



Moishe House: 2015 Evaluation Findings

Executive Summary

ABOUT MOISHE HOUSE

Founded in 2006, Moishe House is committed to creating meaningful Jewish experiences for young adults by meeting them on their own terms. In each house, three to five carefully selected Moishe House residents dedicate their free time and open their home to host regular and accessible religious, educational, cultural and social programs for their peers. Programs are designed to appeal to their friends and extended social networks and include Shabbat dinners, holiday celebrations and community service programs.

Moishe House has grown quickly over the course of its nine years. The new Moishe House Without Walls (MHWOW) model, introduced in 2011, supports alumni and community leaders in providing Jewish opportunities to their peers and networks, in addition to the established Moishe House model. In 2011 Moishe House also introduced immersive learning and leadership retreats, which have become a staple for Jewish learning and growth within Moishe House.

EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Consistent with the 2011 evaluation, Moishe House continues to provide relevant, high quality programming to Jewish young adults around the world.¹

Moishe House:

- Remains a high quality, compelling opportunity for Jewish young adults to engage in active Jewish lives, which is particularly important given Moishe House's rapid growth, nearly doubling in size and reach since 2011.
- Has a unique approach of providing peer-based programs in a home-based setting, which continues to appeal to young adults as a model for building Jewish community.
- Deepens participants' connection to Judaism and Jewish life.
- Is a hub of Jewish life for Jewish young adults.
- Helps people connect with Jewish life outside Moishe House.
- Helps young adults become stronger leaders in the Jewish community.

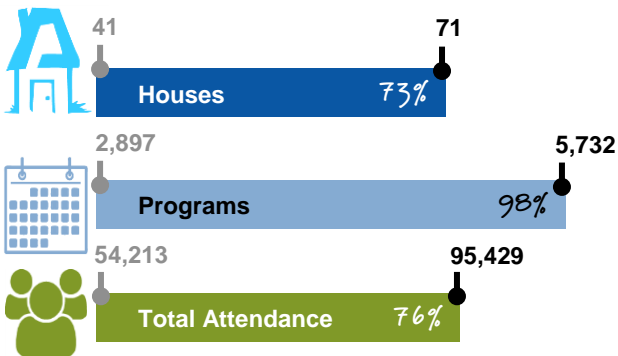
ABOUT THE EVALUATION

This evaluation builds upon a comprehensive study conducted in 2011, which provided early insights into the success of the Moishe House model. The evaluation assesses the ongoing effectiveness and impact of the model, taking into account shifts in program design over time (namely the introduction of MHWOW² and Leadership and Learning Retreats). Participants, residents and alumni of Moishe House’s flagship program as well as MHWOW hosts and participants completed an online survey in 2014–2015. Informing Change analyzed all survey data as well as tracking data provided by Moishe House staff.³ The evaluation findings presented in this executive summary are based on these data sources.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Moishe House is offering more programs and reaching more participants than ever before.

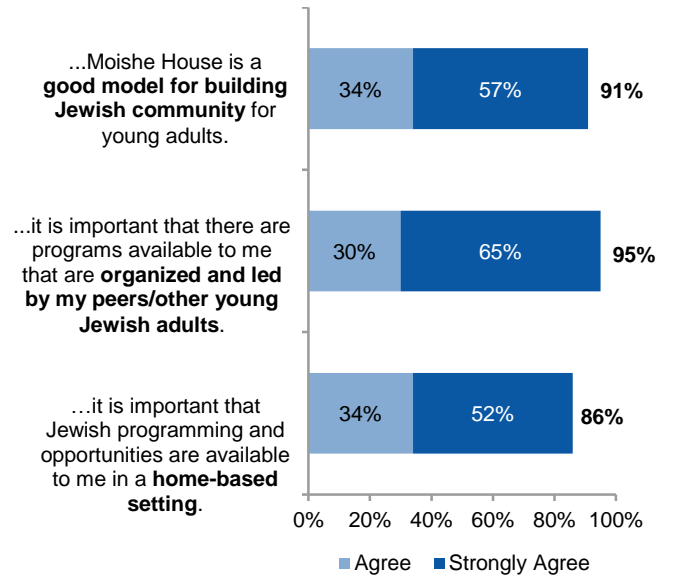
Exhibit 1
Increases from 2011–15
in the number of...



