
Onward Israel

Onward Israel Cohort VI: A Comparison of 2.0 and Community-Based Programs

November 2017

Introduction

Now on the cusp of its seventh year of operation, Onward Israel has grown considerably in the range of resume-building experiences it offers its participants. Most Onward interns take part in community-based, Federation-partnered, programs, designed for individuals who either reside in specific catchment areas or who study at local universities. Individuals who do not live in these areas and are therefore not eligible for such programs can choose from several other program options – some of which are academically-oriented and include summer coursework, some that offer a Jewish learning component in addition to the internship itself, some that partner with national organizations (Hillel, Tamid, etc.), and some that are theme-based. One of these options are 2.0 programs – theme-based internships that focus on specific professional fields and are open to participants from across the globe. A unique feature of 2.0 programs is that in addition to living communally (a common element across all Onward programs), participants spend their summer specializing in the various facets of the same professional field, thus experiencing internships that are somewhat “synchronous” with one another.

In 2016, as part of Rosov Consulting’s ongoing evaluation of Onward Israel, our team explored the extent to which participants from community-based and 2.0 programs were similar to or different from one another in terms of their demographic characteristics, their motivations to apply to Onward, and the program outcomes evidenced. In 2017, in order to assess the validity of findings from the previous year’s analysis, we once again collaborated with Onward to compare participants from these two program models, this time focusing on Cohort VI.

THE SAMPLE

During the summer of 2017, 1,638 individuals took part in Onward’s North American programs. Of these, 553 participated in community-based programs, and 256 participated in 2.0 programs. The findings discussed in this memo are based on an analysis of quantitative survey data obtained two weeks before and two weeks after the summer. In total, 707 individuals completed both the pre-program and post-program surveys (43% response rate). Of these, 268 participated in community-based programs (48% response rate), and 115 participated in 2.0 programs (45% response rate).

Participant Profiles

Demographic characteristics of the overall sample of Onward Israel respondents and the two program-specific sub-samples are shown in Exhibit 1. The most notable feature of the participants in 2.0 programs is that they are slightly older than those in community-based programs. The 2.0 contingent also included a small number of non-Jewish participants, while the community-based programs did not.¹ At the same time, participants from the two program types shared the following demographic characteristics:

- Approximately two-thirds of respondents identified as female.
- The majority of respondents had been to Israel before, many on a Birthright trip.
- Both community-based and 2.0 programs consisted of approximately a third more Birthright alumni than did Onward programs overall.
- Few respondents had Israeli parents.
- More than one-third of respondents indicated that most or all of their friends identify as Jews.
- Approximately half of respondents had attended Jewish day school, with slightly more having attended other Jewish educational experiences, such as overnight camp, youth group or supplementary school.
- Prior to Onward, approximately half of respondents exhibited “higher” Jewish engagement and half exhibited “lower” Jewish engagement,” based on a Cluster Analysis² of the variables pertaining to frequency of participation in Jewish and Israel-related activities during the year leading up to Onward.

¹ Both of these differences were found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), based on a t-test for age and a chi-square test for the percentage of non-Jews in each sub-sample.

² Cluster Analysis is a statistical discovery technique that enables division of respondents into meaningful groups based on similarity in the respondents’ answers to key survey questions.

