community. One thing is for sure: if the Jewish community was a safehaven for people with those issues, they would not have left. It's on the Jewish community to change that.*

What You Might Have Done Differently

The following four pages present a sample of verbatim responses to the question:

Q. Looking back at your experiences, what if anything would you have done differently?

Comments in this section may have been lightly edited to preserve anonymity.

(n – Total=555, Chasidish=135, Lubavitch=62, Yeshivish=149, Modern Orthodox=130)

What You Might Have Done Differently *(Continued)*

Sample Verbatim Responses *

Chasidic

- *Ask for more help earlier.*
- *Get a proper Collage education.*
- *Had children only after I secured my degree.*
- *I wish I Would've left when I was younger, before I got married.*
- *I would have changed my outward look from the get go, instead of gradually.*
- *I would have joined Footsteps and left the community more than a decade ago.*
- *Sooner!!! Sooner!!! Sooner!!!*
- *College when i was younger. It was revolutionary at the time, and I was afraid of the effect it would have on shidduchim and on my relationship with my parents. That's probably the worst decision in my life.*
- *I would have focused more on being clearer with my family where I was and how I was changing, this would have given us more time and gotten us on the path faster towards reconciling our differences and accepting each other for our different lifestyles.*
- *I would've put my wife on birth control right when I stopped believing. Now, I had another child and I'm probably going to get divorced and it makes it more complicated.*
- *I would've included my wife from day one.*
- *I don't know. I still am very hurt by rejection and broken relationships, that I don't have the objectivity or hindsight, yet, to answer.*
- *I'd have taken the guts, and make my decision of leaving religion before getting married to a frum women and having 2 children, and being stuck in making a decision between pursuing my dreams of living a free live, or be able to raise my children and see them for the rest of my life.*
- *Nothing. I am very proud and satisfied for everything I figured out in spite for what my mind was bombarded for decades, and am very proud of my many accomplishments.*
- *I wish I had the support years earlier to leave the community. Felt I needed the support of the orthodox family members, but never felt accepted, always felt different.*
- *I don't think I could have done things differently. I think I did my best. I wish I had not been so alone while transitioning. But how was I to find organizations and people?*

Continued

What You Might Have Done Differently *(Continued)*

***Sample Verbatim* Responses**

Chabad

- *I would have left the Hasidic community before getting married and having a family*
- *Left at a much younger age, and pursued an advanced education.*
- *Planned my education path better*
- *Realize that there are those who will never understand and not bother trying to make them.*
- *I wish I felt less alone. If we knew others had gone thru the same issues it would of helped a lot*
- *I have no idea. I don't think there is any right way to leave and however it happens its extremely painful. I doubt I could have done anything different to make it easier. Had I known just how difficult it would be I may have just opted out of life altogether instead, however since I've got this far and the worst is hopefully behind me I don't regret leaving at all.*
- *Left orthodoxy earlier like as soon as I could at age 18 or 20. I wish I had sought therapeutic help earlier. I wish I had been more open about my sexuality earlier and sought out more sexual experiences. I wish I would've graduated college.*
- *I would have left earlier. Yeshiva was a waste of my life. I'm not a negative person, but I honestly did not gain much from yeshiva. There is no authority, no proper curriculum, (and no, people, Gemara does not "Sharpen your mind" to the point that it's better to have learned that than something more relevant and intellectually stimulating...While Gemara is great to study, there are other fields of study which can sharpen your brain a lot better....and they're relevant).*
- *Probably not that much. Didn't have a traumatic or tough transition. I was very clear and honest about who I was and was accepted for it.*
- *Not strongly. Maybe the way I lost my virginity. I connected being a virgin to being sheltered and did not wait for a relationship. I did not want it to matter or be sacred in the way I was raised. Sex and love were not healthily arranged in my thoughts and actions.*
- *Not gone to Yeshiva. I have so much anger for being forced to go. I think if I would have gone to a modern-orthodox high school such as YULA, I would have been shomer shabbis now.*
- *I left the community when I was 14, and in the many years since, there are many things I wish I had done differently. Never did I regret my choice to leave the community. Though I did struggle with the emotional fall out. Can't think of a better way to have done what I did at such a young age.*
- *I would have spent more time cultivating friendships with my still-religious peers so as not to burn bridges.*
- *Ask for help earlier. Work on courage. Bring everything out in the open from the start. Never get married until I got it all figured out.*

