



InterfaithFamily.com

Encouraging Jewish Choices & A Welcoming Jewish Community

2011 User Survey Report

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METHODOLOGY

InterfaithFamily.com conducted its third user survey in the summer and fall of 2011. The first was in 2007 and the second in 2009. Our goals with this survey were to determine:

- 1) The demographics of our users
- 2) Why people come to InterfaithFamily.com
- 3) What future resources and services our users are interested in
- 4) InterfaithFamily.com's impact on users' lives¹
- 5) How Jewish communal professionals use our resources

Between August 5 and October 14, 2011, visitors to the site saw a pop-up inviting them to take the survey and be entered into a drawing for a \$500 AmEx gift card. We also directly marketed the survey to our users via our biweekly email newsletter and Twitter and Facebook. In all, we received 867 responses.

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 19% 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

Eighty-one percent of our users are female and 19% are male.

Religion

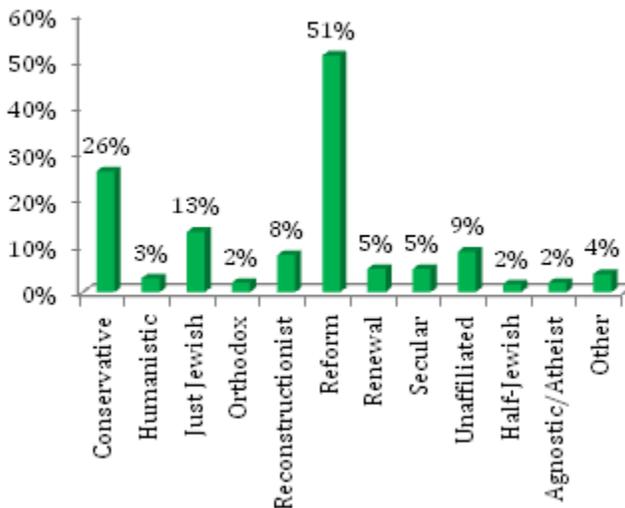
Four out of five users are Jewish: 78% are Jewish vs. 22% who are not Jewish.

Just over half of our Jewish users classify themselves as Reform (51%), and just over a quarter classify themselves as Conservative (26%). Small minorities (<8%) classify themselves as Reconstructionist, Jewish Renewal, Secular Humanist or Orthodox.

¹ We wish to again thank Dr. Sherry Israel, a noted social psychologist and researcher with expertise in survey design and administration, who advised us in 2009 on the formation of some of the questions about InterfaithFamily.com's impact that were asked again in the 2011 survey.

Among our non-Jewish users, 21% percent classify themselves as Mainline Protestant (includes Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian and United Church of Christ) and 19% classify themselves as Catholic (down from 33% in 2009). Twelve percent of our non-Jewish users consider themselves non-Jewish agnostics or atheists.

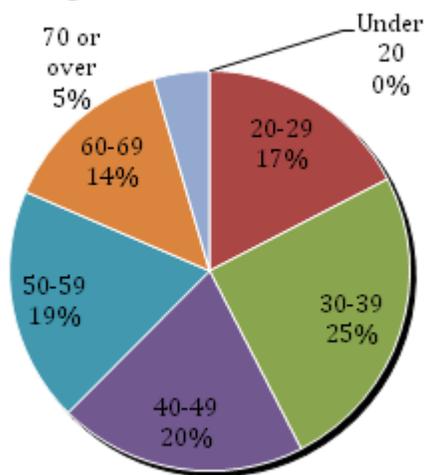
Religious Affiliation Among Jewish Users



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.

