



# The Contribution of Base to the Lives of Young Jewish Adults

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Founded in 2015, Base is a growing movement of young rabbinic couples building welcoming, pluralistic Jewish communities out of their homes through Shabbat and holiday hospitality, Jewish learning, and service. Base uses a strategy of “relational engagement,” believing that Jewish connection happens through the medium of interpersonal relationships rather than membership or institutional affiliation. This model puts the person—not the program—at the core of the rabbi’s work. Base is the newest program offering of Moishe House, and there are currently 7 locations in the United States — the Bay Area, Chicago (3), Denver, Miami and New York City.

## The Evaluation

### Goals

This report examines the contribution of Base involvement to a young adult’s Jewish life, including the (1) the influence of the rabbinic Couple, (2) the significance of Base in the person’s Jewish life, (3) opportunities provided for Jewish growth, (4) increased engagement with Jewish life and (5) friendship. We will also look at factors that influence the types of benefits, or lack of such benefits, reported by distinct sub-groups of Base participants.

### Methodology

In June 2022, a survey was emailed to Basers connected with the 9 Bases operating at the time (Boston, Chicago (4), Miami, and New York City (2)). The survey was emailed to Base’s contact list. 439 who participated at a Base in the past year responded, for a response rate of 20%.

## Executive Summary

### A Meaningful Jewish Space

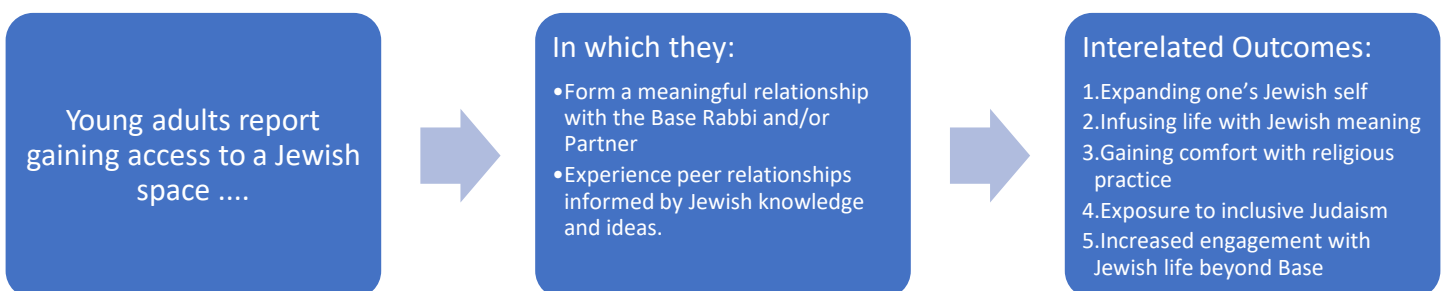
The contribution of Base to a young adult’s Jewish life occurs when they report considering Base as a significant Jewish space. For a minority of respondents Base is their primary Jewish space. For the majority, Base complements their Jewish life elsewhere. The common denominator is that all who report Jewish outcomes from their Base participation will perceive Base as a meaningful space, and a space in which they feel that they belong.

### An Experiential Learning Community

The Base rabbinic couple creates opportunities for social interaction informed by Jewish knowledge and ideas. The result is an experience of community based on social relationships with the Base Rabbi and/or Partner and other young adults that develop through one-on-one discussions with the Rabbi or Partner, in learning cohorts, discussion over Shabbat dinner, during a holiday celebration, volunteering opportunities, social action initiatives and more.

### Holistic Outcomes

After participating in one Base event or activity, a person will likely report that they had an enjoyable experience and that “Base provided me with a space in which I feel comfortable.” They will also report that “the Base couple models a relationship I can learn from.” Those who participate least three times or more in a year report a holistic set of outcomes that inform one another including: (1) expanding one’s sense of Jewish self, (2) infusing life with Jewish meaning, (3) gaining comfort with religious practice, (4) exposure to inclusive Judaism, and (5) Increased engagement with Jewish life beyond Base.



## Different Base Experiences and Contributions

The Base couples establish meaningful relationships and facilitate Jewish growth for a wide variety of young adult Jews. Beyond the common experience of a meaningful connection to the Base rabbinic couple and Jewish peers, there are at least four groups of Basers, each arriving at Base with distinct needs and reporting specific types of Jewish outcomes distinguished by age, level of childhood Jewish affiliation, those participating as couples especially when a partner is not Jewish, and those who grew up Orthodox.

### Key Learnings to Act On

Base is an “experiential learning community” that draws in a diverse group of young Jewish adults who report holistic outcomes for their sense of self and participation in Jewish life.

#### 1. Three +

The most robust Jewish outcomes are reported by those who participate at least three times in a year. At that point, Basers report being touched in a deep sense, as a person and as a Jew, by the Base social and intellectual experience. The more individuals who are brought to the level of three plus participation means greater impact on the Jewish engagement of young adult Jews. Best practices for encouraging ongoing participation are thus vital to Base’s reach and influence.

#### 2. The Centrality of the Base Couple

The centrality of the Base couple to the social and intellectual experience at Base is central to a Baser’s overall experience and thus also a limitation. The Rabbi and Partner can only reach a finite number of people. Tackling this issue in an explicit fashion is vital for Base to extend the influence of its work. Some Bases are working to empower Basers to lead social and learning activities with the goal of extending the Base couples reach. In Chicago, the challenge is being met by multiplying the number of Base homes in the city.

#### 3. Awareness of Sub-Groups

Each rabbinic couple brings different personal qualities to the relationship-building that lies at the heart of the Base experience. Factors such as the rabbinic couple’s age, gender, sexual orientation, denominational affiliation, and broader life interests influence their ability to touch people who are similar and different from them. Thus, each Base couple can benefit from actively reflecting and documenting with their peers, strategies that are authentic to who they are as individuals, for establishing relationships with younger or older Basers, those who grew up unaffiliated or not-Jewish, couples who are seeking their Jewish life together, or those who grew up Orthodox, amongst others.

