

What We Learned from the 2007 Passover/Easter Survey

By Micah Sachs

Introduction

While the confluence of Passover and Easter is not as culturally prominent as the so-called “December dilemma,” deciding how to celebrate these major religious holidays is one of the key potential conflicts in interfaith families. In February 2007, we conducted our third annual Passover/Easter Survey to determine the attitudes and behaviors of people in interfaith relationships during Passover and Easter.

The survey attracted 684 responses—more than three times the number of responses we received in 2006. Of those 684 respondents, 500 said they were in interfaith relationships. Of those 500, 333 have children. Of those 333, 236, or 70%, were raising their children solely in the Jewish religion. Nationally, 33 to 39 percent of interfaith couples are raising their children solely in the Jewish religion, according to the 2000-01 National Jewish Population Study.

This report focuses on the responses of the **236 survey participants who are in interfaith relationships and raising their children solely in the Jewish religion**. The report does not reflect the behaviors of interfaith couples in general, or the behaviors of all interfaith couples with children. The goal of this report is to determine how interfaith families raising their children Jewish deal with the competing demands of the two holidays.

We chose to focus on this population for several reasons:

1. One of the goals of our organization is to promote interfaith couples raising their children Jewish. We therefore want to know more about the exact dynamics of how this works, especially during potential periods of conflict, such as when Passover and Easter overlap.
2. Jewish community policy-makers are focusing increasing attention on engaging interfaith families with the Jewish community with the end goal of the families deciding to raise their children Jewish. As a recently published study on the American Jewish population noted, “There is increasing evidence... that more intermarried families are choosing to raise children Jewishly.”¹
3. Many studies of intermarriage have looked at intermarried Jews as an undifferentiated group and failed to make the important distinction between those intermarried couples that have chosen to create a Jewish home and those who have not. This report, like our previous reports on the behaviors and attitudes of interfaith couples during the December holidays, is one of the few to date that has looked at the behaviors of those interfaith families who are raising their children Jewish.

¹ Leonard Saxe, Elizabeth Tighe, Benjamin Phillips and Charles Kadushin, *Reconsidering the Size and Characteristics of the American Jewish Population: New Estimates of a Larger and More Diverse Community* (Waltham, Mass.: Steinhardt Social Research Institute, 2007), 29.

The Report

Please note: Throughout the report, unless otherwise noted, “respondents” refers to respondents to the survey who are intermarried, have raised or are raising children and have raised or are raising their children exclusively Jewish. This is not a report on all interfaith couples, or all interfaith couples with children. These figures should not be reported as representative of all interfaith families.

The great majority of the 236 respondents plan on participating in Passover activities. More than three-quarters plan on attending a seder, telling the Passover story or eating matzah. Only an insignificant minority don’t plan on participating in Passover celebrations at all. A majority even plan on following the dietary restrictions for most or all of the eight days of Passover.

2. What Passover activities, if any, do you plan to participate in this year?	Count	% (of 236)
Host seder	118	50%
Attend seder	180	76%
Tell the Passover story	195	83%
Eat matzah	218	92%
Follow dietary restrictions for most or all eight days of Passover	131	56%
Will not participate in Passover celebrations	2	0%

Table 1. Passover Activities of Respondents

Meanwhile, they plan on participating in significantly fewer Easter activities, and few plan on participating in the more “religious” Easter activities like attending religious services (15%), hosting Easter dinner (8%) or telling the Easter story (3%). The most common Easter activity is attending Easter dinner (41%). The stark contrast between the number of people hosting Easter dinner and the number of people attending Easter dinner suggests that Easter is a holiday primarily celebrated outside of the home. Nearly one-quarter (24%) don’t plan on participating in Easter celebrations at all.

6. What Easter activities, if any, do you plan on participating in this year?	Count	% (of 236)
Attend religious services	36	15%
Decorate eggs	79	34%
Participate in an Easter egg hunt	78	33%
Host Easter dinner	19	8%
Attend Easter dinner	96	41%
Tell the Easter story	8	3%
Will not participate in Easter celebrations	57	24%

Table 2. Easter Activities of Respondents

Despite the confluence of the two holidays—Easter falls on April 8, the sixth day of Passover in 2007—the great majority of respondents plan on keeping the holidays separate. Among those respondents who plan to participate in both holidays, nearly 70% plan on keeping the holidays entirely separate, and only 3% indicate any significant level of blending.

