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**MS-831: Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation Records, 1980–2008.**

Series D: Adam Gamoran Papers. 1991–2008.

Subseries 4: The Jewish Indicators Project, 1996–2000.

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Gamoran, Adam, et al. "CIJE Indicators Report: Jewish Identity 1977-1996, How Strong Is One's Jewish Identity?" Drafts with comments. Model reports, 1998.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the  
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The Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE) is committed to revitalizing Jewish life in North America through Jewish education. The CIJE Indicators Project is monitoring the educational system and its outcomes. This report focuses on the strength of Jewish identity, an outcome of Jewish education and a key indicator of a thriving Jewish community.



# CIJE Indicators Report: Jewish Identity 1977-1996

## How Strong is One's Jewish Identity?

Seeing one's Jewishness as central to one's life is  
a defining feature of a thriving Jewish community

*There are many ways to measure changes in Jewish identity. The General Social Survey, which questions a random sample of American adults every year, asks respondents about the religion in which they were raised, their and their spouse's current religion, and the strength of their religious identity. How strong is the Jewish identity of American Jewish adults, and how has Jewish identity changed in recent years?*

# CJIE Indicators Report: Jewish Identity 1977-1996

*Seeing one's Jewishness as central to one's life is  
a defining feature of a thriving Jewish community*

## HAS THE STRENGTH OF JEWISH IDENTITY CHANGED OVER TIME?

Yes. Over the past twenty years, the proportion of Jews who refer to themselves as "strong Jews" has declined. In 1976, 35% of adults reported having a strong Jewish identity. By 1993, that figure had declined to 29%. Simultaneously, the proportion of Jews who refer to themselves as "not very strong Jews" has increased. In 1976, 50% of adults reported not having a very strong Jewish identity. By 1993, that figure had risen to 55%. Meanwhile, the proportion of persons raised as Jews who as adults reported no longer being Jewish has remained relatively stable at around 15% in most survey years.

