



Jewish Graduate Student Initiative

Impact Survey Results

Fall 2017

MISSION 
MEASUREMENT



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
SURVEY LAB
DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Executive Summary

- Over Summer 2017, Jewish Graduate Student Initiative (JGSI) commissioned a comprehensive, independent survey of all current students and alumni to track its historical impact on Jewish identity and involvement and thereby help focus its future programming.
- After extensive research, JGSI selected **The University of Chicago Survey Lab** and **Mission Measurement**, both widely recognized as leaders in their field, to jointly conduct the survey.
- JGSI set out to answer two key research questions:
 1. What is the baseline level of JGSI participants' Jewish engagement/identity?
 2. Is JGSI helping to maintain or increase Jewish pride, participation, traditions and civic engagement for participants?
- Respondents were asked about their level of Jewish engagement/identity across several areas prior to interacting with JGSI, and how those changed after their engagement with JGSI.
- The survey was administered via email and Facebook to 1,800 individuals in June 2017 and was completed by 211 individuals (considered a high response rate in the field).
- The following report details the exceptionally positive results that this survey uncovered.

RESULTS: 99% of Alumni Confirm That JGSI Increased or Maintained Their Jewish Engagement and Identity During Grad School

The survey of 211 of JGSI's current participants and alumni confirmed that:

99.6%

*Increased / maintained
Ethnic or Religious Pride*

99.5%

*Increased / maintained Active
Religious Participation*

99.8%

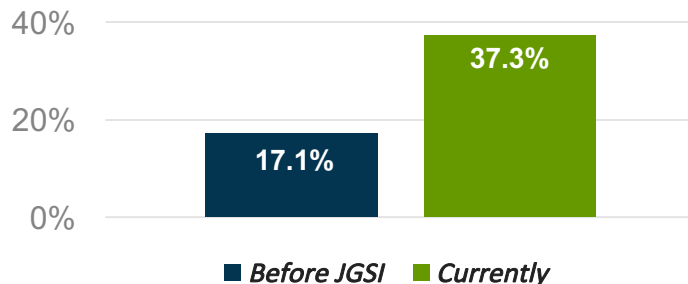
*Increased / maintained
Cultural Traditions & Heritage*

99.9%

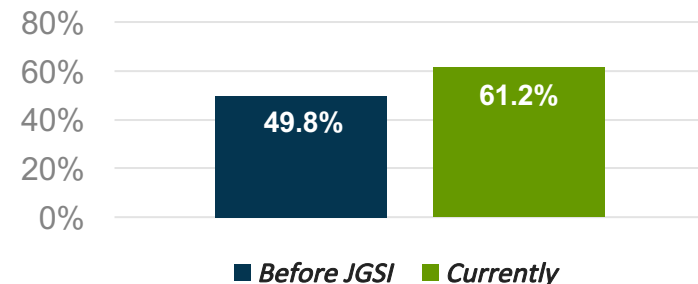
*Increased / maintained
Civic Engagement*

There has been a sizeable increase in Synagogue membership and active practice of Judaism since participants began involvement with JGSI.

Active Member of a Synagogue



Actively Practice Judaism in Any Form



Context



Research Shows that Millennial Jews are Increasingly Disconnected from Judaism and the Jewish Community

The 2013 Pew Research Center's Portrait of Jewish Americans found that younger Jews (18-29) are less religious, less connected to Synagogues, and view their Jewish identity as less important than the Jewish community at large



Level of Religiosity

- All U.S. Jews – 78% identify with Judaism
- 18-29 U.S. Jews – 68% identify with Judaism



Importance of Jewish Identity

- All U.S. Jews – 46% say it's very important
- 18-29 U.S. Jews – 34% say it's very important