1. If you plan to participate in both Easter and Passover celebrations this year, will you blend your celebrations?	Count	% (of 178)
5 – keep separate	124	70%
4	23	13%
3	12	7%
2	2	1%
1 – blend	4	2%
Not applicable	13	7%

Table 3. Blending Patterns of Respondents

These respondents also see significant differences in the level of religiousness of their celebrations of Passover and Easter. Few say their celebrations of either holiday will be deeply religious, but far more say their celebrations of Easter will be entirely secular (67%) than say their celebrations of Passover (2%) will be entirely secular.

4. Please rate the religious nature of your Passover celebrations, where 5 = deeply religious and 1 = entirely secular.	Count	% (of 233)	8. Please rate the religious nature of your Easter celebrations, where 5 = deeply religious and 1 = entirely secular.	Count	% (of 169)
5 – deeply religious	9	4%	5 – deeply religious	5	3%
4	65	28%	4	10	6%
3	115	49%	3	20	12%
2	39	17%	2	21	12%
1 – entirely secular	5	2%	1 – entirely secular	113	67%

Table 4. Religious Nature of Passover vs. Easter Celebrations

A clearer picture of the differences in the level of religiosity the respondents attach to the two holidays is portrayed graphically in Figure 1.

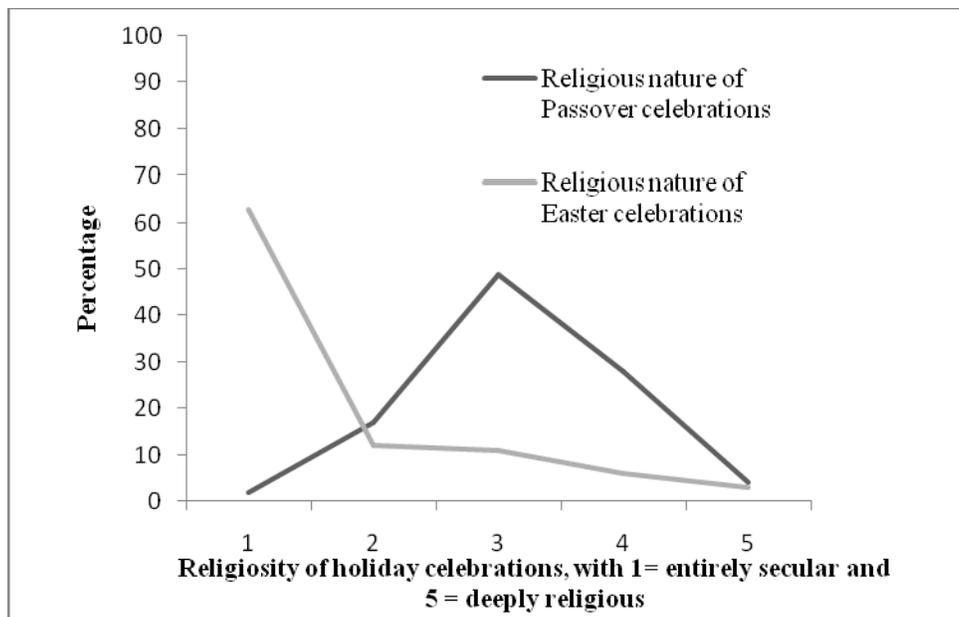


Figure 1. Chart Showing Religious Nature of Passover vs. Easter Celebrations

Overall, the great majority of respondents say they are eagerly anticipating or anticipating Passover (80%) and “very comfortable” or comfortable (85%) with participating in Passover celebrations. Meanwhile, there is a far greater level of ambivalence over Easter’s arrival, with 75% saying they’re

ambivalent or worse about Easter, and 57% saying they’re either “very uncomfortable,” uncomfortable or halfway between very comfortable and very uncomfortable.

