



About the Survey

Thanks to a grant from the Commission on the Jewish People (COJP) of UJA-Federation of NY, the JWOW Leadership Team worked with a consultant, Adena Philips, to create a comprehensive community survey. The leadership wanted to test our assumptions about who attends JWOW programs and why. We also wanted to know whether JWOW's underlying philosophies and vision were, in fact, relevant and meaningful to participants. Ultimately, the survey results would be used to better our practice in reaching families of all denominations and affiliations with meaningful Jewish experiences. This work culminated in a survey that addressed both JWOW-specific questions, along with questions that will provide useful information for local Jewish organizations.

Adena hired Daniel Chiat, a professional survey designer, to create the questions to ensure that the JWOW survey was scientific, and that all of the questions were designed with intent and purpose.

The goals of the survey were as follows:

- Improve understanding of participant demographics and needs
- Establish baseline metrics for select benchmarks
- Determine core priorities for growth and corresponding resource requirements

The survey was launched on January 16, 2015 and stayed open for two weeks, closing on February 1. It was sent to the JWOW email list of 800 people and was also publicized through Facebook.

We received 209 completed surveys, giving us a 26% response rate. The industry standard is 20% for similar organizations, so this was an excellent participation rate.

The results were presented to the JWOW Leadership Team on February 19, 2015 by Adena Philips and Daniel Chiat. Core areas for programmatic and institutional growth were determined and work has already begun to address them.

Summary of Results

1. 91% of respondents live in Suffolk County, Long Island and 58% of those live in the Smithtown/Port Jefferson/Stony Brook area
2. 90% of participants would recommend JWOW to a friend
3. 47% of respondents do not belong to a synagogue
4. 29% of respondents are from an interfaith family
5. 50% of respondents have children under age 12
6. 65% of respondents said that JWOW increases their Jewish pride
7. 76% of respondents with young children* said that JWOW fulfills a communal need that they cannot find elsewhere
8. 70% of respondents with young children said that attending JWOW programs increased their Jewish behaviors at home.

*In this report, “young children” refers to birth through elementary school (pre-B’nai Mitzvah).

Demographics

Most JWOW participants (58%) live in Central Suffolk County including Smithtown, Port Jefferson and Stony Brook. This is most likely because our founder lives in this area and the program grew from a group of local families. The next largest area served by JWOW (15%) is Commack, East Northport and Huntington.

Half of JWOW participants have children ages 12 and under with an additional 22% having children ages 12-13.

Participation is almost evenly split between synagogue members and non-members. This reflects both of JWOW’s goals: To engage the unaffiliated AND to bring Jews together across denominations and affiliations.

Approximately 29% of JWOW participants are from an interfaith family.* This group also tended to skew higher when asked if JWOW makes Jewish traditions comfortable and accessible, whether JWOW fulfills a Jewish communal need that they cannot get elsewhere, and that JWOW increases Jewish identity, increases Jewish pride, etc.

*This number includes those who said that they were Jewish *and* that their spouse/partner was not Jewish, plus those people who consider either themselves or their spouse “partially Jewish,” and those who were raised, “Not Jewish.”

Jewish Identity

94% of respondents said that they are proud to be Jewish – matching the Pew study number exactly. More than three-quarters feel that they have a sense of belonging to the Jewish community.

One-third of respondents consider themselves to be Conservative Jews and 28% Reform, with “Just Jewish” coming in at 22%. This is not surprising because JWOW’s founder is Conservative and she started JWOW with the friends she knew. Since we are a young venture, the original makeup is still reflected in current participants.

Participation in JWOW is almost evenly split between synagogue members and those who are not members of a synagogue. Synagogue members tend to feel very positively about their affiliation, saying overwhelmingly that they would recommend their synagogue to a friend, that it enriches their Jewish identity, that they feel welcomed in their synagogue and that it increases their Jewish pride. Two-thirds of *affiliated* respondents agreed that JWOW fulfills a Jewish communal need that they cannot get elsewhere.

Approximately 29% of JWOW participants are from an interfaith family. As Central Suffolk County has one of the highest rates of intermarriage in New York (according to the 2011 UJA-Federation Community Study of NY), this is a group that JWOW would like to focus on. This is a benchmark number for us, and we hope to see that percentage increase over the next two years. JWOW’s inclusive, low-barrier and cultural programs make it the ideal organization to engage interfaith families.

The survey asked how people consider themselves Jewishly: 78% said “a cultural Jew,” 40% said “a secular Jew,” 66% said “spiritual.” Eighty-one percent (81%) of respondents considered themselves to be “Pro-Israel.”

Impact

JWOW has always received high scores for enjoyment at JWOW programs, but now we know that we are also having a positive impact on Jewish identity and community. Seventy percent of respondents with young children said that attending JWOW programs increased their Jewish behaviors at home, 72% said it increased their Jewish identity, 84% said that JWOW programs strengthen their sense of community.