Member of a Synagogue

- All U.S. Jews – 31% are a member
- 18-29 U.S. Jews – 24% are a member



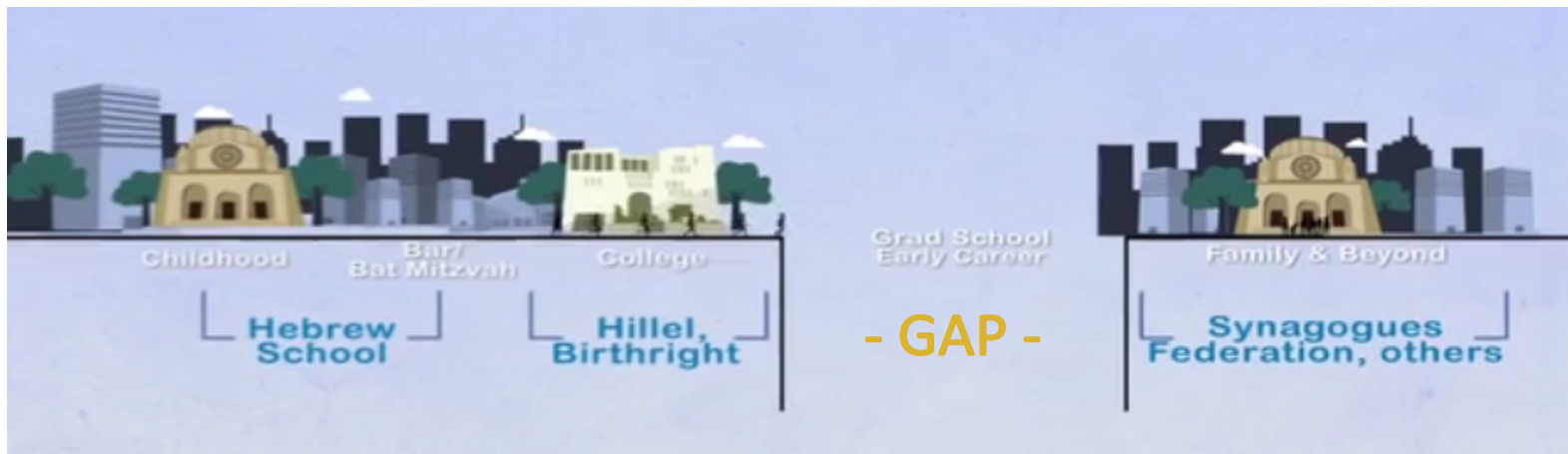
Donate to Jewish Organizations

- All U.S. Jews – 56% donate
- 18-29 U.S. Jews – 39% donate

Given that young Jews frequently move away from home and seldom join/attend synagogues, this gap in Jewish identity and engagement has proven difficult to solve

JGSI Helps Bridge a Critical Gap for Young Jews Through Targeted Programming in Graduate School

The Jewish Graduate Student Initiative (JGSI) provides programming, events, mentorship and community to help bridge a critical gap for young Jews in their identity, connection, and engagement to the Jewish community.



- JGSI has reached over 1,800 graduate students since 2010
- JGSI currently serves graduate students at UCLA, USC, Loyola, Pepperdine, Whittier, and Southwestern University



Outcomes & Methodology

JGSI is Committed to Helping Jewish Graduate Students Achieve Four Priority Outcomes

Mission Measurement, a leading social impact consulting firm, worked with JGSI to identify and prioritize outcomes and measure its impact on current graduate students and past alumni.

JGSI Priority Outcomes

Ethnic or Religious Pride

- Level of Jewish self identity
- Level of Jewish/Israel pride
- Level of interest in children being raised Jewish
- Level of belonging to Jewish culture

Active Religious Participation

- Number of Jewish practices/ experiences (e.g., Shabbat, Jewish social events)
- Synagogue membership
- Level of interest in Jewish learning / Hebrew

Cultural Traditions & Heritage

- Level of participation in Jewish religious celebrations
- Level of connection to Jewish social circle
- Interest in mentorship
- Interest in continued Jewish education
- Level of connection to Jewish community

Civic Engagement

- Level of volunteerism
- Donations to social causes
- Level of awareness of civic issues
- Level of importance placed on being civically engaged

Key Metrics

With the four outcomes as the measuring stick, JGSI was looking to understand what impact their programming had on participants' Jewish engagement and identity.

