

Sample List of Subgroups within a Congregation

This list is intended to help congregations that are “studying their context,” and as a part of that exercise, making a detailed inventory of subgroups within their membership. They can use a list like this to influence specific fundraising or volunteer recruitment initiatives, as well as other projects of the synagogue.

Demographic Subgroups

1. Young adults (18-30)
2. Middle-aged adults (31-50)
3. Older adults (51-65)
4. Seniors (65+)
5. Parents of young children
6. Parents of teenagers
7. Empty nesters
8. Multi-generational families
9. Single individuals
10. Married couples without children
11. Single parents
12. Widows/widowers
13. Divorced individuals
14. Blended families
15. Longtime neighborhood residents (20+ years)
16. Recent arrivals to the neighborhood
17. First-generation Americans
18. Second-generation Americans
19. Multi-ethnic families
20. Military families/veterans

Profession-Based Subgroups

21. Healthcare workers (doctors, nurses, technicians)
22. Educators (teachers, professors, administrators)
23. Business professionals
24. Tradespeople (electricians, plumbers, etc.)
25. Service industry workers
26. Technology professionals
27. Government employees
28. Legal professionals
29. Financial services workers
30. Artists/creative professionals
31. Self-employed/entrepreneurs
32. Stay-at-home parents
33. Retired professionals
34. Nonprofit workers
35. Retail workers
36. Remote workers
37. Students (college/graduate)
38. First responders
39. Social workers/counselors
40. Scientists/researchers

Involvement in Congregation

41. Leadership council/board members
42. Choir/music ministry participants
43. Religious education teachers
44. Outreach committee members
45. Long-time members (15+ years)
46. New members (less than 2 years)
47. Multi-generational congregation families
48. Weekly service attendees
49. Occasional service attendees
50. Holiday-only attendees
51. Youth group leaders
52. Adult education participants
53. Building/maintenance committee
54. Hospitality team
55. Financial/stewardship committee
56. Social justice committee

Skillsets and Talents

- 57. Musicians
- 58. Skilled cooks/bakers
- 59. Visual artists
- 60. Public speakers
- 61. Event organizers
- 62. Gardeners/landscapers
- 63. Technology experts
- 64. Craftspeople
- 65. Writers
- 66. Photographers/videographers
- 67. Accounting/financial skills
- 68. Caregivers
- 69. Medical expertise
- 70. Construction/building skills
- 71. Early childhood education expertise
- 72. Foreign language speakers

Life Experiences

- 73. Cancer survivors
- 74. Parents of children with special needs
- 75. Caregivers for aging parents
- 76. Those experiencing grief/loss
- 77. Recovery community members (addiction recovery)
- 78. Mental health condition management
- 79. Chronic illness community
- 80. Adoptive parents
- 81. Foster parents
- 82. Interfaith marriage couples
- 83. Adult children of alcoholics
- 84. First-in-family college graduates
- 85. Career changers
- 86. Immigrants
- 87. Those who have lived abroad
- 88. Multigenerational caregivers

Interest-Based Groups

- 89. Book club members
- 90. Men's fellowship group
- 91. Women's fellowship group
- 92. Young professionals group
- 93. Meditation/prayer group
- 94. Social justice activists
- 95. Environmental stewardship advocates
- 96. Outdoor enthusiasts
- 97. Film/movie discussion group
- 98. Sports team participants
- 99. Community garden participants
- 100. Cooking/meal sharing group
- 101. Crafting circle
- 102. Habitat for Humanity volunteers
- 103. Food pantry volunteers
- 104. Parenting support group
- 105. Interfaith dialogue participants
- 106. LGBTQ+ members and allies
- 107. Health and wellness group
- 108. Financial planning/stewardship group
- 109. History/heritage preservation enthusiasts
- 110. Local school volunteers

Income/Wealth Subgroups

- 111. Lower-middle income households
- 112. Middle income households
- 113. Upper-middle income households
- 114. High income professionals
- 115. Wealth builders (actively growing investments)
- 116. Financially secure retirees
- 117. Multi-generational wealth families
- 118. First-generation wealth builders
- 119. Those living paycheck-to-paycheck
- 120. Debt reduction focused households
- 121. Financial assistance recipients
- 122. Scholarship/tuition assistance families
- 123. Investment club members
- 124. Real estate investors
- 125. Small business owners

Health and Wellness

- 126. Fitness enthusiasts
- 127. Nutrition-focused individuals
- 128. Yoga/meditation practitioners
- 129. Runners/joggers
- 130. Athletes/sports team members
- 131. Health condition support groups
- 132. Alternative medicine practitioners
- 133. Healthcare advocates
- 134. Caregiver support network
- 135. Mental health awareness advocates

Educational Background

- 136. Trade school graduates
- 137. Community college graduates
- 138. Four-year university graduates
- 139. Graduate degree holders
- 140. Professional certification holders
- 141. Continuing education participants
- 142. Homeschooling families
- 143. Private school families
- 144. Public school families
- 145. Adult literacy volunteers

Cultural Affiliations

- 146. Cultural heritage preservation groups
- 147. Language preservation/speakers
- 148. Cultural celebration organizers
- 149. Ethnic cuisine enthusiasts
- 150. Cultural arts practitioners
- 151. Intercultural dialogue participants
- 152. Cultural education advocates
- 153. Traditional craft practitioners
- 154. Folk music enthusiasts
- 155. Cultural storytellers/historians