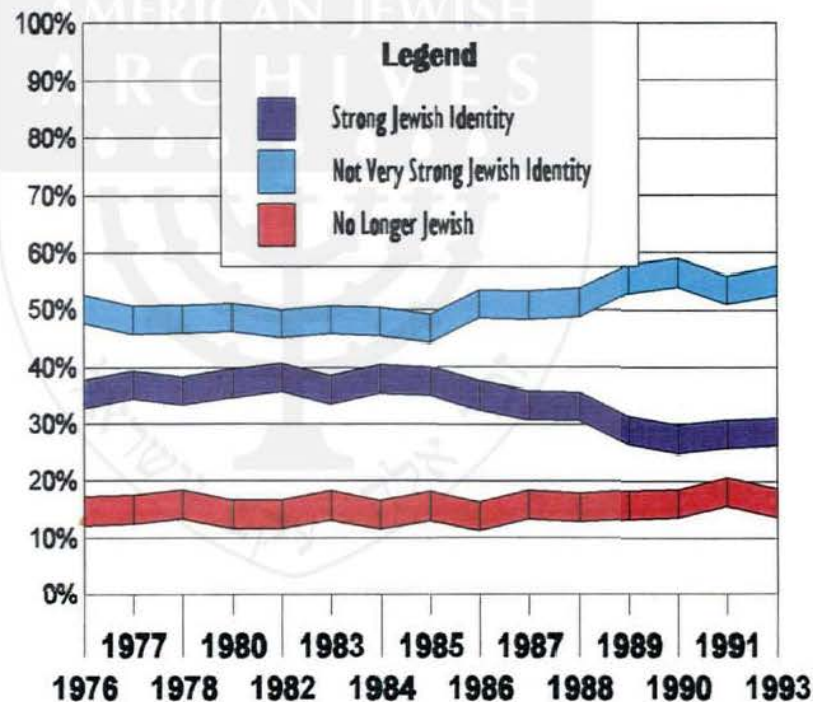


Figure 1: Strength of Jewish Identity

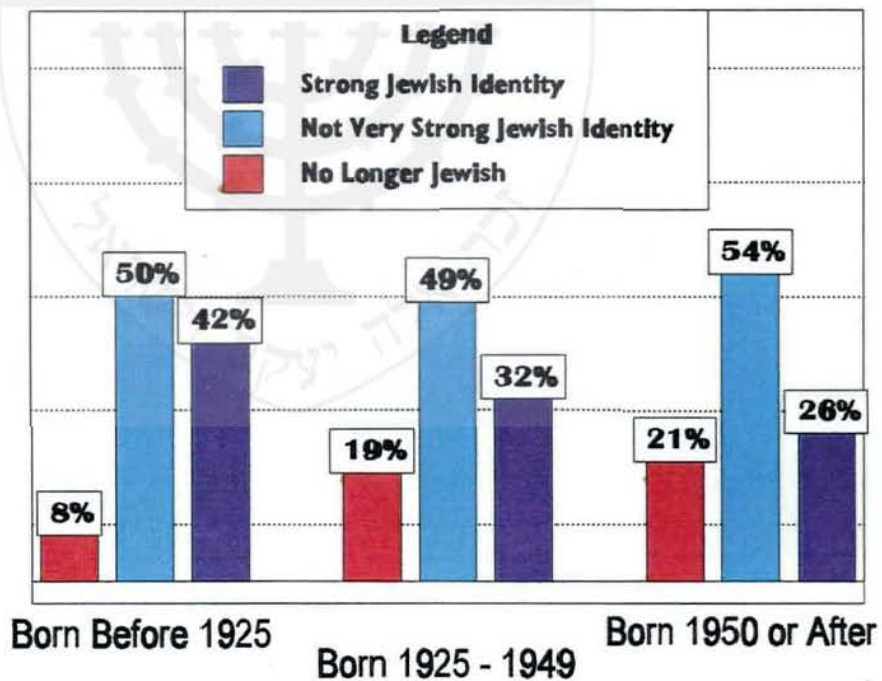
# CJIE Indicators Report: Jewish Identity 1977-1996

*Seeing one's Jewishness as central to one's life is  
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## DOES THE STRENGTH OF JEWISH IDENTITY DIFFER FOR DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS?

Yes. The proportion of adult Jews who reported having a strong Jewish identity is smaller among younger Jews. Forty-two percent of Jews born before 1925 refer to themselves as "strong Jews." Among Jews born between 1925 and 1949, the figure is 32%. Only 26% of Jews born in 1950 or after reported having a strong Jewish identity.

Correspondingly, the proportion of Jews who refer to themselves as "not very strong Jews" is greatest among those born in 1950 or after. While only a small proportion of those persons born before 1925 who were raised as Jews no longer consider themselves Jewish, about 20% of Jews born after 1925 have assimilated.



**Figure 2: Strength of Jewish Identity by Year of Birth**

# CJE Indicators Report: Jewish Identity 1977-1996

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## ARE CHANGES IN JEWISH IDENTITY OVER THE YEARS RELATED TO GENERATIONAL CHANGES?

Yes. Much of the decline in the strength of Jewish identity (as highlighted in Figure 1) can be attributed to differences among Jews born in different years. Jews born in 1950 or after were a greater proportion of the Jewish population in 1993 than in 1976. In 1976, 13% were born in 1950 or after. In 1993, 44% were born in 1950 or after.

Correspondingly,

the proportion of Jews born before 1925 has decreased. For the same period, the proportion of Jews born between 1925 and 1949 has remained about 40%.

