



**InterfaithFamily.com**

Encouraging Jewish Choices & A Welcoming Jewish Community

# 2009 User Survey Report

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## METHODOLOGY

InterfaithFamily.com conducted its second user survey in the spring of 2009. The first was in 2007. Our goals with this survey were to determine:

- 1) The demographics of our users
- 2) Why people come to the site
- 3) What future resources and services our users are interested in
- 4) The impact of the site on users' lives<sup>1</sup>
- 5) How Jewish communal professionals use the site

During May 2009, visitors to the site saw a pop-up inviting them to take the survey to be entered into a drawing for a free iPod Touch. Once they took the survey--or elected not to see the pop-up again--they did not see the pop-up again. We also directly marketed the survey to our users via our biweekly email newsletter and other email lists of previous users. In all, we received 1,109 responses--a response rate of 3.4%.

In this analysis, unless otherwise stated, when we say "users," we are referring to *users who've visited the site before and who responded to the survey*. According to the web-traffic-tracking program Google Analytics, nearly 80% of our visits come from first-time visitors, but only 12% of the survey respondents said they were first-time visitors. Since our survey data is so heavily weighted towards return visitors vs. first-time visitors, we decided to omit the data about first-time visitors, with a few exceptions that are noted. We feel this approach presents the most accurate and illuminating portrait of our users.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Gender

Three-quarters of our users are female and one quarter are male.

### Religion

Four out of five users are Jewish: 79% are Jewish vs. 21% who are not Jewish.

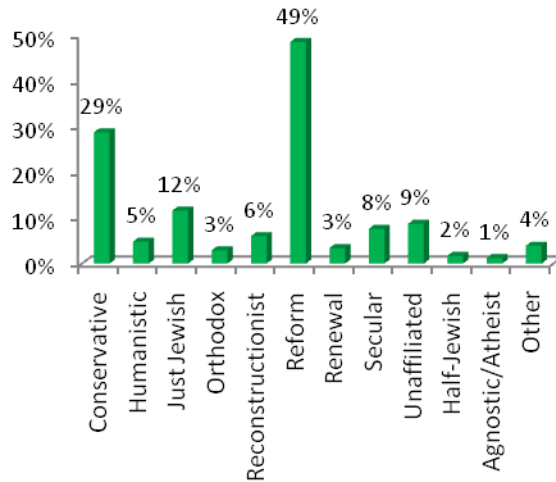
Nearly half of our Jewish users classify themselves as Reform (49%), and more than a quarter classify themselves as Conservative (29%). Small minorities (<10%) classify themselves as Reconstructionist, Jewish Renewal, Secular Humanist or Orthodox.

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<sup>1</sup> We wish to thank Dr. Sherry Israel, a noted social psychologist and researcher with expertise in survey design and administration, who advised us on the formation of some of the questions about InterfaithFamily.com's impact.

Among our non-Jewish users, 33% are Catholic. Twenty-two percent of our non-Jewish users classify themselves as Mainline Protestant, which includes Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian and United Church of Christ. Eight percent of our non-Jewish users consider themselves non-Jewish agnostics or atheists.

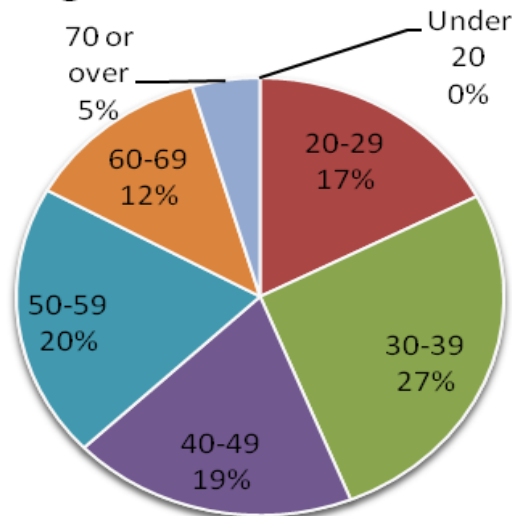
**Religious Affiliation Among Jewish Users**



**Age**

Nearly half of our users (45%) are in the prime child-rearing ages of 30 to 49. Thirty-seven percent of our users are 50 or above.

