

# THE ISRAEL-ENGAGED IN THE TORONTO JEWISH COMMUNITY



# HIGHLIGHTS & IMPLICATIONS

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A report prepared for the  
**UJA Federation of Greater Toronto** and  
**The Jewish Agency for Israel**

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**T**his study is the first of its kind. It digs deep into how more than 1,500 Toronto Jews think, feel and act in relation to Israel. While there have been a great many Jewish community studies over the past decades, some of which — like the New York Jewish Community Study of 2011, and the Greater Seattle Jewish Community Study of 2014 — explore specific attitudes towards Israel, UJA Federation of Greater Toronto is the first organized Jewish community in North America to undertake a broad and systematic look at Israel in the lives of its denizens - both adults and young adults.



This study takes place at a time when there is a great deal of debate about whether Diaspora Jews today, especially younger ones, feel closer and connected to or more distant and alienated from Israel than those even less than a decade ago. Some argue that a closer connection to Israel has been inspired by efforts such as Birthright Israel or prompted by a reaction to the increasing prevalence of anti-Zionism and antisemitism on campus. Others argue that many Jews coming of age today feel alienated by the policies of the Israeli government, by the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Finally, some argue that detachment may be a consequence of rising rates of intermarriage.

While this study sheds little light on those who are not interested enough in Israel either to complete a survey or to participate in a focus group (in other words, those who would be characterized as “distant” from Israel), it does afford an opportunity to understand the role of Israel in the lives of those Toronto Jews who are in some way connected to Israel and to Israelis.

This study represents an unusual opportunity to take a close-up look at the sources and forms of connection to Israel in a community that historically has been highly invested in nurturing such connections.

This report is based on data from 1,554 people who responded to a survey sent out by 21 community organizations to all those on their contact lists, and 98 people who participated in one of 19 focus groups. The data gathered provide UJA Federation with a baseline against which to compare changes in the community over the coming years. The data enable community planners and educators to understand the distinct and different ways in which various age cohorts and demographic groups engage with Israel. Lastly, the data make visible the outcomes produced by educational and communal interventions, such as trips to Israel (especially when experienced multiple times), summer camps, Jewish day schools, and relationships with Shlichim.

**1554** survey respondents

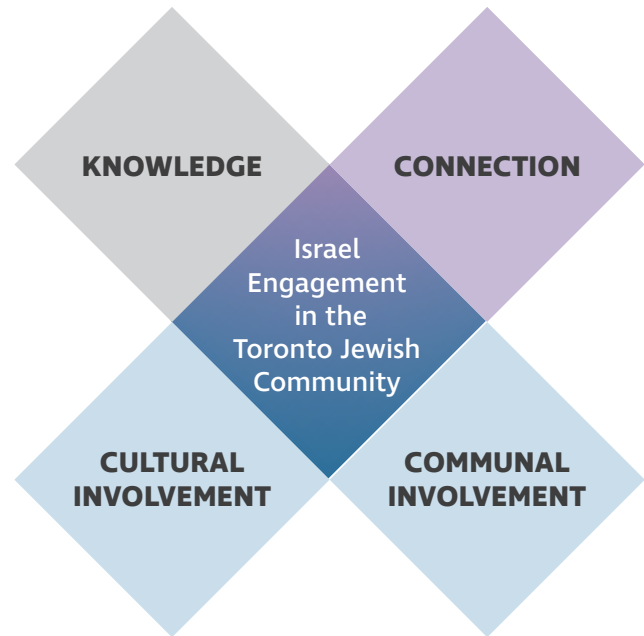
**98**  
focus group participants



## Establishing a baseline

The first main accomplishment of this study has been to develop a set of empirically grounded expressions of Israel engagement and to identify their specific component parts. These expressions provide a framework for systematically studying changes in the form and content of Israel engagement, over time and in relation to different kinds of educational or programmatic interventions.

As explained in the body of the report, our analysis of survey responses surfaced nine broad but distinct expressions of Israel engagement each of which is a composite of specific instances of Israel engagement. Feedback from community professionals indicates that four of these broad expressions are especially useful in capturing the main dimensions of Israel engagement that a plurality of community programmes seek to nurture. The four expressions are as follows (along with examples of their specific components):



**Knowledge about Israel** — expressing knowledge about day to day life in Israel and contemporary Israeli culture, the place of Israel in Jewish history, the current political situation in Israel and the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

**Connection to Israel** — expressing a feeling of being at home in Israel and of not being distant from it.

**Personal Cultural Involvement** — expressing engagement through self-directed and personal activities such as reading books by Israeli authors and following Israeli news media, watching Israeli movies or TV shows, talking with others about Israel, and attending Israeli cultural events and lectures.