#### 4. Creating Meaning Jewish Space

The ability of the rabbinic couples to create meaningful Jewish space for young Jewish adults is a major accomplishment. Continuing existing work to document best practices and share them with the broader field of Jewish engagement and community building professionals will position Base as a thought leader in a professional arena that is vital to the future of American Jewry.

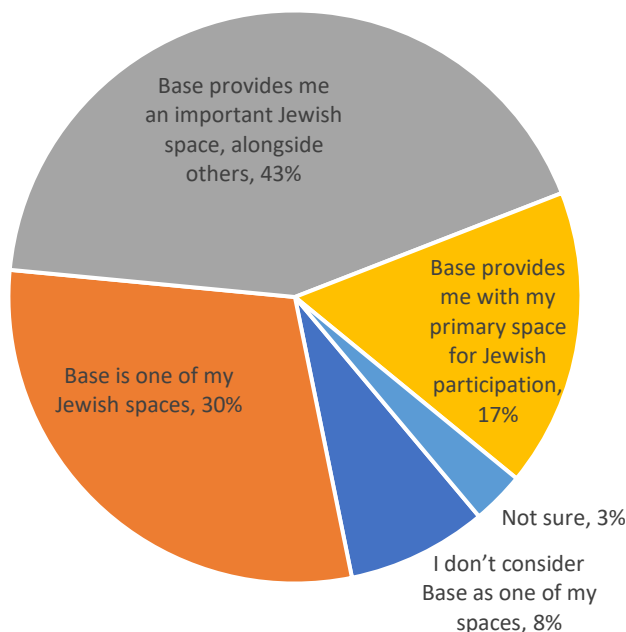
## Outcomes from Base Participation

### Access to Jewish Space

**At heart, Base offers access to a “Jewish space” in which the survey respondents report being able to explore and grow Jewishly.**

When asked directly about the importance of Base as a Jewish space, 17% describe Base as their “primary space for Jewish participation.” An additional 43% view Base as an important space that complements their other areas of Jewish involvement. Only 8% of the respondents declined to consider Base as one of their Jewish spaces (exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1. Which of the following best describes your relationship to Base?



Measured differently, approximately a quarter of the respondents report a “very high contribution” from finding Base as a Jewish space, rising to approximately three-quarters who describe at least a “moderate contribution” (exhibit 2). Note that the answers to the questions in exhibit 2 are highly correlated. The contribution of Base to one’s Jewish life rises with a person considering Base as a Jewish space in which they feel that they belong.

Exhibit 2	Very High Contribution	High Contribution	Moderate Contribution
<b>Answer =</b>	“Very Significant” or “To a Very Great Extent” or Higher	“Significant” / “Great Extent” or higher	“Somewhat Significant” / “An Extent” or higher
<b>To what extent has Base contributed to your finding a Jewish space in which you feel that you belong?</b>	23%	49%	77%
<b>In thinking about your Jewish life in general, to what extent has your Base participation contributed?</b>	22%	45%	75%
<b>In thinking about your Jewish life in general over the past five years, how significant of a role has Base played?</b>	26%	51%	73%

\*Answers to these questions are highly correlated with one another. An answer to one, predicts the answer to the other.

### *An important Jewish space, alongside others*

*“In addition to Base, I am an active member of a large Reform synagogue in Chicago. While my synagogue is my primary Jewish home, Base has provided an immersive, social, and study-based environment in which I can deepen my connection to Judaism while meeting folks that are in my age demographic. I’ve gained greater facility with Torah & Talmud, participated in Shabbat retreats, discussed feminism, anti-racism, antisemitism, and environmentalism in a Jewish context, and deepened my commitment to Jewish ritual practice.”*

The quotes below, taken from written responses in the survey, provide an understanding of how Base serves as a primary or important Jewish space for the respondents.

*In a few sentences, how has your Base participation contributed to your Jewish activities and interests?*

#### Space to explore and grow

- *"Base provided me with an authentic space to explore who I am Jewishly and otherwise. The Rabbi at Base served as an open, accessible mentor, whom I knew would be open to discussing anything. It provided my partner and I with a shared language around Judaism and community at a time when we were having trouble finding a Jewish space where we could both connect."*

#### Secure space

- *"Base has given me the confidence to pursue and reclaim the Jewish education that was denied to me in a safe and comfortable space. I developed close relationships with my fellow Basers that were enriched by the space and the thought and care our rabbi put into our classes and activities, especially during the pandemic. Base was home to me in a very uncertain time and it still is."*

#### Comfortable space

- *"Before interacting with Base HRLM, I had very little Jewish community and certainly did not feel particularly comfortable in Jewish spaces. Since then, my 'Jewish life' has grown substantially, and participating in everything from Shabbat lunches to festival celebrations has become a regular part of my life."*

#### Communal space

- *"I've learned about beautiful rituals or prayers or observances that can be brought into my home and life. Rabbi EBC and Matt have also created a wonderful space and community for conversation and connection, which I have enjoyed and benefited from."*

#### Alternative space

- *"Base gave me an opportunity to explore queer Jewish identity, providing an alternative space to synagogues for young Jews to learn and pray. Base feels more grassroots and led by young people."*

#### A Gateway

- *"I was attending for months because Base was the only Jewish place I felt most comfortable, but now I'm comfortable nearly everywhere. I go to synagogue and other young adult groups now."*

## A Relationship with the Rabbinic Couple

When asked about outcomes from their contact with the rabbinic couple, a fifth to a third of Basers who responded to the survey report a very high contribution, with three-quarters to 93% reporting at least a moderate contribution (exhibit 3). Contributions include:

- Modeling a relationship “I can learn from,” which also “influences how I think about living my Jewish life.
- Feeling a connection to the Base Rabbis and their Partners.