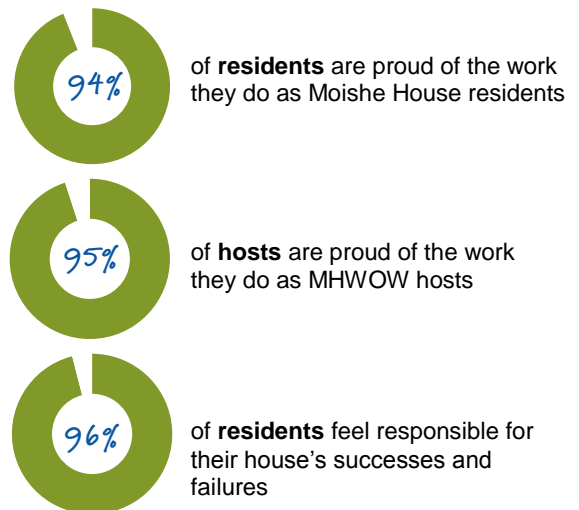
The Moishe House approach of providing peer-based programs in a home-based setting continues to appeal to young adults as a model for building Jewish community.

Exhibit 2
Reflecting on the Moishe House model, survey respondents feel that...

(All survey respondents)⁴
(n=1,284)



Moishe House is a source of pride for house residents and MHWOW hosts:



Moishe House provides a variety of ways for Jewish young adults to engage in active Jewish life, and participation across program types remains high.

Exhibit 3
Participants' Attendance at Moishe House Programs
 (n=1,128-1,136)

Program Type	Participants Who Attended Program Type
Social gatherings	92%
Shabbat dinners	81%
Jewish holiday celebrations	79%
Jewish cultural programming	63%
Jewish learning	43%
Social justice and community organizing	40%

Social gatherings and Jewish culture and holiday programs have the highest attendance rates of all Moishe House programs. While these programs are also offered more often than others, it does not mean that participants chose to attend these programs exclusively. They are interested in a breadth of Jewish engagement opportunities: **82% have attended three or more different types of programs**, and are also interested in participating in a **range of offerings in the future** (whether or not they participated in that particular type of program in the past). A higher proportion of participants are attending all types of Moishe House programs now compared to 2011.

Moishe House is retaining current participants while also attracting new participants who partake in programs regularly.

MOISHE HOUSE PARTICIPANTS

Demographics & Background (n=990)

- **Gender:** 44% Male, 55% Female, 1% Other
- **Age:** 77% between the ages of 22 and 29
- **Religious Affiliation:** Currently, 21% identify as secular/culturally Jewish, 19% Just Jewish, 19% Conservative and 16% Reform
- **Jewish Background⁵:** 65% have strong Jewish background, 29% low Jewish background, and 6% have no Jewish background
- 58% who have visited Israel are Birthright Alumni (n=864)

Moishe House Participation (n=1,136)

- 53% have participated for more than 1 year
- 60% participate about once per month or more
- 87% are likely to participate in Moishe House programs in the future

MOISHE HOUSE RESIDENTS

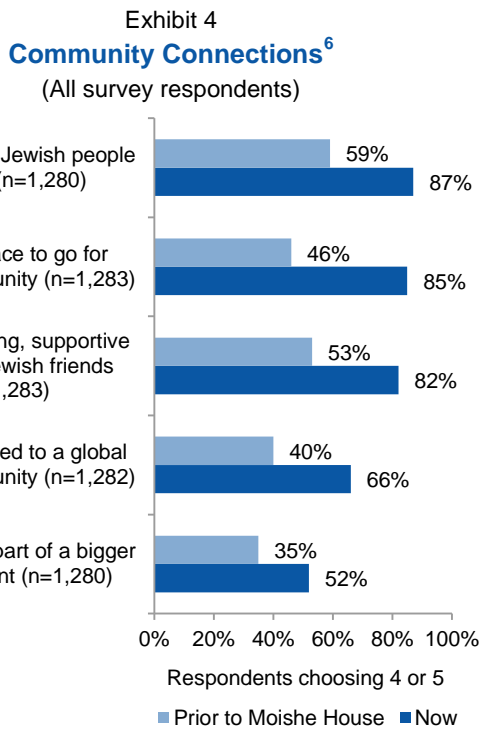
Demographics & Background (n=250)

- **Gender:** 53% Male, 46% Female, 1% Other
- **Age:** 94% between the ages of 22 and 29
- **Religious Affiliation:** Currently, 20% identify as secular/culturally Jewish, 23% Just Jewish, 19% Conservative and 15% Reform
- **Jewish Background:** 68% have strong Jewish background, 30% low Jewish background, and 2% have no Jewish background
- 59% who have visited Israel are Birthright Alumni (n=234)

Jewish young adults connect with each other and build community through Moishe House.

After participating in Moishe House, respondents increase their **connection to other Jews their age** and the **global Jewish community** (46% and 45%, respectively, report an increase), and **more report having somewhere to go for Jewish community** (54% report an increase).