**Communal Involvement** — expressing engagement through participating in community events and legacy programmes that demonstrate support for Israel, such as UJA's Walk with Israel and Yom Ha'atzmaut programmes, and through donating to causes that support Israel and Israelis.

While community programmes and educational interventions certainly aim to produce additional expressions of Israel engagement — for example, cultivating concern for the political situation in Israel, or developing skills as an ambassador or advocate for Israel — the main four expressions outlined above convey succinctly the cognitive and emotional content of what “being engaged with Israel” means in Toronto, and the distinct behavioural expression of engagement. These expressions may seem intuitive (subdivided by knowledge, attitude and behaviour). However the distinction between personal and communal involvement is an important new insight that adds nuance to previous conceptions of engagement.

In Table 1, below, the average responses of different demographic groups in terms of these four expressions of Israel engagement are displayed. The numbers displayed are the estimated marginal means of responses to an aggregate set of survey items within each expression of engagement, on a response scale of 1 to 7, controlling for background variables. (See a description of the statistical models used in the body of the report.) The data are displayed as a heat map in which the lower the average score, the cooler the colour (to an extreme of dark green); the higher average score, the hotter the colour (to an extreme of dark red), with yellow reflecting a score somewhere in the middle.

**Table 1: Expressions of Israel Engagement: A Dashboard in Terms of Age, Denomination and Neighbourhood**

| Demographic Characteristic | Categories                  | N   | Knowledge | Emotional | Cultural Involvement | Communal Involvement |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----|-----------|-----------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Age                        | 21-30                       | 190 | 4.9       | 4.6       | 4.2                  | 3.9                  |
|                            | 31-40                       | 223 | 5.1       | 4.7       | 4.1                  | 4.1                  |
|                            | 41-50                       | 256 | 5.2       | 4.9       | 3.9                  | 4.3                  |
|                            | 51-60                       | 313 | 5.1       | 4.9       | 3.6                  | 4.4                  |
|                            | Over 60                     | 432 | 5.2       | 5.1       | 3.5                  | 4.1                  |
| Denomination               | Conservative                | 590 | 4.8       | 4.6       | 3.4                  | 3.7                  |
|                            | Orthodox                    | 273 | 5.2       | 5.3       | 4.0                  | 4.9                  |
|                            | Reform                      | 203 | 5.0       | 5.0       | 3.7                  | 4.5                  |
|                            | Just Jewish                 | 169 | 5.0       | 4.7       | 3.6                  | 3.8                  |
|                            | Secular Jewish              | 195 | 5.3       | 4.4       | 3.9                  | 3.3                  |
| Neighbourhood              | Downtown                    | 119 | 5.1       | 4.4       | 3.7                  | 3.5                  |
|                            | Midtown                     | 597 | 5.1       | 4.9       | 3.7                  | 4.4                  |
|                            | Thornhill and Richmond Hill | 426 | 5.1       | 5.0       | 3.7                  | 4.5                  |
| Total                      |                             |     | 5.1       | 4.9       | 3.7                  | 4.2                  |

LOW

HIGH

LEGEND

## Distinct populations

The table above (Table 1) can serve as a dashboard that displays different degrees of Israel engagement among populations of special interest to the community. In the long-term, these data establish a baseline in relation to which changes in engagement with Israel can be tracked. In the short-term, these data serve as a starting point for reflecting on the degree to which different constituencies within the Jewish community of Toronto are engaged with Israel, and what accounts for the differences observed.



## Age Cohorts: Surprising Findings about the Under-30s

### How They Engage with Israel

It is widely assumed that young adults under the age of thirty are more detached from Israel than those who are older than them. Scholars basically disagree about whether this so-called “distancing” is an age-related phase (not specifically related to Israel but more a consequence of how millennials engage in a communal life generally) or a disquieting generational change related to a widening gap in the values of different generations; they don’t generally disagree about the existence of “distancing.”<sup>1</sup> Among survey respondents, we found that adults under the age of 30 were indeed less likely to participate in the forms of programming through which many members of the community have traditionally engaged with Israel (for example, UJA’s Walk with Israel or community Yom Ha’atzmaut programmes). With the exception of the over 60s, who may simply be less physically mobile than other groups, the younger each age cohort, the less it interfaces in these forms of Israel engagement, with the under-30s being the least engaged in this way.

