



# MEASURING EXCELLENCE

Summary of Student Outcomes Findings | 2016



## I. Introduction

We are pleased to share highlights from the 2016 Measuring Excellence Student Outcomes Survey. This overview covers the main findings that emerged from the analysis of the survey which was fielded in February 2016 at 46 North American Hillels on a total of 79 campuses, and highlights of the methodology utilized in analysis.<sup>1</sup> Collectively, we received over 13,000 responses to the survey of which 10,079 were Jewish undergraduates. This is the second round of Hillel's student outcomes survey which was initially piloted in November 2014 on the campuses of 18 Hillels.

This survey is one of four instruments used as part of Hillel's Measuring Excellence program. Other tools include an employee engagement survey, a student engagement report, and a financial/ fundraising report. Hillel International worked with Rosov Consulting to design, field, analyze and understand the findings detailed below.<sup>2</sup>

Hillel's student survey aims to measure the extent Jewish students are achieving a designated set of outcomes articulated in [Hillel's Drive to Excellence](#), by a taskforce comprised of Executive Directors from a diverse group of local Hillels, Hillel International staff, lay leaders as well as funders. The survey items were designed to assess these outcomes.

Using factor analysis<sup>3</sup>, the survey items were grouped to create the following four outcome areas:

1. Appreciate Judaism's Centrality in their Lives (Judaism's Centrality)
2. Growing Knowledge and Connection to Jewish Life (Growing Knowledge)
3. Have Strong Jewish Social Networks (Social Networks)
4. Israel Engagement and Connection (Israel Engagement)

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<sup>1</sup> This number counts campuses with 10+ respondents.

<sup>2</sup> The survey was piloted for the first time in November 2014 on the campuses of 18 Hillels. Based on the findings from the first year of the survey, Hillel International partnered with Rosov Consulting to adjust the survey from a 5-point to a 7-point scale while also adding, deleting and changing the wording of some questions.

<sup>3</sup> Factor Analysis is a statistical technique that allows researchers to investigate concepts that are not easily measured directly, by collapsing a large number of question-items into a few main themes, or "factors" as they are called statistically. In a large-scale study such as this one, this technique can uncover the patterns underlying interacting attitudes among survey responses. It provides a more reliable measure than analyzing responses to individual question-items.

In addition to questions designed to understand students' knowledge, attitudes and behaviors that correlate with Hillel's desired outcomes, the survey also queried students' frequency of participation in a variety of Hillel activities, as well as collected data about students' Jewish backgrounds and involvement in Jewish life prior to college.

Additional analyses can be found in *Appendix A* and a full list of items comprising each outcome area along with the reliability<sup>4</sup> measure for each factor can be found in *Appendix B* of this document.

## II. High-Level Findings

The aggregate findings from the second round of the survey confirmed the findings from the Fall 2014 study. Specifically, results from both years show that:

