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Finally, A Picture of Day School Education's Impact: Testing our Claims

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Jewish Lives and Jewish Education in the UK

School, Family and Society

 Springer

An Unprecedented Data Set

- **10 years of data** so far: 2011-2021
- **7 Jewish secondary schools** (Year 7-12)
- **1,000+ students**, born in 2000-01
- **5 Student surveys:**
2012 (n=845), 2014 (n=886), 2016 (n=799), 2018 (n=525), 2021 (n=274)
- **5 Parent surveys:**
2012 (n=486), 2014 (n=418), 2016 (n=334), 2018 (n=294), 2021 (n=174)
- **5 Rounds of family interviews:**
(parents and children): 2011 (n=147), 2013-14 (n=147), 2015-16 (n=120), 2017-18 (n=119), 2020-21 (n=105)



1. Day Schools Cultivate Strong Jewish Identities

Jewish day school education fosters deep and meaningful social connections, positively contributing to Jewish continuity. Compared to non-day school Jewish adults, a significantly greater proportion of day school alumni:

- Consider their children Jewish (95% vs 62%)
- Consider themselves Jewish by religion (89% vs 73%)
- Marry someone Jewish (62% vs 45%)

—Mosbacher, Z. F. (2024). *New research on why Jewish day school matters*. Jewish United Fund.

Regression analysis of data from a survey population that included participants who attended non-Jewish schools showed that Jewish school attendance did not predict greater Jewish religiosity (belief in God, shabbat observance or synagogue attendance). However—even when holding constant Jewish background—attending a Jewish school did predict a greater likelihood that respondents' closest friends are Jewish, that they plan to marry someone Jewish, and that they plan to visit Israel in the next decade.

—Miller, H. & Pomson, A. (2024). *Jewish lives and Jewish education in the UK*

"I definitely feel more culturally Jewish. I feel more aware of what it means to be Jewish. And that's down to the people that I'm around. By its very nature, prescriptive Jewish study according to a curriculum is never going to make somebody more Jewish. It will make them know the facts about Judaism.... It's not going to make you a better Jew or a more devout one. Being in a Jewish environment surrounded by Jewish people could do and I think it has made me more in touch with the Jewish community.... I don't think [my school] has sort of actively influenced me. But just by the nature of being at a Jewish school and being in that community, that's changed how I see myself and the people that I interact with." (Day school student, 18)

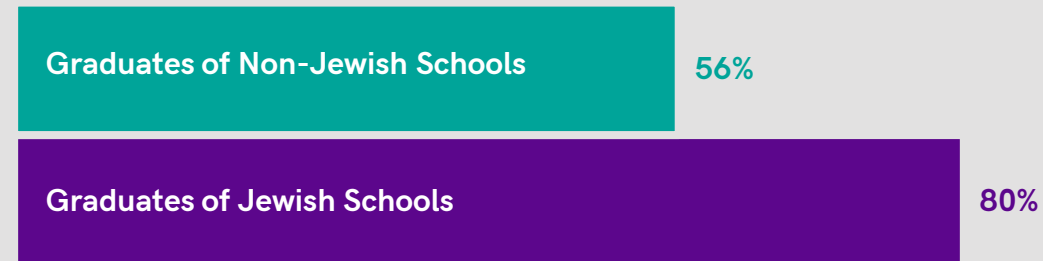
—Miller, H. & Pomson, A. (2024). *Jewish lives and Jewish education in the UK*



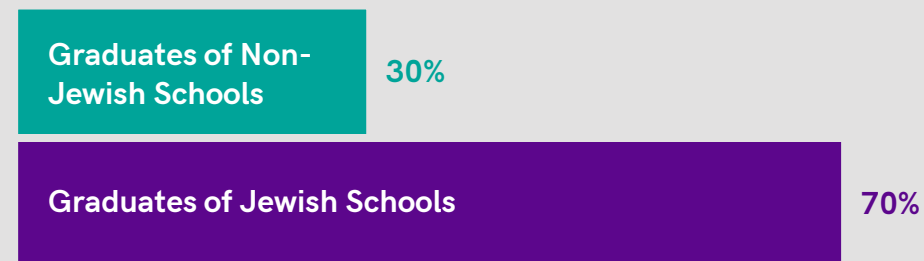
2. Day Schools Build Extensive Jewish Social Networks

Friendships Today

Closest friends today are those they went to school with



All of most of closest friends are Jewish



In each school, we held focus group discussions with students and routinely asked about the highlight of their time in school...Often their first response was how wonderful their fellow students are...

These young people...are bound together by strong, overlapping connections of kinship and shared values. Those values might be more particularistic in religiously Orthodox institutions and more inclusive in community day schools. In either case, they are felt to be countercultural and distinctively Jewish. [These are communities] based on shared values where there is a powerful and palpable sense of being part of the Jewish collective.