Unexpectedly, the under-30 age-cohort is actually the most active when engaging in personally-initiated Israel-related activities, especially of a cultural sort such as watching Israeli movies, or through talking about Israel with friends. As members of this age-cohort explained in focus groups, they make extensive use of social media (Facebook, in particular) to explore and respond to conversation about Israel, at times of their own choosing. While in public terms they seem disengaged from Israel, that disengagement is a reflection more of their discomfort with ritualized communal involvement or with the lack of pluralism often exhibited at communal events. When they can initiate or determine the terms of involvement, they do get involved more intensively than those who are older than them.

### What They Think of Israel

Another widespread assumption about the under-30 age cohort is that having experienced some of the most abrasive forms of anti-Zionist and antisemitic activism in recent years on university campuses, these young people have become alienated from traditional Zionist narratives. For example, Peter Beinart has controver-

sially argued that for people of this age cohort there is a sense that Zionism requires them to check their liberal political sensibilities at the door of communal involvement. This was a thesis we probed by asking survey respondents to react to a series of nine statements that depicted “images of Israel,” such as “Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people” or “Israel is a place where Arabs are treated unfairly.”

Unexpectedly, we found that age cohorts differ significantly only in respect to one particular image: their view of Israel as a “place to be safe from antisemitism.” This is a concept with which older age-cohorts tend much more to agree (with 68% of the over-60s either completely or strongly agreeing). The younger the respondents, the fewer there are who agree with this image, with 44% of those under the age of 30 expressing strong or complete agreement. With this one exception, there is a surprising uniformity of opinion across the age cohorts in response to all of the other images presented. That includes the depiction of Israel as treating Arabs unfairly, where between 11% and 15% agreed strongly or completely with this statement across the different age-cohorts.

### Implications

While we cannot know about the attitudes and behaviours of those who did not participate in the study, these findings suggest that the most decisive differences between the age cohorts are in the forms by which they engage with Israel, less so in their attitudinal orientation to Israel. The findings suggest that the community does not need to fundamentally overhaul the narratives by which it makes a case for engaging with Israel, although it seems that employing Holocaust-related imagery is not resonant for younger cohorts. Moreover, it does seem as if the corrosive impact of campus anti-Zionism on students’ engagement with and perception of Israel might be overstated. The main challenge for the community, it seems, is to develop media (social, in-person and user-initiated) that appeal to younger age cohorts and that can provide outlets through which they can connect with Israel. Developing such outlets is likely a challenge for the community when it comes to involving this age cohort with other forms of Jewish programming too.

<sup>1</sup> Beinart, P. (2013). *The Crisis of Zionism*, New York: Picador; Cohen, S.M. & Kelman, A. (2010). Thinking about distancing from Israel. *Contemporary Jewry*, 30: 287-297; Saxe, L., Fishman, S., Shain, M., Wright, G. & Hecht, S. (2013). *Young adults and Jewish engagement: The impact of Birthright Israel*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University.



## **Denominations:** The Modern Orthodox and the Secular – Similar and also Sharply Different

Just as particular age cohorts stand out in how they engage with Israel, so do particular religious denominations. As Table 1 shows, those who identify as Conservative, Reform or Just Jewish do not generally differ from one another or from the other denominations in their attitudes and behaviours. Those who identify themselves either as Orthodox/Modern Orthodox or as Secular do differ in potentially important ways from the rest of the sample.

### **How They Engage with Israel**

The responses of Orthodox/Modern Orthodox survey respondents (17% of the sample) are consistent with previous studies of North American Jewry. This group is more emotionally connected to Israel, and its connection translates into higher rates of involvement in community programming as well as into self-directed personal engagement with Israel.

More unexpected are the ways in which those who identify themselves as Secular express their engagement with Israel. Their levels of personally-driven engagement with Israel are similar to those of the Modern Orthodox, and are significantly higher than all other denominational groups, but their engagement with community events is significantly lower than other groups. Their cognitive engagement with Israel is similar to the Orthodox/Modern Orthodox group and significantly higher than all other groups, and (not shown in Table 1) they express the greatest interest in political matters in Israel.