3. Please rank how much you are looking forward to Passover this year:	Count	% (of 234)	7. Please rank how much you are looking forward to Easter this year:	Count	% (of 180)
5 – eager anticipation	67	29%	5 – eager anticipation	8	4%
4	119	51%	4	37	21%
3 – ambivalence	39	17%	3 – ambivalence	85	47%
2	7	3%	2	18	10%
1 – not looking forward to the holiday	2	1%	1 – not looking forward to the holiday	32	18%

Table 5. Respondents’ Anticipation of Passover vs. Anticipation of Easter

5. How comfortable do you feel about participating in Passover celebrations?	Count	% (of 234)	5. How comfortable do you feel about participating in Easter celebrations?	Count	% (of 180)
5 – very comfortable	147	63%	5 – very comfortable	29	52%
4	52	22%	4	12	22%
3	27	12%	3	24	44%
2	5	2%	2	21	37%
1 – very uncomfortable	3	1%	1 – very uncomfortable	12	21%
Not applicable	0	0%	Not applicable	2	4%

Table 6. Respondents’ Comfort Level with Passover vs. Comfort Level with Easter

However, participants’ anticipation of the holidays and comfort level with the holidays differ drastically when you compare Jewish vs. Christian respondents. Interestingly, there is not much difference in the levels of anticipation for Passover between the two populations: 82% of Jews vs. 78% of Christians are anticipating or “eagerly” anticipating Passover. But there is a difference in the two cohorts’ level of comfort with Passover. The Christian respondents aren’t uncomfortable with participating in Passover celebrations, but they’re not quite as comfortable as the Jewish respondents. Seventy-one percent of Jewish respondents say they’re “very comfortable” with participating in Passover celebrations, while only 49% of Christians respondents say the same.

Jewish Respondents			Christian Respondents		
3. Please rank how much you are looking forward to Passover this year:	Count	% (of 147)	7. Please rank how much you are looking forward to Passover this year:	Count	% (of 68)
5 – eager anticipation	47	29%	5 – eager anticipation	14	21%
4	72	51%	4	39	57%
3 – ambivalence	21	17%	3 – ambivalence	14	21%
2	5	3%	2	1	2%
1 – not looking forward to the holiday	2	1%	1 – not looking forward to the holiday	0	0%

Table 7. Respondents’ Anticipation of Passover, Jewish vs. Christian Respondents

Jewish Respondents			Christian Respondents		
5. How comfortable do you feel about participating in Passover celebrations?	Count	% (of 147)	5. How comfortable do you feel about participating in Passover celebrations?	Count	% (of 68)
5 – very comfortable	105	71%	5 – very comfortable	33	49%
4	28	19%	4	18	27%
3	8	5%	3	16	24%
2	3	2%	2	1	2%
1 – very uncomfortable	3	2%	1 – very uncomfortable	0	0%
Not applicable	0	0%	Not applicable	0	0%

Table 8. Respondents’ Comfort Level with Passover, Jewish vs. Christian Respondents

There are major differences, however, between Jewish and Christian respondents when it comes to levels of anticipation of, and comfort level with, Easter. Fifty percent of Christian respondents are anticipating or “eagerly” anticipating Easter, in comparison to 13% of Jewish respondents. By the same token, 87% of Jewish respondents are ambivalent or worse about Easter, while 50% of Christian respondents are ambivalent or worse about Easter; 29% of Jewish respondents say they’re not looking forward to the holiday at all, while only 3% of Christian respondents say the same.

The data on comfort level with Easter tells a similar story. Seventy-one percent of Christian respondents are comfortable or “very comfortable” with Easter, while only 20% of Jewish respondents say the same. Meanwhile, 50% of Jewish respondents are uncomfortable or “very uncomfortable” with Easter while only 8% of Christian respondents say the same.