—Pomson, A. & Wertheimer, J. (2022). *Inside Jewish day schools: leadership, learning and community*

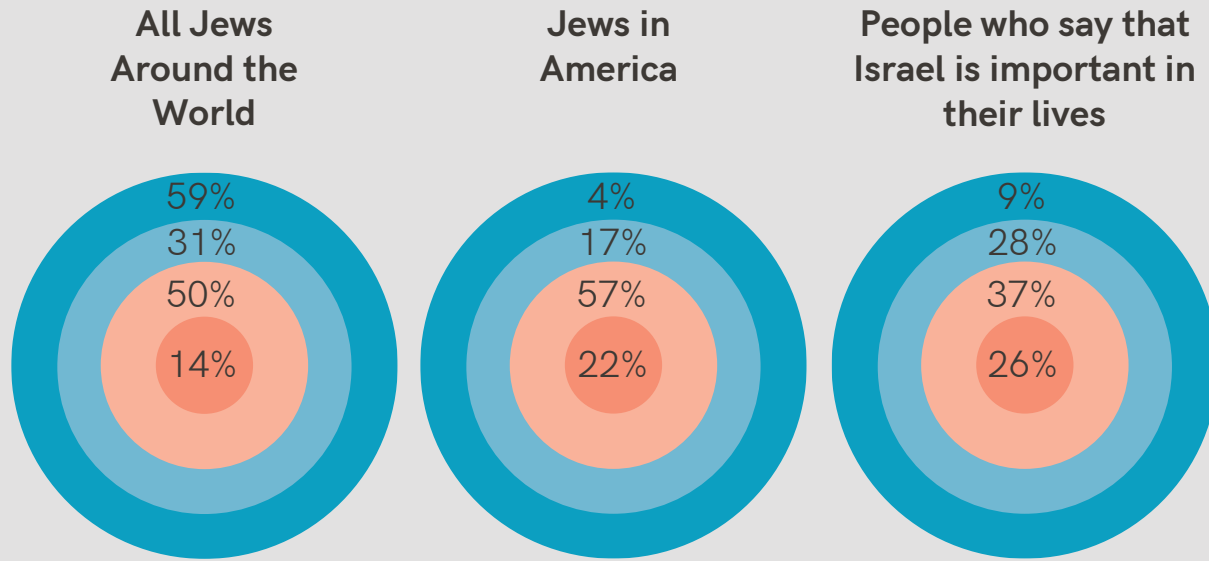
"It just felt, these people, our lives were so similar when growing up, it's kind of easy to speak to these people, and they understand your problems, they understand what you've been through as a kid and whatever, and so it was much easier to grow accustomed to them than it felt growing accustomed to a stranger I'd never met before." (Day school graduate, 21 years old)

—Miller, H. & Pomson, A. (2024). *Jewish lives and Jewish education in the UK*



3. Day Schools Connect Young People to Israel

Identifying with Different Groups of People



Pomson, A., Wertheimer, J. & Hachon Wolf, H. (2014). Hearts and minds: Israel in North American Jewish day schools. AVI CHAI Foundation.

[At age twenty] 19% of graduates from non-Jewish schools felt “disconnected from Israel,” more than double the proportion of those who attended Jewish schools. 45% thought “Israel is an attractive place to live” compared to 52% of Jewish school graduates, and just 12% “would like it if people saw [them] as a representative of the State of Israel,” compared to 22% of Jewish school graduates).

—Miller, H. & Pomson, A. (2024). Jewish lives and Jewish education in the UK

Jewish day school education cultivates a love for Israel and instills a lifelong commitment to supporting and engaging with global Jewry. Compared to non-day school Jewish adults, a significantly greater proportion of day school alumni: Feel emotionally “very attached” to Israel (65% vs 27%); Feel “very much” a part of the worldwide Jewish community (45% vs 26%)

—Mosbacher, Z. F. (2024). New research on why Jewish day school matters. Jewish United Fund.

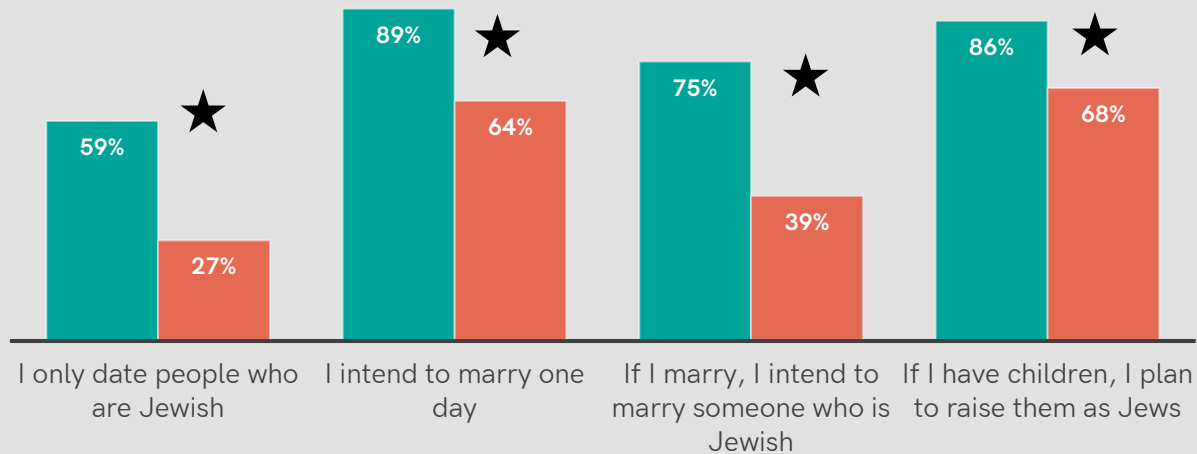


4. Day Schools Graduates are Committed to Raising their Children as Jews

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements?