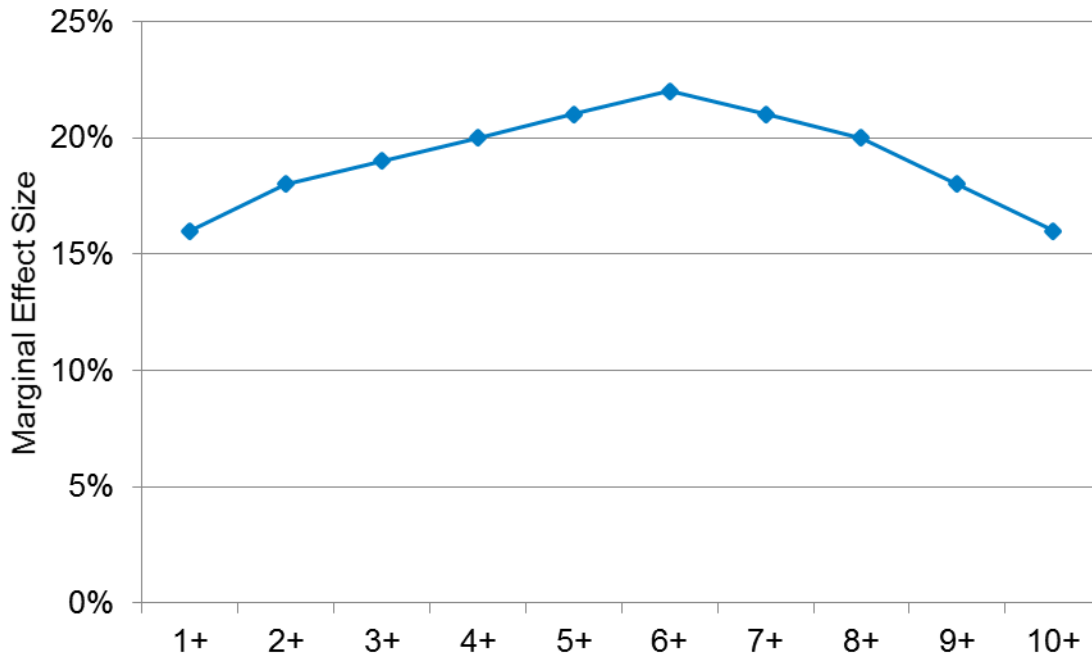
- Participation in Hillel activities is related to significantly higher student outcomes, above and beyond what can be attributed to students' profiles (their gender, age, and college standing) as well as students' Jewish background (including how students identify as Jews and their previous educational experiences). That is, the more students participate in Hillel activities, the higher each of the four outcome areas.
- Even participating in just one Hillel activity is correlated with significantly higher student outcomes compared to those students who have not participated in Hillel at all. Moreover, student outcomes continue to rise with increased participation in Hillel.
- Students who reported participating in 6 activities with Hillel demonstrated the highest marginal effect. While outcomes continue to increase after 6 activities, the rate of growth is slower.
- Students who reported engaging with Hillel 6 or more times displayed similar outcome scores to those students who participated in high-impact experiences. See *Appendix C* for the definition of high-impact.

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<sup>4</sup> Reliability is the degree to which a set of items consistently measure the same thing across respondents. Internal consistency (as measured by Cronbach's Alpha) is a common way to assess reliability. It measures how well items on a survey measure the same construct. That is, how closely related a set of items are as a group.

## Outcomes Increase with Hillel Participation

The chart below shows the marginal Hillel effect of each interaction with Hillel. While outcomes continue to grow after six interactions, the rate of growth slows.



In addition, similar to the findings from the first year of the survey, Jewish background plays a role in student's Jewish growth:

- Students with high backgrounds had the highest outcome scores, while those with low backgrounds had the lowest outcome scores.
- Students with low backgrounds show the largest growth in all areas as compared to those with medium or high backgrounds.

See *Appendix D* for an explanation of how the background categories were created.

## III. Survey Respondents

The survey was fielded on the campuses of 46 North American Hillels in February 2016. We received 13,000+ usable responses with 10,000+ from Jewish undergraduates.

**Figure 1: Undergraduate Survey Respondents**

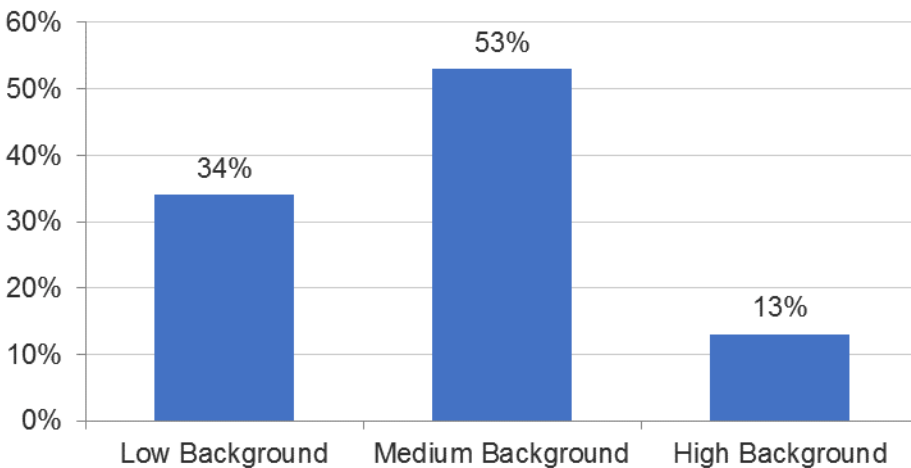
		Aggregate	
Respondents	Jewish	10,079	76%
	Non-Jewish	3,224	24%