Technology Engagement

- 156. Early technology adopters
- 157. Social media community builders
- 158. Digital accessibility advocates
- 159. Online learning participants
- 160. Digital literacy teachers
- 161. Technology-hesitant members
- 162. Digital content creators
- 163. Virtual community moderators
- 164. IT support volunteers
- 165. Cybersecurity-aware individuals

Community Connections

- 166. Neighborhood association members
- 167. Local business supporters
- 168. Community emergency response team
- 169. Local politics participants
- 170. Sister congregation relationships
- 171. Interfaith dialogue participants
- 172. Community festival organizers
- 173. Community garden participants
- 174. Local history preservationists
- 175. Public space improvement advocates

Transportation/Mobility

- 176. Public transit users
- 177. Carpooling network
- 178. Cycling enthusiasts
- 179. Walking/pedestrian advocates
- 180. Electric vehicle owners
- 181. Transportation assistance providers
- 182. Mobility-challenged individuals
- 183. Ride-share organizers
- 184. Long-distance commuters
- 185. Transportation equity advocates

Environmental Engagement

186. Sustainability advocates
187. Energy conservation practitioners
188. Waste reduction/zero waste households
189. Native plant gardeners
190. Wildlife habitat supporters
191. Clean water advocates
192. Climate action participants
193. Local food system supporters
194. Environmental education volunteers
195. Green building enthusiasts

Generational Perspectives

196. Silent Generation members (born 1928-1945)
197. Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964)
198. Generation X (born 1965-1980)
199. Millennials (born 1981-1996)
200. Generation Z (born 1997-2012)

This list was generated by Claude, a large-language-model AI, in response to this request:

“I’m imagining a church or synagogue in a middle class American neighborhood. There are approximately 200 households. I’d like to make an inventory of a great variety of different subgroups that exist within this hypothetical congregation. I’d like to include all the most common demographic subgroups, but also subgroupings by profession, by skills sets, by major life experiences, and other categories I haven’t even thought of. I’d like to have 100 subgroups or more. Can you help?”

Claude’s response also included the following: “These categories represent the rich diversity that exists even within a seemingly homogeneous religious community, highlighting how congregation members bring different perspectives, needs, strengths, and areas of interest that can enrich community life. Each of these subgroups represents potential communities within your larger congregation, with many individuals belonging to multiple categories simultaneously. This creates a rich tapestry of interconnected mini-communities that could form the basis for [religious or educational] programs, outreach efforts, or community building initiatives.”

Claude also responded to a request that specified a liberal synagogue in a major metro area, and this was the output:

Cultural and Religious Subgroups in a Liberal Metro-Area Synagogue

Here's a list of potential cultural and religious subgroups you might find within a middle-class, liberal synagogue in a diverse metropolitan area:

Jewish Cultural/Ethnic Backgrounds

1. Ashkenazi Jews (Eastern European heritage)
2. Sephardic Jews (Spanish/Mediterranean heritage)
3. Mizrahi Jews (Middle Eastern/North African heritage)
4. Black Jews (African-American & African-Canadian Jews)
5. Multi-racial Jews
6. Ethiopian Jews
7. Indian Jews (Bene Israel, Cochin)
8. Russian/Former Soviet Union Jewish immigrants
9. Israeli-Americans
10. Latin American Jewish families

Religious Practice Levels

11. Culturally Jewish, secular in practice
12. "High Holiday Jews" (attend mainly on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur)
13. Shabbat-observant members
14. Kosher-keeping households
15. Hebrew-fluent members
16. Jewish education enthusiasts
17. Ritual specialists (Torah readers, prayer leaders)
18. Jewish meditation practitioners
19. Jewish renewal movement participants

Family Compositions

20. Interfaith families
21. LGBTQ+ families and individuals
22. Converts to Judaism
23. Jews-by-choice exploring traditions

- 24. Multi-generational Jewish families
- 25. Single Jewish parents
- 26. Households with adopted children
- 27. Teens preparing for Bar/Bat Mitzvah
- 28. Empty nesters reconnecting with tradition

Jewish Denominational Backgrounds

- 29. Reform background
- 30. Conservative background
- 31. Reconstructionist background
- 32. Orthodox background (now in a liberal setting)
- 33. Renewal movement background
- 34. Post-denominational Jews
- 35. Humanistic Jewish background
- 36. "Just Jewish" (non-denominational)

Social Justice & Community Engagement

- 37. Tikkun olam (social justice) committee members
- 38. Israel-Palestine dialogue participants
- 39. Refugee support volunteers
- 40. Climate action Jewish activists
- 41. Racial justice advocates
- 42. Jewish-Muslim alliance participants
- 43. Food security/anti-hunger initiative members
- 44. Housing justice advocates

Educational & Cultural Interests

- 45. Jewish history study group
- 46. Yiddish language enthusiasts
- 47. Hebrew language learners
- 48. Jewish literature book club
- 49. Kabbalah/Jewish mysticism students
- 50. Jewish cooking club
- 51. Israeli dancing group
- 52. Jewish film festival participants

Life-Stage Groups

- 53. Young Jewish professionals
- 54. Jewish seniors/elder community
- 55. Jewish parenting group
- 56. College students home for holidays
- 57. Jewish early childhood families
- 58. Adult B'nei Mitzvah participants (adults studying for Bar/Bat Mitzvah)
- 59. Recent emptier nesters reconnecting with community
- 60. Jewish singles group

This list captures the diversity that might exist within a liberal synagogue in a metropolitan area, reflecting both traditional Jewish cultural divisions and contemporary social identities and interests.