Percentage of "Agree/Strongly Agree"

■ Jewish school ■ Non-Jewish school



★ Differences between Jewish and non-Jewish schools are statistically significant for all items. Percentages represent those who selected "agree" or "strongly agree," the top two points on a six-point scale. Survey participants were 20 years old when they responded.

Miller, H. & Pomson, A. (2024). *Jewish lives and Jewish education in the UK*

...while Jewish school graduates do not share the same principled commitment to dating Jewish and marrying Jewish as their parents' generation, they are still more inclined than their peers who graduated non-Jewish schools to date and marry other Jews. This is simply because so many of their friends are Jewish and because they see the cultural and social advantages (the bonuses) in finding a Jewish partner. For almost all of them, their imagined Jewish future does include an ongoing Jewish identity and adherence to Jewish life through any children they might have.

—Miller, H. & Pomson, A. (2024). *Jewish lives and Jewish education in the UK*



5. Day Schools Produce Literate Jewish Adults

Day schools possess the special potential to nurture young people with the ability to contribute to Jewish culture; they cultivate Jewish cultural virtuosos. Compared with every other educational institution to which Jewish children have access, Jewish day schools are unusual in the amount of time they have at their disposal and, crucially, the extent to which that time forms part of a rhythmic cycle...

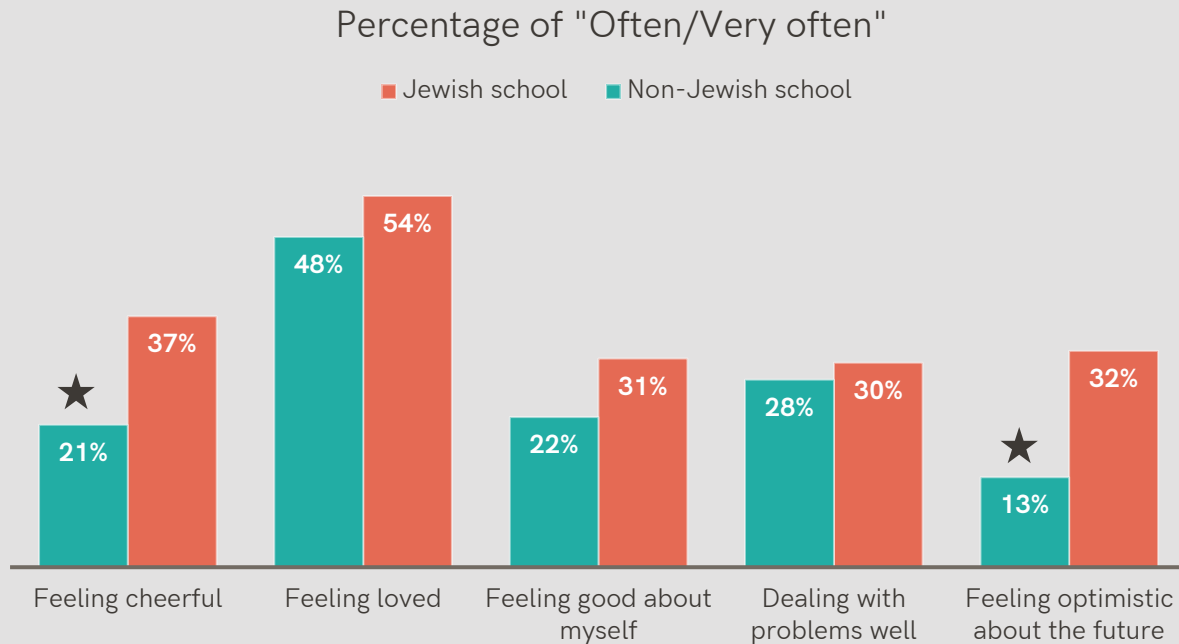
[In our observations, we saw how students had gone beyond being culturally competent. They were displaying knowledge and skills that enabled them, at a high level, to tell stories about profound moments from the Jewish past, contribute to the well-being of society, engage in meaning-generating text study, pray fluently, and articulate Israel's significance. They were exhibiting virtuosity in some of the primary markers of Jewish cultural literacy and social responsibility.

—Pomson, A. & Wertheimer, J. (2022). *Inside Jewish day schools: leadership, learning and community*



6. Day Schools Nurture Robust Mental Health

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts.
In the past 2 weeks, how often have you experienced the following?



★ Statistically Significant Difference

(Six-point scale: "never" to "very often")

Miller, H. & Pomson, A. (2024). Jewish lives and Jewish education in the UK

[Covid-19 has] impacted my personal development positively, because I've realised I am OK on my own and that I can do things for myself, which has been a big lesson for me to not depend on other people.

It's sort of made me realise how fragile all the systems of the world are. The fact that everything can just shut down within a matter of days sort of made me realise how stuff just doesn't matter as much.

