Sephardic & Mizrahi Jews in the United States:

IDENTITIES, EXPERIENCES, AND COMMUNITIES

The **Recommendations** *Report*

THE

Recommendations

REPORT

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About This Study

THIS REPORT IS ONE OF SEVERAL produced from a multi-year research project focused on understanding the identities, experiences, and communal life of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews in the United States. The study was conducted by an academic research team based at New York University, under the direction of Dr. Mijal Bitton, and was commissioned by JIMENA: Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa. It was made possible with the generous support of a range of philanthropic and institutional partners committed to advancing Sephardic and Mizrahi inclusion in Jewish communal life.

The project was carried out by a strong team of interdisciplinary researchers and benefitted from the guidance of an international academic advisory committee. In addition to academic input, we actively engaged practitioners and community leaders—both as interview participants and as advisors—to ensure the research reflected lived realities and communal perspectives.

The study aims to support a more inclusive Jewish communal landscape—one that reflects the richness, diversity, and complexity of Sephardic life. It is designed as a comprehensive resource: offering new data, field-based insights, historical context, and practical guidance to help scholars, educators, and communal professionals better understand and engage Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews in the American context.

This work brings together two complementary forms of research:

- **Secondary analysis** of existing literature reviews, historical material, and quantitative data—including national and local Jewish population surveys—organized through our guiding questions and reinterpreted through a Sephardic and Mizrahi lens.

- **Original fieldwork,** including interviews, site visits, and ethnographic observations across four key Sephardic communities shaped by post-1965 immigration.

Although the terms Sephardic and Mizrahi have distinct origins and meanings, this study reflects how they are used—and contested—by participants. In line with community usage, we primarily use "Sephardic" as a broad social identity while noting when "Mizrahi" is relevant. Across the study, we prioritized self-identification and recognized the limitations of existing categories—religious, racial, and ethnic—in capturing these communities' realities.

The study was conducted during a time of shifting communal and political context for Jews in America—including the brutal October 7th attacks by Hamas in Israel, the subsequent rise in antisemitism across the US, and intensifying public debate around race, identity, and inclusion in American Jewish life. These broader dynamics shaped both the narratives we heard and the urgency of this work.

This project is offered as a first step, not a final word. It is not meant to be comprehensive or exhaustive, and we hope it serves as a foundation for future research. For further directions, see the "Recommendations" section of this report.

We invite you to explore the full report or delve into any of its focused sub-sections. Below is the full table of contents.
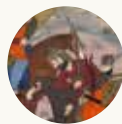
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Recommendations: Addressing Diversity Within Diversity

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS AND RESEARCHERS

Based on the study's empirical findings and insights, we offer actionable recommendations for practitioners and researchers seeking deeper engagement with Sephardic Jews.[1] The recommendations balance nuance with complexity, and are neither exhaustive nor final but instead provide a foundation for further exploration. To reflect the diversity within Sephardic and Mizrahi populations, we emphasize examples and frameworks designed to help organizations and those who lead and work in them think and act more inclusively.

The recommendations are framed by five suggested paradigm shifts in how practitioners and researchers should approach inclusion and diversity work in Jewish communal spaces:

→   From US Categories to Integrated US Jewish Frameworks

→   From Marginalization to Recognition

→   From Singular Values to Value Pluralism

→   From Ashkenormativity to Jewish Diversity

→   From One-Size-Fits-All to Adaptive Inclusion

While these recommendations were developed for those who lead and work in organizations—specifically Ashkenazi-majority organizations—significant change also happens outside formal organizational spaces in families, informal networks, and broader cultural and societal shifts. These recommendations strive for meaningful organizational change, but we also hope practitioners will carry the message of inclusivity and deeper engagement with Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews beyond their organizational walls.
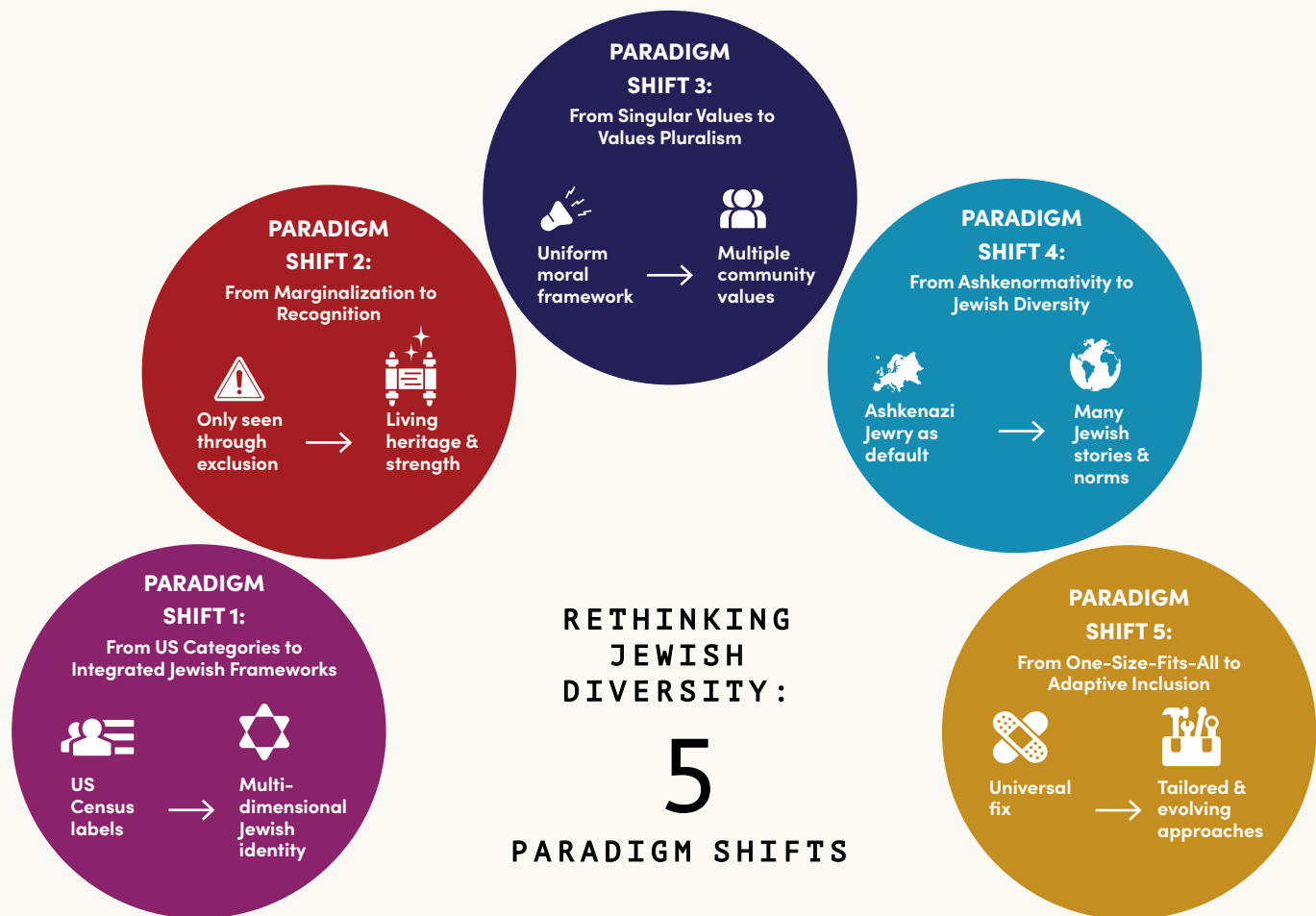
Paradigm Shifts:
A New Vision of Jewish Diversity

Diversity efforts in Ashkenazi-majority Jewish spaces often rely on frameworks that do not adequately reflect the experiences of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews in the United States. Before offering specific practitioner recommendations, we describe five paradigm shifts for approaching inclusion and diversity work in Jewish communal spaces. While these shifts are principally informed by the experiences and needs of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews, they have implications for the American Jewish community more broadly (including Ashkenazi or Ashkenazi-majority spaces and institutions), particularly regarding engagement with immigrant communities and other minority Jewish populations.

Creating inclusive Jewish spaces requires a thoughtful balance between respecting distinct communal needs and fostering broader connections. While not every Jewish space needs to fully accommodate all Sephardic and Mizrahi traditions, every institution should approach inclusion with intentionality and cultural understanding. These recommendations offer a framework for meaningful engagement that acknowledges the richness and complexity of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewish life.

As Jewish institutions continue to evolve, the work of building more inclusive spaces remains ongoing. Leaders and organizations dedicated to this work should commit to continued learning, regular assessment, and authentic partnership with Sephardic and Mizrahi communities.