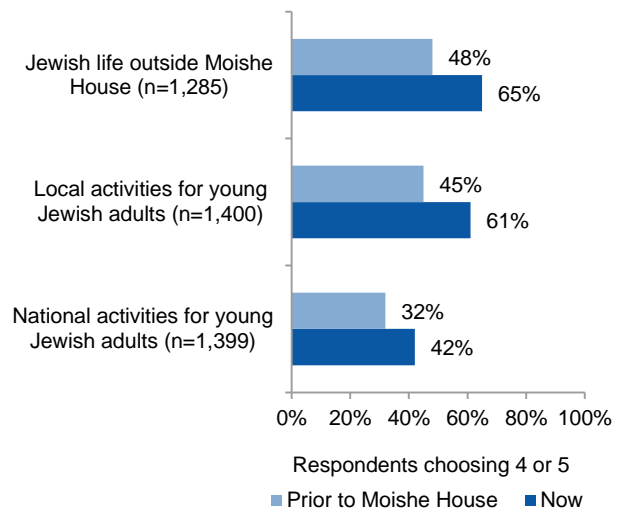
Residents, in particular, report large increases in **belonging to a larger movement (72%)** and **connection to the global Jewish community (64%)**.



Moishe House is seen as a hub of Jewish life for Jewish young adults by a large majority of program participants (79%) and residents (89%). Additionally, respondents tend to increase their involvement in Jewish life outside Moishe House after getting involved in the program.

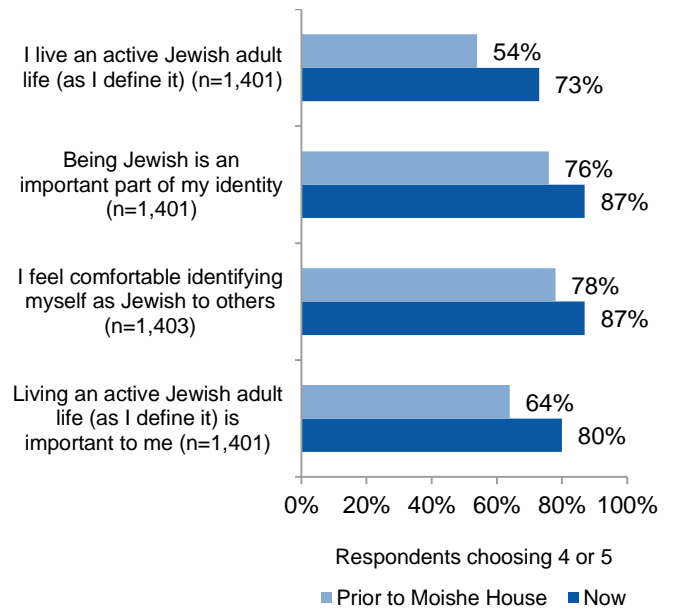
Moishe House remains one of the many ways people connect to the Jewish community and engage in Jewish life. A third (37%) of respondents agree that Moishe House is their **primary source of connection to the Jewish community**. Agreement is highest amongst house residents, with almost twice as many (63%) echoing this sentiment.

Exhibit 5
Participation in Jewish Life Outside Moishe House
(All survey respondents)



Jewish life is and will continue to be an important tenant of people’s lives, which has deepened since they started coming to Moishe House.

Exhibit 6
Importance of Aspects of Jewish Life
(All survey respondents)



While respondents tend to come into Moishe House with previous Jewish experiences and opportunities, **over half (52%) believe their level of Jewish life and involvement will increase in the future.** They attribute this to an increased desire to engage and learn further (sometimes as a result of living in a Moishe House), having a growing network and anticipating engaging in Jewish life as a family, with children of their own.

An additional **46% anticipate that their level of involvement will stay the same.** These respondents indicate that they were already highly active and engaged or are generally comfortable with how and what they do to engage in Jewish life currently. Generally, respondents are excited about being Jewish and take **pride** in their Jewish identity—it is important to them to “be proud of who I am.” Participating in Moishe House is both a means and an end to living active Jewish lives for respondents.

Some of the most important things young adults involved in Moishe House do to live active Jewish lives include:

- “Being a part of the Jewish community, being accepted by and accepting of all those who participate in Jewish life,” and having Jewish friends
- Celebrating or observing holidays and festivals—including Shabbat, high holidays and other Jewish holidays—at synagogue or by gathering at home with family and friends
- Planning and “taking part in as many Jewish events” as possible, and “enjoying Jewish cultural events” and social programs
- Learning about and participating in Jewish traditions and Jewish rituals
- To “never stop learning” about Judaism and Jewish history, and commit to actively living ongoing Jewish lives

PARTICIPATION FREQUENCY MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Participants who attend Moishe House programs more than once per month demonstrate greater change in outcomes related to building community, community leadership and living a Jewish life.