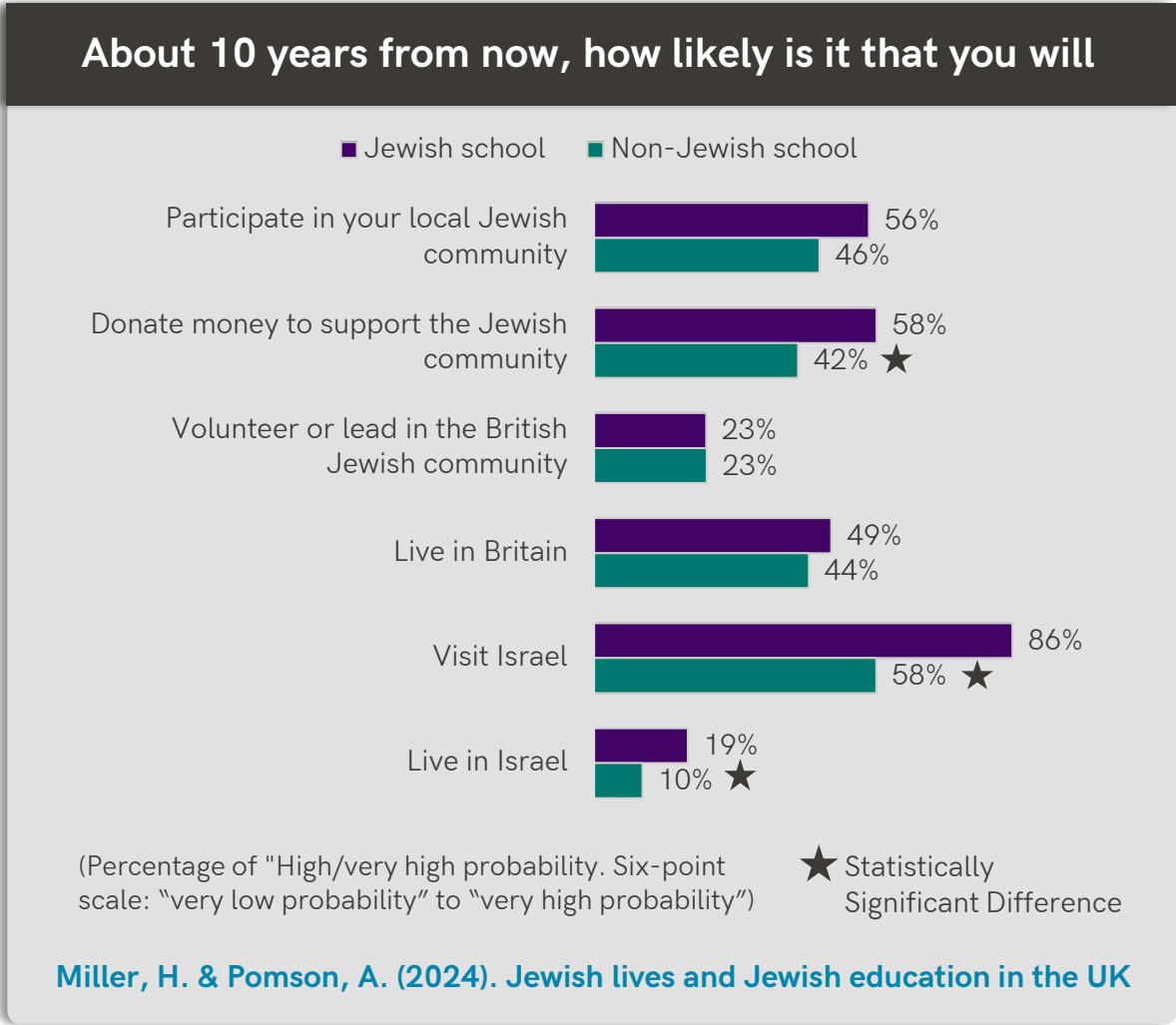
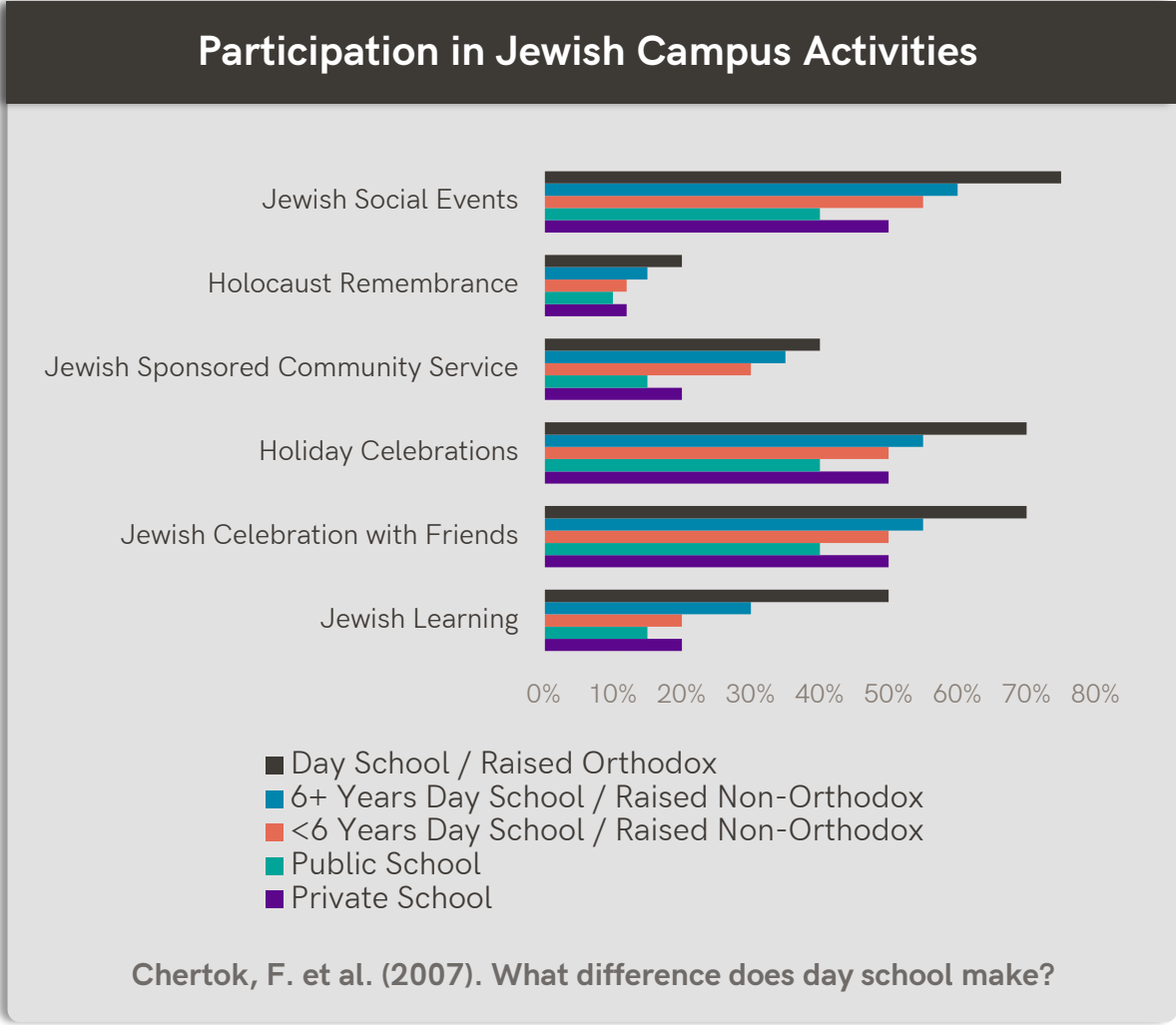
...going home, travel, work, enjoy life - all cancelled!