Continued

What You Might Have Done Differently *(Continued)*

***Sample Verbatim* Responses**

Yeshivish

- *Not married a religious girl while I had doubts about my beliefs.*
- *Completely left at an earlier stage*
- *Found a better way to announce to my family. I would have done it sooner.*
- *Found a way to live in the grey instead of leaving all observance behind me.*
- *I might have not told my parents I was an atheist right away*
- *I wish I hadn't gotten married at age 19...*
- *I might have left earlier and quicker. (Don't stay around living the double life for too long, u start getting comfortable with it.)*
- *When I began my transition, I was desperate to shed my past. I tried to experience as many things as I could in the shortest amount of time. I regret not savoring the experience more. Trying foods or seeing things for the first time is not something you get to do again.*
- *I would have realized that we have spiritual boundaries and therefore no one has a right to tell someone what they should or shouldn't believe. I wish I knew earlier that I can trust my own opinions instead of submitting to the sages' views.*
- *My husband and I are both OTD yet still live in the community. Would've left when younger and joined the conservative community , but in our 50's our social life is in the orthodox community we were raised and and we probably will stay in living a double life till 120. Should've left and built a different social life with people who would've accepted us the way we were in our low 20's.*
- *If I'd known that I had a variety of choices. I would never have gotten married to a ultra orthodox Jewish fundamentalist. Getting married to the abusive person I was married to, and then leaving. Has caused me to have to engage in a ensuing painful custody battle with Chareidi control freaks hell bent on smashing me. This is unfortunate..... And the chareidi cult style community is ultimately responsible for this outcome.*
- *I would have been braver. I was terrified. Mostly of what people would think of me. I could not be myself because someone may think I'm bad. Especially my mother, who, as a holocaust survivor, just didn't deserve to be "disappointed" by me. The first time I showed up at a family affair without a hat on was SO monumental for me. It's was all terrifying. I was a nice, somewhat shy, sweet person who was doing something that everyone would hate me for. Still recovering!*
- *I may well have given it up completely before marriage/family, which makes things vastly more complicated. Also, there are elements I still love and feel connected to.*
- *I would have left earlier. I was too scared and didn't know what to do if I left. Instead, I lived a double life learning in yeshiva all day and sneaking out to Wendy's at night. I also would do more to find people with similar situation to my own.*

Continued

What You Might Have Done Differently *(Continued)*

***Sample Verbatim* Responses**

Modern Orthodox

- *Abandoned Shabbat observance sooner. Spent less time wasted in yeshiva.*
- *Asked my parents to switch me to a non-orthodox school.*
- *Been my true self earlier.*
- *I would have been up front with my family earlier on.*
- *Less self-destructive behavior.*
- *Sought professional help in coming to terms with my sexuality at a much younger age.*
- *Would have lost religion as a single man rather than married, in a religious community.*
- *30s.*
- *I would have established myself in a modern orthodox community with a shul I could enjoy, a rabbi I respect and a feeling of spirituality.*
- *Might have looked for more support in finding a happy medium rather than just running in the complete opposite direction. There is a part of me that still wishes I was a part of the orthodox community just a less judgmental one.*
- *Nope. I feel strongly that I am happy that I have a strong Judaic learning background that has stood me well my entire adult and parenting life. it is important to have that upbringing to be able to make decisions about religion from a strength of knowledge standpoint rather than a weakness of ignorance. How do you know if you don't want to be religious (or believe in Hashem) if you don't even know anything about those concepts?*
- *Nothing. I had to transition while still married to a very spiritual and God fearing husband. So I did it discreetly and slowly so he would not freak out. He's come to terms with my beliefs and respects them.*
- *I would have "come out of the closet" sooner. It would have been easier and less stressful on me.. And I may not have gotten married to the wrong man because I felt I had to be married to be worth anything.*
- *I likely would have stood up more for my husband that converted. Being accepted at all costs were such a big overarching theme in my life and it's an unhealthy mindset. Now there is no pretense and judgment when I meet new people.*
- *I would have finished college sooner. I got caught up in the emotional issues and negative coping behaviors as a young adult (that involved both OTD-related and non-OTD-related personal problems) and at times felt completely hopeless and like a waste. I dropped out of college, made a lot of bad decisions, and did some things I still regret. I wish I had coped better, stayed in school, and got moving on my career sooner. (As an aside, I did finally get control of my behaviors/emotions, finished school, and am working my way through a career, so things did work out in the end. I just wish I had figured these things out sooner so that I could be further along financially and career-wise at this point.)*

Advice to Those Considering Leaving

The following four pages present a sample of verbatim responses to the question:

Q. In conclusion, what advice would you give to others who are considering leaving their Orthodox community, for a more modern lifestyle?

Comments in this section may have been lightly edited to preserve anonymity.

(n – Total=610, Chasidish=153, Lubavitch=70, Yeshivish=157, Modern Orthodox=142)

Advice to Those Considering Leaving *(Continued)*

Sample Verbatim Responses *

Chasidic

- *Breathe.. Take it slow.. Plan well.. And know that you are not alone.*
- *Go to school/pursue your dreams. Problems always end up solving themselves, but you rarely get another chance at Life. (the virtue of school goes further than just an education, it's a new and more extensive social circle that really can enhance life immeasurably.)*
- *Be strong, don't allow yourself to be consumed by feelings of guilt, inadequacy, or the many other unhealthy negative emotions that are likely to assail you. Try to change your way of thinking in as deep and pervasive a manner as possible, so that you are almost like a secular Jew or non Jew, who views religion and Orthodoxy with detached ambivalence. Try to burn as few bridges as possible on your way out, in order to spare yourself and the people around you unnecessary misery and aggravation. Do all you can to remain optimistic, even if the odds are stacked against you (which they most often are). There is nothing more courageous, more admirable, more beautiful, than a man (or woman) who embarks upon the journey of self- knowledge and exploration, and is not deterred by the many obstacles along the way. Good luck!!*
- *Make sure you have reliable support, resources, or money saved up if that's possible. Have a solid plan before you make a drastic move.*
- *It's not all fun and games and hedonism. There is more to the world than drugs and sex. It's hard work, and it won't be easy to go through the transition. Make sure you have legitimate intelligent reasons for leaving, and have a plan. Leaving will require sacrifice, of family, friends, and financial stability. If you have kids you may lose them. It may be isolating until you find your crowd in the secular world, but there are resources to help with that. You may have to give up your preconceived notions of right and wrong when you leave, such as racial superiority, and if you are a man you will need to learn about things like consent, sexual harassment in the workplace etc.*
- *Every community has its positives and negatives. Don't think it'll be glorious sailing elsewhere.*
- *My Dear Friend, Listen to me well, as I have done what you are contemplating to do now. Please know that you are considering a journey where once embarked, you cannot look back. Knowledge cannot be unlearned. Experiences cannot be undone. Know that your support system, perhaps even your family & people who are constants in your life, may all disappear. Think hard. Think smart. Allow yourself the time to set your resources in order and to have a very clear mind and goal. Take a good luck at other important areas in your life that may be effecting your happiness. Take care of those issues first. My friend, the restricted lifestyle that is suffocating you, literally, is not made for an amazing person like yourself. You want to live an authentic life. You will be able to make the transition as long as you know yourself well, and you truly believe that you were born to set yourself free. If your mind is free, your body will follow! I also want to share with you a secret. I want you to know that in the end, you won't regret leaving! I promise! Never have I met someone, who out of their own will and values, has left the Orthodox community only to regret it later. You know what you want, and I support you. Signed by an Ex-Chassidish girl who has been through a hell of a lot, and still am, fighting to be completely free. But I'm happy because I'm living an authentic life. Best Wishes.*

