



## Jewish Graduate Student Initiative

# 2021 Impact Survey Results

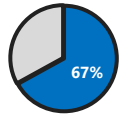
September 2021



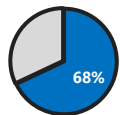
**MISSION**   
MEASUREMENT 

# Executive Summary (1 of 2)

An *impact survey of 508 current and past participants* indicated that – despite the pandemic and increasing the rigor of measurement – **JGSI demonstrated success in increasing religious, social, and community involvement.**



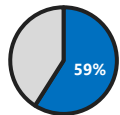
**67% of participants attended multiple times a year<sup>1</sup>**



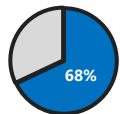
**For 68% of participants, JGSI was the only Jewish organization they were involved with** in Grad School

**3X**

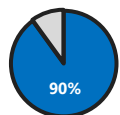
**Active JGSI participants are 3X more likely to view Judaism as 'Very Important'** compared to American Jews in PEW's 2020 Study<sup>2</sup>



**59% of active participants regularly donate to Jewish nonprofits each year;** an increase of 40% compared to pre-JGSI



**68% of active participants feel JGSI was a catalyst for connecting them with Jews outside their community**



**90% of active participants in online/hybrid programming attributed a more positive impact on their pandemic experience to JGSI**

## TESTIMONIAL

"JGSI brought me back to Judaism. It has sparked my involvement in different Jewish organizations and has inspired me to start volunteering to organizations that help fight against antisemitism. It also helped me stay grounded during the pandemic. I am very grateful."

1. JGSI participants are considered 'active' if they attend multiple events/programs during the year  
2. The PEW Study asked American Jews how important religion was to them

## Executive Summary (2 of 2)

While JGSI aims to help participants improve against their baseline, it is notable to report that **99% of participants either preserved or increased Jewish identity, religious participation, and pride**, especially when considering the typical fall off that American Jews typically have in grad school. Here are the figures.

### >99% of JGSI Participants Preserved or Increased...

#### Ethnic or Religious Pride

**99% preserved or increased** their ethnic or religious pride

#### Active Religious Participation

**99% preserved or increased** their religious participation

#### Cultural Traditions & Heritage

**100% preserved or increased** their cultural traditions & heritage

#### Civic Engagement

**100% preserved or increased** their civic engagement

# Content

- **Survey Methodology & Participants** Pg. 5
- **Background** Pg. 8
- **Detailed Findings** Pg. 10
- **Appendix** Pg. 17

# Survey Methodology & Participants

# Survey Methodology

In order to determine JGSI's impact on current and past participants, University of Chicago Survey Lab and Mission Measurement developed a survey around **two main research questions**:

- What is the **baseline level** of JGSI participants' Jewish engagement/identity?
- How has **involvement in JGSI** impacted Jewish pride, participation, traditions, civic engagement, and Israel engagement for participants?

## Methodology & Assumptions

- The survey was administered in July 2021– August 2021 by University of Chicago Survey Lab and was completed by 508 individuals
- The design and methodology is similar to surveys Mission Measurement has administered for other clients including the Tim Horton Children's Foundation, the Surge Institute, and Autodesk
- While helping participants to preserve their level of Jewish identity, pride, and engagement can be considered a success due to the well-documented drop in Jewish identity, pride, and engagement between university and starting a family, we have moved to more rigorous measurement of impact focused on helping participants increase or improve across outcomes
- Given the response rate, the assumption of 11,000 participants in JGSI programming, and the assumption that the sample is representative of the population, there is a 4.25% margin of error at the 95% confidence level
- Statistics reported for *% who Increased* include the individuals who selected Significantly Increased or Increased.

# Who Took the Survey

508 individuals completed the 2021 Impact Survey. The sample included **33% current grad students** and **67% alumnus / young professionals**.

## Age

Under 22	1%
22 - 29	57%
30 - 39	37%
40+	5%

## Current Status

Current Graduate Student	33%
Alumnus	43%
Young Professional	23%
Other	1%

## Religious Practice

Reform	31%
Conservative	26%
Secular	16%
Orthodox	12%
Completely Unaffiliated	4%
Reconstructionist	1%
Other	10%

## First JGSI Interaction

2012 and earlier	10%
2013	3%
2014	3%
2015	5%
2016	5%
2017	6%
2018	15%
2019	19%
2020	25%
2021	9%