**Figure 2: Students' Characteristics**

		Aggregate
Gender	Males	38%
	Females	61%
Greek Life	Sorority/Fraternity	38%
Class Standing	Freshman	25%
	Sophomore	27%
	Junior	23%
	Senior	25%

**Figure 3: Jewish Background**

See *Appendix D* for an explanation of how these background categories were created.



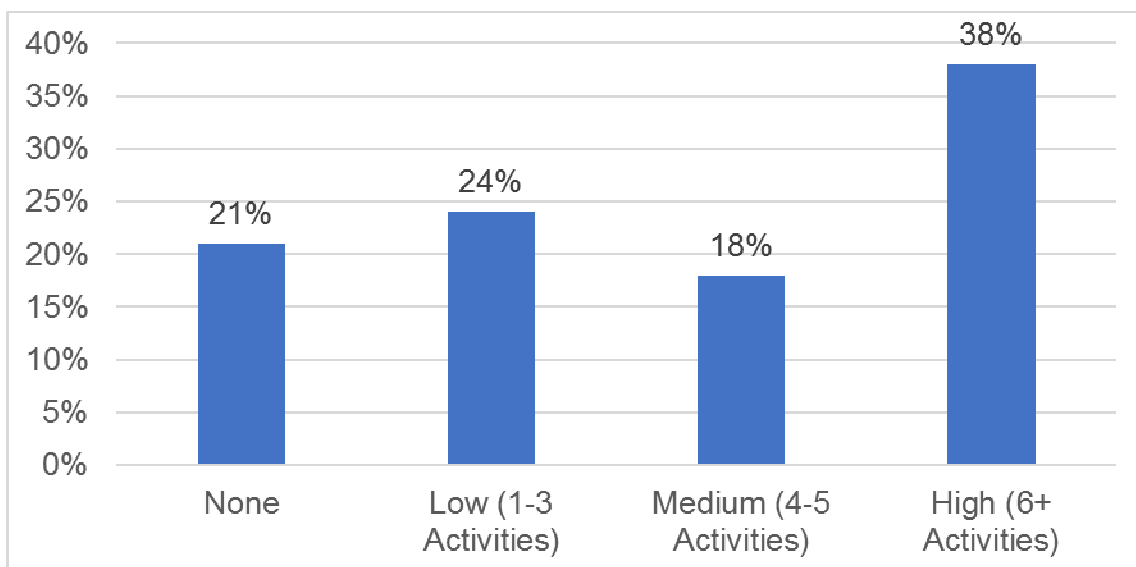
**Figure 4: Background Characteristics**

		Aggregate
Parental Make-up	Both Jewish	76%
	One Jewish	22%
	None	2%
Denomination	Conservative	24%
	Orthodox	12%
	Reform	34%
	Just Jewish	23%
	Other*	7%
Day School	Never	61%
	1-3 years	12%
	4-6 years	6%
	7+ years	21%

\*Refers to combination of Reconstructionist, Renewal, and non-Denominational.