PARADIGM SHIFT 3:
From Singular Values to Values Pluralism

Uniform moral framework → Multiple community values

PARADIGM SHIFT 2:
From Marginalization to Recognition

Only seen through exclusion → Living heritage & strength

PARADIGM SHIFT 4:
From Ashkenormativity to Jewish Diversity

Ashkenazi Jewry as default → Many Jewish stories & norms

PARADIGM SHIFT 1:
From US Categories to Integrated Jewish Frameworks

US Census labels → Multi-dimensional Jewish identity

RETHINKING JEWISH DIVERSITY:

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PARADIGM SHIFTS

PARADIGM SHIFT 5:
From One-Size-Fits-All to Adaptive Inclusion

Universal fix → Tailored & evolving approaches

Paradigm Shift #1:

FROM US CATEGORIES TO INTEGRATED US JEWISH FRAMEWORKS

AVOID

Viewing diversity in Jewish spaces solely through US racial and ethnic categories, which assumes that:

→ US racial and ethnic classifications (e.g., census race/ethnicity options) fully capture Jewish experiences and define Jewish diversity

→ US diversity models can be directly applied to all Jewish communities globally

→ Ashkenazi Jews are inherently "white," while Sephardic/Mizrahi Jews are inherently "people of color" or "Jews of color"

CONSIDER

Jewish diversity requires frameworks that recognize:

→ The complex intersections of ancestry, ethnicity, race, religion, and culture

→ Migration patterns and geopolitical histories that shape identities, perspectives, practices and communal structures (e.g., Muslim-majority countries of origin)

→ The central role of family origins and communal networks in shaping Jewish identity

Paradigm Shift #2:

FROM MARGINALIZATION TO RECOGNITION

AVOID

Viewing Sephardic and Mizrahi US Jews only through the lens of:

→ Exclusion, marginalization, and victimhood narratives

→ Barriers and challenges to integrating into Jewish communities and US society

→ Mizrahi Jews in Israel, and thus conflating their experiences with those of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews in the US

CONSIDER

Supporting Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews requires recognizing:

→ Their rich traditions and deep and vibrant religious and intellectual heritage that has made enduring contributions to Jewish life

→ The distinct strengths, resilience, and entrepreneurial innovations that shape their communities today

→ Strong Sephardic and Mizrahi communal identities, even as marginalization, barriers and biases persist within Ashkenazi-majority institutional frameworks

Paradigm Shift #3:

FROM SINGULAR VALUES TO VALUES PLURALISM

AVOID	CONSIDER
Creating inclusion projects that assume:	**Creating inclusion projects that recognize and allow for:**
→ Universal agreement with or advocacy for a single set of values (e.g., liberal values)	→ Community-focused approaches that emphasize collective identity
→ Consensus on the same theories and tools for inclusion (e.g., diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) frameworks)	→ Sensitivity to cultural norms and taboos across different Jewish communities
→ Individualism and the sovereign Jewish self as universally accepted moral frameworks	→ The diversity of values, religious perspectives, and political views within Jewish communities, encompassing both liberal and traditional approaches

Paradigm Shift #4:

FROM ASHKENORMATIVITY TO JEWISH DIVERSITY

AVOID	CONSIDER
Centering Judaism in the US exclusively around:	**Understanding Judaism in the US as encompassing:**
→ European Jewish experiences as the dominant narrative and Ashkenazi cultural norms as the default	→ Multiple historical experiences beyond the European context
→ Yiddish as the primary language of Jewish tradition and ancestry	→ Diverse cultural expressions and norms across Jewish communities, including a range of languages like Ladino, Judeo-Arabic, and Persian
→ Denominational structures and institutional affiliations as the only legitimate forms of Jewish identity and engagement	→ Varied religious practices and different models of religious organization
→ European Holocaust narratives as the central framework for Jewish memory	→ Numerous forms of communal affiliation and engagement beyond institutional settings

Paradigm Shift #5:

FROM ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL TO ADAPTIVE INCLUSION