Jewish Respondents			Christian Respondents		
3. Please rank how much you are looking forward to Easter this year:	Count	% (of 101)	7. Please rank how much you are looking forward to Easter this year:	Count	% (of 62)
5 – eager anticipation	2	2%	5 – eager anticipation	6	10%
4	11	11%	4	25	40%
3 – ambivalence	46	46%	3 – ambivalence	25	40%
2	13	13%	2	4	7%
1 – not looking forward to the holiday	29	29%	1 – not looking forward to the holiday	2	3%

Table 9. Respondents’ Anticipation of Easter, Jewish vs. Christian Respondents

Jewish Respondents			Christian Respondents		
5. How comfortable do you feel about participating in Easter celebrations?	Count	% (of 101)	5. How comfortable do you feel about participating in Easter celebrations?	Count	% (of 62)
5 – very comfortable	11	11%	5 – very comfortable	34	55%
4	9	9%	4	10	16%
3	27	27%	3	12	19%
2	30	30%	2	5	8%
1 – very uncomfortable	21	21%	1 – very uncomfortable	0	0%
Not applicable	3	3%	Not applicable	1	2%

Table 10. Respondents’ Comfort Level with Easter, Jewish vs. Christian Respondents

Figure 2 shows the differences in the comfort levels with Easter of Jewish vs. Christian respondents in graphic form.

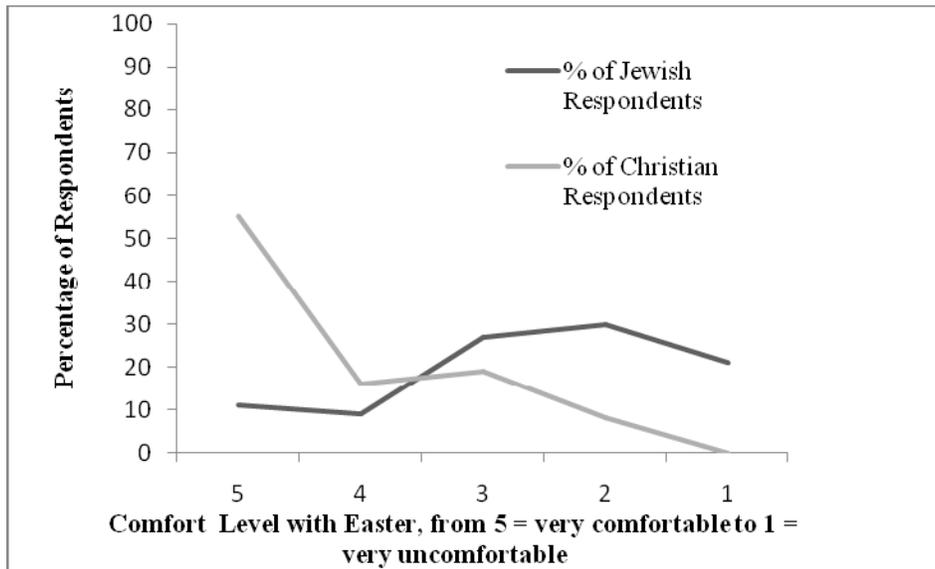


Figure 2. Chart Showing Respondents’ Comfort Level with Easter, Jewish vs. Christian Respondents

Numerous studies have shown that the mother’s religious background has a much greater influence over the children’s religious behavior than the father’s religious background. Although our cohort of respondents have all said they are raising their children exclusively Jewish, it is still particularly instructive to compare the Jewish behaviors of couples where the woman is Jewish vs. couples where the man is Jewish. One would expect that both kinds of couples would show a preponderance of Passover-related behaviors. Surprisingly, a greater percentage of respondents in interfaith couples where the woman is *not* Jewish plan to eat matzah, attend a seder and tell the Passover story. This shows that even in interfaith households raising children Jewish where the mother isn’t Jewish, Jewish behaviors are highly prevalent.

Respondents in An Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Jewish			Respondents in an Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Not Jewish		
2. What Passover activities, if any, do you plan to participate in this year?	Count	% (of 123)	2. What Passover activities, if any, do you plan to participate in this year?	Count	% (of 94)
Host seder	66	54%	Host seder	42	45%
Attend seder	94	76%	Attend seder	75	80%
Tell the Passover story	96	78%	Tell the Passover story	83	88%
Eat matzah	110	89%	Eat matzah	91	97%
Follow dietary restrictions for most or all eight days of Passover	75	61%	Follow dietary restrictions for most or all eight days of Passover	49	52%
Will not participate in Passover celebrations	0	0%	Will not participate in Passover celebrations	2	2%