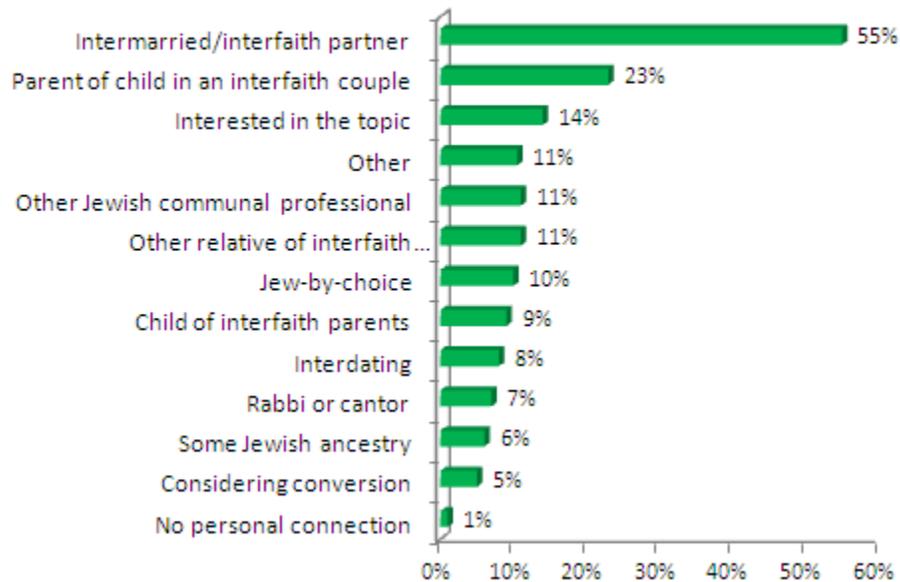
Age Breakdown of Users



Connection to Intermarriage

Fifty-five percent of users are intermarried, 23% are parents of children in an interfaith couple, and 17% are rabbis, cantors or other Jewish professionals working with interfaith families. Fifteen percent are converts or considering conversion, 9% are children of interfaith couples, and 8% are interdating.

Users' Connection to Intermarriage



Other Notable Demographics

- 66% of our users are parents.
- 39% 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 INTERFAITHFAMILY.COM?

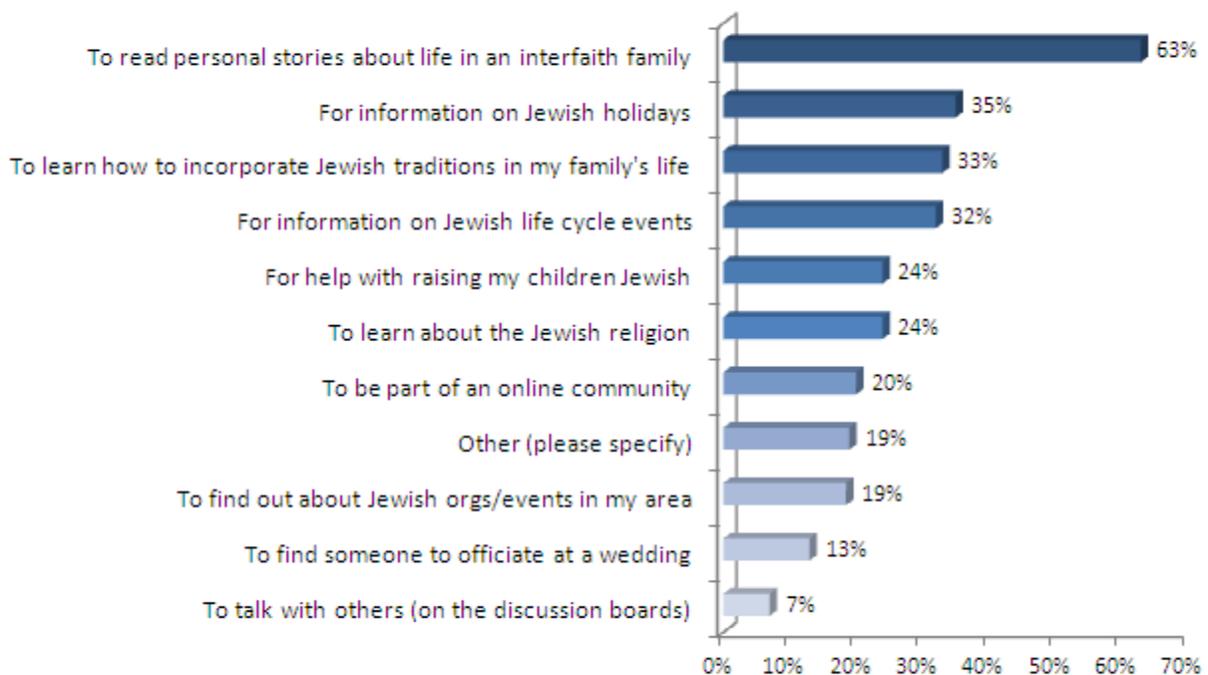
InterfaithFamily.com has always featured personal stories about life in an interfaith family. While we have greatly expanded our resources since our founding, the majority of users (63%) continue to say that these stories are a reason they come to the site.