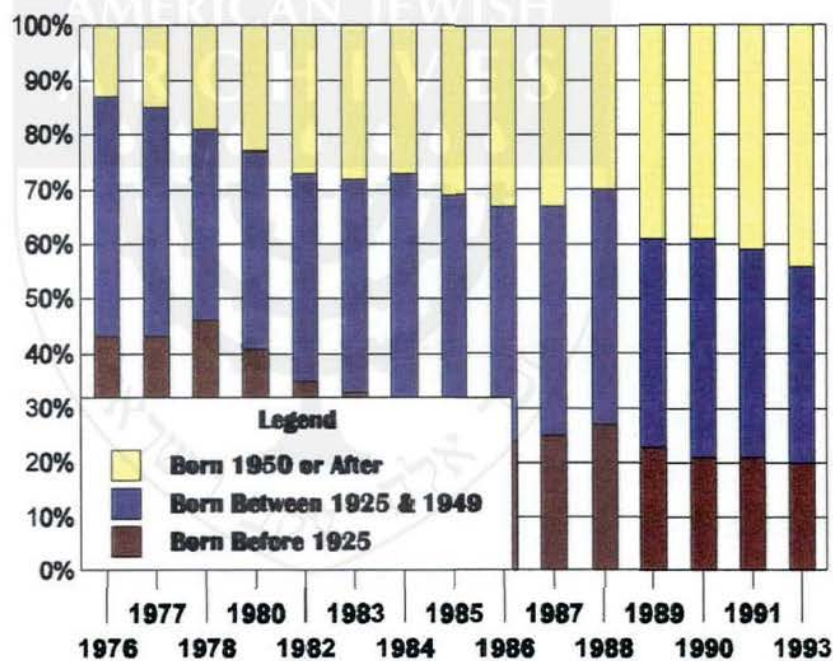


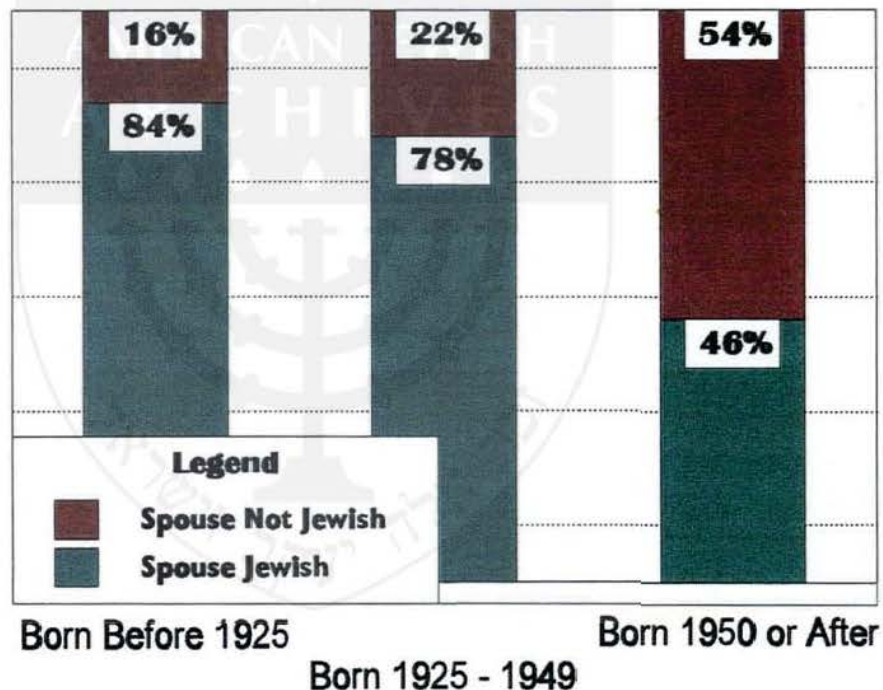
Figure 3: Proportion of Birth Cohorts in Each Survey Year

# CJIE Indicators Report: Jewish Identity 1977-1996

*Seeing one's Jewishness as central to one's life is  
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## DO INTERMARRIAGE RATES ALSO DIFFER FOR DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS?

Yes. The proportion of intermarried Jews is greater among Jews born in 1950 or after. Fifty-four percent of adult Jews born in 1950 or after reported being married to a non-Jewish spouse. Only 16% of Jews born before 1925 reported being married to a non-Jewish spouse. The figure for Jews born between 1925 and 1949 is 22%.



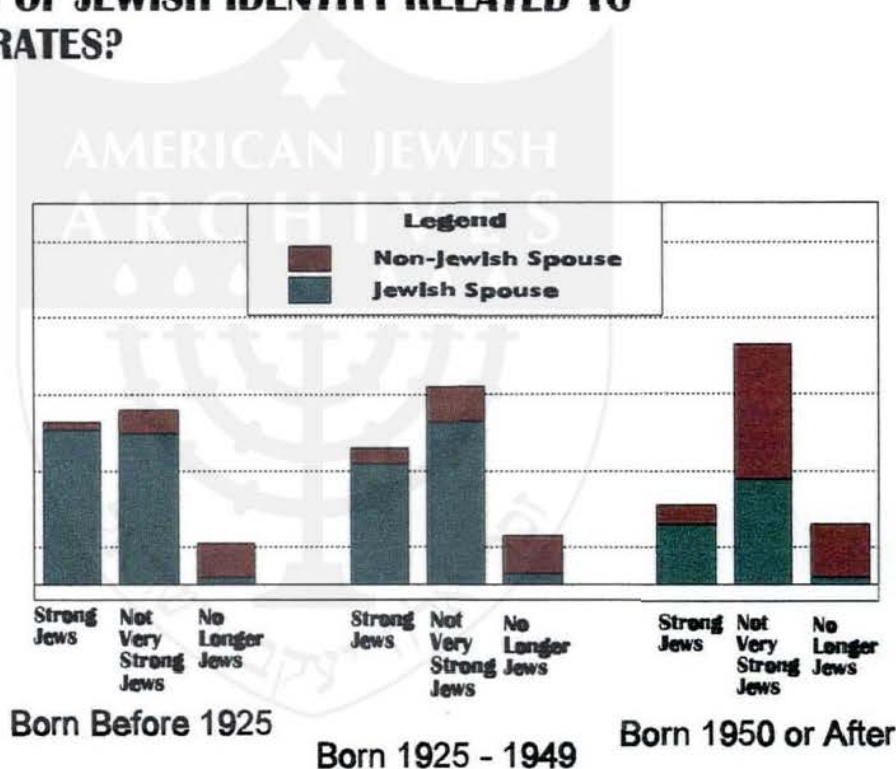
**Figure 4: Intermarriage Rate by Year of Birth**

# CJIE Indicators Report: Jewish Identity 1977-1996

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## IS THE STRENGTH OF JEWISH IDENTITY RELATED TO INTERMARRIAGE RATES?