### **What They Think of Israel**

In terms of their images of Israel, the Orthodox and the Secular are almost polar opposites of one another, while both groups again differ from other denominations. A higher proportion of the Orthodox strongly view Israel as the Homeland

of the Jewish People (97%); a much smaller proportion (65%) of the Secular do so. By contrast, a very small proportion of the Orthodox (14%) think of Israel as a place where Arabs are treated unfairly; a much higher proportion of the Secular (31%) do so.

### **Implications**

The secular are present in equal proportion across all age cohorts and make up between 10% and 15% of the sample. They are worth understanding more carefully since they seem to constitute a distinctive Toronto phenomenon. They are different from those who call themselves “Just Jewish” in this sample, or those that the Pew Research Center’s (2014) Portrait of Jewish Americans identified as “Jewish Not By Religion.” Although more than a third of this group report “never” going to synagogue, these are not people who simply don’t like going to Shul. Half of the members of this group in the 21-40 age cohort attended Jewish day school for some period of time, almost all had visited Israel at least once during the past 10 years, and 70% had participated on a mediated trip to Israel at some time. There are more Israelis in this group than among other denominations, but they still are only a minority (15%).

All in all, these appear to be people who connect with Israel independently to high levels. As we learned in focus groups, Israel provides an important part of what connects them to Jewish life. And yet, whatever their age, they don’t find meaning in mainstream community events. They have the highest levels of cultural engagement with Israel but the lowest rates of communal engagement. This group is also the most concerned about the political situation in Israel. It is worth considering whether different or new forms of community programming might engage this minority population.



## Neighbourhood: Challenges in Engaging Jews Downtown

For the purpose of analysis, the survey sample was segmented into three broad groups based on the postal codes that survey respondents provided: 1) North of Steeles Avenue (Thornhill and Richmond Hill); 2) South of Steeles and north of St Clair (Midtown), and 3) South of St Clair along with the Danforth and Beaches (Downtown). When divided up in this way, it is evident that where one lives is related to differences in how one engages with Israel.

### How They Engage with Israel

In fact, Table 1 does not fully reflect the extent to which living in one of these neighbourhoods is indeed a predictor of Israel engagement. While knowledge of Israel and personal-cultural involvement with Israel do not vary with where someone lives, these are actually exceptions to the patterns displayed in relation to the other broad expressions of engagement (emotional connection to Israel and communal involvement) and to all further forms of engagement not included in the dashboard, such as political concern with Israel, involvement on social media, and emotional concern and activism when Israel is at war. In all of these cases, respondents from the downtown neighbourhoods were less engaged with Israel attitudinally and behaviourally than those from other neighbourhoods. By contrast, there are very few differences between the responses of those who live in midtown neighbourhoods and those in Thornhill and Richmond Hill.

### What They Think of Israel

There were similar consistent differences when comparing the images of Israel that resonated with respondents from these three different geographic areas. Respondents from downtown neighbourhoods leaned towards images of Israel that reflected a more left-wing or progressive orientation: for example, that Arabs are treated unfairly in Israel (36% strongly or completely agreed, compared with just 6% and 7% in the other neighbourhoods); that Israel is not a land promised by God (53% Downtown

compared with 26% in Midtown and 14% in Thornhill and Richmond Hill strongly or completely agreed), and Israel is a place to be safe from antisemitism (23% Downtown compared with 48% in Midtown and 64% in Thornhill and Richmond Hill strongly or completely agreed).

These two patterns were further supported by focus group data where participants of different ages in Downtown groups tended to express political viewpoints that were left of centre. While these participants strongly engage with Israel (after all they had chosen to spend at least an hour talking about their relationship to Israel), they also reported struggling with the mainstream Jewish community's approach to Israel, avoiding communal involvement when possible and having challenging experiences when they do end up joining in community programmes/events.

