

# THE FUTURE OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY



**IRA M. SHESKIN, PH.D.**  
DIRECTOR OF THE JEWISH DEMOGRAPHY PROJECT OF THE  
SUE AND LEONARD MILLER CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY JUDAIC STUDIES  
AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY  
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI



## THE DEMISE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE HAS LONG BEEN PREDICTED

- Arnold Toynbee, in his classic 12-volume study of history (1934-1961) was troubled by the one exception to his universal rules governing the eventual decline of every people. He declared that the Jews were “a vestigial remnant” of a people destined to perish soon.



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## THE DEMISE OF AMERICAN JEWRY HAS LONG BEEN PREDICTED

RELIGION AMONG JEWS FOUND TO BE WANING; Case-Workers Also Contend the Charity Federation Here Is Not a Unifying Influence.

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

May 30, 1934, Wednesday

ATLANTIC CITY, May 29. -- The New York committee of case-workers, a section of the National Conference of Jewish Social Service, reported today that there was a decreasing influence of religion in American Jewish life and a large gap between the communal leadership and the masses, and that the Federation of Jewish Charities was not the unifying influence it purports to be.

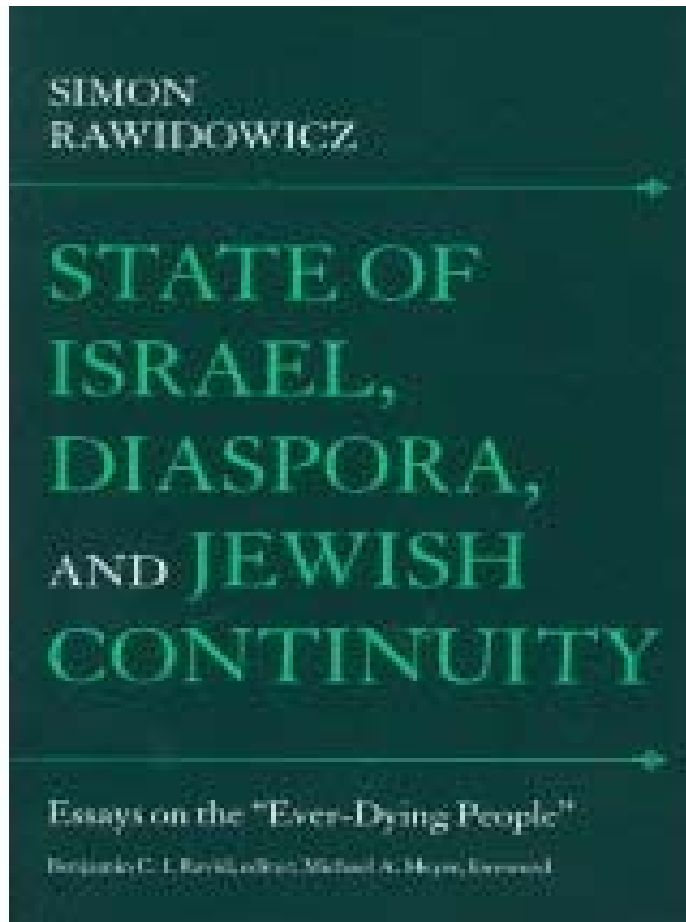
The New York Times  
ON THE WEB

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May 5,  
1964

opined that  
Jews would  
disappear  
from the  
US by the  
year 2000!



1986 -Essays on the "Ever-Dying People"

6

Assimilation and Its Discontents  
How success ruined the New York Jew.

*NEW YORK*

September 28, 2008



Who would want to belong to a club that didn't accept Jews?  
What on earth would you do there?

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## **LIKE MARK TWAIN, WHO READ HIS OWN OBITUARY IN THE NEWSPAPER, AMERICAN JEWS CAN RESPOND THAT THE REPORT OF THEIR DEATH “IS HIGHLY EXAGGERATED”**

- The US now has:
- Hundreds of College Judaic Studies Programs with thousands of courses and thousands of students. Almost none of this existed 50 years ago
- Thousands of Jewish and Israel-oriented websites
- More than 60 Florence Melton Adult Mini-Schools have opened since 1986
- Chabad and Aish HaTorah are flourishing and attracting many non-Orthodox Jews
- More than 50 Jewish museums
- Jewish Book Fairs, Jewish Film Festivals, and Israel Independence Day celebrations are attracting hundreds of thousands each year

## FURTHER SIGNS OF STRENGTH

- Foundation for Jewish Camp supports more than 150 Jewish camps throughout the US
- Taglit - Birthright Israel has taken over 150,000 American Jewish youth to Israel on free ten-day educational trips
- Hillel on the college campus has seen significant strengthening
- More than 100 Chabad Houses on US campuses
- Number of synagogues increased from 2,851 in 1936 to 3,727 in 2001

## FURTHER SIGNS OF STRENGTH

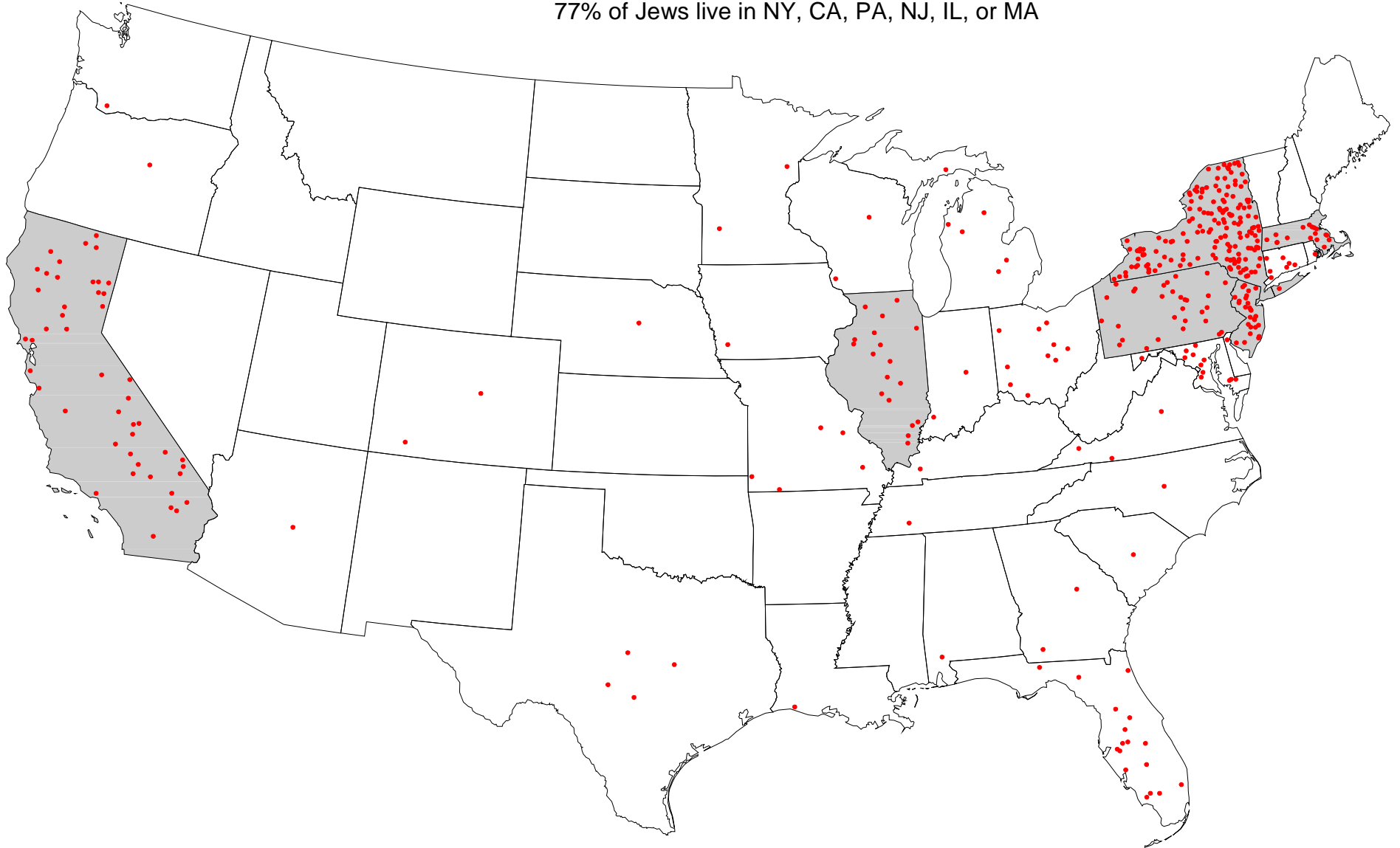
- *US News and World Report*, December 13, 2007: In Judaism, in addition to a **small but detectable surge in the Orthodox** denomination, . . . even the moderate Conservative and the progressive Reform denominations are shifting toward the older ways, including the use of **more Hebrew** in the services or **stricter observance of the Halakha**. Many young adults are joining . . . the **independent minyanim**, are drawn in part by the commitment to traditional liturgical practices and observances. **Reform** may still be the largest Jewish denomination in America, but much of **the faith's vitality is devoted to recapturing those traditions that modernizers dismissed as relics**.
- More than half of Reform rabbis keep kosher
- Reform now encourages aliyah

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**SOME BASIC FACTS ABOUT AMERICAN JEWRY**

# Geographic Distribution of Jewish Population 1970

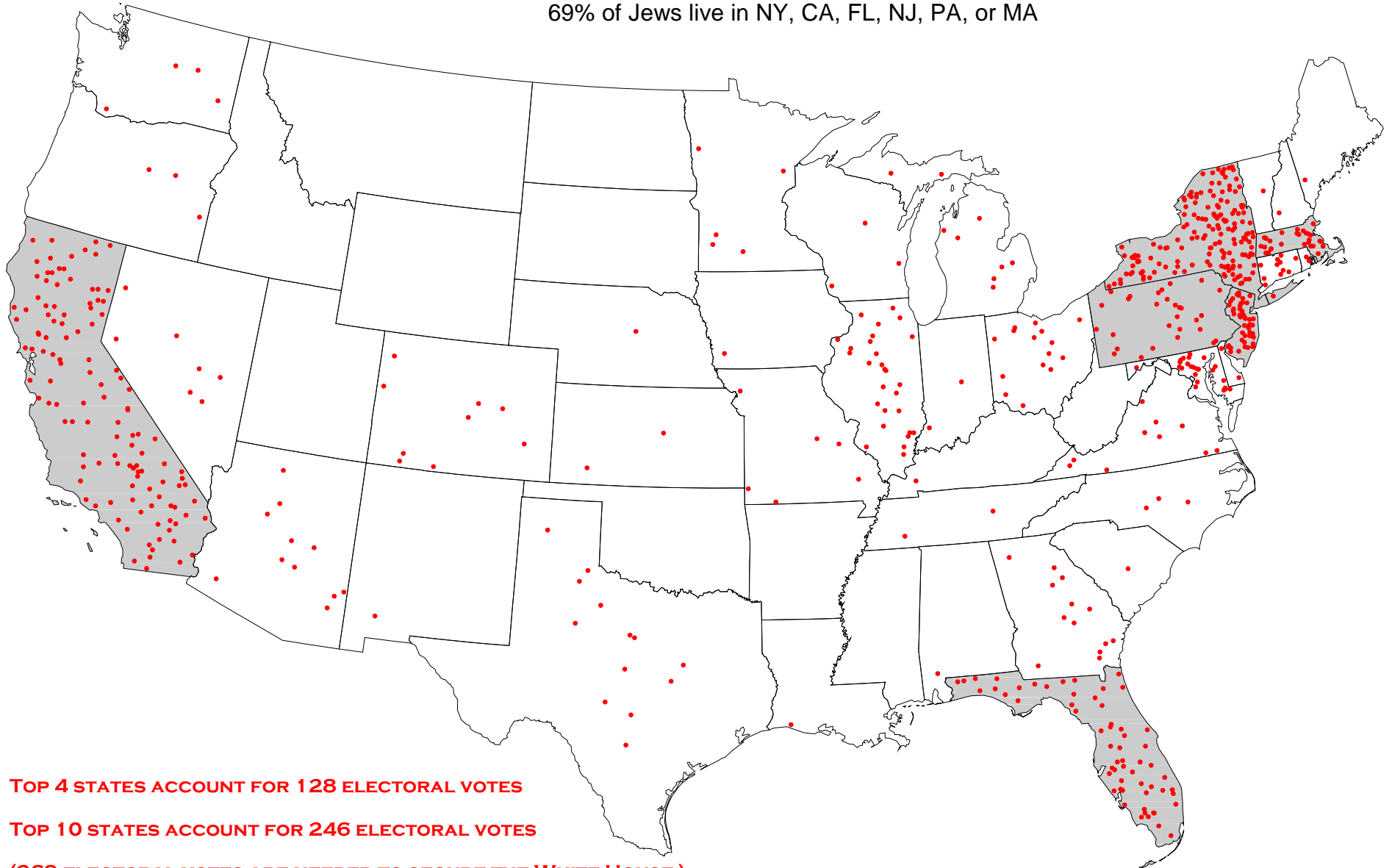
42% of Jews live in New York  
77% of Jews live in NY, CA, PA, NJ, IL, or MA



Each dot represents 10,000 Jews  
Dots are randomly placed within each state

## Geographic Distribution of Jewish Population 2009

25% of Jews live in New York  
69% of Jews live in NY, CA, FL, NJ, PA, or MA



**TOP 4 STATES ACCOUNT FOR 128 ELECTORAL VOTES**

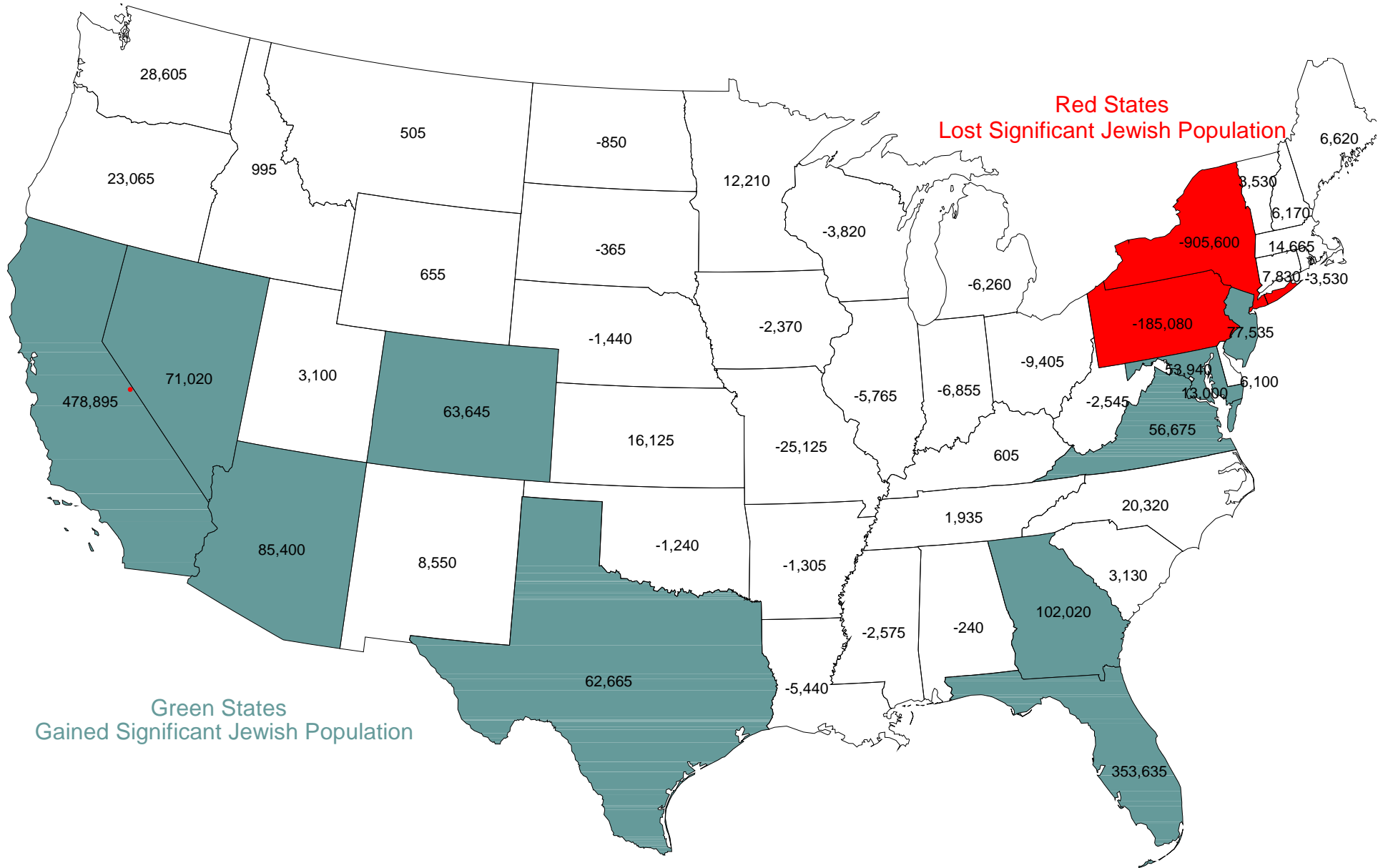
**TOP 10 STATES ACCOUNT FOR 246 ELECTORAL VOTES**

**(269 ELECTORAL VOTES ARE NEEDED TO SECURE THE WHITE HOUSE )**

**RECALL WHAT A DIFFERENCE A FEW VOTES IN FLORIDA MADE IN 2000**

Each dot represents 10,000 Jews  
Dots are randomly placed within each state

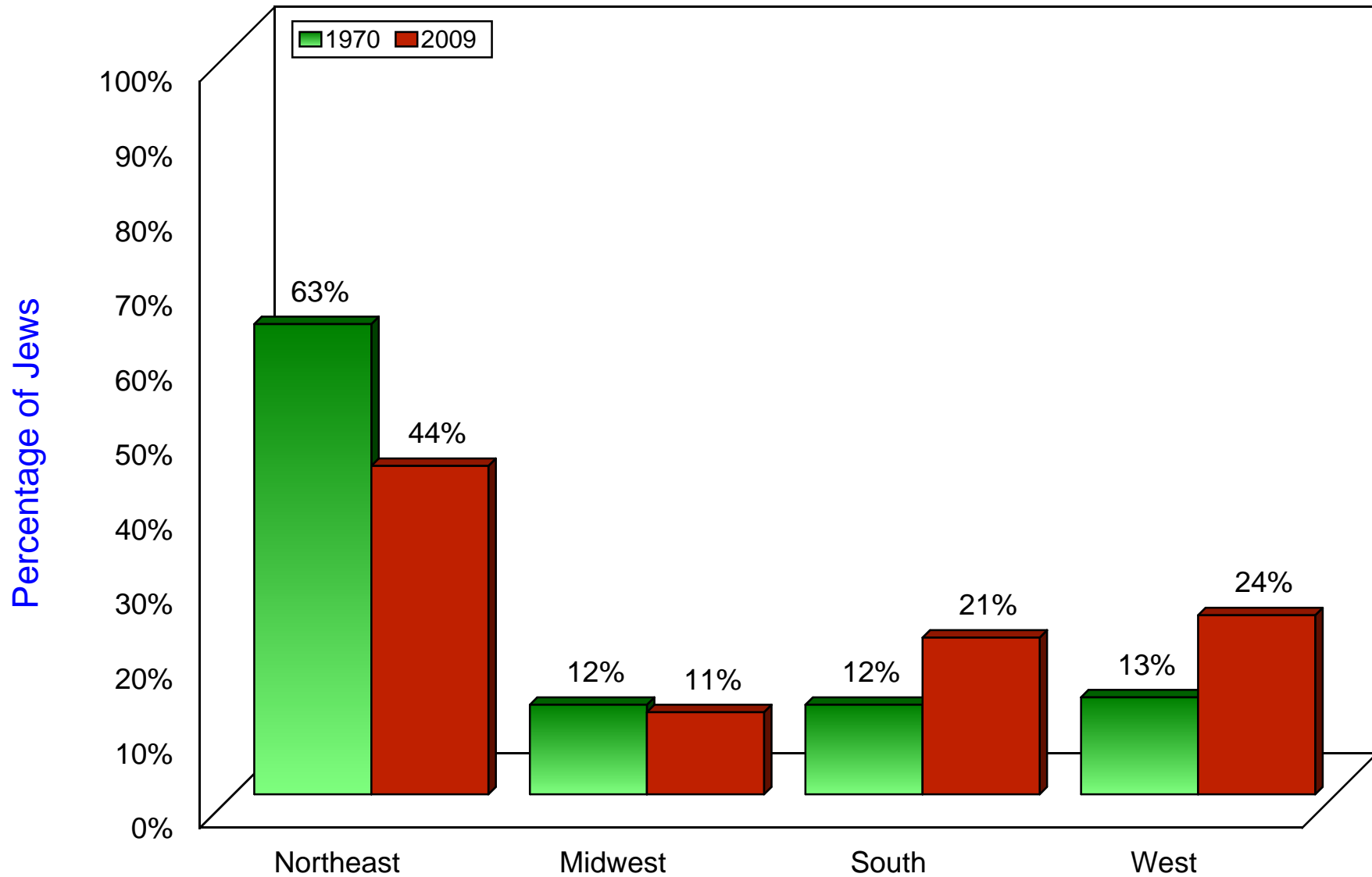
# Changes in Geographic Distribution of Jewish Population 1970-2009



Red States  
Lost Significant Jewish Population

Green States  
Gained Significant Jewish Population

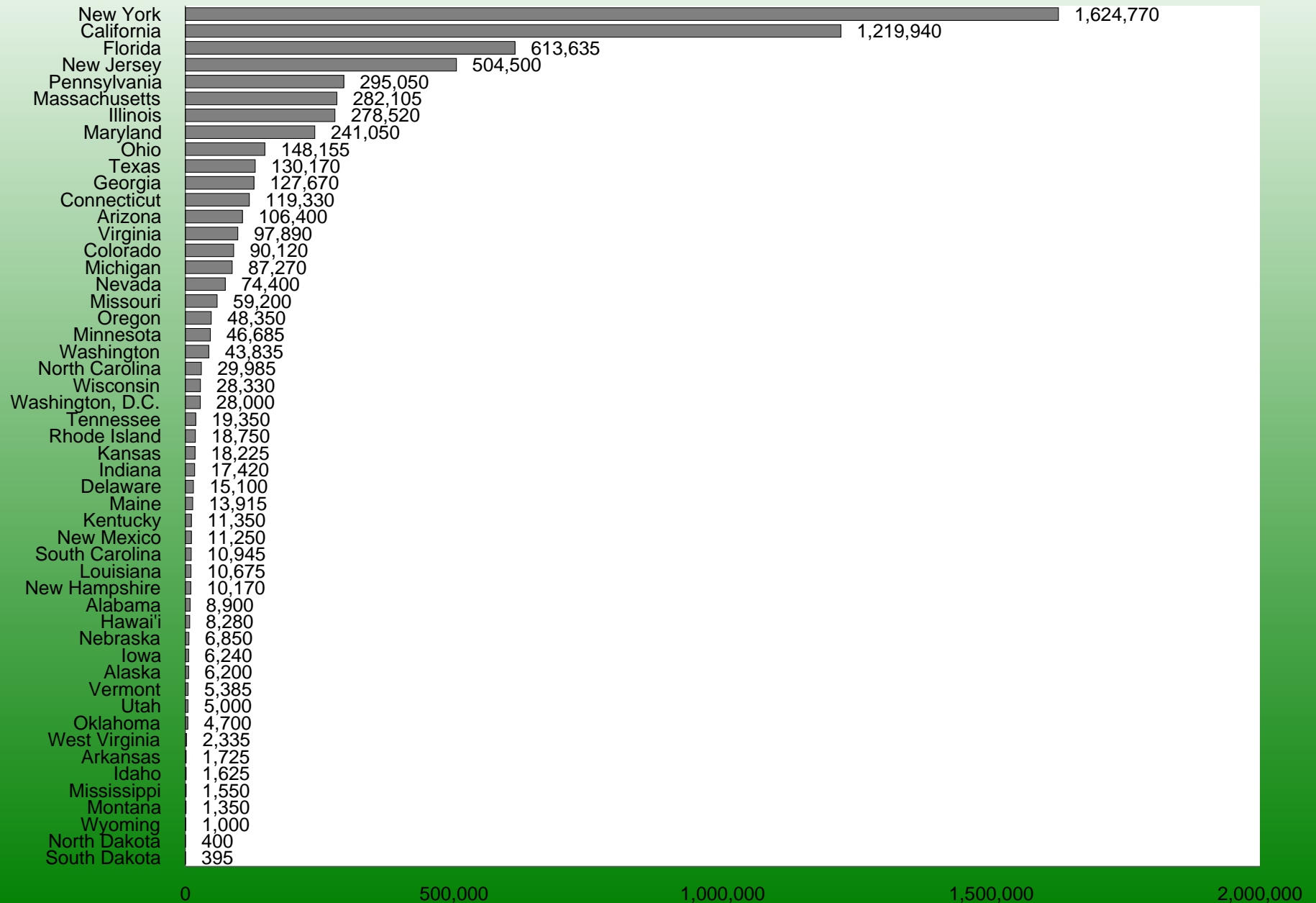
## GEOGRAPHIC SHIFT IN JEWISH POPULATION