Yes. For all three age groups, very few of those who described themselves as "strong Jews" were married to a non-Jewish spouse. Intermarriage rates are higher among those less strongly identified. In particular, for Jews born in 1950 or after, about half of those who describe themselves as "not very strong Jews" were intermarried, and almost all of those who were no longer Jewish were married to non-Jews.



**Figure 5: Rates of Intermarriage and Strength of Jewish Identity by Birth Cohort**

Of course, these data do not reveal whether a weakened Jewish identity leads to intermarriage or vice versa. Nevertheless, they show that the General Social Survey question about religious identity is a useful indicator of Jewish life, in that it is closely related to a key mechanism of continuity.

# CIJE Indicators Report: Jewish Identity 1977-1996



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## METHODS

The data for the preceding analyses was obtained from the General Social Survey (GSS) for the years 1977 through 1996, which was conducted under the auspices of the National Opinion Research center (NORC) at the University of Chicago. (Surveys were not conducted in 1979, 1981, 1992, and 1995.) Each GSS involves an independently drawn random sample of English-speaking persons 18 years of age or over, living in non-institutional arrangements within the United States.

The following questions from the GSS were the source of the data on Jewish identity and intermarriage.

- **Current Religious Identity:** *What is your religious preference? Is it Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion?*
- **Strength of (Current) Religious Identity:** *Would you call yourself a strong (give preference indicated in preceding question) or not a very strong (give preference indicated in preceding question)?*
- **Religion Raised:** *In what religion were you raised?*
- **Spouse's Current Religion:** *In what religion was your (husband/wife) raised?*

All respondents to the GSS who reported being raised Jewish were included in the analyses. This yielded a total of 739 respondents who were raised as Jews, of whom 431 were married at the time of the survey. After excluding cases with missing data, the total number of respondents on the question of Jewish identity was 670 and on the question of intermarriage was 372. In the final analysis, which examined both the strength of Jewish identity and intermarriage, the total number of respondents was 338. In calculating the percentages used in Figures 1 and 3, 5-year moving averages were employed.

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*This report was prepared by the CIJE Research and Evaluation team:  
Adam Gamoran (University of Wisconsin, Madison), Ellen Goldring  
(Vanderbilt University), and Bill Robinson (CIJE Staff Researcher).*