Continued

Advice to Those Considering Leaving *(Continued)*

***Sample Verbatim* Responses**

Chabad

- *Do what makes you happy, take the risk, work hard, be independent.*
- *Find a successful person who left for advice*
- *Seek a college education first. The rest will work itself out.*
- *Find a support system before you leave, don't be afraid to leave. As you enter the other side you realize there are so many others exactly likely you that you never know or hear about until you actually leave.*
- *Be smart. If you're under 18, stay at home and save up money (except if there's abuse, etc) to move out and for college if that's something you want to do. Ease people into your new life. Be respectful! Kill them with kindness. Be patient with your family. Appreciate what you got from your old life, but let go when you're ready. Be bold and leave when it's the time. Don't wait too long or it'll become harder.*
- *Have a confidant, a therapist who can help you work through stuff. Leaving can be very isolating at first, and its important to surround yourself with supportive, positive community or friends.*
- *Being happy with yourself is the most important thing in the world. Firstly, you must understand that the Judaism that you were brought up with is not the only Judaism and not necessarily true Judaism. Seek out other communities and ways of life and find what works for you. If living a religious lifestyle gives you nothing but questions, annoyances, and beliefs that you don't believe in than maybe you should just let go for a bit, try to enjoy life, and then see if religion can fit into your life, if you can believe in it in another way.*
- *It's not all or nothing. You can lead a very meaningful Jewish life doing your own thing. I have yet to receive a phone call, letter, email, text or whatsapp from G-d telling me what i do is wrong. As long as you are respectful to all humans on earth whether or not they are respectful to you, you will be okay.*
- *if you do it, be prepared to do it with a lot of money in your pockets, a lot of people supporting you and be very prepared for a lot of gossip and bad vibes in the community.*
- *Be your own individual. Think for yourself, Don't let other people tell you what you should believe in. Take the time to actually analyze your life, and see what your own belief system is, you may find you prefer facts, like science, over beliefs.*
- *Think it over twice and three times and four times before jumping. The change may be worse than the previous condition.*
- *Take it slow. Don't burn bridges. Stay positive. It gets better. Be respectful. Don't bash people on social media. Have some class.*

Continued

Advice to Those Considering Leaving *(Continued)*

***Sample Verbatim* Responses**

Yeshivish

- *Do it before you get married, if possible. It gets harder later.*
- *Do not do this journey alone. Create a support system. Footsteps is the best address to start.*
- *Do what makes you happy. But be respectful to your family. Give them a chance to accept you.*
- *Make changes slowly. Educate yourself. Realize that the outside world has its own problems.*
- *Read, educate yourself, get a degree, don't let anyone make you feel bad for your life choices.*
- *Be aware that what you are doing will very much affect your life. Your relationships will change. But if you believe that you don't believe in what the community believes in, do it. DO NOT do it simply to get revenge on your parents. While it might be a good extra, it should not be your main reason*
- *It's important to realize what you would be giving up, if you decide to make this transition. Being part of a community is comfortable, and it's difficult to lose that. I don't think there is any easy path, but the world is a fascinating place when rules are not preventing you from exploring it.*
- *There are a lot of other people like you, you're not going to be alone, but it may be hard to find them at first.*
- *I honestly don't know. I think this is difficult any way you do it. Project Makom is an amazing thing, get on board with them.*
- *The sooner you leave, the less regrets you will have for the rest of your life. Get ahold of "Dawkins, Dennet, Harris & Hitchens books, and read them cover to cover. They will save you decades of second guessing yourself. Learn to translate "Holy" or "Pure" into "religious stupidity" (in your head, quietly).*
- *Go for it. Let me just get this straight - people aren't leaving because they want a "more modern lifestyle!" They're leaving because that lifestyle is the alternative to the horrible pain in their current lifestyle. I don't believe someone can truly heal if they remain in the confines of what has burned them in the first place. Maybe they will rediscover Judaism in a better light...but they won't have a chance to do that if they remain stuck in the pain. Being healthy first is the most important thing.*
- *Be afraid. It's ok. And then do it anyway, if that's what you feel deep down. It's ok to be afraid.*
- *Separate two things - they are not related. First, there is your relationship with G-d. Second, there is your desire to live in a less sheltered way. The second can be satisfied without going OTD. Make sure you have absolutely no relationship with G-d before you opt to go OTD. There are resources such as Makom that help questioning Jews find their place inside Orthodoxy.*
- *Do it , with a lot of support and using all the resources available The world is a wonderful place. Don't deprive yourself of it.*