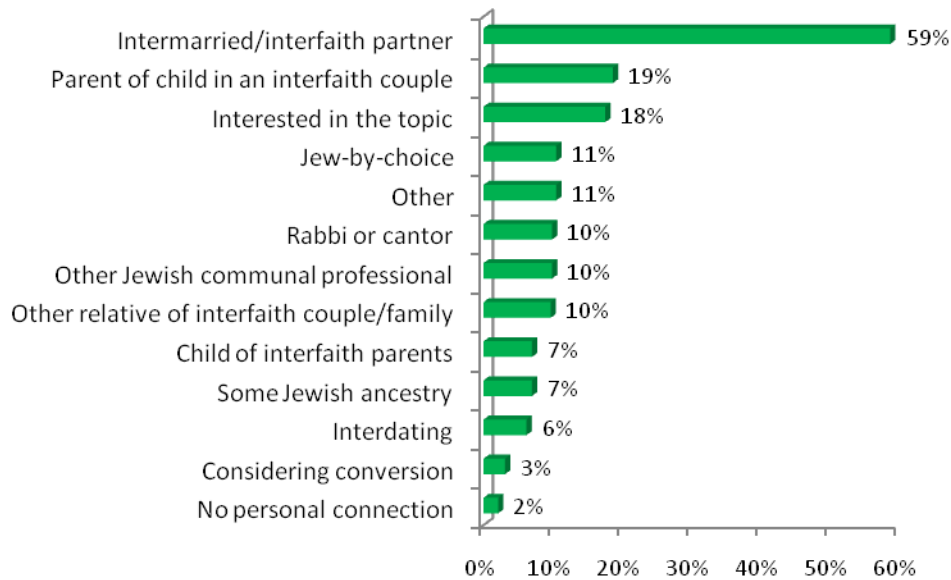
**Age Breakdown of Users**



## Connection to Intermarriage

Fifty-nine percent of users are intermarried, while slightly less than a fifth are parents of children in an interfaith couple (19%), rabbis, cantors or other Jewish professionals working with interfaith families (19%) or interdating (19%). Thirteen percent are converts or considering conversion, and 10% are children of interfaith couples.

Users' Connection to Intermarriage



## Other Notable Demographics

- 65% of our users are parents.
- 51% are female and intermarried.
- 27% are intermarried with children at home.
- 28% have children aged 12 or younger
- 22% have children aged 8 or younger.

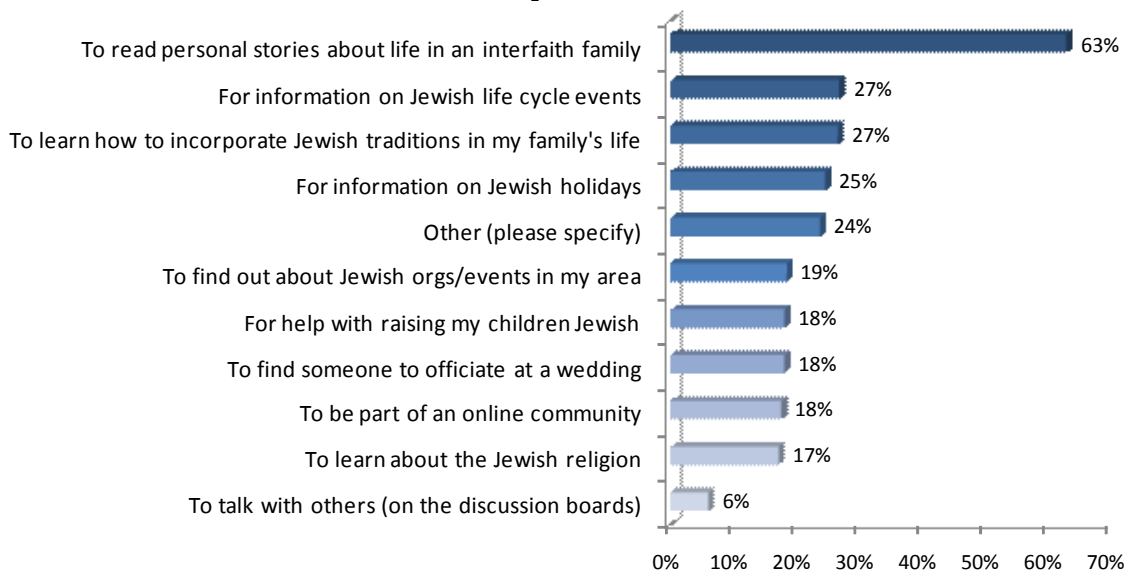
## WHY DO PEOPLE COME TO THE SITE?