**Figure 5: Participation in Hillel**

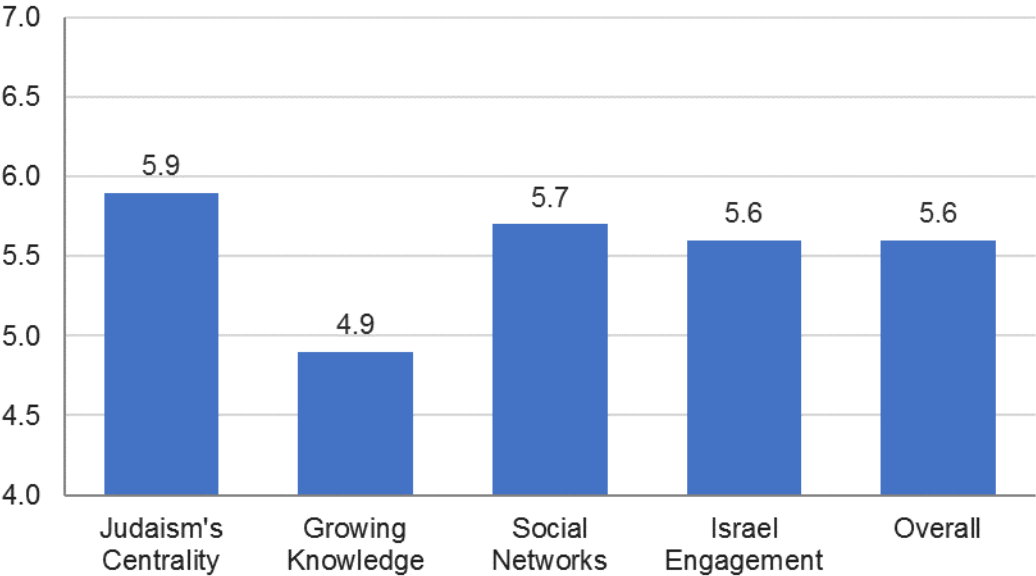
Survey respondents were asked to report the frequency with which they participated in Hillel activities. Please note that "None" stands for no participation in Hillel.



## IV. Outcome Scores

All of the questions in the survey designed to measure student outcomes solicited responses along a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 representing the lowest end, "strongly disagree", and 7 representing the highest end, "strongly agree".<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 6: Scores by Outcome Area**



Particular activities correlated with increases in Jewish student outcomes. The chart below suggests the programs and activities that had the highest correlation in growth for students with less previous Jewish background.

**Figure 7: Activities Correlated with Outcomes at the Aggregate for Low Background Students**

	Judaism's Centrality	Growing Knowledge	Social Network	Israel Engagement
Jewish holiday meal	+	+	+	+
Shabbat dinner	+	+	+	+
Israel programs		+	+	+
Jewish learning	+	+		
Conversations with staff member				+
Use of the Hillel building			+	
Social events			+	
Volunteering/service projects		+		
Birthright Israel trip	+		+	+
Jewish student leadership roles		+		
An Israel program longer than 2 weeks				+
Off-campus overnight retreats/conferences			+	

A plus sign indicates that the activity or high-impact experience has a positive correlation to the outcome area listed in that column.

In addition to the above activities, the data also showed that the particular staff positions correlated with higher student outcomes. Specifically, Senior Jewish Educators, Israel Fellows and Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus (JLIC) couples were shown to correlate with higher outcomes.