### Implications

Neighbourhood strongly relates to how people think and feel, and to their politics. The populations among whom people live powerfully reinforce their attitudes and behaviours. People live close to others who share their socio-cultural profile. Their neighbours affirm and confirm their own views of the world. Individuals who participated in this study from Downtown neighbourhoods differ dramatically from other participants in the study, and yet they are not so turned off that they are indifferent to Israel. On the contrary, they are passionate about Israel, but in different ways from those elsewhere in Toronto. They feel that their perspectives are rarely heard in community forums. The challenge for the organized community is to create spaces where like-minded people can come together and continue to engage with Israel in positive and constructive ways, even while they may see things differently from most others in the community. This, it seems, has been the special achievement of the BASE (the Beit Midrash of Downtown Toronto), a downtown meeting place for young Jews who share a left-of-centre orientation.

## Educational and communal interventions

An important strand of this inquiry was focused on the extent to which connections to and relationships with Israel are associated with programmatic interventions, especially those supported by UJA Federation. The survey instrument was designed to help identify the contribution of such experiences to expressions of Israel engagement when background characteristics of the respondents, such as age, denomination and educational background are held constant.

In this section, we address each of these experiences in turn.



## Trips to Israel – The More, The More

Because so many participants in the study had visited Israel at least once (a noteworthy marker of the extent of Israel engagement in the Toronto community), it was not possible to assess Israel engagement among those who had never visited the country during their lives compared with those who had been to Israel. Instead, we focused specifically on those who are 40 years of age or younger, 90% of whom had visited Israel at least once within the framework of what we refer to as a mediated experience. That is, they visited Israel within a programme shaped by an educational vision or communal agenda and not only as part of private/personal or business trip to Israel.

While holding constant background variables such as schooling and denomination, we were able to examine the relationship between levels of Israel engagement and the frequency with which members of this age cohort visited Israel during the last ten years. As seen in Table 2, the data are unambiguous: the more often a person visits Israel, the more actively engaged they are with it. This, we believe, is something of a virtuous circle: frequent visits contribute to more intense engagement which in turn results in further visits.

### Implications

These data suggest that there are two tasks for the community when planning and promoting mediated trips to Israel. First, to recruit

individuals to a first trip to Israel. These first experiences have a discernable impact on expressions of Israel engagement. The second task is then to encourage these same individuals to take a second — usually longer — trip, since this second experience seems to be related to continuing increases in expressions of Israel engagement. After going on a second trip, it seems as if the virtuous circle to which we referred above is truly set in motion.

The two trips play different roles: the first trip serves as a gateway to a lifetime of Israel engagement; it establishes a palpable, personal connection to Israel that does not seem to diminish much with time. Focus group participants referred to such trips as “transformative” and “life-changing.” The second trip intensifies and expands the outcomes originally stimulated by that first direct encounter with Israel.

The Toronto Jewish community is unusual in its systematic approach to recruiting participants to a continuum of developmentally appropriate experiences in Israel over the course of people’s lives. This is a strategy that seems to be bearing fruit. All in all, both mediated and unmediated trips increase personal relationships and enjoyment of Israel; they provide a different kind of education about Israel than available in the Diaspora; and ultimately — as we see below — they fuel Israel activism.

**Table 2: Expressions of Israel Engagement in Relation to Frequency of Visits During the Last 10 Years**

| Number of Trips | N   | Knowledge | Connection | Cultural Involvement | Communal Involvement |
|-----------------|-----|-----------|------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| None            | 12  | 3.7       | 3.2        | 2.8                  | 2.5                  |
| Once            | 110 | 4.2       | 4.0        | 2.8                  | 3.3                  |
| 2 to 3 times    | 146 | 4.9       | 4.7        | 3.6                  | 4.1                  |
| 4 to 5 times    | 50  | 5.3       | 5.1        | 4.3                  | 4.7                  |
| 6 or more times | 66  | 5.7       | 5.4        | 4.4                  | 4.9                  |

LOW

LEGEND

HIGH



## The Varied Impacts of Birthright Israel

The composition of the sample makes it possible to look at the particular contribution of Birthright Israel to respondents' relationships to Israel. A large segment of 21 to 40 year old respondents who went on some sort of mediated trip, participated solely in Birthright Israel (46%). Others participated in Birthright as well as additional trips (25%), and the remainder of this group (29%) went on mediated trips other than Birthright.

Comparing these sub-groups, we found that Birthright has an additive effect but is not a substitute for a mix of experiences in Israel. In other words, those who went on Birthright as well as on other additional mediated trips reported higher levels of engagement in relation to some expressions of Israel engagement than those who went on other mediated trips but not on Birthright as well. This is what we mean by a surprising additive effect. However, those who only went on Birthright, and on no additional trips, consistently displayed lower levels of engagement than those who went only on other mediated trips. In this respect, Birthright is not a substitute for other programmes.