InterfaithFamily.com has always featured personal stories about life in an interfaith family. While we have greatly expanded our resources since our founding, the majority of users (63%) continue to say that these stories are a reason they come to the site.

*"I come to see how others in interfaith relationships flourish, and how they deal with challenges, and most to get hope that I could raise Jewish children and have a Jewish family even though I am not Jewish."*

Around a quarter of our users say they come for information on Jewish holidays (25%), information on Jewish life cycle events (27%) or to learn how to incorporate Jewish traditions in their family's life (27%). Eighteen percent say they come, or have come, to find someone to officiate at a wedding.

**Reasons People Come to the Site**



The picture changes with different subsets of visitors. Much larger percentages of our non-Jewish users come to our site for information on Jewish life: 42% come for information on Jewish holidays, 41% come to learn how to incorporate Jewish traditions in their family's life and 43% come to learn about the Jewish religion.

First-time visitors also visit the site for very different reasons. Only 22% say they came to the site to read people's personal stories about life in an interfaith family. Eighteen percent say they came to learn about the Jewish religion, and 36% say they came to the site to find someone to officiate at an interfaith wedding--which is not surprising, given our active online ad campaign targeting people looking for an officiant at their interfaith wedding.

*"IFF helped me find a rabbi for our wedding, and explained all the customs and traditions in an easy to understand way for our non-Jewish guests."*

### Frequency of Visits

Sixty-two percent of users visit the site more than once a month; 31% visit once every two weeks or more.

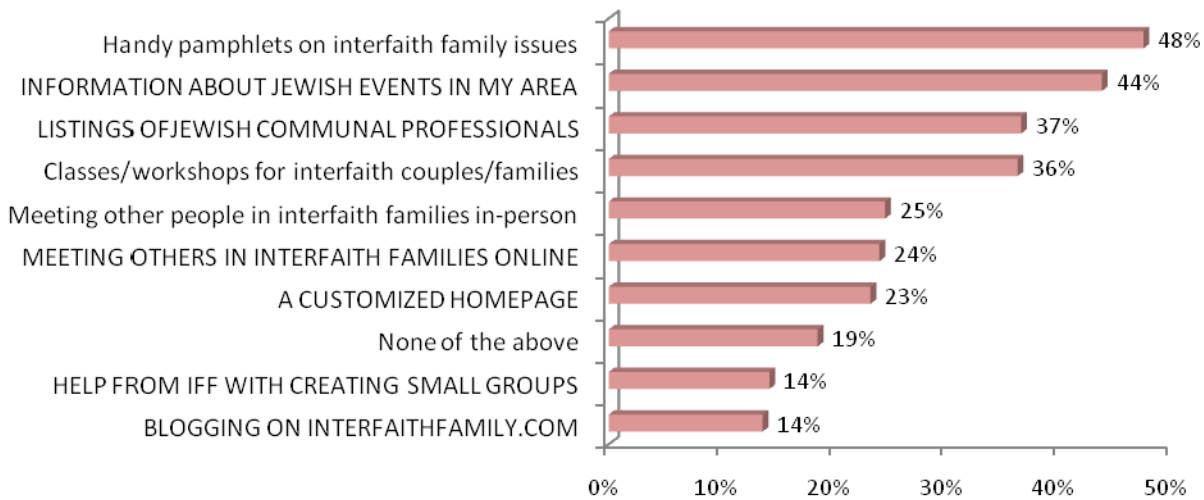
## INTEREST IN FUTURE RESOURCES

We asked users about their level of interest in some potential future resources and services. We also asked about some current resources as a way to gauge demand for our existing offerings.

Nearly half of our users (48%) expressed interest in handy pamphlets on interfaith family issues, such as what to do on holidays, how to talk to kids about religion, etc.

Significant numbers also expressed interest in listings of helpful Jewish communal professionals (37%) and information about Jewish events in their area (44%).

**Users' Interest in Future Resources and Services**



(Social networking-related functions are in CAPS.)

InterfaithFamily.com's major project for 2009 is the launch of new social networking functionality on the site. Seventy-one percent of our users expressed interest in at least one of the functions our new site will offer, including meeting others on-line and a customized homepage.

Nearly half (44%) expressed interest in information about Jewish events in their area. To meet the needs of these users, our re-designed website now offers integrated organization and events listings that are easier to use than our previous system.

In addition, 36% expressed interest in classes or workshops for interfaith families.