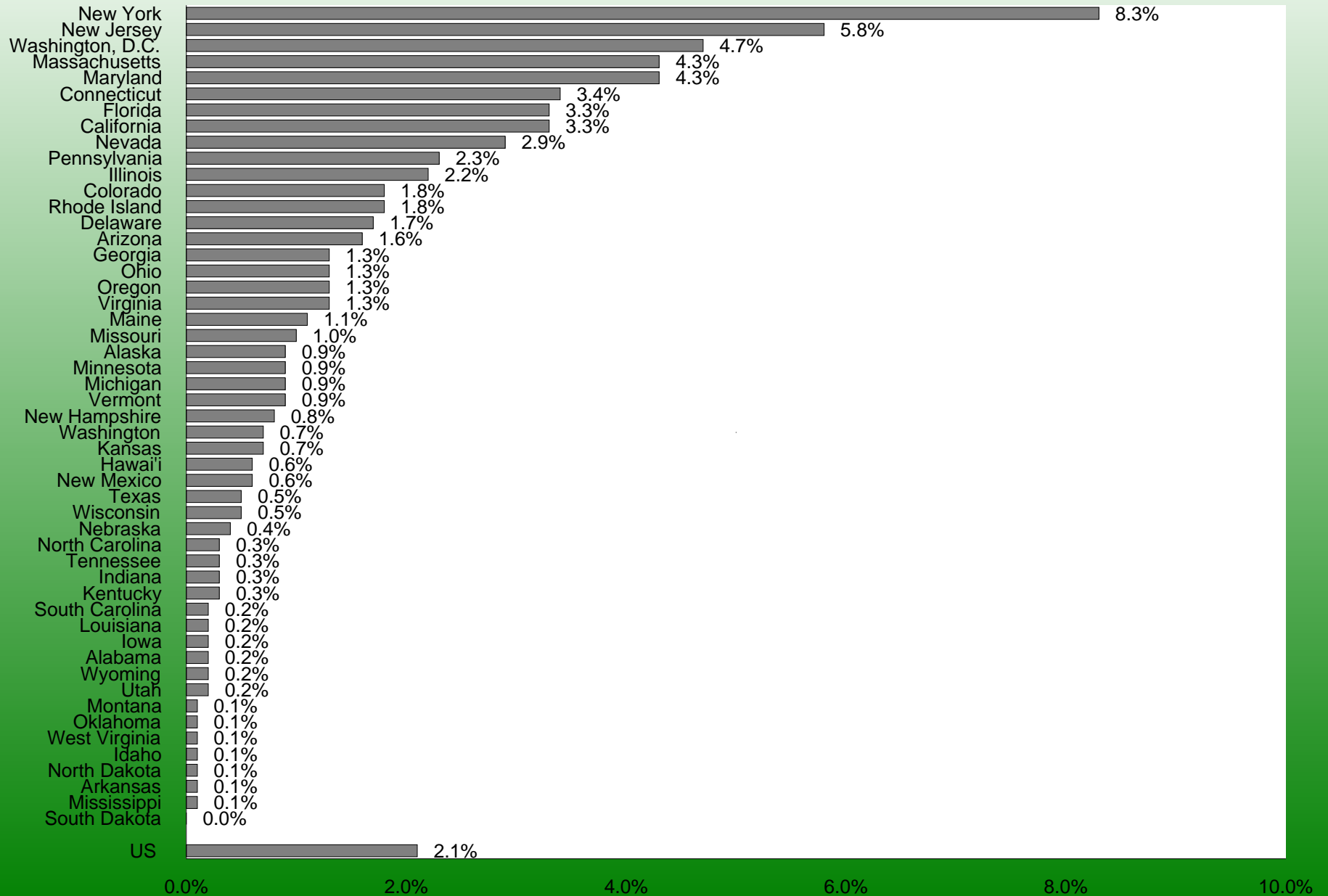
Source: *American Jewish Year Book*

# STATES WITH THE LARGEST JEWISH POPULATION

(Number of Jews)



# STATES WITH THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF ITS RESIDENTS WHO ARE JEWISH



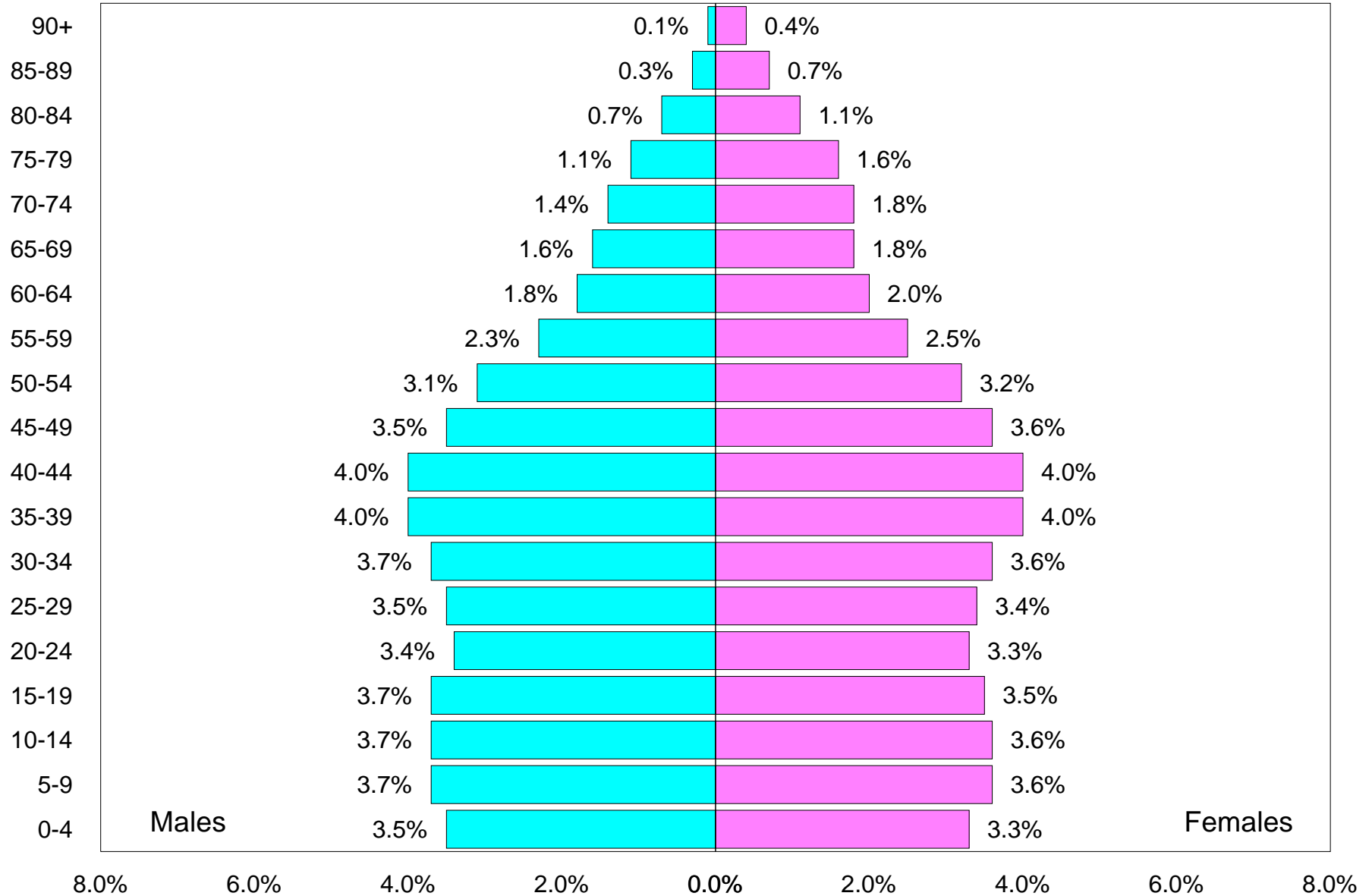
## IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGE IN GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

- Political (discussed above)
- Need to rebuild infrastructure: synagogues, JCCs, Jewish day schools
- This need to rebuild infrastructure has also been affected by movement from urban to suburban areas
- Movement of Jews into areas with a low density of Jewish population contributes to friendship networks that contain many non-Jews, thus increasing intermarriage

# AGE DISTRIBUTION-ALL AMERICANS - 2000

Median Age is 35 Years    12% are Age 65 and Over    6% are Age 75 and Over

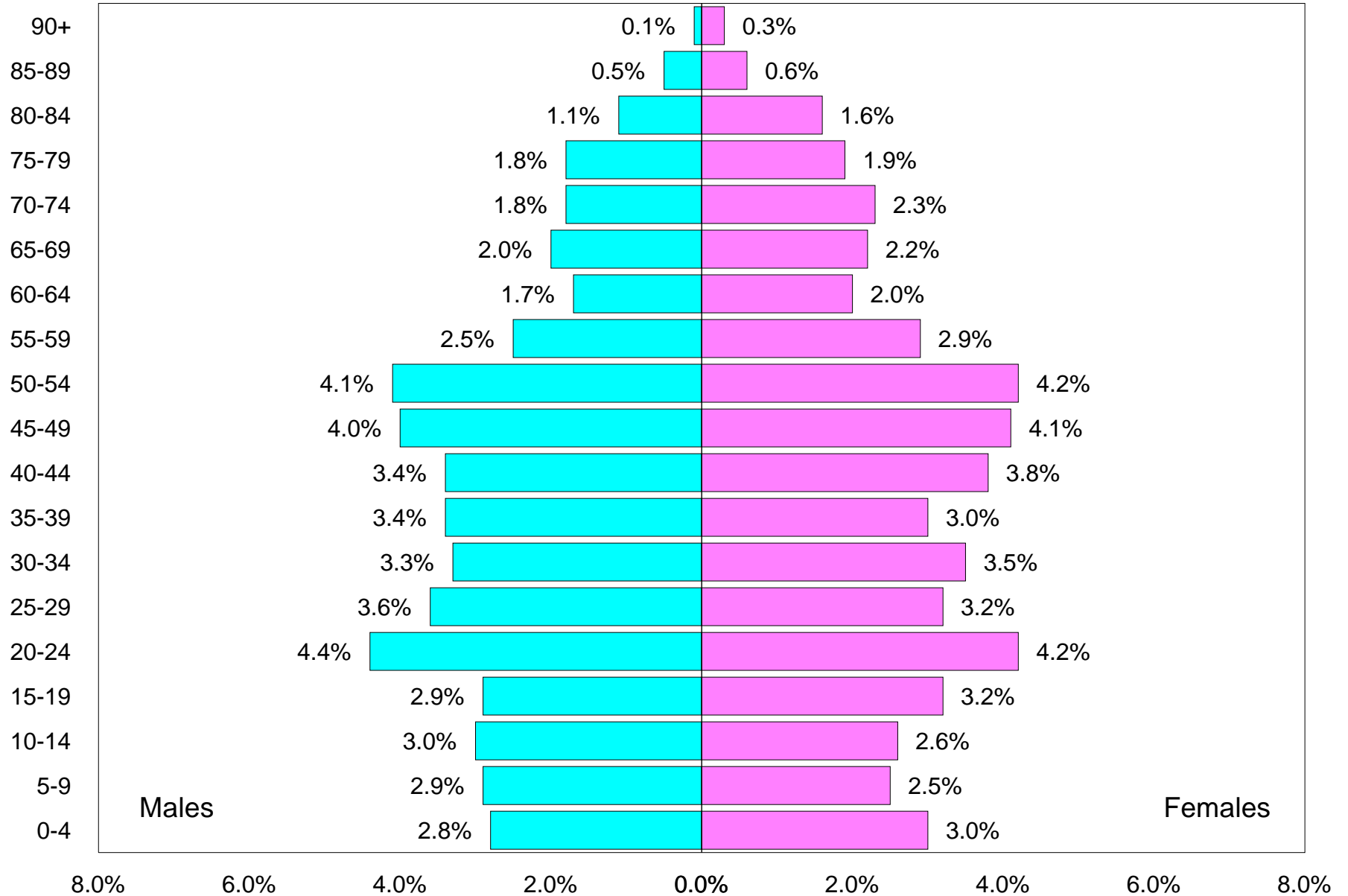
Age Group



# AGE DISTRIBUTION-AMERICAN JEWS - 2000

Median Age is 39 Years    16% are Age 65 and Over    8% are Age 75 and Over

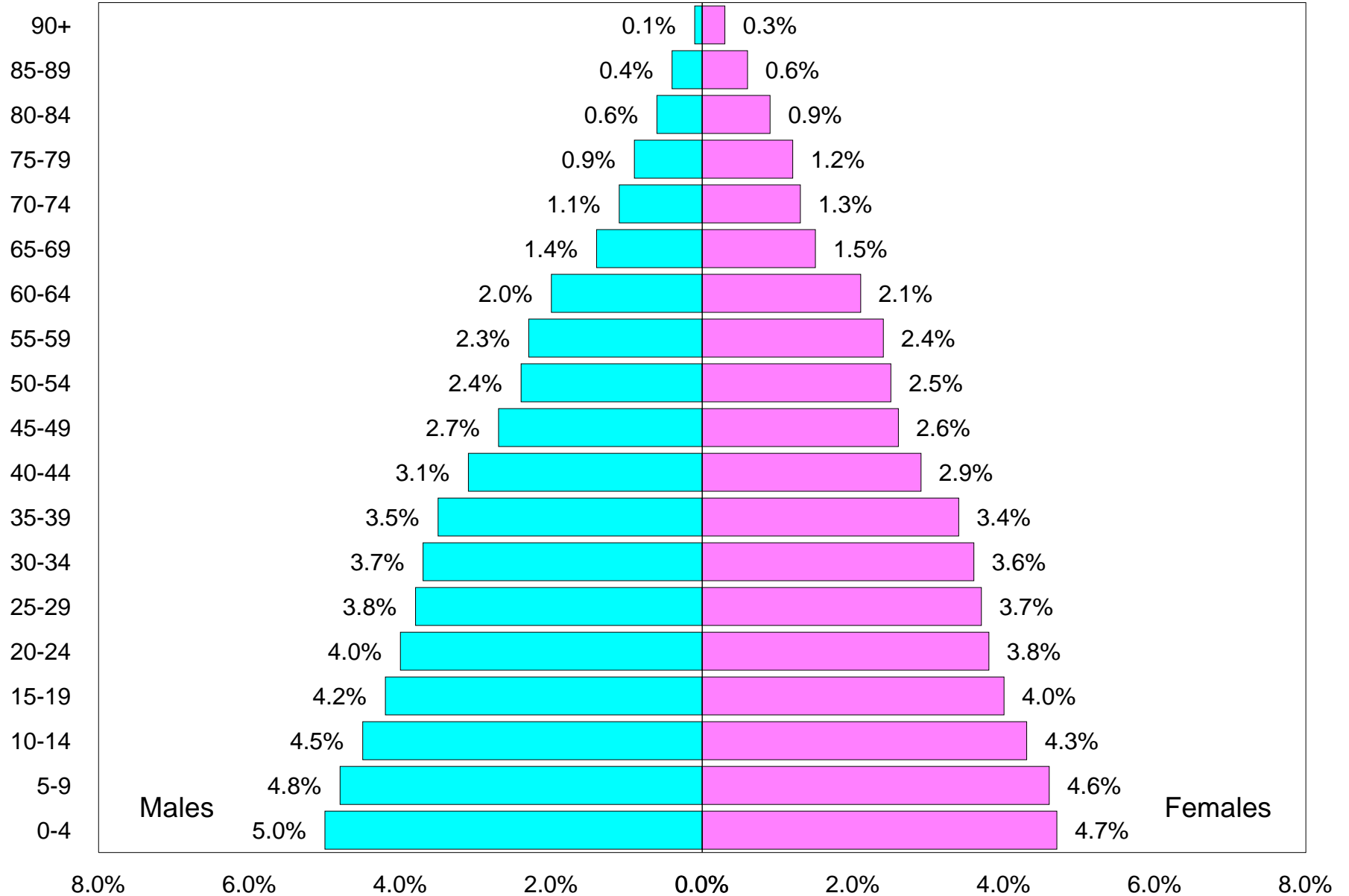
Age Group



# AGE DISTRIBUTION-ISRAEL - 2010

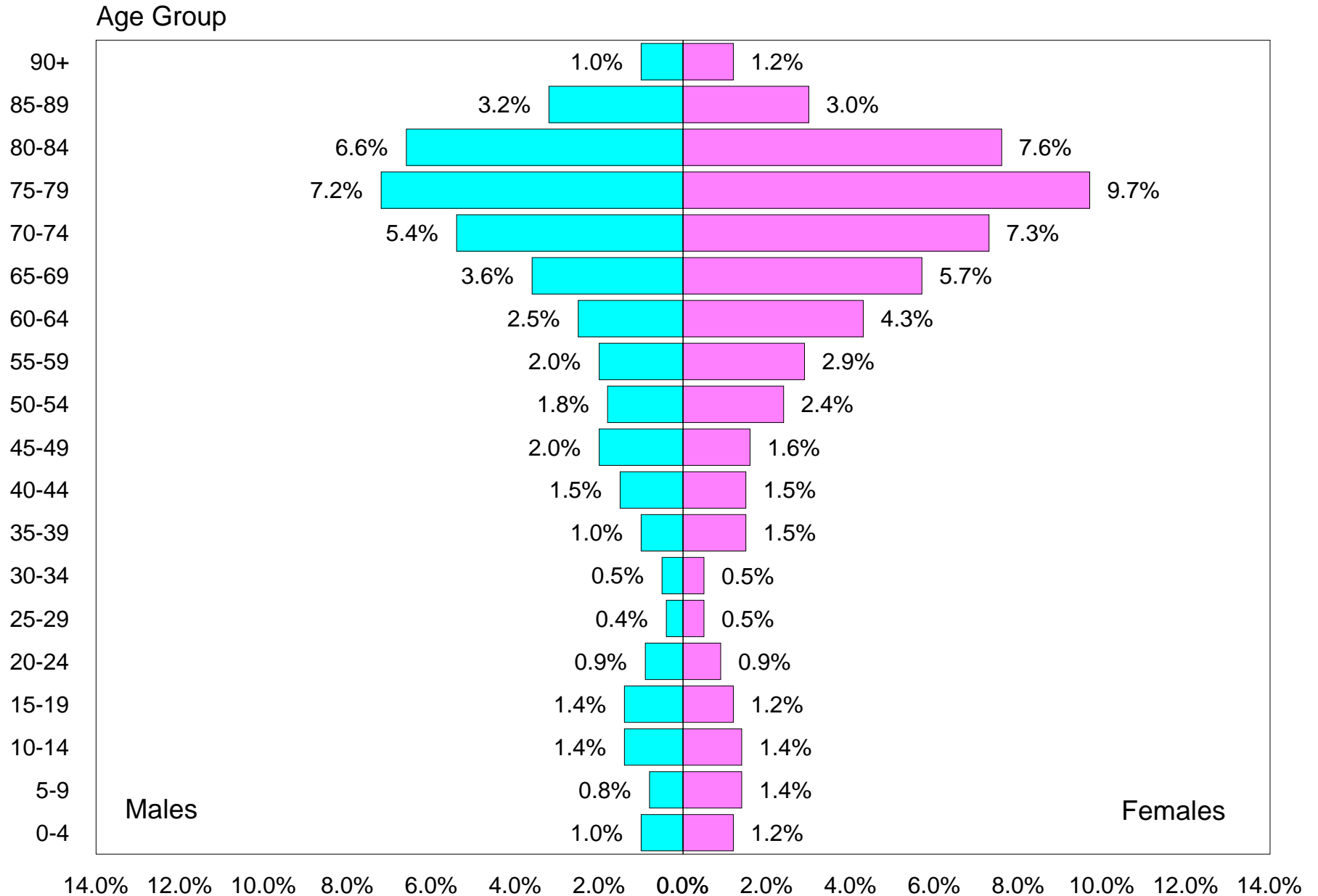
Median Age is 29 Years    10% are Age 65 and Over    5% are Age 75 and Over

Age Group



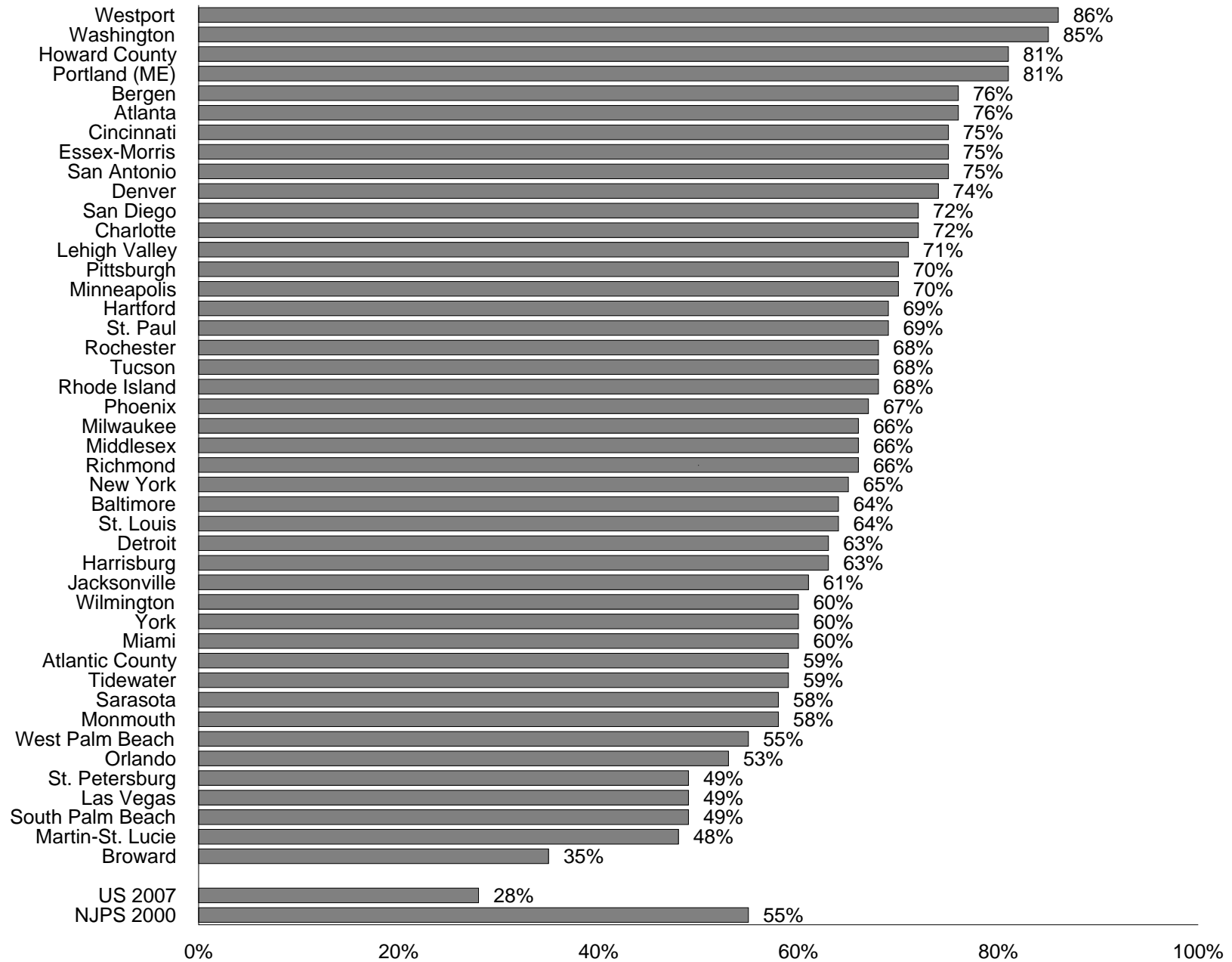
# AGE DISTRIBUTION-SOUTH PALM BEACH

**Median Age is 71 Years**    **62% are Age 65 and Over**    **40% are Age 75 and Over**  
 (Persons in Jewish Households)



