

The Limmud International Study:

Jewish Learning Communities
on a Global Scale

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Limmud
INTERNATIONAL



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Introduction

Limmud, a Jewish education initiative, has grown from a small UK-based conference for 80 participants, to an international movement comprising annual events in more than 50 locations world-wide, reaching over 30,000 individuals per year.

- This is commendable growth, and numerically, by any criteria, Limmud International could be said to be a huge success.
- But what does success mean? What types of impact does participation in Limmud style Jewish learning exert...
 - On participants' personal Jewish journeys?
 - On their communities, worldwide?

Overview of findings

A story of success and diversity

The story of Limmud is undoubtedly a story of diversity, success and growth.

Jewish Identity

The Jewish identity and involvement profiles of Limmud participants vary from country to country. For example, American and Israeli Limmudniks are more religiously oriented than counterparts in other countries.

Jewish involvement and leadership

Limmudniks are not only active in their Jewish communities, significant numbers are Jewish leaders. From 8% to 24% of respondents, per country grouping, report that they have personally setup a new Jewish initiative or organization.

Strong impact on European participants

Europe's Limmud events reach more of the less Jewishly involved. European Limmudniks are the most likely to cite impact on their Jewish learning and community involvement as a result of their Limmud participation.

Repeat participation

Limmud events in the United States and Europe have the fewest repeat participants, while Australia, Israel and the UK have the most.

Israeli respondents are an exceptional group

- Israeli Limmudniks show the highest levels of Jewish identity and involvement. They are among the most likely to cite Limmud participation as leading to continuing involvements in other Limmud events, other Jewish learning venues and Jewish community initiatives.
- With a majority having attended a Limmud in another country as presenters, we learn that Israelis – beyond benefiting personally - are an important resource for the global Limmud enterprise.

Previous Research

Until now, there has not been an attempt at a rigorous comparison across the different national Limmud groups to gain an understanding of the impact of participation. Existing research includes:

- Annette Koren and Nicole Samuel. 2007, “An Evaluation of Limmud New York”
- Steven M. Cohen and Judith Veinstein. 2008. “Connecting a Community of Learners: The Limmud NY Experience”
- Caryn Aviv. 2010. “Limmud UK 2009” Association for Jewish Studies (AJS), Fall
- Simon Caplan. 2010. “Supporting Limmuds Across the World”
- Raymond Simonson. 2011. “Limmud: A Unique Model of Transformative Jewish Learning” in Miller H., Grant L. and Pomson A., *International Handbook of Jewish Education*.
- In the UK, Jon Boyd is conducting doctoral research on Limmud.

Methodology

Collaborative research project

- Led by Steven M. Cohen and Ezra Kopelowitz working with researchers in the UK, Jerusalem and New York, & collaborating with key Limmud International leadership in the UK.
- In the spirit of Limmud, almost all of the research was undertaken by volunteers and performed pro bono.

Internet survey

- Demographic and personal details; exposure to and engagement with, Limmud; personal and community Jewish journeys.
- Developed collaboratively
- Translated from English into key languages to ensure maximum response: Hebrew, Russian, French and Spanish. Volunteers from the Limmud International community undertook this task.

Participating in research

1 Limmud Atlanda+SE	26 Limmud Hungary
2 Limmud Arava	27 Limmud Los Angeles
4 Limmud Keshet Baltics	28 Limmud Modiin
5 Limmud Brazil	29 Limmud Montreal
6 Limmud Keshet Bulgaria	30 Limmud Negev
7 Limmud Keshet Buenos Aires	31 Limmud Netherlands
8 Limmud Boston	32 Limmud New Zealand
9 Limmud Chicago	33 Limmud New York
10 Limmud Colorado	34 Limmud NOLA
11 Limmud EXYU	35 Limmud OZ Melbourne
12 Limmud France	36 Limmud OZ-Sydney
13 Limmud FSU Ashkelon	37 Limmud Philadelphia
14 Limmud FSU Belarus	38 Limmud Keshet Poland
15 Limmud FSU Jerusalem	39 Limmud Keshet Romania
16 Limmud FSU Moscow	40 Limmud South Africa - Cape Town
17 Limmud FSU Odessa	41 Limmud South Africa - Durban
18 Limmud FSU Hamptons (NY)	42 Limmud South Africa - Johannesburg
19 Limmud FSU St Petersburg	43 Limmud Stockholm
20 Limmud FSU Ukraine	44 Limmud Toronto
21 Limmud Galil	45 Limmud Turkey
22 Limmud Germany	46 Limmud in the UK (Conference)
23 Limmud Germany - Tag Berlin	47 Limmud in the UK (Fest)
24 Limmud Germany - Tag Cologne	48 Limmud in the UK (regional day events)
25 Limmud Germany - Tag Frankfurt	49 Limmud Winnipeg

Analysis organized by country groupings

UK

USA

Australia

Israel

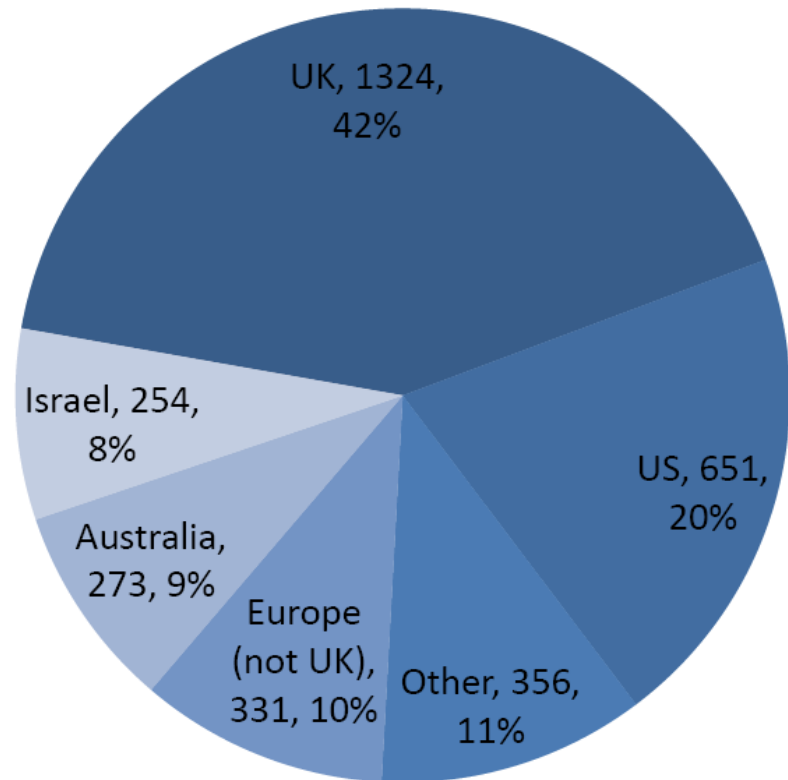
Europe (not UK)

Other

Austria
Belgium
Croatia
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Hungary
Italy
Lithuania
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Romania
Russian Federation
Serbia
Slovakia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Ukraine

Argentina
Brazil
Canada
Greece
Hong Kong
Mexico
New Zealand
South Africa
Turkey
Other

Number of respondents by country grouping



- Survey distributed by e-mail to local Limmud contact lists
- Responded to survey
 - Total: 3189
 - By country grouping
 - UK - 1324
 - USA - 651
 - Australia - 273
 - Israel - 254
 - Europe (not UK) - 331
 - Other – 356
- Limmud FSU groups serves Russian speakers, and these have been integrated into the other country groupings. There were 103 Limmud FSU respondents.

Who responded to our survey?

Key features of Limmud participants who responded worldwide:

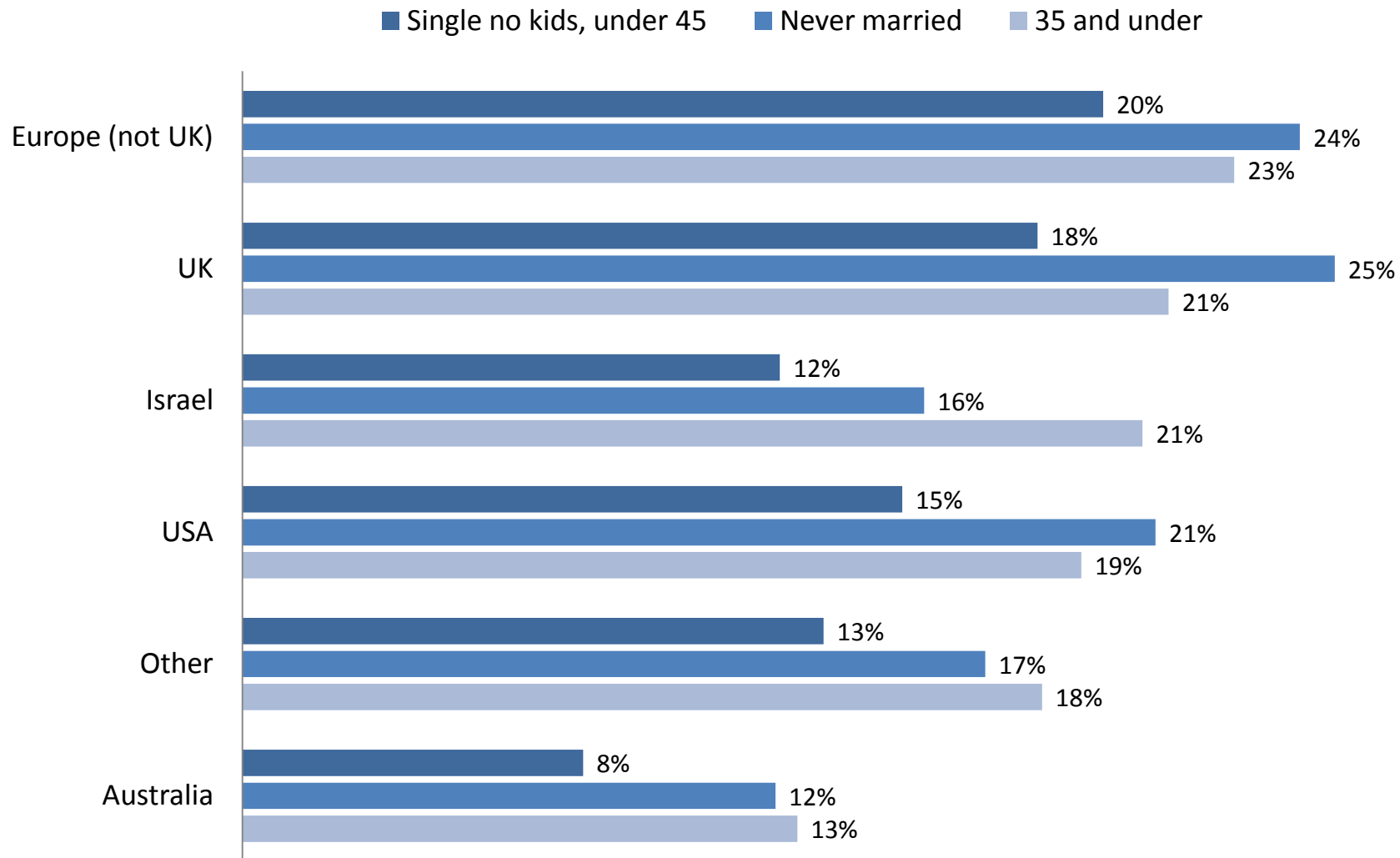
- 64%, 45 years of age and older
- 65% married
- 75% parents
- 61% female

Never married	22%
In-Married: 2 born Jews	50%
In-Married: 1-2 Jews by Choice	7%
Intermarried	7%
Separated, divorced, or widowed	15%

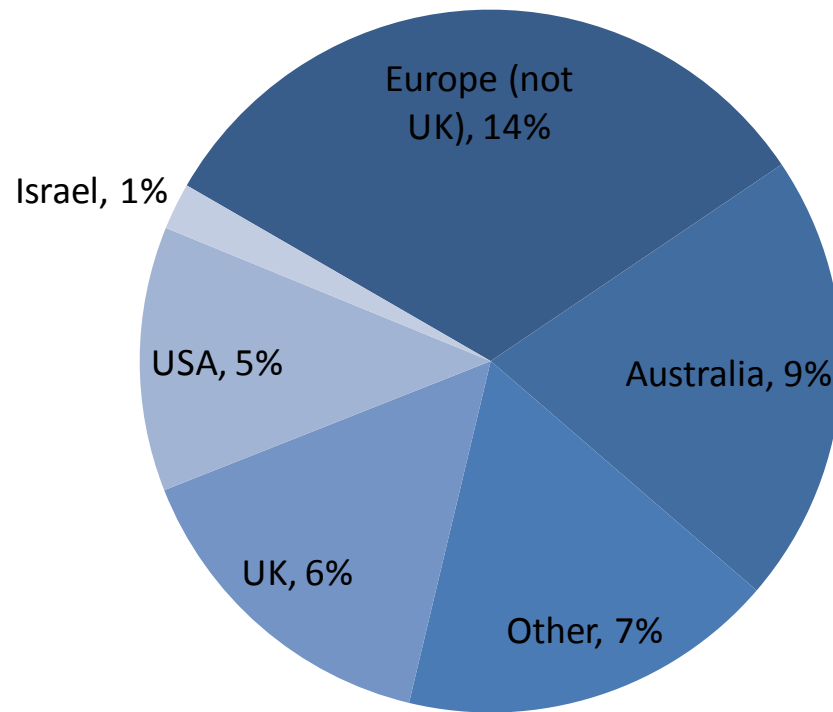
Single no kids, under 45	16%
Married no kids, under 45	10%
Married with kids	52%
Single parent	13%
Single, 45+	8%

Younger than 18	1%
18 – 25	5%
26 – 35	14%
36 – 45	15%
46 – 55	20%
56 – 65	28%
66 – 75	13%
76 or older	3%

Of the respondents, Europe and UK have the highest proportion of young and single participants, Australia the lowest.

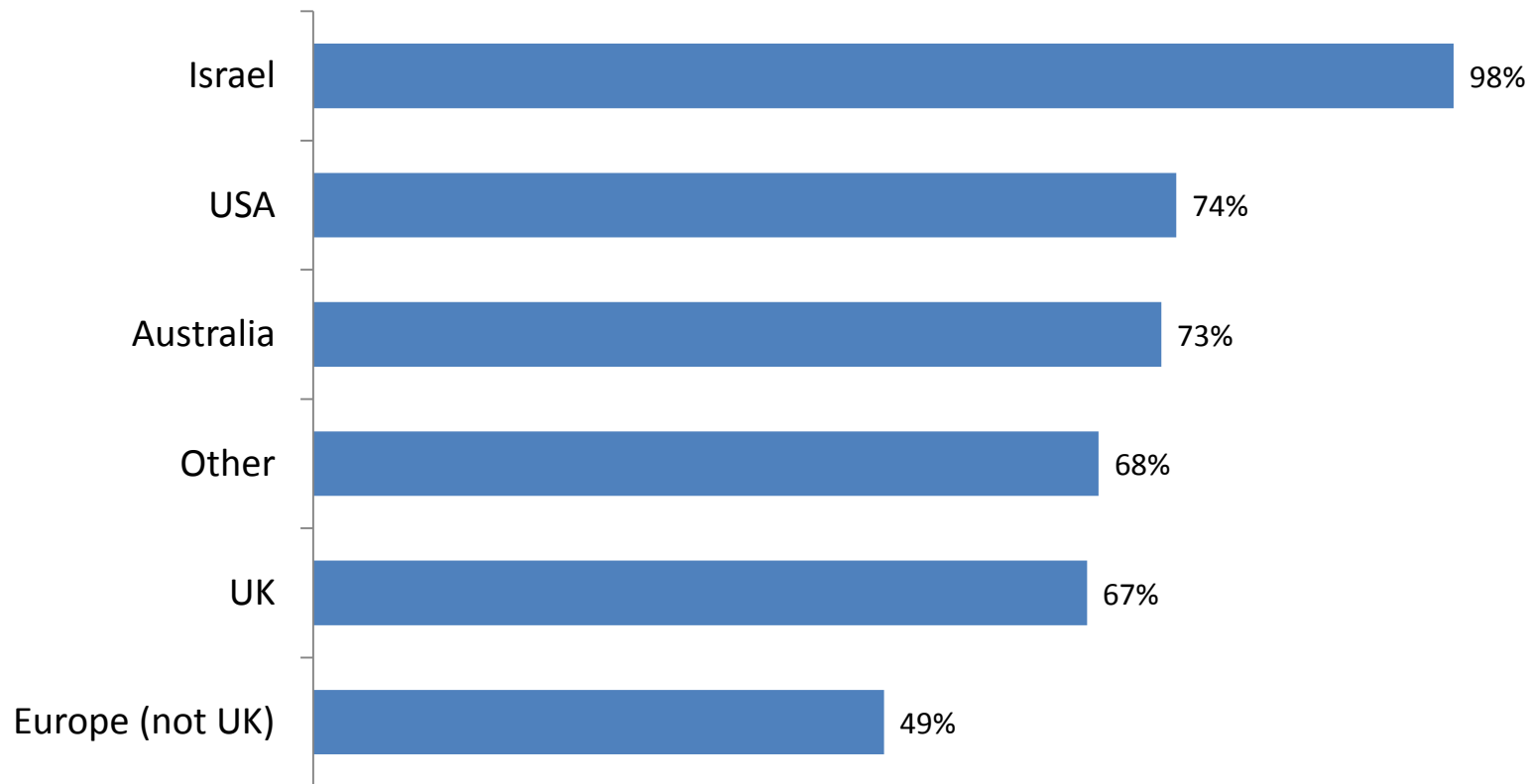


The highest percentage of intermarried Limmud participants (14% of those married) is in the Europe country grouping.



