

BROAD AUDIENCE, LASTING INFLUENCE: Evaluating Hadar's Strategic Plan Implementation

JUNE 2020

Overview

For the last three years, Rosov Consulting has been working with the Hadar Institute on an evaluation of their strategic plan implementation. Released in September 2016, the strategic plan lists three central goals:

GOAL

1

Strengthen and expand Hadar's Immersive Programs.

GOAL

2

Support individuals and groups of individuals seeking to create, strengthen, and transform communities dedicated to our vision of *Torah, Avodah, and Hesed*.

GOAL

3

Impact diverse audiences by offering a vision of Torah that is uncompromisingly honest, spiritually meaningful, and socially responsible.

Our findings are organized around central evaluation questions that we crafted with Hadar at the start of our work together:

GOAL ① IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES

What does an Immersive Program offer?

Participants are energized by Immersive Programs at Hadar. Their reactions go beyond being highly satisfied. The experiences reverberate with meaning and concrete Jewish takeaways even 8 and 18 months later.

How is Hadar making a lasting impact on participants?

After completing a Hadar Immersive Program, participants feel motivated to continue their Jewish learning and feel confident in their abilities to lead Jewish lives and communities. They attribute these feelings and intentions directly to Hadar. Wanting to bring Hadar's vision back home is an oft-stated goal.

Who participates in Immersive Programs at Hadar?

Participants in Hadar Immersive Programs span all ages and types of Jewish upbringing, yet they have much in common. They are confident in their Jewish practice, and many are mission-aligned with Hadar. Most importantly, participants seem primed to engage in various aspects of Jewish life, often as leaders.

GOAL ② EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY SUPPORT

How does Hadar work to strengthen its values and mission on the ground?

Hadar's growing alumni network is its strongest asset. Cultivation of this network is accomplished through powerful Immersive Programs and content that have a lasting effect on participants. Some alumni view Hadar as their primary source of support for projects they lead within their Jewish community (such as an independent minyan or a learning program).

How, if at all, do alumni meaningfully impact their home communities after an immersive experience?

A large number of alumni are furthering Hadar's mission in their home communities. Many have formed or taken on leadership roles in independent minyanim (prayer groups) or learning spaces based on Hadar's model. Others have simply become more engaged in their Jewish practice—which in turn strengthens communities on the ground.

Which elements of strategic partnerships lead to impact on the ground?

Hadar's most successful strategic partnerships are those which feature a prolonged, deep investment of time and resources. The work that has been done in Washington, DC is a prime example of the type of positive impact such partnerships can have.

GOAL ③ COMPELLING CONTENT

How does Hadar's content influence those who use it?

Those who interact with Hadar's content speak of the myriad ways in which it has influenced them, including providing a way to think about Judaism differently than before, creating tangible changes in their lives, or using Hadar's content to create community. Many speak about spreading Hadar's content throughout their networks.

What influence, if any, does social media have on consumption of Hadar's content?

Social media is a powerful tool for disseminating Hadar's content, and sometimes, serves as the content itself. Content that is disseminated on Facebook or via email is used and experienced by a wide range of individuals, sometimes heavily (daily or weekly).

Who consumes Hadar's content? Does Hadar's content influence one type of person more than another?

A wide range of individuals consume Hadar's content, including those of varying ages, Jewish backgrounds, and gender. Those who previously participated in Immersive Programs seem to access more of Hadar's content than those who have not.

IMMERSIVE PROGRAMMING

Main Findings

- I.1. Hadar experiences leave participants with many takeaways, both about themselves and about their views of the Jewish world. These **takeaways resonate in their lives for a long time after the program** has finished.
- I.2. Participants are highly satisfied with their Immersive Programs and **leave having had extremely meaningful experiences**.
- I.3. People who attended Hadar Immersives are **confident in their abilities to engage in Jewish learning on their own** and feel strongly about their connection to Jewish traditions, *hesed*, and egalitarian Judaism.
- I.4. Many past participants actively **attribute their high confidence in and strongly-felt attitudes about Jewish practice to their time at Hadar**, even eight months after the program has finished.
- I.5. Participants **leave Immersive Programs feeling motivated to continue their learning**. They continue to feel motivated even eight months later. Many attribute this motivation to Hadar.
- I.6. Hadar participants leave with **meaningful and concrete goals for themselves** and their communities that remain relevant over time.
- I.7. Many Immersive Program participants feel they would like to bring Hadar's vision—however they understand it—to their home communities. **More than half of respondents feel they are well positioned to bring Hadar's vision home**.
- I.8. Participants are **involved** in myriad ways in their Jewish communities right after they return and **for many months afterwards**.
- I.9. **No matter how long someone spends at Hadar, the impact is still felt many months later**. However, participants in longer-term programs lasting one month or more are more powerfully impacted by their experience.

Long-Term Outcomes (18 months later)

- I.10. **Jewish practice is more important**—because of Hadar.
- I.11. **Hadar remains a prominent feature** in the lives of participants, even 18 months out.
- I.12. Long after participating in their Hadar program, respondents are **consistently participating in communal Jewish life**—many at similar frequencies 18 months after their programs as reported 8 months after.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Main Findings

Hadar works toward Goal 2 through myriad strategies, including Alumni support, DC-based work, Project Zug, Pedagogy of Partnership (PoP), and Rising Song Institute (RSI). Due to delays resulting from COVID-19, findings from the PoP evaluation will be reported separately. Additional findings from RSI will be featured in a separate report.

Alumni Support

- 2.1. Hadar remains an active component of alumni's lives, even years later. **The impact of a summer or year-long program can be life changing for some.**
- 2.2. Many Hadar alumni go on to be actively **engaged in their communities**, taking on important projects that are supported and/or inspired by Hadar.
- 2.3. Hadar has **cultivated a robust network of alumni**. This network provides support to alumni in many ways, often in their work to further Hadar's vision.

Project Zug

- 2.4. Project Zug empowers individuals, including those with and without prior experiences learning Jewish text, to **connect with one another and to high-quality Jewish learning**.

Hadar in DC

- 2.5. Hadar has **provided relevant, rich content to participants in its Washington, DC programs**.
- 2.6. Hadar has **tapped into a network of individuals who are primarily attracted by its content**.
- 2.7. Having a **dedicated full-time Hadar rabbi in DC** has paid dividends.

Rising Song Institute (RSI)

- 2.8. RSI offers a unique opportunity for participants, with varied backgrounds in music and Jewish song leadership, to **immerse themselves in Jewish music**.
- 2.9. The **peer network** that is provided by these programs is both a **motivator to participate** and an outgrowth of participation

COMPELLING CONTENT

Main Findings

- 3.1. **Weekly Divrei Torah written by Hadar educators were the most-used form of content**, while melodies written by Joey Weisenberg were the second-most used.
- 3.2. **A relatively large number of individuals interact with Hadar's content** on social media or through weekly emails.
- 3.3. Hadar's content has resulted in tangible behavioral changes. **Many people view Hadar as setting a standard for how to live their Jewish lives.**
- 3.4. Hadar's content results in many people thinking differently about the way they view Judaism, where they belong within the community, and what is important to them. **Hadar's content stimulates people to reflect on and sometimes shift the beliefs with which they were raised.**
- 3.5. **People are spreading Hadar's content widely within their communities.** When they need references for something they're writing or creating, Hadar is the go-to source for many.
- 3.6. **After experiencing Hadar's content collectively, several communities across the country have worked to adopt key messages:** commitment to *halakhah* (Jewish law), egalitarianism, and Torah that is relevant to the modern world.
- 3.7. **Participating in an Immersive Program is a strong predictor for increased usage of Hadar's content**, as the experience exposes individuals to a wider range of materials.
- 3.8. **Hadar's content seems to appeal to a range of demographic categories**, with no discernable differences by age or gender.

Data Sources

GOAL 1

IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES

Data collection efforts focused on participants in 2017–2018 Immersive Programs (occurring after Hadar released its strategic plan). There were 684 individuals who participated in one or more of 14 Immersive Programs in 2017–2018. We surveyed each participant twice: once, approximately 2 months after the experience, and a second time approximately 8 months afterwards. We designed these surveys collaboratively with Hadar, hoping to understand more deeply what type of impact Hadar Immersive Programs have. 411 participants completed at least one of the two surveys (a 60% response rate); 198 of these completed both (a 29% response rate). These response rates are sufficient for drawing conclusions from the data.

We also surveyed summer and year program alumni a third time, 18 months after their programs, garnering 37 responses.

GOAL 2

EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Overall, data were collected to understand more deeply the ways in which individuals—both alumni and non-alumni—have felt supported by Hadar in their work to strengthen their Jewish communities. In 2019, Rosov Consulting conducted a study of Hadar summer and year program alumni from 2009–2017, which included a survey and a set of interviews. The survey instrument was a slightly modified version of a survey used in previous alumni studies. The survey was sent to 404 alumni; of those, 172 individuals completed the survey, representing a 43% response rate. We also interviewed 12 Hadar Immersive Program alumni. (We did not include alumni of programs from 2017 onward, as they had already been surveyed as part of our Goal 1 activities.)