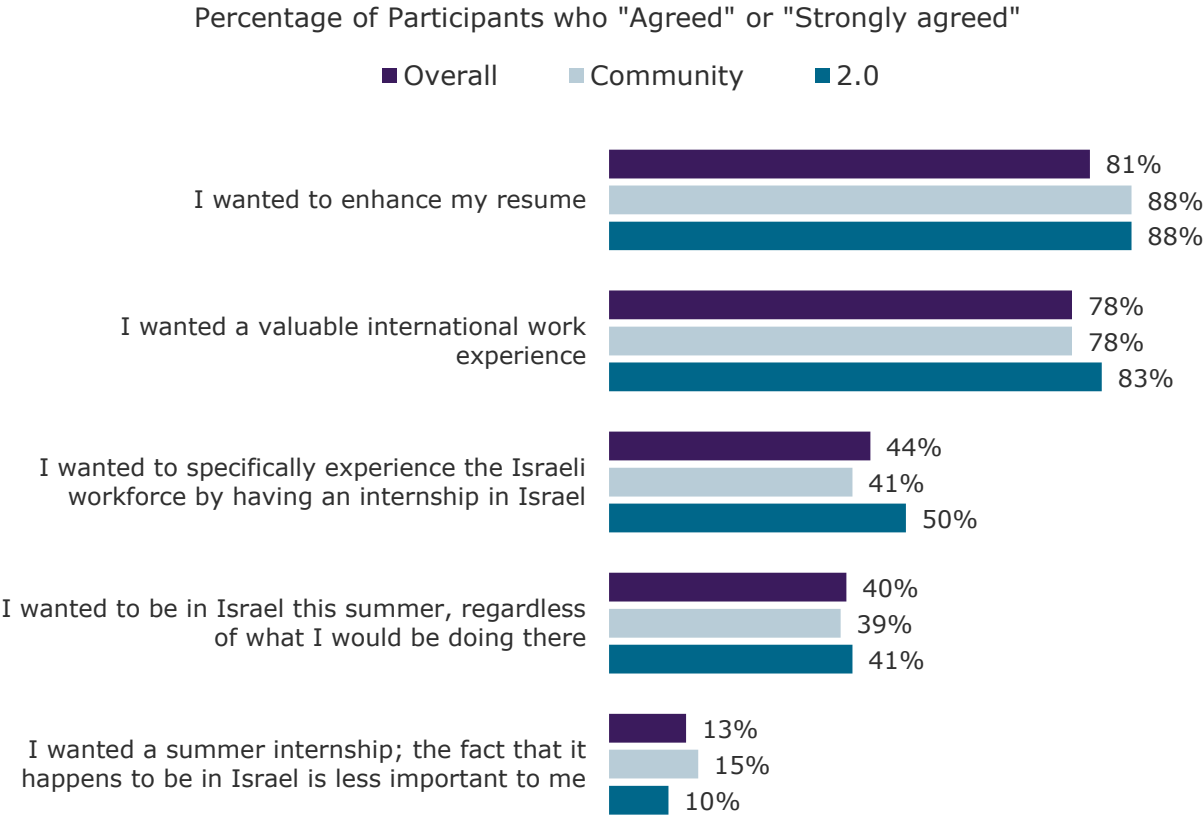
Exhibit 1: Characteristics of the Sample

		Overall (n=707)	Community (n=268)	2.0 (n=115)
Average age		20.2	20.1	20.7
Identify as Jewish		95%	100%	93%
Gender	Male	36%	32%	31%
	Female	64%	68%	69%
Been to Israel before		81%	89%	89%
Birthright alumni		44%	61%	62%
Israeli parents		17%	18%	21%
Most or all of close friends identify as Jewish		47%	43%	34%
Prior participation in Jewish educational experiences	Day school	49%	44%	49%
	Overnight camp	64%	62%	52%
	Youth group	61%	58%	52%
	Supplementary school	64%	67%	64%
Jewish engagement leading up to Onward	Higher engaged	53%	49%	49%
	Lower engaged	47%	51%	51%

Motivations to Participate in Onward

Prior to the start of their Onward program, participants were presented with a list of five motivation statements and asked to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each statement. As depicted in Exhibit 2, participants were most interested in taking part in Onward in order to enhance their resume and gain a valuable international work experience, regardless of the type of program in which they took part. Additionally, the fact that few participants agreed with the statement, “I wanted a summer internship; the fact that it happens to be in Israel is less important to me” highlights the key role that Israel plays in attracting individuals to Onward. Overall, participants from community-based and 2.0 programs were found to mirror one another in terms of their reasoning for taking part in Onward.

Exhibit 2: Motivation Statements



Program Outcomes

Based on a Factor Analysis³ of several of the items included in the pre-program and post-program survey instruments, Onward's impact was assessed across the following six dimensions ("factors"): (i) Connection to Israel and Israelis; (ii) Knowledge about Israel; (iii) Connection to Jewish peoplehood; (iv) Knowledge related to Jewish peoplehood; (v) Professional confidence and competency; and (vi) Professional direction. A list of these factors and the items of which they are composed is included in Appendix A.

As demonstrated in Exhibit 3, the areas in which the greatest percentage of participants experienced growth were **knowledge about Israel** (politics, culture, economy, etc.) and **professional direction** (clear sense of career goals, knowing what working in a particular professional field entails, etc.). In both of these domains, more than half of the overall sample reported stronger outcomes following their return from Onward.

When comparing participants in community-based and 2.0 programs, both exhibited a similar increase for each of these outcomes – the *only* areas of statistically significant change at the end of the summer for these two program models.⁴ This finding further illustrates the similarities between the two program models and specifically the consistency in the program experience they offer.