Almost all Israelis report that most of their closest friends are Jewish; while, only about half of the Europeans report the same.

Most to all of closest friends are Jewish



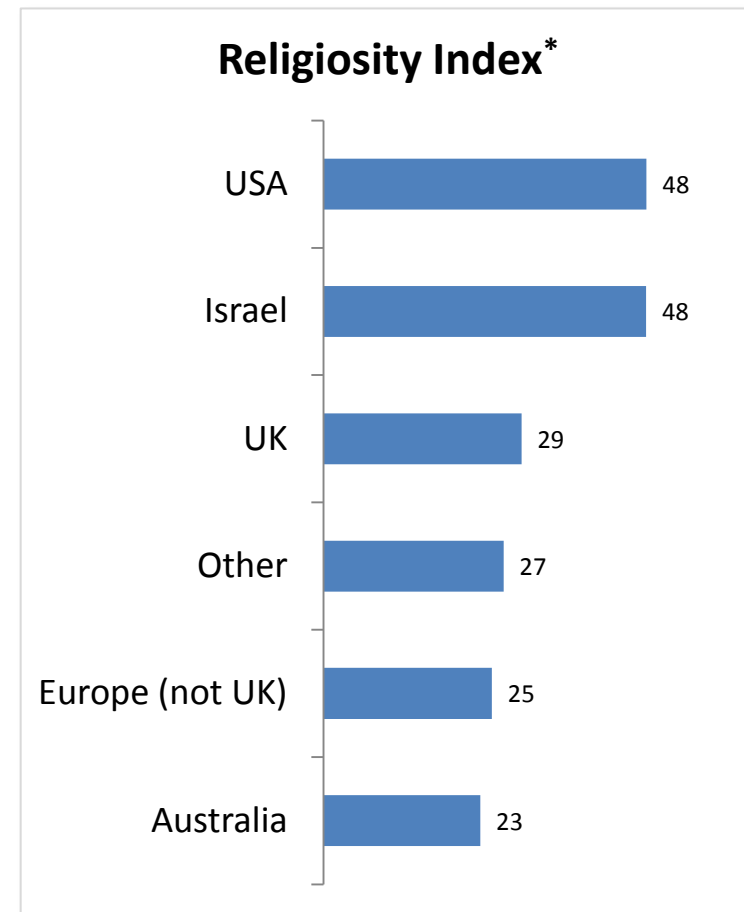
Jewish Identity

“...Limmud has deepened my interest in and enthusiasm for all things Jewish ranging from the religious to the political...”

“...Limmud has been a vital component in my identity development...”

Religiosity

Of the respondents, American and Israeli Limmudniks are far more religiously oriented than their counterparts in other countries.



Index questions

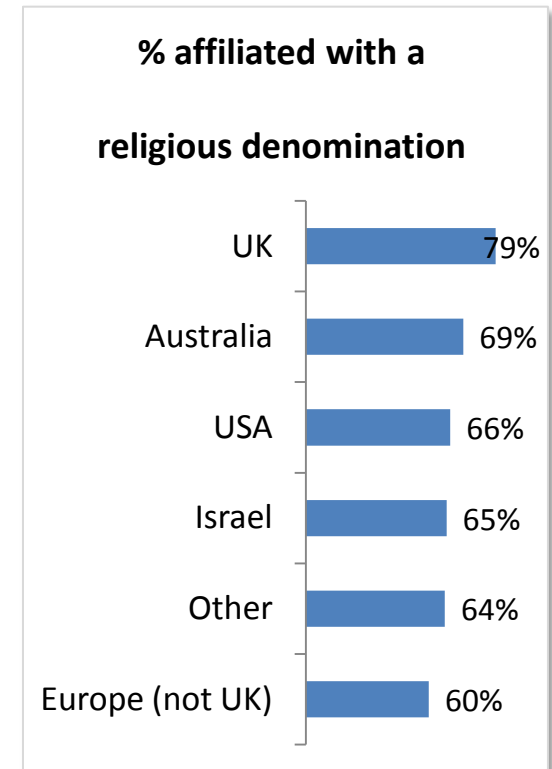
Being Jewish means lots of things to lots of people. When you think about being Jewish, to what extent do you find the following aspects of being Jewish personally meaningful to you?

- Torah
- God
- Studying Jewish Texts
- Prayer

*The index calculates the scores for all given questions, placing respondents on a scale of 0 to 100, with 100 representing the highest possible, positive score.

Denominational affiliation

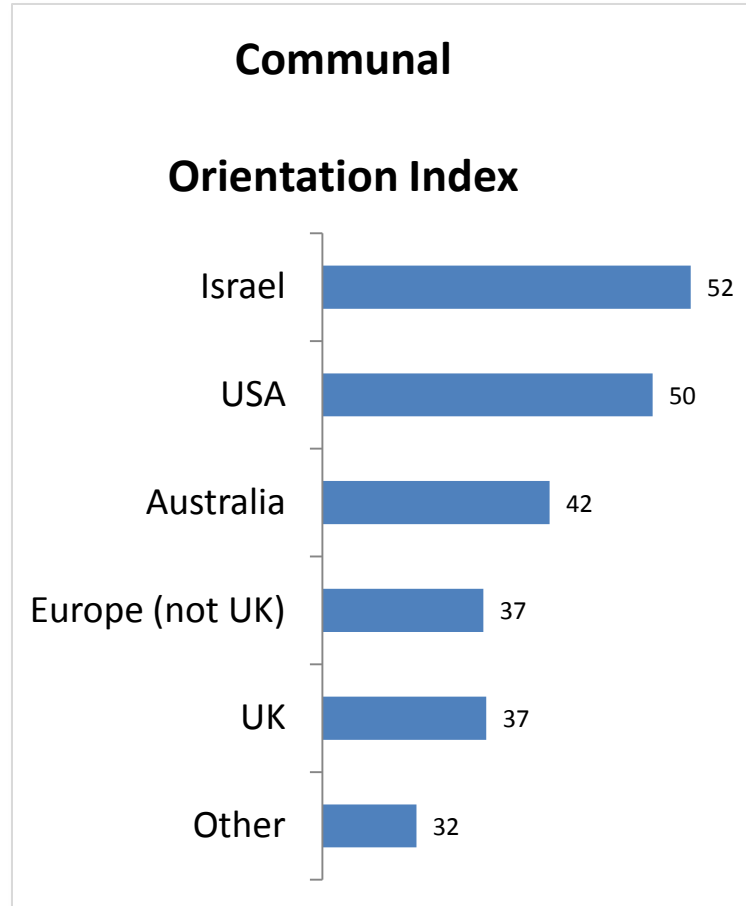
- In all country groupings most identify with a religious denomination
- UK and American Limmudniks are the least likely to identify as secular
- Americans are the most likely to identify with post-denominationalism.



	UK	USA	Australia	Israel	Europe	Other
Orthodox	33%	13%	29%	37%	8%	20%
Masorti/Conservative	16%	33%	20%	19%	34%	27%
Reform/Liberal/Reconstructionist	29%	20%	20%	9%	17%	17%
Renewal/post-denominational/non-denominational	5%	19%	2%	7%	2%	4%
Secular/Secular Humanist	6%	3%	16%	18%	17%	13%
Just Jewish	8%	9%	9%	8%	19%	16%
Not Jewish	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%
Other	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%

Jewish Communal Orientation

- Americans and Israelis are more likely than members of the other country groupings to express attachment to the broader Jewish community, in terms of finding Jewish friends, leadership, and the Jewish community highly meaningful.
- The “other” country grouping members express weak communal orientation, in these terms.



Index questions

Being Jewish means lots of things to lots of people. When you think about being Jewish, to what extent do you find the following aspects of being Jewish personally meaningful to you?

- Israel
- Jewish friends
- Leadership
- Role I can play in strengthening my Jewish community

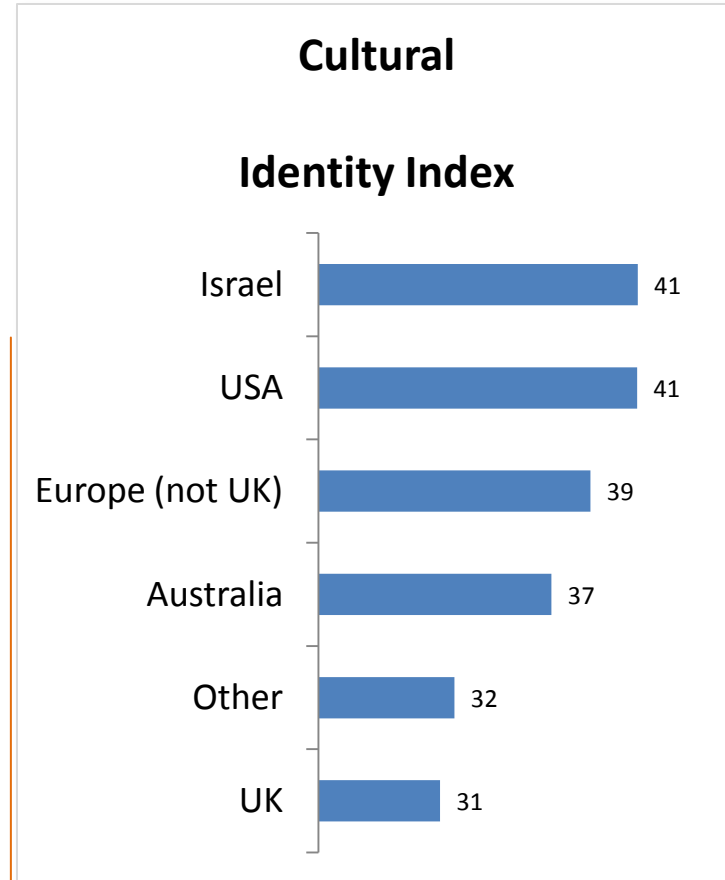
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Cultural Jewish Orientation

- In the meaning they attach to music, art, reading, etc.