AVOID	CONSIDER
Assuming that in the process of expanding inclusion to underrepresented populations:	**Embracing the complexity and challenges of inclusion work by recognizing that:**
→ Shared priorities and universal frameworks and solutions will be effective for all Jewish communities	→ Inclusion requires acknowledging complexity and difference
→ A single, generic approach will succeed across diverse groups	→ Conflicting priorities must be engaged with and balanced
→ One representative voice can speak for an entire underrepresented community	→ Multiple adaptive approaches are necessary for effective inclusion
→ Tensions can be eliminated rather than managed	→ A commitment to ongoing learning is essential for meaningful progress
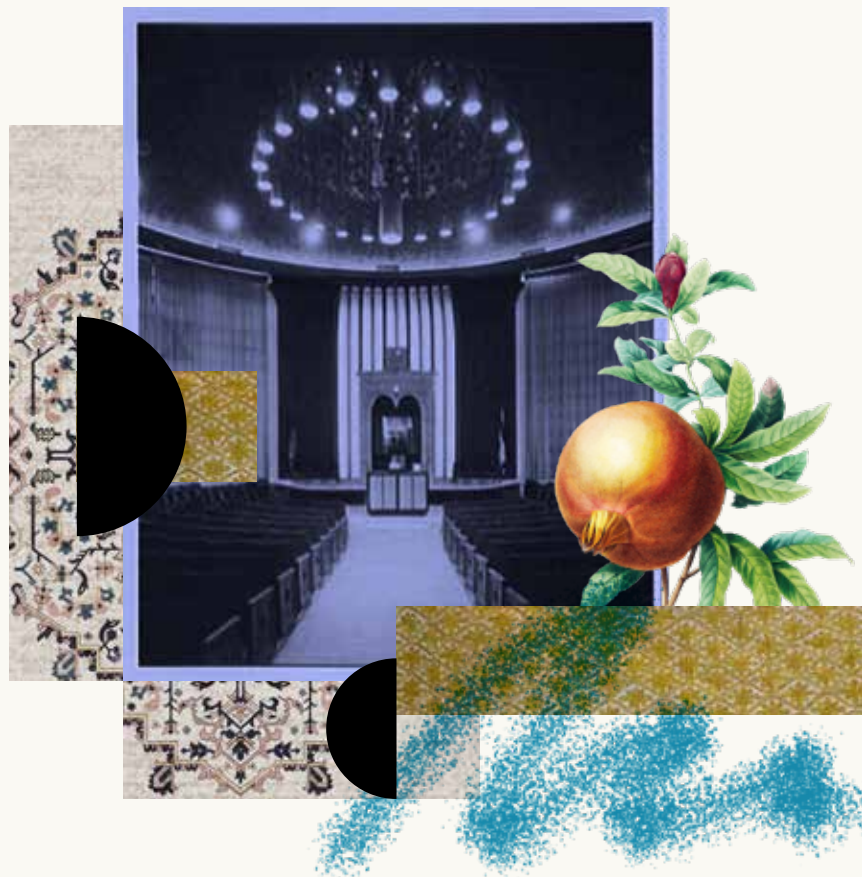
Institutional Recommendations

Creating a more inclusive Jewish environment for Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews requires a nuanced understanding of the diverse range of Jewish institutional and organizational spaces, which vary widely in structure, demographics, and goals. Each institution faces distinct challenges and opportunities, necessitating tailored integration strategies while maintaining consistent inclusion principles across organizational categories. We first present recommendations for those wanting to engage more deeply with (a) Sephardic Jews in Sephardic-majority and Sephardic-led spaces and (b) Sephardic Jews in Ashkenazi-majority and Ashkenazi-led spaces, followed by specific recommendations for practitioners in various types of Jewish organizations, including broad communal organizations, service providers, philanthropic institutions, and advocacy organizations.[6]

SEPHARDIC-MAJORITY OR SEPHARDIC-LED SPACES

Many Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews report a desire to have their own spaces and institutions that primarily serve them while preserving and advancing their distinct traditions and practices. Examples include Sephardic day schools and synagogues, which often serve as central cultural and religious hubs within their communities. What follows are key considerations for Ashkenazi-led organizations or institutions interested in supporting or collaborating with these spaces:

- **Analyze Community Needs:** Understand and analyze the specific needs, practices, and challenges of these institutions to develop tailored collaboration strategies rather than generic approaches.

- **Respect the Desire for Independence:** Acknowledge and support when Sephardic-led organizations choose to develop their own programming to serve their communities in ways that reflect their unique needs and traditions.

- **Engage Community Leadership:** Build strong relationships and identify shared objectives by working directly with trusted Sephardic and Mizrahi community leaders.

- **Verify Cultural Terms:** Seek guidance about institutional and leadership self-identification and use terminology that authentically reflects communal practices.

- **Respect Cultural Values:** Design collaboration strategies that respect socially conservative values common in many Sephardic and Mizrahi communities.

- **Design Support Services:** Develop community-specific resources (such as mental health programming) that account for cultural sensitivities, stigmas, and traditional support systems.