Table 11. Passover Activities of Respondents, Couples Where the Woman Is Jewish vs. Couples Where the Woman Is Not Jewish

It is particularly revealing to look at the Easter behaviors of couples where the woman is Jewish vs. where the woman is not Jewish. Even among our cohort of respondents—all of whom are raising their children exclusively Jewish—Easter behaviors are much more prevalent when the woman is not Jewish. This is especially the case for “secular” Easter activities like decorating eggs and participating in Easter egg hunts. Far fewer couples where the woman is Jewish plan on decorating eggs (16%) than couples where the woman is not Jewish (53%); the same pattern holds for participating in an Easter egg hunt (19% when the woman is Jewish, 47% when she is not). Fully one-third of couples where the woman is Jewish plan on not participating in Easter celebrations at all vs. only 15% of non-Jewish-woman couples.

“Religious” Easter behaviors are not very common among Jewish-woman couples, but they are much more common than among non-Jewish-woman couples. No respondents in couples where the woman is Jewish said they plan on telling the Easter story, while 9% of respondents in couples where the woman is not Jewish said they would. Nine percent of Jewish-woman couples plan on attending religious services for Easter vs. 28% of non-Jewish-woman couples.

Respondents in An Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Jewish			Respondents in an Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Not Jewish		
6. What Easter activities, if any, do you plan on participating in this year?	Count	% (of 123)	6. What Easter activities, if any, do you plan on participating in this year?	Count	% (of 94)
Attend religious services	9	7%	Attend religious services	26	28%
Decorate eggs	20	16%	Decorate eggs	50	53%
Participate in an Easter egg hunt	23	19%	Participate in an Easter egg hunt	44	47%
Host Easter dinner	5	4%	Host Easter dinner	13	14%
Attend Easter dinner	48	39%	Attend Easter dinner	41	44%
Tell the Easter story	0	0%	Tell the Easter story	8	9%
Will not participate in Easter celebrations	41	33%	Will not participate in Easter celebrations	14	15%

Table 12. Easter Activities of Respondents, Couples Where the Woman Is Jewish vs. Couples Where the Woman Is Not Jewish

Overall, both groups for the most part characterize their Easter celebrations as secular, but non-Jewish-woman couples on average characterize their Easter celebrations as more religious than Jewish-woman couples. Fully 74% of Jewish-woman couples characterize their Easter celebrations as “entirely secular” and 82% characterize their celebrations as secular or “entirely secular.” By comparison, only 45% of non-Jewish-woman couples characterize their Easter celebrations as “entirely secular,” although 63% characterize their Easter celebrations as secular or “entirely secular.”

Respondents in An Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Jewish			Respondents in An Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Not Jewish		
8. Please rate the religious nature of your Easter celebrations, where 5 = deeply religious and 1= entirely secular.	Count	% (of 83)	8. Please rate the religious nature of your Easter celebrations, where 5 = deeply religious and 1= entirely secular.	Count	% (of 80)
5 – deeply religious	1	1%	5 – deeply religious	3	4%
4	2	2%	4	8	10%
3	4	5%	3	16	20%
2	7	8%	2	14	18%
1 – entirely secular	61	74%	1 – entirely secular	36	45%
Not applicable	8	10%	Not applicable	3	4%

Table 13. Religious Nature of Easter Celebrations, Couples Where the Woman Is Jewish vs. Couples Where the Woman Is Not Jewish

Interestingly, no matter how the cohort of respondents is subdivided, everyone gives similar reasons to their children for why they participate in Easter celebrations. Among all respondents, similarly-sized

majorities (63%) say that “respect for the non-Jewish parent’s traditions” and “respect for the traditions of the non-Jewish parent’s extended family” are ways they explain their family’s participation in Easter. A majority (59%) say that “open-mindedness/tolerance” is a reason they give their children. Very few characterize the participation in Easter as “an opportunity for [their] children to make up their own mind about what religion to adopt” (9%) or tell their children they participate in Easter because they don’t want to upset the non-Jewish parent (9%). Slightly less than half (42%) of respondents explain their participation as part of a “desire to expose [their] children to different faith traditions than [their] own.”