Americans and Israelis show the highest levels of Jewish cultural orientation. In these matters of Jewish culture Europeans and Australians are at similar levels

- UK and “Other” respondents score lowest.



Being Jewish means lots of things to lots of people. When you think about being Jewish, to what extent do you find the following aspects of being Jewish personally meaningful to you?

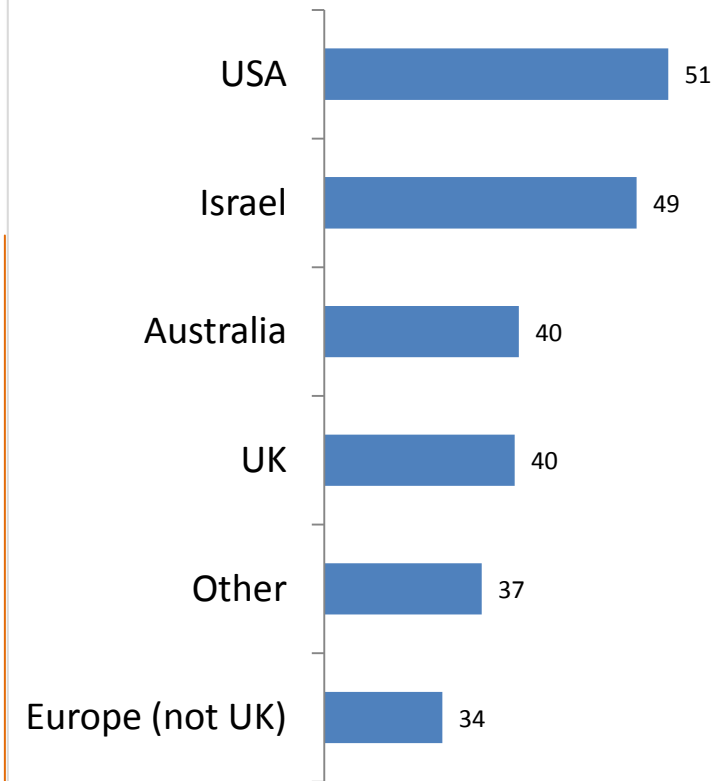
- Music and art
- Reading Jewish related books
- Jewish history
- Reading about Judaism or Jewish topics on-line

*The index calculates the scores for all given questions, placing respondents on a scale of 0 to 100, with 100 representing the highest possible, positive score.

Repair the World Orientation

- US and Israeli respondents display the strongest resonance with social justice concerns, connecting their Jewishness to improving society
- European Limmud respondents show the lowest score on this measure.

Repair the World Index*



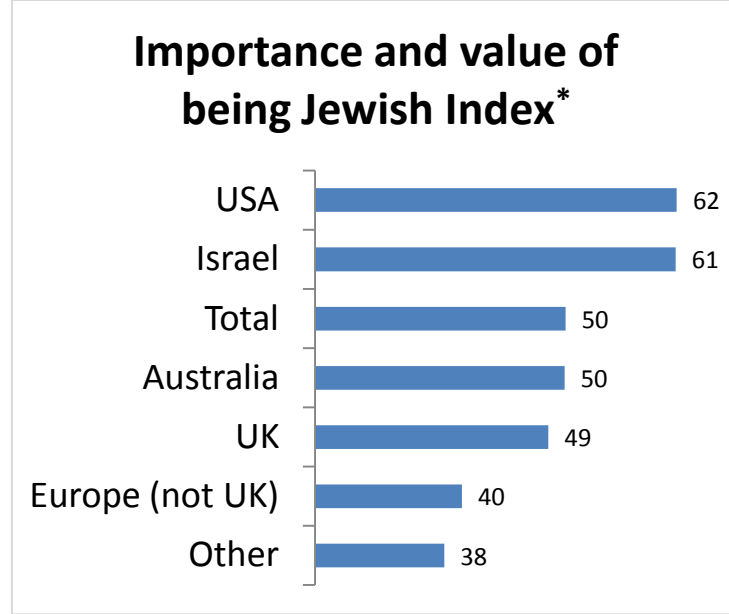
Being Jewish means lots of things to lots of people. When you think about being Jewish, to what extent do you find the following aspects of being Jewish personally meaningful to you?

- Ethics and values
- Protecting the environment
- Community service, volunteering
- Social justice

*The index calculates the scores for all given questions, placing respondents on a scale of 0 to 100, with 100 representing the highest possible, positive score.

Importance of being Jewish

When we look a general measure of “importance of being Jewish” the American and Israeli respondents exhibit the highest average scores.



How important is being Jewish to you?

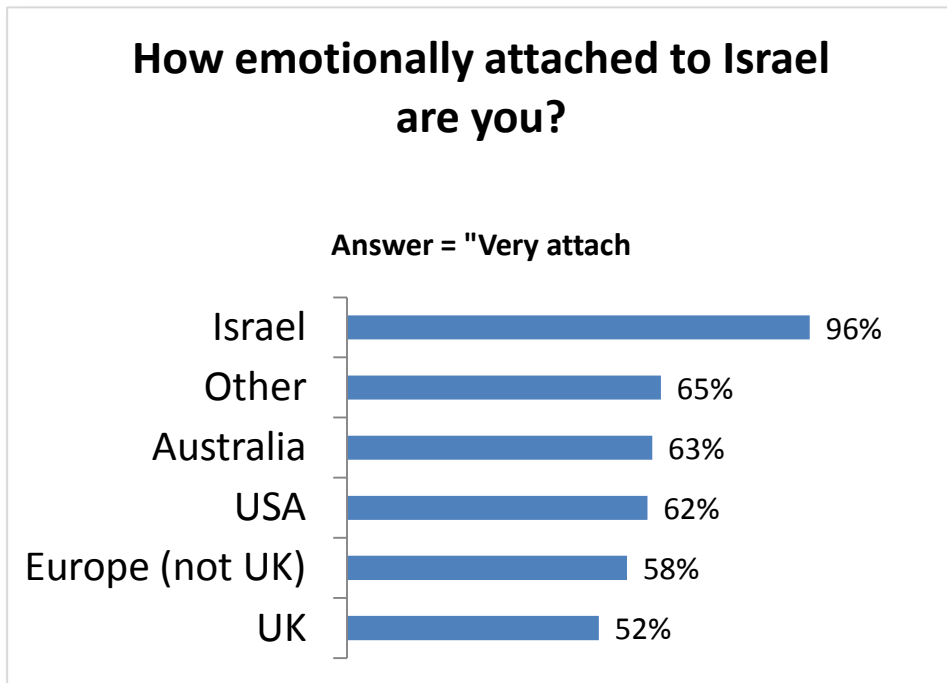
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- Being Jewish adds meaning to my life
- I have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people
- It's important to me to have many friends who are Jewish
- I feel a special connection to others who I meet who are Jewish
- I have lots of positive memories connected with being Jewish
- I see Jewish tradition as relevant to my life
- Jewish values help guide my life choices