Why are people drawn to JWOW? The top three reasons are:

1. I want my children to meet other Jewish children
2. I want to make Jewish friends for myself
3. I want a community with which to celebrate Jewish holidays

These numbers were quite evenly split between synagogue members and non-members. Interestingly, there was a noticeable difference between these two groups in that synagogue members were much more drawn to JWOW due to:

1. I want to have fun
2. I like the people
3. I am drawn to JWOW’s vision

Both groups clearly use JWOW as a path to finding Jewish community. However, synagogue members are more likely to have some of these Jewish needs met through their affiliation.

Socialization among Jewish families is a priority for JWOW. Nineteen percent of respondents affirmed that they socialize with friends met at JWOW programming outside of JWOW-run events. This is a good start, but we would like to see this number increase and we already have ideas of how to do that.

JWOW and Social Media

JWOW uses Facebook to build an online community and as an educational tool. With a Facebook group of over 1,000 members, people post articles related to Jewish topics, crowdsource answers to Jewish questions, and express their personal Jewish identity through online conversations. The survey found that 56% of respondents engage with the JWOW Facebook page. The top reasons were:

1. To read interesting Jewish-related articles/stories (57%)
2. To see what other people are talking about (41%)
3. To be part of the conversation (31%)
4. To feel part of a community (27%)

Perception of JWOW

Ninety percent of JWOW participants would recommend JWOW to a friend, indicating a very positive perception of JWOW and our programs. This is all the more impressive because JWOW's programs are run by volunteers, not trained professionals. In fact, 40% of respondents reported having been a JWOW volunteer, attesting to our strong volunteer culture.

When asked to choose the top words or phrases associated with JWOW, there was a fairly even split between the following (in order):

1. Friendly
2. Community Organizing
3. Cultural
4. Grassroots
5. Inclusive

Almost 80% of young families felt *empowered* by JWOW to create the community they want. JWOW has always seen itself as the engine that helps people to be prosumers of their Jewish lives.

Sustainability

As a start-up looking to become a second-stage organization, JWOW must become financially sustainable. The survey found that 1/3 of respondents had made a donation to JWOW, and another third either did not know that JWOW was donations-based or were not asked to donate. This indicates that there is a great chance of accessing more community contributions to JWOW through a comprehensive fundraising strategy. This important topic is currently being addressed by the Leadership Team.

Overall Summary

The JWOW community survey validated the work of JWOW and gave us ways to explore areas for future growth and sustainability. The data shows that JWOW is filling a need among Jewish and interfaith families that they cannot find elsewhere. Those who have heard of JWOW and especially those who have attended programs, seem to love it. Not only are people having fun and meeting new Jewish friends, but JWOW is having a positive impact on their Jewish identity. Participants – both adults and children -- are learning, experientially, about Jewish holidays and traditions. They are also feeling empowered through JWOW to create the Jewish community that they want and need.

Strategic Planning

Using the data from the survey, the JWOW Leadership Team is focusing on five areas of programmatic and three areas of institutional growth. We are in the beginning stages of exploration.

Programmatic Growth

Fifty-four percent of respondents expressed interest *adult Jewish education*. This is a surprisingly high number and one which we are investigating further. It would be very exciting for JWOW to take its success in experiential learning and translate some of those practices into more formal expanded learning options.

Thirty-seven percent of respondents preferred *more/deeper Jewish content* at JWOW programs. We will consider how to do this while still keeping JWOW programs comfortable and inclusive.

Social connections are key to building a vibrant Jewish community and it is what most participants come to JWOW for. We would like to offer new threads on the social web. One way we hope to do this is by bringing together families who live in the same geographic area and have children of the same age into chavura-style groups.

Interfaith families feel very comfortable at JWOW programs, according to the data. We will explore how best to find and engage more interfaith families in JWOW.

Finally, 20% of respondents were *empty-nesters*. JWOW offers some programs that are for adults only. We are now seeking possible ways to engage more of our adult population and expand these offerings.

Institutional Growth

JWOW has big dreams for growth and expansion throughout Long Island and across the country. In order to do this, the organization must first become financially stable. A comprehensive *fundraising strategy* is a top priority. JWOW is committed to a non-membership model, so other streams of revenue are currently being explored.

The JWOW Leadership Team has skillfully brought JWOW to its current success. To move to the next stage of growth, JWOW will create a *Board of Directors* that will have full oversight of the organization.

JWOW runs on volunteers. This is a resource that must constantly be stewarded and refreshed. The Leadership Team will consider different models of *utilizing volunteers*. We also plan to create a training manual for volunteers, featuring JWOW methodology, to ensure quality control at programs.

We will also look at the role of paid professionals versus volunteers, and how to retain a strong volunteer culture while also employing staff.