Continued

Advice to Those Considering Leaving *(Continued)*

***Sample Verbatim* Responses**

Modern Orthodox

- *Be rational when making decisions- not emotional.*
- *Be true to yourself and don't hurt anyone else in the process.*
- *Do it before you're married and before you have children who are 'plugged' into the community.*
- *Follow your star. Judaism, from atheist to hardcore haredi, is a DIY proposition.*
- *Get education and skills necessary for the real world.*
- *I think it is worth it. I think most people should consider therapy.*
- *If you want control over your life, you need to get out. Make new friends… just understand what you're sacrificing by remaining within the community, and decide whether it's worth it for you to stay.*
- *If orthodoxy has anything meaningful to you, try to bring it with you or look for a more open community.*
- *Judaism doesn't have to be an all or nothing. I recently went to an OTD bbq … and was horrified that non kosher meat and pig products were being served. There's a big difference between choosing not to be a part of that life and completely disrespecting those who chose to remain. For me it was eye opening as it highlighted the great differences between those who leave from a place of intellectual/logical reasoning versus those from an emotional place or due a bad experience that harbor bad will towards others.*
- *Do it! The world is huge and fascinating. Don't be afraid. There are tons of ways to build community and non-Jews aren't scary and they don't all want to kill you! I wish I was more exposed to non-Jews and alternate ways of building community. I would just say religion isn't the only way to build a strong community.*
- *I think that Orthodoxy is one modern lifestyle of many. I actually don't really find it less modern than any other lifestyle found in 2016, and think that the wording of this question is kind of strange.*
- *Education is crucial. Learning a way to make a living to support oneself is crucial. Therapy to acquire social skills and confidence that were not necessarily taught at home is crucial.*
- *There is a mourning process that must happen when you leave the community. You are leaving something very substantial behind. It is normal and healthy to take time to acknowledge this and allow yourself to mourn it. But once you have processed the loss, there is so much to gain: freedom to find your own way in life, with the people and ideas that excite you the most...your life becomes wide open, with no one else dictating its direction...and compassion becomes limitless and not just bound by the confines of who is Jewish. It's wonderful out here.*

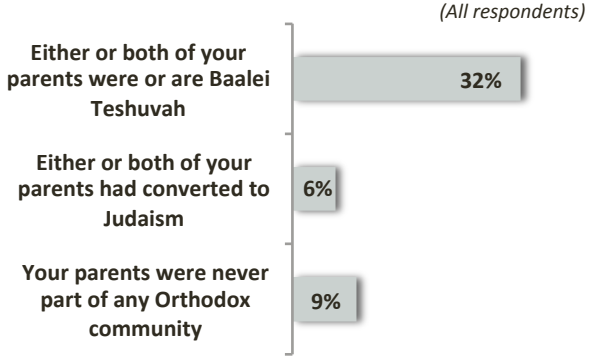
Appendix – Demographics

NISHMA RESEARCH
Marketing Research for the Jewish Community

Family Background – Nearly one-third of respondents have at least one Baal Teshuva parent. The Chasidic spoke Yiddish at home (91%), while the other groups virtually all spoke English.

Baalei Teshuvah, Converts,
Parents Part of Orthodox Community

(All respondents)



% Parent(s) Baalei Teshuvah:
- Chasidic – 8%
- Chabad – 54%
- Yeshivish – 39%
- Modern Orthodox – 36%

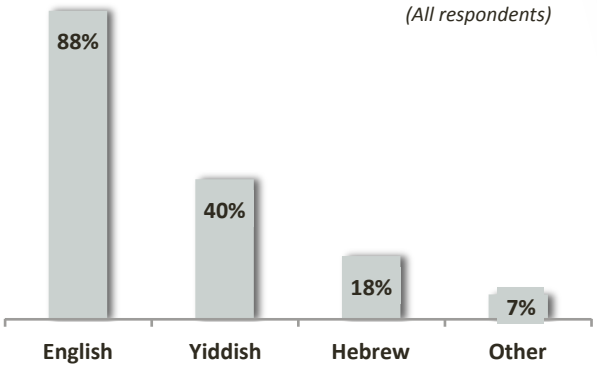
% Parent(s) Converts:
- Chasidic – 3%
- Chabad – 8%
- Yeshivish – 6%
- Modern Orthodox – 7%

Q. Please indicate if …
1. Either or both of your parents were or are Baalei Teshuvah
2. Either or both of your parents had converted to Judaism
3. Your parents were never part of any Orthodox community
- Scale: Yes; No; Not sure / No response

(n – Total=826, Chasidic=205, Chabad=90, Yeshivish=211, Modern Orthodox=212)

Languages Spoken at Home, Growing Up

(All respondents)