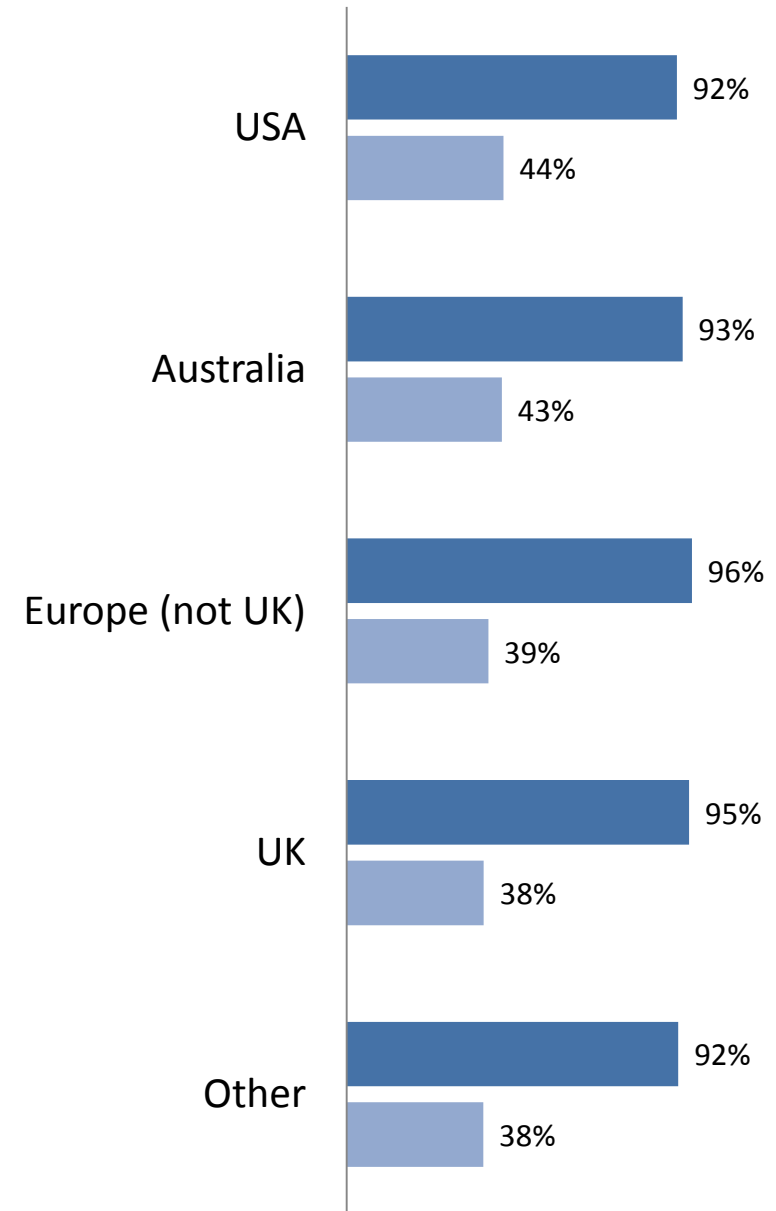
*The index calculates the scores for all given questions, placing respondents on a scale of 0 to 100, with 100 representing the highest possible, positive score.

Israel

- Over 90% have visited Israel from all the country groups, with between a third and a half having spent four or more months in Israel
- Most feel “very attached” to Israel in all country groupings.



- Have you ever been to Israel?
- Have you ever spent 4 months or more studying or working in Israel?



Jewish involvement

“...Limmud reconfirmed my commitment to social justice from a Jewish perspective...”

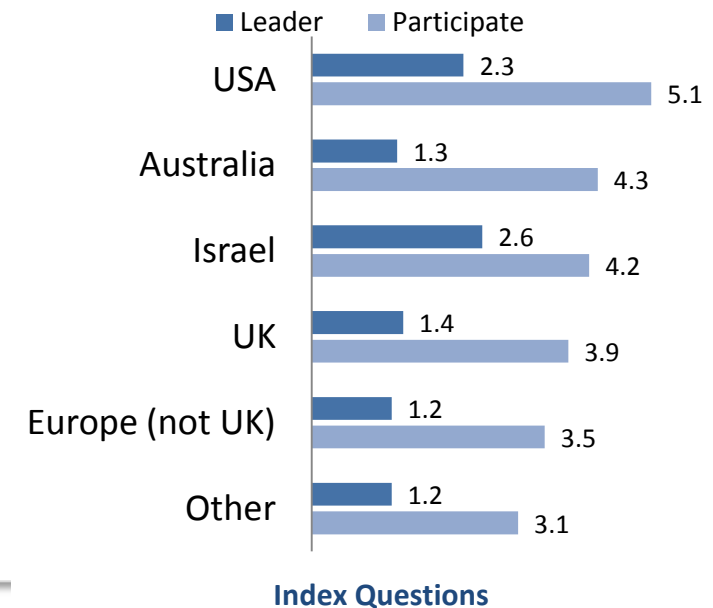
“...Limmud gave my children a strong Jewish foundation and involvement...”

Participation and Leadership

- American respondents have the highest rates of participation in organized Jewish life
- When measured by those who report having filled leadership roles, Israelis score highest
- The “other” country grouping and Europeans score lowest.

Level of leadership and participation

Number shows average number of organizational contexts within which the person is involved, with the maximum possible being 10.



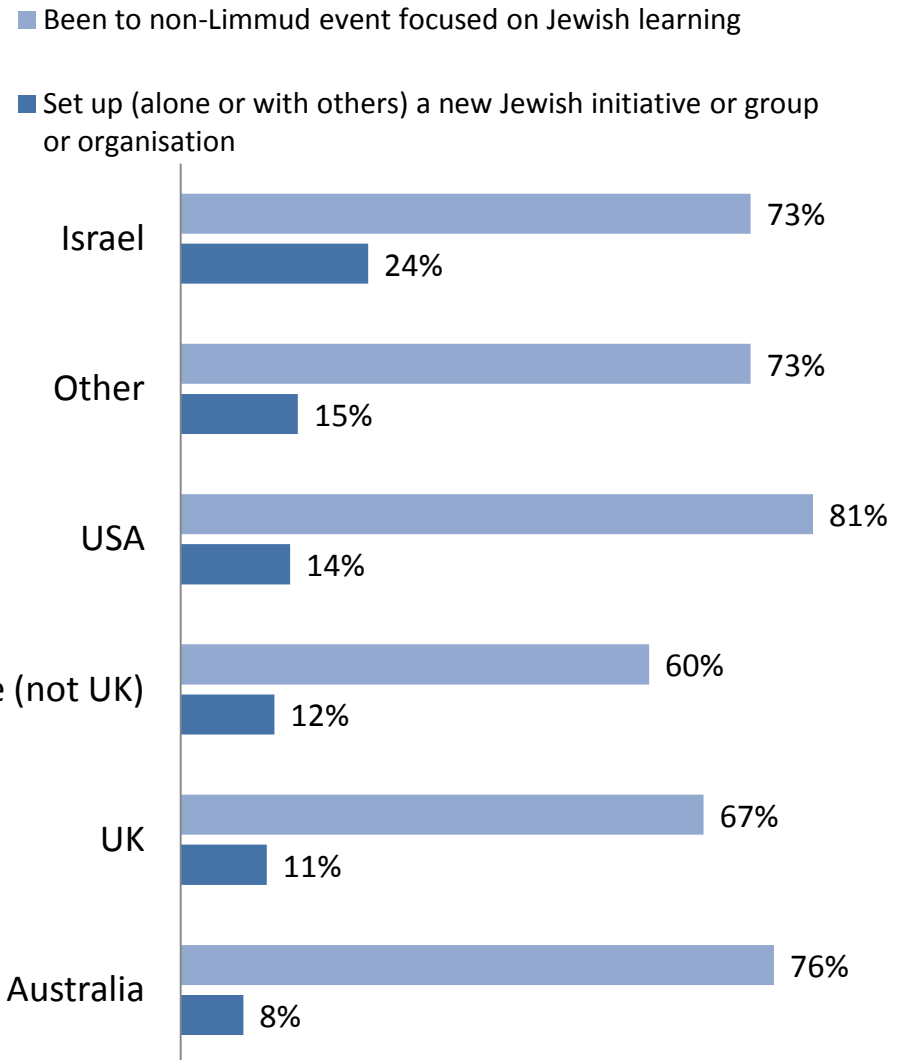
For each, during the last 3 years, have you been involved in a leadership capacity, if at all? For each, indicate your level of involvement.

- A “conventional” congregation
- An independent minyan or similar community
- A Jewish human services agency
- A Jewish day school or religious school
- A Jewish social justice organization or initiative
- An adult Jewish learning initiative
- A Jewish cultural organization or initiative
- An Israel advocacy organization
- Another Israel-oriented project
- A philanthropic foundation

Since first participating in Limmud:

- Between 8% and 24% of respondents, per country grouping have setup a new Jewish initiative, group or organization, with Israelis the most active
- At least 60% of in all country groupings have been to a non-Limmud Jewish learning event.

Since your first Limmud event, have you



The Limmud Experience

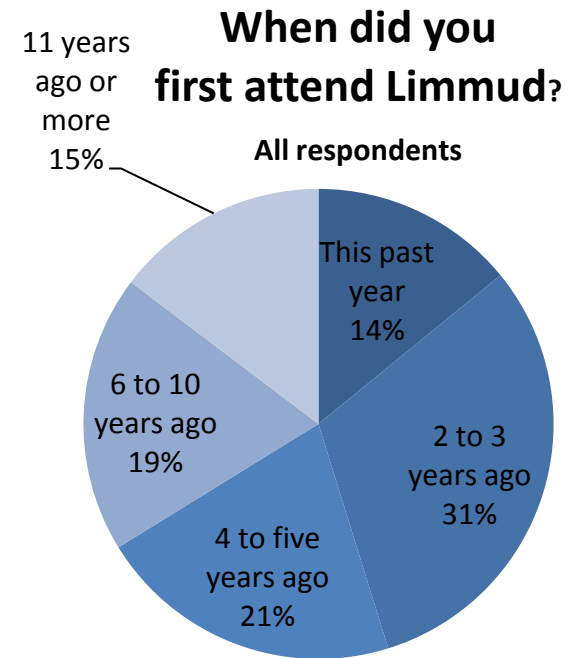
“...Limmud is the most vibrant, exciting, dynamic and open expression of Jewish community I have experienced...”