## 4-YEAR COLLEGE DEGREE OR HIGHER

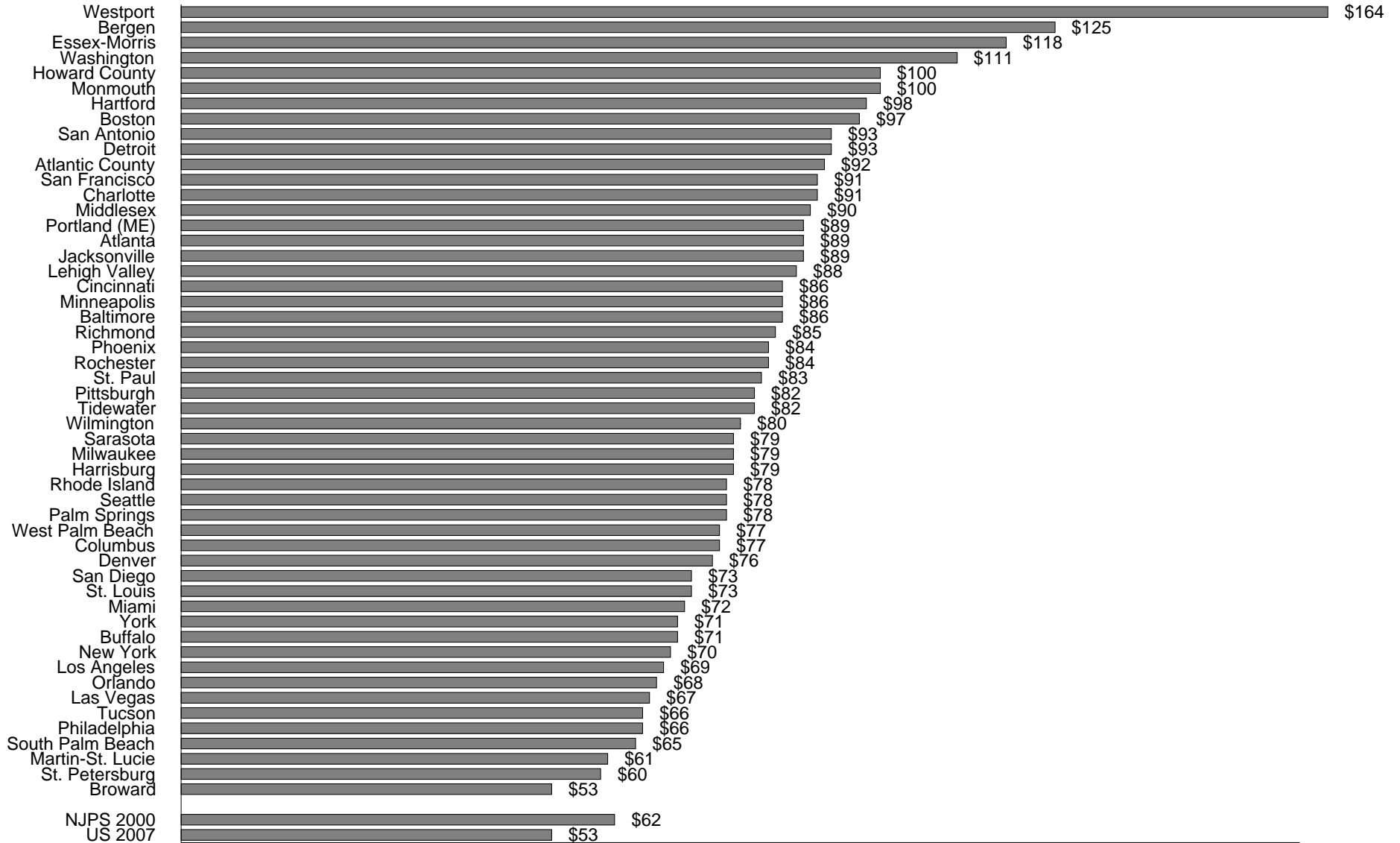
(Adults Age 25 and Over in Jewish Households)



# MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

(In dollars adjusted for inflation)

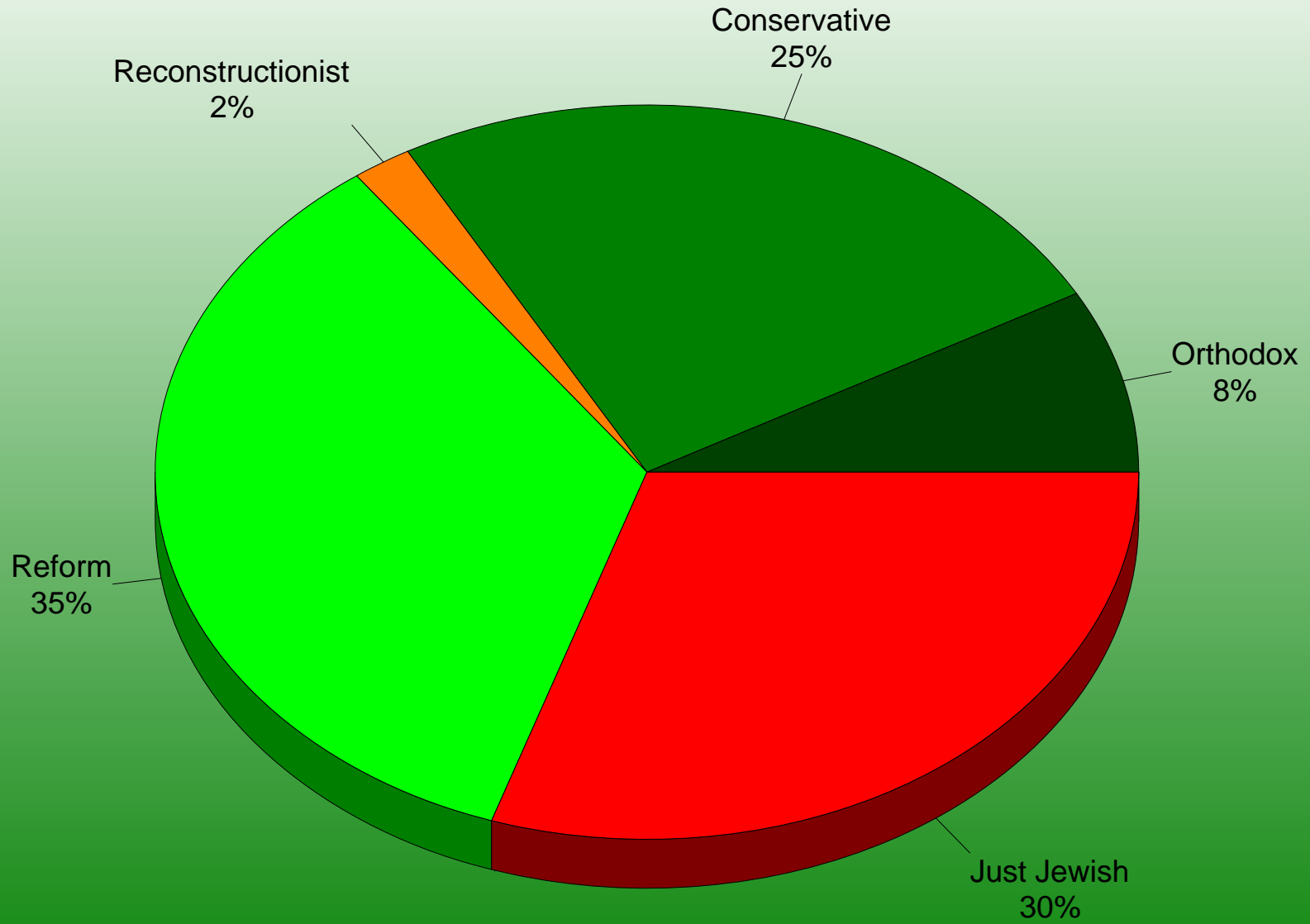
(Jewish Households)



(in thousands)

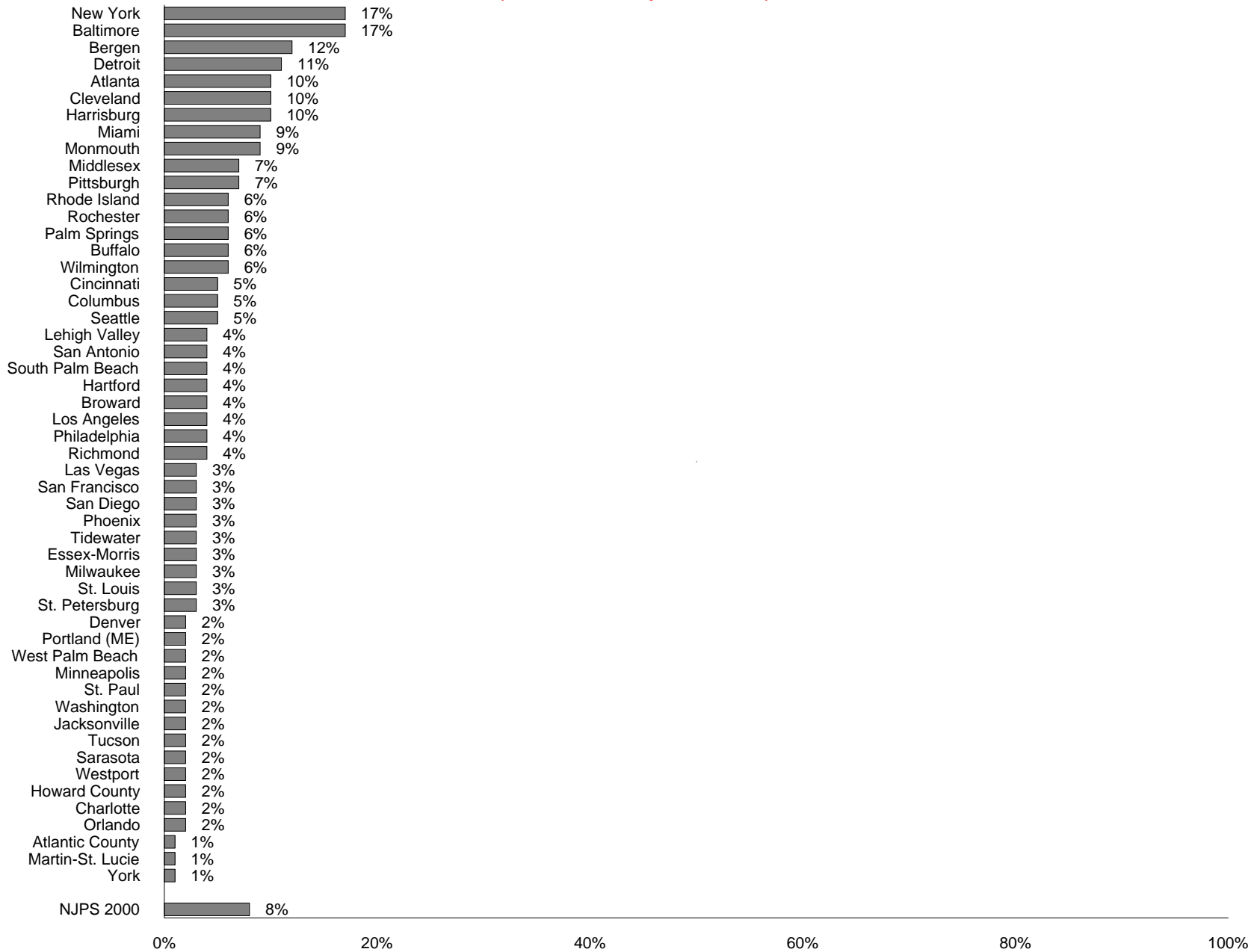
# JEWISH IDENTIFICATION

(Jewish Respondents)

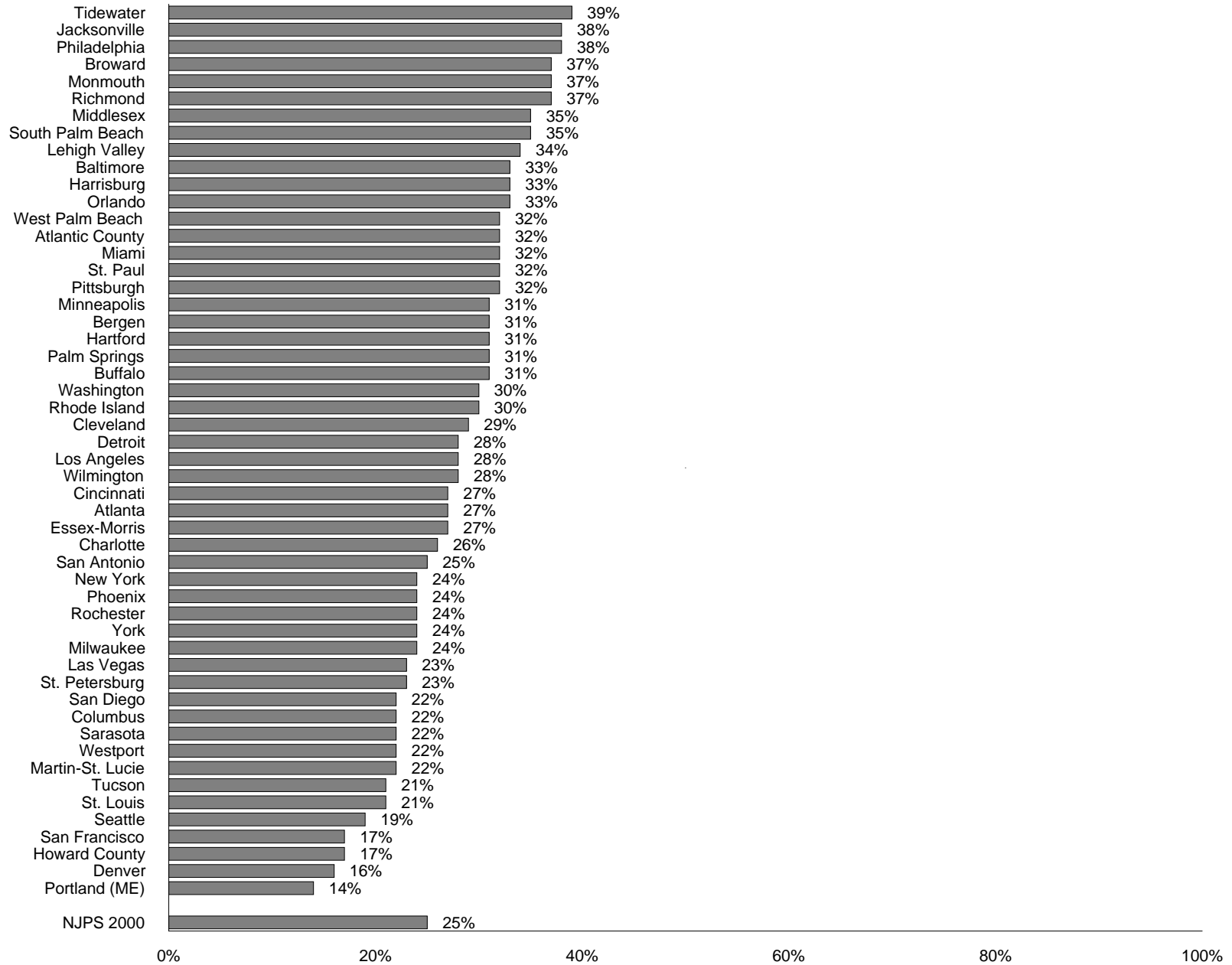


# ORTHODOX IDENTIFICATION

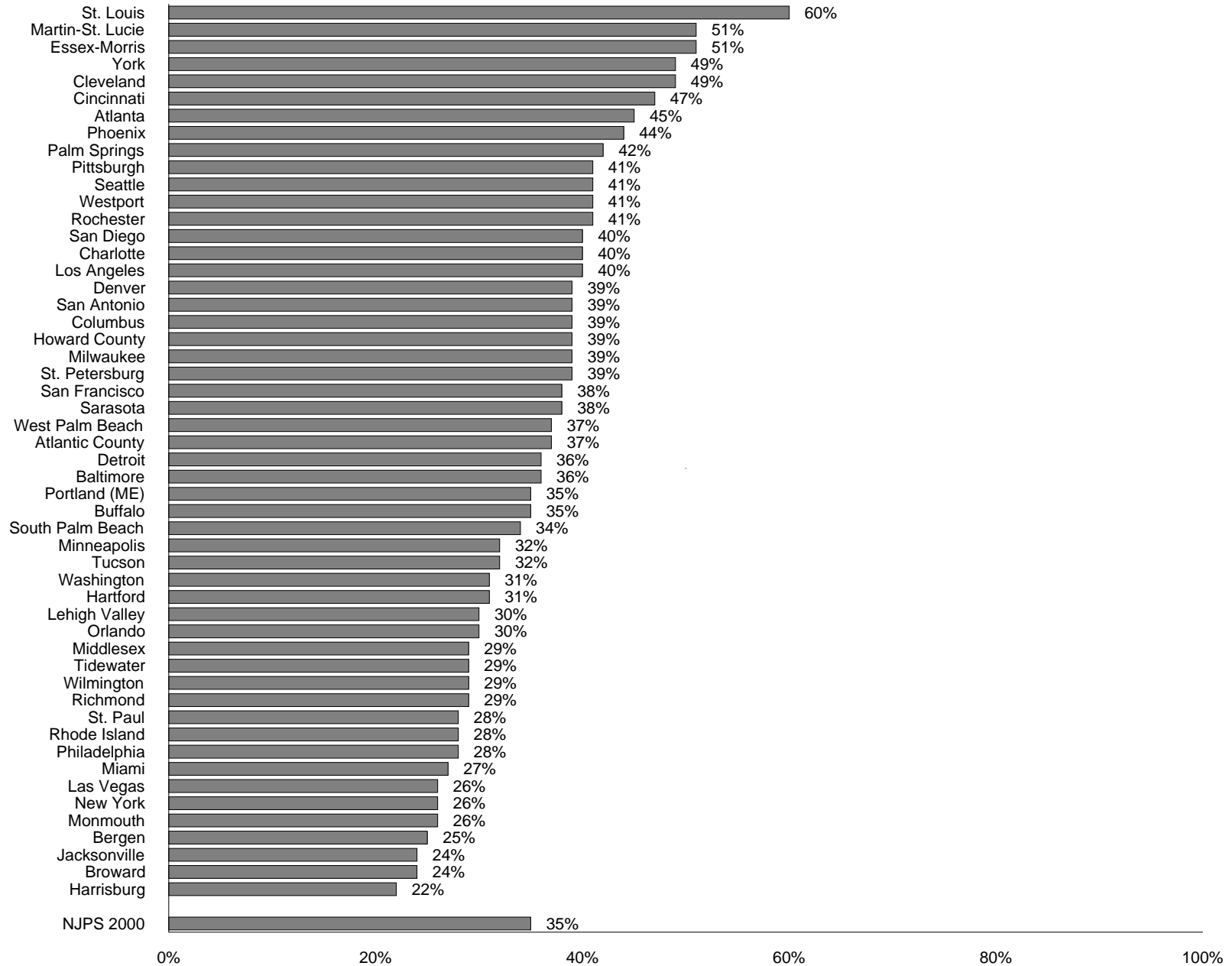
(Jewish Respondents)



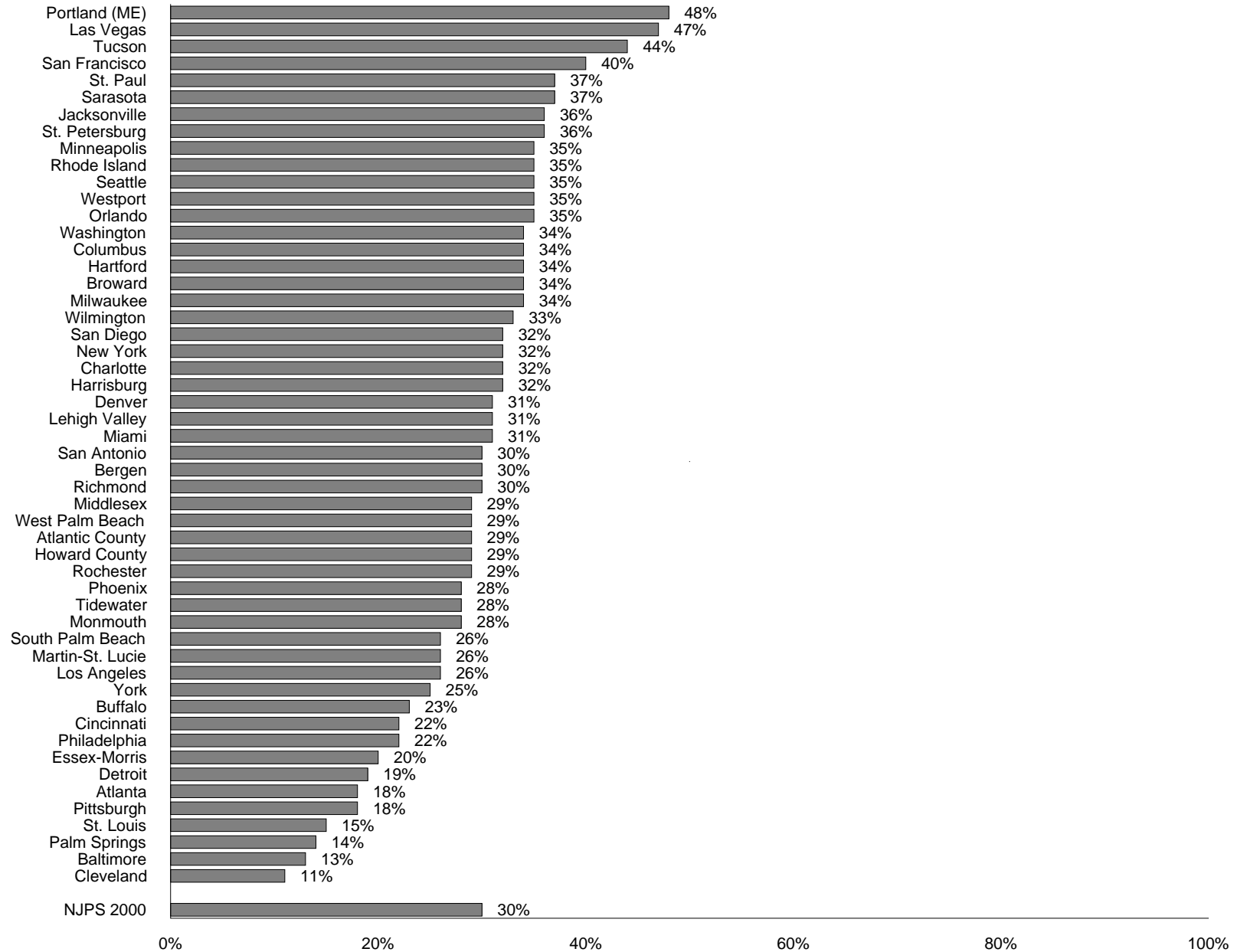
# CONSERVATIVE IDENTIFICATION (Jewish Respondents)