"It's hard to know how to keep Judaism in my life and in my future children's lives, so it's nice to have an online community of people like us."

About a third of our users say they come for information on Jewish holidays (35%, up from 25% in 2009), to learn how to incorporate Jewish traditions in their family's life (33%), or for information on Jewish life cycle events (32%). Twenty-four percent (up from 18% in 2009) say they come for help with raising their children Jewish. Thirteen percent say they come, or have come, to find someone to officiate at a wedding.

"We found a wonderful rabbi through IFF and it was a perfect ceremony. I am so appreciative for that."

Reasons People Come to InterfaithFamily.com



Much larger percentages of our non-Jewish users come to our site for information on Jewish life: 49% come for information on Jewish holidays, 43% come to learn how to incorporate Jewish traditions in their family's life and 41% come to learn about the Jewish religion.

Frequency of Visits

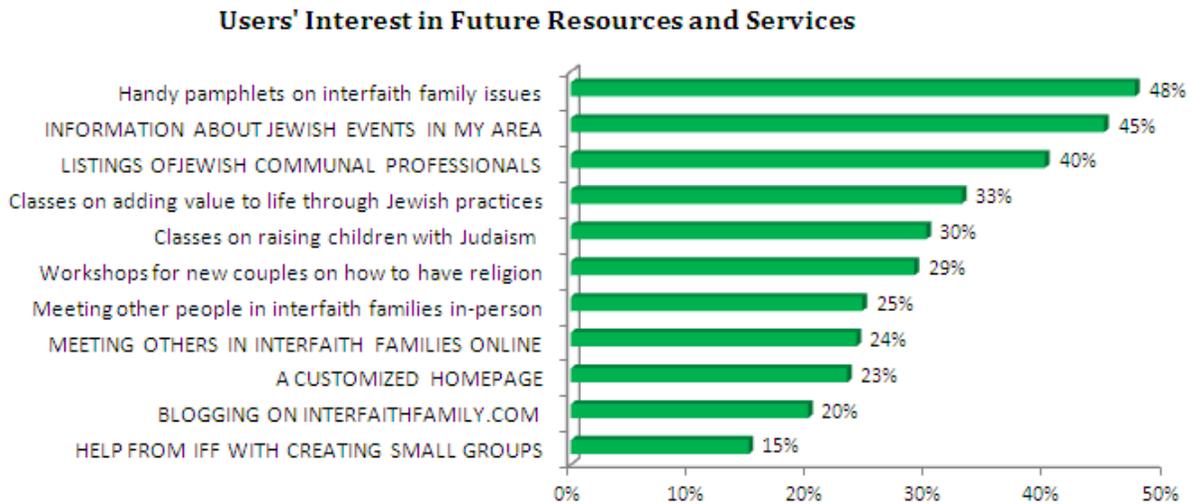
Sixty-eight percent of users visit the site more than once a month (up from 62% in 2009); 35% visit once every two weeks or more.

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%, the same as in 2009) expressed interest in handy pamphlets on interfaith family issues, such as what to do on holidays. We started offering these pamphlets in 2010.

In late 2009 we launched our new Network with social networking functionality and listings of Jewish organizations, professionals and programs. Significant numbers of users continue to express interest in information about Jewish events in their area (45%), listings of helpful Jewish communal professionals (40%), meeting others online (24%), and a customized home page (23%).



(Social networking-related functions are in CAPS.)

In 2011 we launched our pilot InterfaithFamily/Chicago initiative. A key feature of that effort is to provide workshops and classes in which our users express interest: 33% said they are interested in classes about adding value to their life in an interfaith family through Jewish practices, 30% in classes about raising children with Judaism and 29% in workshops for couples on how to have religion in their lives.