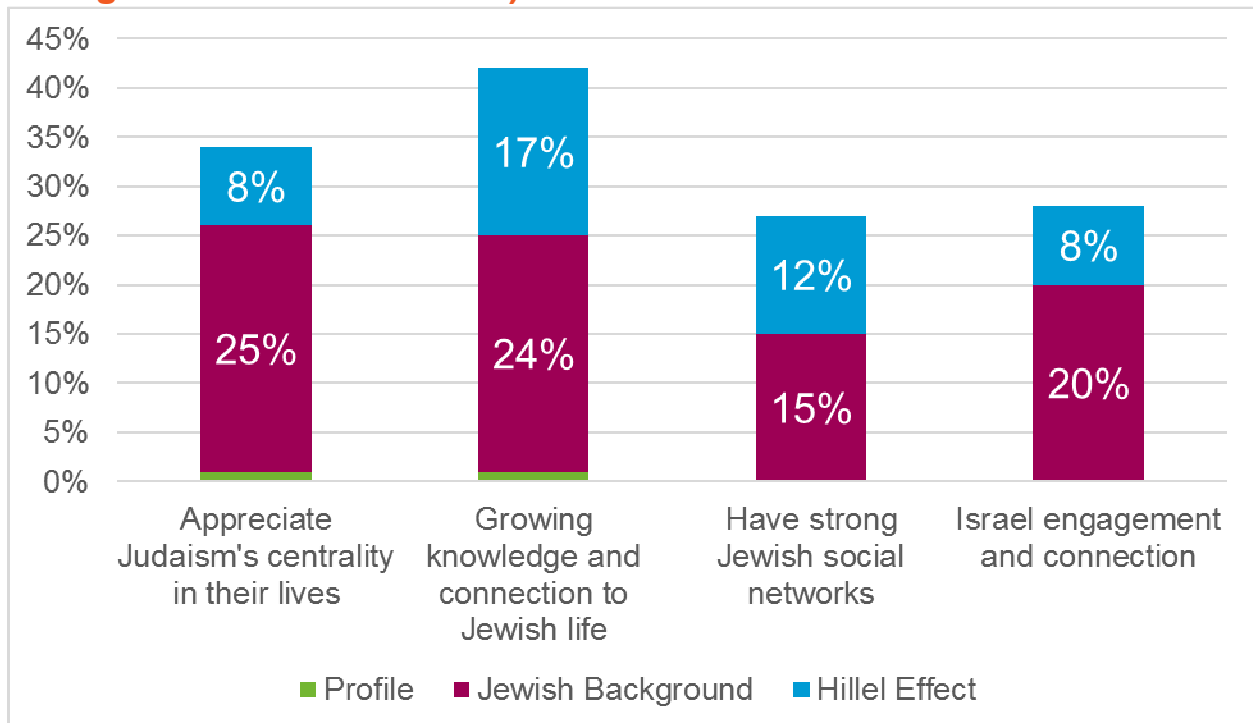


## V. Hillel Effect

The Hillel Effect<sup>5</sup> is the percentage of the variability of students' responses that can be directly attributed to Hillel. It is the unique contribution of Hillel to students' outcomes, above and beyond their background and profile (age, gender, and college standing).

Figure 8 depicts Hillel's effect size. In this graph two pieces of information are important: (1) you can see how much background variables play a role in students' outcomes, and (2) you can see to what extent participation in Hillel adds to explaining differences in students' outcomes on your campus. A medium effect is between 5-10% and a high effect is anything over 10%, so Hillel's effect on students' outcome scores is medium to high.

**Figure 8: Hillel's Unique Effect on Student Outcomes (Student Profile, Background and Hillel Effect)**



<sup>5</sup> In order to calculate the Hillel Effect, five regression analyses (one for each of the four outcome areas plus the aggregate outcome) were conducted. A regression analysis is a statistical technique for estimating the relationships among several variables.

## VI. APPENDICES:

### Appendix A

**Figure 1: Participation Rates by Background**

The chart below outlines the frequency of participation among students of various Jewish backgrounds.

		Aggregate
Low Background	None (0 Activities)	27%
	Low (1-3 Activities)	18%
	Medium (4-5 Activities)	9%
	High (6+ Activities/High-Impact)	46%
Medium Background	None (0 Activities)	12%
	Low (1-3 Activities)	15%
	Medium (4-5 Activities)	10%
	High (6+ Activities/High-Impact)	64%
High Background	None (0 Activities)	4%
	Low (1-3 Activities)	8%
	Medium (4-5 Activities)	7%
	High (6+ Activities/High-Impact)	82%

## APPENDIX B:

### Questions that Correlate with Outcome Areas

Using Factor Analysis, a statistical technique that allows researchers to investigate concepts that are not easily measured directly, survey questions were collapsed into a few main themes, or “factors” as they are called statistically. In a large-scale study such as this one, this technique can uncover the patterns underlying interacting attitudes among survey responses. It provides a more reliable measure than analyzing responses to individual question-items.