Exhibit 3. Contribution of Connection with Base Rabbi and/or Partner

Answer =	Very High Contribution	High Contribution	Moderate Contribution
	“Very Strongly Agree” or “To a Very Great Extent” or Higher	“Strongly Agree” / “Great Extent” or higher	“Agree” / “An Extent” or higher
The Base couple models a relationship I can learn from	28%	52%	93%
To what extent do you feel a connection with your Base Rabbi?	32%	52%	84%
Seeing the Base Rabbinic couple model how to live a Jewish life has influenced how I think about my Jewish life	20%	38%	78%
To what extent do you feel a connection with your Base Rabbi’s Partner?	21%	49%	75%

**The relationship formed between a young adult and the rabbinical couple is central to understanding the contribution of Base to the lives of young Jewish adults.** Those who report the highest contribution of Base to their Jewish lives will almost always report developing a meaningful relationship with the Base Rabbi and Partner.

67% of the respondents report developing a meaningful relationship with the Base Rabbi or the Rabbi’s Partner, of whom 43% developed a relationship with both and 24% with just one of the Partners (exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4. A meaningful relationship with the Base Rabbi / Partner

<b>Developed a meaningful relationship with the Base Rabbi and Partner</b>	43%
<b>Developed a meaningful relationship with one</b>	24%
<b>Did not develop a meaningful relationship with either</b>	33%

## Establishing the Relevance of Jewish Ideas and Values in a Social Context

For Basers, the Rabbi and/or Partner are essential to the experience of meaningful Jewish space. For example:

*“Base has given me space to reflect and engage in all things Jewish with a nominal peer group that I likely wouldn’t have otherwise connected with. Most importantly, it facilitated a relationship with a non-synagogue and non-Chabad Rabbi that I wouldn’t have access to otherwise. It was helpful in my decision about seeking to join a nearby synagogue.”*

As captured by the above quote, **Base is not a synagogue.** Rather, Basers perceive Base as a peer community, in which the social experience is informed by learning, reflection, intellectual growth and engagement facilitated by the Base Rabbi and Partner. **The emphasis is on “relevance”, rather than knowledge for religious practice.** The learning focuses on the relevance of Jewish ideas and values to an individual’s life, rather than on learning Jewish law for living a Jewish life.

*“Rav Jonathan emailed me a last-minute invitation to Restorative Draughts, and said he thought I would enjoy it. I ended up going and discovered that the delicious homemade meal was totally vegan (which I am also). The conversation of the evening was wonderful, philosophical, and engaging, and it left me feeling, not only restored, but also deeply welcomed in a way which I hadn’t expected.”*

*“Rabbi Adam invited me to be a part of his spirituality group where we sat around outside in a circle, wrote whatever we wanted in a journal and talked about our personal stories and relationship with G-d. It was then that I felt most connected to Judaism and could truly say whatever was on my mind without being judged.”*

## The Jewish Contribution of a Relationship with the Rabbinic Couple

Basers’ descriptions of the contribution from their connection with the rabbinic couple fall into four broad areas interconnected categories.

### 1. Expanding one’s Jewish self

Gaining a broader and deeper understanding of who one is as a person and a Jew, or the way in which they approach being Jewish.

### 2. Infusing life with Jewish meaning

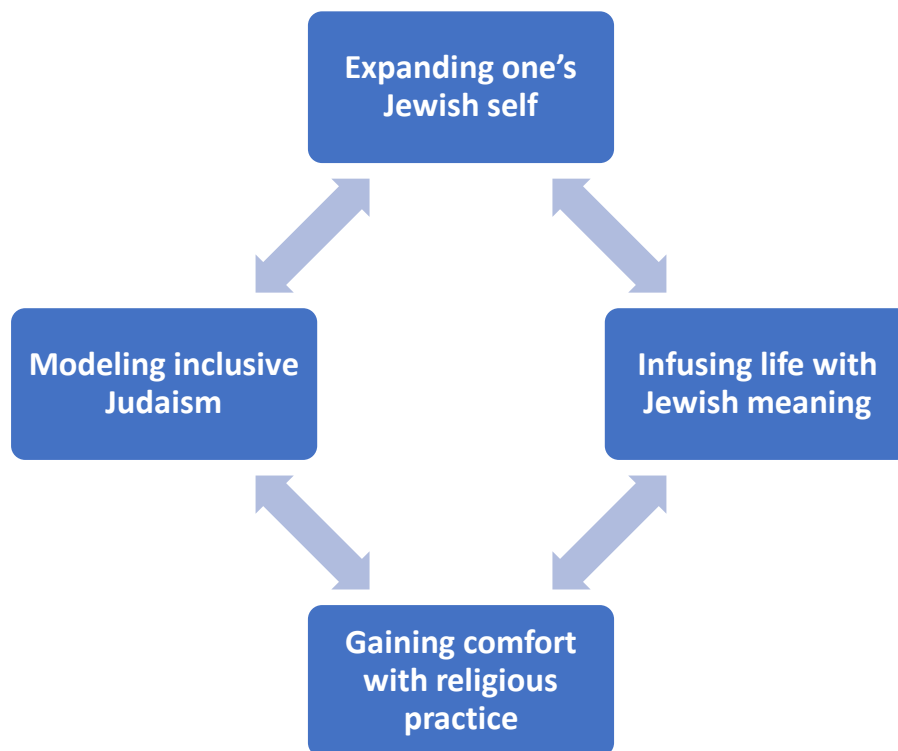
Jewish wisdom and values inform how one perceives their place in the world, their relationships to others and life’s challenges.

### 3. Gaining comfort with religious practice

Religious observance gains increasing relevance. Basers report feeling greater comfort with the rituals they choose to engage in.

### 4. Modeling inclusive Judaism

Observing Jewish practices in which a broad spectrum of people can feel comfortable and included.





## Expanding One's Jewish Self

The following are diverse examples of how Basers report experiencing a broader and deeper understanding of who they are as Jews or the way in which they approach being Jewish.