10. If you are raising your children as Jews, how do you explain or talk about your participation in Easter celebrations to your children?	Count	% (of 180)
Respect for non-Jewish parent’s traditions	113	63%
Desire not to upset the non-Jewish parent	17	9%
Respect for the traditions of the non-Jewish parent’s extended family	114	63%
Desire not to upset the non-Jewish parent’s extended family	19	11%
Open-mindedness/tolerance	106	59%
Desire to expose your children to different faith traditions than your own	76	42%
Opportunity for your children to make up their own mind about what religion to adopt	17	9%
Other	29	16%

Table 14. How Respondents Explain Their Participation in Easter to Their Children

There are no major differences in how Jewish-woman couples and non-Jewish woman couples talk about participation in Easter, but there are some small, but telling, differences in how Jewish respondents and Christian respondents talk about Easter participation. Significantly fewer Jewish respondents than Christian respondents mentioned “open-mindedness/tolerance” (52% for Jewish, 74% for Christian). Also, fewer Jewish respondents (37%) than Christian respondents (50%) mention “desire to expose your children to different faith traditions than your own.”

Jewish Respondents			Christian Respondents		
10. If you are raising your children as Jews, how do you explain or talk about your	Count	% (of 101)	10. If you are raising your children as Jews, how do you explain or talk about your	Count	% (of 62)

participation in Easter celebrations to your children?			participation in Easter celebrations to your children?		
Respect for non-Jewish parent’s traditions	63	62%	Respect for non-Jewish parent’s traditions	41	66%
Desire not to upset the non-Jewish parent	13	13%	Desire not to upset the non-Jewish parent	3	5%
Respect for the traditions of the non-Jewish parent’s extended family	64	63%	Respect for the traditions of the non-Jewish parent’s extended family	37	60%
Desire not to upset the non-Jewish parent’s extended family	12	12%	Desire not to upset the non-Jewish parent’s extended family	4	7%
Open-mindedness/tolerance	52	52%	Open-mindedness/tolerance	46	74%
Desire to expose your children to different faith traditions than your own	37	37%	Desire to expose your children to different faith traditions than your own	31	50%
Opportunity for your children to make up their own mind about what religion to adopt	8	8%	Opportunity for your children to make up their own mind about what religion to adopt	8	13%
Other	15	15%	Other	12	19%

Table 15. How Respondents Explain Their Participation in Easter to Their Children, Jewish Respondents vs. Christian Respondents

The endgame of all this research is to determine whether the child will grow up with a strong Jewish identity. Overwhelmingly, our respondents say they are unconcerned that participating in Easter celebrations will affect their children’s Jewish identity. A few say that participating in Easter strengthens their children’s Jewish identity because it encourages their children to ask questions, but many more point out how their Easter celebrations are either entirely secular or only occur in the homes of relatives. Here are some typical responses to the question “If you are raising your children as Jews, do you think that your participation in Easter celebrations affects their Jewish identity? Why or why not? What if anything have your children said to you about this?”:

No, because my husband’s family is not at all religious and it really is just getting together for dinner.

Easter is a community activity. We celebrate Passover as a religious holiday and Easter egg hunts as a spring activity.

I don’t think it affects their identity, but provides them with an open-mindedness and respect for other traditions. The kids consider themselves very lucky to be able to celebrate [a] variety of traditions and celebrations.

No. We observe it only in a secular manner—and don’t even refer to it as “Easter.” It’s the Springtime Bunny for the egg hunt as opposed to the Easter bunny. And though I cook an Easter dinner, we do not refer to it that way at all... it’s just a remembrance of what I did when I was growing up.

While raising our children as Jews, there was never a problem with the kids having Easter egg hunts, Easter baskets and an Easter ham at the non-Jewish grandparents' home.

No. They go to Jewish Sunday school and a [have] a strong affiliation with our temple. I do not bring them to Easter religious services.

A number of respondents noted that Easter wasn't an issue, but Christmas was. This jibes with the results of our Third Annual December Holidays Survey, which revealed a greater level of anxiety over the allure of Christmas.