## IMPACT OF THE SITE ON USERS' LIVES

We asked users about our impact on the elements of InterfaithFamily.com's Theory of Change, which states that *if* couples:

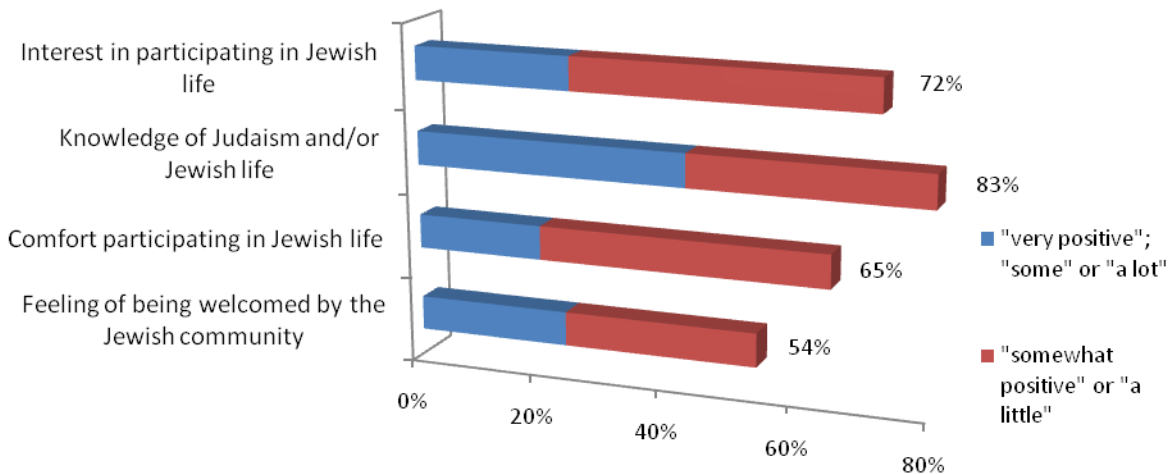
- become interested in participating in Jewish life as a source of value and meaning in their lives,
- become knowledgeable about Jewish life,
- become comfortable engaging in Jewish life, and
- feel welcomed by Jewish communities,

*then* they will engage in Jewish life and make Jewish choices. We focus in this report on one of our most important audiences: intermarried couples with children at home.

### Did Users Gain Interest, Knowledge and Comfort, and Feel Welcomed?

Significant majorities of intermarried users with children at home reported that InterfaithFamily.com had a positive effect in the past two years on their becoming interested in, knowledgeable about, and comfortable participating in Jewish life, and feeling welcomed by the Jewish community.

#### IFF's Influence on Target Users' Sense of Jewish Connection



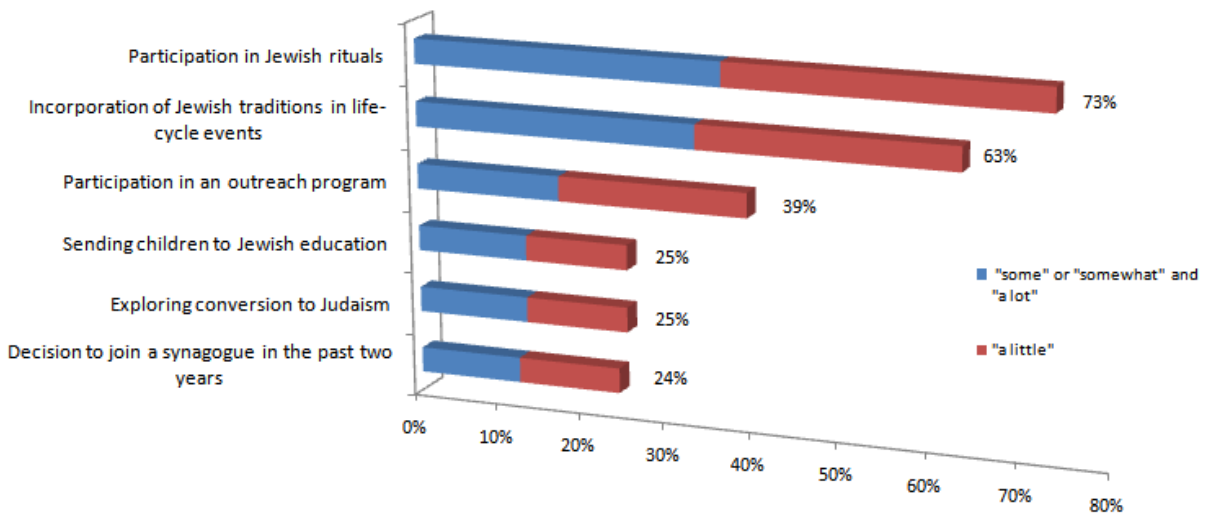
- 72% said IFF had a somewhat or very positive effect on their interest in participating in Jewish life (25% said “very positive,” 47% said “somewhat positive”).
- 83% said IFF influenced their knowledge of Judaism and/or Jewish life (43% said “some” or “a lot,” a greater percentage than cited their partner, friends, extended family or Jewish education classes; 40% said “a little”).
- 65% said IFF had a somewhat or very positive effect on their comfort participating in Jewish life (20% said “very positive,” 45% said “somewhat positive”).
- 54% said IFF had a somewhat or very positive effect on their feeling of being welcomed by the Jewish community (24% said “very positive,” 30% said “somewhat positive”). As one user said, “The main benefit I have received from IFF is feeling welcomed by the Jewish community, as a Jew who chooses to have a non-Jewish partner.”