### Implications

In line with the previously noted virtuous circle of participating in multiple trips to Israel, it might be that Birthright's most significant contribution is in whetting an appetite to participate in further and longer-term experiences in Israel that are consistently associated with high levels of engagement. Birthright sets in motion a cycle of more intensive engagement with Israel that is catalyzed by further visits to the country. In that respect the programme should be marketed and conceived as a gateway rather than as a terminus reached when one arrives at a certain age.

There is an additional somewhat unexpected contribution that Birthright makes to Israel engagement in the community, a contribution that surfaced in some focus groups. This additional "Birthright effect" impacts some of those who transition from participating in programmes to staffing them. For these people, their passion for the programme fuels their own formation and growth as Israel activists and peer-leaders. Their ongoing involvement with the programme stimulates their desire to visit the country more often, for their own needs, and to share their enthusiasm with others. In fact, for some of these young people, their role as Birthright staff provides their primary connection to Jewish life.



## The Special Case of March of the Living

Toronto is unusual on account of the high number of young people who participate in the March of the Living programme that takes young people from the death camps of eastern Europe to an experience of Israel over the Yom Ha'atzmaut period. As many as 154 of survey respondents (10% of the sample) had participated in the programme, and for 56 of these respondents, this was the only mediated trip to Israel in which they had participated.

Unlike Birthright, there has been very little published research exploring the outcomes intensified by the March of the Living experience. This study represents a first opportunity to address that lacuna in some small way.

The data are surprisingly clear. As seen in Table 3, when controlling for age and Jewish educational background, there is a significant difference between those who participated at

some point in March of the Living and those who had not participated in any other mediated trip to Israel. These data are surprising because even with a small sample of 56 participants — usually a constraint to finding significant statistical relationships — these differences are evident in relation to all four major expressions of Israel engagement.

At the same time, when these 56 participants' "images of Israel" were compared with the sample of those who had not participated in any other mediated programme, there were no evident significant differences. This too is noteworthy since March of the Living has been criticized for heavily promoting the notion that Israel is a refuge from antisemitism, as exemplified by its Shoah to Rebirth programme design. We saw no evidence in the data to support this critique.



**Table 3: Expressions of Israel Engagement in Relation to Participating in March of the Living**

| March of the Living | N   | Knowledge | Connection | Cultural Involvement | Communal Involvement |
|---------------------|-----|-----------|------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Did Not Attend      | 593 | 4.9       | 4.7        | 3.5                  | 4.1                  |
| Attended            | 56  | 5.2       | 5.3        | 4.0                  | 4.7                  |



## Shinshinim and Shlichim – “Real People” Intensifying Israel Engagement

Another way in which the Toronto Jewish community has made a special investment in Israel engagement over many years is through bringing Shlichim to the city. Over the last decade, this investment has seen expression through the Shinshinim programme in which young Israelis, immediately before or after their army service, are integrated for a year at a time in family homes and in a variety of community institutions such as synagogues, schools and camps.

Given such a long-standing investment, a special effort was made to explore whether the social connections formed with Shlichim are reflected in enhanced engagement with Israel. As seen in Table 4, the connection with Shlichim is associated with higher level engagement with Israel across all four expressions of engagement. Of course, it could be that the connection to Israelis is not what causes the higher Israel engagement scores but rather is its result, meaning that people who are more engaged with Israel in general choose to bond with Shlichim and Israelis who live in Toronto. However, it is striking that this association still holds even for those who do not otherwise have Israeli friends. Without any other local social network with Israelis, these people displayed higher levels of Israel engagement.

### Implications

While the quantitative data do not make it possible to compare the effect of relationships with Shlichim relative to the effect of participating in trips to Israel (since there are so few people who have a relationship with Shlichim and have also never been to Israel), qualitative data do highlight the different impacts of these two interventions, pointing to their complementary nature. Focus group participants highlighted the contribution of Shinshinim through their ongoing presence in communal institutions, making Israel a part of everyday life. One participant, who some years earlier had hosted one of the Shinshinim in his own home, identified the fact that the relationship formed with the Shinshin continued over the succeeding years. In his words, “it is like having a son in Israel.” This continuing relationship is quite different from the short-term intensity of most experiences in Israel. It speaks to the relational outcomes of being exposed to what interviewees call “real people” who share their passion for Israel.