(Day school graduates, 21 years old)

—Miller, H. & Pomson, A. (2024). Jewish lives and Jewish education in the UK



7. Day School Graduates are Involved in Jewish Life on Campus and Beyond



8. Day Schools Incubate Jewish Leaders

Jewish Educational Experience by Sector of Lay Leaders, past & present							
Activity	Jewish Pre-school	J Day School, Yeshiva (K-8)	J Day School, Yeshiva (9-12)	Jewish Overnight Camp	College Courses in Jewish Studies	J Student Activities (Hillel, etc.)	Israel Trip (Teen, Birthright, Other)
Day School	55% ▲	50% ▲	38% ▲	57%	49%	42% ▼	72%
Camp	47%	37%	25%	75% ▲	54%	49%	78%
Academic	44%	40%	32%	63%	56%	55%	77%
Religious School	36%	27%	25%	55%	58%	46%	70%
Congregation	31% ▼	27%	19%	55%	43% ▼	43% ▼	62% ▼
Youth	45%	26%	20%	72% ▲	64% ▲	65%	84% ▲
Hillel	45%	25%	19%	62% ▲	64% ▲	83% ▲	87% ▲
Federation	35%	26%	16%	51% ▼	50%	49%	76%
Philanthropy	36%	30%	23%	57%	50%	46%	76%
Israel	37%	30%	25%	57%	59%	55%	80%
Social Justice	32%	18% ▼	10% ▼	58%	54%	61%	79%
Advocacy	35%	27%	21%	58%	58%	57%	72%
Women's Org'n	37%	31%	20%	55%	48%	40% ▼	69%