“...Limmud is the best Jewish event ...it is a big world packed into four days...”

“...All the sessions I attended were fascinating and the feeling of electricity in the air was exhilarating...”

New and veteran Limmudniks

- UK, the oldest Limmud, has the highest proportion of veteran participants
- UK and Australia had fewest responses from new participants
- USA and Europe had the largest number of responses from new participants.

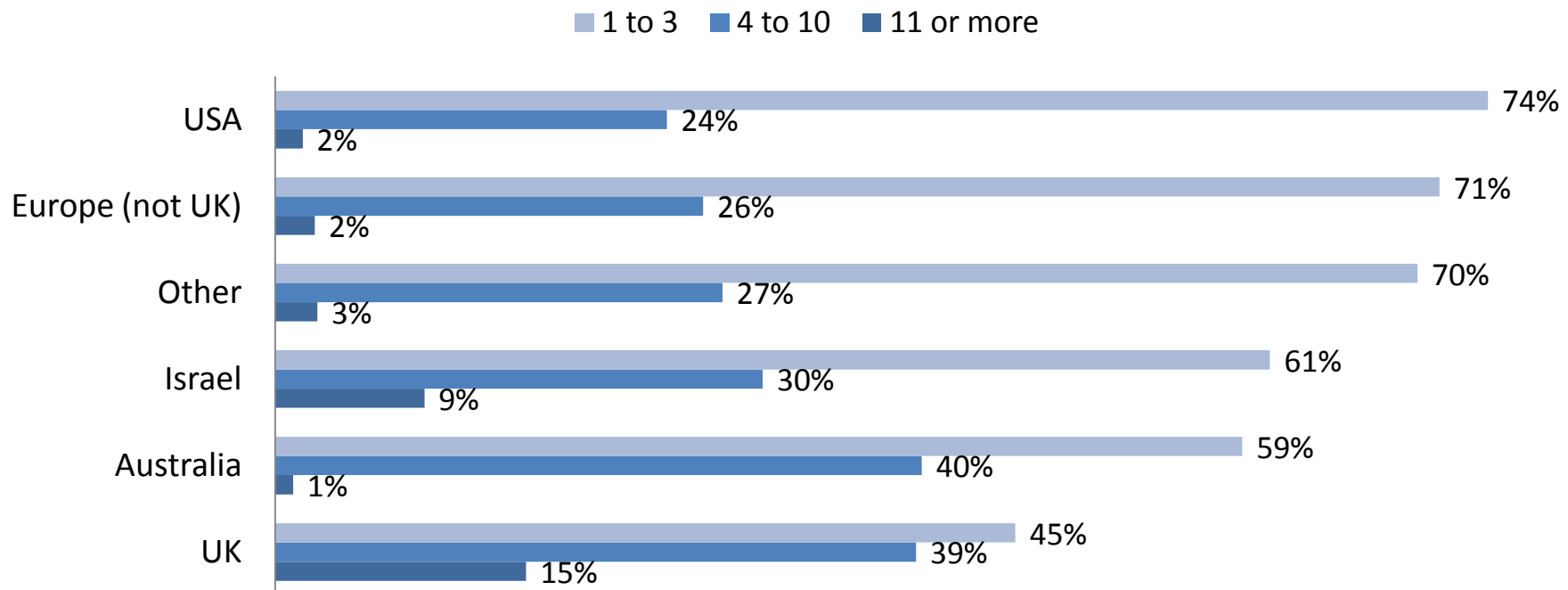


When respondents from each country group first attended a Limmud - comparison to the average

	UK	USA	Australia	Israel	Europe (not UK)	Other
This past year	-2%	4%	-10%	-3%	10%	1%
2 to 3 years ago	-12%	16%	-2%	0%	10%	12%
4 to five years ago	-3%	0%	12%	-3%	1%	6%
6 to 10 years ago	6%	-8%	9%	5%	-11%	-9%
11 years ago or more	12%	-12%	-10%	0%	-9%	-11%

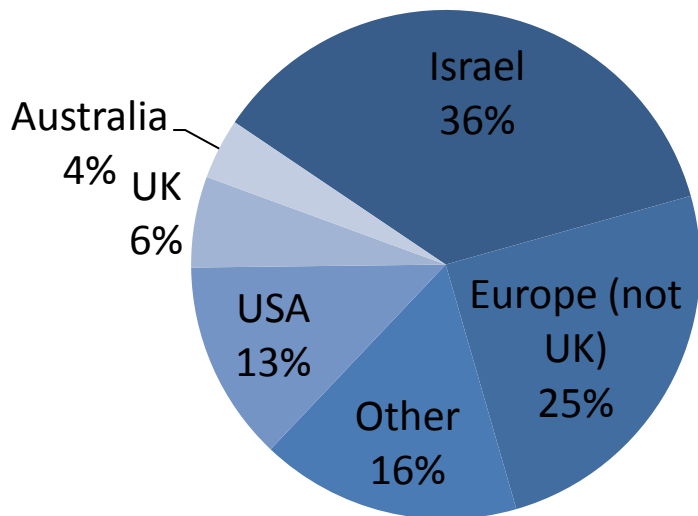
Number of Limmuds attended

- USA and Europe have the largest proportion of respondents who have attended fewer than three times
- Australia, Israel and the UK have the largest proportion those who attend 4 or more times.

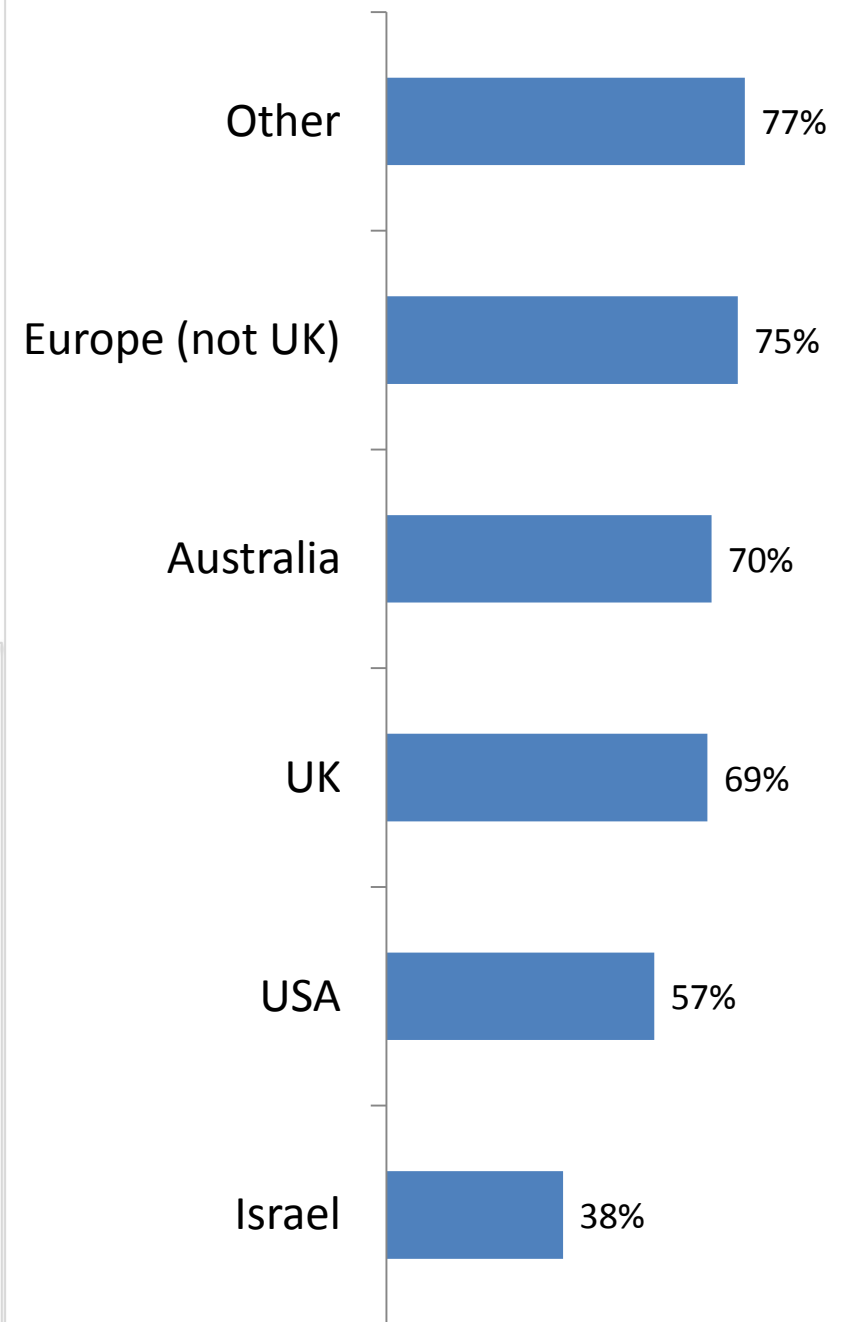


- Israelis are the most likely to have attended a Limmud event outside their home country.
- Israelis are the most likely to attend in the role of a presenter
- Europeans in contrast are more likely to attend outside of their home country as a regular participant.