In 2019 and 2020, Rosov Consulting interviewed five participants in Project Zug in an effort to learn more about Hadar’s work to deepen participants’ connections to Jewish learning and to one another. Rosov Consulting also studied the impact of Hadar in the greater Washington, DC area. In 2017 and 2019, we distributed two surveys to participants who had attended one or more programs held in Washington, DC. In 2017, 135 people took the survey, while 228 took it in 2019. Additionally, in 2019, Rosov Consulting staff interviewed five Washington, DC program participants.

In 2019 and 2020, Rosov Consulting interviewed 20 participants and staff of the Rising Song Fellowship and Residency programs.

GOAL 3

COMPELLING CONTENT

Data collection efforts focused on those who have interacted with Hadar’s content, though have not necessarily participated in any Immersive Program. In June and July 2018, Rosov Consulting surveyed individuals who had interacted with Hadar’s content over the prior six weeks (including Torah featured on Hadar’s website, written material, music, public lectures, and social media activity).

643 individuals completed the survey, which was circulated widely over email and social media and was featured on Hadar’s website. We used a purposive sampling technique that targeted those who interact with Hadar’s content online. Our sample includes a range of individuals of differing ages, Jewish backgrounds, and types of content used.

Our sampling method allows us to draw reliable conclusions, though they may not always be generalizable to the full population. It is not possible to determine with certainty the exact size of the population that interacts with Hadar’s content.

GOAL

1

IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES



Hadar experiences leave participants with many takeaways, both about themselves and about their views of the Jewish world. These takeaways resonate in their lives for a long time after the program has finished.

Participants were asked to list up to three takeaways that came from their time at the Immersive Program. It is noteworthy that many respondents chose to list the maximum number of takeaways, despite the question being optional.

Broadly speaking, there were two types of responses. The first type had to do with **self-reflection**. These takeaways are indicative of participants' feelings about themselves and their abilities.

 Self-Reflection/Internal

“My voice matters in the Jewish community.”

“Confidence in my ability to critically examine text.”

“I benefit a lot from living a structured halachic life and should try to do so more faithfully.”

“Through learning Talmud in chevruta you can learn a lot about both yourself and someone who might be a stranger to you and hopefully grow in your own character and interpersonal relationships.”

“To do Teshuvah, you have to believe in your own capacity to change, and also understand your limits.”

“I can do this & I want to do this (real Torah learning!).”

“That it is possible for me to learn enough about a narrow subject, even in a short time, to make a difference in my day-to-day practice.”

The second type was more focused on **participants' views and understanding of Judaism**, which often represented a **paradigm shift**. These takeaways spoke to participants' thoughts/feelings about the Jewish world and their experience living in it.

 Paradigm Shift/External

"There are a lot [more] people out there who share my values than I thought."

"An open inquiry into Gemara can lead to shedding light on contemporary issues."

"There is no one right way to relate to or experience davening and traditional liturgy is ripe with more meaning than one might read at face value (through intertext!)."

"There is a future for traditional and egalitarian Judaism."

"That Torah needs to be lived, as well as studied, and there are many ways to do that, exemplified by the teachers and students I learned with."

"We can have a progressive, committed, serious, rigorous Judaism!! We don't have to pick one thing."

"The fact that you can be fully halachic and fully egalitarian."

Eight months after the program ended, in a second survey, participants were shown the takeaways they had previously written and were asked to what extent those takeaways were still relevant in their lives. The takeaways were overwhelmingly still relevant to the participants, with 86% of the takeaways being rated a 4 or 5 out of 5 (1 representing not at all relevant, and 5 representing very relevant in participants' lives).

Examples of respondents' takeaways that were given a score of "4" or "5"

"My Jewish identity doesn't necessarily need to be based on tension, but can also base itself on love and belonging."

"The Torah needs everyone's intuition/morality, we should not assume the Torah is right and our values are wrong—the two are in conversation."

"Balance familiar, nostalgic moments with new melodies. Don't deprive the congregation of those familiar moments."

1.1

Takeaways continue to remain relevant for summer and year program participants, even 18 months after the program. We did not observe a change in perceived relevance over time.

This suggests that the impact generated by longer-term Hadar programs has “staying power.”

8 months
post-program*

83%

18 months
post-program*

82%

of takeaways were given a score of “4” or “5”



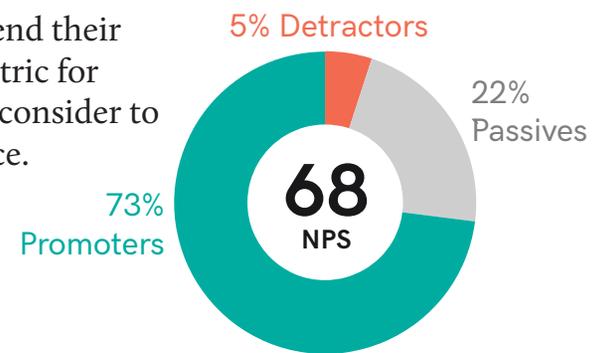
*These percentages are for data from the summer and year-long programs only.

1.2

Participants were highly satisfied with their Immersive Program and left having had extremely meaningful experiences.

Immersive Program participants were asked to what extent they would recommend their program to a friend. The overall Net Promoter Score (NPS, a commonly used metric for measuring satisfaction) for Immersive Programs is **68**, which industry standards consider to be “excellent.” It is clear that Hadar participants are satisfied with their experience.

Participants were asked to share a meaningful experience from their Immersive, if they had one. Responses to this question can be grouped into four main categories:



Participants reflect on a feeling of **empowerment**, being able to participate in Jewish learning and community building in ways they never had before or being seen/noticed in ways they hadn’t been seen previously.

“Having the opportunity to study Talmud in a serious environment, being treated as a full member of a learning community was particularly meaningful to me.”

“Rav Elie asked me to spend some time speaking one-on-one on my last day. We spoke about my experience, some of my reflections, as well as some of my thoughts about the future. I was very touched by our meeting, and I felt like he cared about me personally, not just because I was a part of his organization.”

“The closing circle, when it became clear that we had created a welcoming, diverse learning community.”



A central component of most Hadar Immersive Programs (especially the Singing Communities Intensive) is **prayer and song**. Participants often cite these moments as the highlight of their Hadar experience.

“Singing the niggun together and becoming more sure of ourselves and our collective voices the more we sang together.”

“There were so many, but most memorable was at the very end. Joey gathered the group together, and we formed a spontaneous choir — I had never really experienced this before. It was surprisingly moving.”

“Being in a room where everyone was singing and making beautiful harmonies together and the space just felt like a beautiful overflowing fishbowl of sound.”

1.2



Some participants reflect on moments that were not part of the structure of their Immersive Program per se, but rather were facilitated by their joint participation with others in the same program. These meaningful moments are **out of the classroom**, but Hadar-facilitated.

“That I was able to help someone on their journey. Following a discussion on the power of havruta by R. Avi Killip and an open invitation to reach out to a havruta that may have made a special connection, someone reached out to me and shared that our study had been such an experience.”

“Getting to sit with the other Jewish professionals during lunch time and reflect on where we came from as Jews, what we had learned, and how we all fit into the world of Jewish professionals.”

“Seeing someone else from winter week on the subway and being able to strike up a meaningful conversation about halachic egalitarianism.”



The final group of meaningful moments speak to the value of the formal learning experience. Immersive participants reflect about how these experiences **influence them intellectually and personally**.

“Classes with Rav Jason, specifically on tefillin and revelation, really changed my Jewish practice and outlook.”

“The faculty was very skillful at taking sections of challenging text and assisting us as students to see the point, to gain insight. This happened a number of times during the Seminar.”

“The eureka moment in shiur when you realize you were right to be confused in hevruta.”

1.3

People who attended Hadar Immersives are confident in their abilities to engage in Jewish learning on their own and feel strongly about their connection to Jewish traditions, *hesed*, and egalitarian Judaism.

We asked participants, both two and eight months after the program, how confident they were in their abilities to engage in certain Jewish activities. Examples include “Engage with the Torah in a way that is intellectually open” or “Run a ‘Hadar-inspired’ event.”

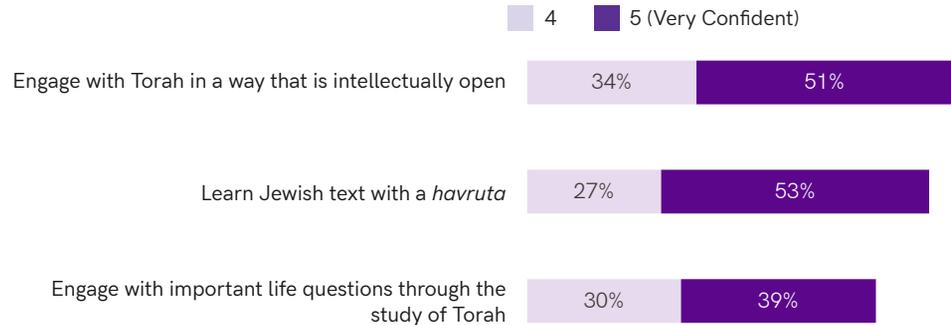
We also asked them a series of attitudinal questions, focusing on how strongly they felt about their connection to Jewish traditions, the importance of *hesed* (acts of loving-kindness), and egalitarianism.