*See full outcome definition in appendix

To Measure JGSI's Impact, Mission Measurement Designed A Survey For Current/Past Participants

In order to determine JGSI's impact on current/past students, Mission Measurement laid out two key research questions

- What is the **baseline level** of JGSI participants' Jewish engagement/identity?
- Is JGSI **maintaining or increasing** Jewish pride, participation, traditions and civic engagement for participants?*

Methodology

- Respondents were asked about their level of Jewish engagement/identity across several areas prior to interacting with JGSI, and how those changed after their engagement with JGSI
- The survey was administered via email and Facebook to 1,800 individuals in June 2017 and was completed by 211 individuals



*Since there is a documented drop in engagement between college and starting a family, maintaining or increasing engagement are considered successful outcomes of JGSI.

Results



Survey Results Show That JGSI Has Been Successful Bridging the Engagement/Identity Gap for Young Jews

Participating in JGSI has resulted in a:

- 118% increase in active synagogue membership
 - *Post-JGSI Synagogue membership was 55% higher than national average for 18-29 year olds**
- 22% increase in actively practicing Judaism

“A JGSI mixer is where I met my future wife.”

– USC Marshall alumni

Additionally, as a result of JGSI:

- 74% of respondents increased or significantly increased their interest in being part of a Jewish community
- 69% of respondents increased or significantly increased their interest in connecting with a rabbi or religious mentor

“[JGSI] Helped me find a summer internship, academic internship, and full-time job”

– UCLA Anderson alumni

***MM Synopsis:** While the level of Jewish engagement/identity varied widely prior to joining JGSI, respondents almost universally recognized the role of JGSI in helping them maintain or increase their level of Jewish engagement/identity.*

*Based on 2013 Pew Research Center's Portrait of Jewish Americans

JGSI | August 2017

Results for Ethnic/Religious Pride Outcome

Key Findings around Ethnic/Religious Pride:

- For all questions, 99%+ indicated that involvement with JGSI increased* or maintained their ethnic/religious pride
- 74% of respondents stated that JGSI increased or significantly increased their **Jewish Identity**
- 55% of respondents stated that JGSI increased or significantly increased their **interest in raising their children Jewish**
- 75% of respondents stated that JGSI increased their **connection to Judaism/Jewish People**

“I now understand the significance of being Jewish and am proud to be. I also now feel the need to be with someone else that is Jewish, and raise a Jewish family.”

- Current graduate student

“I became even more proud to be a Jew and an Israeli than I already was.”

- Current USC Marshall student

***MM Synopsis:** Among the four outcome areas, participants felt the strongest here prior to their involvement with JGSI. In the future, JGSI may be able to reapportion resources to other outcomes with a greater need.*

*This metric includes those who responded 'Increased' and 'Significantly Increased'

Results for Active Religious Participation Outcome

Key Findings around Active Religious Participation:

- For all questions, 99%+ indicated that involvement with JGSI increased* or maintained their religious participation
- Among JGSI respondents, **active participation in a synagogue more than doubled**
- 59% of respondents stated that JGSI increased or significantly increased their **interest in reading or studying about Judaism**
- 59% of respondents stated that JGSI increased or significantly increased their **interest in leading an ethical or moral life based on Jewish principles**

“This program really gave me a place to connect to Judaism and to connect to people in my same situation when there really wasn't any other forum to do so.”

– Loyola Law School alumni

“The biggest impact is making the Jewish community more available. I had been meaning to get more involved since moving to LA but never knew how.”

- Current USC Marshall student

***MM Synopsis:** The 118%+ increase in synagogue membership and 22% increase in active practice of Judaism is impressive. JGSI should dive deeper to understand what is causing these results to help it scale for additional impact.*

*This metric includes those who responded 'Increased' and 'Significantly Increased'

Results for Cultural Traditions & Heritage Outcome

Key Findings around Cultural Traditions & Heritage:

- For all questions, 99%+ indicated that involvement with JGSI increased* or maintained their traditions and heritage
- 76% of respondents stated that JGSI increased or significantly increased their **Jewish social circle**
- 69% of respondents stated that JGSI increased or significantly increased their **interest in attending or hosting a Jewish religious celebration with friends/family**

“[JGSI] Reinforced the importance of marrying a Jewish woman, raising my children Jewish, and observing some of the customs & traditions of Judaism.”