Chasidic:
- Yiddish 91%, English 55%, Hebrew 14%, Other 6%

Chabad:
- English 99%, Yiddish 38%, Hebrew 20%, Other 11%

Yeshivish:
- English 99%, Yiddish 23%, Hebrew 19%, Other 2%

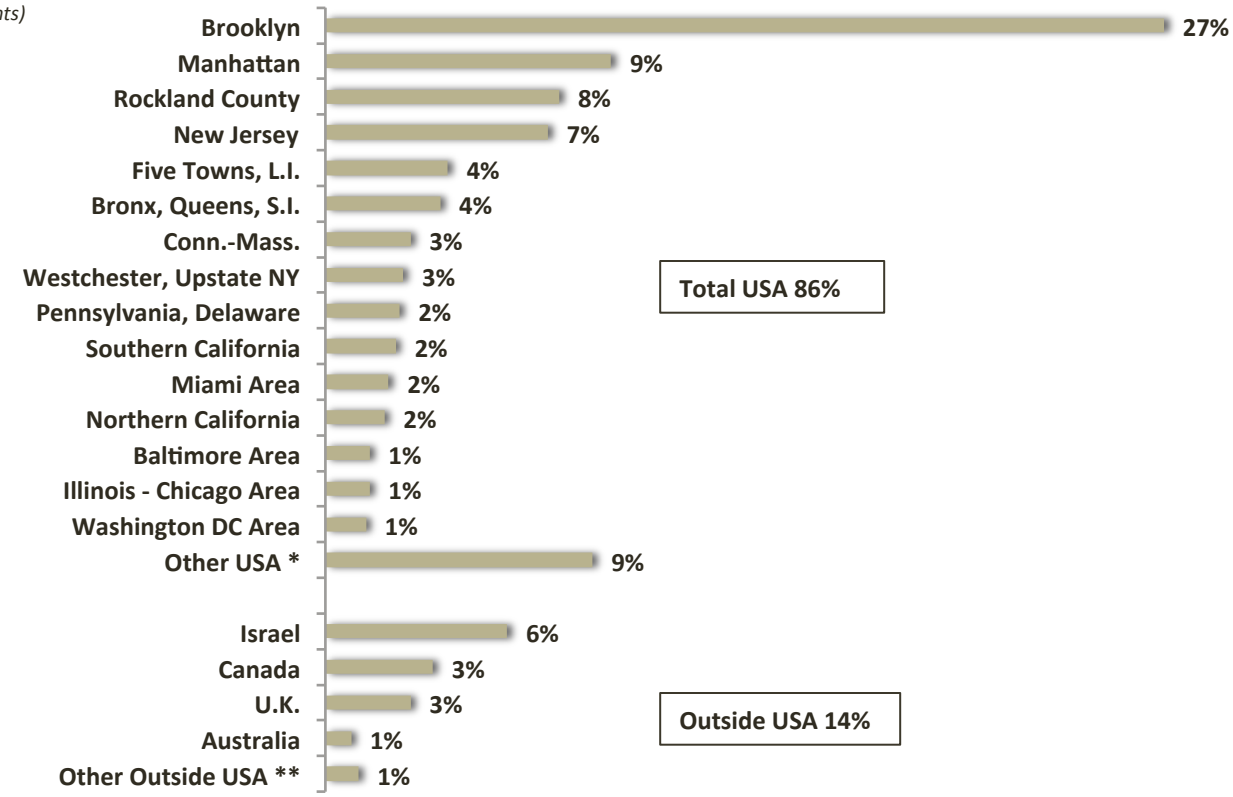
Modern Orthodox:
- English 98%, Yiddish 16%, Hebrew 17%, Other 9%

Q. What languages were commonly spoken in your home, when you were growing up?
Please check all that apply.
- English; Yiddish; Hebrew; Other(s) – Please describe

(n – Total=806, Chasidic=198, Chabad=90, Yeshivish=205, Modern Orthodox=212)

Where Respondents Currently Reside – Survey respondents are dispersed over 31 states and 11 foreign countries. 60% reside in the Greater New York City area, with nearly half of them (27% of all respondents) residing in Brooklyn.

(All respondents)



* Includes 2% in Michigan-Wisconsin, and 1% each in Ohio-Indiana, Texas, Washington-Oregon-Montana, Virginia-Carolinas-Georgia, Colorado-Utah-Nevada-Arizona, and Alabama-Tennessee-Kentucky … and one respondent in Hawaii.

** Includes three respondents in Finland and one each in Belgium, China, Hungary, South Africa, Thailand and Vietnam.

Q. Where do you currently live?
- In the USA - Please enter Zip Code; Outside USA - Please enter Country

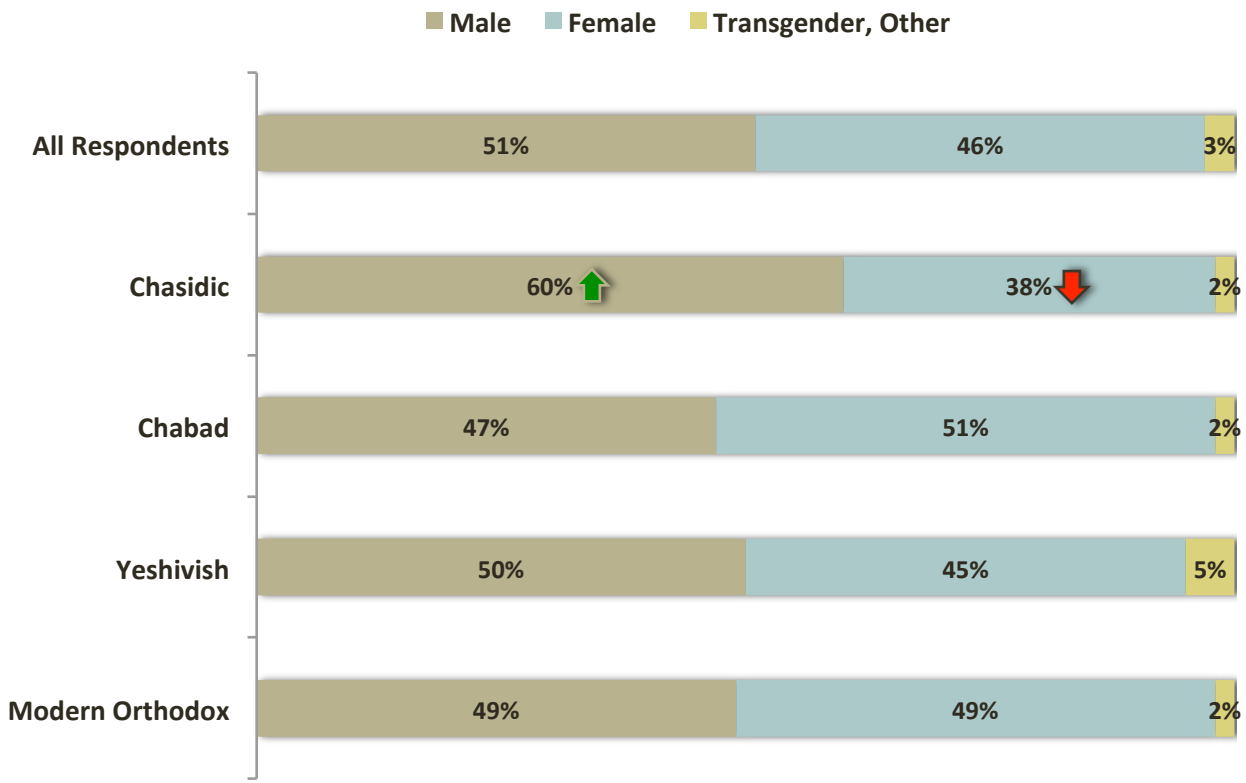
(n – Total=810, Chasidic=203, Chabad=88, Yeshivish=198, Modern Orthodox=217)