Participants report similar levels of confidence two and eight months after completing a program in a range of areas, including the way they engage with Jewish text and with important Jewish questions. Additionally, they feel strongly about their connection with Jewish traditions, *hesed*, and being egalitarian.

(Note: Instead of fielding a pre-program survey, we asked participants to attribute their attitudes and abilities to the experience they just had.)

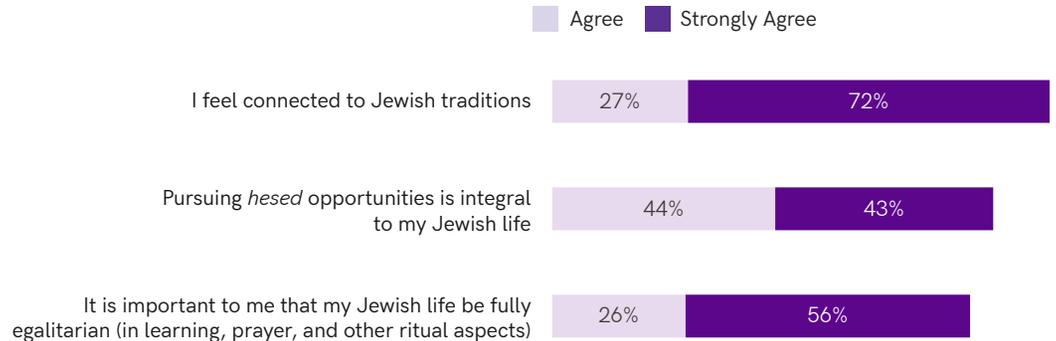
How confident do you feel in your ability to do the following?

(8 months post-program*, N=197)



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

(8 months post-program*, N=197)



* Only data from 8 months post-program is provided in the graphs as they are not statistically different to data collected 2 months post-program.

1.4

Many past participants actively attribute their high confidence in and strongly-felt attitudes about Jewish practice to their time at Hadar, even eight months after the program has finished.

For anyone who indicated confidence in their responses, or strongly agreed with one of the attitude statements, we followed up by asking to what extent they attributed that feeling to Hadar.

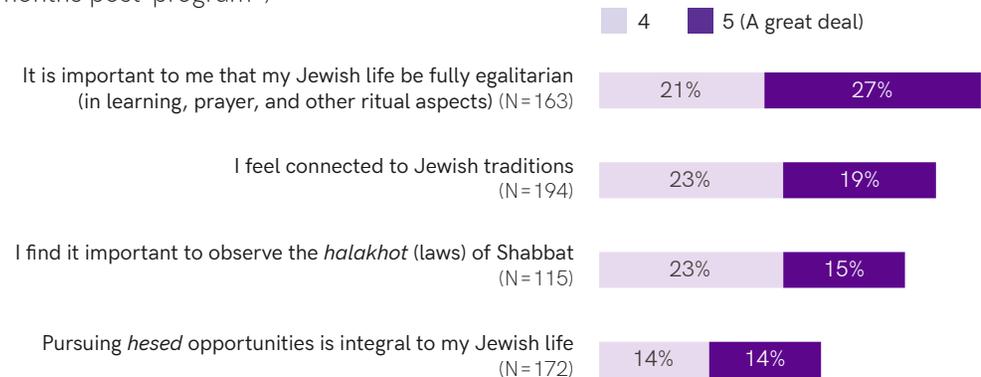
Participants attribute a great deal to Hadar. For example, a core group of participants feel confident in their abilities to organize a program or event inspired by their time at Hadar, and half of these individuals attribute this confidence to their time on an Immersive Program.

Additionally, almost half of the people who said it is important that their lives be fully egalitarian still attribute this feeling to their Immersive experience, even many months after the program ended.

To what extent do you attribute your confidence in this area to your time at Hadar?
(8 months post-program*)



To what extent do you attribute your agreement with this statement to your time at Hadar?
(8 months post-program*)



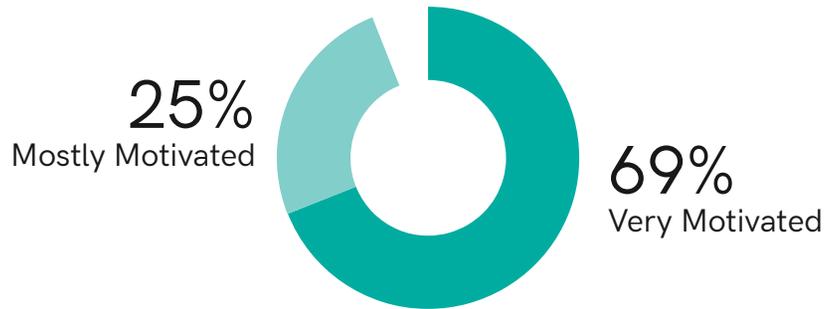
* Only data from 8 months post-program is provided in the graphs as they are not statistically different to data collected 2 months post-program.

1.5

Participants leave Immersive Programs feeling motivated to continue their learning. They continue to feel motivated even eight months later. Many attribute this motivation to Hadar.

Two months after completing an Immersive Program, 94% of participants feel motivated to continue learning Jewish topics. They are similarly motivated eight months later, with no statistically significant decrease in their response.

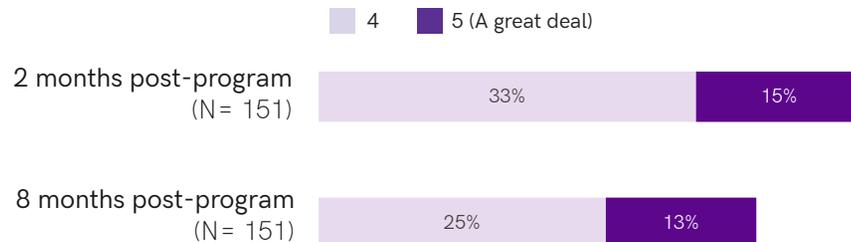
How motivated do you feel to continue learning Jewish topics?
(8 months post-program, N=160, 5-point scale)



Additionally, two months after the completion of a program, nearly half of all respondents attribute their motivation to continue learning Jewish topics directly to their Hadar experience.

Eight months later, the percentage of those who attribute their motivation to their Hadar program decreases—suggesting that while Hadar started them on a path towards Jewish learning, they were able to continue on this path even without Hadar’s influence.

To what extent do you attribute your motivation to learn Jewish topics to your time at Hadar?



1.6

Hadar leaves participants with meaningful and concrete goals for themselves and their communities that remain relevant over time.

In the first survey, participants were asked if they had any goals that emerged from their time in the program. We provided space for up to three goals. Participants' goals can be categorized in four ways: **Act, Become, Create, Discover.**

ACT

In the most basic sense, these goals are concrete and straightforward—and involve an action that can be summarized succinctly.

- 🗨️ *Finishing a tractate of Talmud*
- 🗨️ *Lead Hallel and Musaf for Rosh Chodesh*
- 🗨️ *Maintaining a kosher kitchen and being Shomer Shabbas longer-term*



BECOME

These goals express a need to make personal changes in one's life that reflect learning at Hadar.

- 🗨️ *Become confident in my own relationship to G-d, Torah, and the Jewish community rather than using an external measure*
- 🗨️ *Finding more learning community in my everyday life*
- 🗨️ *Becoming a more effective service leader*

CREATE

These goals express a desire to build within one's home community something similar to what was experienced at Hadar.

-  *Bring diversity of learning opportunities to our community*
-  *Bringing new ways of engaging with sacred texts to my institution, for a variety of age groups and diverse peoples*
-  *To hold on to the love I felt at Hadar and take it outside into a world which desperately needs it*

**DISCOVER**

These goals express a sense of openness to continuing a journey—either intellectual or spiritual—that was started at Hadar.

-  *Continue learning gemara*
-  *I want to continue to expand my familiarity with Rabbinic Jewish texts*
-  *Delve deeper into the connection of Torah, Halacha, and Music*

In the second survey, we showed the participants all of the goals they had indicated previously. They were then asked to what extent they had accomplished each individual goal or to indicate if the goal was no longer relevant. Only 1% of the goals were no longer relevant many months later, while more than 40% of participants had made significant progress (indicating “4” or “5”), and 29% felt they had made some progress (indicating a score of “3”).

1.7

Many Immersive Program participants feel they would like to bring Hadar’s vision—however they understand it—to their home communities.

Eight months after completing an Immersive, participants still maintain that they would like their home community to represent Hadar’s vision. More than half of participants feel well-positioned to support their home community in doing so.

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

(8 months post-program, N= 125)



Hadar’s Vision

“Jews, in communities throughout the United States and Israel, are living meaningful lives of Torah, Avodah, and Hesed.”



1.8

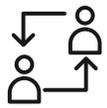
Participants are involved in myriad ways in their Jewish communities right after they return and in a sustained way for many months afterwards.

Participants in Immersive Programs are very involved in their Jewish communities at home, with nearly half indicating that they participate in an ongoing *havruta* (learning partnership) on a daily or weekly basis. Nearly half also say that they organize a community *hesed* opportunity at least a few times a year, and nearly 70% are involved in organizing Jewish learning events in their home communities.

The high level of involvement in communal activities is seen in responses both two months and eight months after participating in a Hadar Immersive Program.