Attended Limmud outside of home country

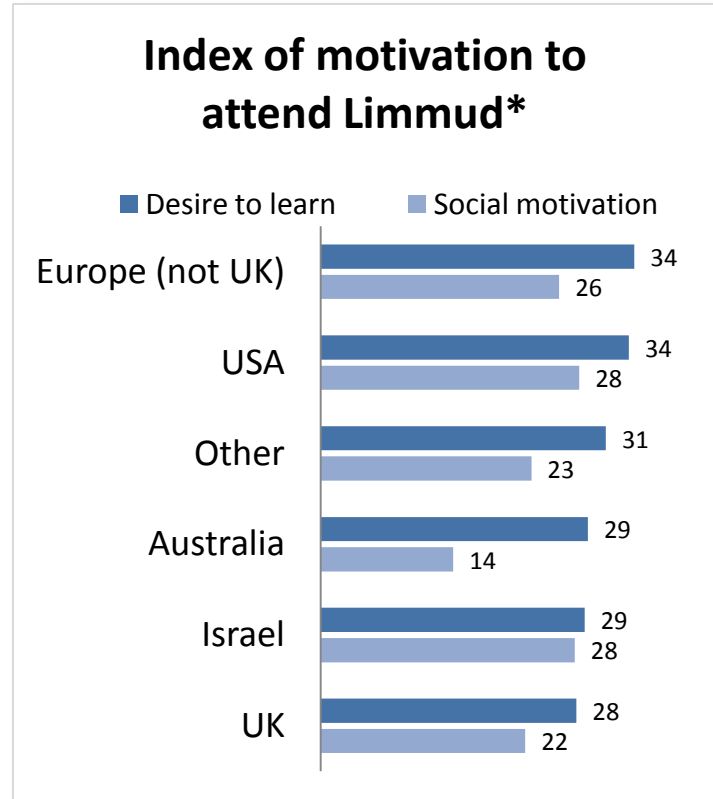


Never a presenter



Motivation to attend

- For four country groupings learning (intellectual stimulation, text learning, etc.) is cited as the primary motivation for participating, more than for social reasons (community, family, friends, etc.)
- Israelis cite both learning and social motivations equally
- Australian respondents are far more likely to attend for learning, rather than social reasons.



When you attended your most recent Limmud event, to what extent were you motivated by each of the following:

Motivation to learn

- Intellectual stimulation
- Learning Jewish texts
- Learning how Judaism can make my life more meaningful
- Improving my ability to participate in Jewish life

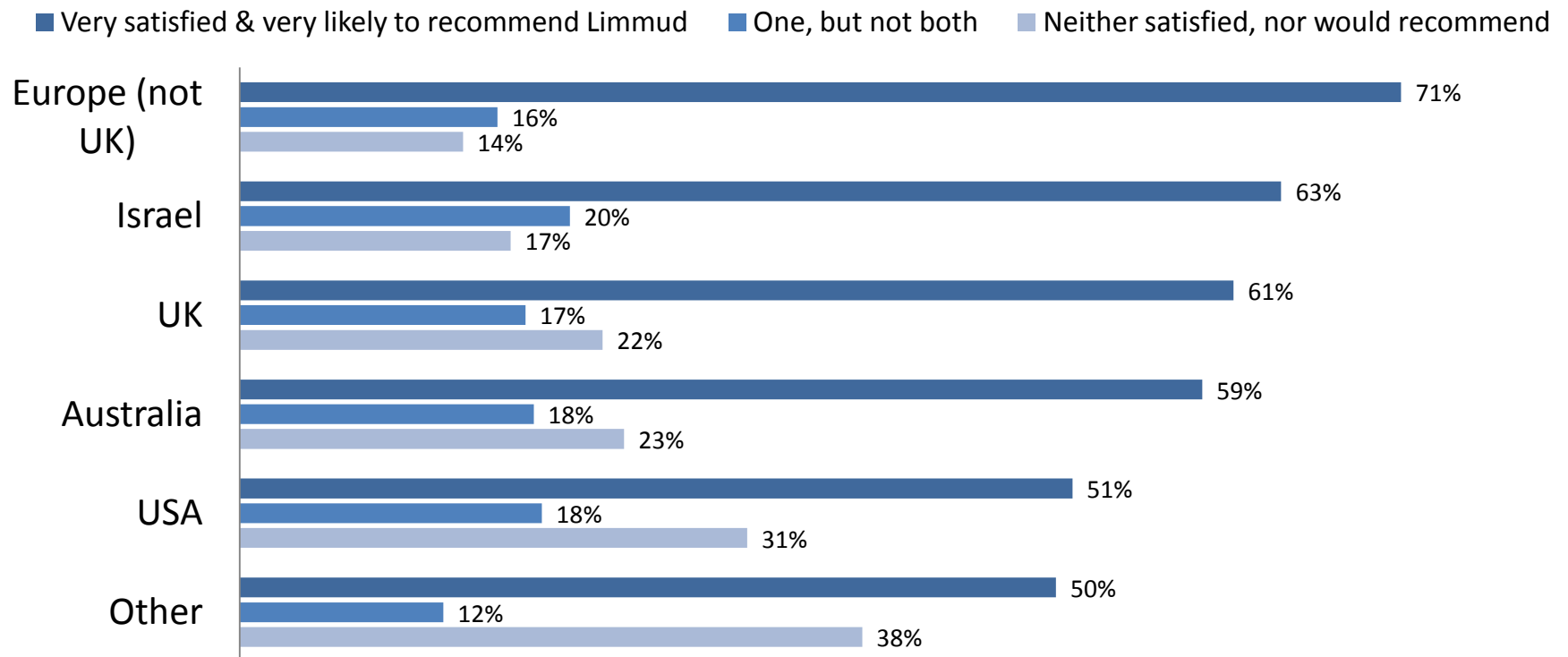
Social motivation

- Participating in the Limmud conference community
- Learning together with my spouse, partner, or friends
- Meeting new friends
- Meeting up with old friends

*The index calculates the scores for all given questions, placing respondents on a scale of 0 to 100, with 100 representing the highest possible, positive score.

Satisfaction

- Europeans, Israelis, UK and Australians show a consistent pattern: a majority are both “very satisfied” and “very likely” to recommend Limmud. A relatively small group was neither very satisfied nor likely to recommend.
- In contrast, among USA and the “other” country respondents there is a minority who are neither very satisfied nor very likely to recommend.