Continued

Where Respondents Currently Reside by Community of Origin – 69% of the Chasidic live in Brooklyn (many in Borough Park) or Rockland County, as do one-third of the Chabad (8% in Crown Heights). The Modern Orthodox and Chabad more often have left the Greater NYC area.

Residence Location	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox
Total USA	86%	89%	83%	86%	87%
Total Outside USA (Israel)	14% (6%)	11% (2%)	17% (3%)	14% (8%)	13% (8%)
Brooklyn	27%	50% ↑ (Borough Park 23%; Williamsburg 2%)	33% (Crown Heights 8%)	22% (Midwood 14%)	13% ↓
Manhattan	9%	3% ↓	9%	14% ↑ (Upper West 7%)	12% (Upper West 6%)
Rockland County	8%	19% ↑ (Monsey 6% New Square 5%)	1% ↓	5%	3% ↓
New Jersey	7%	1% ↓	1% ↓	11% ↑ (Lakewood 2%)	11% ↑
Other USA	35%	16% ↓	39%	34%	48% ↑

Gender – The Chasidic segment skews more male than the other segments.

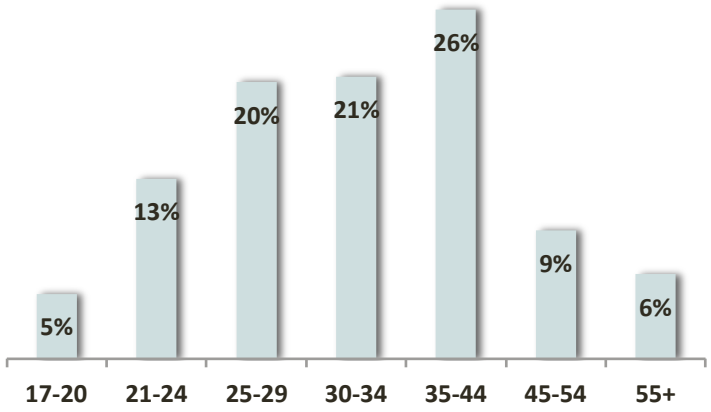


Q. What is your gender?
- Male; Female; Transgender; Other - Please describe

(n – Total=807, Chasidic=198, Chabad=86, Yeshivish=206, Modern Orthodox=208)

Age – The median age among all respondents was 32. The Chasidic are a bit younger than the other segments, and the Modern Orthodox are notably older (median age 37).

(All respondents)



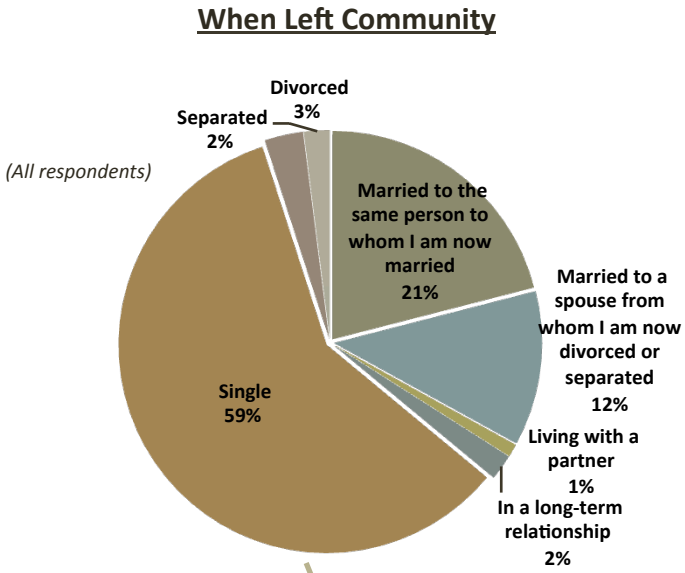
Age	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox
<30	38%	51% ↑	39%	45% ↑	22% ↓
30-44	47%	45%	52%	43%	49%
45+	15%	4% ↓	9%	12%	29% ↑
Median	32	29 ↓	32	30	37 ↑