# REFORM IDENTIFICATION (Jewish Respondents)

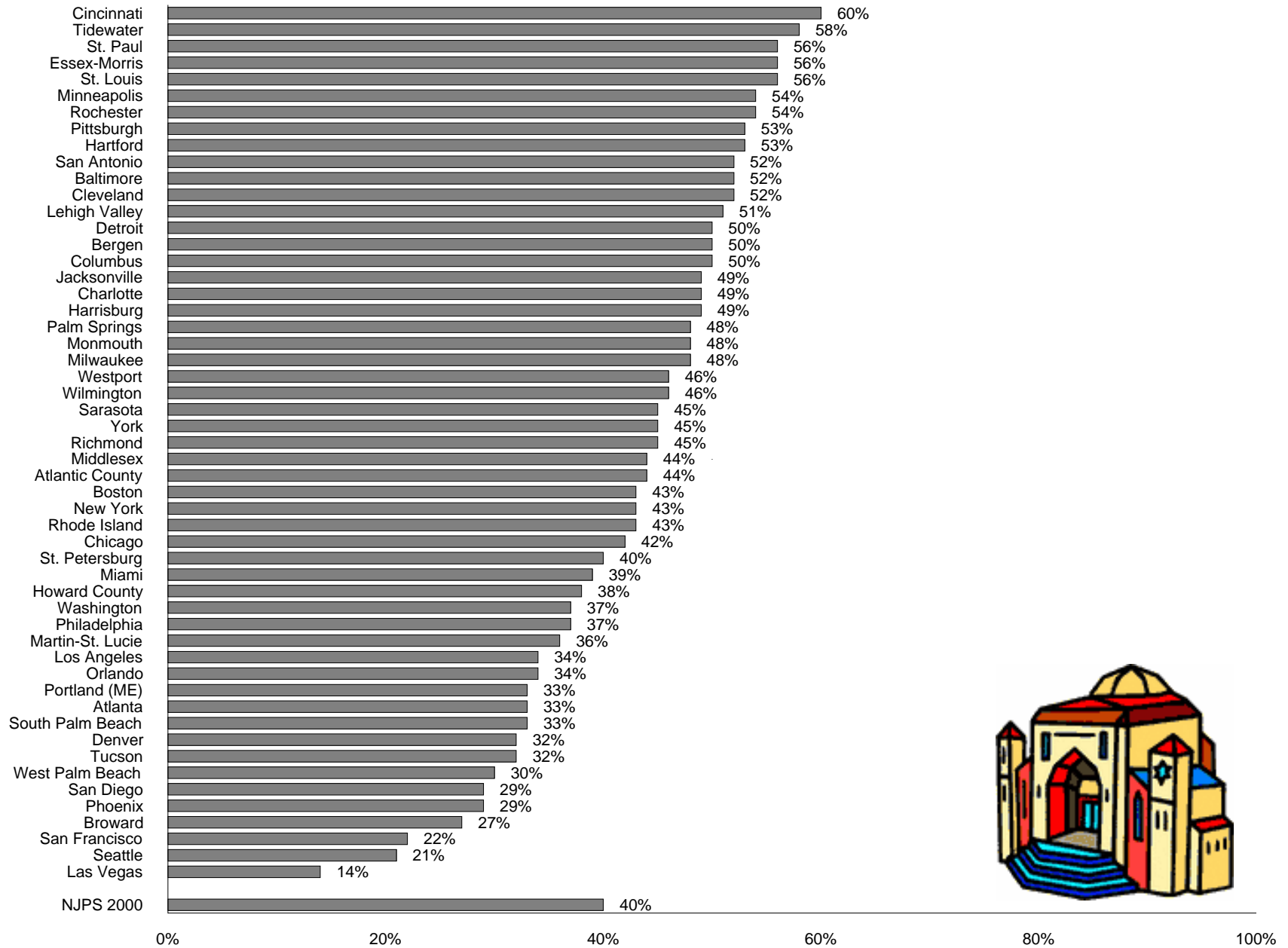


# JUST JEWISH IDENTIFICATION (Jewish Respondents)



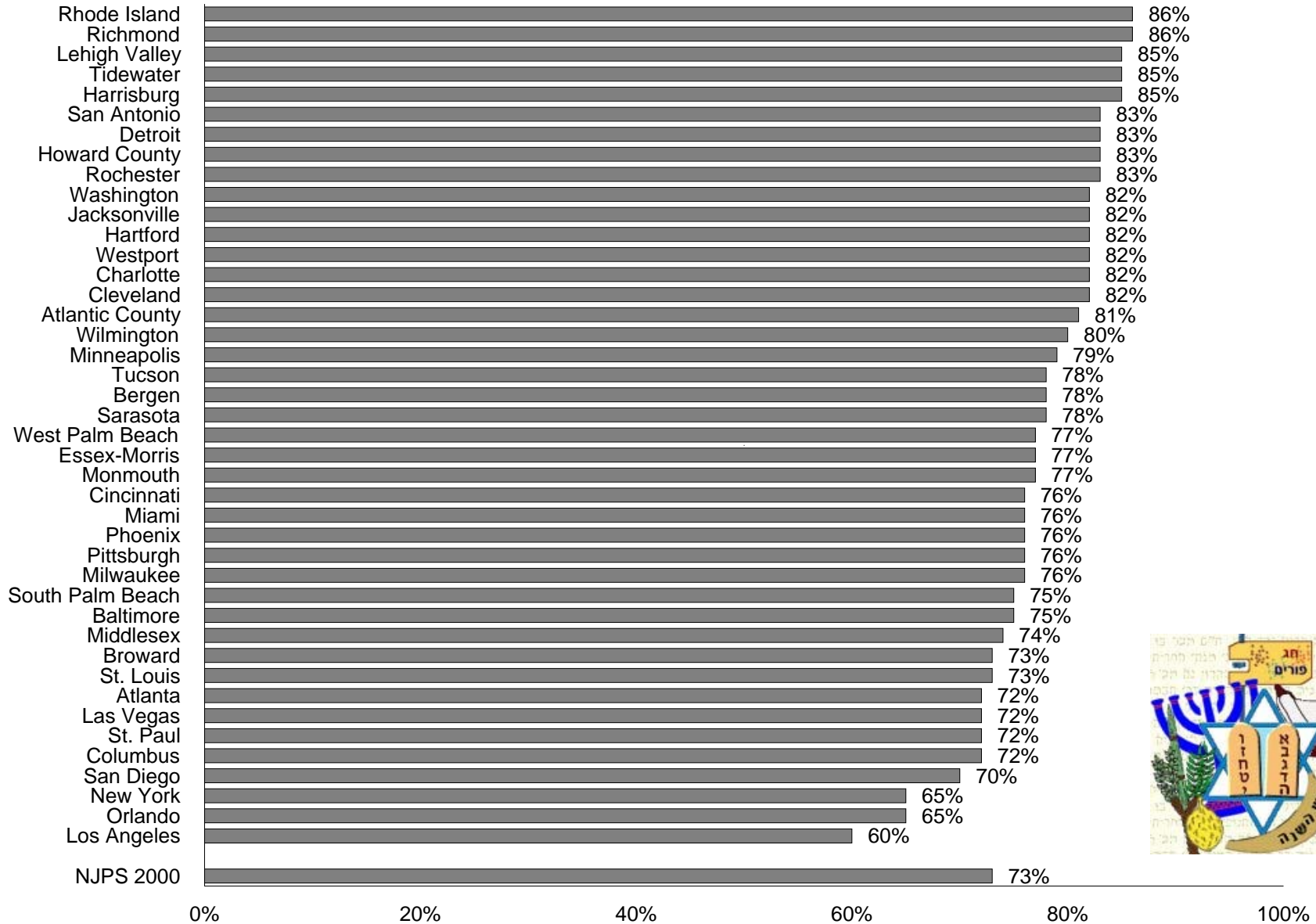
# REPORTED CURRENT SYNAGOGUE MEMBERSHIP

(Jewish Households)



# RECEIVED SOME FORMAL JEWISH EDUCATION AS A CHILD

(Born or Raised Jewish Adults)



**FIVE QUESTIONS:**

- 1) HOW MANY AMERICAN JEWS ARE THERE?**
- 2) IS THE JEWISH POPULATION INCREASING, DECREASING, OR REMAINING THE SAME?**
- 3) WHAT LIGHT DOES DATA ON JEWISH CONTINUITY HAVE TO SHED ON THE QUESTION OF THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN JEWS?**
- 4) WHAT ARE THE POLITICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE LIKELY FUTURE DECREASE IN THE US JEWISH POPULATION?**
- 5) WHAT INTERVENTIONS IS THE ORGANIZED JEWISH COMMUNITY TAKING TO COUNTERACT THE FORCES OF ASSIMILATION?**

**QUESTION 1:**  
**HOW MANY JEWS LIVE IN THE UNITED STATES?**

## DEFINING JEWS

- Both an ethnic group and a religious group
- Orthodox and Conservative: matrilineal descent
- Reform and Reconstructionist: patrilineal and matrilineal descent
- Israeli law of return: one Jewish grandparent
- Social Scientists studying American Jewry: “Consider Self Jewish” but no Messianics

## METHODS FOR COUNTING JEWS

- Jews are not counted in the US Census (except for Kiryas Joel, Monsey, and New Square)
- Older methods
  - Census variables: "mother tongue" and % Russian and Polish
  - Absences from school on Yom Kippur
  - Death records
- Current methods
  - Random digit dialing (RDD) Telephone Surveys
  - Distinctive Jewish Names Ratios
  - Key Informant/Internet estimates
  - Brandeis University meta-analysis

## RANDOM DIGIT DIALING

- Generate four numbers at random to go at the end of each area code/exchange code in the study area, resulting in 10-digit numbers.
  - 212-589-XXXX
- If a household is reached, inquire if anyone in the household is Jewish. Ask household size and whether each person in household is Jewish
- Calculate the percentage of households reached that are Jewish.

SCREENER

Hello. We are calling for a *population study* for the Jewish community sponsored by the San Antonio Jewish Federation. We are *NOT* asking for donations or selling anything AND we do not know your name or address. We *ARE* randomly interviewing households with one or more Jewish persons.

<p><b>Was anyone in your household born or raised Jewish, or is anyone currently Jewish?</b></p>		
<p>Yes ↓</p>	<p>A mixed response ↓</p>	<p>No ↓</p>
	<p><i>(There is a Jewish born or raised person in the household, but no one is currently Jewish.)</i></p> <p>↓</p>	<p><b>Since no one in your household is Jewish, let me just thank you for your time.</b></p> <p><b>Have a great (day/evening).</b></p>
<p><b>Great! My name is _____,</b> <i>(FIRST NAME ONLY)</i></p> <p><b>and your participation is important in helping the San Antonio Jewish community identify needs and plan for the future.</b></p> <p><b>Again, your answers will be anonymous.</b></p> <p><b>We do <i>NOT</i> know your name or address.</b></p> <p><b><i>DO THE SURVEY</i></b></p>	<p><b>So that we can properly understand your answer, would you please tell me what you mean when you say someone in your household was (born/raised) Jewish but is not currently Jewish?</b></p> <p>Continue with “My name is” for:</p> <p>Agnostic Atheist Doesn’t identify as Jewish No religion Non-observant Non-practicing Non-religious Non-Western religion (Buddhist) Nothing Secular</p> <p>“Not consider self Jewish, but has NOT converted out and is not a</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Messianic (Jews for Jesus, Hebrew Christian, Completed Jew)</li> <li>2. Converso, Marrano, Crypto Jew</li> <li>3. Converted to another religion</li> <li>4. Not formally converted to another religion, but regularly attends church or other services</li> <li>5. Grandparent was Jewish</li> <li>6. Father Jewish, but raised in another religion</li> <li>7. Mother Jewish, but raised in another religion</li> <li>8. Mother and father Jewish, but raised in another religion</li> <li>9. Father Jewish, but not raised in any religion</li> <li>10. Mother Jewish, but not raised in any religion</li> <li>11. Mother and father Jewish, but not raised in any religion</li> <li>12. Believes has some Jewish blood</li> <li>13. Black Hebrews</li> </ol>

## DISTINCTIVE JEWISH NAMES

• Berman	Gross	Lieberman
• Caplan	Grossman	Rosen
• Cohen	Jacobs	Rosenberg
• Epstein	Jaffe	Rosenthal
• Feldman	Kahn	Rubin
• Freedman	Kaplan	Schwartz
• Friedman	Katz	Shapiro
• Goldberg	Kohn	Siegel
• Goldman	Levin	Silverman
• Goldstein	Levine	Stern
• Goodman	Levinson	Weinstein
• Greenberg	Levy	Weiss

**ABOUT 8%-12% OF JEWS IN US HAVE ONE OF THESE NAMES**

## KEY INFORMANTS AND INTERNET ESTIMATES

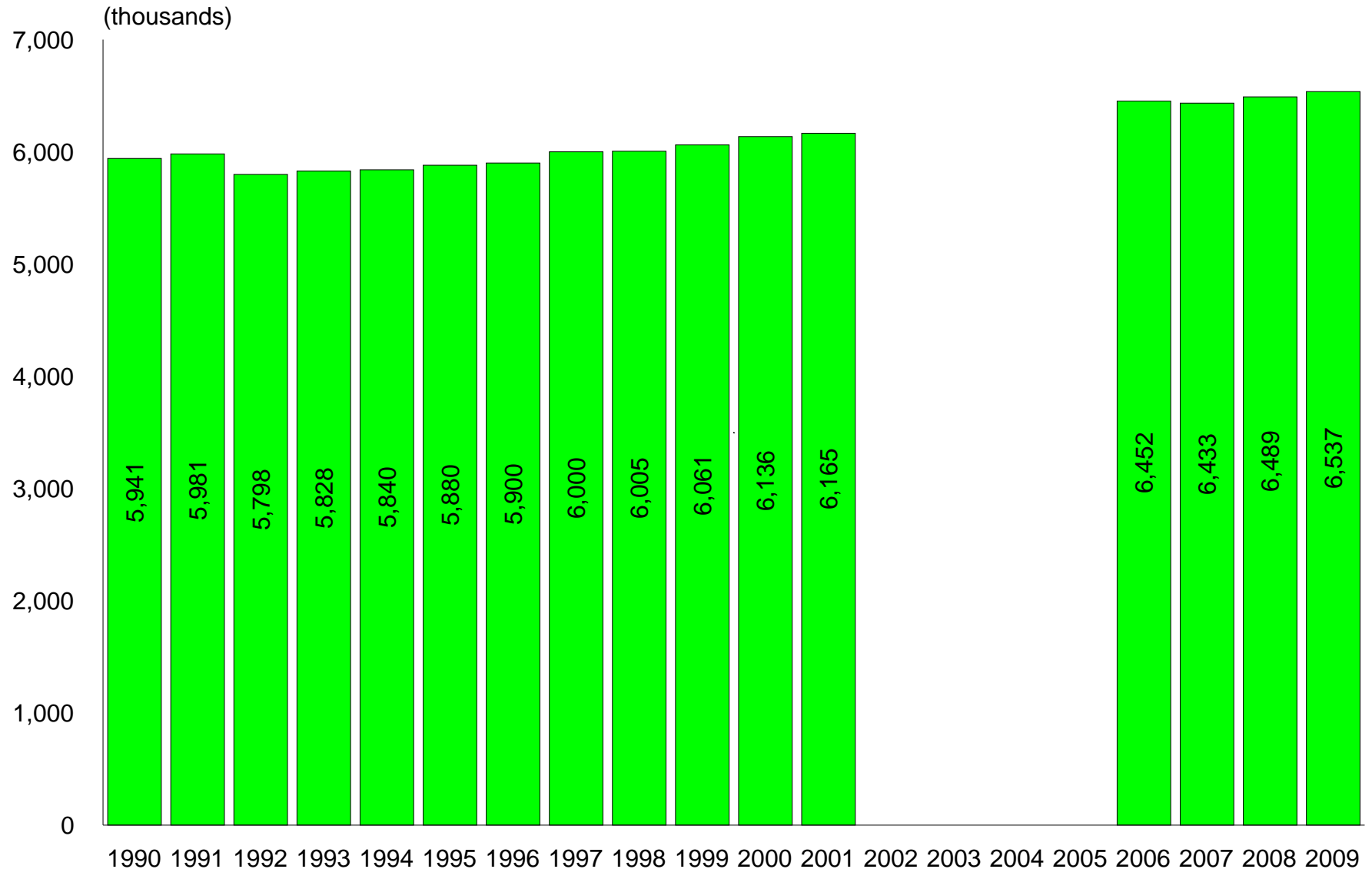
- Estimates of the Jewish population of over 1,000 American Jewish communities are summarized annually in the *American Jewish Year Book* (AJYB)
- When the results of an RDD survey or DJN procedure are available for a particular community, this is used in place of a key informant number
- Of the total number of Jews reported by the AJYB, more than 80% of that number is supported by RDD estimates of local Jewish communities made during the past 15 years

## THE VIRGINIA SECTION OF THE 2009 “AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK”

Virginia				
	1997-2001	Blacksburg-Radford	175	
	1997-2001	Charlottesville	1,500	
	1997-2001	Danville area	100	
	2009	Fredericksburg (parts of Spotsylvania, Stafford, King George, and Orange Counties)	500	
	1997-2001	Lynchburg area	275	
	1997-2001	Martinsville	100	
	1997-2001	Newport News-Hampton-Williamsburg-James City-York County, and Poquoson City	2,400	
	2008	<b>Norfolk (2001)</b>	3,550	
	2008	<b>Virginia Beach (2001)</b>	6,000	
	2008	<b>Chesapeake-Portsmouth-Suffolk (2001)</b>	1,400	
	2008	<b>Norfolk-Virginia Beach Total (2001)</b>		10,950
	2003	<b>Arlington-Alexandria-Falls Church (2003)</b>	28,000	
	2003	<b>South Fairfax-Prince William County (2003)</b>	25,000	
	2003	<b>West Fairfax-Loudoun County (2003)</b>	14,500	
	2003	<b>Greater Washington Total in Northern Virginia (2003)</b>		67,500
	2009	Petersburg-Colonial Heights-Hopewell	200	
	2006	<b>Central (1994)</b>	2,200	
	2006	<b>West End (1994)</b>	2,400	
	2006	<b>Far West End (1994)</b>	4,800	
	2006	<b>Northeast (1994)</b>	1,200	
	2006	<b>Southside (1994)</b>	1,900	
	2006	<b>Richmond (Henrico and Chesterfield Counties) Total (1994)</b>		12,500
	1997-2001	Roanoke	900	
	1997-2001	Staunton-Lexington (Augusta, Bath, Highland, Page, Rockingham, and Shenandoah Counties)	370	
	1997-2001	Winchester (Clarke, Frederick, Warren, and Winchester Counties)	270	
	1997-2001	Other places	150	
		<b>Total Virginia</b>	<b>97,890</b>	

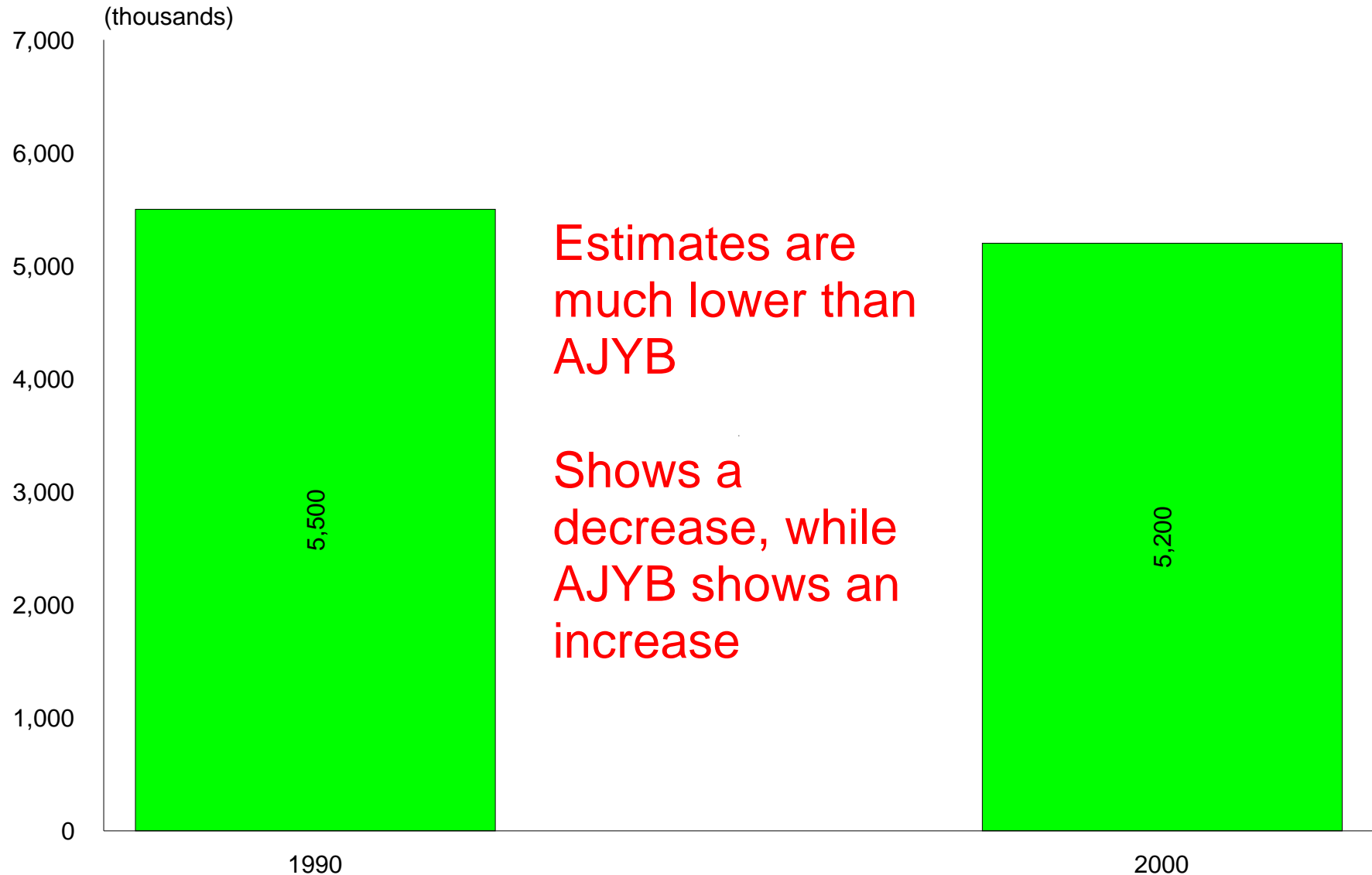
## NUMBER OF AMERICAN JEWS

### *AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK ESTIMATES*



Source: American Jewish Year Book (Schwartz and Scheckner until 2001, Sheskin and Dashefsky 2006-2009)

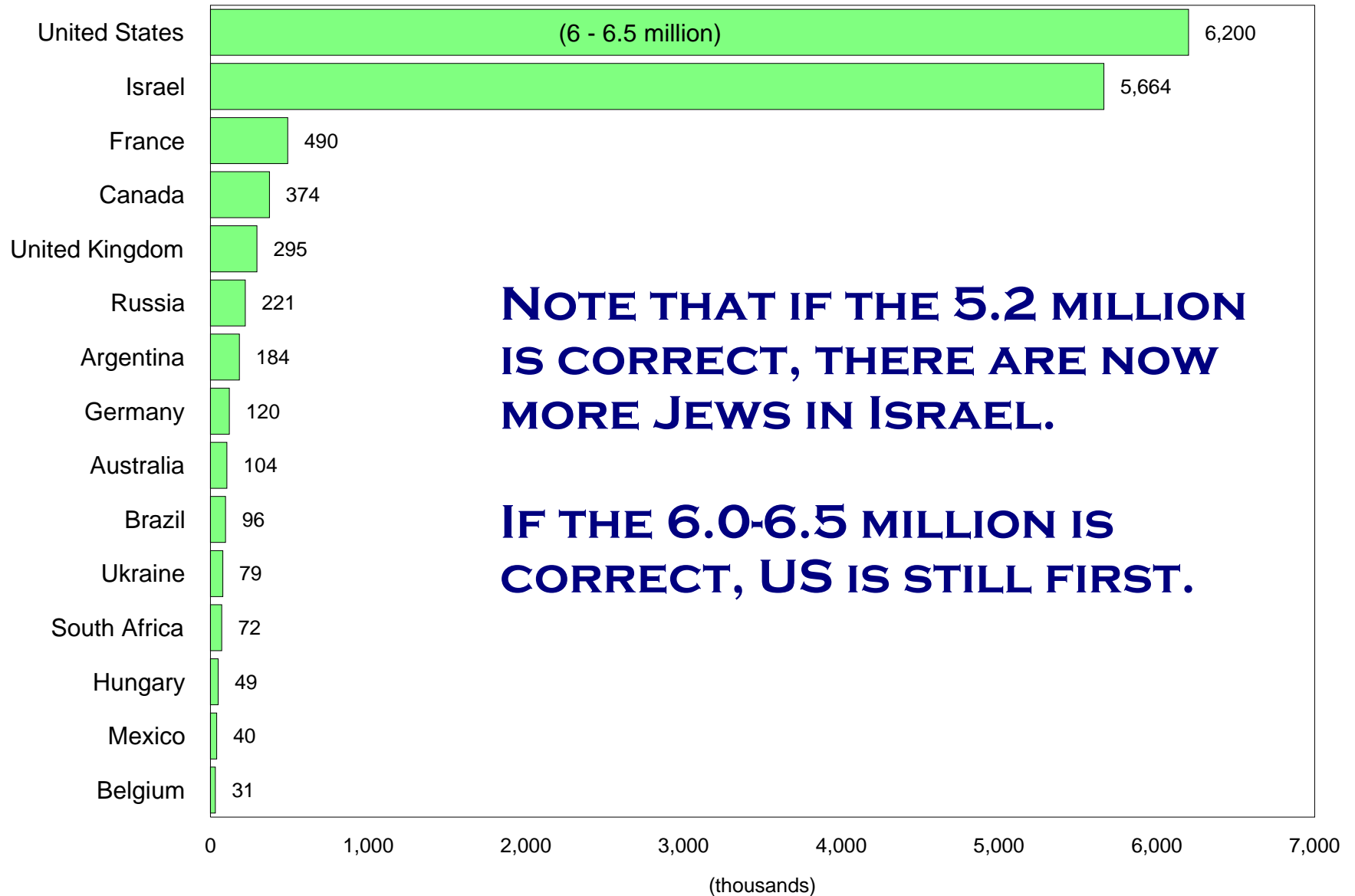
## NUMBER OF AMERICAN JEWS *NATIONAL JEWISH POPULATION SURVEY ESTIMATES*



## THE PROBLEM

- The AJYB estimate of 6.5 million is well above the NJPS estimate of 5.2 million in 2000
- Why?
- The NJPS estimate is too low
  - A disproportionate percentage of Jews refused to participate in NJPS 2000, resulting in an undercount
- The AJYB estimate is too high
  - Students
  - Snowbirds
  - Movers between Studies
  - No Studies in some communities (informants overstate)
  - Informants are not really knowledgeable and overestimate turns out not to be a reason: an analysis shows a 3% underreporting
  - The Brandeis University meta-analysis confirms the 6.0-6.4 million from the AJYB