- **Support Institutional Development:** Strengthen emerging and under-resourced Sephardic-led organizations by providing targeted infrastructure development and professionalization support.
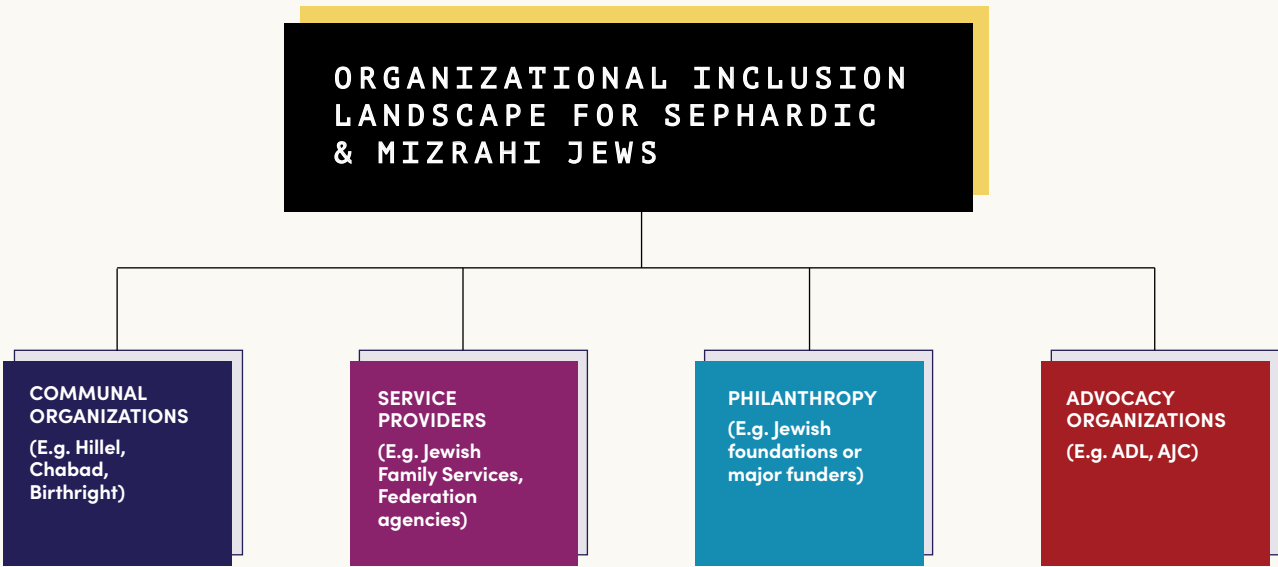
ASHKENAZI-MAJORITY OR ASHKENAZI-LED SPACES

Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews often partake (or seek to partake) in "mainstream" Jewish life and institutions, particularly where their communities are not as well-established or well-resourced. In Ashkenazi-led institutions with Sephardic and Mizrahi participation—such as Ashkenazi-founded day schools, summer camps, congregational schools, and synagogues—intentional efforts are needed to ensure they feel welcome and included. What follows are key considerations for leaders of Ashkenazi-majority organizations or institutions interested in supporting or collaborating with these constituents:

- **Revisit Jewish Peoplehood Narratives:**
  Prioritize a broad and holistic vision for Jewish peoplehood that seeks to integrate Sephardic

and Mizrahi Jews as an essential part of the Jewish communal fabric.

- **Map Community Demographics:**
  Survey the institutions' participants to determine their ancestors' countries of origin, immigration time to the US, and other relevant characteristics.

- **Monitor Institutional Progress:**
  Continuously evaluate how Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews experience the institution.

- **Cultural Awareness Training:**
  Provide cultural awareness training for Ashkenazi leadership and staff.

ORGANIZATIONAL INCLUSION LANDSCAPE FOR SEPHARDIC & MIZRAHI JEWS

COMMUNAL ORGANIZATIONS
(E.g. Hillel, Chabad, Birthright)

SERVICE PROVIDERS
(E.g. Jewish Family Services, Federation agencies)

PHILANTHROPY
(E.g. Jewish foundations or major funders)

ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS
(E.g. ADL, AJC)

- **Enhance Learning Content:**
  Integrate Sephardic and Mizrahi histories, frameworks such as *masortiyut,* and MENA Jewish experiences into curricula to benefit all populations served.

- **Honor Religious Diversity:**
  Structure religious services, educational programs, and community engagement to accommodate practices outside the normative Ashkenazi (including denominational) frameworks.

- **Adapt Ritual Practices:**
  Maintain institutional standards while incorporating diverse traditions (for example by offering parallel "edot Hamizrah" prayer books and providing education about ritual differences).

- **Build Culturally Competent Teams:**
  Across all leadership levels, recruit Sephardic and Mizrahi educators, clergy, and decision-makers, or non-Sephardic/Mizrahi individuals with strong cultural competency in Sephardic and Mizrahi communities.

- **Create Lasting Partnerships:**
  Embed Sephardic and Mizrahi traditions into daily operations through co-created programs, liturgy integration, and learning opportunities.

- **Prioritize Family Connections:**
  Structure programming to accommodate extended family bonds and communal relationships central to Sephardic and Mizrahi culture.

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Structure programming to accommodate extended family bonds and communal relationships.

- **Adapt Lay Leadership Models:**
  Develop leadership structures that embrace volunteer styles common in many Sephardic and Mizrahi communities, such as entrepreneurial, relationship-driven, and less bureaucratic approaches to leadership.

