

Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children Strongly Participate in Passover Activities

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In a surprising finding from its new 2008 Passover/Easter Survey, InterfaithFamily.com, a non-profit publisher and advocacy organization, found that fewer than half of interfaith families raising Jewish children plan on participating in Easter – compared to 86% who participate in Christmas, according to IFF's 2007 December Holidays Survey. Nearly all interfaith families raising Jewish children plan on attending or hosting a Passover seder.

"Many in the Jewish community still consider intermarriage a threat to Jewish identity and strength," said Edmund Case, president of InterfaithFamily.com. "But this study shows that many interfaith families are doing a great job imparting Jewish tradition and observances to their children."

The great majority (98 percent) of interfaith families raising Jewish children are participating in Passover activities. Nearly two-thirds plan on following dietary restrictions for most or all of the eight days of Passover, and nearly four-fifths plan on telling the Passover story. Conversely, they are participating in far fewer Easter activities. More than half are not participating in Easter celebrations at all, while only 36 percent plan on hosting or attending an Easter dinner – compared to 64% who told IFF in the fall that they planned to eat Christmas foods at home, at the home of relatives or at the home of friends. Only very small minorities plan to engage in "religious" Easter activities like telling the Easter story or attending religious services. Only one of 196 respondents plans to tell the Easter story. Those that are participating in Easter overwhelmingly see their participation as secular. Conversely, while they don't see Passover as deeply religious, they see it as significantly more religious than Easter.

The survey also uncovered that the mother's religion has a strong influence on religious upbringing. Within an interfaith couple, the woman's religion determines the amount of Easter activities, particularly secular ones, that the family participates in even if the children are being raised Jewish. Thirty percent of families where the woman is not Jewish plan on participating in Easter egg hunts, as compared to 15 percent of families where the woman is Jewish. Forty-four percent of couples where the woman is not Jewish say that they will not participate in Easter celebrations at all, compared to 60 percent of families where the woman is Jewish. However, there are no meaningful differences between the two groups when it comes to Passover activities. Even in interfaith households raising children Jewish where the mother isn't Jewish, Passover behaviors are highly prevalent.

Key findings on interfaith families raising Jewish children include:

- 74 percent plan on attending a seder, while 54 percent plan on hosting a seder. 30 percent plan on attending Easter dinner, while only 7 percent plan on hosting an Easter dinner.
- 1 percent of respondents say that their observance of Passover will be entirely secular, as compared to 66 percent that say their celebrations of Easter will be entirely secular.
- There seems to be more ambivalence over celebrating Easter. 89 percent of respondents said that they are "very comfortable" or "comfortable" celebrating Passover, as compared to 35 percent who say they are "very comfortable" or "comfortable" celebrating Easter.
- In explaining participation in Easter activities, 72 percent pointed to respect for the non-Jewish parent, 68 percent for respect for the traditions of the non-Jewish parent's extended family, and 65 percent cited open-mindedness/tolerance. However, there were some differences between how Jewish respondents and non-Jewish respondents answered this question. More than three-quarters (76 percent) of non-Jewish respondents pointed to open-mindedness/tolerance, compared to 60 percent of Jewish parents. Nearly half (48 percent) of non-Jewish parents pointed to desire to expose their children to a different faith tradition vs. 33 percent of Jewish respondents.
- 79 percent will tell the Passover story, as compared to 1 percent that plan to tell the Easter story.
- 92 percent plan on eating matzah, and 64 percent will follow the dietary restrictions for most or all eight days of Passover.

- Only 15 percent will attend religious services for Easter. 55 percent will not participate in any Easter activities.
- InterfaithFamily.com's sample is very similar to the average Jewish respondent nationwide, according to the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01. Similar percentages say half or more of their friends are Jewish, light Hanukkah candles, attend Jewish religious services monthly or more and belong to a JCC.

For more information, read the report "What We Learned from the 2008 Passover/Easter Survey." It can be found online at: www.interfaithfamily.com/files/pdf/WhatWeLearnedfromthe20... InterfaithFamily.com has developed a resource page for interfaith families dealing with the Passover/Easter holidays that includes resources such as "Tips for Interfaith Families: How to Make a Seder Inclusive" and numerous articles that help interfaith families have a more enjoyable and meaningful holiday season. For more, visit [www.interfaithfamily.com/resource_pages/Passover and East...](http://www.interfaithfamily.com/resource_pages/Passover_and_East...)

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About InterfaithFamily.com

InterfaithFamily.com, Inc. is the online resource for interfaith families exploring Jewish life and the grass-roots advocate for a welcoming Jewish community. This resource is for all individuals touched by interfaith relationships where one partner is Jewish and everyone who works with and cares about them. It covers all topics of interest to interfaith families, their friends, relatives, co-workers and communities.

[You can find this press release here](#)