Put together, this indicates that **Hadar Immersive Program alumni are well situated to make an impact on their home communities, a central goal of Hadar’s strategic plan.**

At least weekly



45%

Participate in ongoing *havruta*



88%

Engage in Jewish prayer



31%

Teach Torah in some way

At least a few times a year



47%

Organize a community *hesed* opportunity



69%

Organize a learning event in their community

1.9

No matter how long someone spends at Hadar, the impact is still felt many months later. However, participants in longer-term programs lasting one month or more are more powerfully impacted by their experience.

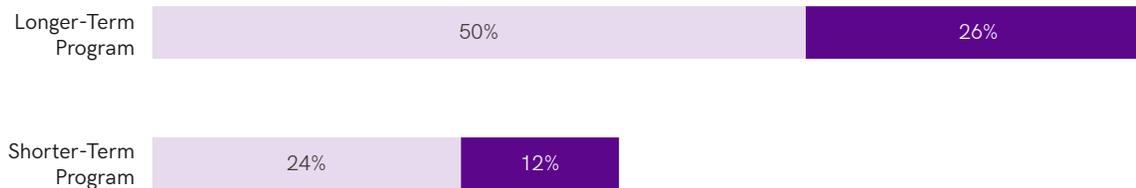
There is no difference in perceived impact between surveys two months and eight months after a program of any length. This indicates that while the impact of a shorter-term program may be less powerful, the lasting effect of the program is no different than that of a longer program.

Those who spend time in longer-term programs (lasting one month or more) are more likely to attribute to Hadar their level of confidence in a variety of areas (see below for two examples).

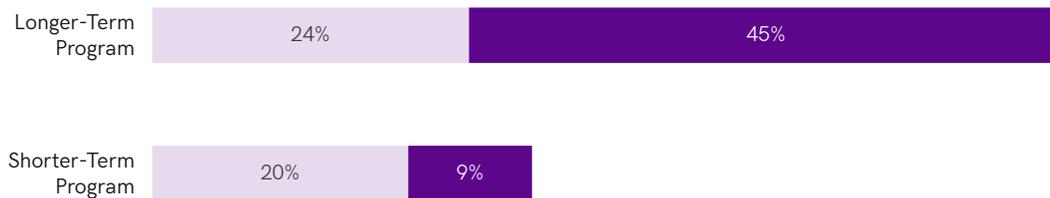
To what extent do you attribute your confidence in this area to your time at Hadar?
(8 months post-program)

4 5 (A Great Deal)

Engage with important life questions through the study of Torah
(N=135)



Teach a class centered around Jewish text
(N=116)



The following three findings all emerge from data collected from summer and year program participants who were surveyed 18 months after their programs concluded.

1.10

Jewish practice is more important — because of Hadar.

Yeshivat Hadar alumni maintain that *halakha* is important to them 18 months after their program. When asked about the extent to which Hadar influenced how important *halakha* is for them, 38% of respondents said “A lot” or “Very much.”

This suggests that Hadar has effectively transmitted one of the core elements of its value/vision—committed Jewish practice—to its longer-term Immersive participants.

“Hadar was the basis of my introduction to halakhic life and thought. It’s the foundation of my relationship to halakha.”

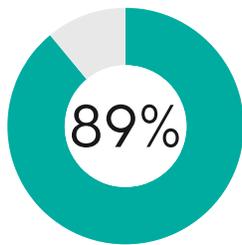
“Hadar was the first place that I had role models that observed halakhah in a gender egalitarian community.”

“It has helped me to develop a deep identification with the Jewish tradition.”

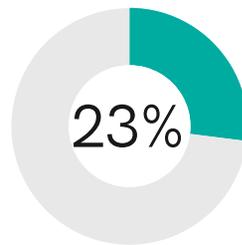
1.11

Hadar remains a prominent feature in the lives of participants, even 18 months out.

Continued relevance of Hadar has led many to be involved in further Hadar activities, such as using Hadar’s content or attending another Immersive Program. Additionally, participants consistently report that they fostered strong friendships during their time in the fellowship program, with 70% giving it a 4 or 5 out of 5.



Used Hadar’s content in past month



Attended another Hadar Immersive Program

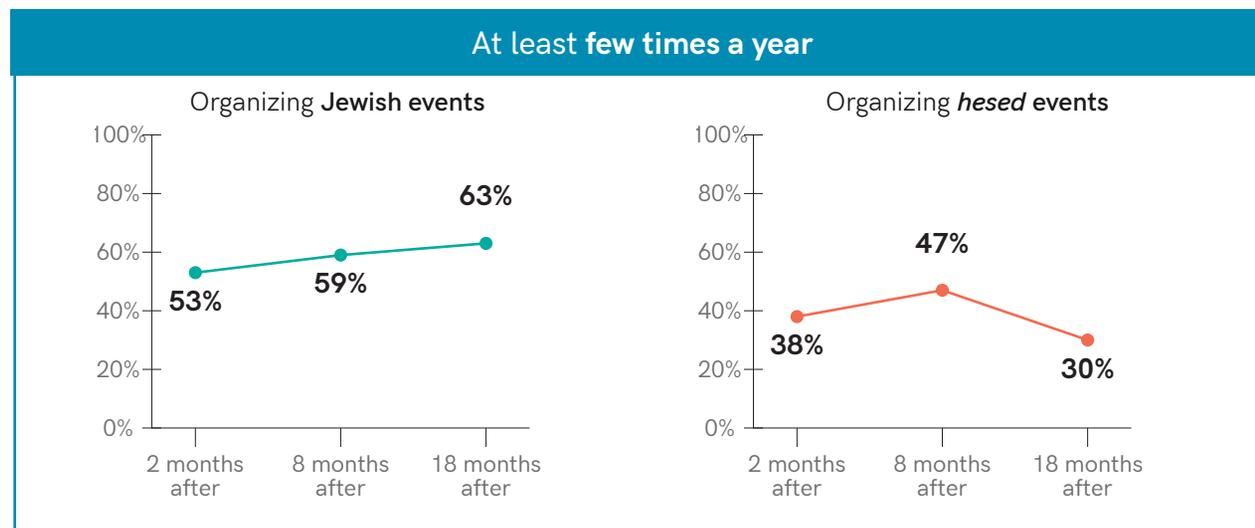
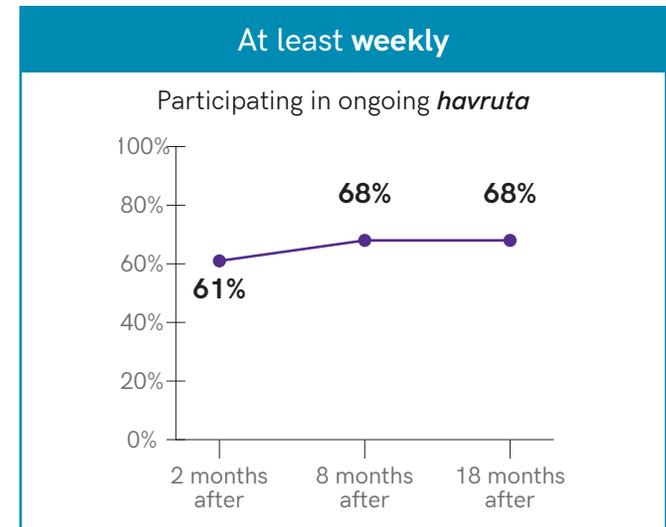
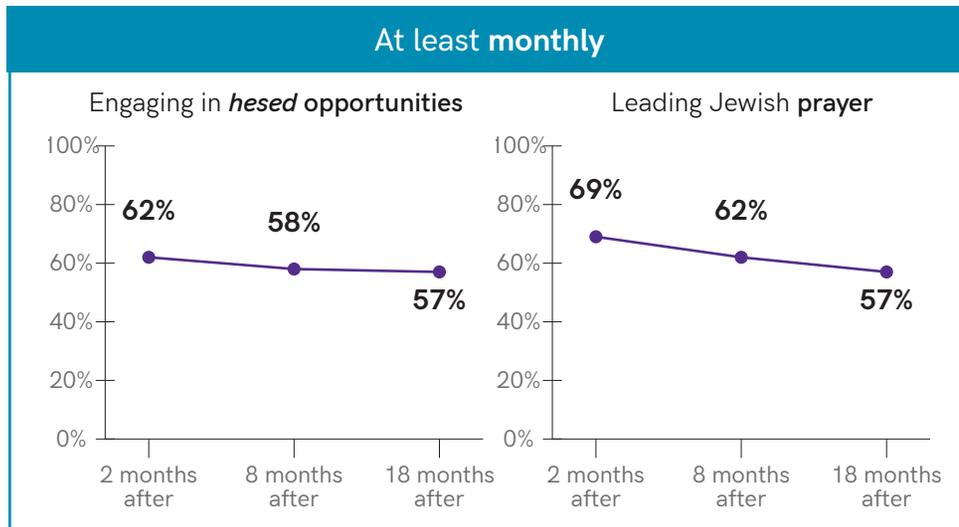
(18 months post-program, N = 37)

“I was already doing these things before going to Hadar but Hadar gave me a stronger framework to do so, a bigger support system, and more friends who are doing the same, which I think helps and motivates me to stick with it.”