- **Apply Proven Models:**
  Draw insights from successful examples like Seattle Hebrew Academy's dual Sephardic-Ashkenazi curriculum to create inclusive frameworks that honor diverse traditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIFIC TYPES OF AMERICAN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

Many organizations claim and aim to serve or represent the entire Jewish community while being overwhelmingly Ashkenazi-led and informed by Ashkenazi norms in practice. This section focuses on national and local organizations seeking to be more inclusive of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews, such as (1) communal organizations like Hillel, Chabad, and Birthright, (2) service providers like Jewish Federation agencies and Jewish Family Services, (3) philanthropic organizations, and (4) advocacy organizations like ADL and AJC. Some of these approaches may help inform broader conversations about inclusivity for minority communities. What follows are key considerations for leaders of these organizations seeking to better serve or collaborate with Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews.

COMMUNAL ORGANIZATIONS

- **Evaluate Service Scope:**
  Regularly assess whether activities, policies, and spaces reflect the diverse needs and traditions of Sephardic and Mizrahi participants.

- **Advance Staff Knowledge:**
  Educate personnel on Sephardic and Mizrahi histories, communal structures, and traditions to enhance organizational inclusion.

> **To enable religious expression facilitate Sephardic-specific prayer services, speakers, and traditions.**

- **Understand Different Perspectives:**
  Consider diverse social views and political priorities that reflect Sephardic and Mizrahi values when developing initiatives.

- **Integrate Cultural Practices:**
  Incorporate Sephardic and Mizrahi holidays, narratives, and observances naturally throughout organizational programming, ideally with inputs from or in partnership with Sephardic and Mizrahi participants and professionals.

- **Diversify Language Choices:**
  Incorporate heritage words not only from Yiddish but also words popular in contemporary Sephardic and Mizrahi communities from Ladino, Judeo-Arabic, and other Jewish languages.

- **Expand Leadership Diversity:**
  Across all leadership levels, recruit Sephardic and Mizrahi educators, clergy, and decision-makers, or non-Sephardic/Mizrahi individuals with strong cultural competency in Sephardic and Mizrahi communities.

- **Enable Religious Expression:**
  Facilitate Sephardic-specific prayer services, speakers, and traditions.

SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

- **Assess Audience Demographics:**
  Assess whether your organization serves (or should serve) Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews by exploring community needs and identifying partners for effective engagement.

- **Honor Diverse Traditions**:
  Create programs reflecting varied cultural and religious norms while avoiding standardized approaches that may not serve specific communities.

- **Support Immigrant Communities:**
  Address the unique challenges faced by Sephardic and Mizrahi immigrants through programs that respect family centrality, conservative values, communal pride, and religious observance.

- **Enable Language Access:**
  Where applicable, provide services in Hebrew, Persian, Spanish, French, and Russian (and other relevant languages) to support older adults and those with language barriers.

ELEVATE COMMUNITY NARRATIVES:

Amplify Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewish histories and experiences to counter misconceptions about Jewish heritage

Ladino Songs
רומנסות ושירים בלאדינו
Avre tu Puerta Serrada
Romansas I Kantigas En Ladino

DIVERSIFY LANGUAGE CHOICES:

Incorporate heritage words popular in contemporary Sephardic and Mizrahi communities from Ladino, Judeo-Arabic, and other Jewish languages, instead of just Yiddish

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- **Strengthen Community Connections:**
Invest in culturally-informed marketing and community outreach to increase service awareness and overcome stigma and unfamiliarity with agencies.

- **Build Cultural Competency:**
Recruit professionals with expertise in Sephardic and Mizrahi culture and traditions while avoiding assumptions about religious observance, socio-economic background, or racial identity.

- **Ensure Inclusive Leadership:**
Partner with Sephardic and Mizrahi leaders to develop appropriate services and ensure representation across all decision-making bodies.

- **Identify and Support Community Liaisons:**
Proactively identify and nurture individuals within Sephardic and Mizrahi communities—such as those entering mental health or social service fields—who can serve as trusted bridges between service providers and community members who prefer to engage with insiders.

PHILANTHROPIC ORGANIZATIONS

- **Assess Institutional Objectives:**
Examine organizational goals for serving and understanding diverse Jewish communities across the United States and how Sephardic and Mizrahi populations may fit within those goals.

- **Create Core Resources:**
Support the development of comprehensive educational materials covering global and local Sephardic/Mizrahi Judaism, law, history, and traditions for use across Jewish institutions nationwide seeking to be more inclusive of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews.

- **Fund Essential Research:**
Support studies that address knowledge gaps about US Sephardic and Mizrahi communities to inform institutional engagement, policy, and funding decisions.

- **Build Cultural Competency:**
Implement educational initiatives that equip Ashkenazi-led organizations with the knowledge and tools to effectively engage Sephardic and Mizrahi communities.