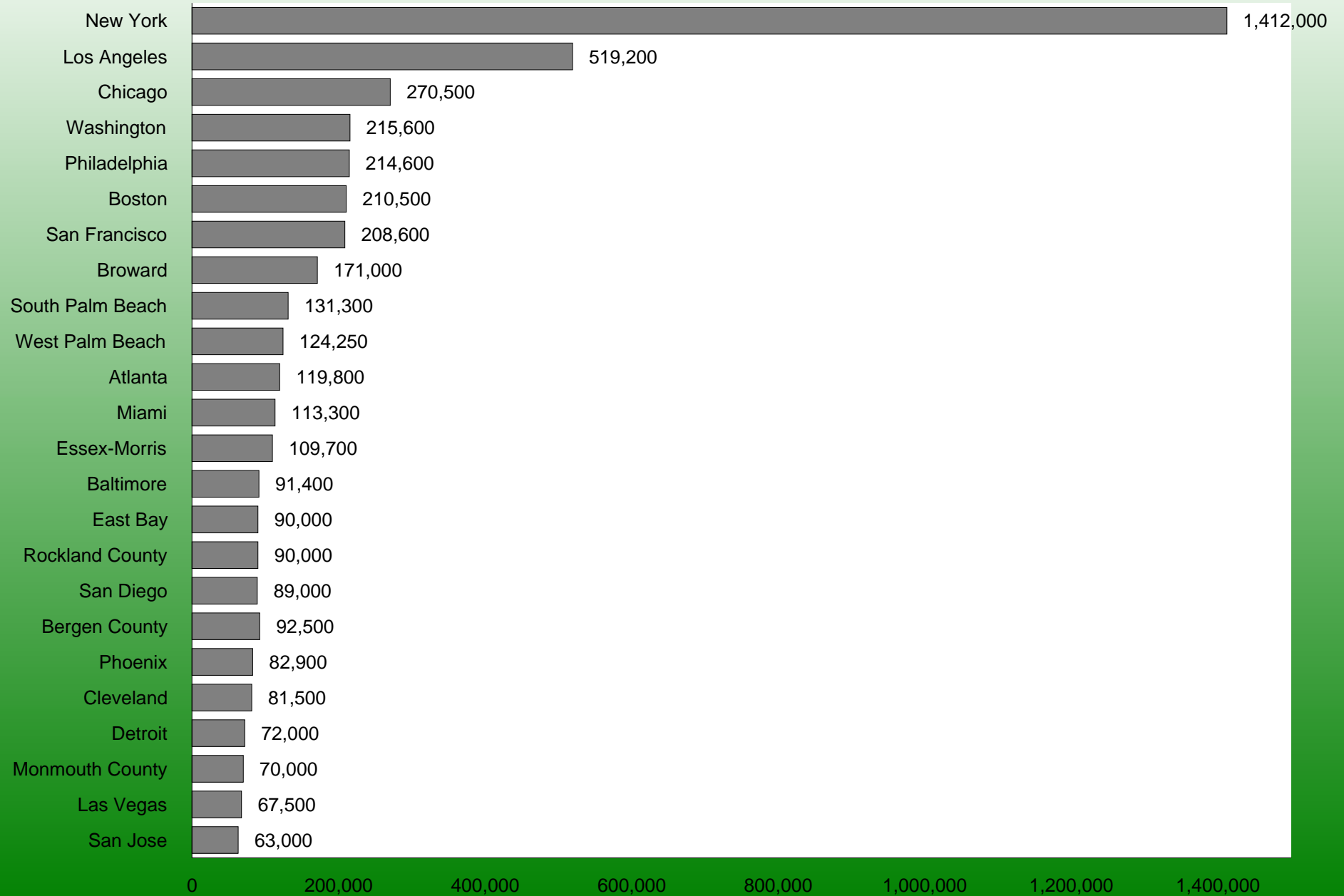
## LARGEST JEWISH POPULATIONS



Source: American Jewish Year Book (Sergio DellaPergola)

# 24 LARGEST AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITIES

(Number of Jews)

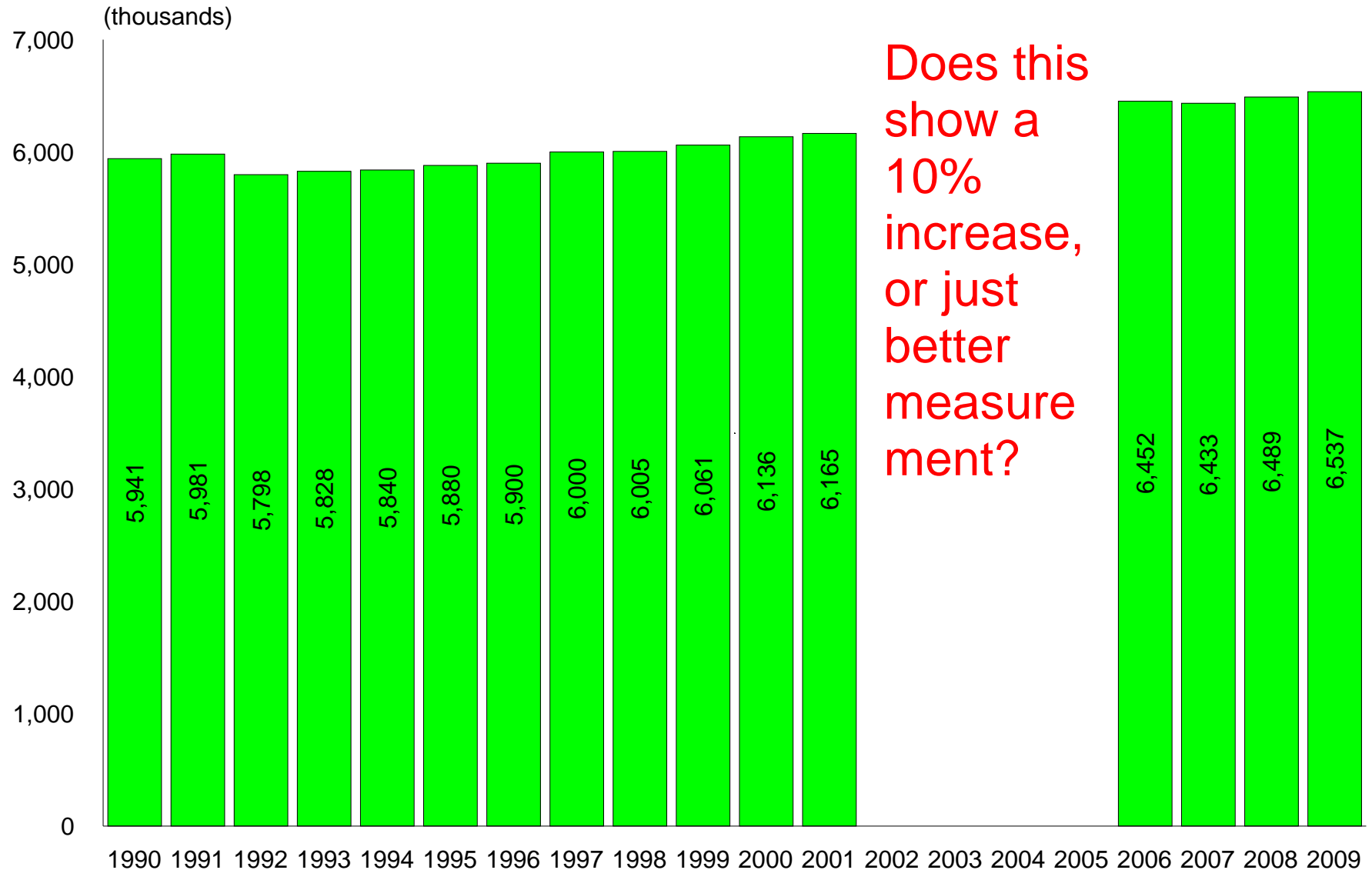


**QUESTION 2:**

**IS THE JEWISH POPULATION INCREASING, DECREASING,  
OR REMAINING THE SAME?**

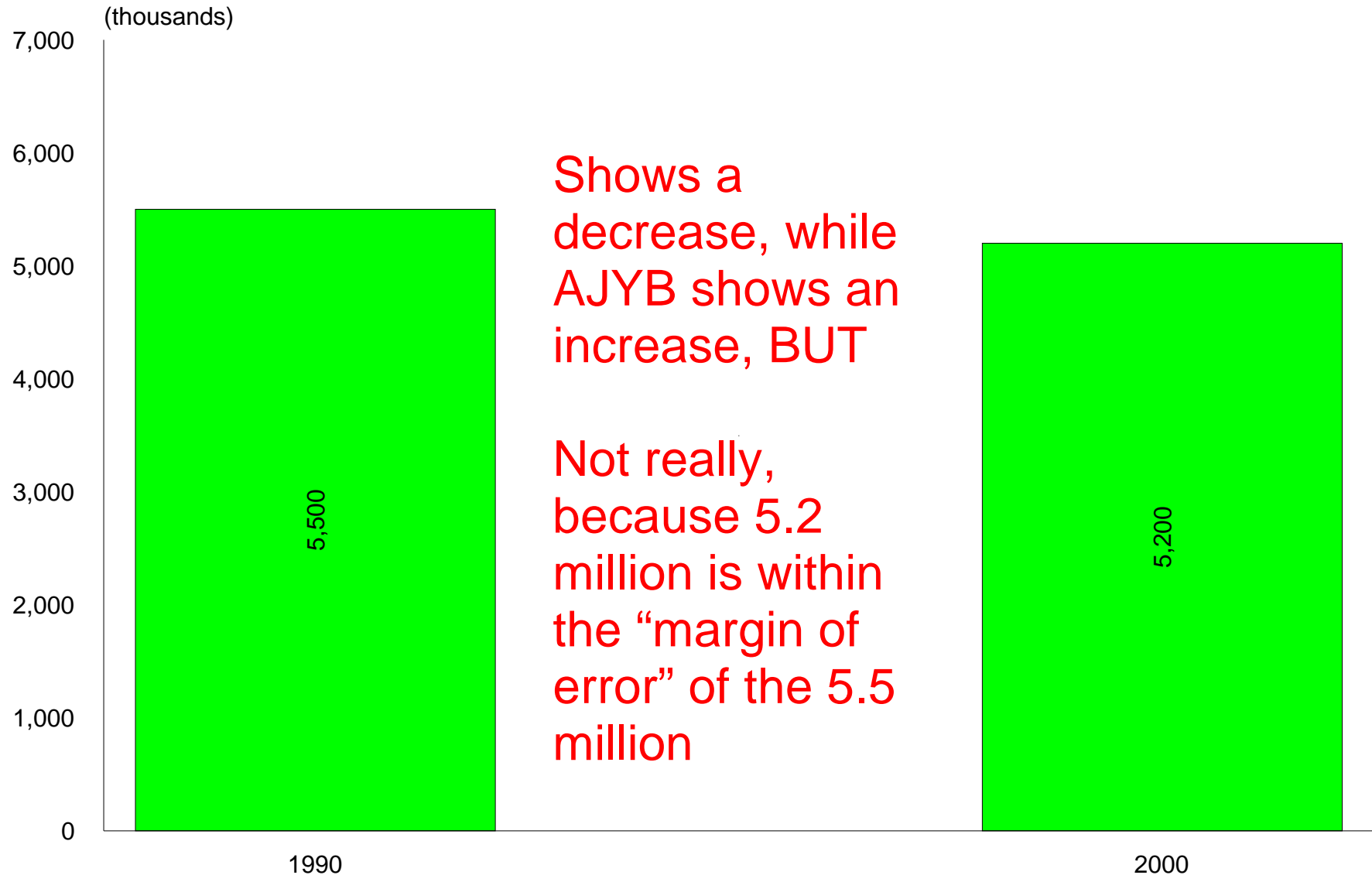
## NUMBER OF AMERICAN JEWS

### *AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK ESTIMATES*

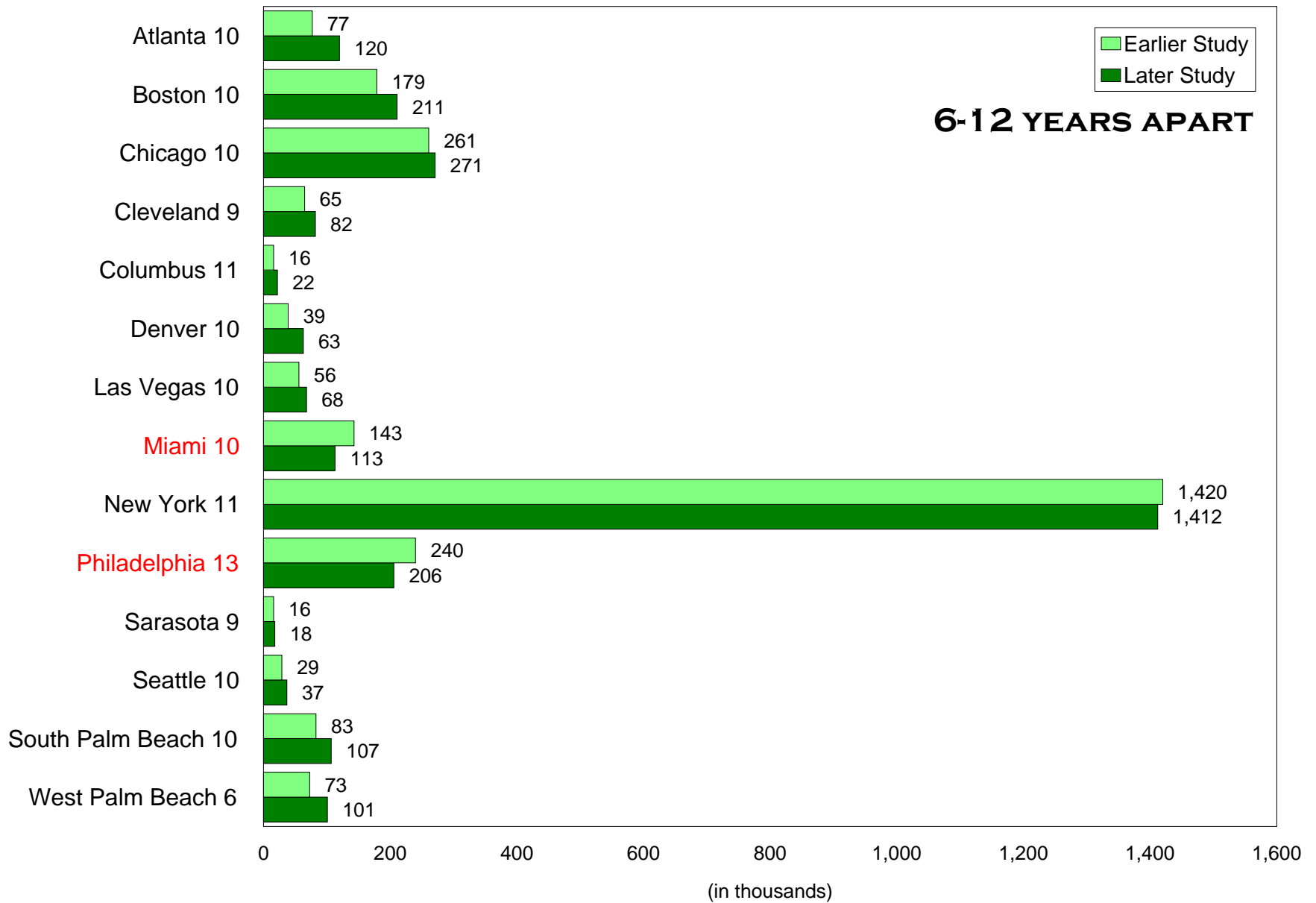


Source: American Jewish Year Book (Schwartz and Scheckner until 2001, Sheskin and Dashefsky 2006-2009)

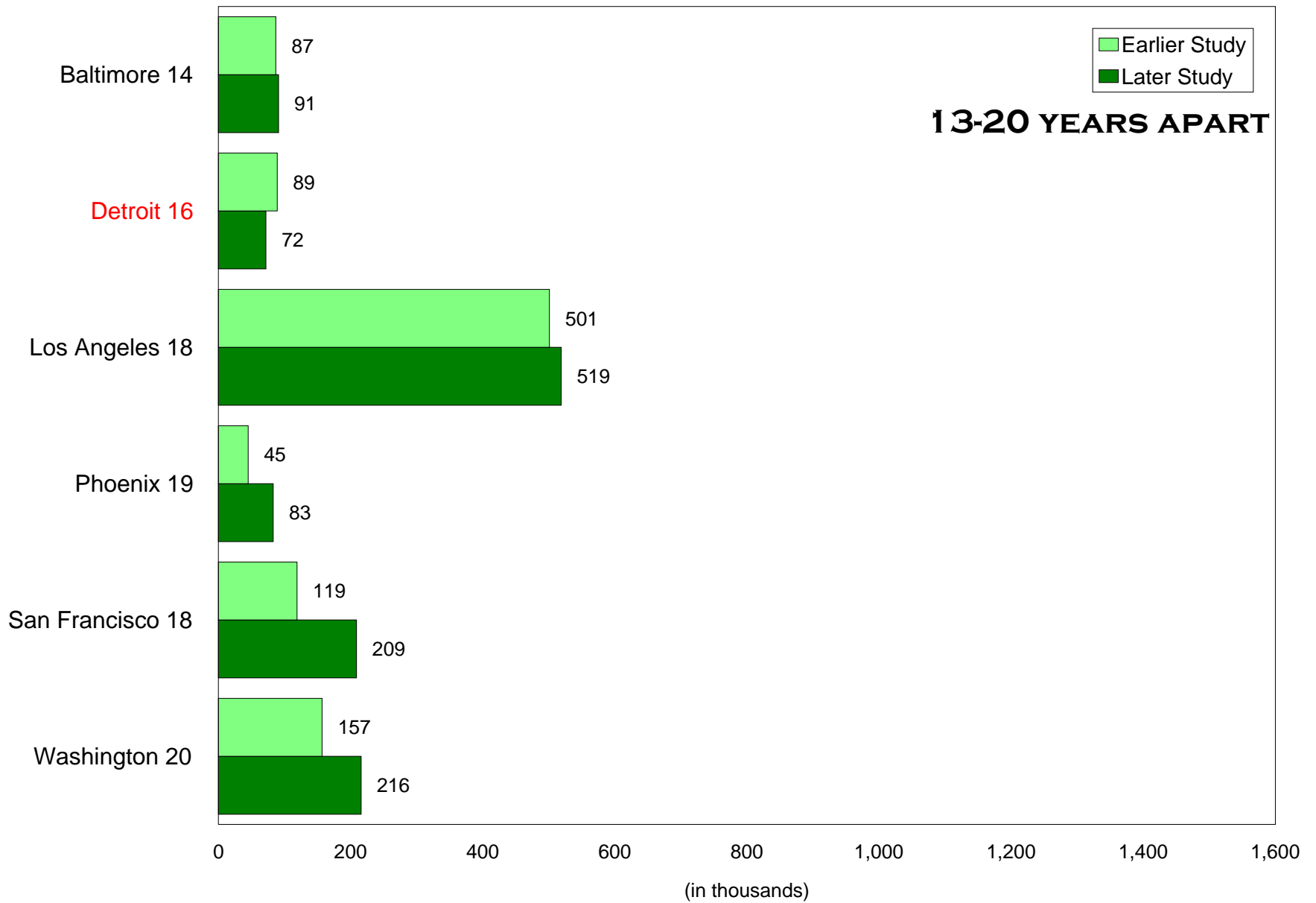
## NUMBER OF AMERICAN JEWS *NATIONAL JEWISH POPULATION SURVEY ESTIMATES*



# CHANGES IN THE JEWISH POPULATION



# CHANGES IN THE JEWISH POPULATION



# 50 INCREASING, DECREASING, OR REMAINING THE SAME?

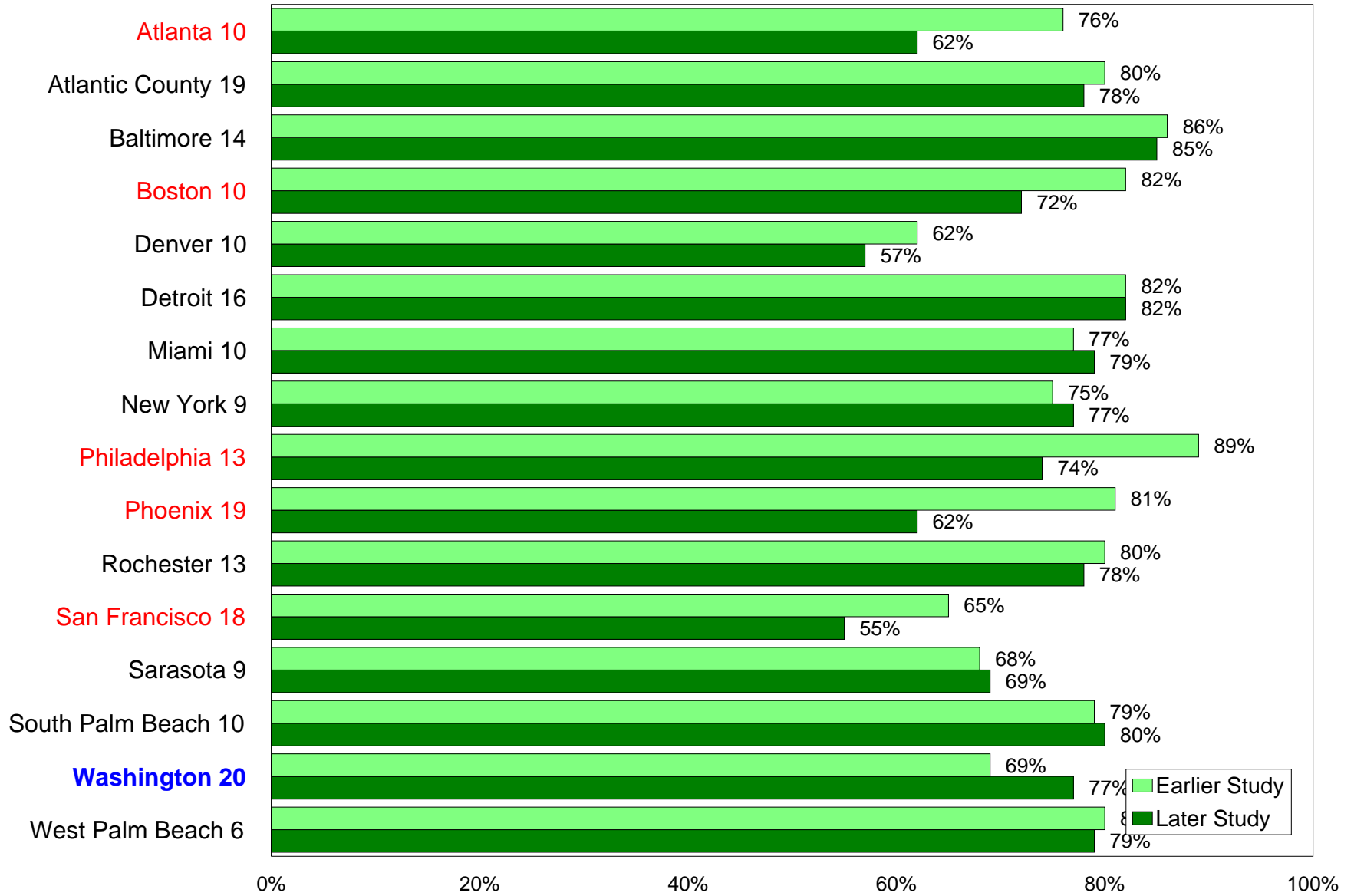
- The data seem to show a Jewish population that has remained relatively constant over the past couple of decades (probably because of the in-migration from the FSU), but which is likely to decrease in the future due to:
  - a fertility rate of 1.9, not all of who will be raised as Jews
  - a high percentage of elderly
  - a significant number of persons who “opt out”