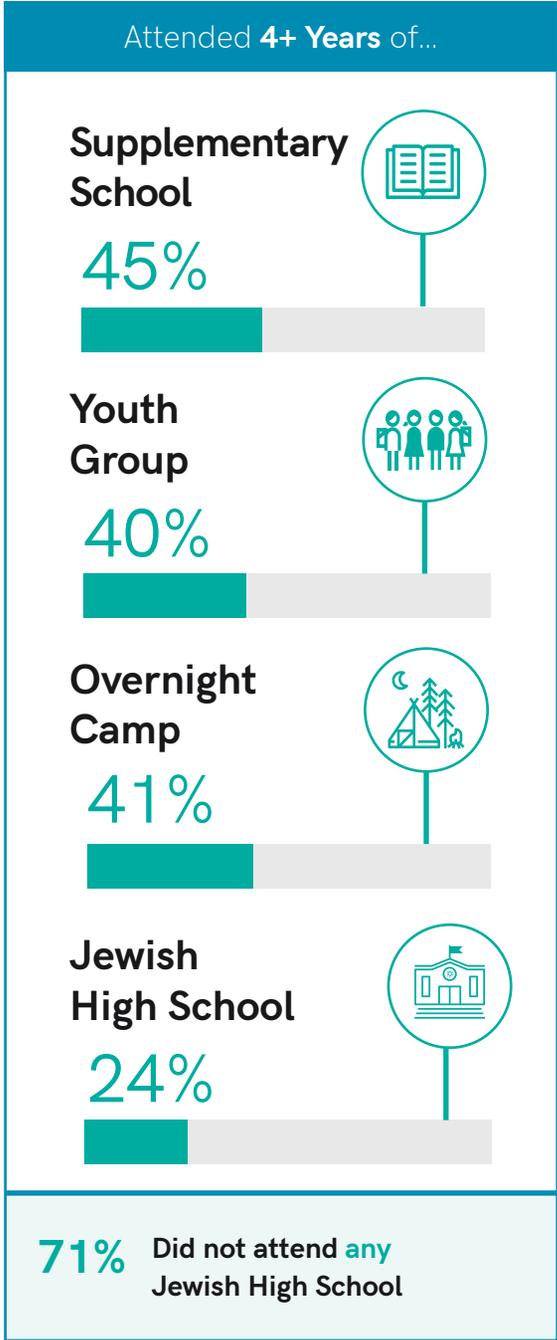
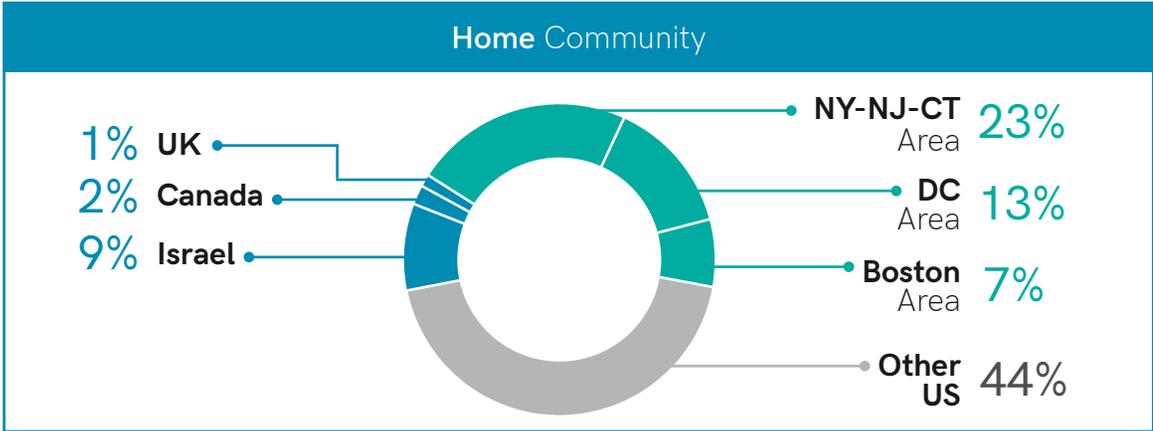
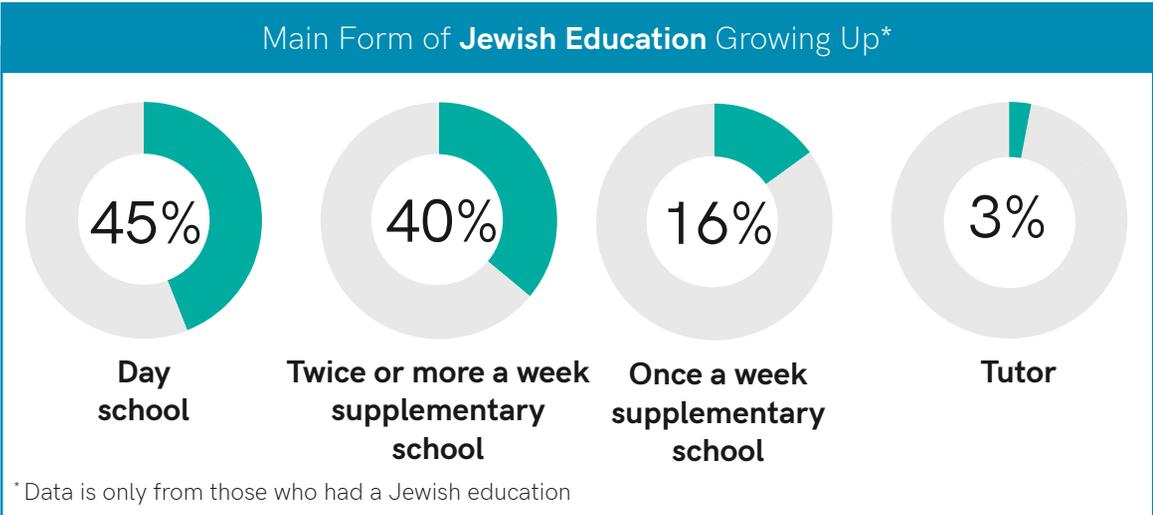
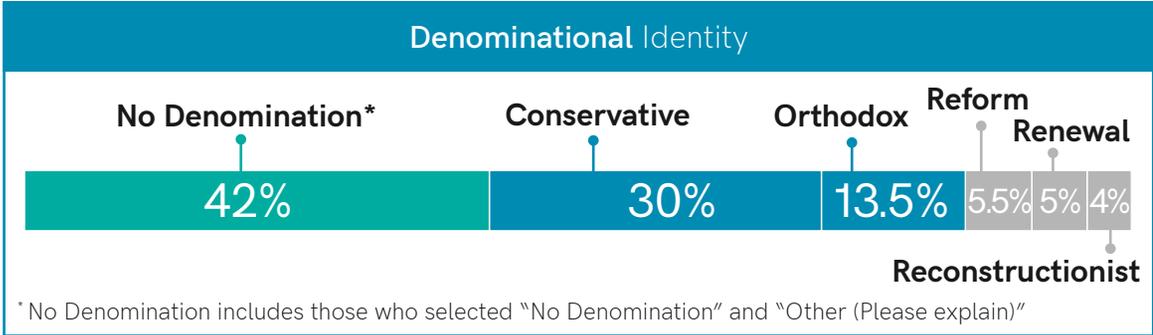
1.12

Long after participating in their Hadar program, respondents are consistently participating in communal Jewish life—many at similar frequencies 18 months after their programs as reported 8 months after.

Eighteen months later, participants in summer and year-long Immersive Programs are sustaining their *havruta* study, and to only a slightly lesser degree their prayer-leading and *hesed* activities. They are organizing **even more** Jewish events than reported 8 months post-program. The only noticeable decline is with regard to organizing *hesed* events.



Demographics | Who Participates in Hadar Immersive Programs



GOAL

2

EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY SUPPORT



2.1

Hadar remains an active component of alumni's lives, even years later. The impact of a summer or year-long program can be life changing for some.

ALUMNI We asked alumni a series of questions to better understand their current relationship with Hadar. These questions asked about how much of Hadar's content they engaged with and sought to uncover the possible effect Hadar has had on their lives in such domains as their career goals and their views of engaging with Jewish texts.

“What I know is that being at Hadar was such a step up in my feeling comfortable in Jewish space, that I have intentionally sought out communities that make me feel the same way, in order to make me feel like my full self. I would have hoped to find that whether or not I was at Hadar, but Hadar showed me what is possible. A lot of the communities I am in are facilitated by Hadar alumni.”

“After that first summer, [I] had a havruta with one of my friends—studied Rav Eitan's book about [egalitarianism and] tefillah. ... I feel like the beit midrash world at Hadar managed to sink into other aspects of my life.”

The effects of participating in a Hadar summer or year program (i.e., a program that lasts at least one month) appear to be long lasting. When comparing those who participated in programs 2 years ago to those who participated in programs 10 years ago, most effects stayed constant;* there was only one (rather intuitive) statistically significant difference: Those who attended an immersive program a longer time ago were less likely to think about the conversations they had with faculty during their time at Hadar.

“It made all the impact. I am who I am, personally, professionally, and religiously because of Hadar. The way I practice Judaism, my love of text, my career as a rabbi, the community we choose to belong to, my wife.”