- **Strengthen Community Infrastructure:**
Help Sephardic-led organizations develop professional capacity by improving governance, fundraising, and operational systems.

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Partner with Sephardic and Mizrahi leaders to develop appropriate services and ensure representation across all decision-making bodies.

- **Expand Leadership Opportunities:**
  Actively recruit and develop Sephardic and Mizrahi leaders to ensure meaningful representation in Jewish institutional leadership at decision-making levels.

- **Develop Professional Skills:**
  Create tailored leadership development and mentorship programs that support Sephardic and Mizrahi professionals working in Jewish organizations while fostering connections between Sephardic and Mizrahi leaders and broader Jewish nonprofit networks.

- **Increase Community Resources:**
  Fund under-resourced Jewish life initiatives in Sephardic and Mizrahi communities to provide benefits and support sustainable growth.

ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

- **Research Local Communities:**
  Study the diverse traditions and perspectives of regional Sephardic and Mizrahi populations to ensure programs reflect their distinct experiences.

- **Build Authentic Partnerships:**
  Engage directly with Sephardic and Mizrahi community leaders to understand priorities and challenges while ensuring terminology and frameworks remain inclusive and relevant.

- **Ensure Representation:**
  Create meaningful alliances and bonds with Sephardic and Mizrahi organizations that enable genuine representation in communal policy decisions.

- **Enhance Staff Knowledge:**
  Provide staff with resources about Sephardic and Mizrahi history, contemporary antisemitism in MENA regions, and the political and social experiences of these communities.

- **Include MENA Voices:**
  Incorporate Sephardic and Mizrahi viewpoints in shaping conversations about Israel and MENA, antisemitism, and Jewish security concerns.

- **Elevate Community Narratives:**
  Amplify Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewish histories and experiences to counter misconceptions about Jewish heritage.

ENHANCE STAFF KNOWLEDGE:

Provide staff with resources about Sephardic and Mizrahi history, contemporary antisemitism in MENA regions, and the political and social experiences of these communities

Research Recommendations

Just as Jewish institutions vary in their structure and goals, research on Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews requires methodological approaches that recognize diverse identities, experiences, and communal patterns. Effective research design must balance rigorous data collection with cultural sensitivity while addressing significant gaps in our understanding of these communities in the United States. The following recommendations offer guidance for researchers and institutions conducting studies of American Jews broadly and more specifically of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews in America.

SURVEY RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

Categorization in surveys

- Surveys should offer Sephardic and Mizrahi as distinct options alongside Ashkenazi and others when asking about Jewish identities and heritage.

DESIGNING INCLUSIVE SURVEYS

Survey Design Basics for Sephardic & Mizrahi Inclusion

▸ Offer distinct options when asking about Jewish identities and heritage

▸ Allow multiple selections and write-in responses

▸ Avoid rigid definitions—these categories are fluid and evolving

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- Respondents should always have the option to select more than one category and provide a write-in response.

- Survey instruments should avoid imposing definitions of Sephardic and Mizrahi, as these categories are fluid and evolving.

Denominational identification

- Ideally, researchers should include Sephardic and Mizrahi as additional categories in denominational questions that typically include options such as Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist, allowing respondents to select multiple options (e.g., Sephardic & Orthodox).

- If adding categories is not possible, a write-in option should always be available.

Cognitive testing of survey categories

- Researchers should conduct cognitive tests of commonly used questions and response options in Jewish identity research, ensuring they reflect how respondents actually self-identify.

Data analysis

- Researchers should not assume a direct relationship between Sephardic/Mizrahi identity and US racial/ethnic categories. For example, percentages of "diverse" Jews should not aggregate Sephardic/Mizrahi populations with other racial or ethnic groups unless there is a demonstrated relationship or a clearly stated rationale for doing so.

- The categories Sephardic and especially Mizrahi are evolving and context-dependent. They carry multiple meanings (e.g., ancestry vs. practice) and

vary significantly across different communities and geographic locations. Any analysis should keep this in mind and not assume, for example, that Mizrahi responses in Florida correspond with those in NY.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

Community sensitivity and context

- Researchers should avoid generalizing Sephardic/Mizrahi Jews as a monolithic group and should pay attention to local and communal distinctions.

- If studying MENA populations, researchers should engage with secondary literature from Israeli scholarship (often in Hebrew) and from other countries (e.g., France) about Mizrahim to gain a deeper contextual understanding.

Trust–building and cultural competency

- Qualitative research projects should be structured to allow for significant trust-building, particularly among socially conservative, insular, or immigrant communities. Trust-building strategies should be tailored to each community and not assumed to be universally applicable.

- Avoid academic jargon when recruiting respondents and communicate clearly and repeatedly about confidentiality.

