



CENTER FOR RADICALLY
INCLUSIVE JUDAISM

*Advocating for attitudes, policies and programs that
engage interfaith families in Jewish life and community*


The Pew Number That Matters: 72%

May 13, 2021



The Inexorable Tide of Interfaith Marriage

The non-Orthodox Jewish community is and will continue to be largely intermarried

- **72%** – % of *individual* non-Orthodox Jews who married between 2010-2020 that intermarried – same as reported in 2013
 - **75%? 80%?** – % of *couples/households* formed by non-Orthodox Jews who married 2010-2020
 - **82%** – % of married Jews who are children of one Jewish parent are intermarried
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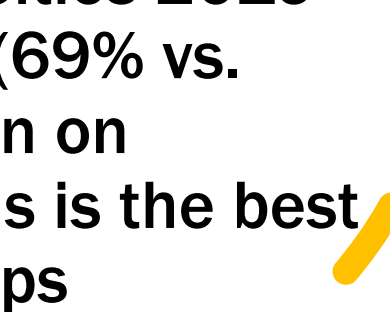
The Inexorable Tide of Diversity

88% of all Jews identify as straight, but of those under 30, 75% do

8% of all Jews, but 15% of those under 30, identify as other than White (non-Hispanic)

Pew 2020 does not break out Jewish behaviors/attitudes by these groups, as it does for “spouse Jewish” and “spouse not Jewish”

Given high rates of interfaith marriage among LGBTQ Jews (64% vs. 42% in Twin Cities 2019 as one example) and Jews of color (69% vs. 53% in 2013 Pew data), information on behaviors/attitudes of intermarrieds is the best available proxy for these other groups



Why Don't More Interfaith Families Engage?

Pew 2020 asked why respondents didn't go to religious services more than a few times a year or less – best proxy available from the survey as to why interfaith families don't engage in other activities. Responses suggest two sets of reasons:

- "Don't think I know enough to participate" (24% of intermarrieds, compared to 14% of inmarrieds, say that's a reason they don't go to services more often)*
- "Feel pressured to do more" (10%), "don't feel welcome" (8%), "people treat me like I don't belong" (4%)*

* Pew Research Center data shared with the Center



There Are Programmatic Responses To “I Don’t Know Enough”

Data:

- **61%** of intermarrieds share Jewish culture/holidays with non-Jewish friends (compared to **66%** of inmarrieds)
- **45%** of intermarrieds held or attended a Seder in the last year (compared to **86%**); **40%** own a Seder plate (compared to **80%**)

Conclusion:

- Engagement efforts addressing lack of knowledge could focus on holidays,, e.g., widespread campaign to invite interfaith families to Seders



Welcoming vs. Belonging

Welcoming makes one feel their presence is appreciated as a guest; like others, interfaith families won't engage unless they feel they belong, a part of Jewish communities.

- Only 27% of intermarrieds feel a sense of belonging to the Jewish people “a great deal” compared to 72% of inmarrieds*
- 8% of intermarrieds give “I don't feel welcome” as reason they don't attend religious services, 4% say “people treat me like I don't really belong”
- Cohen Center local community studies show intermarrieds feel less welcome, less “a part of,” than inmarrieds; significant segment conveys persistent feeling of being “other”

* Pew Research Center data shared with the Center



Changing Attitudes Towards Interfaith Marriage

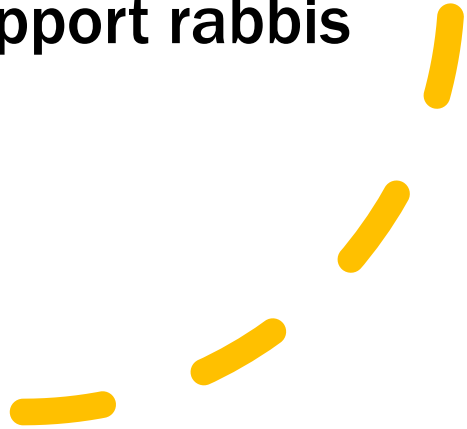
Messages that interfaith relationships are sub-optimal and partners from different faith backgrounds undesirable – like touting the results of programs as resulting in fewer interfaith marriages – do not help people feel that they belong

Attitudes preferring inmarriage may be changing – only 22% of all Jews say it is very important that their grandchildren marry other Jews



Eliminating Restrictive Policies

Policies that restrict participation of interfaith families and partners from different faith backgrounds do not help people feel that they belong

- **Not recognizing patrilineals as Jewish excludes 23% of all Jews ages 18-29 who have a Jewish father and not a Jewish mother**
 - **Not officiating at weddings of interfaith couples alienates the 64% of all Jews and the 80% of intermarried Jews who support rabbis doing so**
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Aren't Reform Congregations Inclusive?

30% of Jews raised Conservative now identify as Reform; 42% of married Jews who are intermarried identify as Reform

Many people think that the Reform movement is the part of the Jewish community that is inclusive of interfaith families, but a 2019 survey of Reform congregations uncovered continued restrictions on participation by partners from different faith backgrounds in leadership and ritual

Only 13% of intermarrieds live in a household where someone is a synagogue member, compared to 60% of inmarrieds





Focus

Every liberal Jewish leader – in religious movements, federations, foundations, agencies, educational institutions – should focus on what they can do to engage more interfaith families

For More Information

- Detailed review and analysis of interfaith marriage data in the Jewish Americans in 2020 report available at
<http://www.cfrij.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Pew-2020.pdf>
 - Analysis of Cohen Center's eleven local community studies since 2013 Pew report available at
<https://www.cfrij.com/what-local-community-studies-tell-us-about-interfaith-family-inclusion>
 - Survey on Reform Synagogue Interfaith Inclusion Policies and Practices available at
<http://www.cfrij.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Reform-Congregations-Survey-Report.pdf>
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