–USC Marshall alumni

“Once I became part of the JGSI family, my life completely changed ...my family life has significantly improved as I have incorporated more Jewish traditions.”

–Current Southwestern Law student

***MM Synopsis:** The social nature of celebrating/preserving Jewish cultural traditions and heritage is clearly something that young Jews value. JGSI should continue to facilitate the social side of Jewish activities so that they become an enjoyable habit to be continued beyond grad school.*

*This metric includes those who responded 'Increased' and 'Significantly Increased'

Results for Civic Engagement Outcome

Key Findings around Civic Engagement:

- For all questions, 99%+ indicated that involvement with JGSI increased* or maintained their level of civic engagement
- 58% of respondents stated that JGSI increased or significantly increased their **understanding of local challenges and issues in the community**
- 57% of respondents stated that JGSI increased or significantly increased their **interest in volunteering for local civic causes**

“[JGSI] It assisted me in organizing events for the small local Jewish community at my school and actively taking the role of a community leader...”

–Cal Haas alumni

“Rabbi Sorani plays multiple roles well, including the role of an accessible rabbi who is willing to meet one-on-one with his community members. He runs around tending to people's needs.”

- Current UCLA Law student

***MM Synopsis:** Given the low interest in volunteering prior to joining JGSI and the high interest after individuals become involved, JGSI should consider providing additional opportunities for students and alumni.*

*This metric includes those who responded 'Increased' and 'Significantly Increased'

Additional Analysis

Comparing JGSI's Impact - Alumni vs. Current Students

Key Findings Comparing Alumni vs. Current Students*

- Current students started the program with a much **higher level of Jewish engagement/identity** than alumnus
- Alumnus typically saw a much **bigger jump in impact from engagement with JGSI** across all questions
- **Current active synagogue membership** is nearly identical for the two groups
- **38% more current students were comfortable expressing their Jewish identity openly** prior to joining JGSI compared to current alumnus

***MM Synopsis:** Given that JGSI alumnus report that the program had a much larger impact on them as compared to current students, it seems plausible to infer that the program's full impact can take several years. The willingness of nearly 90% of today's students to express their Jewish identity openly (compared to 49% with alumnus) may point to the welcoming place that JGSI has helped foster for Jews on campus.*

*N for JGSI alumnus is 149, N for JGSI current students is 46

Additional Analysis

Comparing JGSI's Impact Based on Level of Engagement

Key Findings around Level of Engagement*

- Individuals who came to JGSI events less frequently started out with higher levels of Jewish engagement/identity
- Individuals who came to JGSI events more frequently were more likely to feel that JGSI increased their level of Jewish engagement/identity
- Individuals who came to JGSI events less frequently were 26% more likely to actively practice in Judaism prior to interacting with JGSI

***MM Synopsis:** Individuals that already have a strong sense of Jewish engagement/identity don't feel the need to come to events as often; given that they come to events less, it makes sense that they get less out of the program. JGSI should focus their efforts on those who are at a lower level of Jewish engagement/identity since that is where they can have the biggest impact.*

*We separated respondents into two groups (1) weekly and monthly ($N=97$), (2) several times a year and rarely/never ($N = 52$)



Appendix

- JGSI Priority Outcomes
- Data Analysis
- Popularity of JGSI Activities

JGSI Priority Outcomes

Mission Measurement included a definition for each outcome to help determine when the outcome has been achieved.