## Gender

Female	45%
Male	54%
Non-Binary	1%

## Relationship Status

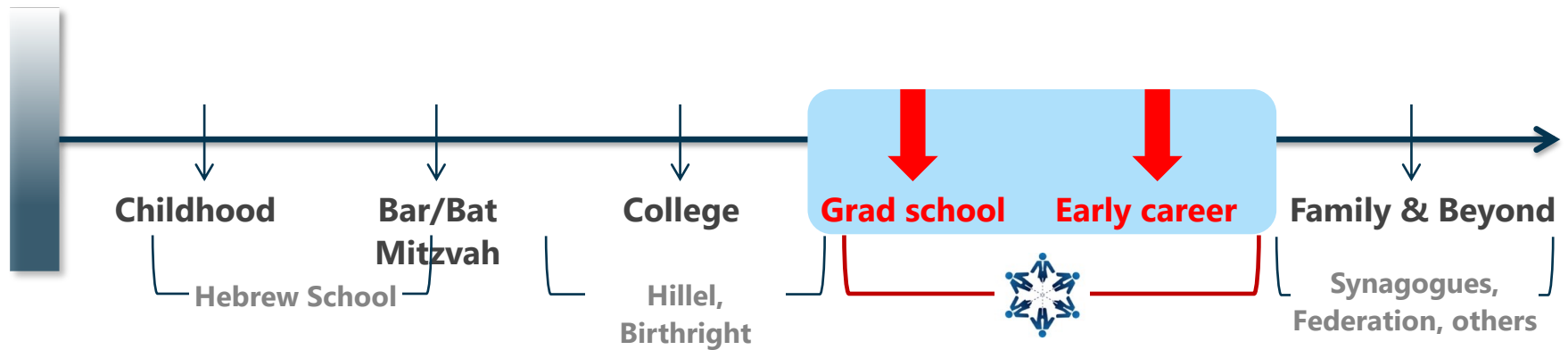
Single	43%
In a Relationship	31%
Married	25%
Divorced	1%

# Background



# JGSI Programming Helps Bridge a Critical Gap for Young Jews Throughout Graduate School

Research shows that that **younger Jews (18 - 29) are more religious**, less connected to Synagogues, and view their Jewish identity as less important than the Jewish community at large.<sup>1</sup> 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.

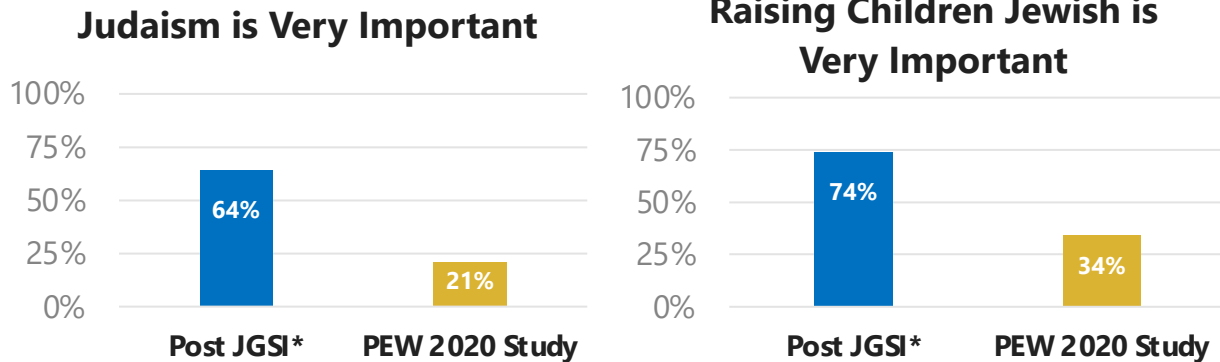


- Based in Los Angeles, JGSI currently serves graduate students at more than 183 campuses including UCLA, USC, Stanford, NYU, Columbia, Penn, and the University of Chicago
- JGSI's programs reach a nationwide audience of 11,000 students and alumni annually

1. The research includes findings from the 2020 Pew Research Center's Portrait of Jewish Americans

## Detailed Findings

# Detailed Findings: Ethnic or Religious Pride



**TOP FINDINGS**

64% of active participants **feel Judaism is very important** to them, a 31% increase compared to pre-JGSI

74% of active participants feel that **raising their children Jewish is very important**

## Context:

- JGSI plays a critical role in reconnecting young Jews to Judaism and the Jewish community and through that work, in elevating the role of Judaism in their lives and their pride at being Jewish.
- 31% more active JGSI participants feel Judaism is 'very important' after having engaged with the program, compared to before.
- The 64% of active JGSI participants that view Judaism as very important compares very favorably with the 21% of American Jews who view religion as very important in the 2020 PEW Study.
- The 74% of active JGSI participants who rated raising their children Jewish as being 'very important' compares very favorably to the 34% of American Jews who view it as very important that their grandkids are raised Jewish.
- Question structures were changed from 2019 to 2021 surveys and data reported here focuses more on actions taken / behavior achieved, rather than just interest.

**PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVE**

*"I really **felt closer and more meaning** towards my Jewish community."*

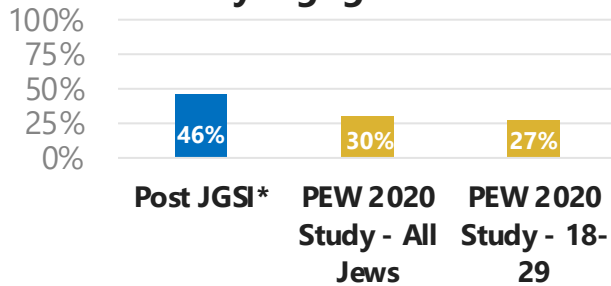
*"Growing up with divorced parents where practicing was an after thought, and in a non-Jewish community made it very difficult to feel part of the greater Jewish community. **JLSA made the connection more concrete.**"*

\*Calculated for active participants. JGSI participants are considered 'active' if they attend multiple events/programs during the year.

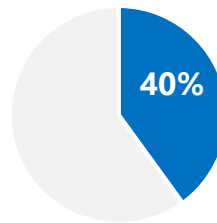
\*\*See additional findings and outcome definitions in Appendix.

# Detailed Findings: Active Religious Participation

## Membership at a Synagogue



## Increased Level of Comfort in Speaking Openly about Judaism\*\*



### Context:

- JGSI plays a critical role in reconnecting young Jews to more active religious participation. While the very basis of participation in Judaism is often focused on the synagogue, it can also include the observance of Jewish customs and attendance at cultural or religious events.
- 46% of JGSI participants are members of a synagogue or expect to join within the next year (31% are current members). This compares favorably to PEW's 2020 study of American Jews in which 30% are members, with only 27% of those aged 18-29 being members.
- Question structures were changed from 2019 to 2021 surveys and data reported here focuses more on actions taken / behavior achieved, rather than just interest.

\* Includes current members and those who plan to join in the coming year.

\*\* Calculated for active participants. JGSI participants are considered 'active' if they attend multiple events/programs during the year.

\*\*\* See additional findings and outcome definitions in Appendix.

## TOP FINDINGS

35% of active participants increased their **attendance at Jewish cultural and religious celebrations** thanks to JGSI

32% of active participants increased **observance of Jewish customs**

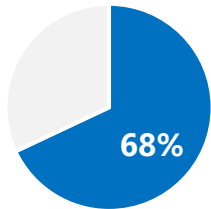
## PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVE

*"JGSI has made a significant effort to include those of us who are returning and trying to figure out how we want to embrace Judaism in our lives."*

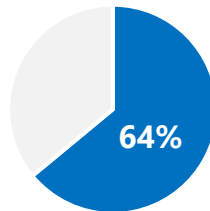
*"[JGSI] helped me keep a consistent thread of Judaism and Jewish thinking in my life, in a way that feels authentic to me and not pushed onto me by my family."*

# Detailed Findings: Cultural Traditions & Heritage

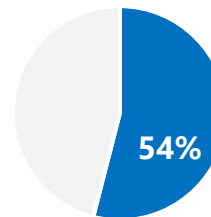
## Catalyst for Connecting you with Jews Outside your Community\*



## Increased Jewish Social Circle\*



## Increased Interest in Attending / Hosting Jewish Cultural Celebrations\*



### Context:

- JGSI plays a critical role in connecting young Jews to the Jewish community in a religious, social, and professional capacity.
- Question structures were changed from 2019 to 2021 surveys and data reported here focuses more on actions taken / behavior achieved, rather than just interest.