* In some areas, comparison groups are too small to test for significant differences (for example, which types of content Hadar alumni engage with).

** Our survey instrument did not ask respondents to specify the ways in which their career goals were influenced, only the extent to which they were. Therefore, we cannot say with certainty how career goals were influenced by Hadar—only that they were.

93%

Said Hadar's Torah has had a positive impact on their lives

85%

Used Hadar's content in the prior 6 weeks

72%

Often think about the teachings from their time at Hadar

69%

Often think about conversations with Hadar faculty

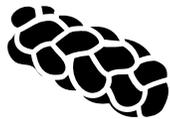
44%

Say Hadar influenced their career goals to some/a great extent**

2.2

Many Hadar alumni go on to be actively engaged in their communities, taking on important projects that are supported and/or inspired by Hadar.

ALUMNI Alumni were asked a series of questions focused on how they engage with the community around them. These questions ranged from organizing *hesed* events and teaching Torah, to hosting Shabbat meals or leading davening.



82%

Host Shabbat
or holiday meals



47%

Involved in
independent minyan
or synagogue
leadership



50%

Teach Torah at
least monthly

Survey respondents were asked the following question: Looking back, what specific impact, if any, did your Hadar experience have on your personal Jewish journey?

“[Hadar] gave a model of integrating different elements into Jewish community that made me confident in taking next leaps in my role in Jewish community, practice and leadership.”

“Hadar shaped both my personal and professional Jewish journey. The skills I acquired allowed me to participate anywhere in any community and also to embark on a PhD using shutim [responsa] and Jewish text study.”

“Hadar gave me confidence to engage with text, and to teach text to others. The process of developing the ‘Living Room Learning’ sticks with me as a guide for developing text studies to share, and gave me the confidence to teach text in that way.”

“Even though I am not working on any project, I do feel like if I were to have a project, Hadar would be the most obvious place to look for support.”

2.3

Hadar has cultivated a robust network of alumni. This network provides support to alumni in many ways, often in their work to further Hadar’s vision.

ALUMNI Hadar’s alumni network is leveraged in several ways—including an active email listserv and annual alumni Shabbatonim, as well as an alumni board in formation. On one level, these core activities help to build community among alumni. On another level, these elements contribute to Hadar’s growth “on the ground,” as more and more alumni begin to identify with communities that are informed by Hadar’s values (often based in New York City, DC, or Boston).

In interviews with alumni, we learned that it is not only, and perhaps not even primarily, the intentional work that Hadar does to cultivate this network that leads to its strength. Instead, many connections are formed organically, as Hadar attracts individuals who are searching for the same modes of Jewish practice and identification. Among alumni respondents, 50% reported that they speak to other alumni at least a few times a month, while 80% reported that they speak to Hadar faculty at least a few times a year.

How often do you communicate with Hadar alumni whom you met for the first time during your Hadar experience? (N=171)



How often do you speak with faculty whom you engaged with during your Hadar experience? (N=171)



Alumni Speak about the Hadar Network

“I think Hadar does an excellent job of facilitating an alumni community and I point to Hadar often as my ‘community’ and the teachers as my ‘rabbis.’ I loved my time there and still reflect on it often.”

“I ... have a lot of close relationships with people through Hadar. ... Being a part of the alumni community has been powerful.”

“I feel very much a part of the network. In the sense of alumni—they are good at doing outreach about programming and different opportunities. And also in my day-to-day, the people, the Jewish friends that I have are basically all Hadar people.”

“Most of my peers have had their Jewish practice impacted by Hadar. It is the undercurrent of everything that happens.”

“[Hadar should] continue to expand Hadar activities in Israel and continue to build such an active alumni community—I think this is a huge strength of Hadar and makes alumni feel empowered to keep the experience going.”

2.4

Project Zug empowers individuals, including those with and without prior experiences learning Jewish text, to connect with one another and to high-quality Jewish learning.

PROJECT ZUG Hadar also works towards Goal 2 through its investment in Project Zug. This initiative pairs individuals across the country with one another to learn Jewish texts, through an online platform provided by Hadar. The program both exposes the participants to content and also endeavors to teach them how to learn with a *havruta* by offering prompts and guided questions.

Participants emerge from their experience feeling more inspired and able to engage in Jewish learning independently and/or with others. For some, Project Zug facilitates a connection—either personal or communal—to a broader Hadar network.

Reflecting on how Project Zug connected them to Hadar, one interviewee indicated that they felt “beholden” to Hadar as a result of their experience with Project Zug specifically:

“My connection to Hadar remains Project Zug. I feel beholden to [Hadar] and have a high degree of respect for Project Zug as well as their overall efforts.”

A number of interviewees spoke positively about their Project Zug experiences, highlighting the quality of the courses offered as well as the range and diversity of offerings.

“The quality of the courses offered and the quality of the faculty certainly stands out. It has become part of my life. I would miss it if I didn’t have it.”

“We were looking for a learning opportunity that we could pick up and plug in and unplug when we wanted to. Hadar is a brand that comes with a promise of a certain kind of quality. Knowing that Project Zug was part of that brand didn’t require much vetting.”

One interviewee appreciated that Project Zug helped them to facilitate a strong connection with their *havruta*. The learning came with a structure and guiding questions, which enabled richer interactions with their study partner.

“It wasn’t on us to ask the questions or to find the material to learn. It felt like we had a coach or a teacher which was different than the experiences I had before. I actually appreciated that.”

“I hope that they continue to invest in it because I think that they [offer] an easy on-ramp to making Torah learning a regular practice in people’s lives and I think that’s exciting.”

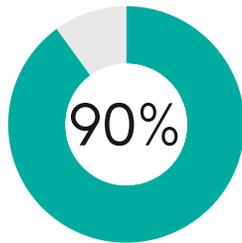
Starting in 2018, and intensifying in 2019, Hadar launched a new initiative in Washington, DC. They facilitated several programs, learning experiences, and a 3-day immersive program, and they hired a full-time faculty person to represent Hadar in DC.

2.5

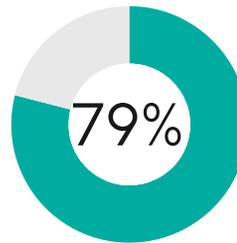
Hadar has provided relevant, rich content to participants in its Washington, DC programs.

HADAR IN DC

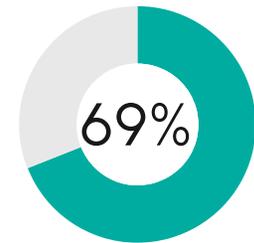
Participants in Washington, DC are extremely satisfied with the Hadar-sponsored events they have attended. They feel the content is relevant to their lives and are very interested in attending future events in the DC area.



Satisfied



Discussed topics after event



Found content relevant

When asked how likely they would be to attend a future Hadar program in DC, on a scale of 1–5 where 1 is “Not at all likely” and 5 is “Extremely likely,” 75% responded with a 4 or a 5. Hadar is viewed as consistently offering high-quality learning and bringing learners together from across the various communities in DC.

Will you attend a future Hadar program in DC? (N=208)



“It was the first Jewish learning event/program I attended upon moving to DC, and since then I have become much more involved in exploring my Judaism.”

“In addition to being introduced to the writings and thinking of the rabbis, the questions they address are relevant to our lives and how we are and behave in the world.”

“The increase in Hadar programming outside of New York City during the last few years has been encouraging in terms of showcasing that the vision has broader viability and appeal. It would be great to see more of this.”

2.6

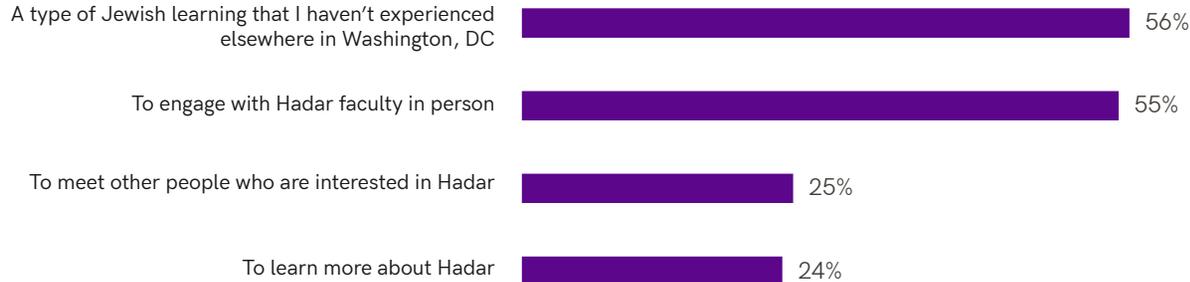
Hadar has tapped into a network of individuals in Washington, DC who are primarily attracted by its content.

HADAR IN DC

We asked participants what initially motivated them to attend the programming they did. While being connected to Hadar as an organization is important, many individuals were actually more drawn in by the learning opportunity itself than the Hadar name. That said, participants are confident in the learning opportunity because of Hadar's reputation.

Thinking about the Hadar program(s) you attended in Washington, DC, to what extent did each of the following motivate your decision to participate?

(% who responded "A lot" or "Extremely," N=164)



“A mentor recommended it as a new way for me to engage in Jewish learning.”