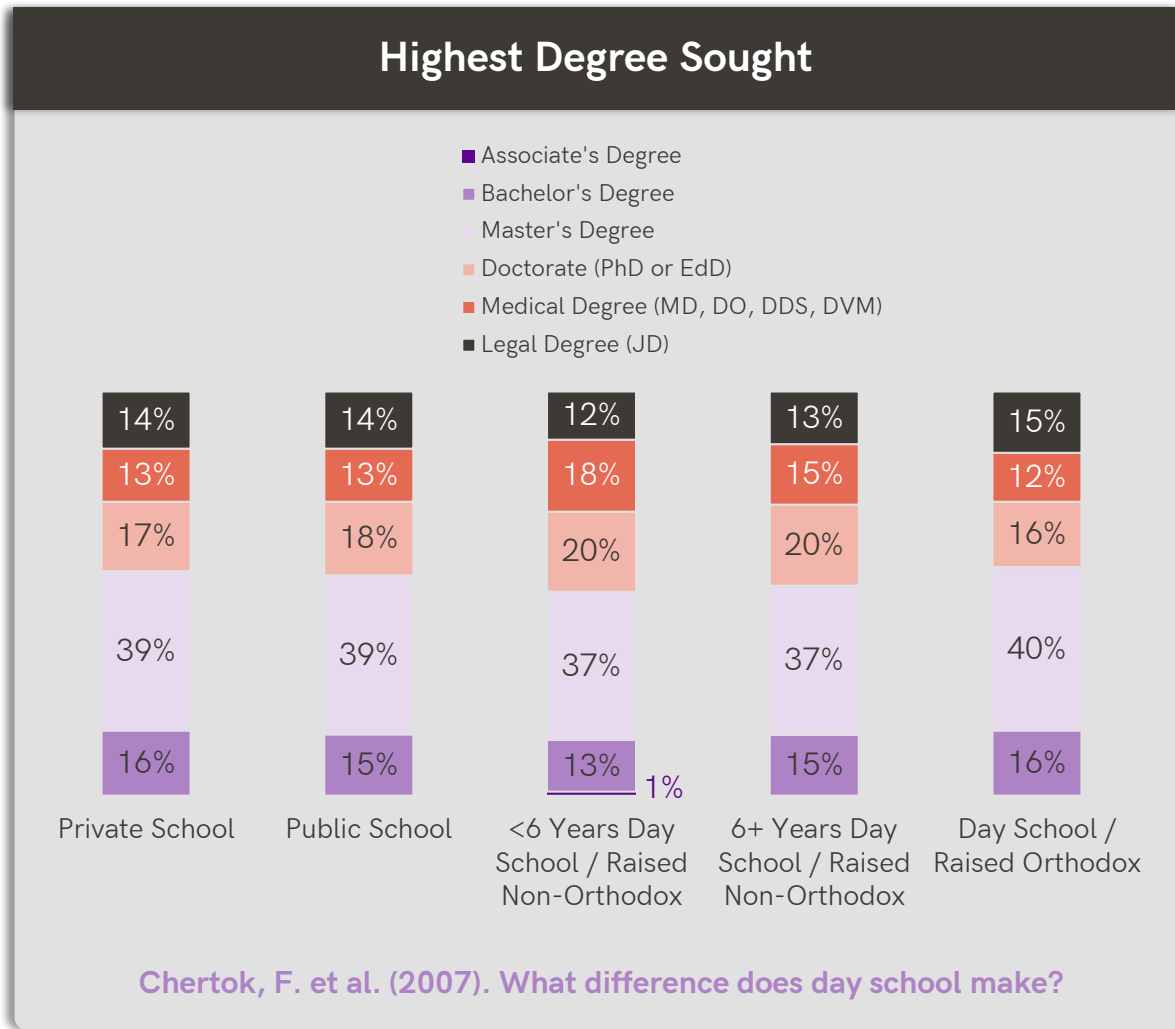
Jewish Educational Experiences by Sector of Professional Leadership							
Activity	Jewish Pre-school	J Day School, Yeshiva (K-8)	J Day School, Yeshiva (9-12)	Jewish Overnight Camp	College Courses in Jewish Studies	J Student Activities (Hillel, etc.)	Israel Experience
Day School	62% ▲	63% ▲	51% ▲	65%	58%	41% ▼	76%
Camp	52% ▲	32%	18%	85% ▲	54%	53%	81% ▲
Religious School	35%	25%	17%	61%	64%	55%	83% ▲
Senior Clergy	38%	27%	18%	60%	72% ▲	65%	79%
Hillel	47%	29%	19%	61%	67%	76% ▲	86% ▲
Academic	44%	44%	34%	58%	60%	46%	75%
Federation	31% ▼	17% ▼	12% ▼	63%	60%	65%	81% ▲
Philanthropy	34%	29%	14%	58%	53%	48%	70% ▼
JCC	44%	26%	16%	67%	57%	46%	80%
Israel	32% ▼	35%	22%	56%	62%	57%	77%
Social Justice	34%	23%	11% ▼	53% ▼	42% ▼	43% ▼	68% ▼
Advocacy	31% ▼	28%	17%	52% ▼	52%	43% ▼	71%

"The analysis...of over 2,000 respondents - Jewish leaders, lay and professional, present and past - has shown conclusively that Jewish education levels among Jewish communal leaders are high in comparison with the Jewish public. That generalization holds true for Jewish day school enrollment as well as overnight Jewish camp attendance."

—Keren Keshet & Research Success Technologies. (2021). *The Jewish education of today's Jewish leadership: Day Schools, Overnight Camps, & Other Educational Experiences among Lay & Professional Jewish Communal Leaders*