### Deeper understanding of Jewish self

*"I had a really meaningful coffee date with Rabbi Atara where I made connections and understood a part of myself I had never understood before until that conversation. That was pretty amazing."*

### Sharing knowledge with others

*"My Base Rabbi invited me to teach a class on the spirituality of challah baking. It was the first time I got to engage with the Jewish community in a teaching capacity and gave me more confidence in sharing a meaningful part of my Jewish spiritual practice."*

### Being able to talk about Israel

*"The first real conversation I've ever had about Israel that has shaped my approach to talking about Israel and race relations in America."*

### Deepening sense of Jewish belonging

*"At every single event I've attended, questions are deeply answered without judgement, or a simple conversation that is genuine, every engagement with R Gindea and Jessie has made me feel a sense of belonging. I feel like them setting the example has created a community of people who also act this way. This type of Jewish religious leadership (one with a genuine heart) is what makes Base Miami special and lacking in many other communities."*

### Knowledge and understanding

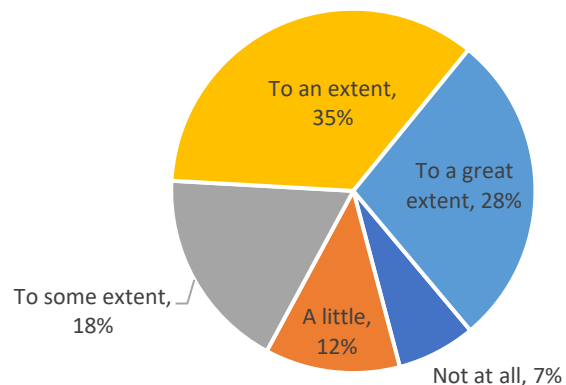
*"My first event at Base LGSQ was a dinner series that explored Judaism through food. It was the first time I had ever considered how Jewish identity and food are deeply intertwined beyond the routine of keeping kosher or making the same special foods for each holiday. It went beyond that and questioned how Jewish experience can be shaped by food depending on where you're from. It was a fascinating concept."*

### Finding my Jewish skin

*"My regular conversations with Rabbi Gindea are very important to me. I truly appreciate his perspective and the way in which we discuss and debate ideas. His approach has helped me get more comfortable with my way of living Jewishly."*

Exhibit 5. To what extent has your experience at Base contributed to feeling a sense of belonging to the Jewish People?

For 63% of the respondents, the expansion of one's Jewish self includes a significant contribution to their feeling a sense of belonging to the Jewish People "to an extent" (35%) or "a great extent" (28%). Just 7% report no contribution to their sense of belonging to the Jewish People (exhibit 5).



## Infusing Life with Jewish Meaning

Jewish wisdom and values inform how one perceives their place in the world, their relationships to others and life's challenges.

### Divine Presence

*"One Shabbat dinner last fall, Rabbi EBC and Matt encouraged us around the table to describe a moment when we noticed God but did not expect it, based on the parshah of Jacob's ladder. This has been a beautiful teaching that I have been trying to carry with me frequently."*

*"Rabbi Adam always includes nigunim as a way for us to connect and ground ourselves in whatever we are about to do. He explains that this is one of the ways we can connect to ourselves, Judaism, and the divine and I appreciate this very much!"*

### Life's Struggles

*"For Rabbis Sarah and Will, seeing them be the parents of two young children with strong connections to Judaism has been inspiring and has helped me think about how I can make intentional choices in my own child-rearing practices with my 19 month old daughter. Their openness about the struggles and successes has also been helpful to see and made it easier to connect with them."*

*"Base, particularly Rabbi Megan, has been more influential than I can put into words. I've struggled to find a Jewish community home and this has been hard with getting married and wanting to start a family. The books, the social justice focus, the way of breaking down texts and having meaningful conversations really spoke to me."*

## Gaining Comfort with Religious Practice

The rabbinical couples model their personal observance in their homes. They don't prescribe how any Baser should engage with religious Jewish practices elsewhere. Their focus is on the relevance of religious observance to a person, and enabling individuals to feel comfortable with the rituals they choose to engage in.

### Seeking relevance rather than observance

*"The way the Rabbi explained faith was so much more approachable than any concept I have listened to in the past. It was very un-prescriptive."*

*"In trying to understand and develop a personal connection to more frequent practice, the Base couple encouraged me to take it at my own pace and find meaning in smaller rituals contributing to a larger practice. From challah bakes, to learning, to Kabbalat Shabbat, I am able to develop more connections."*

### Ritual

*"My rabbi invited me over for my very first Shabbat dinner. She walked me through the steps and made me feel so comfortable despite my anxiety that I would 'mess up.'"*

*"My husband is not Jewish. However, he partakes in all major Jewish events along with me. One of our more difficult conversations was where to conduct a bris if the time came when we had a son. The Base couple walked us through a path of thought that allowed us to discuss settings in which both my husband and I were okay with engaging in this major life event."*

## Modeling Inclusive Judaism

The Base rabbinical couples observe traditional Jewish practices in their homes in such a way that a broad spectrum of people can feel comfortable and included.

### Inclusive

*"One moment that stands out was a Sukkot event at Base Lincoln Park, where there was a variety of Jews with different levels of engagement, observance, and knowledge. Rav Sarah made all the observances such as washing hands and benching and havdallah, accessible, not optional, but also not intimidating. I hope I can create a Jewish home where I don't hide my practices if I host people who don't observe the same way, but make the practices welcoming and engaging."*

### Openness

*"I have seen more than once how the Rabbi and his partner are reacting to uncomfortable situations or conversations, and I learned from and appreciate them."*

### Acceptance

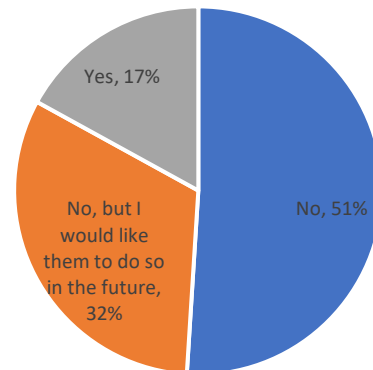
*"Visiting Base in Lincoln Park for the first time and experiencing the home of a same-sex couple, as a closeted woman, helped me understand that it is okay - in fact, even encouraged - to truly be my whole self, especially in Jewish spaces."*

## Life Cycle Ceremonies

17% of the respondents report a Base Rabbi or Partner officiating at a life cycle ceremony. 32% expressing a desire for the Base couple to officiate (exhibit 6).

As a respondent reports greater contribution of the Base couple to his or her life, so too the desire for them to officiate rises to the point where 75% of those reporting the highest level of contribution would either like one of the Partners to officiate at their life cycle ceremonies or have already had such an experience.