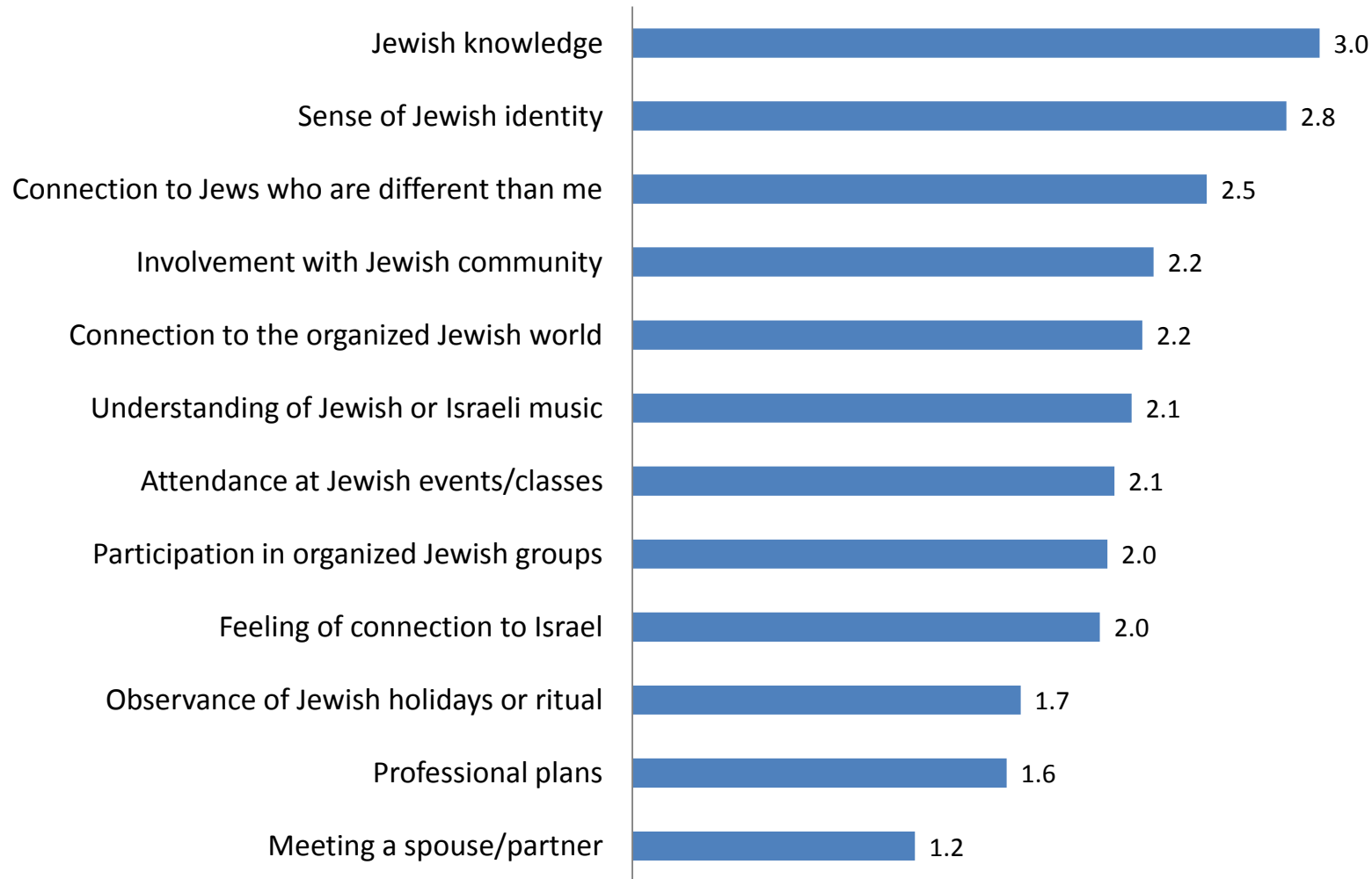
Impact

“...Limmud is like summer camp: intensive and life transforming...”

“I love Limmud because it has been a way for me to explore and connect with my Judaism with people from all over the world.”

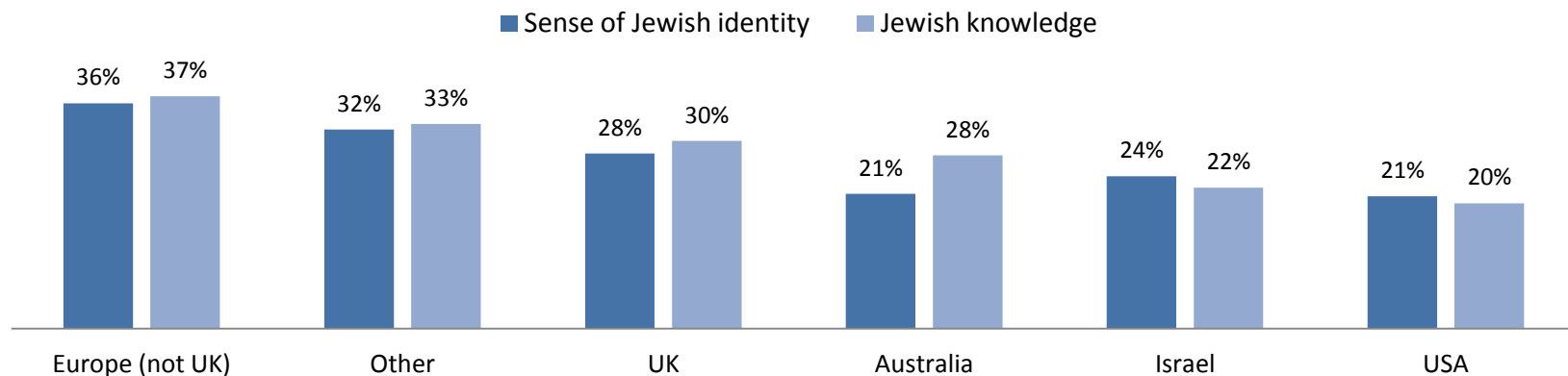
To what extent would you say that participation in Limmud has a positive impact on your life in anyway?

Mean score: 1=Not at all, 4 = To a great exten



- **Jewish knowledge and Jewish identity** are the two areas in which respondents in all countries consistently cite of high impact as a result of participating in Limmud. A significant number attribute impact in areas having to do with Jewish learning community and peoplehood.
- In most areas, **Europeans attribute the highest levels of impact.** Given the Europeans relatively low scores on many of Jewish identity measures, this finding likely points to Limmud's role in contributing the resurgence and renewal of Jewish life in Europe
- **Limmud FSU** organizes Limmud events for Russian speakers in several of the national groupings making for a distinct impact trajectory focused on the Jewish journey of Russian speakers in Jerusalem and Europe (including the former Soviet Union).

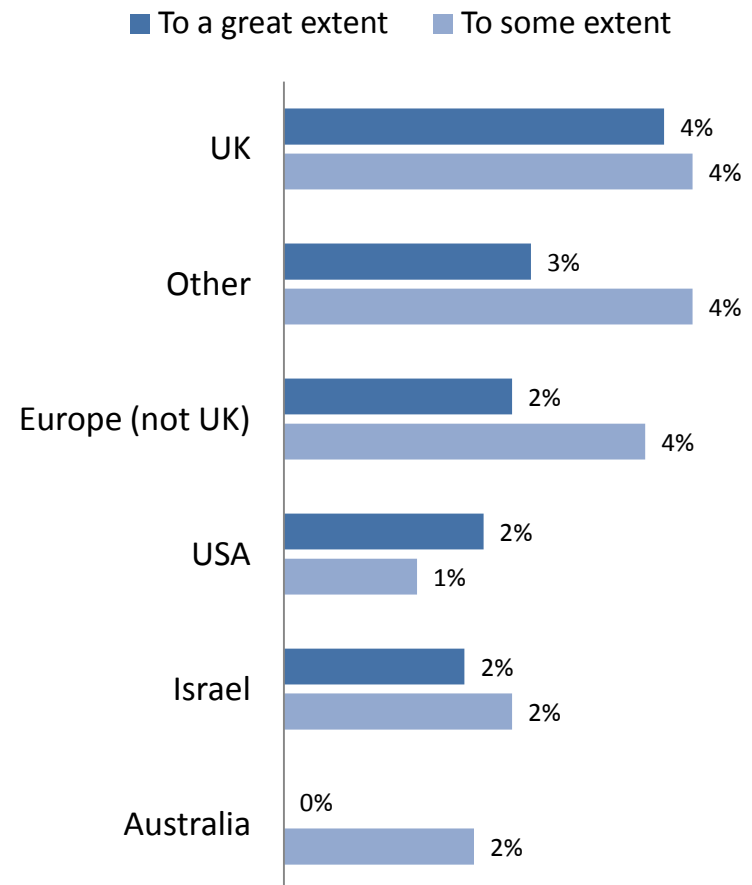
To what extent would you say that participation in Limmud has a positive impact on your life in anyway?
 % answering "to a great extent"



For the lucky few

Participation in Limmud contributes to meeting a spouse or partner, with participants in UK, the “other” country grouping and Europe most likely to cite the Limmud cupid effect.

Impact of Limmud participation on meeting a spouse or partner



- **Limmud provides a social platform**, with close to 50% or more in almost all country groupings (but not Australia) stating that they maintain contact with someone they met at a Limmud event
- **Initial Limmud participation leads many to continue** to participate in Limmud, Jewish learning and community
- In five of the country groupings, between a fifth and a third of respondents have **joined a Limmud team as a volunteer**
- In almost all areas Israeli participants cite the greatest Limmud induced activity, while the Australians cite the least

Since your first Limmud event, have you Answer="a few times" or "several times"	UK	USA	Australia	Israel	Europe (not UK)	Other
Kept in contact with anyone new you met at a Limmud event	45%	49%	28%	60%	47%	53%
Been to other Limmud events in your own community or elsewhere	44%	38%	38%	47%	33%	42%
Volunteered your time during a Limmud event	40%	40%	19%	48%	28%	41%
Used Limmud publications (chavruta book/Shabbat book)	32%	14%	7%	34%	19%	20%
Been to Limmud events in other communities	25%	16%	12%	33%	21%	19%
Joined a Limmud team as a volunteer	25%	24%	10%	29%	20%	37%
Become involved in an organisation or initiative that you heard about at a Limmud event	21%	17%	9%	17%	10%	15%
Been to a non-Limmud Jewish event because of someone you met at Limmud	18%	18%	7%	21%	13%	19%

In the words of respondents

“Limmud is a smorgasbord of choose-your-own adventure goodness”

“Limmud is an amazing opportunity to see just how diverse Jews and Judaism is”

“Limmud’s my best Jewish experience – an excellent example of pluralism, not found elsewhere. I firmly believe it is a very important organization”