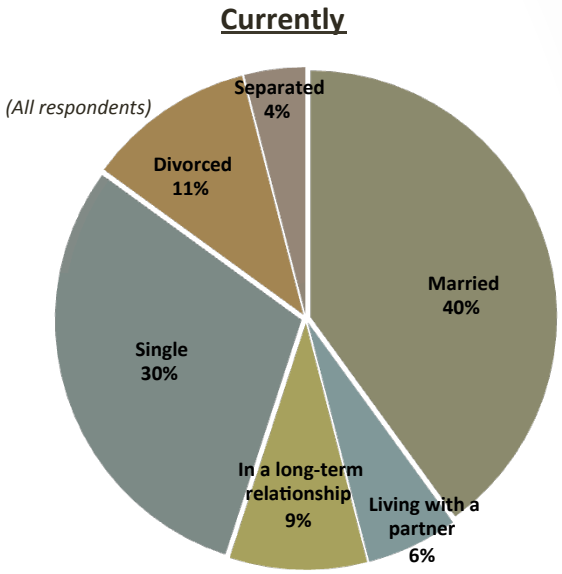
- **Survey respondents are younger than U.S. Jewry in general. The Pew Survey* showed a median age of 50 for all U.S. Jews, with a median age of 40 among Orthodox Jews.**

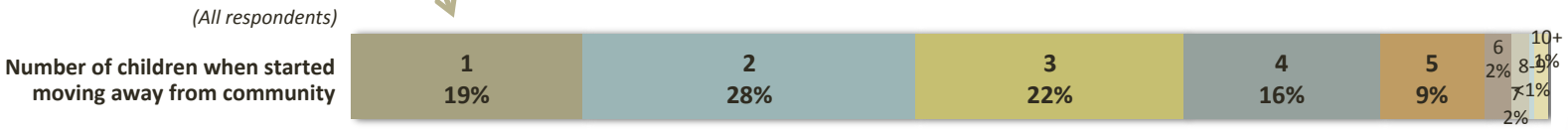
Q. In what year were you born?
(n – Total=775, Chasidic=189, Chabad=81, Yeshivish=193, Modern Orthodox=202)

* Source: A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews, October 2013

Marital/Relationship Status and Number of Children







- **31% had children when they first started moving away from their community, with an average among them of 3 children.**

Q. What is your current marital/relationship status?
- Married; Living with a partner; In a long-term relationship; Single; Divorced; Separated; Widowed

(n – Total=875, Chasidic=215, Chabad=95, Yeshivish=220, Modern Orthodox=228)

Q. What was your marital status when you first STARTED moving away from the Orthodox community in which you were raised?
- Married to the same person to whom I am now married; Married to a spouse from whom I am now divorced or separated; Living with a partner; In a long-term relationship; Single; Divorced; Separated; Widowed

(n – Total=877, Chasidic=213, Chabad=96, Yeshivish=221, Modern Orthodox=228)

Q. Did you have any children at that time (when you first started moving away from the Orthodox community in which you were raised)?
- Yes – Please enter number of children; No

(n – Total=879, Chasidic=214, Chabad=96, Yeshivish=221, Modern Orthodox=228)

Continued

Marital/Relationship Status and Number of Children by Community of Origin

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	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox
	When Left Community					Currently				
Married	33%	52% ↑	17% ↓	27% ↓	29%	40%	44%	35%	32% ↓	49% ↑
Single	59%	40% ↓	77% ↑	68% ↑	64%	30%	21% ↓	42% ↑	40% ↑	22% ↓
Divorced/ Separated	5%	8%	3%	3%	3%	15%	21% ↑	13%	12%	11% ↓
Partner/Long-Term Relationship	3%	0%	3%	2%	4%	15%	13%	9%	16%	17%
% With Children & Average Number	31% 2.9	50% 2.7	14% 3.5	24% 3.4	26% 2.8					

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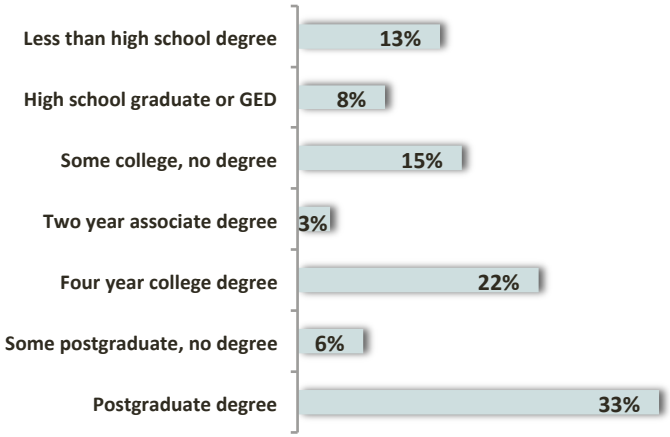
Education – A substantial majority (61%) of respondents are college graduates or beyond, but there are wide variations among the segments. 39% of Chasidic do not have high school degrees, while 51% of Modern Orthodox have postgraduate degrees.

