

# Happy Chanukah from jpr /







Nearly 16 million people around the world self-identify as Jews today, making up just under 0.2% of the planet's population. About 7 million Jews live in Israel, another 6.3 million reside in the US, and Europe is home to over 1.3 million, with France (438,500) and the UK (313,000) leading the list there. Other countries with a significant Jewish community are Canada (400,000), Argentina (170,000), Russia (123,000), Australia (117,000), and South Africa (just under 50,000).



71% of adult Jews in the UK attend at least one candle-lighting ceremony during Chanukah, either at home or elsewhere (which is about the same proportion of British Jews who attend a Passover seder). This makes Chanukah one of the most significant weeks in the Jewish calendar. However, while four in five Jews who are married to another Jew attend a candle-lighting ceremony each year, only 36% of Jews who are married to someone not Jewish do so – a smaller proportion than the 45% of them who have a Christmas tree at home.



26% of all married Jews around the world are intermarried, but there's a clear distinction between the situation in Israel (5%) and the Diaspora (42%). In Europe and the US, intermarriage is most prevalent among Jews identifying as secular or 'Just Jewish', although the American Jewish community – often characterised as having high levels of intermarriage at around 45% for the community as a whole – is actually fairly average in the context of the Jewish Diaspora as a whole.



28% of adult Jews in the UK say they have a Christmas tree at home at least some years – but the results vary across the community. While almost no Orthodox Jews report having a Christmas tree at home, over half of 'non-practising' Jews say they have one, and Jews who identify as 'Reform or Progressive' are almost four times as likely to have a Christmas tree than Jews identifying as 'Traditional'. Nearly a quarter of Jews in the UK both light Chanukah candles and have a Christmas tree, at least some years.



Even though only a third of European Jews say 'believing in God' is a "very important" part of their Jewishness, 74% of them attend a Passover seder most or all years, and nearly half light candles most Friday nights. In the UK, only a third of Jews say they believe in God, as described in the Bible. Still, two out of three (65%) British Jews who don't believe in God attend synagogue, at least on the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, and 'non-believers' make up more than half of paid-up synagogue members. It seems Jews are comfortable being Jewish without believing in God.



A recent JPR study undertaken for the European Commission found that over four times as many research reports on Jewish life were published between 2010-20 than in 1990-2000. The good news is that this trend continues, so it is likely that we will see the record from the previous decade smashed again. The not-so-good news is that the field of contemporary Jewish Studies in Europe has an increasingly disproportionate focus on antisemitism and the Holocaust, and a comparative lack of focus on topics such as Jewish education, culture, identity and demography.



For over a decade, the Office for National Statistics has been assessing the mental wellbeing of the country's population. JPR started replicating their approach during the Covid-19 pandemic and found that anxiety levels among British Jews have been consistently higher than the national average in recent years. The anxiety measures we recorded for Jews in 2024 were the highest we have seen so far: 3.8 on a scale of 0 (low anxiety) to 10 (high). So, if you are feeling more anxious than usual this year, know at least that you are far from alone.



It seems that community involvement is good for us: our data suggest that the more a Jewish person is attached to the Jewish community, the more likely they are to report higher levels of happiness and satisfaction in life. Given the significant mental health crisis going on today that particularly affects young people, it seems that community organisations could play a more deliberate role in helping to offset some of these challenges and become more significant mechanisms in assisting people to become part of supportive communal networks.



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