9. On a Trajectory to First-Class Higher Education



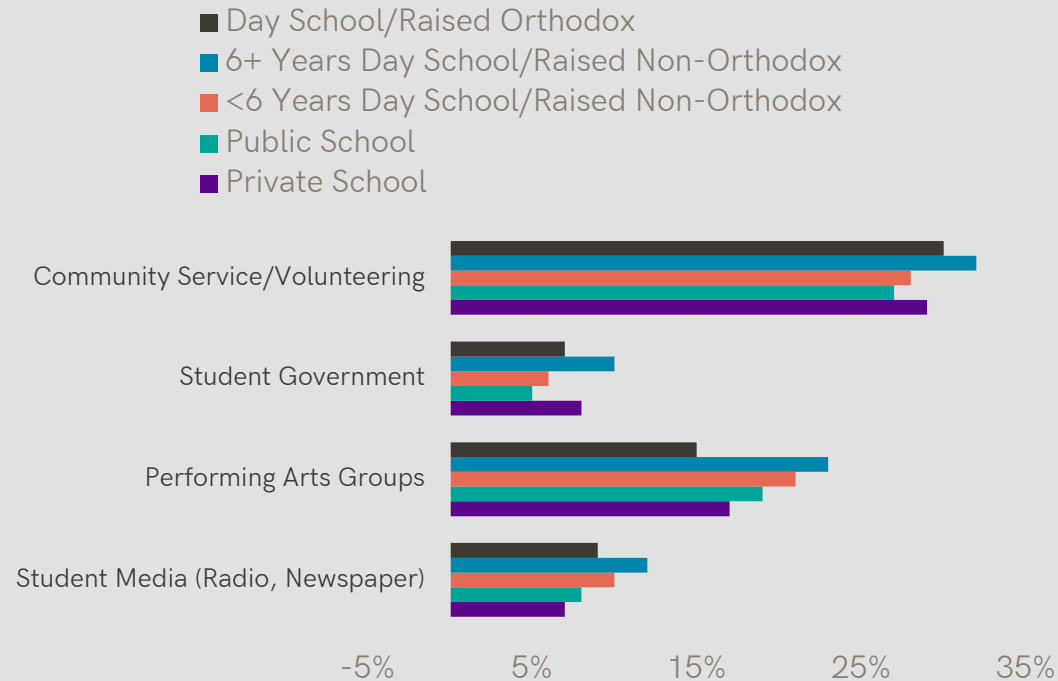
Alumni of Jewish high schools gain admittance to colleges and universities that represent the full spectrum of institutions of higher education including the most highly selective. In fact, the majority of the respondents to the present survey attend colleges and universities in the top quartile of ranked schools... There are no significant differences in the self-reported GPAs of those who attended public, private, or day schools. Students from non-Orthodox backgrounds with six or more years of day school demonstrate the highest academic self-confidence. While day school students from an Orthodox background experience lower math confidence, they like other students who attended day schools, do not appear to experience any skill deficits that limit their willingness to select major fields of study that are dependent on skills related to math and science. Nor are they any more likely than other students to feel the need for tutoring or remedial work in math or science.

—Chertok, F. et al. (2007). What difference does day school make?



10. Day Schools Produce Engaged Citizens

Involvement in Extracurricular Activities



"I did run a campaign to try and remove beef from campus, for like an environmental campaign, which we're still working on at the moment." (Day school graduate, 21 years old)

—Chertok, F. et al. (2007). *What difference does day school make?*

In political terms, these young people [day school graduates] tend to be outward looking. In Year 13...90% planned to vote ...Three years later, 83% had indeed voted in the general election, much higher than the national average among 18-24 year old voters in the UK, currently only at 47%.

Besides exercising their right to vote, participants found many ways to get involved in societal matters once they were at university. In this respect, graduates of Jewish schools differed little from those who had attended non-Jewish schools. Some limited their activism to Jewish causes, but many did not. And the causes within which they played active roles run the gamut of contemporary concerns: the environment, anti-racism, social justice, and equity, more generally.

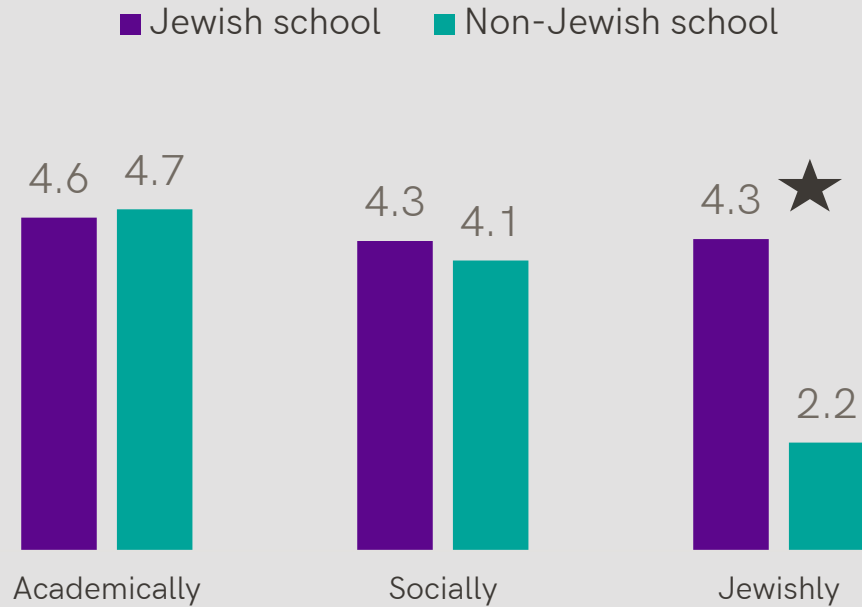
I edited the student newspaper and there were a couple of things that I could say I engaged in, in the political sense...So there was one in first year where I outed someone - it was a college fellow, he was a ... bit of a racist. So, we outed that. (Day school graduate, 21 years old)

—Miller, H. & Pomson, A. (2024). *Jewish lives and Jewish education in the UK*



11. Day Schools Graduates are Prepared for Life After School

To what extent did school prepare you for life after school?