“I enjoy text study, it was at a convenient time and at an affordable price.”

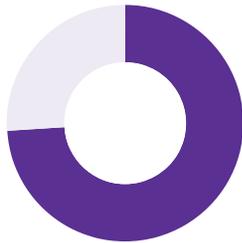
“I never did any learning with Hadar before... [but] I appreciate Jewish learning and thought this would be a great experience. Even though [R. Avi Strausberg, the full-time educator in DC] wasn't actually teaching [the program], I relied on Hadar's name to deliver.”

2.7

Having a dedicated full-time Hadar rabbi in DC has paid dividends.

HADAR IN DC

Many seem to appreciate having Rabbi Avi Strausberg on the ground. They feel that having access to a talented and highly regarded educator represents the investment Hadar is making in the DC community. Most believe the work Hadar is doing is complementary to what exists; Hadar is viewed as trying to strengthen existing communities rather than replace or occupy existing ones.



74%

of those who had one-on-one interactions with Rabbi Avi Strausberg were **extremely satisfied**

- 💬 *“Spectacular. So phenomenal to have Avi and this resource in general in the DC community. Great learning and ties together otherwise disparate communities.”*
- 💬 *“Very beneficial. I think Avi is doing a great job in broadening the range of activities in DC and engaging audiences.”*
- 💬 *“The presence of a Hadar faculty member fills a gap that is much needed to be filled.”*



2.8

RSI offers a unique opportunity for participants, with varied backgrounds in music and Jewish song leadership, to immerse themselves in Jewish music.

RISING SONG INSTITUTE

Participants of the Rising Song Residency and Fellowship programs report that they rarely get the opportunity to “sit” in music and connect with peers in the way that the Rising Song Institute allows them to—many of the participants attend specifically for this lived experience they aren’t finding elsewhere, unsure of what the specific outcomes will be but confident it will be worthwhile.

💬 *“I personally am not a trained musician, so I couldn’t get into music school if I wanted to ... just literally at face value, this is the school of my dreams. Study in depth Jewish music and have time to do our own projects but with support.”*

💬 *“I was excited by the opportunity. I was thinking, as someone who is a congregational rabbi chazan, I am often getting wonderfully deep into rabbi-ing, and sometimes my own creative practice is put to the side.”*



2.9

The peer network that is provided by these programs is both a motivator to participate and an outgrowth of participation.

RISING SONG INSTITUTE

Participants believe that the group, in both the fellowship and residency programs, is the biggest reason the programs worked; the cohort experience is key. The Residents attributed this to the fact that, as participants in the pilot program, they contributed directly to the development of the program model and its implementation. This required a collaborative, supportive dynamic among participants. The Fellows appreciated the intergenerational experience of being in a Jewishly and musically diverse cohort.



“The thing that worked the best is we were a very close-knit team and we were all resources to each other. Someone in the group had the skill set you were looking to develop.”

“It was cool to be in community and connection with people who were at different life stages in their career.”

“I had a sense that, yes, Joey would be leading and had something specific to share, but also wanted an opportunity to create a cohort where we could all learn from each other. That was appealing to me and seemed meaningful.”

GOAL

3

COMPELLING CONTENT



3.1

Weekly Divrei Torah written by Hadar educators were the most-used form of content, while melodies written by Joey Weisenberg were the second-most used.

A weekly Dvar Torah by a Hadar educator was the most-used form of content, with 40% of respondents saying they read it at least once in the prior six weeks; a melody written by Joey Weisenberg was the second-most used, with 32% saying they had sung/listened to a melody in the prior six weeks. A Hadar lecture/class that was recorded was also popular, with 31% saying they had engaged with it at least once in the prior six weeks.

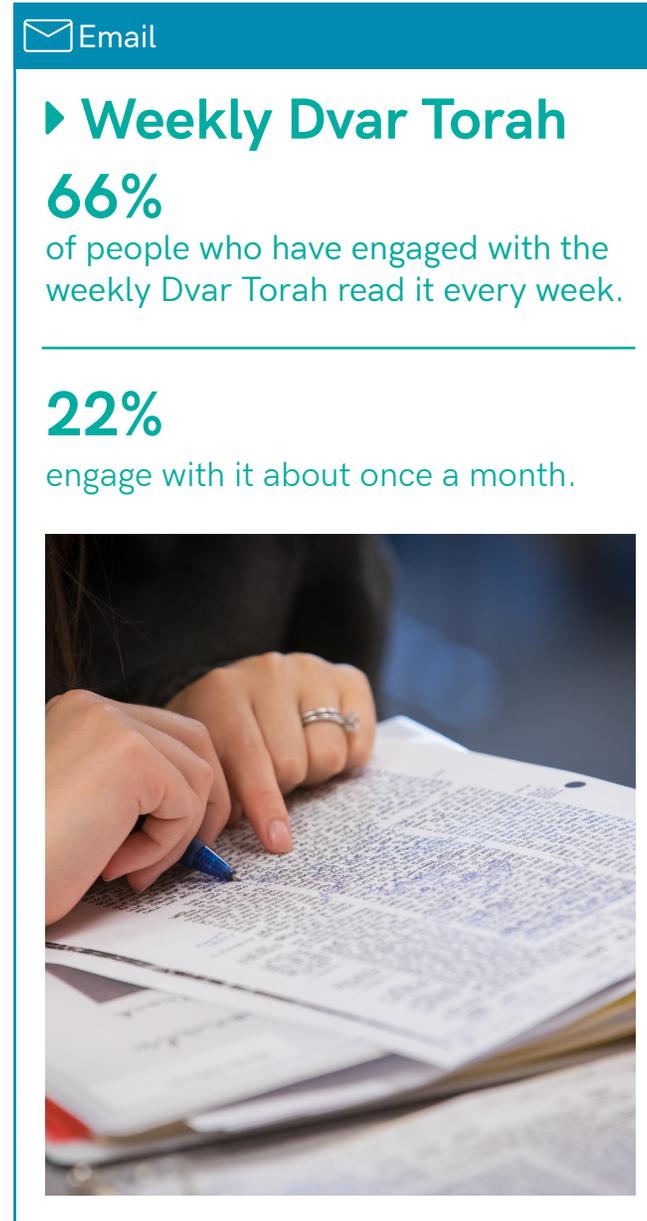
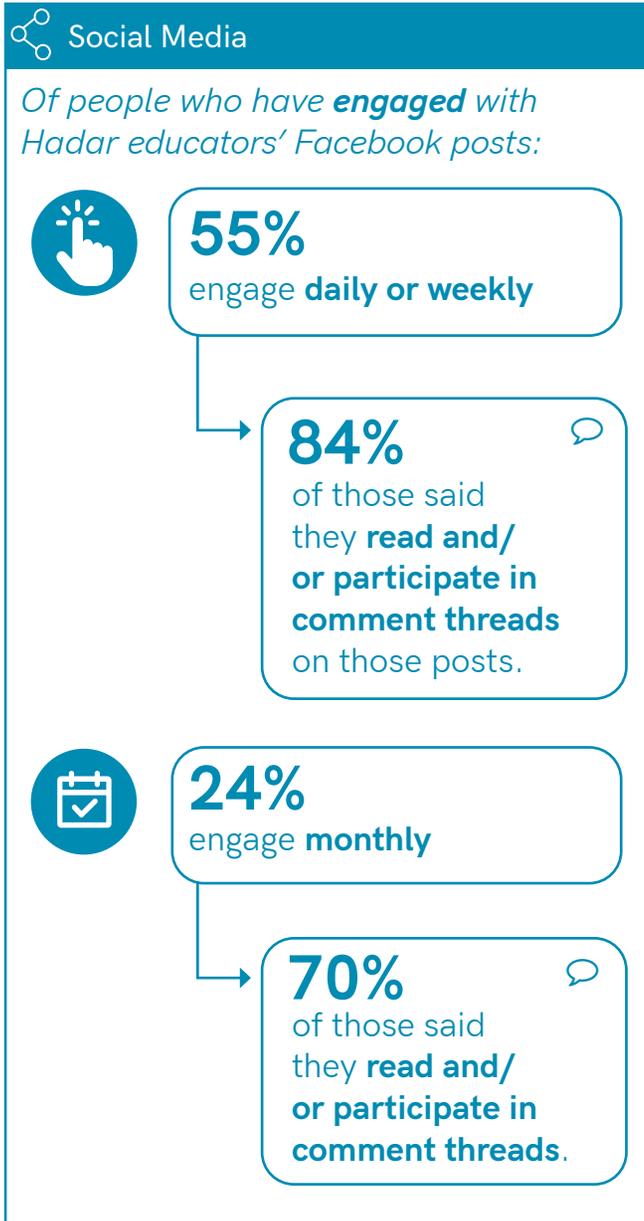
In the last six weeks, have you read/listened/attended at least once?