Exhibit 6. Has a Base rabbi ever officiated or helped you with a life cycle event, such as a conversion, wedding, or funeral?



*"As my partner and I are transitioning into marriage, our Base couple served as mentors for what a healthy, authentic relationship could look like and provided practical guidance for a strong Jewish marriage."*

*"The Base Rabbi officiated our wedding. It was a time of joy, but also one of conflict, and together the Base couple helped us navigate this meaningful transition in our life."*

## Increased Engagement with Jewish Life

Beyond their involvement at Base, Basers also report a range of increased engagement with Jewish life, including friendships, connecting with other Jewish organizations, increased engagement in Jewish religious tradition and hosting at home.

*Exhibit 7. Listed below are possible outcomes of your contact with Base. Which of the outcomes, if any, applies to you?*

<b>Connected me to others who are now my friends</b>	52%
<b>Connected me to a Jewish organization</b>	40%
<b>Started to, or increased the frequency with which I celebrate and mark the Jewish calendar (i.e., Shabbat, holidays, rituals, etc.)</b>	34%
<b>Increased my engagement with other Jewish initiatives/spaces/organizations</b>	34%
<b>Started to, or increased my hosting of peers in my home (virtually or in-person)</b>	16%

### Friendships and Connections

*"When I look back at my years of Base involvement, the primary takeaway (for which I am very grateful) would be the friendships and connections I've made, and I look fondly on the times when I attended Base dinners and events on a weekly basis."*

*"As someone new to the city, Base helped me connect with Jewish people."*

*"Helped me find friends, people I trust and can rely on."*

*"Helped me meet like-minded LGBT Jews."*

*"Base Loop is a place where my partner and I have met a ton of new friends and connected with some old ones. They are the warmest people and just our flavor of Judaism."*

*"Base participation has helped me learn about Judaism and introduced me to lots of very interesting people in Chicago. Before Base, I didn't know any Jewish people my age or very much about Jewish culture and tradition. Base has taught me a lot of interesting facts about being Jewish I didn't know before."*

## More = More

The outcomes of participating at Base are holistic. The more a person participates, the greater the spectrum of benefits reported.

**Regardless of extent of participation**, almost all those participating, even once, report an enjoyable experience (exhibit 10) and that “the Base couple models a relationship I can learn from.” Beyond those two outcomes, all other outcomes shown in exhibits 9 and 10 depend on intensity of engagement.

- **Second time is critical.** If a person returns after the first visit, they will report significantly higher outcomes.
- **Three times or more** is the threshold at which Basers begin reporting a significant increase in outcomes, rising to 66% of those who participate 10 or more times reporting 17 of the 22 possible outcomes shown in exhibits 9 and 10.

Exhibit 8.

About how many times have you participated in Base events of any kind since Spring 2021?

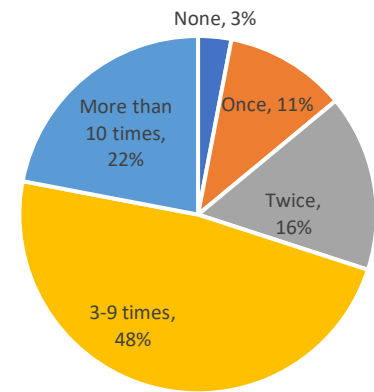


Exhibit 9. Base Outcomes by “About how many times have you participated in Base events of any kind since Spring 2021?”

	Percent answering providing a positive answer (strongly agree or higher, to a great extent or higher)			
	Once	Twice	3-9 times	10 + times
The Base couple models a relationship I can learn from	91%	78%	95%	94%
Seeing the Base Rabbinic couple model how to live a Jewish life has influenced how I think about my Jewish life	45%	54%	75%	83%
To what extent has your experience at Base contributed to feeling a sense of belonging to the Jewish People?	45%	33%	45%	67%
In thinking about your Jewish life in general, to what extent has your Base participation contributed?	18%	14%	22%	47%
To what extent has Base contributed to your finding a Jewish space in which you feel that you belong?	18%	19%	30%	57%

Exhibit 10. Listed below are possible outcomes of your contact with Base Which of the outcomes, if any, applies to you? Select all that apply

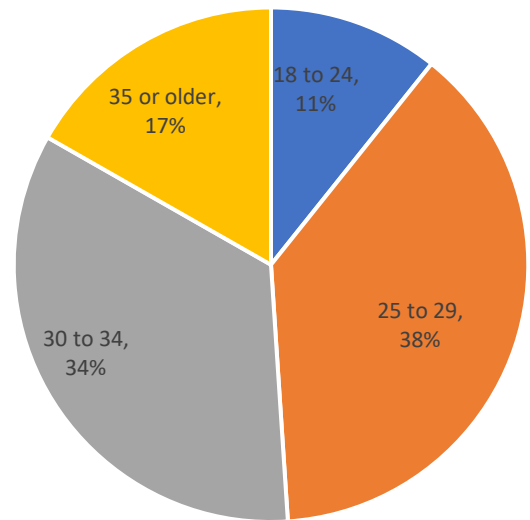
Column %	About how many times have you participated in Base events of any kind since Spring 2021?			
	Once	Twice	3-9 times	10 + times
Had an enjoyable experience	86%	95%	96%	93%
Developed a meaningful relationship with the Base Rabbi	37%	46%	70%	90%
Provided me with a space in which I feel comfortable	67%	64%	81%	89%
Provided me with ways to participate in community	53%	67%	80%	83%
Provided me opportunities to explore who I am Jewishly	35%	49%	60%	80%
Contributed to my intellectual growth	35%	38%	54%	79%
Connected me to others who are now my friends	28%	38%	53%	78%
Contributed to my spiritual growth	28%	48%	64%	74%
Provided me with opportunities to try new things	37%	57%	56%	71%
Provided me opportunities to find the Jewish space(s) most appropriate for me	30%	48%	60%	70%
Learned useful Jewish knowledge and/or skills	33%	39%	55%	69%
Developed a meaningful relationship with the Base Rabbi’s	28%	30%	48%	68%
Connected me to others who share common interests	42%	51%	59%	67%
A safe place to explore who I am	35%	38%	51%	67%
Started to, or increased the frequency with which I celebrate and mark the Jewish calendar (i.e., Shabbat, holidays, rituals, etc.)	21%	15%	38%	49%
Connected me to a Jewish organization	33%	33%	40%	48%
Provided me with ways to bring Jewish involvement to my family and/or friends	21%	23%	37%	47%
Increased my engagement with other Jewish initiatives/spaces/organizations	28%	31%	34%	45%
Made a change in my Jewish practice	7%	13%	23%	40%
Started to, or increased my hosting of peers in my home (virtually or in-person)	5%	8%	15%	31%