*“I now understand that it’s important for my future children to have a sense of religious identity and not to be exposed to multiple religions and to just ‘choose’ him or herself.”*

### Did Users Engage in Jewish Life?

Intermarried users with children at home also reported remarkable levels of engagement with Jewish life and Jewish choices in the past two years.

**IFF's Influence on Target Users' Jewish Choices**



- 73% said IFF influenced their participation in Jewish rituals (36% said "some" or "a lot," 37% said "a little").

*"When I read that so many interfaith families are lighting Shabbat candles, it encourages me to light them as well."*

- 63% said IFF influenced their incorporation of Jewish traditions in life-cycle events (33% said "some" or "a lot," 30% said "a little"). As one user said, "We had a Bat Mitzvah because your site gave me access to a rabbi who welcomed all who wanted to help raise a Jewish child."

- 39% said IFF influenced them to participate in an outreach program for people in interfaith relationships (17% said "somewhat" or "a lot," 22% said "a little").

- 25% said IFF influenced them to send their children to Jewish education classes (12% said "somewhat" or "a lot," 13% said "a little").

*"IFF helped me to decide to send my daughter to religious school and become an active participant."*

- 25% said IFF influenced them to explore conversion to Judaism (12% said "somewhat" or "a lot," 13% said "a little"). As one user said, "I came here mostly looking for info on conversion to Judaism. I think I will indeed make an appointment with a rabbi."

- 24% of intermarried users with children at home who are members of a synagogue or who were a member within the past five years said IFF influenced their decision to join a synagogue in the past two years (12% said "somewhat" or "a lot," 12% said "a little").

## High Impact Among Least Affiliated

Among the least affiliated users, IFF's influence was significant, especially in comparison to common influences on a person's religious engagement:

- 73% of *non-Jewish users* said IFF influenced their participation in Jewish rituals (39% said "some" or "a lot"--a greater percentage than cited rabbis or other Jewish professionals, Jewish education classes, friends or involvement in a synagogue).

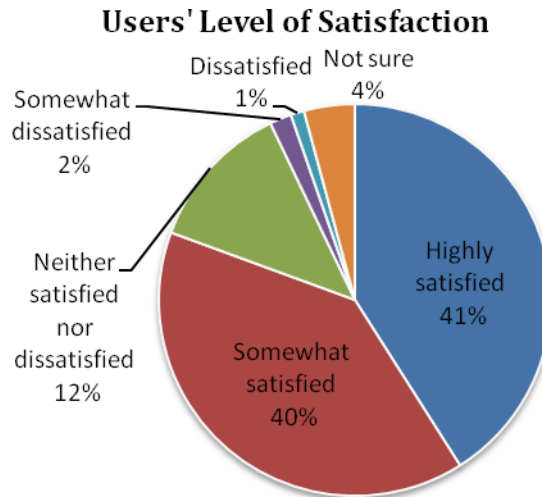
*"I appreciate IFF for the resources. They are especially helpful to the non-Jewish partner (me) in the relationships."*

- 78% of *non-synagogue members* said IFF influenced their knowledge of Jewish life (with 39% saying "some" or "a lot," a greater percentage than cited Jewish education classes, or their partner, rabbi, children, extended family or friends).