Internal consistency (as measured by Cronbach’s Alpha), indicated in the left column of the chart below, is a common way to assess reliability. It measures how well items on a survey measure the same construct. That is, how closely related a set of items are as a group.

Outcome Areas	Questions
<p><b>Appreciate Judaism’s Centrality in Life</b> (Alpha = 0.94)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people</li> <li>• I feel a connection to my Jewish heritage</li> <li>• I feel a special connection to other Jews</li> <li>• I intend to participate in Jewish life after I graduate</li> <li>• I want to be involved in Jewish life</li> <li>• Learning about Judaism is important to me</li> <li>• I identify myself as Jewish to others whom I meet</li> <li>• I can explain to others what being Jewish means to me</li> <li>• I integrate Jewish tradition into my life</li> </ul>
<p><b>Growing Knowledge and Connection to Jewish Life</b> (Alpha = 0.86)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I participate in conversations/learning on Jewish topics</li> <li>• I spend time learning about Jewish life and culture</li> <li>• I commemorate Shabbat in a way that distinguishes it from other days of the week</li> <li>• I know how to be involved in local Jewish life outside of my college community</li> <li>• I take a leadership role in Jewish life</li> </ul>
<p><b>Have a Strong Jewish Social Network</b> (Alpha = 0.82)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have friends with whom I can share the experience of being Jewish</li> <li>• My friends attend Jewish social events often</li> <li>• It is important to me to have friends with whom I can do Jewish things</li> <li>• I feel connected to other Jews</li> </ul>
<p><b>Israel Engagement and Connection</b> (Alpha = 0.90)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I participate in Israel-related events</li> <li>• I can articulate to others what Israel means to me</li> <li>• I consider myself a supporter of Israel</li> <li>• I feel a connection to Israel</li> <li>• Caring about Israel is part of my Jewish identity</li> </ul>

## Appendix C: Hillel's Definition of High Impact Experiences

The following is the criteria by which activities and experiences were considered to be high-impact.

Experience	Criteria
Sustained/Ongoing	Same group meets over several days or regularly over a period of several weeks and/or months.
Jewish-Rich Content	Participants gain new Jewish content, which could be about people, texts, traditions, history, Israel, cultural practices, etc.

In addition, at least two of the following three criteria need to be met:

Experience	Criteria
Students as Producers	Participants are not merely consumers of the experience, but producers of it as well.
Reflective	The experience must explicitly elicit some reflection on what the participant experienced.
Community Building	The experience helps to create a sense of community among its participants.

## Appendix D: Jewish Background

The three categories of Jewish background: low background, medium background, and high background are based on a composite measure that includes the following variables: denomination, whether parents are Jewish or not, participation in Jewish day schools, supplementary schools, youth groups and summer camps, and attending Shabbat dinner and religious services before college.

The following table lists the variables and the points given to each type of response.

Variable	Points
Parents Jewish	None = 0 Points; One Parent = 1 Point; Both Parents = 3 Points
Day School	0 Years = 0 Points; 1 Year = 1 Point; 2 Years = 2 Points; 3 Years = 3 Points; 4 Years = 4 Points; 5 Years = 5 Points; 6 Years = 6 Points; 7 Years = 7 Points
Supplementary School	
Youth Groups	
Summer Camps	
Shabbat Dinners	No = 0 Points; Yes = 3 Points
Religious Services	

Summing all these points, we created a Jewish background scale that ranged between 0 and 40 points. Breaking the scale into thirds, low Jewish background was defined as points ranging between 0 and 13; medium Jewish background was defined as points ranging between 14 and 26; and high Jewish background was defined as points ranging between 27 and 40.