



Key Findings from GenZ Now

The Jewish Education Project released *GenZ Now: Understanding and Connecting with Jewish Teens Today*. This monumental study of almost 18,000 teens across the United States revealed deep insights and findings.

Key Findings Related to Jewish Youth-Serving Organizations and Teens

1. Involvement in a Jewish Youth-Serving Organization Is Related to Positive Teen Outcomes. Teens who reported participating in a YSO since seventh grade, compared to non-participating teens, rated themselves higher on almost all GenNow outcomes, even when controlling for earlier Jewish educational experiences. Participation in a YSO contributes not only to teens connecting to being Jewish but also to their feeling good about themselves, deepening relationships with family, friends, and mentors, and feeling empowered to make change in the world.

2. Teens Get More from More Youth-Serving Organizations. A little more than half the teens in the survey reported participating in more than one YSO, as opposed to being “loyal” to just one organization. Participation in multiple YSOs, instead of only one, predicted higher ratings on almost all GenNow outcomes.

3. Jewish Content Lifts All Boats. We asked teens to tell us whether the activities they participated in contained “Jewish stuff.” We found that reporting “Jewish stuff” in activities predicted higher ratings across *all* the GenNow outcomes, including the social-emotional ones. This finding was one of the strongest and most consistent predictors in our study.

4. Youth-Serving Organizations Could Attract More Diverse Jewish Teens. The portrait we have of teens engaged in Jewish activities does not match the portrait we have of American Jewish families on the whole. Notably there are far fewer teens who describe their families as interfaith or who describe themselves as having a diverse background than we may have expected. There were also fewer teens who describe themselves as gender fluid or nonbinary than in the general American teen population. We see this opportunity to attract more diverse teens as an area of tremendous growth for the YSOs (and the Jewish community as a whole).

Key Findings About Jewish Community-Connected Teens

1. Participation as a Teen Matters. The study shows that teens who reported involvement in Jewish activities as teens had higher scores on all the GenNow outcomes, compared to those who did not participate. Further, teens who first began to participate in Jewish activities as teens rated themselves higher than teens who were involved in Jewish educational programs as children but stopped participating as teens.

2. Jewish Teens Like Their Parents and Value Their Perspectives. The teens in our study enjoy spending time with their family and often looked to their parents to help them make sense of the world. This finding is consistent with data about teens in general.

3. Being Jewish Is Often About Family. Jewish beliefs and practices are closely linked with family in the hearts and minds of teens. Being Jewish is not simply a religious or ethnic practice but also an expression of family bonds.

4. Relig-ish? Americans increasingly describe themselves as having “no religion.” In our data, a sizable minority of Jewish teens shared that they are atheist, agnostic, or Jewish culturally but not religiously. But even many “no religion” teens are interested in engaging with Judaism at certain points in their life.

5. Jewish Culture Is Something to Celebrate. The most commonly used word by teens to express what it means to be Jewish is “culture.” The concept of Jewish culture captures the elements of being Jewish that teens feel good about and leaves out those elements that they object to or are confused by.

6. Jewish Teens Share the Troubles and Concerns of Other American Adolescents. Teens in our study believe adolescents need help with social-emotional issues. In particular, they named coping with anxiety, academic pressure, self-esteem issues, and failure as the biggest needs of their peers.

7. Jewish Teens See Positives and Negatives to Social Media. Teens acknowledge that social media can cause them stress, but many also believe it can help them cope with stress, connect with friends, and organize for change.

8. Anti-Semitism and the American Jewish Teen. Many of the teens we interviewed report anti-Semitic experiences but do not feel personally threatened or see it as a primary lens to understand their experience in the United States today.

9. Open to Israel. Jewish community-connected teens are interested in Israel and believe that as Jews they have a special connection to the land and country. They want to ask trusted adults questions about Israel, and teens who have not traveled there hope to do so one day.

10. Travel to Israel Is a Teen Peak Experience. Travel to Israel as part of an organized group predicted higher ratings on most outcomes, including social-emotional outcomes. Teens who have visited Israel describe it as a peak experience. Teens who have not been to Israel would like to go.