- 59% of *users with low levels of Jewish involvement* said IFF influenced their sense of Jewish connection (24% said "some" or "a lot"--more than the number that cited rabbis, independent reading/research, Jewish education classes, friends, synagogue or children).

## High Level of Satisfaction

Eighty-one percent of our users say they are satisfied with their experience of IFF vs. 3% who say they are unsatisfied.



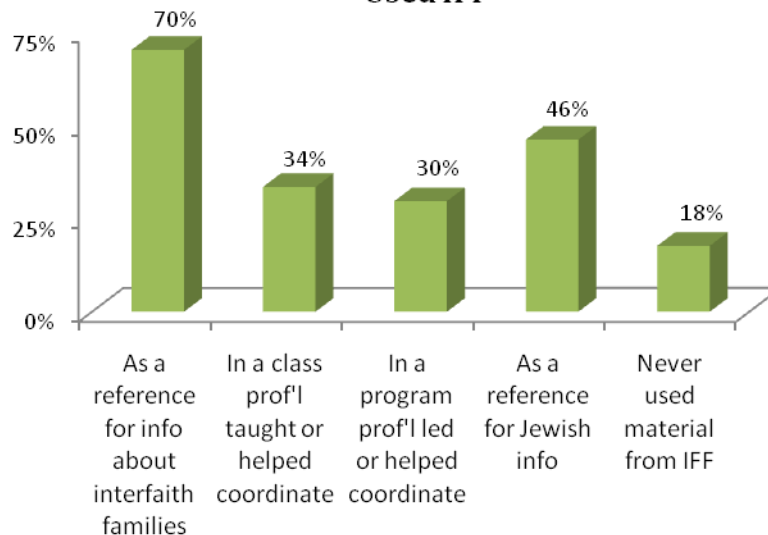
## IMPACT ON JEWISH COMMUNAL PROFESSIONALS

The majority (56%) of the Jewish communal professionals who use the site are Reform. Twenty-eight percent are Conservative.

Seventy percent of professionals use InterfaithFamily.com as a reference for information on interfaith families, while a third (34%) have used materials from the site in a class they taught or helped coordinate and 30% have used it in a program they led or helped coordinate. Only 18% say they have never used the site in their professional work.

*"I'm a director of a Jewish early childhood program. Many of my families are interfaith. The site is a great resource for family education."*

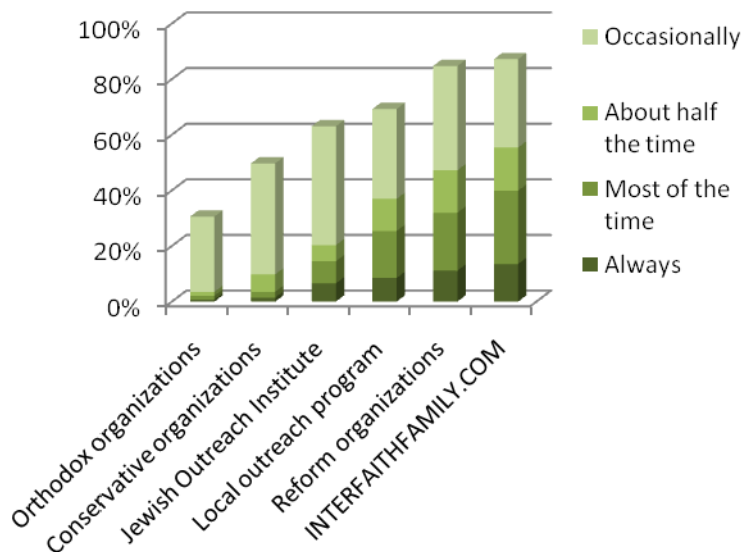
### Ways Jewish Communal Professionals Have Used IFF



Jewish communal professionals who use the site refer the interfaith couples and families they work with to InterfaithFamily.com more often than they do to Reform movement organizations, Conservative organizations, Orthodox organizations, the Jewish Outreach Institute or a local outreach program. Forty percent refer interfaith families and couples to InterfaithFamily.com "most of the time" or "always."