IMPACT ON USERS' LIVES

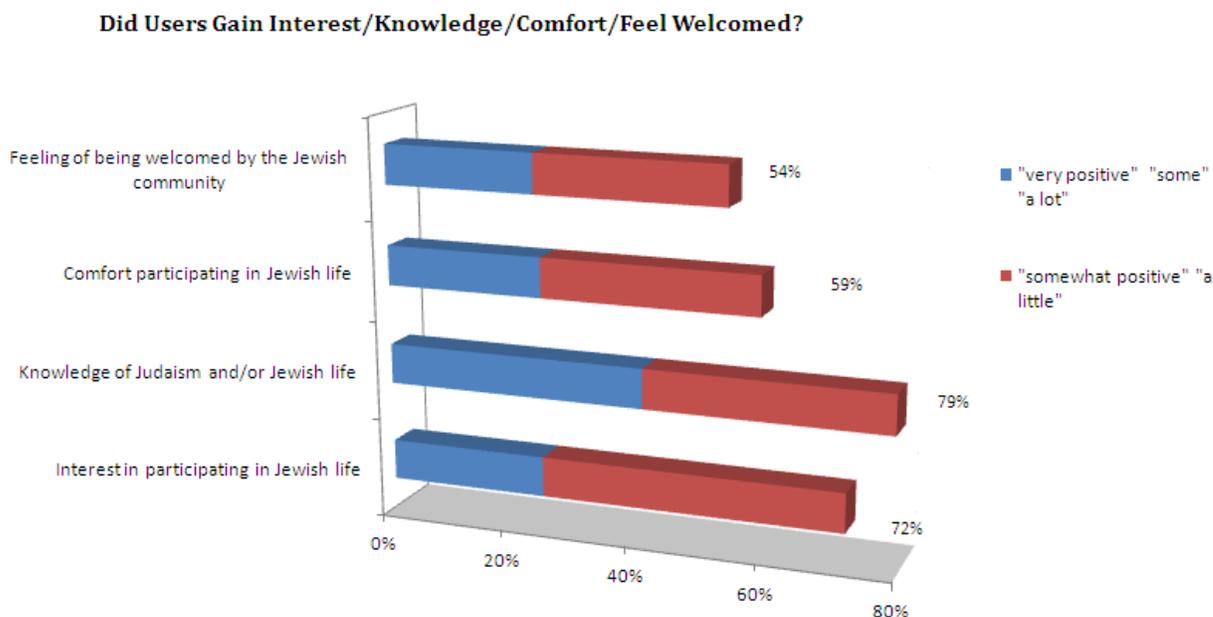
We asked users about our impact on the elements of InterfaithFamily.com's Theory of Change, which states that *if* couples:

- 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?

Sizeable 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.



- 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"). As one user said, "Explanations online are a spur to participation."

"IFF.com is my synagogue away from synagogue, increasing my knowledge of Judaism (I'm the non-Jewish spouse), feeling connected to other people living an interfaith life, and strengthening my resolve to raise my son Jewish."

- 79% said IFF influenced their knowledge of Judaism and/or Jewish life (41% said "some" or "a lot," a greater percentage than cited their partner, friends, extended family or Jewish education

classes; 38% said “a little”). As one user said, *“We have started occasionally celebrating Shabbat and we did a Passover Seder. Your website has been very helpful for me – I’m not Jewish – in preparing for those occasions and just learning about the various holidays.”*

- 59% said IFF had a somewhat or very positive effect on their comfort participating in Jewish life, down from 65% in 2009 (25% said “very positive,” 34% said “somewhat positive”).