# The Contribution of Base for Different Groups

## The Age Effect

- **Rabbinic couple reaches all age groups**  
Regardless of age, all Basers report near equivalent levels of influence from their relationship with the rabbinic couple and for the contribution of Base for their engagement with Jewish life.
- **Younger Basers gain the most holistic benefit**  
The younger the Baser, the more holistic Base’s contribution to their lives. The 18- to 24-year-olds are the most likely, on average, to report a Base serving as their primary Jewish space, reporting opportunities for Jewish growth and developing friendships.
- **The 25- to 34-year-olds are in the middle.** They, too, report relatively high levels of benefit, although lower than the younger Basers.
- **The benefits for the oldest Basers are more focused**  
Relative to the other age groups, the 35 + age group receives benefit from the connection to the rabbinical couple and their connection to Jewish life beyond Base at similar levels. On all other measures they score significantly lower.

Exhibit 11. Age Groups



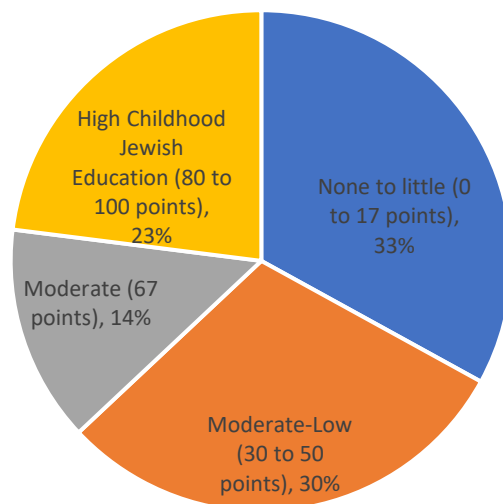
## First Engagement with Organized Jewish Life as an Adult

One-third of the Basers responding to the survey come from an unaffiliated Jewish background and report a relatively high contribution to their Jewish lives.

**Growing up “unaffiliated”** includes those who had zero to little childhood Jewish education (exhibit 12), which for most also means that they had no Jewish parents, or one Jewish parent and they have not traveled to Israel travel. In other words, they did not grow up with families who engaged with the organized Jewish community.

Those growing up unaffiliated are most likely, on average, to report a high level of Jewish significance from their contact with Base, and that contact leading to high levels of outcome for personal Jewish growth and engagement with Jewish life beyond Base.

Exhibit 12. Childhood Jewish Education Index\*



\*Childhood Jewish Education Index combines Jewish summer camp attendance and Jewish schooling. Someone who attended camp for two or more years and attended Day School up until the age of 13 will receive a “high” score.

## Engaging with Jewish Life as a Couple

58% of the respondents are partnered: married or in a long-term and/or exclusive relationship. Of these partnered Basers, 14% are with someone who is not Jewish.

As couples, they are engaging with Jewish life. 57% report engaging successfully with the Jewish life, 39% are engaging but not at their ideal place. Just 4% are not engaging (exhibit 13).

Those partnered with non-Jews are far less likely to state they are “successfully engaging with the Jewish life we want.” They are either more likely to be “working to engage with Jewish life,” or are “not engaging with Jewish life as a couple” (exhibit 14).

The comparison of the partnered to those who are single shows that those who are partnered are somewhat more likely to report benefit from contact with the rabbinic couple; otherwise there is little difference. However, when we zero in on those partnered with non-Jews, the differences are substantial.

**Those partnered with non-Jews are dramatically more likely to report a contribution to their engagement with Jewish life beyond Base.** Base serves as

a gateway for them to gain confidence and an understanding of pathways for Jewish involvement. They are somewhat more likely to report contribution from the connection with the rabbinic couple and their personal Jewish growth. Yet, they are less likely to report friendship outcomes, and are slightly less likely to report positive outcomes in terms of Base as a significant Jewish space.

What we learn is that Basers who are partnered with non-Jews are a unique target audience. When they engage as a couple, they receive clear benefits, in a manner that is unique to their search as a couple for engagement and Jewish growth. They are more actively exploring and searching than those with Jewish partners and are less likely to have settled in their Jewish space.