*"I refer more people to IFF than any other website in my rabbinate."*

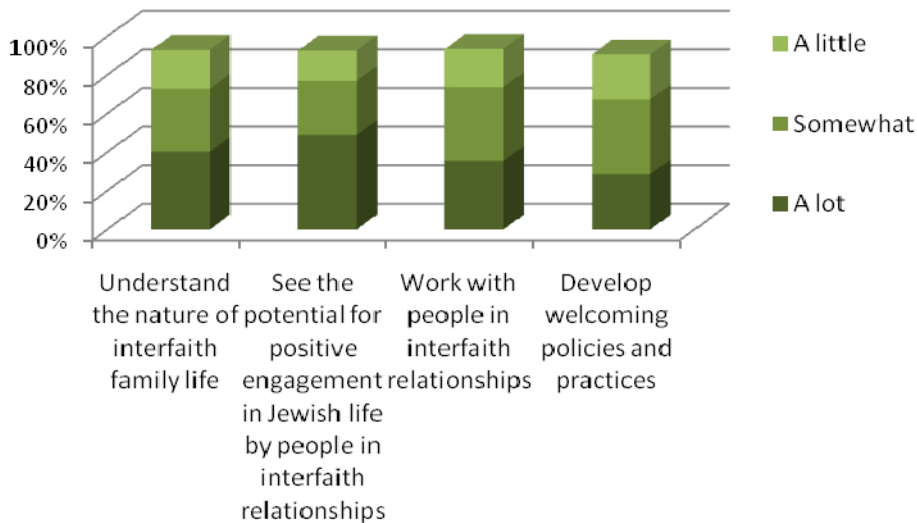
### How Often Jewish Communal Professionals Refer People to Select Resources



We also asked our professional users about the remaining elements of InterfaithFamily.com’s Theory of Change: *if* Jewish professionals see the potential for positive engagement by people in interfaith relationships, in response to welcoming attitudes, practices and policies, *then* more interfaith couples will make Jewish choices.

Our professional users report that InterfaithFamily.com has had a very positive impact: 77% said IFF has helped them "somewhat" or "a lot" to see the potential for positive engagement in Jewish life by people in interfaith relationships; 67% said it has helped them "somewhat" or "a lot" to develop welcoming policies and practices.

### Impact of IFF on Jewish Communal Professionals



## CONCLUSIONS

InterfaithFamily.com serves a predominantly female, predominantly Jewish, predominantly intermarried population, most of whom have children. This is consistent with the findings from our 2007 User Survey, after which we made a point of focusing much of our content on that demographic "sweet spot."

A growing percentage of visitors come to our site for help finding a rabbi for their interfaith wedding. This affirms our commitment over the last few years to market aggressively our Jewish Clergy Officiation Referral Service, as well as our Resource Center for Jewish Clergy.

Our users are interested in even more direct engagement with InterfaithFamily.com. Our new social networking system will help meet the demand of the 71% of our users who are looking for social networking-related functions, like a customized home page, online connections with others in interfaith families, information about Jewish events in their area and other functions.

Intermarried couples with children at home reported that InterfaithFamily.com had positive influence on the factors that we believe lead to Jewish choices: interest in, knowledge about and comfort with Jewish life, as well as feeling welcomed by Jewish communities. They also report that InterfaithFamily.com had positive influence on their Jewish choices, including participation in Jewish rituals and life-cycle events, decision to join a synagogue, participation in interfaith outreach programs and decision to send children to Jewish education classes. Our impact is especially strong among the least Jewishly affiliated users: non-synagogue members and non-Jewish users. InterfaithFamily.com is particularly influential on unaffiliated users' level of Jewish knowledge--more so than traditional sources like friends, extended family, synagogue, Jewish education classes or rabbis.

Our Jewish professional users, including rabbis and outreach professionals, refer the site to their clients more often than any other resource for interfaith families. They also report that InterfaithFamily.com has helped them to see interfaith families in a more positive light and develop welcoming policies.

Looking at areas of potential improvement, we could expand our reach to men and to children of intermarried parents. We have done well meeting our users' needs for information about Jewish rituals and life-cycle events, but we must continue to expand our offerings into "how-to" materials, downloadable pamphlets and multimedia/video.

We show less impact on elements that depend on prevailing communal offerings and attitudes, such as generating comfort participating in Jewish life or feeling welcomed by Jewish communities, joining synagogues or sending children to Jewish education.

That 36% of our users are interested in classes and workshops for interfaith families, in an era when the number of such programs is dwindling, suggests a strong need to be filled. While we are not in a position to offer on-the-ground programs, we could consider online versions or materials that others could use for programming.

We hope that our new social networking functionality, which supports the formation and maintenance of both online and in-person groups of people in interfaith families, will serve as a mechanism to foster community and generate more of a sense of comfort and connection among interfaith families.