(Six-point scale: "not at all" to "completely")

★ Statistically Significant Difference

—Miller, H. & Pomson, A. (2024). *Jewish lives and Jewish education in the UK*

[School] gave me the skills to be a very independent learner.

[School] taught me to be quite a confident person. It made me feel welcomed, wanted and appreciated. So, I go out now with the attitude that I'm always appreciated, and I'm always loved because that's what I got from my school.

I thought it was a really good social environment. So that would be like a highlight.

(Day school graduates, 21 years old)

—Miller, H. & Pomson, A. (2024). *Jewish lives and Jewish education in the UK*



12. Day Schools Enable Parents to Find Jewish Friends and Jewish Community

For families starting out with relatively underdeveloped Jewish social networks, their children's schools play a constructive role in their own lives as adults. The thickening of their relationships with other Jewish adults is an everyday consequence of what one might characterize as caring for one another's children, through car-pooling arrangements, sitting together on committees, or organizing playdates. By these means, the concern they share for their children helps parents make Jewish friends...

When parents come into school to celebrate Chanukah, Purim, Sukkot, and Yom Haatzmaut, they join together not only with their own children but with the parents of other children who often make up a proximate and most attractive Jewish community.

—Pomson, A. & Wertheimer, J. (2022). *Inside Jewish day schools: leadership, learning and community*

The symbolic frame of school life (the ways parents find meaning within their children's school) parallels the sociological functions historically performed by the synagogue as bet k'nesset (house of meeting), bet midrash (house of study) and bet tephillah (house of prayer). There is compelling evidence...of parents turning to and making use of the school as a site of social fellowship, education and spiritual inspiration, for themselves.

...It seems that the day school - an institution created so as to enable the next generation of adult Jews to participate knowledgeably and responsibly in Jewish life - can and does provide a point of entry to meaningful Jewish engagement and learning for many in the present generation of adult Jews.

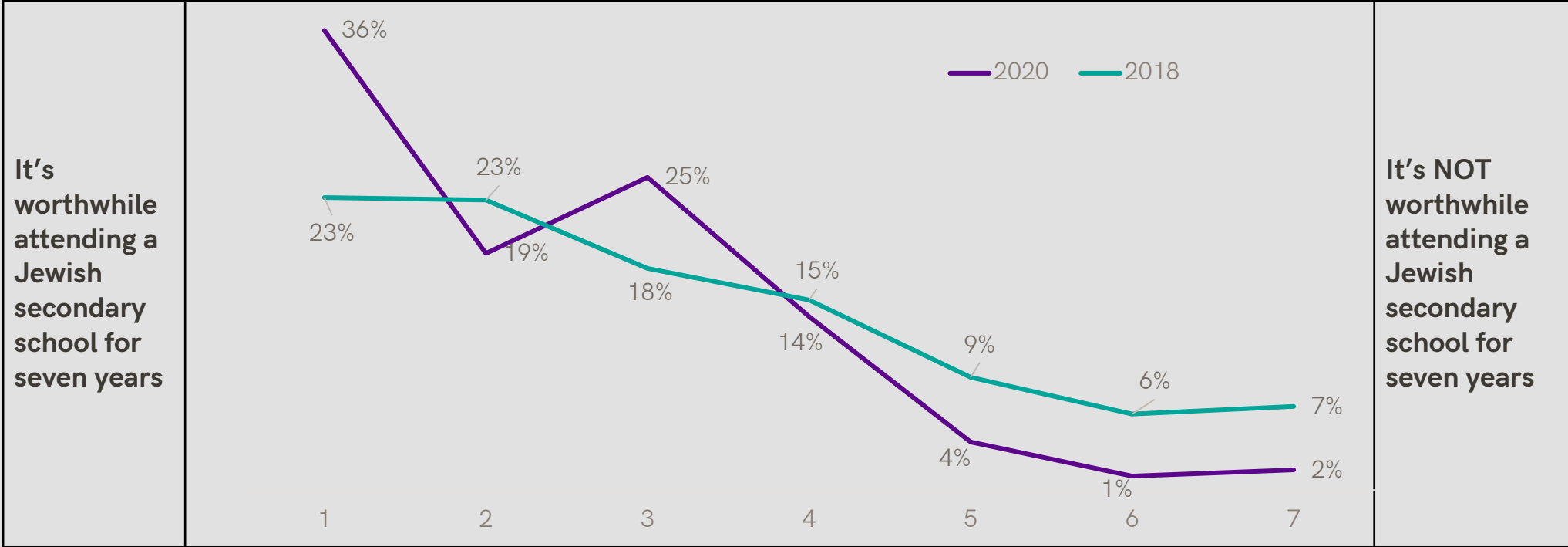
— Pomson, A. & Schnoor, R. (2008). *Back to school: Jewish day school in the lives of adult Jews*



Distance Makes the Heart Grow Fonder

Three years after they left school, graduates appreciate their day school more than did when they were in their senior (graduating) year.

Assessing the Value of Day School Education



—Miller, H. & Pomson, A. (2024). Jewish lives and Jewish education in the UK