An additional notable finding – though not statistically significant – is that 2.0 programs consisted of a greater percentage of participants whose professional direction, confidence, and competency increased following the program, relative to community-based programs. This finding resonates with one of the learnings from interviews conducted with program providers last summer, indicating that 2.0 participants seem to have a greater sense of professional drive.

It is important to note that the overall sample of Onward respondents showcased statistically significant growth in four areas: (i) Knowledge about Israel; (ii) Knowledge related to Jewish peoplehood; (iii) Professional confidence and competency; and (iv) Professional direction.⁵

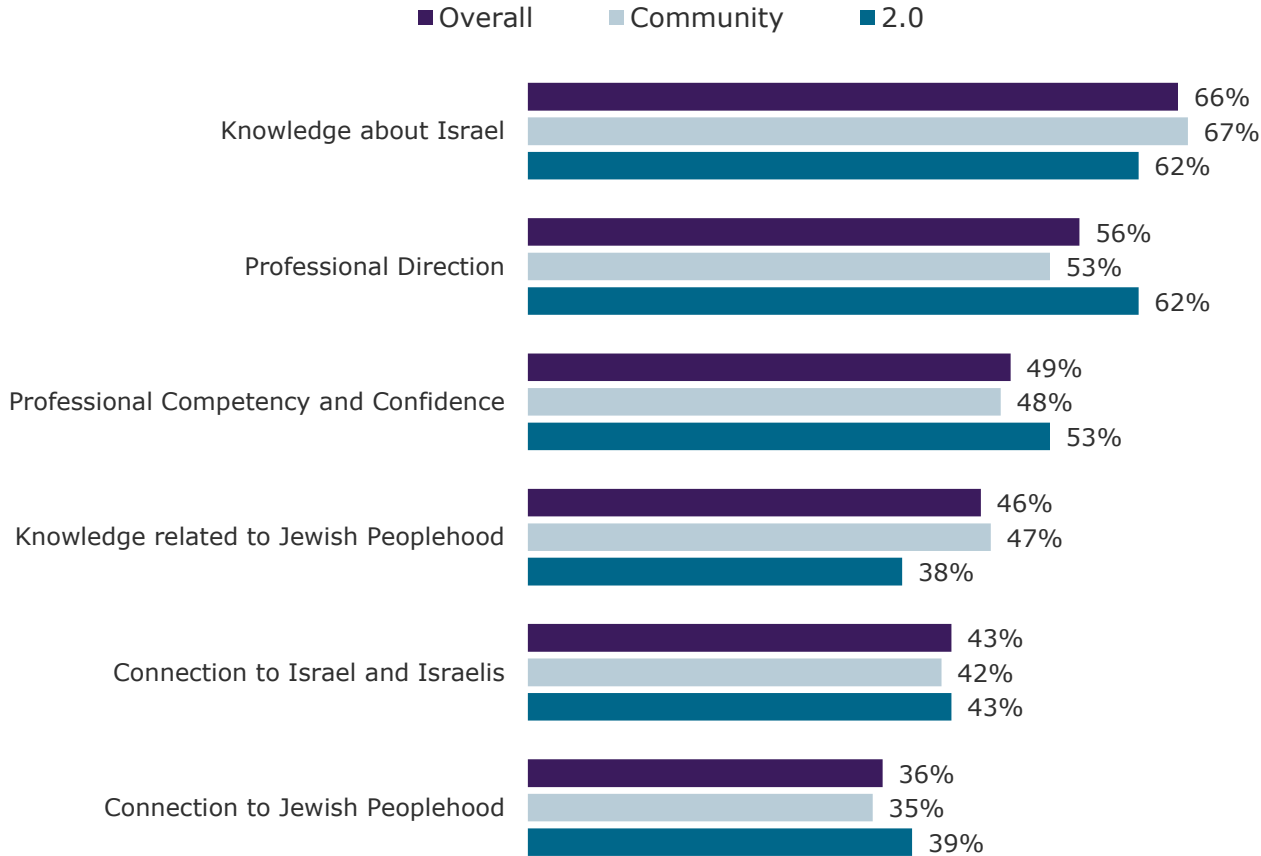
³ Factor analysis is a statistical technique that reduces a large number of variables into a smaller set of variables ("factors"), making the data more manageable and easier to understand. Each factor is composed of variables exhibiting similar response patterns.