## TOP FINDINGS

64% of active participants increased their **Jewish social circle**

42% of active participants **gained a new Jewish personal role model**

## PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVE

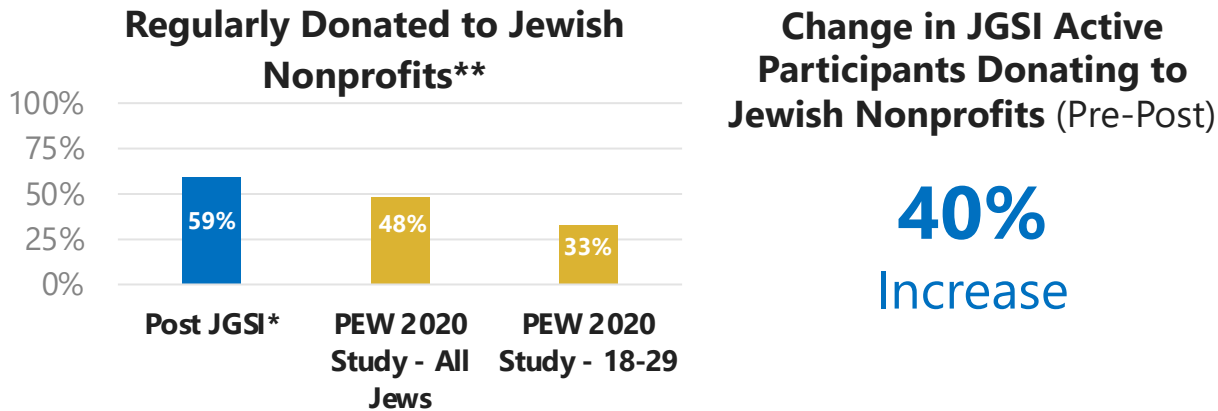
*"[JGSI] allowed me to gain insight from other Jewish professionals, which has **helped foster my own professional growth with my career and my religion**"*

*"[JGSI] **connected me to a Jewish community** when I'd just moved to LA and **made me want to explore my Judaism more than I have in the past**"*

\* Calculated for active participants. JGSI participants are considered 'active' if they attend multiple events/programs during the year.

\*\* See additional findings and outcome definitions in Appendix.

# Detailed Findings: Civic Engagement



## Context:

- JGSI plays a critical role in helping young Jews to become civically engaged and take up the mantle of supporting Jewish causes.
- Notably, 59% of active JGSI participants regularly donated to Jewish nonprofits, as compared to 48% for American Jews according to the Pew 2020 study (and only 33% of American Jews aged 18-29).
- 40% more active JGSI participants regularly donated to Jewish nonprofits after having engaged with the program, compared to before.
- 34% more active JGSI participants regularly volunteered with Jewish nonprofits after having engaged with the program, compared to before.
- Question structures were changed from 2019 to 2021 surveys and data reported here focuses more on actions taken / behavior achieved, rather than just interest.

## TOP FINDINGS

*59% of active participants regularly donate to Jewish nonprofits – a 40% increase from pre-JGSI and higher than the 48% average from PEW's 2020 study*

## PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVE

*"[JGSI] sparked my involvement in different Jewish organizations and has inspired me to start volunteering to organizations that help fight against antisemitism."*

*"JGSI has inspired me to participate more enthusiastically with the local and national Jewish community."*

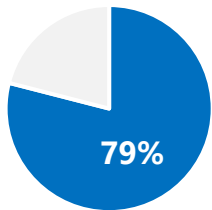
\*Calculated for active participants. JGSI participants are considered 'active' if they attend multiple events/programs during the year.

\*\* Someone who donates multiple times a year is considered to have 'regularly donated'.

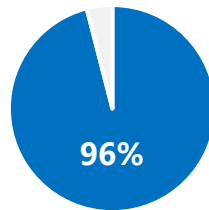
\*\*\* See additional findings and outcome definitions in Appendix.

# Detailed Findings: Israel Engagement & Addressing Anti-Semitism

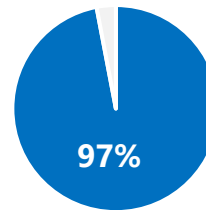
## Increased Concern about Anti-Semitism Last Year



## Increased or Maintained Comfort in Speaking Openly About Israel



## Increased or Maintained Connection to Israel



### Context:

- JGSI plays a critical role in helping young Jews engage with Israel and address anti-Semitism when they see it or experience it. It is worth noting the strong results, despite the recent conflict involving Israel which likely created some head-winds regarding the perception of Israel and led to more anti-Semitism.
- Questions around anti-Semitism are new this impact study.

### TOP FINDINGS

79% of JGSI participants had **increased concern about Anti-Semitism** last year

97% of participants increased or maintained their **connection to Israel** thanks to JGSI

### PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVE

*"[JGSI helped] students to increase their connection to Israel so dramatically that students travelled there and stayed for an extended time period."*

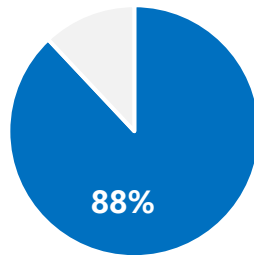
*"Now I feel much more comfortable and involved in the Jewish community, and I have a greater sense of pride, especially in times like this when antisemitism is at an all time high."*

\*See additional findings and outcome definitions in Appendix.