# HAS THE STRENGTH OF JEWISH IDENTITY CHANGED OVER TIME?

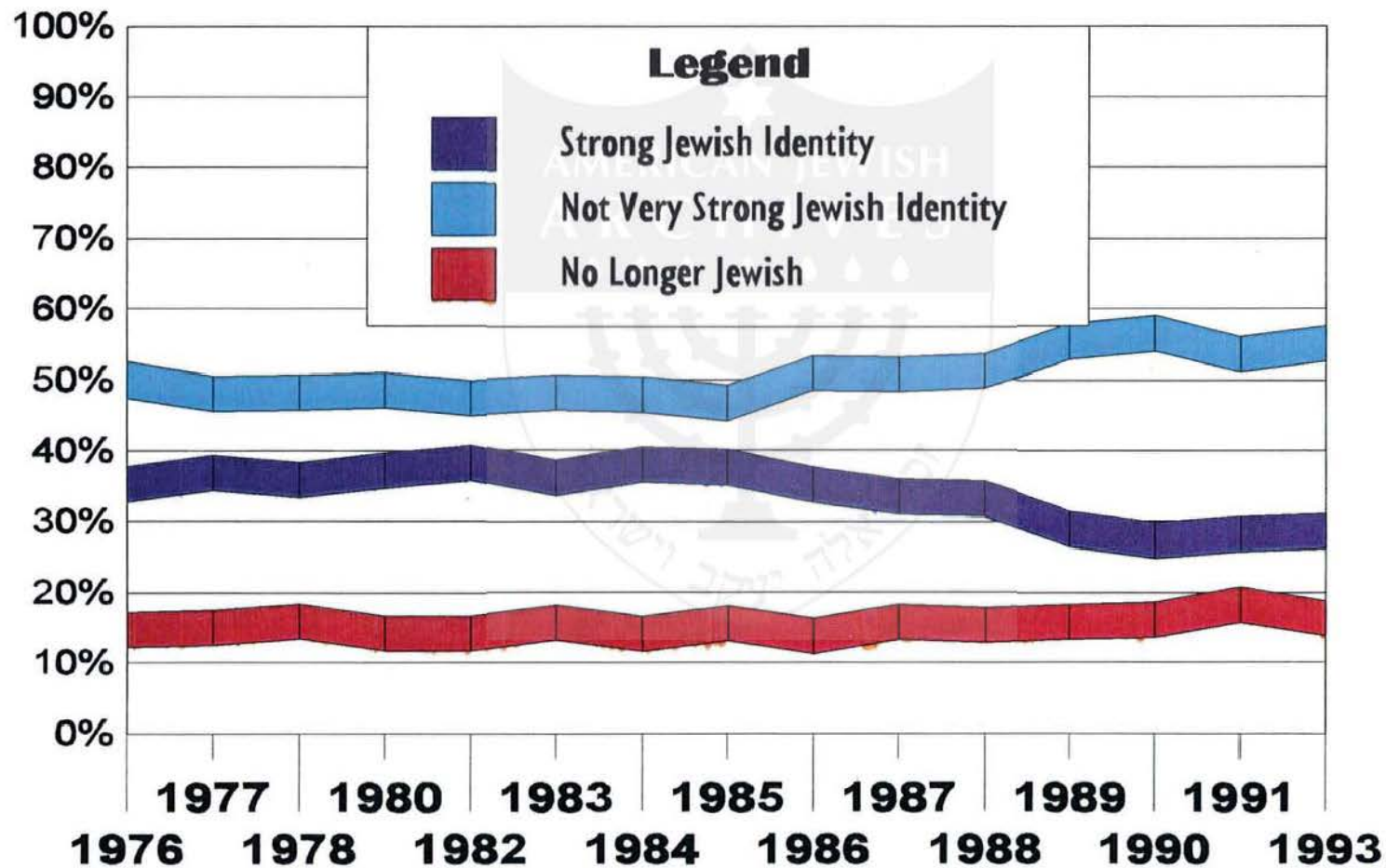
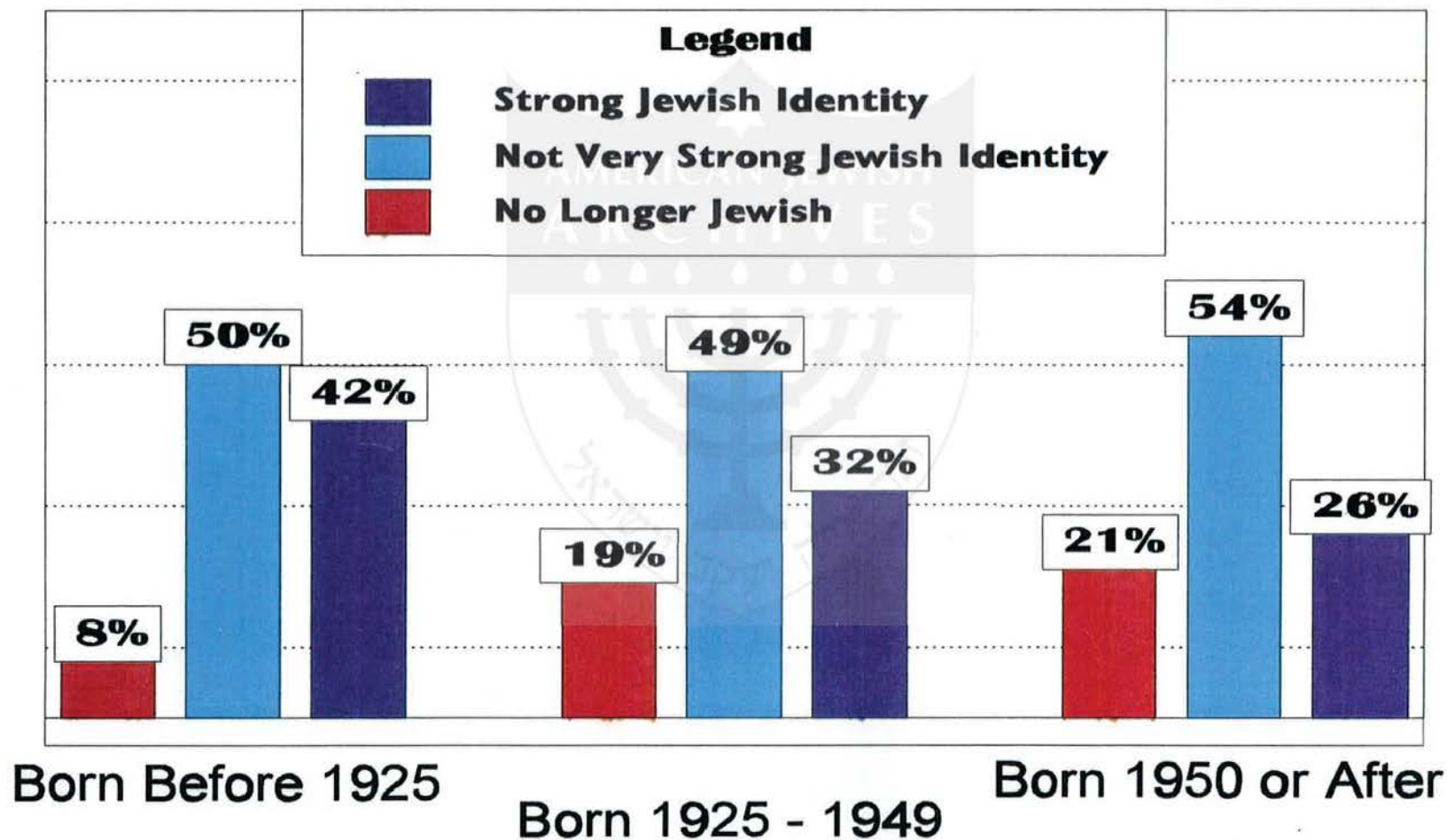