- Note that research activities will have different meanings in different communities. For example, incentives such as gift cards may be welcomed in some communities but may create suspicion in others, and researchers should assess this in advance.

Framing and language sensitivity

- Researchers should develop cultural competency before conducting studies. Survey and interview questions should be adapted to reflect community norms and expectations. For example, instead of asking, "Where did you go to college?" ask, "What level of formal education did you receive?" In addition, ask

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH GROUND RULES

A few recommendations for culturally competent research

▸ Avoid treating Sephardic/ Mizrahi Jews as a single group

▸ Avoid academic jargon—be clear and respectful

▸ Tailor trust-building strategies to each community

about volunteer and community work in contexts where these are significant social contributions.

- Labels and identity categories should be tested before use, as even basic terms like Sephardic or Orthodox can carry different meanings in different communities.

- Researchers should consider grounded theory approaches for studies on Jewish identity and observance to avoid imposing Ashkenazi-based assumptions.

Mixed methods research

- Where feasible and appropriate to implement, mixed methods approaches utilizing both quantitative and qualitative research methods that complement each other provide the most robust understanding of Sephardic and Mizrahi communities.

- At the same time, researchers should be aware that different data sources may contradict each other. For example, estimates of population sizes from surveys, organizational data, and community informants may differ widely from each other. More work is needed to understand and reconcile these discrepancies.

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There is a need for expanded sociological and applied research on underexplored aspects of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewish life in the US.

Methodological disclosures

- When reporting survey results, researchers should disclose important methodological information, such as sampling methods (probability or nonprobability) and frames, weighting to adjust achieved samples (if any), modes of survey data administration, and survey field dates.

- When reporting qualitative research, researchers should disclose details about their recruitment strategies, including efforts to reach individuals from communities that have historically had trust issues with researchers. This includes how participants were identified and approached, any measures taken to build trust and rapport, the role of community leaders or cultural brokers in the process, and considerations around language accessibility and informed consent. Additionally, researchers should discuss any barriers encountered in recruitment and how they triangulated data in their studies.

RESEARCH AGENDA: KEY CONTENT AREAS

There is a need for expanded sociological and applied research on underexplored aspects of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewish life in the US. Key areas of focus should include:

- **Pre-1924 Sephardic Communities:**
  Examine the social structures of long-established communities, such as Greek/Turkish Jews and Spanish-Portuguese Jews.

- **International Networks:**
  Analyze the Sephardic and Mizrahi transnational networks and their connection to the United States. One example is Moroccan Jews, whose diaspora is divided into multiple communities, including Spanish-speaking and French-speaking communities, and whose migration patterns have made it a very international diaspora.

- **Sephardic Lineage & Rediscovery:**
  Study the growing number of individuals who trace their ancestry to Sephardic Jews forcibly converted during the Inquisition. Some identify as Bnei Anussim, others as crypto-Jews, and some as descendants of conversos exploring their Jewish roots. Among them, some seek formal reintegration into Jewish life, while others engage with their heritage primarily as a historical or cultural connection.

- **Mizrahi Israeli Jews in the US:**
  Investigate the integration, identity, and communal life of Mizrahi Israelis in America.

- **Integrated Individuals:**
  Study the experiences of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews who participate in historically Ashkenazi spaces, including those who do not actively participate in Sephardic-specific communities, as well as how these historically Ashkenazi spaces are responding.

- **Mixed Families:**
  Examine identity formation, cultural transmission, and belonging in families with mixed backgrounds, such as families with Sephardic, Ashkenazi, and non-Jewish heritage.

NOTES

1 Our recommendations are grounded in the primary data we collected from the four focus communities, supplemented by literature reviews, survey data from community and national studies, and conversations with academics, practitioners, and community leaders from diverse Sephardic and Mizrahi backgrounds. We also convened a roundtable of Sephardic and Mizrahi practitioners who reviewed an early draft of this report and engaged in a generative discussion about practitioner-oriented recommendations. These recommendations were further reviewed by additional practitioners in the field, who offered feedback and reactions based on their own experiences and perspectives.

Although our primary focus was on specific communities, we also drew on our broader knowledge of other Sephardic and Mizrahi populations in the US who were not directly included in our data collection. These include Jews integrated into Ashkenazi-majority or non-Jewish spaces, members of blended families, descendants of pre-1924 immigrant groups (such as Greek, Turkish, Spanish, or Portuguese Jews), newer immigrants including Israeli Mizrahi Jews living in the US, and individuals who have recently discovered genealogical or ancestral connections to historic Sephardic Jews. Although we do not offer specific recommendations for these additional groups, the principles of inclusion and cultural recognition that underlie our findings have broader relevance and can inform efforts to support the diversity of the American Jewish community.