Demographic Portrait of Our Respondents

Of the 684 people who responded to our Passover-Easter Survey, 236 said they were intermarried, had children and had raised or were raising their children exclusively Jewish. Of those 236 respondents, the majority (62%) are Jewish:

15. What is your religion? Please check all that apply.	Count	% (of 236)
Jewish	147	62%
Catholic	42	18%
Protestant	28	12%
Muslim	0	0%
Hindu	0	0%
Agnostic/Atheist	7	3%
None	5	2%
Other	19	8%

Table 16. Religion of Respondents

Their partners were a mix of Jewish (41%), Catholic (23%), Protestant (14%) and other religions. Because respondents could check multiple religions, there is some overlap where intermarried respondents characterized themselves and their partner as Jewish, as well as other religions.

15. What is your spouse's religion? Please check all that apply.	Count	% (of 236)
Jewish	97	41%
Catholic	55	23%
Protestant	33	14%
Muslim	0	0%
Hindu	1	0%
Agnostic/Atheist	19	8%
None	12	5%
Not applicable	0	0%
Other	35	15%

Table 17. Religion of Respondents' Spouses

The great majority of the respondents were female (83%).

15. What is your gender?	Count	% (of 236)
Male	40	17%
Female	196	83%

Table 18. Gender of Respondents

Three-quarters were between the ages of 30 and 49.

15. What is your age?	Count	% (of 236)
Under 20	0	0%
20-29	9	4%
30-39	98	42%
40-49	80	34%
50-59	32	14%
60-69	15	6%
70 and over	2	1%

Table 19. Age of Respondents

Nearly half of the respondents (43%) have children 3 or younger. 54% have children 5 or younger.

15. What the age of your children?	Count	% (of 236)
0-3	101	43%
4-5	57	24%
6-8	64	27%
9-12	47	20%
13-17	37	16%
18-30	35	15%
30 and over	11	5%

Table 20. Age of Respondents' Children

Slightly more than a third have sent their children to a one-day-a-week Jewish educational program (34%) and a quarter have sent their children to part-time Jewish school that meets more than once a week. 10% have sent their children to Jewish day school. Overall, 76% of respondents say their child has participated in some kind of Jewish education—which is very similar to the percentage of Jewish children ages 6-17 who have received some kind of Jewish education according to the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01 (79%). The percentages that say their children go to one day a week Jewish school and that say their children go to part-time Jewish school more than once a week are also very

similar to the NJPS’s numbers for the general Jewish population: 25% in part-time Jewish school that met once a week among our respondents vs. 24% in the NJPS; 34% in one-day-a-week Jewish education among our respondents vs. 25% in the NJPS. The percentage of respondents attending Jewish day school was significantly lower than the general Jewish population according to the NJPS, but a recent study, *Reconsidering the Size and Characteristics of the American Jewish Population: New Estimates of a Larger and More Diverse Community* (Steinhardt Social Research Institute, 2007) showed that the NJPS probably significantly over-exaggerated the percentage of Jewish children in Jewish day school.

22. Which types of Jewish education has your child or children participated in?	Count	% (of 236)
One day a week Jewish educational program	80	34%
Part-time Jewish school that met more than once a week	60	25%
Full-time Jewish day school	23	10%
Private tutoring	15	6%
None	32	14%
Not applicable	25	11%
Some other type of schooling	53	23%

Table 21. Types of Jewish Education Respondents’ Children Have Participated In

Along with Passover activities, we also asked about the frequency of Jewish behaviors, basing our questions on the survey instrument for the 2005 Boston Jewish Community Study. Large majorities say they always light Hanukkah candles (81%) and attend or hold a Passover seder (79%) and nearly half (45%) say they light candles on Friday night “all of the time” or “usually.” The great majority (85%) say that no one in their household ever attends weekly services at church or another non-Jewish house of worship.