It seems then that relationships with Shinshinim may not be “transformative” in the way that trips to Israel are experienced, but they may constitute a more intimate and a more continuous part of people’s lives. For these reasons it is worth exploring how to extend the programme’s “touch” to additional educational frameworks. As we suggest below, Jewish summer camps make up one such sector that is ripe for further expansion.

**Table 4: Expressions of Israel Engagement in Relation to Friendship with Shlichim**

| Have Israeli Friends? | Friendly with Shlichim/Shinshinim? | N    | Knowledge | Connection | Cultural Involvement | Communal Involvement |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|------|-----------|------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Have                  | Friendly                           | 361  | 5.6       | 5.2        | 4.5                  | 4.9                  |
|                       | Not Friendly                       | 516  | 5.1       | 4.9        | 3.8                  | 4.1                  |
|                       | Total                              | 877  | 5.3       | 5.0        | 4.1                  | 4.4                  |
| Doesn't Have          | Friendly                           | 110  | 5.0       | 5.1        | 3.6                  | 4.6                  |
|                       | Not Friendly                       | 402  | 4.7       | 4.5        | 3.2                  | 3.5                  |
|                       | Total                              | 512  | 4.8       | 4.6        | 3.3                  | 3.7                  |
| Total                 | Friendly                           | 471  | 5.4       | 5.1        | 4.3                  | 4.8                  |
|                       | Not Friendly                       | 918  | 4.9       | 4.8        | 3.6                  | 3.8                  |
|                       | Total                              | 1389 | 5.1       | 4.9        | 3.8                  | 4.2                  |





## The Lasting Effects of Specific Forms of Immersive Jewish Education – and the Apparently Limited Impact of Summer Camp

While trips to Israel and the presence of Shlichim in the community are examples of “interventions” specifically geared towards enhancing engagement with Israel, other Jewish educational experiences also enhance engagement with Israel even if such an outcome is not their primary intent. In general terms, we found that the more people are exposed to Jewish day schools and to youth groups, the more they feel connected to Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people, the more they know about Israel, and the more they are personally and communally involved with Israel. In short, all four expressions of Israel are enhanced.

However, surprisingly, participating in overnight camps did not seem to enhance these relationships, except for communal involvement with Israel outcomes. To probe this unexpected phenomenon, we ran a somewhat artificial analytical experiment, and compared those who had only attended either a day school, a youth group or a Jewish camp. We consider this analysis artificial since in reality only a small minority of people participate in just one of these experiences.

As Table 5 shows, the patterns found in the sample as a whole are somewhat confirmed by

this experiment. Day schools and youth groups are related to higher levels of cognitive and emotional expressions of Israel engagement among those who attend just one or the other; camp is not. When it comes to behaviours, there does not seem to be a difference between the outcomes produced by day schools, youth groups and camps. Participation in all three experiences produces higher levels of communal involvement with Israel.

### Implications

The positive impact of day school education and youth movements is not surprising. These immersive environments are often suffused with a strong Zionist ethos that seems positively to impact engagement with Israel. The weaker impact of camp does however call for further investigation. Of these three types of educational experiences this is probably the least orientated around an Israel-centric vision, and that is apparently reflected in the data. These findings, while tentative, suggest that it will be worthwhile to explore how camps can become more effective vehicles for enhancing Israel engagement.

**Table 5: Expressions of Israel Engagement in Relation to Immersive Forms of Jewish Education**

| Form of Jewish Education Attended | N   | Knowledge | Connection | Cultural Involvement | Communal Involvement |
|-----------------------------------|-----|-----------|------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Camp Only                         | 51  | 4.7       | 4.7        | 3.5                  | 3.8                  |
| Day School Only                   | 51  | 5.1       | 5.0        | 3.5                  | 3.8                  |
| Youth Group Only                  | 75  | 5.1       | 4.9        | 3.9                  | 4.1                  |
| None of the Above                 | 157 | 5.0       | 4.6        | 3.6                  | 3.5                  |
| All Three                         | 307 | 5.3       | 5.0        | 4.0                  | 4.8                  |





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