**QUESTION 3:**

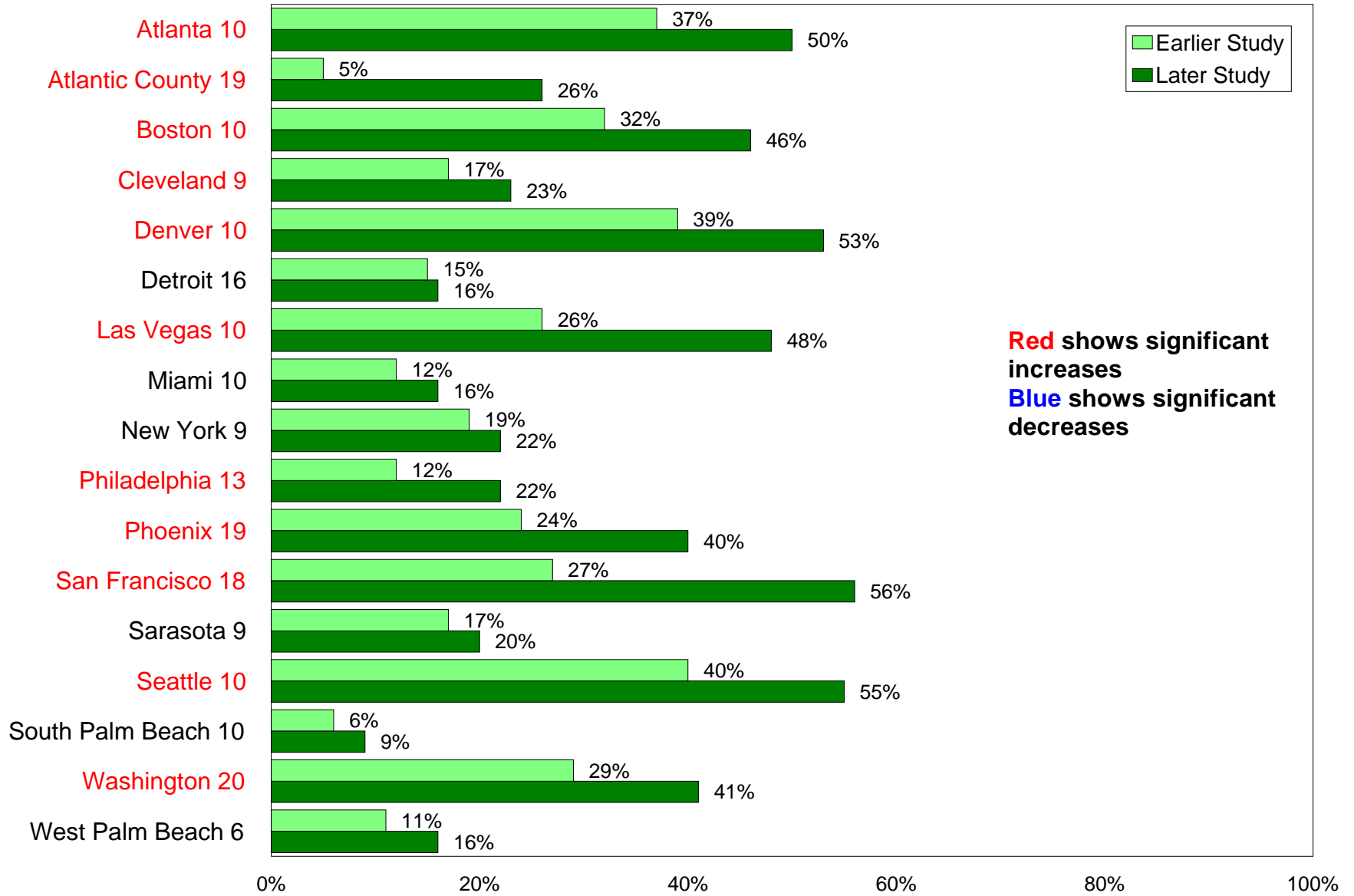
**WHAT LIGHT DOES DATA ON JEWISH CONTINUITY HAVE  
TO SHED ON THE QUESTION OF THE FUTURE OF  
AMERICAN JEWS?**

# CHANGES IN ALWAYS/USUALLY PARTICIPATE IN A PASSOVER SEDER

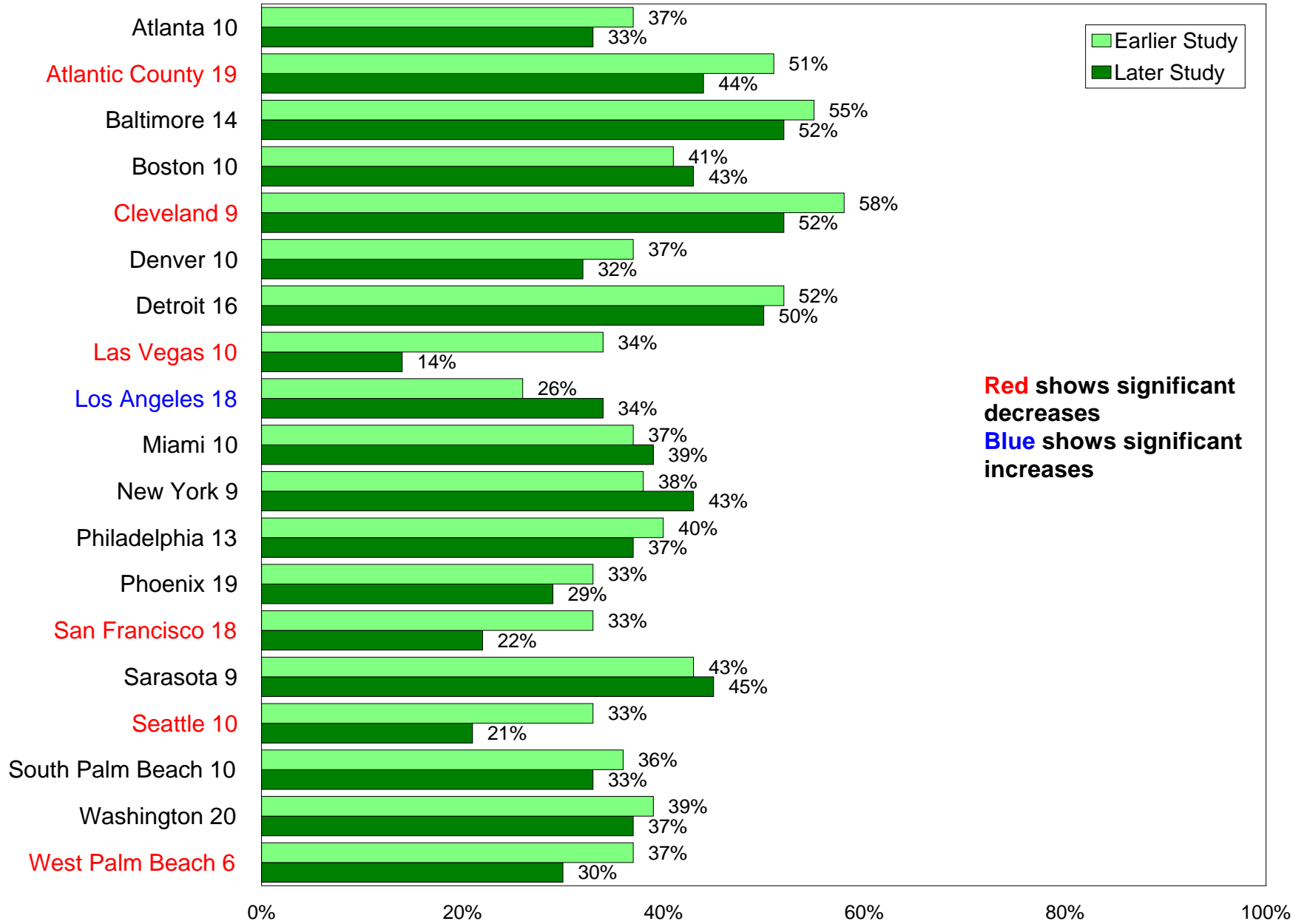
Red shows significant decreases  
Blue shows significant increases



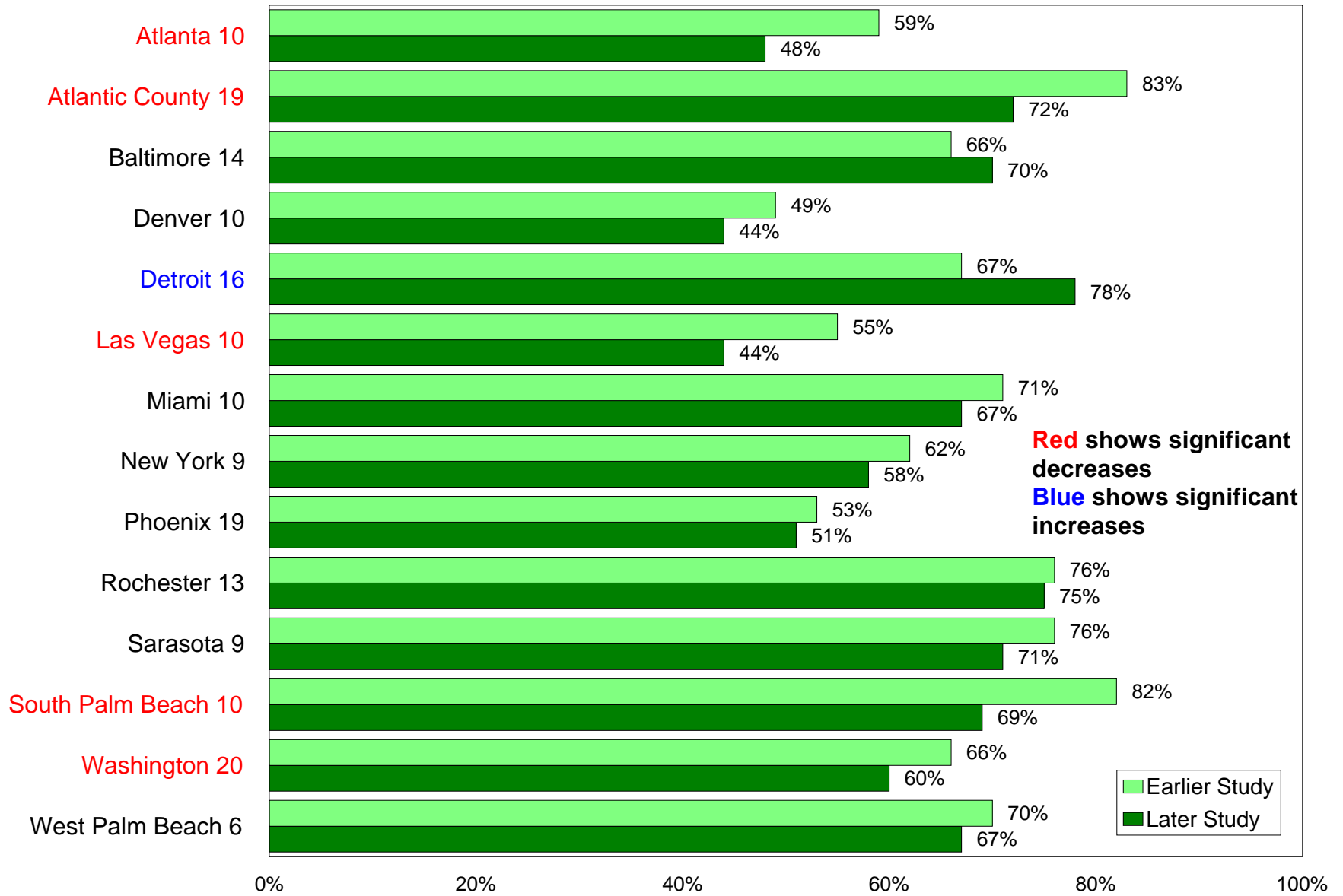
# CHANGES IN COUPLES INTERMARRIAGE RATE



# CHANGES IN SYNAGOGUE MEMBERSHIP



# CHANGES IN DONATED TO JEWISH CHARITIES IN THE PAST YEAR



**QUESTION 4:**

**WHAT ARE THE POLITICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE LIKELY FUTURE DECREASE IN THE US JEWISH POPULATION?**

## POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

- Jews are either 1.7% or 2.1% of the American population depending on whether NJPS or AJYB is correct.
- Jewish political influence comes from the Electoral College and from Jews concentrating in certain states
- Political influence will be dependent on a core group of politically-active Jews who donate and campaign
- But eventually, decreasing numbers will impact the ability of the Jewish community to impact policy

## PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

- Many Jews, who have themselves chosen to become less involved in Jewish life, feel that the "correctness" or "inevitability" of their choice has been confirmed by the fact that many others have followed the same path.
- Other Jews reacted with alarm at the implications of the findings of significant increases in intermarriage. Determined to reverse the trends, Jewish continuity was made a priority in many American Jewish communities (and in the Jewish community nationally) and addressed by "Jewish continuity commissions" in many Jewish communities. This led to additional funding for both formal and informal Jewish education and for programs like Birthright Israel.

## ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

- Cost of being Jewish is often a major reason for non-participation.
- As the number of Jews decreases, particularly in small communities, the costs of running the community per remaining household increases.
- Miami decreasing from 143,000 Jews to 113,000 Jews over a decade has less impact than decreases in small communities

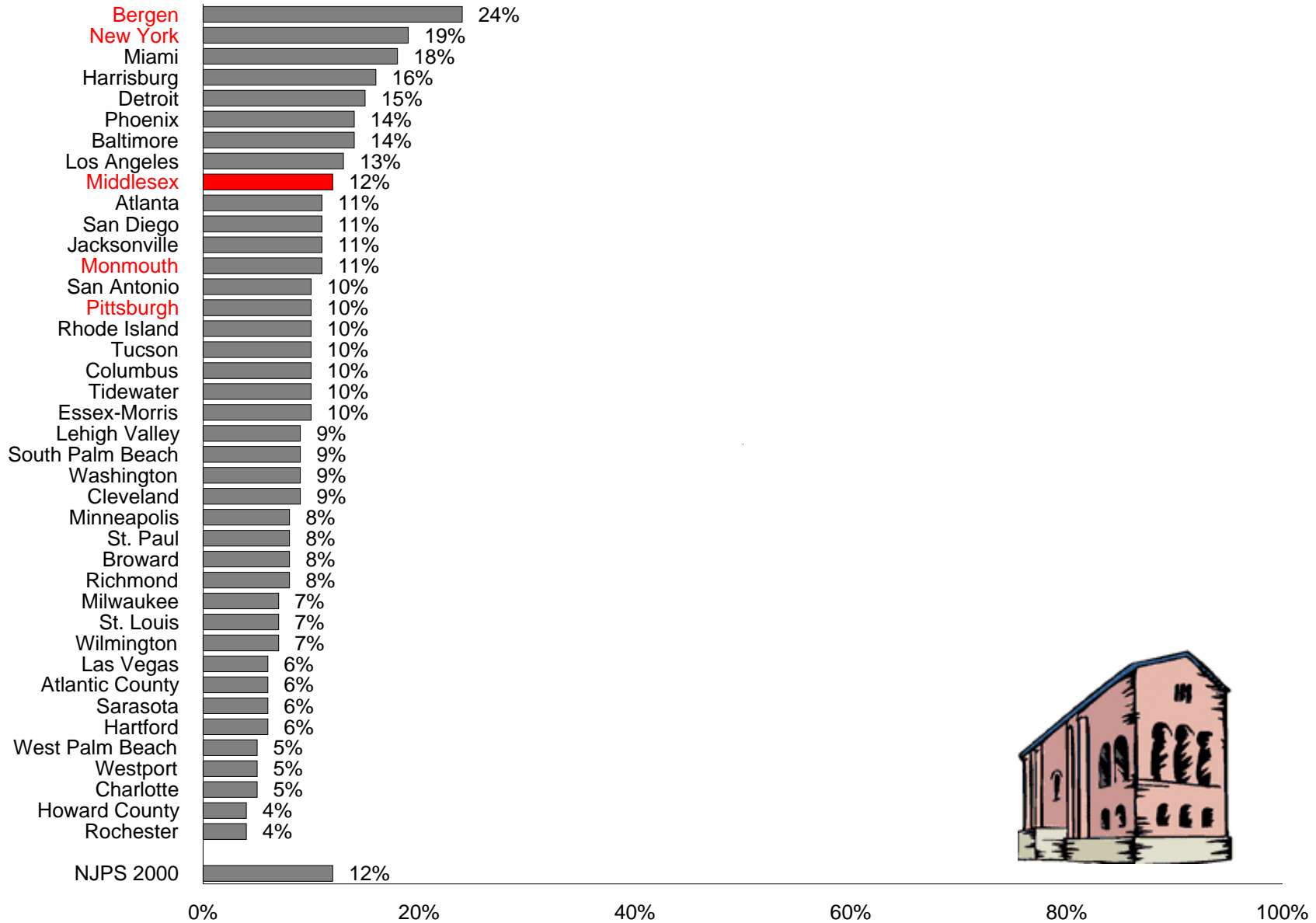
**QUESTION 5:**

**WHAT INTERVENTIONS IS THE ORGANIZED JEWISH  
COMMUNITY TAKING TO COUNTERACT THE FORCES OF  
ASSIMILATION?**

**USING MIDDLESEX COUNTY 2008 DATA TO ILLUSTRATE**

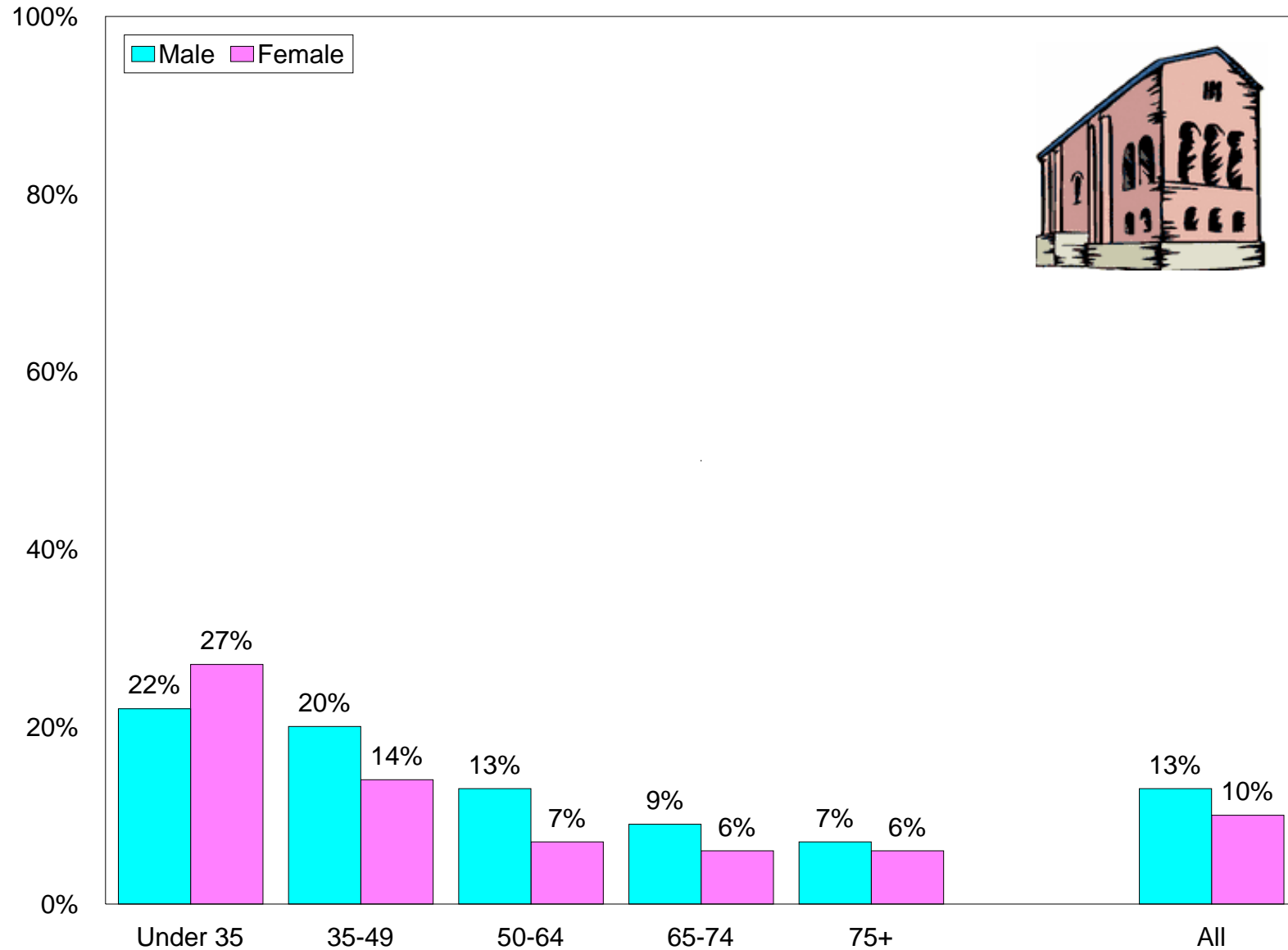
# ATTENDED A JEWISH DAY SCHOOL AS A CHILD

(Born or Raised Jewish Adults)



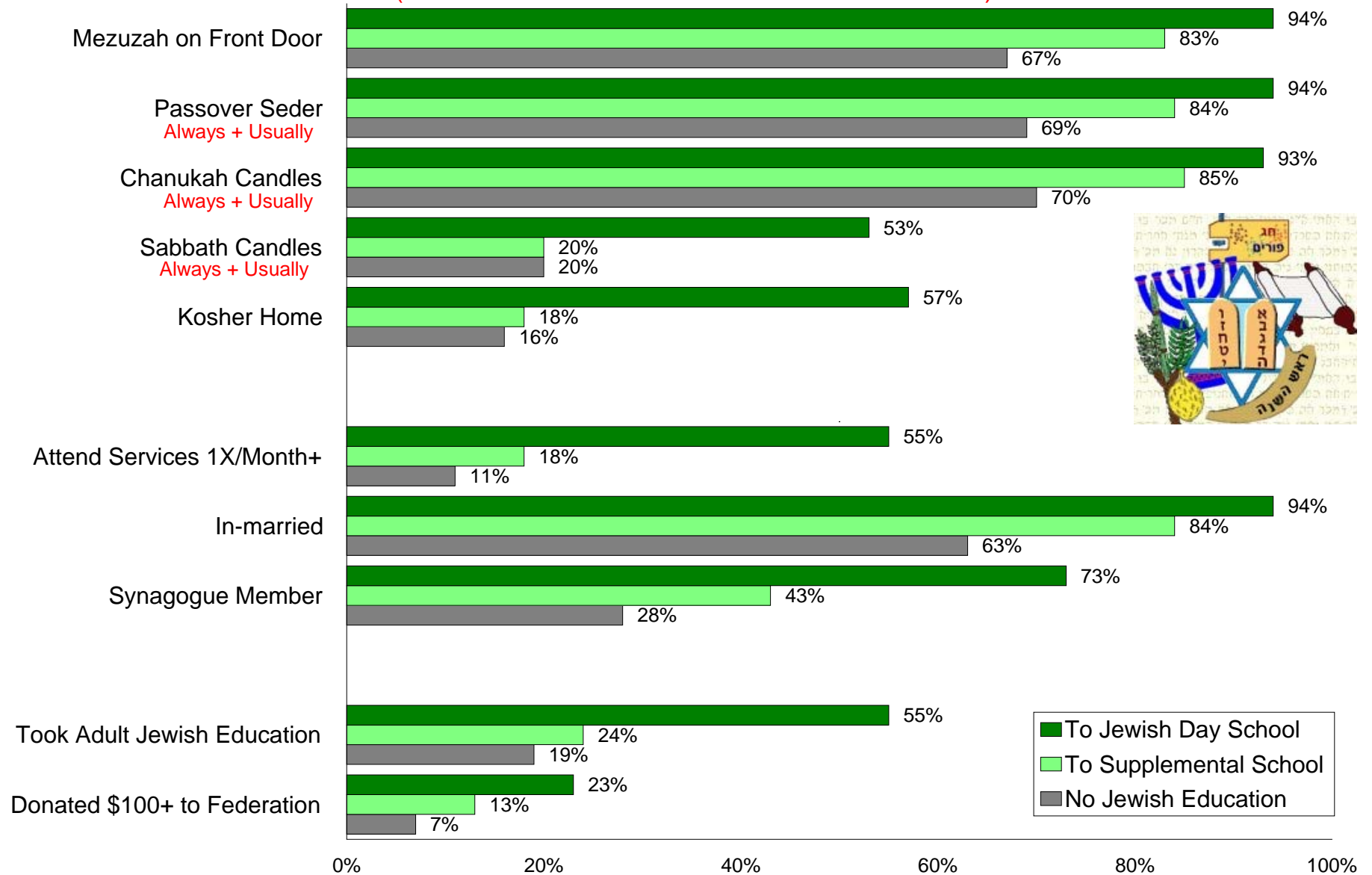
## ATTENDED A JEWISH DAY SCHOOL AS A CHILD BY AGE AND SEX