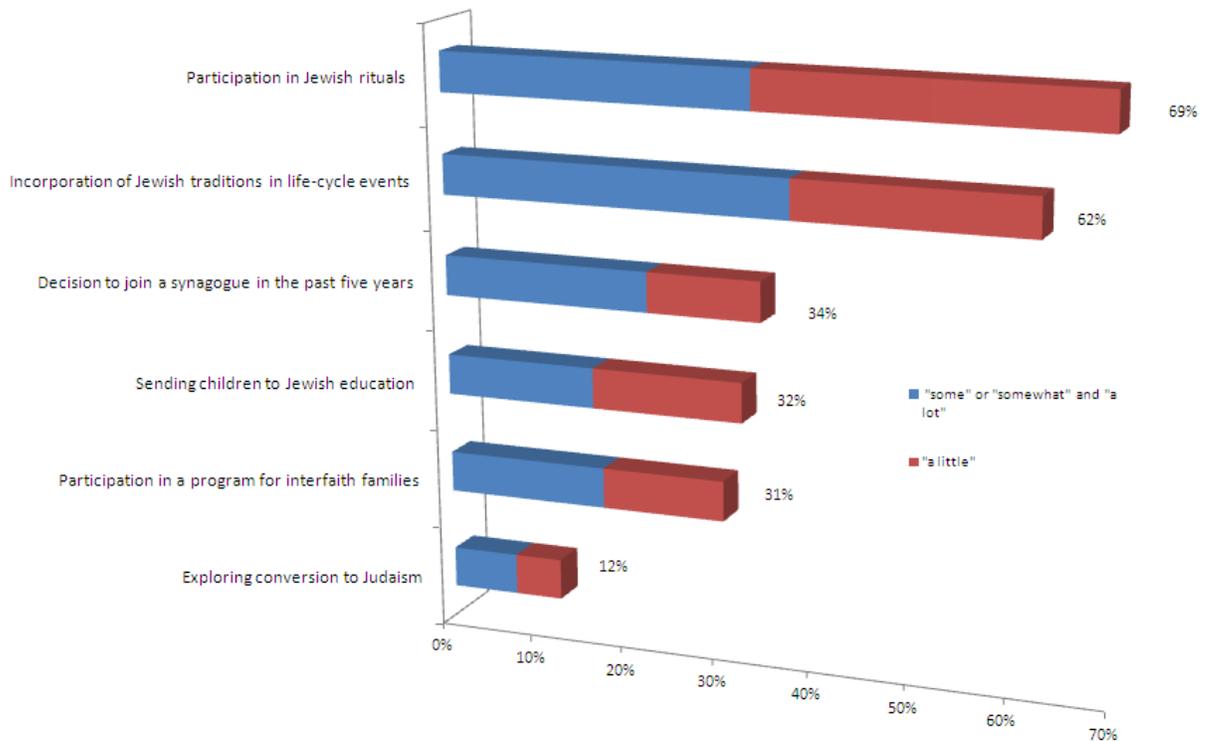
“Understanding how I can incorporate these things into my and my non-Jewish spouse's life has made it a lot more comfortable to reach out in the Jewish community.”

- 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, *“It was quite difficult for my husband to feel accepted after several rabbis refused to marry us. So seeing this community helped me ensure to him that Jews accepted us.”*

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 (five years in the case of deciding to join a synagogue).

IFF's Influence on Target Users' Jewish Choices



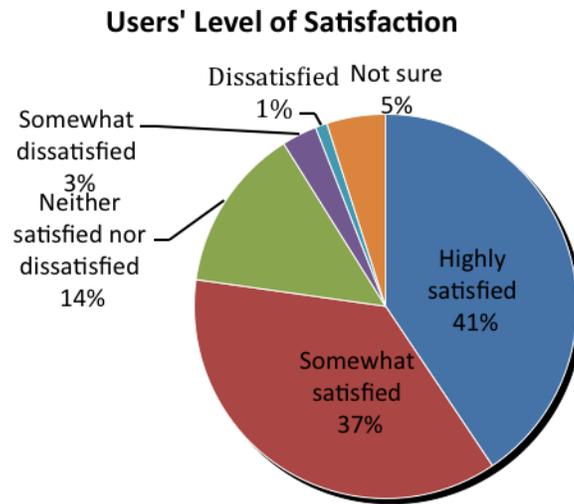
- 69% said IFF influenced their participation in Jewish rituals (33% said "some" or "a lot," 36% said "a little"). As one user said, *"After reading your pamphlet on bedtime rituals for children I began reciting the Shema every night with my son, and reading the alternative translation of the blessing from the pamphlet to him. I also looked up the ritual for hanging a mezuzah after we moved. Both rituals really resonated with me."*
- 62% said IFF influenced their incorporation of Jewish traditions in life-cycle events (37% said "some" or "a lot," 25% said "a little"). *"I turned to the website to get ideas for planning my son's Brit Milah."*
- 34% 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 five years, up from 24% in 2009 (22% said "somewhat" or "a lot," 12% said "a little"). *"I found the name of a local synagogue listed on the website. I contacted the synagogue and spoke with the rabbi and will take my daughter to the children's services in the fall."*
"We found the rabbi that married us through the site and a community we are considering joining."
- 32% said IFF influenced them to send their children to Jewish education classes, up from 25% in 2009 (16% said "somewhat" or "a lot," 16% said "a little").
- 31% said IFF influenced them to participate in a program for people in interfaith relationships, down from 39% in 2009 (18% said "somewhat" or "a lot," 13% said "a little").
- 12% said IFF influenced them to explore conversion to Judaism, down from 25% in 2009 (7% said "somewhat" or "a lot," 5% said "a little"). As one user said, *"I discovered IFF while studying for conversion and it was helpful to me to read about other people like me who had been involved in Judaism for decades before formally converting."*