Outcome	Definition
Ethnic or Religious Pride	This outcome is satisfied if an individual has achieved the following within the past year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Developed a strong sense of identity (e.g., with cultural / ethnic values, concepts, and traditions)</i> • <i>Demonstrated increased pride about belonging to an ethnic / religious community</i>
Active Participation	This outcome is satisfied if a program has achieved the following within the last year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Demonstrated increased public and private participation in ethnic / religious activities (e.g., church attendance, prayer, etc.)</i> • <i>Become an active participant of an ethnic / religious community</i> • <i>Developed an advanced capacity (skills, knowledge, and language) to actively engage in ethnic / cultural activities</i>
Cultural Traditions & Heritage	This outcomes is satisfied if a community has achieved the following within the last year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Preserved traditional practices from the past for future generations in an ethnic / religious group (e.g., holidays, ceremonies, etc.)</i> • <i>Established a network of positive, inter-generational connections among members of an ethnic / religious community (e.g., friendships, mentorships, educators, etc.)</i> • <i>Developed a strong sense of connection to an ethnic / religious community, instilling a desire and commitment to actively participate in an ethnic / religious group</i>
Civic Engagement	This outcome is satisfied if an individual has achieved at least one of the following within the past year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Actively volunteered in community/extracurricular organization(s) to bring about social change</i> • <i>Developed his/her awareness or understanding of civic responsibility</i>

Alumni vs. Current Students Data Analysis

Question	Response(s)	Current Students (n=46)	Alumni (n=149)
Raising your kids Jewish	Prior – Agree/Strongly Agree	76%	48.9%
	Post – Increased/Sign. Increased	37.2%	61.8%
	Post – Stayed the same	62.8%	38.2%
Express my Jewish identity openly	Prior – Agree/Strongly Agree	86.9%	48.9%
	Post – Increased/Sign. Increased	55.8%	75.6%
	Post – Stayed the same	44.2%	24.4%
Connected with a rabbi or other Jewish mentor	Prior – Agree/Strongly Agree	51.1%	10.8%
	Post – Increased/Sign. Increased	51.1%	75.5%
	Post –Stayed the Same	46.5%	23.7%
Active member of a synagogue	Prior - Yes	34.7%	10.8%
	Post - Yes	38.4%	38.4%
Active practice Judaism in any form	Prior - Yes	67.3%	43.5%
	Post – Increased/Sign. Increased	32.5%	70.8%
	Post –Stayed the same	67.5%	28.4%

Level of Engagement Data Analysis

Question	Response(s)	Weekly/Monthly (n=97)	Less Frequent (n=52)
Raising your kids Jewish	Prior – Agree/Strongly Agree	44.7%	65.3%
	Post – Increased/Sign. Increased	73.1%	41.1%
	Post – Stayed the same	26.9%	58.9%
Express my Jewish identity openly	Prior – Agree/Strongly Agree	43.2%	65.3%
	Post – Increased/Sign. Increased	84.9%	58.8%
	Post – Stayed the same	15.1%	41.2%
Connected with a rabbi or other Jewish mentor	Prior – Agree/Strongly Agree	9.3%	13.4%
	Post – Increased/Sign. Increased	81.7%	64%
	Post –Stayed the Same	18.3%	34%
Active member of a synagogue	Prior - Yes	9%	15.3%
	Post - Yes	38.9%	37.5%
Active practice Judaism in any form	Prior - Yes	34.4%	60.7%
	Post – Increased/Sign. Increased	78.4%	56.8%
	Post –Stayed the same	20.4%	43.2%

Popularity of JGSI Programs

JGSI Activities	Students	Alumni (in the last 12 months)
Dinner 4 Eight	36.5%	2.8%
One-on-one meetings with Rabbi Sorani or Rabbi Rosenberg	48.8%	11.8%
Shabbat Dinners	52.1%	13.3%
Ethics & Leadership Fellowship	16.6%	4.7%
Israel Trips	21.3%	0.5%
Jewish Executive Leadership Conference	40.8%	10.9%
JGSI Mixers (Such as JEL Connect)	44.1%	9.5%
Lunch & Learns	36.5%	5.7%
Campus Speakers	36.0%	7.6%
JSLA or JBSA events	35.1%	14.2%
Selah events	7.6%	1.9%
Jewish Holidays	28.4%	8.1%

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