Moishe House serves as a place for people to practice and experience Judaism and Jewish life, and residents are more likely to change their practices and behaviors after getting involved with Moishe House.

Almost two-thirds (65%) of residents have adopted new Jewish practices since getting involved with Moishe House, and one-third (31%) of Moishe House program participants have done the same. Given the greater intensity of the Moishe House experience for residents than participants, it is not surprising that residing in a house has a greater influence on residents Jewish lives. Similarly, half (51%) of participants who attended a leadership or learning retreat also adopted a new practice. New Jewish practices (*sometimes* adopted as a direct result of participating in Moishe House) include holiday practices and traditions, and Shabbat traditions—celebrating Shabbat more often, learning new songs, Kiddush or simply setting aside intentional time.

Moishe House is helping young adults become stronger leaders in the Jewish community, particularly for house residents.

Residents are gaining leadership experience and growing leadership skills, alongside their skills, knowledge and confidence about leading some aspects of Jewish rituals, traditions and customs.

Exhibit 7
Residents' Ratings of Skills, Knowledge & Confidence



SUPPORT FROM NATIONAL STAFF

Moishe House staff support residents and hosts in their community work. As Moishe House has grown, staff remain open and accessible to house residents:

- 85% of residents agree that national staff are open to both positive and negative feedback from residents and hosts. A slightly lower proportion of hosts (67%) feel the same.
- 87% of residents, hosts and alumni agree that they are given the resources they need to do their jobs effectively.

Residents, hosts and alumni find resources from national staff very helpful overall, however slightly lower than in 2011. National staff will need to allocate time and attention to ensuring the quality of supports is sustained over time.

Respondents identified additional supports they would like from the national office, some of which have been recently implemented, including ongoing and more frequent communication from the national office, additional training, guidance, and resources to support their houses as well as additional funding and expedited reimbursement.

CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

Moishe House remains a relevant, compelling opportunity for Jewish young adults to engage in active Jewish lives, which is particularly important given this period of rapid growth. A few notable evaluation findings surface as important reminders as Moishe House moves forward:

- **Connection to the Jewish Community:** Moishe House remains an important space for young adults to create the Jewish activities and experiences that *they* desire and to live the Jewish lives that *they* define. It will be important to continue to promote Moishe House as one of the many ways—and not a competing way—for young adults to participate in active Jewish life.
- **The MHWOW Model:** Generally, MHWOW is an effective extension of Moishe House. Participants in Moishe House and MHWOW programs report similar changes in community connection and Jewish life, as well as program satisfaction.
- **Supports:** Residents and hosts will continue to need support to maintain high levels of program quality. It will be important to sustain continued attention to the quality and accessibility of these resources, particularly as the organization continues to grow.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Unless otherwise noted, respondent ratings and outcomes are similar to 2011 evaluation findings.
- ² Throughout this executive summary, “Moishe House” is used to refer to both the house-based Moishe House model and MHWOW, unless specified otherwise.
- ³ The survey, fielded from November 10, 2014 to January 12, 2015, resulted in 1,553 responses included in the analysis. Moishe House’s central office as well as residents of individual houses distributed the survey, relying on word of mouth, email communication and social media for outreach.
- ⁴ “All survey respondents” refers to the respondent types represented in the exhibit. “All” includes residents, hosts, alumni, Moishe House participants and MHWOW participants. The “n” indicates the number of respondents per item.
- ⁵ In 2011, TCC Group determined level of Jewish background by using Steven M. Cohen’s research as the guide to select six variables to measure respondents’ Jewish backgrounds. The variables included 1) Attended a Jewish day school; 2) Attended or worked at an overnight Jewish camp; 3) Had a Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony; 4) Raised by two Jewish parents; 5) Raised Orthodox or Conservative; and 6) Visited Israel. Respondents were designated as having strong backgrounds if they selected 4–6 of these variables, and low if they had 1–3 selected. In 2011, TCC Group was not able to determine who came in with zero and no background—the questions were not mandatory, so they only looked at the two groups, low and strong. No background (0 of the 6 options selected) is a new category used in the 2015 evaluation.
- ⁶ Respondents were asked to rate each item on a 5-point scale: 1 = Not at all, 3 = To some extent, 5 = To a great extent. Only those choosing 4 or 5 are reported here and in subsequent graphs.