(N= 641, % of respondents for each content type)

0-9%	10-19%	20-29%	30-40%
Project Zug online class	A Hadar lecture in person	Recording of prayer services on Hadar’s website	A Hadar lecture/class that was recorded
Joey Weisenberg’s book <i>The Torah of Music</i>	Rabbi Shai Held’s book <i>The Heart of Torah</i>	Written material in Hadar’s online Torah library	A melody written by Joey Weisenberg
Notes or materials from your time at Hadar		A Hadar educator’s Facebook post	A weekly Dvar Torah by a Hadar educator on the Torah portion
Rabbi Ethan Tucker and Rabbi Micha’el Rosenberg’s book <i>Gender Equality and Prayer in Jewish Law</i>		Responsa Radio podcast	

3.2

A relatively large number of individuals interact with Hadar’s content on social media or through weekly emails.



Respondents were asked to reflect in open-ended responses about the impact they have experienced, if any, from the different types of Hadar's content with which they have interacted. The next four findings emerge from an analysis of the written responses to these survey questions. The first two respond to the question, "In what way do you feel you have been impacted personally?"

3.3

Hadar's content has resulted in tangible behavioral changes. Many people view Hadar as setting a standard for how to live their Jewish lives.

- "I've been both personally encouraged and seen areas where I've needed to change and grow in reading these commentaries [Rabbi Shai Held's 'Heart of Torah']."*
- "Has been one of the primary reasons I'm now among the best daveners at my shul."*
- "The podcast has shaped my perspective on halakhah and helped me to develop my own practices."*

3.4

Hadar's content results in many people thinking differently about the way they view Judaism, where they belong within the community, and what is important to them. Hadar's content stimulates people to reflect on and sometimes shift the beliefs with which they were raised.

- "Many Hadar lectures have broadened and deepened my understanding of core Jewish texts and ideas. They have affected how I think, talk, and live Jewishly."*
- "As an ordained Orthodox rabbi, these divrei torah have reignited a lot of the passion that I have lost over the years relating to learning."*
- "Hadar's resources have me thinking about halacha in a different way and from a different perspective. I really enjoy the complexities and the realness of the teachers and the topics are relatable."*

The second two findings respond to the question, “In what ways, if at all, did any of Hadar’s resources have an impact on your community?” *

3.5

People are spreading Hadar’s content widely within their communities. When they need references for something they’re writing or creating, Hadar is the go-to source for many.

- 💬 “[Shai Held’s] *Torah on Mishpatim* and how we turn memory into empathy is a piece of Torah that I refer to and teach all the time. It continues to inspire me.”
- 💬 “I am using [the recorded Hadar lecture/class] to prepare my own shiurim (classes) to teach.”
- 💬 “R. Elie gave me new ideas for how to teach liturgy, and his new reading of mourner’s kaddish which I taught at a shiva minyan has been very helpful to several people in my shul. I could go on and on.”

3.6

After experiencing Hadar’s content collectively, several communities across the country have worked to adopt key messages: commitment to *halakhah* (Jewish law), egalitarianism, and Torah that is relevant to the modern world.

- 💬 “It totally transformed and galvanized it and created a culture of excellence and serious commitment to mitzvot and halachah.”
- 💬 “My community at the University of Chicago was very much built in the image of Hadar.”
- 💬 “For a growing number of the members of our synagogue, Hadar has become a significant, if not principal, resource for Jewish education and for thoughtful, incisive, stimulating discussion and knowledge.”

*Note: We did not specify to respondents what “community” they should consider when answering this question. Many respondents considered their synagogue community, though some spoke about virtual communities or study groups.

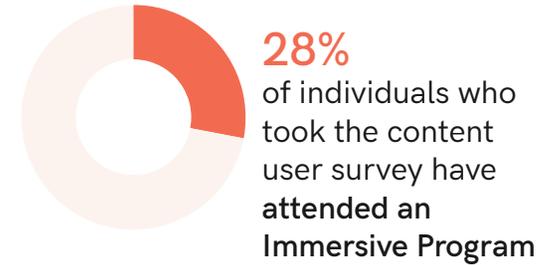
3.7

Participating in an Immersive Program is a strong predictor for increased usage of Hadar’s content.

Those who participated in Immersive Programs are more likely to indicate that they have engaged with more forms of Hadar’s content (see page 22 for list) in the last six weeks than those who have not participated in an Immersive Program.

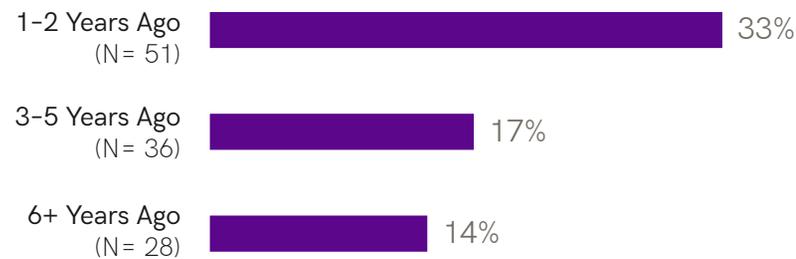
Importantly, the number of forms of content used in the last six weeks is not dependent on how long their last Immersive Program was.

Forms of Content Used (average number per person)



Perhaps unexpectedly, one third of respondents who have participated in an Immersive Program in the last 1–2 years have **consulted their notes** from their time at Hadar. This indicates that the content learned at Hadar is not only a window to new forms of engagement, but also has “staying power” of its own.

Respondents Who Have Used Their Hadar Notes in the Prior Six Weeks Based on When They Participated in an Immersive



3.8

Hadar's content seems to appeal to a range of demographic categories, with no discernable differences by age or gender.

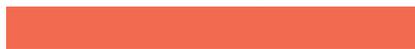
A diverse range of individuals engage with Hadar's content. It's important to note that our sample only includes individuals who encountered our survey online; it's possible that groups of individuals engage with Hadar's content offline (lectures, concerts, learning groups, etc.).

Main Form of Jewish Education Growing Up

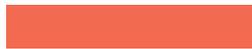
41% A religious supplementary Jewish school



35% Jewish day school or yeshiva



21% None of the above

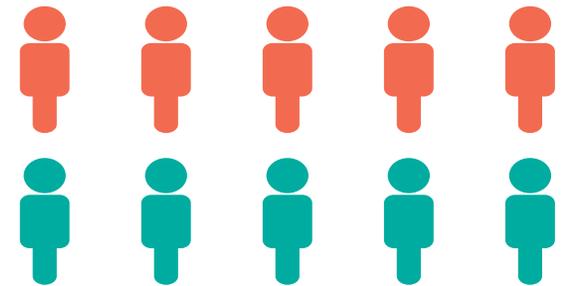


2% A private tutor



Gender Identity

Male Identifying (48%)



Female Identifying (52%)

Age Groups

36% Up to 30

35% 31-50

30% Over 50

Exploring Hadar’s Vision

As part of our data collection efforts, we surveyed two different populations about their understanding of Hadar’s vision:

1. Those who participated in Immersive Programs in the 2017–2018 program year
2. Alumni who participated in Immersive Programs prior to 2017

For each population, respondents reflected on their understanding of Hadar’s vision in an open-ended question. This was important, because the way that participants reflect back an organization’s vision can shed light on how effectively that vision is understood.

The most striking feature of the responses from both datasets is the varied ways in which Hadar’s vision is understood. Some respondents feel that Hadar’s goal is to foster a community of individuals who value text study and egalitarianism, while others feel that Hadar’s goal is to make Jewish learning accessible to a wide audience. Some reflected on Hadar’s focus on providing a unique learning and/or religious experience for students. Others reflected on Hadar’s goal to build a “movement” that includes and extends beyond its students.

We see these perspectives as expressing the multifaceted nature of Hadar’s approach. It may also signal an opportunity to cultivate more consistency in messaging as Hadar continues to expand.

Finally, it’s worth noting that there are some who don’t understand how Hadar’s work coheres into a unified vision. For example, as one participant questioned, is Hadar “an [institution], a denomination, or a network”?

Understandings of Hadar’s Vision

“Create robust egalitarian Jewish communities built upon commitments to Talmud Torah and Jewish practice.”

“An intellectual commitment to egalitarian Torah, and making it more accessible to a wide audience.”

“Build a network of Jews who have halachic-egalitarian sensibilities and empowerment in learning and teaching Torah.”

“To bring a depth of Jewish learning to as many people as possible, through as many media as possible.”

“Building empowered and self-sufficient Jewish communities focused on Torah, tefillah, and hesed.”

“Hadar is a space for dedicated egalitarian halakhic Judaism lived through Torah study, prayer and hesed”

“Hadar seeks to teach Torah to those who will spread a love of Torah and a devotion to a halakhic egalitarian way of life, including Torah study, prayer, and hesed.”

“The Torah is important and has something to say to everyone, and we should trust it and allow it to guide our lives.”

Appendix: List of Hadar Immersive Programs

Participants from the following 14 programs during the 2017-2018 year were surveyed for the “Goal 1” section of this report:

1. Manger Winter Learning Seminar
2. Singing Communities Intensive
3. Day School Educators Institute
4. Executive Seminar
5. Halakhah Intensive
6. High Holidays Leaders Training
7. Winter Seminar in Israel (סמינר החורף)
8. Jewish Professionals Institute
9. Rabbinic Yeshiva Intensive
10. Teshuvah Seminar
11. Elul Program (תוכנית אלול)
12. Winter Learning Institute in DC
13. Yeshivat Hadar Summer Beit Midrash 2018
14. Yeshivat Hadar Year Fellowship



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