(Born or Raised Jewish Adults)



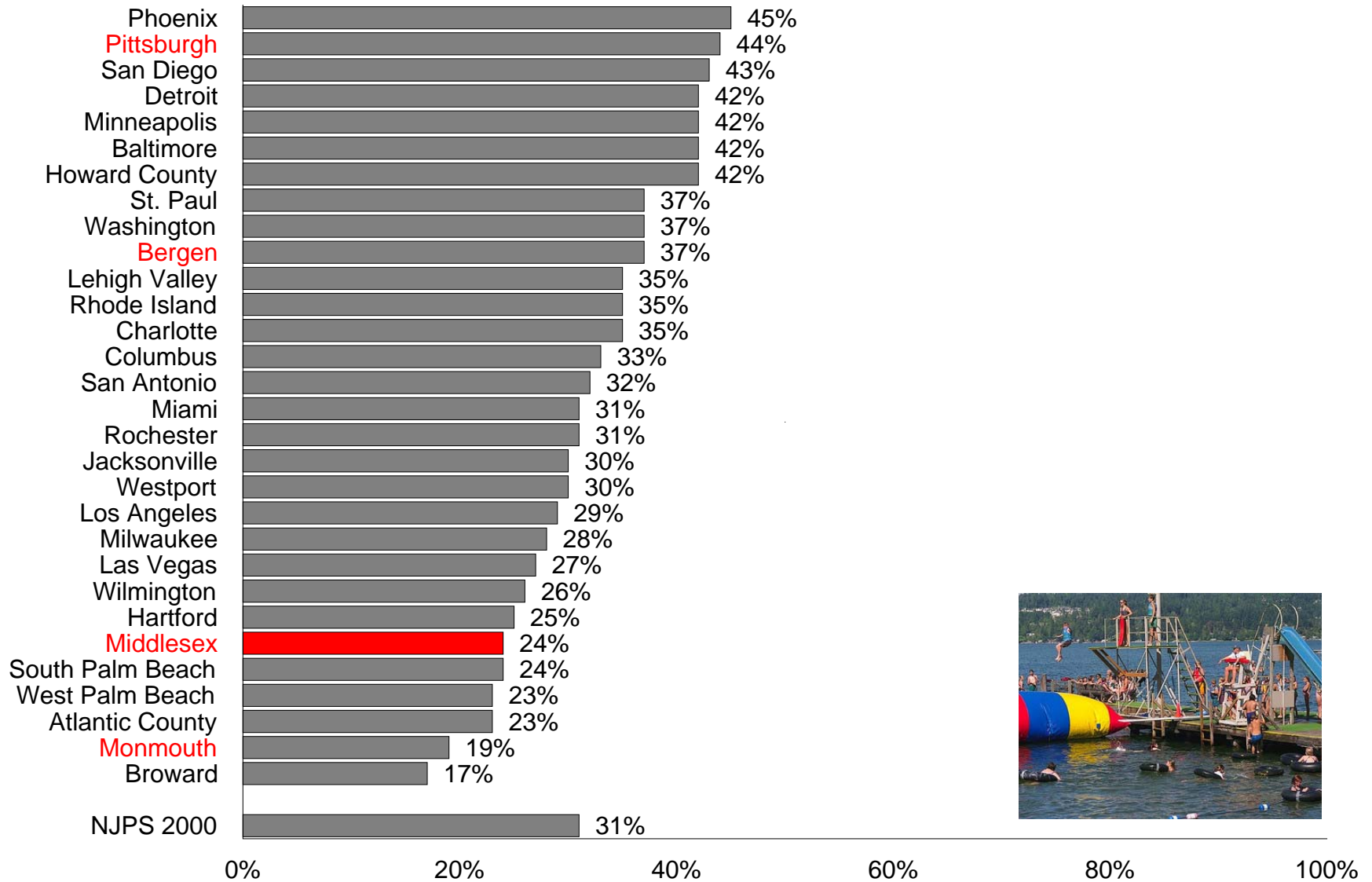
# 63 HOUSEHOLDS IN WHICH AN ADULT RECEIVED SOME FORMAL JEWISH EDUCATION AS A CHILD

Correlation with Adult Jewish Behaviors  
(Households with Born or Raised Jewish Adults)



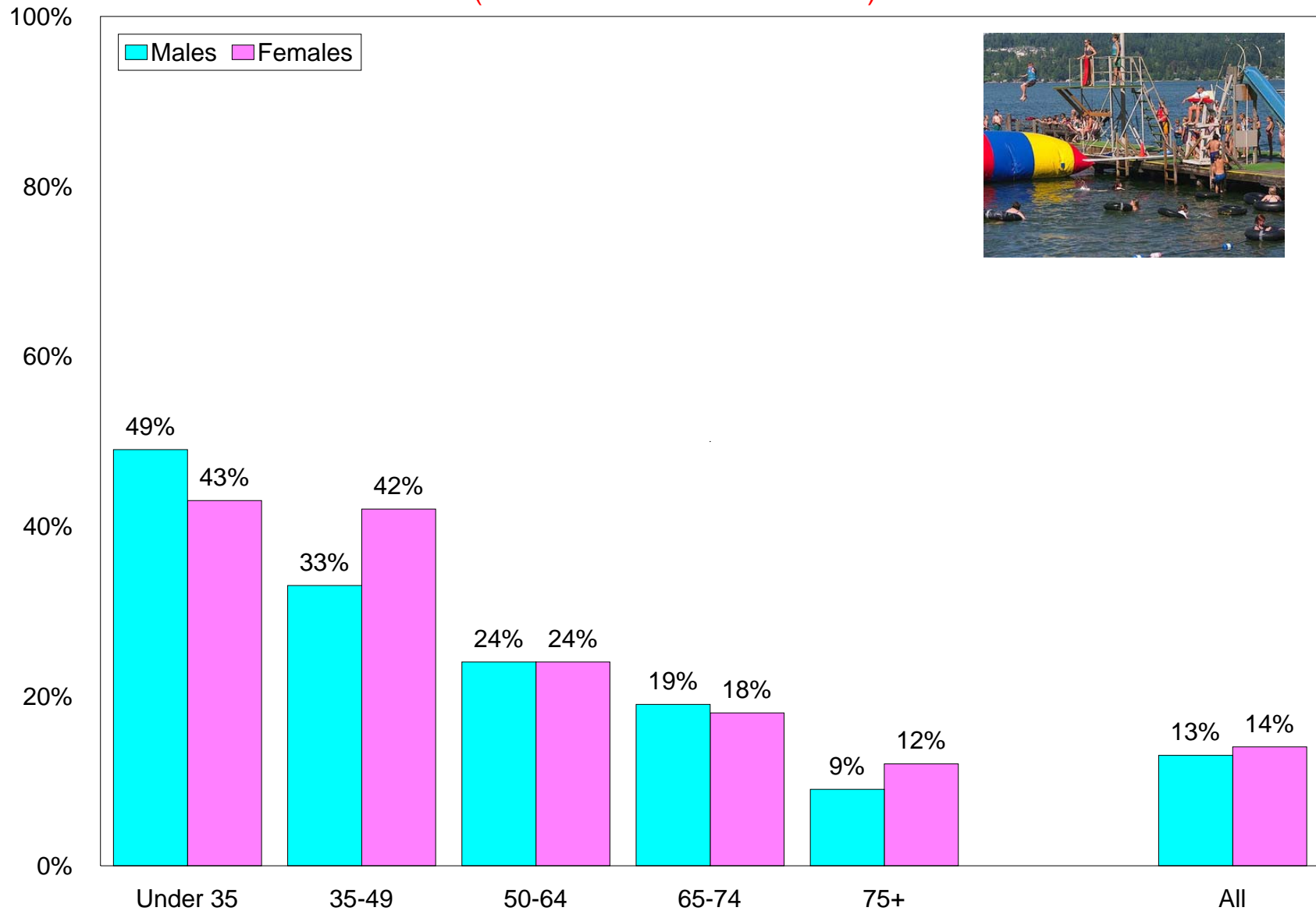
# ATTENDED OR WORKED AT A JEWISH SLEEP AWAY CAMP AS A CHILD

(Born or Raised Jewish Adults)



# ATTENDED OR WORKED AT A JEWISH SLEEP AWAY CAMP AS A CHILD BY AGE

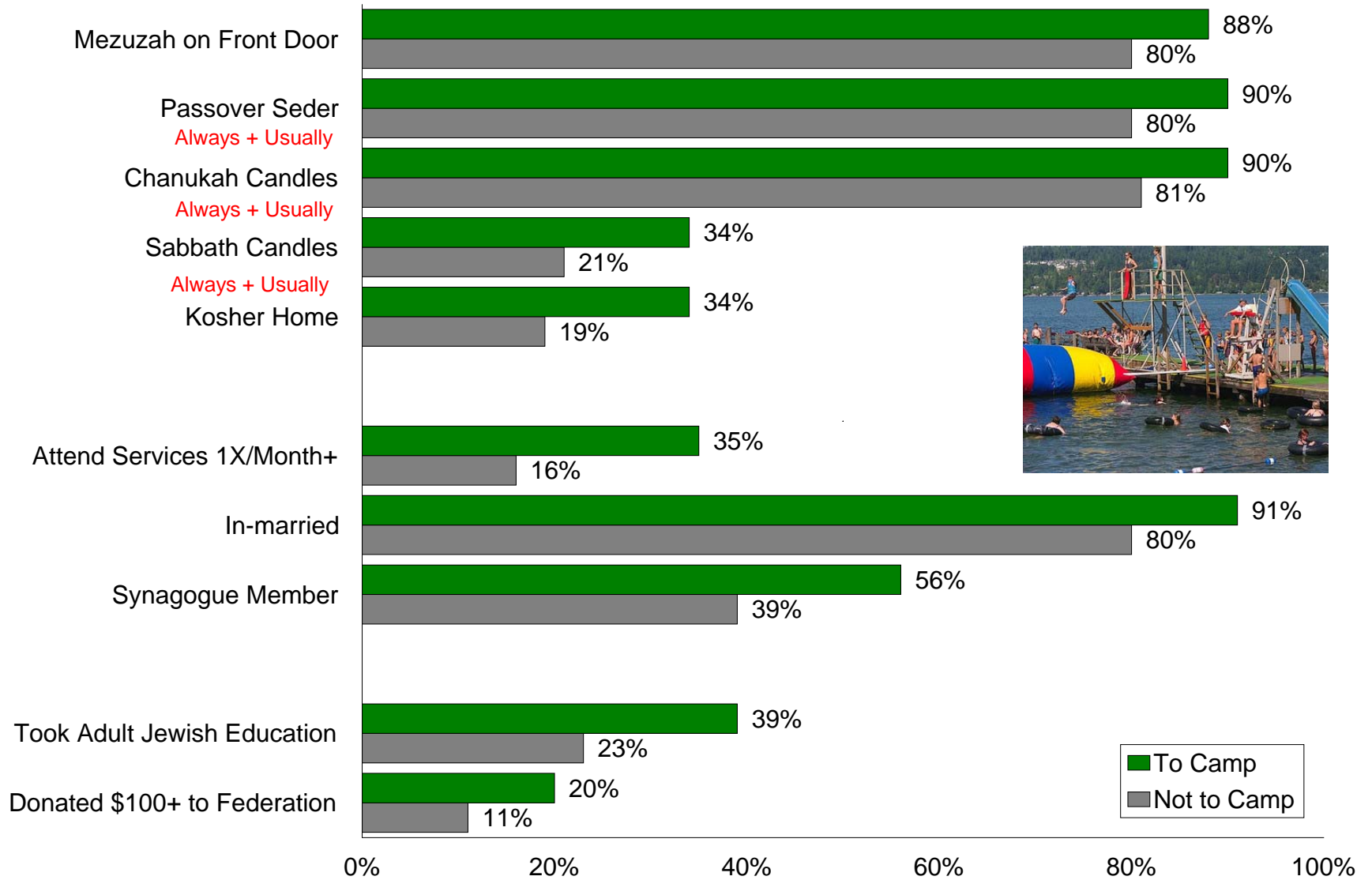
(Born or Raised Jewish Adults)



66

# HOUSEHOLDS IN WHICH AN ADULT ATTENDED OR WORKED AT A JEWISH SLEEP AWAY CAMP AS A CHILD

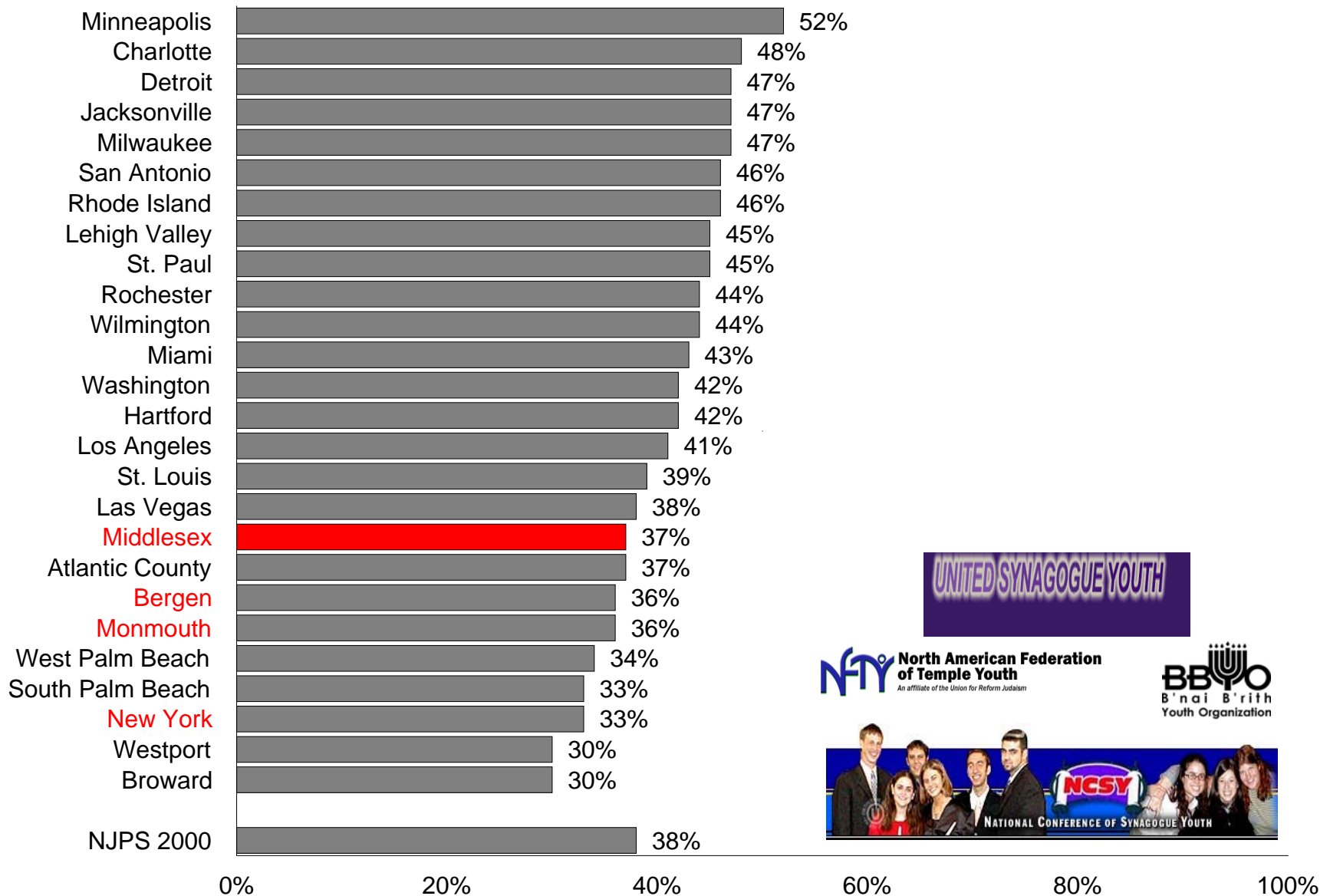
Correlation with Adult Jewish Behaviors  
(Households with Born or Raised Jewish Adults)



■ To Camp  
■ Not to Camp

# 67 PARTICIPATED IN A JEWISH TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP AS A TEENAGER

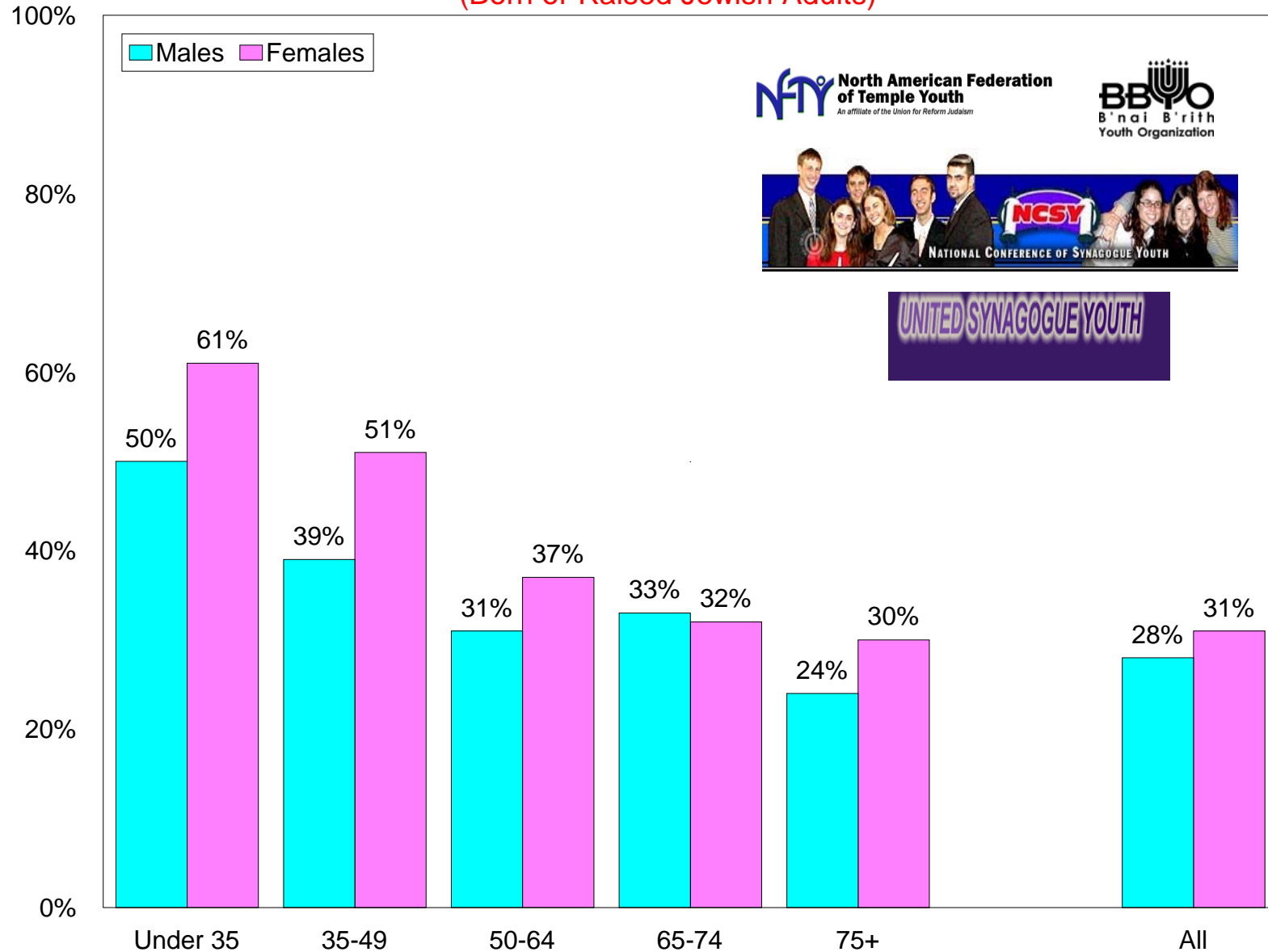
(Born or Raised Jewish Adults)



68

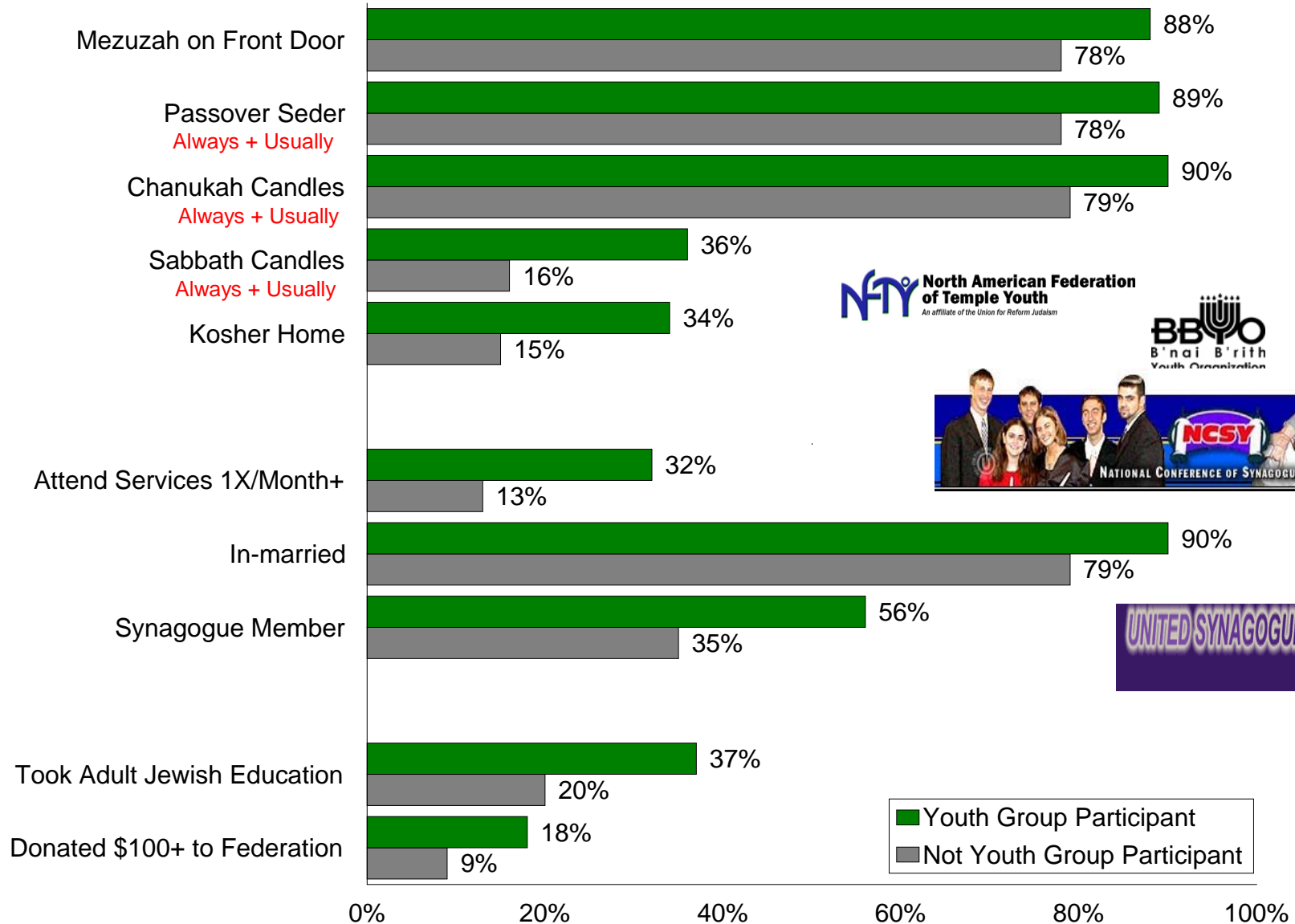
# PARTICIPATED IN A JEWISH TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP AS A TEENAGER BY AGE

(Born or Raised Jewish Adults)