Exhibit 13. Jewish engagement as couple

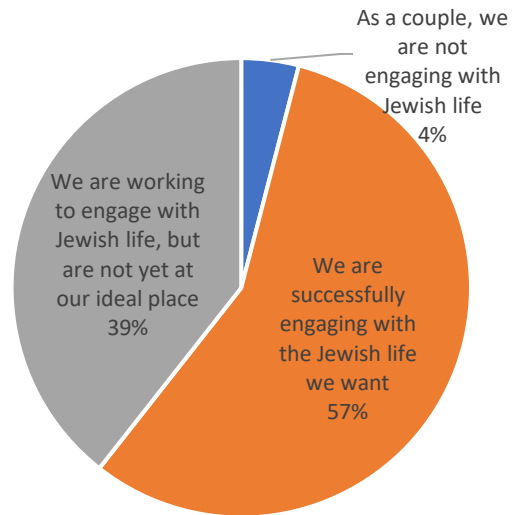
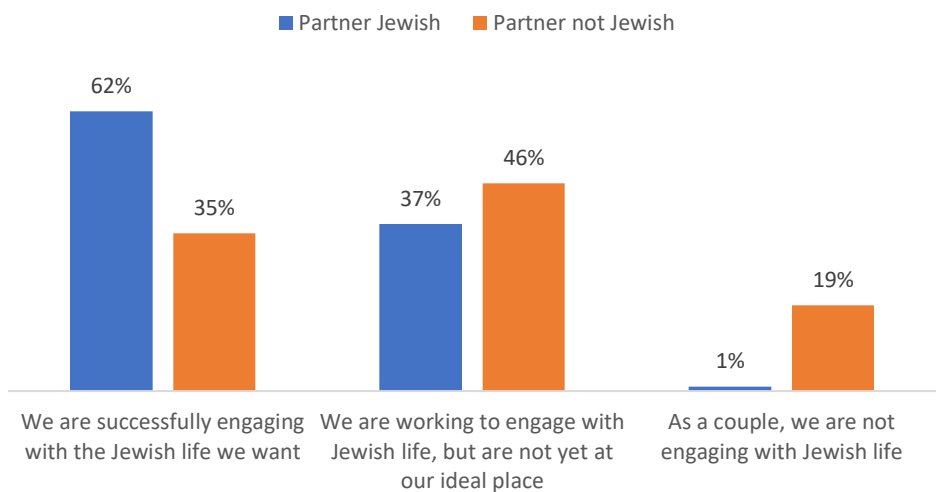


Exhibit 14. Jewish engagement as couple with Jewish Partner compared to non-Jewish Partner





## Interfaith Couples

*"I did not feel there was a space for an interfaith couple like myself and my husband previously, but I feel comfortable at Base and have learned more about Judaism through discussions with the Rabbi and felt more connected to ritual and my spirituality."*

*"Rabbi EBC was wonderful. She supported my partner and me as we struggled with our pandemic honeymoon, and also gave me guidance about whether or not conversion was right for me at this time. It was incredibly meaningful to me to have such a positive experience with a religious leader, it's definitely the first one I've had in my life."*

*"Rabbi EBC, in our first meeting (over Zoom about potential conversion), gently guided me toward giving a spiritual history and responded to it with such thoughtful reflections on the deeper themes and parts of her own story that I felt a space open up in which to explore safely. This is after many years of considering conversion but feeling the edges of peoplehood and who's in and out were too jagged to safely engage. 1.5 years later, I am so happily Jewish in a trad egal household! Coming to her affiliated shul for the first time, Rabbi EBC said, 'can I help orient you in any way?' It made space for any level of prior knowledge/orientation and - in that case - helped me jump in where we were in the Torah reading. I now use this same question when new students/residents join my teams in the hospital."*

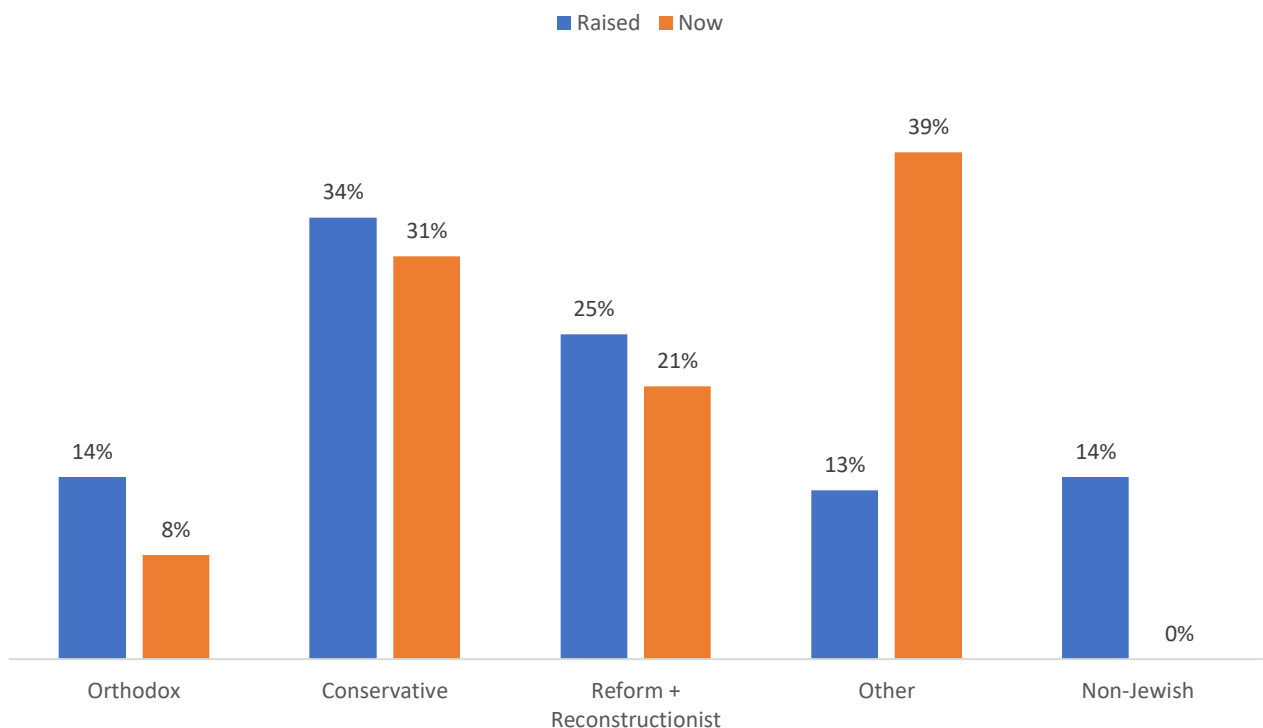


## For Those Raised Orthodox – An Opportunity to Experiment

14% of Basers were raised Orthodox and 8% currently identify as Orthodox (exhibit 15). For this segment of the population, the importance of Base is to enable them to expand their Jewish horizons beyond the Orthodox community. As a group, they are more likely to report meaningful contact with the Base Rabbi and report Base offering them an opportunity for Jewish growth. They are also more likely to be involved in other Jewish spaces.