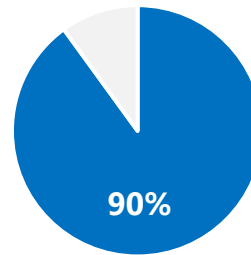
# Detailed Findings: JGSI Programming Helped Improve the Pandemic Experience

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, JGSI shifted to providing virtual/online programming in March 2020. **60% of active participants took part in these online or hybrid programs.**

## Participation in JGSI Programming Helped me to Stay Connected to the Jewish Community\*



## Participation in JGSI Programming Made a Positive Impact on My Pandemic Experience\*



### Context:

- Like most organizations, JGSI had limited experience running hybrid and online programming prior to the pandemic. The JGSI team made the switch quickly though, and was able to largely maintain programming, while even adding some new event types.
- It is clear from the results that JGSI programming was critical to helping improve the pandemic experience for active participants
- Questions around COVID-19 are new this impact study.

\* For active participants. JGSI participants are considered 'active' if they attend multiple events/programs during the year.

\*\* See additional findings and outcome definitions in Appendix.

## TOP FINDINGS

90% of active participants in JGSI's online / hybrid programming felt it **positively improved their pandemic experience**

## PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVE

*"I loved the JGSI cohort during the pandemic. I am so glad it connected me to the JEWL program."*

*"[JGSI] has given me a community, networking opportunities and a sense of routine/normalcy during these uncertain times... I love when the conversation on Zoom is going so well that we stay on longer than intended."*



## Appendix

- Outcome Definitions
- Full Data Set

# Appendix 1: JGSI Priority Outcomes

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

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



## Appendix 2: Full Data Set (1 of 3)

Question response data that includes active participants and all participants

<b>JGSI's Impact on Ethnic or Religious Pride</b>	<b>Active Participants</b>	<b>All participants</b>
Judaism is very important	64%	61%
Raising children Jewish is very important	74%	71%
Increased connection to Judaism / Jewish people	54%	46%
Increased Jewish pride	46%	41%
Increased Jewish self-expression or identity	47%	41%
Increased role in the Jewish community	48%	39%

<b>JGSI's Impact on Active Religious Participation</b>	<b>Active Participants</b>	<b>All participants</b>
Active member of a synagogue (or planning to join shortly)	46% <sup>1</sup>	45% <sup>1</sup>
Increased observance of Jewish customs	32%	26%
Increased attendance at Jewish cultural or religious events	35%	30%
Increased interest in reading or studying about Judaism	39%	32%
Increased level of comfort in speaking openly about Judaism	40%	35%

## Appendix 2: Full Data Set (2 of 3)

Question response data that includes active participants and all participants

<b>JGSI's Impact on Cultural Traditions &amp; Heritage</b>	<b>Active Participants</b>	<b>All participants</b>
Increased Jewish social circle	64%	54%
Increased interest in attending/hosting Jewish cultural celebrations	54%	46%
Increased interest in learning more about Judaism	48%	41%
Facilitated a connection with a new Jewish personal role model	42%	36%
Facilitated a connection with a professional mentor	27%	25%
Catalyst for connecting you with Jews outside your community	68%	59%

<b>JGSI's Impact on Civic Engagement</b>	<b>Active Participants</b>	<b>All participants</b>
Increased understanding of local challenges/issues in your community	28%	25%
Increased the pursuit of an ethical/moral life because of Jewish principles	31%	28%
Increased the pursuit of social justice / Tikkun Olam	31%	26%
Regularly volunteered with Jewish nonprofits <sup>1</sup>	39%	39%
Regularly donated to Jewish nonprofits <sup>1</sup>	59%	56%

## Appendix 2: Full Data Set (3 of 3)

Question response data that includes active participants and all participants

JGSI's Impact on Israel Engagement & Addressing Anti-Semitism	Active Participants	All participants
Increased level of comfort in speaking openly about Israel	30%	26% <i>(96% for increased or maintained)</i>
Increased interest in learning more about Israel	33%	29%
Increased connection to Israel	31%	27% <i>(97% for increased or maintained)</i>
Increased concern about anti-Semitism last year	79%	78%
Personally experienced anti-Semitism	32%	28%
JGSI participation provided added resolve to stand up to anti-Semitism	44%	39%

JGSI's Impact on Covid Support	Active Participants	All participants
Participation in JGSI programming helped me to stay connected to the Jewish community	88%	86%
Participation in JGSI programming made a positive impact on my pandemic experience	90%	88%