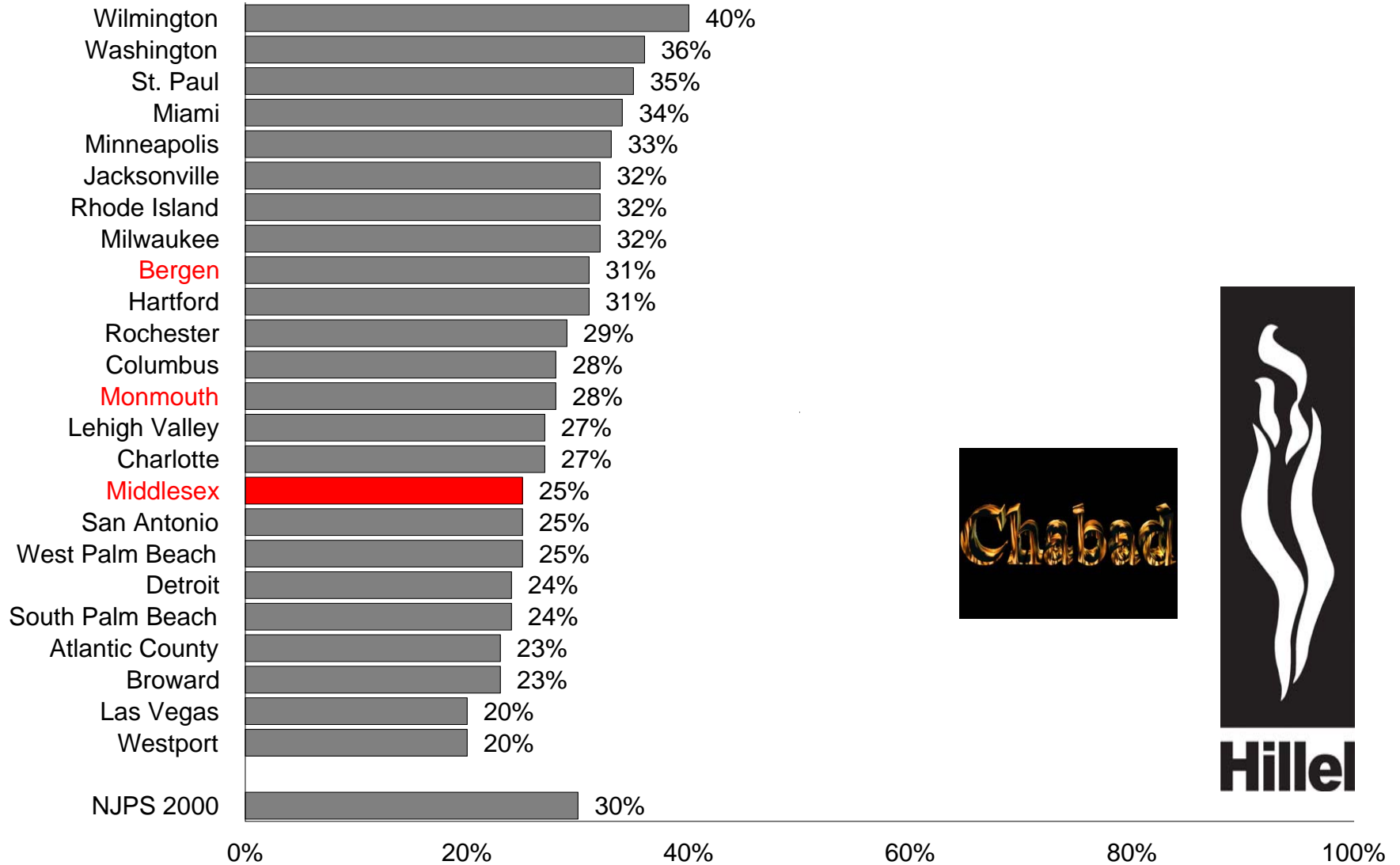
# 69 HOUSEHOLDS IN WHICH AN ADULT PARTICIPATED IN A JEWISH YOUTH GROUP AS A TEENAGER

Correlation with Adult Jewish Behaviors  
(Households with Born or Raised Jewish Adults)



# 70 PARTICIPATED IN HILLEL/CHABAD WHILE IN COLLEGE (EXCLUDING HIGH HOLIDAYS)

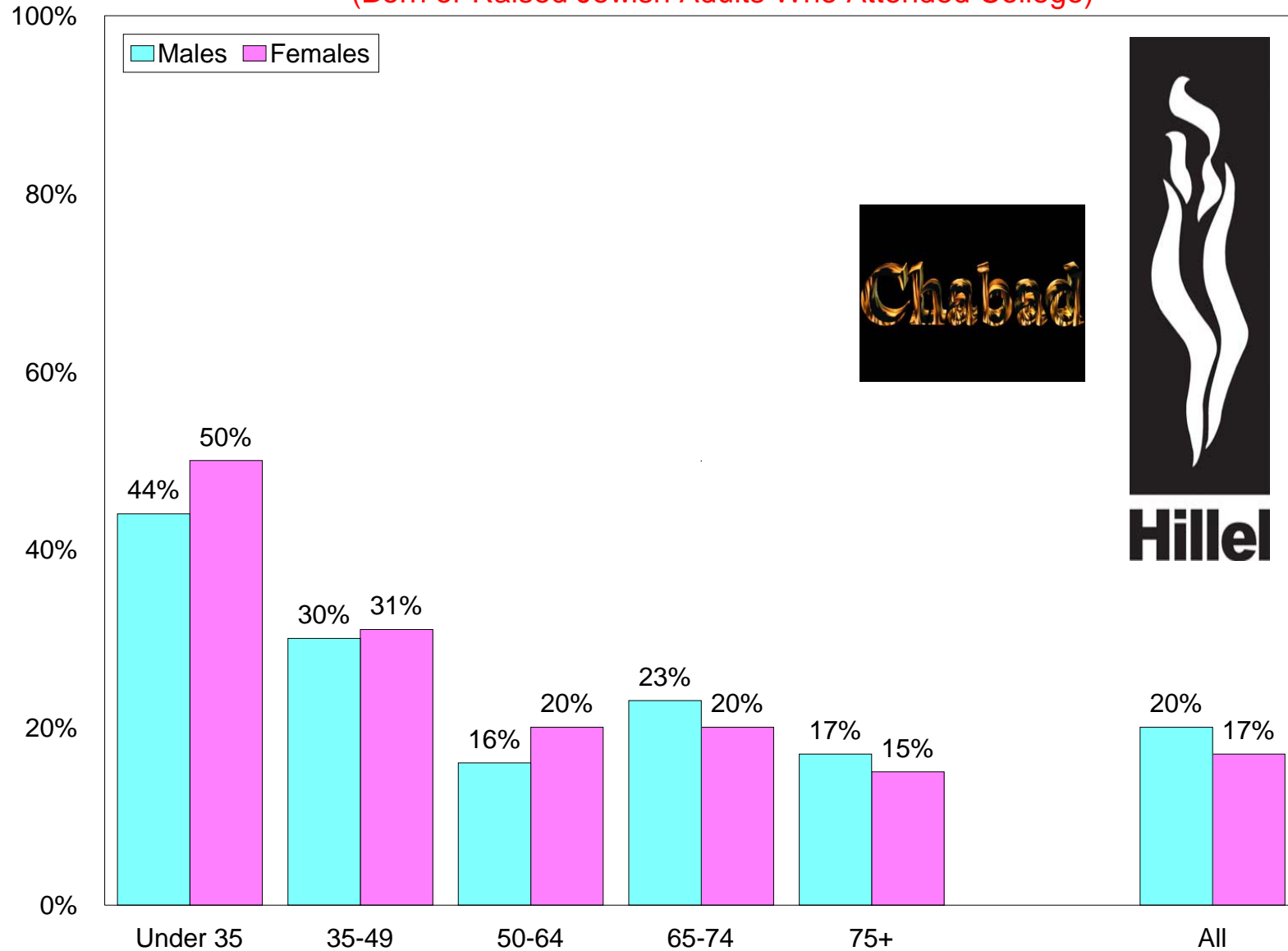
(Born or Raised Jewish Adults Who Attended College)



**Hillel**

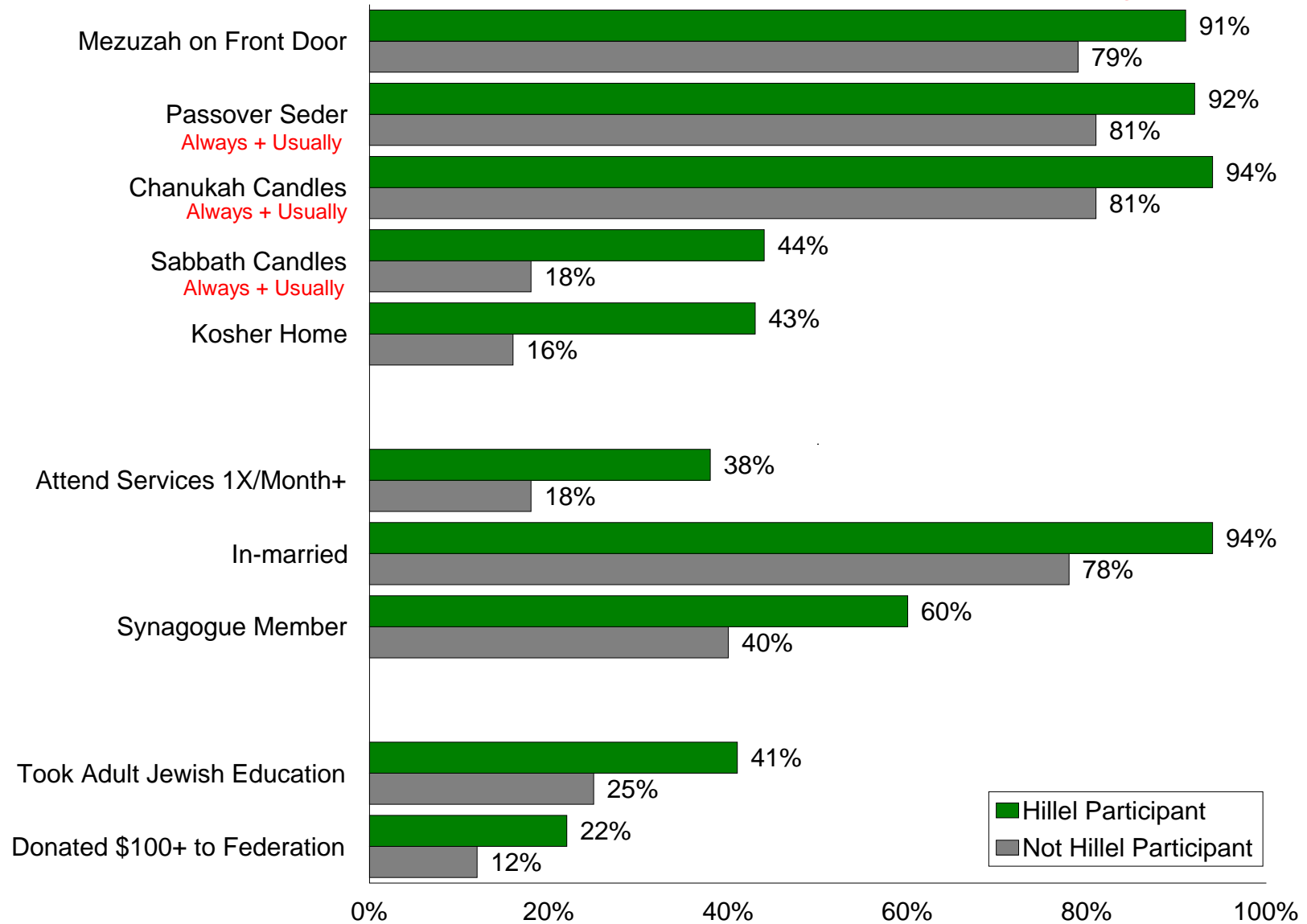
# 71 PARTICIPATED IN HILLEL/CHABAD WHILE IN COLLEGE (EXCLUDING HIGH HOLIDAYS) BY AGE

(Born or Raised Jewish Adults Who Attended College)



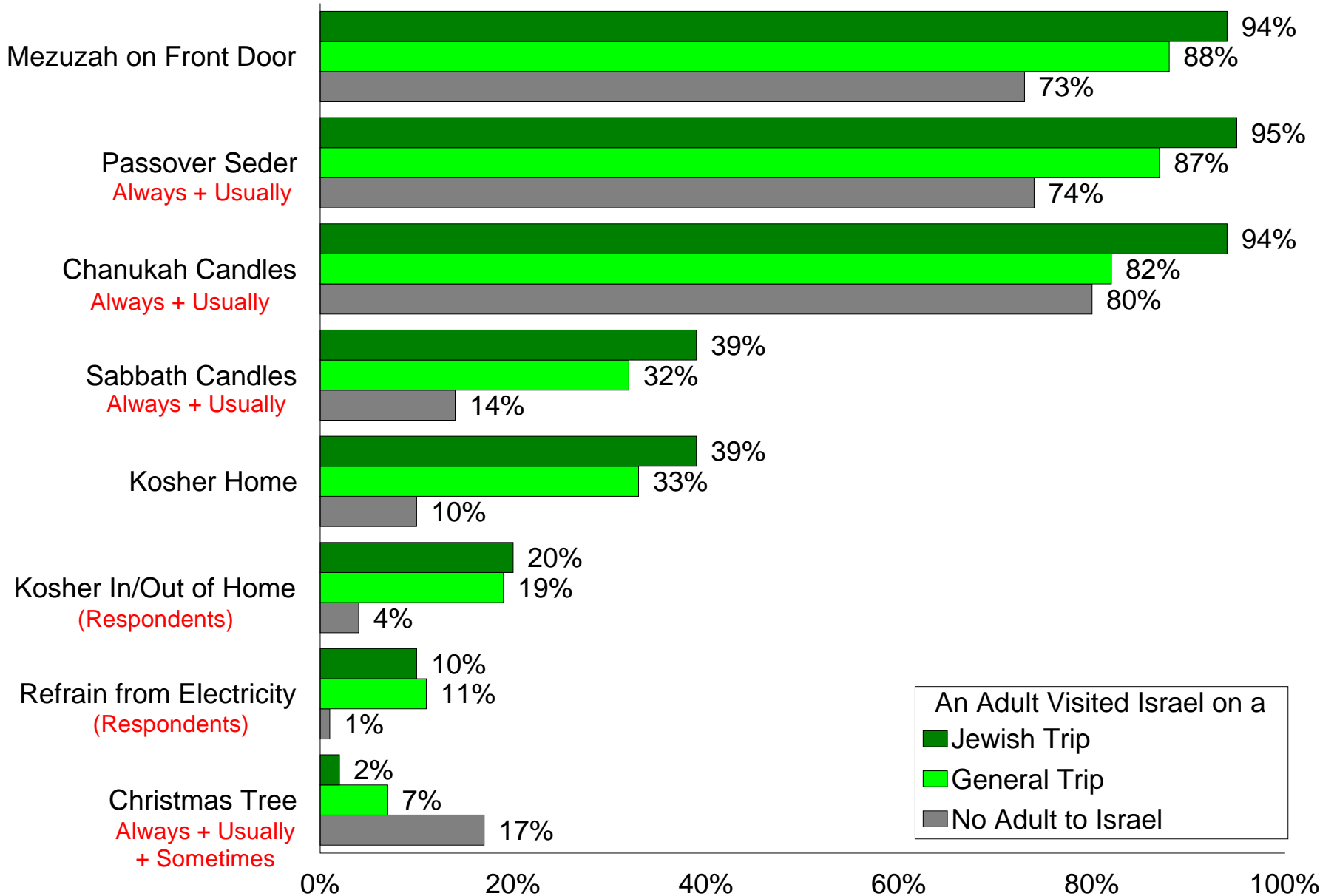
## HOUSEHOLDS IN WHICH AN ADULT PARTICIPATED IN HILLEL/CHABAD WHILE IN COLLEGE (EXCLUDING HIGH HOLIDAYS)

Correlation with Adult Jewish Behaviors  
(Households with Born or Raised Jewish Adults Who Attended College)



# CORRELATIONS WITH TRIPS TO ISRAEL - I

(Jewish Households)

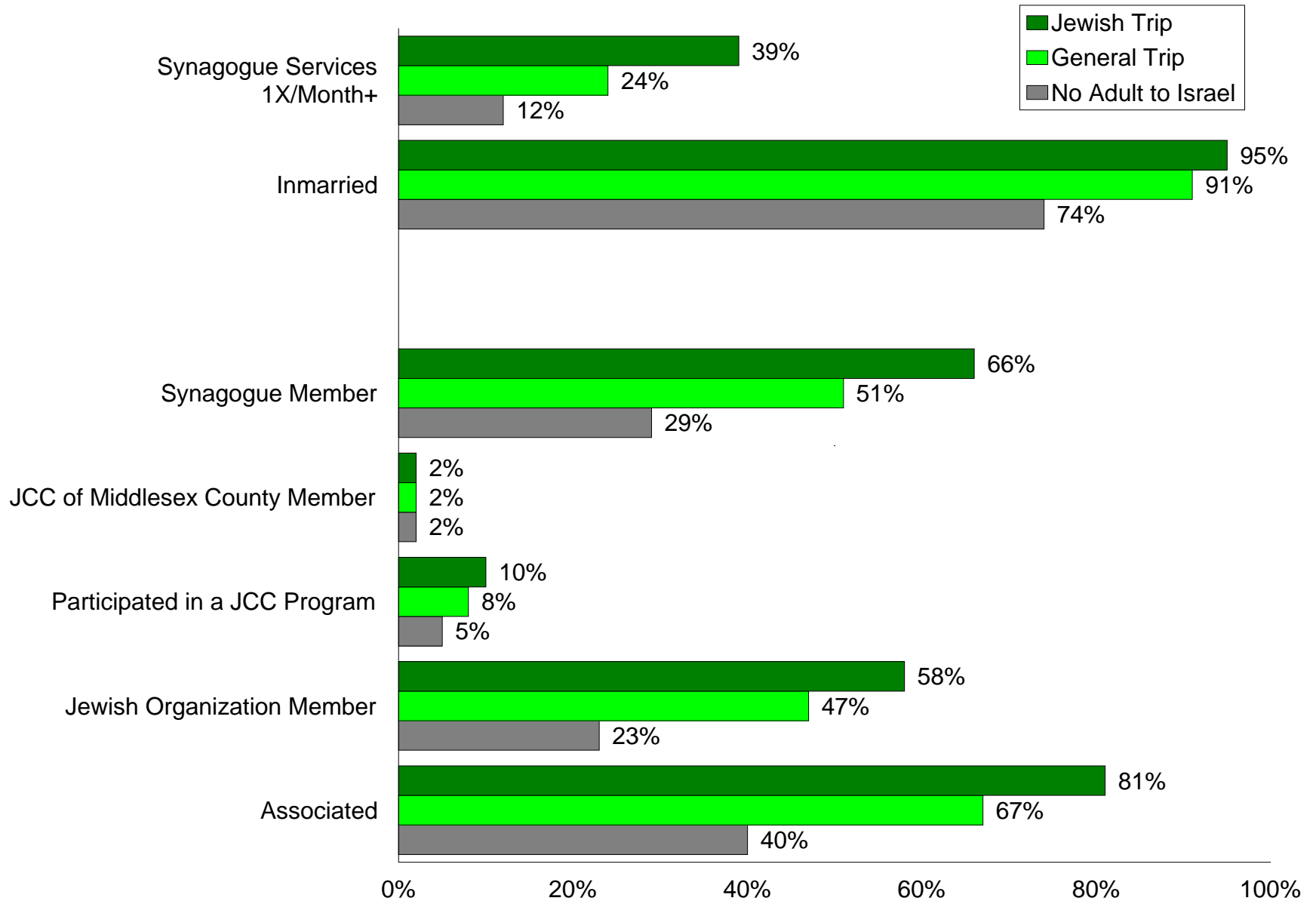


An Adult Visited Israel on a

- Jewish Trip
- General Trip
- No Adult to Israel

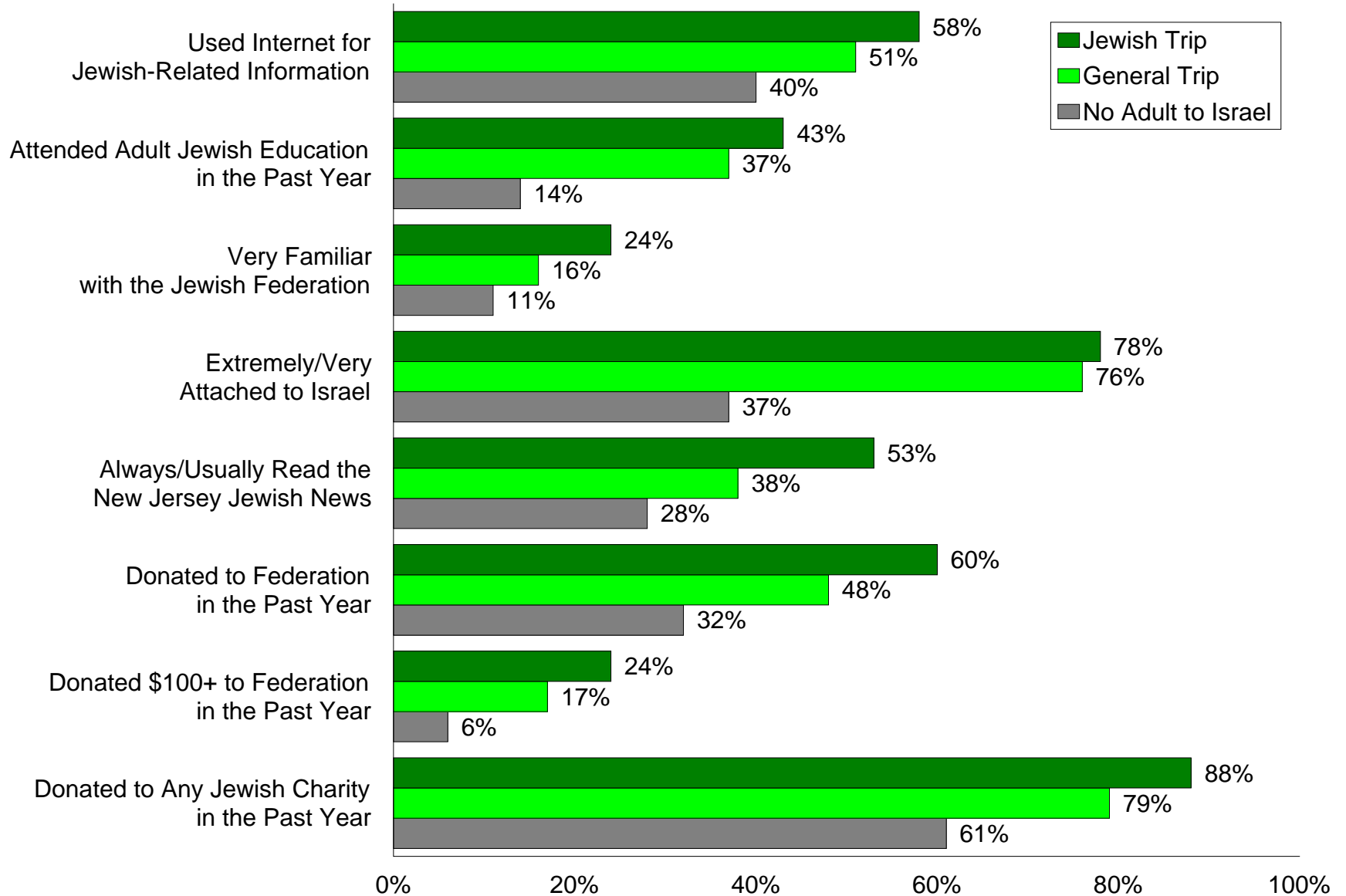
# CORRELATION WITH TRIPS TO ISRAEL - II

(Jewish Households)



# CORRELATION WITH TRIPS TO ISRAEL - III

(Jewish Households)



## **CONCLUSIONS:**

**1) HOW MANY AMERICAN JEWS ARE THERE?**

**PROBABLY 6.0-6.5 MILLION**

**2) IS THE JEWISH POPULATION INCREASING,  
DECREASING, OR REMAINING THE SAME?**

**HAS BEEN ABOUT THE SAME, BUT WILL DECREASE**

**3) WHAT LIGHT DOES DATA ON JEWISH CONTINUITY  
HAVE TO SHED ON THE QUESTION OF THE FUTURE OF  
AMERICAN JEWS?**

**WE ARE LOSING JEWS TO ASSIMILATION**

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

**4) WHAT ARE THE POLITICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE LIKELY FUTURE DECREASE IN THE US JEWISH POPULATION?**

**POLITICAL: NOT YET SIGNIFICANT**

**PSYCHOLOGICAL: IS DEPRESSING TO SOME, MAKES OTHERS WANT TO DO MORE**

**5) WHAT INTERVENTIONS IS THE ORGANIZED JEWISH COMMUNITY TAKING TO COUNTERACT THE FORCES OF ASSIMILATION?**

**JEWISH DAY SCHOOL, CAMP, HILLEL, YOUTH GROUP, ISRAEL TRIPS**