24. How often does someone in your household:	All of the time	Usually	Some of the time	Never	Response total
Light candles on Friday nights?	18% (43)	27% (64)	31% (73)	23% (54)	234
Light Hanukkah candles?	81% (189)	15% (35)	4% (9)	0% (1)	234
Have a Christmas tree in your home?	33% (77)	8% (19)	15% (34)	44% (104)	234
Attend or hold a Passover seder?	79% (186)	14% (33)	5% (12)	1% (3)	234
Attend weekly services at a synagogue?	4% (10)	15% (34)	62% (144)	20% (46)	234
Attend weekly services at a church or other non-Jewish house of worship?	1% (2)	3% (6)	12% (28)	85% (198)	234

Table 22. Frequency of Respondents’ Religious Behaviors

As far as Jewish social connections, the majority say that “about half” or more of their friends are Jewish (59%).

26. How many of your friends are Jewish?	Count	% (of 234)
All	1	0%
Most	46	20%
About half	90	39%
Some	92	39%
None	5	2%

Table 23. Jewish Friendship Patterns of Respondents

Interestingly, in the case of religious behavior and Jewish friendship patterns, our respondents are very similar to the national averages for the entire Jewish population, according to the NJPS.

	Respondents to our survey	NJPS 2000-01
Half or more friends are Jewish*	59%	52%
Hold/attend Passover seder	79%	77%
Light Shabbat candles	18%	28%
Light Hanukkah candles	81%	72%
Attend Jewish religious services**	19%	27%

*The NJPS asked about “close” friends.

**The NJPS asked about attending Jewish religious services “monthly or more.” We asked whether someone in your household attended weekly services at a synagogue all of the time, usually, some of the time or never. We calculated a comparable percentage by adding the responses to “all of the time” and “usually.”

Table 24. Jewish Connections of Respondents vs. American Jews (NJPS 2000-01)

As a group, our Jewish respondents had experienced a surprisingly high level of Jewish education as children. 77% indicated they received some kind of Jewish education from grades 1-8, and 49% indicated they received some kind of Jewish education from grades 9-12. However, in analyzing the data, we did not find any significant relationship between the level of Jewish education as a child and levels of Passover or Easter activities as an intermarried adult.

25. Which of the following types of Jewish education did you receive in:	One day a week	Part-time more than once a week	Full-time Jewish day school	Other Jewish schooling	None	Response total
Grades 1-8	19% (28)	50% (73)	8% (11)	3% (4)	23% (33)	145
Grades 9-12	18% (24)	25% (33)	1% (1)	5% (7)	51% (66)	145

Table 25. Jewish Education of Respondents

Conclusions

Overall, intermarried people who have decided to raise their children Jewish appear to be doing a good job of promoting Jewish behavior and de-emphasizing non-Jewish behavior. The great majority are participating in numerous Passover activities. More than three-fourths plan on attending a seder, half plan on hosting a seder and more than half plan on following dietary restrictions for most or all of the eight days of Passover.

Conversely, they are participating in far fewer Easter activities. Nearly a quarter are not participating in Easter celebrations at all, while only 40% plan on even attending Easter dinner. Only very small minorities plan to engage in “religious” Easter activities like telling the Easter story or attending religious services.

For those that are participating in Easter, they overwhelmingly see their participation in Easter as secular, as indicated by both our quantitative and qualitative research. Conversely, while they don’t see Passover as deeply religious, they see it as significantly more religious than Easter.

Despite Easter falling during Passover this year, very few respondents plan on blending the two holidays in any way.

Having firmly decided on a religious tradition for their children, the respondents rarely explain to their children that they’re participating in Easter so they can make up their own mind about what religion to adopt. Most respondents say they explain their family’s participation in Easter to their children as a matter of “respect” for either the non-Jewish parent’s traditions or the traditions of the non-Jewish parent’s extended family.

It is the case, however, that Easter activities are much more prevalent in Jewish homes where the mother is not Jewish. Far more households with a non-Jewish mother plan on decorating eggs, participating in an Easter egg hunt and attending Easter religious services than households where the mother is Jewish. But tellingly, only small percentages of even these non-Jewish-woman households plan on hosting Easter dinner or telling the Easter story. While they are more likely to participate in “secular” Easter activities, they are still not particularly likely to participate in “religious” Easter activities. Most of them still characterize their Easter celebrations as secular, and few view their Easter celebrations as religious.

Overall, the respondents do not feel that the Easter-Passover conflict is nearly as significant as the so-called “December Dilemma.”