*“Base taught me to view the practice of halakhic Judaism as containing the possibility to more fully include people marginalized by the traditional gender norms that have become central to Orthodox Judaism.”*

Exhibit 15. Denominational Identification



## Concluding Discussion

### Creating Jewish Space in which Young Adults feel Comfortable

The contribution of Base to a young adult's Jewish life is rooted in a person considering Base as a significant Jewish space. For a minority of respondents, Base is their primary Jewish space. For the majority Base complements their Jewish life elsewhere. The common denominator is that all who report Jewish outcomes from their Base participation will perceive Base as a meaningful space, and a space in which they feel that they belong. Terms used to describe Base as a Jewish space include: "A space to explore and grow," "a secure space," "a comfortable space," "a communal space," "an alternative space," and "a gateway" to other Jewish involvement opportunities.

### The Base Weave

The Base rabbinic couple creates opportunities for social interaction which are informed by Jewish knowledge and ideas. In a previous report, we described the experience of meaningful Jewish space created by "the Base Weave," composed of five inter-weaving and reinforcing experiences.

*"Base is a meaningful Jewish space in which I feel comfortable, empowered to participate and experience community led by a rabbinical couple whom I admire."<sup>1</sup>*

### An Experiential Learning Community – Social Relationships Informed by Jewish Knowledge and Ideas

At the heart of the Base Weave are the meaningful social relationships with the Base Rabbi and/or Partner and other young adults. By design, the social relationships formed at Base are informed by Jewish knowledge and ideas, whether in one-on-one discussions with the Rabbi or Partner, in learning cohorts, discussion over Shabbat dinner, during a holiday celebration, a volunteering opportunity, or social action initiative.

### Holistic Jewish Outcomes

Basers report outcomes that speak to an expanding sense of Jewish self, in which social relationships and issues of concern in daily life and beyond are seen through a Jewish lens. Life becomes imbued with Jewish meaning. That outcome is fed by and feeds other outcomes, which include Basers gaining comfort with religious practice, exposure to an inclusive form of Judaism, and increasing their engagement with Jewish life beyond Base. The latter includes seeking out Jewish friendships, hosting on Shabbat and becoming involved with other Jewish organizations.

### More = More

The more the Baser participates at Base, the more the different Jewish outcomes begin to inform one another. A person participating in one event will likely report an enjoyable experience and that "Base provided me with a space in which I feel comfortable." They will also report that "the Base couple models a relationship I can learn from." Already from the second time a Baser participates in a Base activity, they report multiple positive outcomes. As Basers continue to participate, they develop their relationship with the Base couple and other young adults they meet at Base leading to the holistic outcomes documented above.

### Different Base Experiences and Contributions

The Base couples establish meaningful relationships and facilitate Jewish growth for a wide variety of young adult Jews. Beyond the common experience of a meaningful connection to the Base rabbinic couple and Jewish peers, there are at least four groups of Basers, each arriving at Base with distinct needs and reporting specific types of Jewish outcomes.

1. **By Age.** Base targets young adults, and indeed the younger the adult, the more likely they are to report robust, holistic Jewish outcomes, including reporting Base serving as their primary Jewish space, opportunities for

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<sup>1</sup> See: [Weaving a Meaningful Jewish Space for Young Adults: Base Movement 2021 Evaluation Summary of Findings](#)

Jewish growth and developing friendships. Older Basers receive narrower benefits with a focus on a pastoral or mentoring relationship with the Base Rabbi or Partner, and the opening of pathways for increased Jewish engagement beyond Base.

2. **By Level of Affiliation.** For those Basers who did not grow up in affiliated households and received little formal Jewish education, Base serves as a gateway into organized Jewish life. They are the most likely, on average, to report high levels of holistic Jewish outcomes from their contact with Base.
3. **Interfaith Couples.** Those partnered with non-Jews are dramatically more likely to report a contribution to their engagement with Jewish life beyond Base. Base serves as a gateway for them to gain confidence and an understanding of pathways for Jewish involvement.
4. **Orthodox Jews.** For those who were raised Orthodox or who currently identify as Orthodox, the importance of Base is often rooted in their desire to expand their Jewish horizons beyond the Orthodox community. As a group they are more likely to report meaningful contact with the Base Rabbi and report Base offering them an opportunity for Jewish growth. They are also likely to be involved in other Jewish spaces, including Orthodox institutions.

### Key Learnings to Act On

Base is an “experiential learning community” that draws in a diverse group of young Jewish adults who report holistic outcomes for their sense of self and participation in Jewish life.

#### *Three +*

Success is evidenced by the “participation effect.” The more a Baser participates, the more holistic and powerful the Jewish outcomes they report. Thus, any strategy that professionalizes and enhances repeated participation will lead to meaningful Jewish outcomes for more young adults. Encouraging a first visit and then following up to convert that visit into a second and then third. Once a person chooses to participate at least three times, they are likely to be touched in a deep sense, as a person and as a Jew by the Base social and intellectual experience.

#### *The Centrality of the Base Couple*

The centrality of the Base couple to the social and intellectual experience at Base is central and thus also a limitation. The Rabbi and Partner can only reach a finite number of people each year. There are Bases where an effort being made to empower Basers to lead social and learning activities to extend the Base couples reach. In some cities, such as Chicago, this challenge is also being met by multiplying the number of Base homes in the city.

#### *Awareness of Sub-Groups*

We recommend developing a professional development practice within Base that focuses on the different needs of sub-groups coming to Base. Each rabbinic couple brings different personal qualities to the relationship building that lies at the heart of the Base experience. Factors such as the rabbinic couple’s age, gender, sexual orientation, denominational affiliation, and broader life interests influence their ability to touch people who are similar and different from them. Each Base couple would benefit from actively reflecting and documenting with their peers strategies that are authentic to who they are as individuals, for establishing relationships with younger or older Basers, those who grew up unaffiliated or not Jewish, couples who are seeking their Jewish life together, or those who grew up Orthodox, amongst others.

#### *Creating Meaningful Jewish Space*

The ability of the rabbinic couples to create meaningful Jewish space for young Jewish adults is a major accomplishment. Continuing existing work to document best practices and share them with the broader field of Jewish engagement and community building professionals will position Base as a thought leader in a professional arena that is vital to the future of American Jewry.