Figure 1: Strength of Jewish Identity

## DOES THE STRENGTH OF JEWISH IDENTITY DIFFER FOR DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS?



**Figure 2: Strength of Jewish Identity by Year of Birth**

# ARE CHANGES IN JEWISH IDENTITY OVER THE YEARS RELATED TO GENERATIONAL CHANGES?

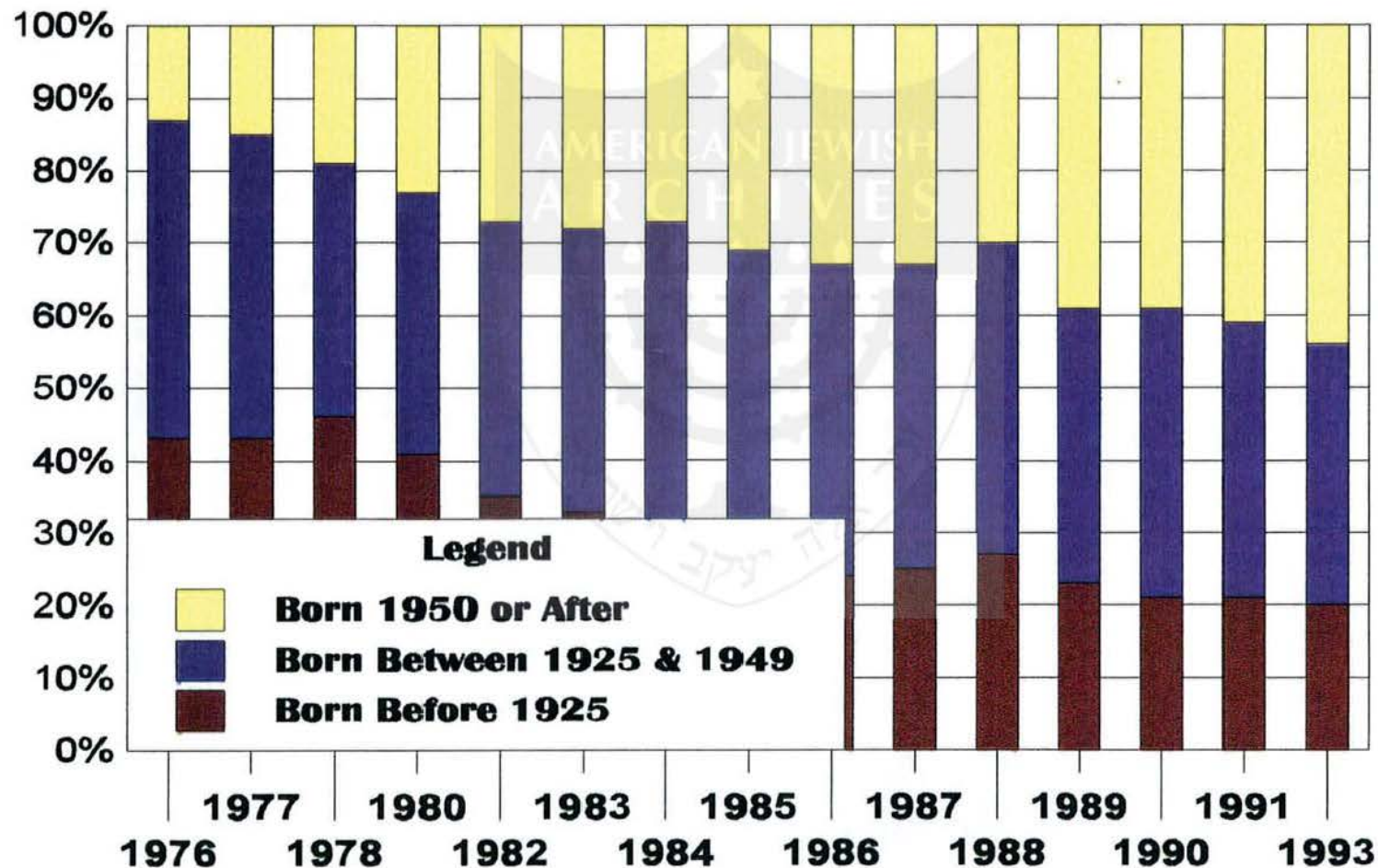
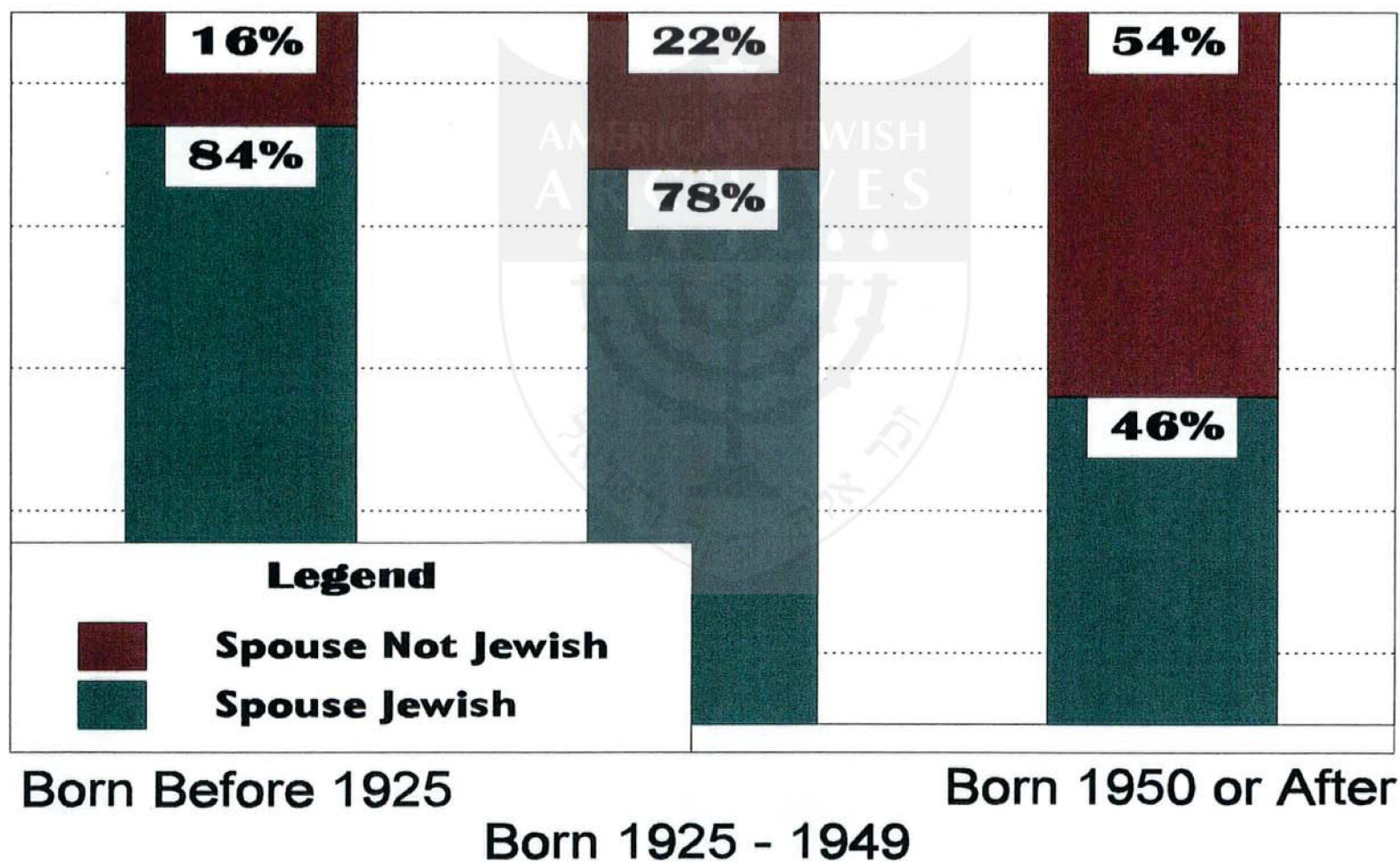