(All respondents)



Education	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox
Less than High School Degree	13%	39% ↑	14%	4% ↓	1% ↓
High School Degree	8%	10%	8%	12%	2% ↓
Some College, Associate Degree	18%	24% ↑	24%	17%	12% ↓
Four Year College Degree	22%	12% ↓	22%	26%	26%
Some Postgraduate	6%	3%	5%	8%	8%
Postgraduate Degree	33%	13% ↓	27%	33%	51% ↑

- **Our survey respondents overall are well educated compared to all U.S. Jews. The Pew Survey* showed 58% of all U.S. Jews and 39% of Orthodox Jews with a college degree or higher, compared to 61% among our respondents. Pew showed 28% of all U.S. Jews and with a postgraduate degree, compared to 33% among our respondents.**

Q. What is the highest level of secular studies schooling you have completed or the highest degree you have received?
- Less than high school (Grades 1-8 or no formal schooling); High school incomplete (Grades 9-11 or Grade 12 with NO diploma); High school graduate (Grade 12 with diploma or GED certificate); Some college, no degree (includes community college); Two year associate degree from a college or university; Four year college or university degree/Bachelor's degree; Some postgraduate or professional schooling, no postgraduate degree; Postgraduate or professional degree, including master's, doctorate, medical or law degree

(n – Total=802, Chasidic=197, Chabad=85, Yeshivish=206, Modern Orthodox=206)

* Source: A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews, October 2013

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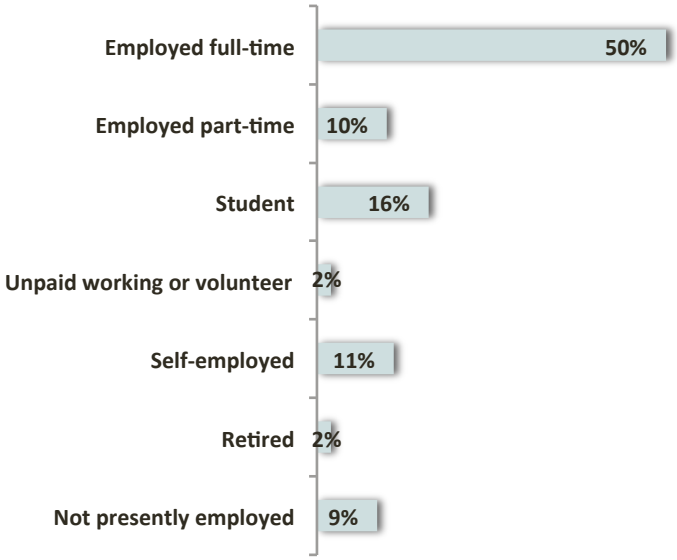
Employment – Current employment status shows only nominal variations across the segments. Chasidic are more often students, while Modern Orthodox are more often employed full-time. Chabad are more often not employed.

(All respondents)



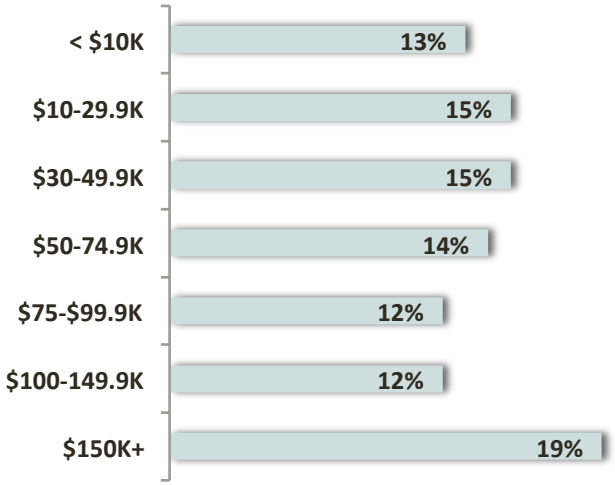
Employment	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox
Employed Full-Time	50%	48%	43%	50%	55%
Employed Part-Time	10%	9%	12%	12%	10%
Student	16%	21% ↑	17%	18%	10% ↓
Unpaid Worker or Volunteer	2%	<1%	4%	2%	2%
Self-Employed	11%	13%	8%	10%	11%
Retired	2%	<1%	1%	1%	4%
Not Presently Employed	9%	9%	15% ↑	7%	8%

Q. Which of these best describes your current employment status?
- Employed full-time; Employed part-time; Student; Working or volunteering - non-paid; Self-employed; Retired; Not presently employed

(n – Total=803, Chasidic=197, Chabad=86, Yeshivish=206, Modern Orthodox=206)

Annual Household Income – Income among the Modern Orthodox is about double that of the other segments.

(All respondents)



Household Income	All	Chasidic	Chabad	Yeshivish	Modern Orthodox
< $10K	13%	21% ↑	18%	13%	6%
$10K – $29.9K	15%	15%	25% ↑	18%	10%
$30K – $49.9K	15%	16%	16%	18%	8%
$50K – $74.9K	14%	20% ↑	11%	10% ↓	11%
$75K – $99.9K	12%	12%	7%	9%	15%
$100K – $149.9K	12%	8% ↓	8%	11%	15%
$150K +	19%	8% ↓	15%	22%	35% ↑
Median	$62K	$49K ↓	$38K ↓	$54K	$101K ↑

- **Our survey respondents overall have median household income ($62K) somewhat lower than that of all all U.S. Jews ($87K, according to The Pew Survey*), although our Modern Orthodox segment earns more ($101K) than the typical U.S. Jewish household.**

Q. What is your annual household income?
Under $10,000; $10,000 - $29,999; $30,000 - $49,999; $50,000 - $74,999; $75,000 - $99,999; $100,000 - $149,999; $150,000 or more
(n – Total=768, Chasidic=190, Chabad=83, Yeshivish=198, Modern Orthodox=193)

* Source: A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews, October 2013

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Rev2