⁴ This finding was produced by a paired-samples t-test, $p < 0.05$. There were slight increases in the other outcomes areas as well, but these were not statistically significant.

⁵ The large size of the overall sample, relative to the program-specific sub-samples (particularly 2.0), allows for greater statistical power, which can detect acute differences when testing for significance. As such, the sample size accounts for the greater observable change in the sample of Onward programs overall, compared to the community-based and 2.0 programs.

Exhibit 3: Areas of Growth

Percentage of participants who displayed higher outcome scores post-trip



TAKE-AWAYS FROM ONWARD

Following the program, participants were asked what their greatest take-aways were from their summer experience. As shown in Exhibit 4, the vast majority of participants (more than 80%) felt that they were able to learn more about Israel, build meaningful relationships with others, and learn more about themselves during their time on Onward. Additionally, participants very much felt that they gained valuable work experience and professional skills from their Onward program. Here, too, participants from community-based and 2.0 programs reported similar outcomes, reflective of a consistent experience between these two programs – and across Onward’s offerings overall.

Exhibit 4: Take-Aways from the Summer

“To what extent were you able to do the following during your time on Onward?”
Percentage of participants who "agreed" or "strongly agreed"

	Overall	Community	2.0
Learn more about Israel	83%	83%	81%
Build meaningful relationships with others	83%	82%	82%
Learn more about myself	80%	82%	82%
Gain professional skills	75%	74%	79%
Gain valuable work experience	72%	73%	73%
Think about Israel in a nuanced, challenging way	68%	71%	72%
Explore my Jewish identity	63%	62%	58%
Gain leadership skills	60%	55%	64%
Do something good for others	60%	62%	57%
Contribute to Israeli society	47%	43%	46%

Conclusions

The large number of similarities between community-based and 2.0 participants – in terms of their demographic make-up, motivations to participate in Onward, and resulting outcomes – confirm two conclusions our team proposed at the end of our work last summer. First, and most strikingly in the context of rapid program expansion, these findings point to a consistent quality of program experience across models shaped by different design concepts. This consistency underlines the strength and stability of the core experiences being provided by Onward Israel and their capacity to bring about positive change in participants' lives, particularly in their professional development and their knowledge of Israel and the Jewish people.

These findings also corroborate a second conclusion, with regards to participant recruitment: the 2.0 model usefully broadens the pool of recruits to Onward Israel, but it does not necessarily diversify the profile of those recruits. The 2.0 model enables Onward to reach more people who might not otherwise have elected to invest time in an eight-week program in Israel. It expands the market. In this respect, it serves as a handy addition to the suite of programs Onward offers.

APPENDIX A: Program Outcomes - Factors and Items

Connection to Israel and Israelis (Reliability = 0.88)	I feel a strong connection to Israel and Israelis
	I feel at home in Israel
	Caring about Israel is a very important part of my being a Jew
	I feel proud of Israel
	I can articulate to others what Israel means to me
	I feel a sense of responsibility to Israel and Israelis
Knowledge about Israel (Reliability = 0.90)	I know about Israeli politics
	I know about the Israeli economy
	I know about Israel's geopolitical situation
	I know about diversity within Israeli society
	I know about Israeli culture
Connection to Jewish Peoplehood (Reliability = 0.85)	I have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people
	I feel connected to other Jews around the world
	I feel connected to other Jews at home or at school
	I am interested in learning more about Judaism and my Jewish heritage
	I feel connected to Judaism and my Jewish heritage
Knowledge related to Jewish Peoplehood (Reliability = 0.81)	I know about different ways of being Jewish
	I know about Judaism and my Jewish heritage
	I know about Jewish communities around the world
Professional Competency and Confidence (Reliability = 0.86)	I manage myself well in the workplace in terms of problem-solving, taking initiative, etc.
	I am confident in my ability to present myself to an employer
	I am confident in my resume
	I have the ability and knowhow to network in my professional field of interest
	I am comfortable in a cross-cultural working environment
	I feel confident in professional settings
	I feel confident in new and unfamiliar settings
	I can work well with people from different cultural backgrounds
Professional Direction (Reliability = 0.88)	I know what working my professional field entails
	I know where I am headed professionally, or what my options are
	I have a clear sense of my academic and/or career goals
	I know about what it takes to succeed in my area of professional interest
	I have skills relevant to my professional field of interest
	I know about the day-to-day activities related to my area of professional interest



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