Beyond intermarried users with children at home, IFF impacts many types of people involved in interfaith relationships:

- *"I come to the site to find ways to bring Judaism to my interfaith grandchildren." "The support I received in terms of worthwhile information and referrals after the birth of my grandson was invaluable."*
- *"Interfaithfamily.com has shown me how I can continue to be Jewish and to have a strong Jewish identity even within an interfaith relationship."*
- *"InterfaithFamily.com has been a safe space for exploring my Jewish identity and learning about how others who may not have grown up with Jewish practices are claiming Judaism as their own."*
- *"I have actually converted but need so much help in raising my kids Jewish. The conversion class that I took contained so little day to day practical information that I need a place to turn for support like your website."*

High Level of Satisfaction

Seventy-eight percent of our users say they are satisfied with their experience of IFF vs. 4% who say they are unsatisfied.

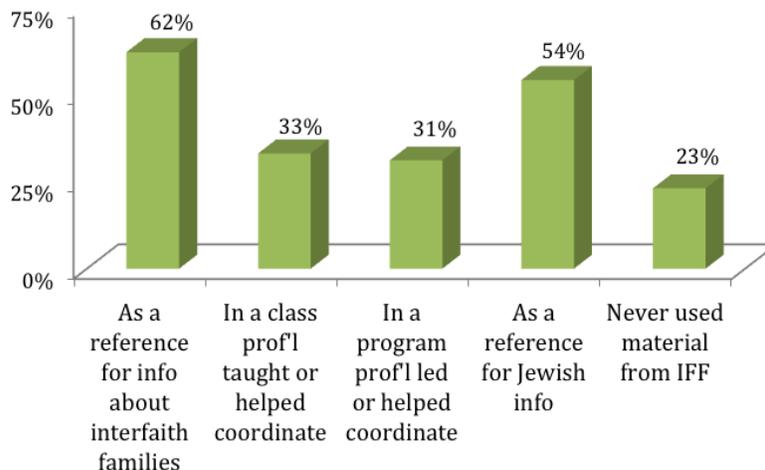


IMPACT ON JEWISH COMMUNAL PROFESSIONALS

The majority (51%) of the Jewish communal professionals who use the site are Reform. Twenty-eight percent are Conservative.

Sixty-two percent of professionals use InterfaithFamily.com as a reference for information on interfaith families (down from 70% in 2009) and 54% as a reference for Jewish information (up from 46% in 2009), while a third (33%) have used materials from the site in a class they taught or helped coordinate and 31% have used it in a program they led or helped coordinate. Only 23% say they have never used the site in their professional work.

Ways Jewish Communal Professionals Have Used IFF



One rabbi said, "I come to the site to be increasingly sensitive to the needs of interfaith couples/families." Another said, "I come to the site to help my congregation be welcoming to interfaith families." Another user said, "I am a Jewish professional and use interfaith family.com as a resource to educate myself, for materials to use in programming, and for information to be able to make referrals or connections to open and welcoming people in my area." Another said, "My interest is as a Jewish professional who wants to understand better how to work with interfaith families.... Your materials and perspectives are very helpful."

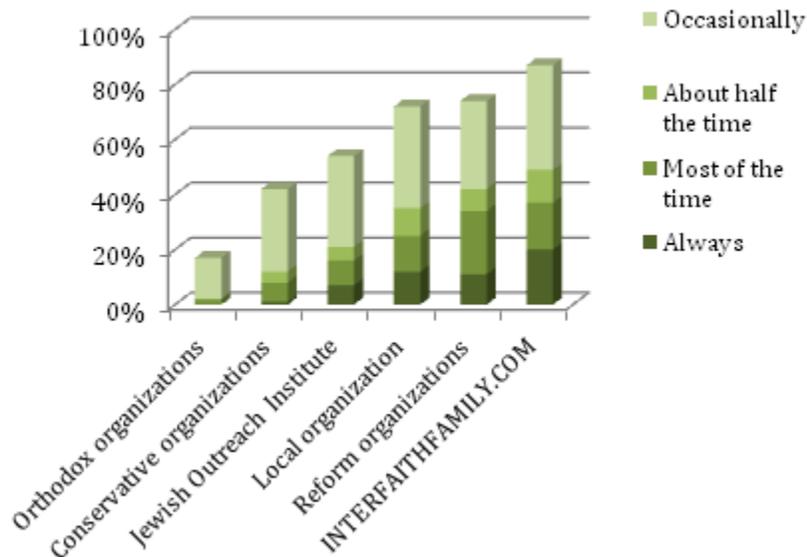
All kinds of professionals use IFF's resources:

- "I'm a URJ Outreach facilitator. I refer the website to interfaith couples, and individuals who are converting."
- "I come for information to pass on to my Mothers Circle students."
- "I run an interfaith outreach program and use your site as a resource for programming, publicity and assistance to those who participate in my programs."
- "As a Jewish family educator in a preschool I look for information to share with our families."
- "As a Hebrew and 7th Grade teacher I have many interfaith children in my classes. I use a lot of your information and stories with them."
- "I work at a Jewish Social Service Agency, and the information is helpful for our staff, clients and volunteers."

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 organization. Thirty-seven percent refer interfaith families and couples to InterfaithFamily.com "most of the time" or "always."

"I use the site regularly in all my rabbinic work with interfaith couples and individuals converting."

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: 71% said IFF has helped them "somewhat" or "a lot" to see the potential for positive engagement in Jewish life by people in interfaith relationships (down from 77% in 2009); 57% said it has helped them "somewhat" or "a lot" to develop welcoming policies and practices (down from 67% in 2009).



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 2009 and 2007 User Surveys, and we have continued to focus much of our content on that demographic "sweet spot." Looking at areas of potential improvement, we could expand our reach to men and to children of intermarried parents.

A steady 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 to offer workshops and resource materials for clergy through our Resource Center for Jewish Clergy.

More of our users are coming to the site in 2011 than did in 2009 looking for information about Jewish holidays, life-cycle events and rituals. Those coming for information about Jewish holidays, for example, increased from 25% to 35%; the percentage coming for help raising their children Jewish increased from 18% to 24%. These increases may be due to our having significantly increased our offerings of "how-to" materials, downloadable pamphlets and multimedia/video, which we will continue to do in order to meet these needs.

Our users continue to be interested in direct engagement with InterfaithFamily.com. Our social networking system launched in 2009 meets the demand of the high percentages of our users who are looking for social networking-related functions like information about Jewish events in their area (45%), listings of local professionals (40%), meeting other interfaith families online (24%), a customized home page (23%), and other functions.

Intermarried couples with children at home continue to report, as they did in 2009, that InterfaithFamily.com had positive influence on the factors that we believe lead to Jewish choices: knowledge about Jewish life (79%), interest in Jewish life (72%), and comfort participating in Jewish life (59%), as well as feeling welcomed by Jewish communities (54%). We noticed a decline in our influence on feeling comfortable participating in Jewish life, from 65% in 2009.

As in 2009, we show greater impact on elements that are personal--participating in Jewish life and feeling knowledgeable about it --and less on those that depend on prevailing communal offerings and attitudes--feeling comfortable participating in Jewish life and feeling welcomed by Jewish communities. We hope that increased use of our 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.

Our Jewish professional users, including rabbis and outreach professionals, refer our resources to their clients more often than any other organization's or movement's resources for interfaith families. They also report that InterfaithFamily.com has helped them to see interfaith families in a more positive light (71%) and develop welcoming policies and practices (57%). We noticed a decline in our influence on professionals developing welcoming policies and practices, which we plan to address with increased activity of our Resource Center for Program Providers.

Finally, intermarried couples with children at home report that InterfaithFamily.com had positive influence on their Jewish choices, including participation in Jewish rituals and life-cycle events (62-69%), deciding to join a synagogue (34%), deciding to send children to Jewish education classes (32%), participation in programs for interfaith families (31%) and exploring conversion (12%). We noticed a decline in influencing participation in programs for interfaith families (from 39% in 2009) and on exploring conversion (from 25% in 2009), which may reflect trends towards fewer program offerings for interfaith families and lower interest in conversion. We are heartened by the increase in our influencing decisions to send children to Jewish education classes (up from 25% in 2009) and a bigger increase in influencing decisions to join synagogues (up from 24% in 2009).

That almost one third of our users are interested in workshops for new interfaith couples about how to have religion in their lives and in classes on raising children with Judaism in interfaith families and adding value to their lives through Jewish practices confirms the need for such programs and supports our plan to offer them in our InterfaithFamily/Chicago pilot initiative.