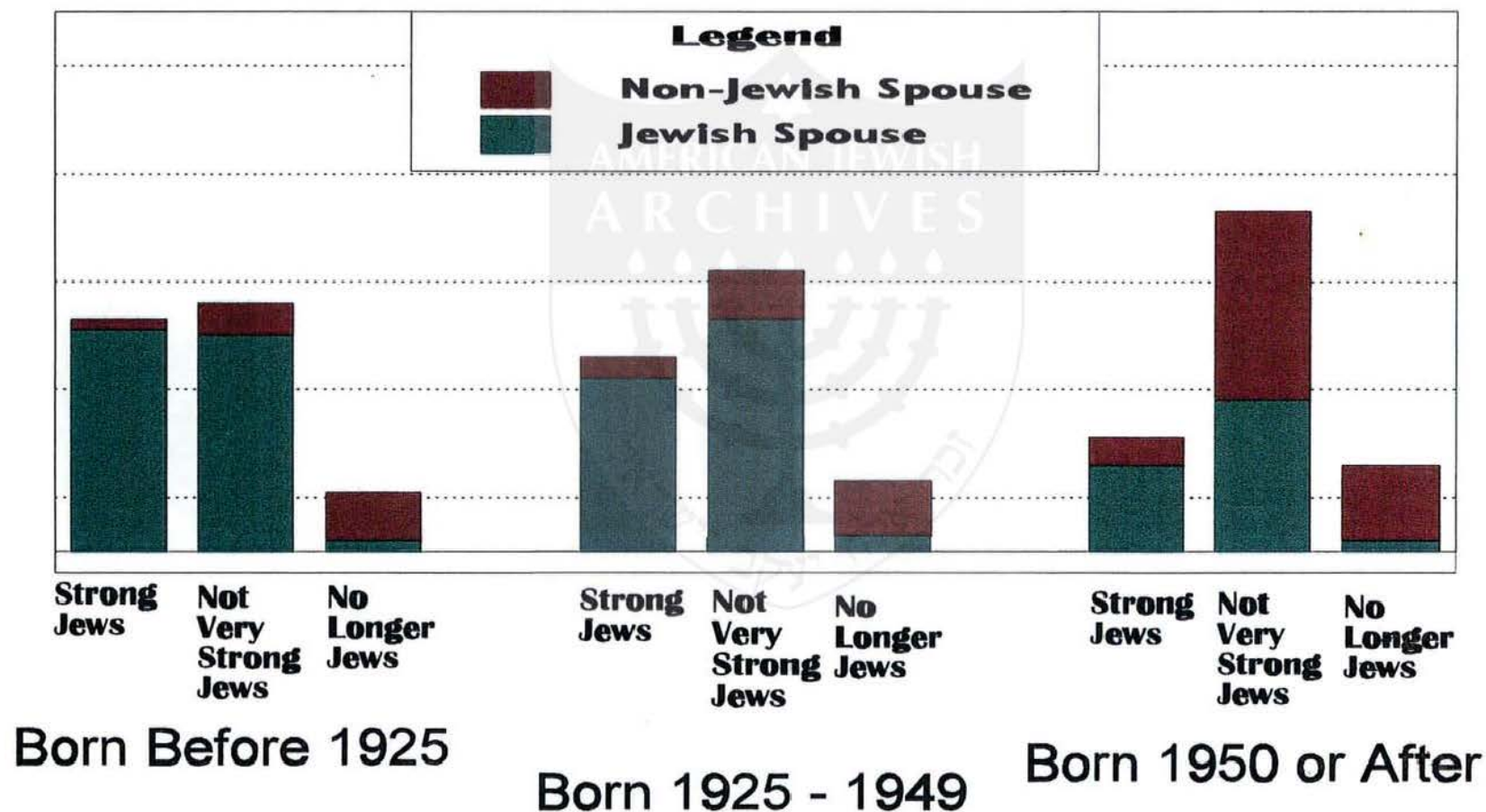
Figure 3: Proportion of Birth Cohorts in Each Survey Year

## DO INTERMARRIAGE RATES ALSO DIFFER FOR DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS?



**Figure 4: Intermarriage Rate by Year of Birth**

# IS THE STRENGTH OF JEWISH IDENTITY RELATED TO INTERMARRIAGE RATES?



**Figure 5: Rates of Intermarriage and Strength of Jewish Identity by Birth Cohort**