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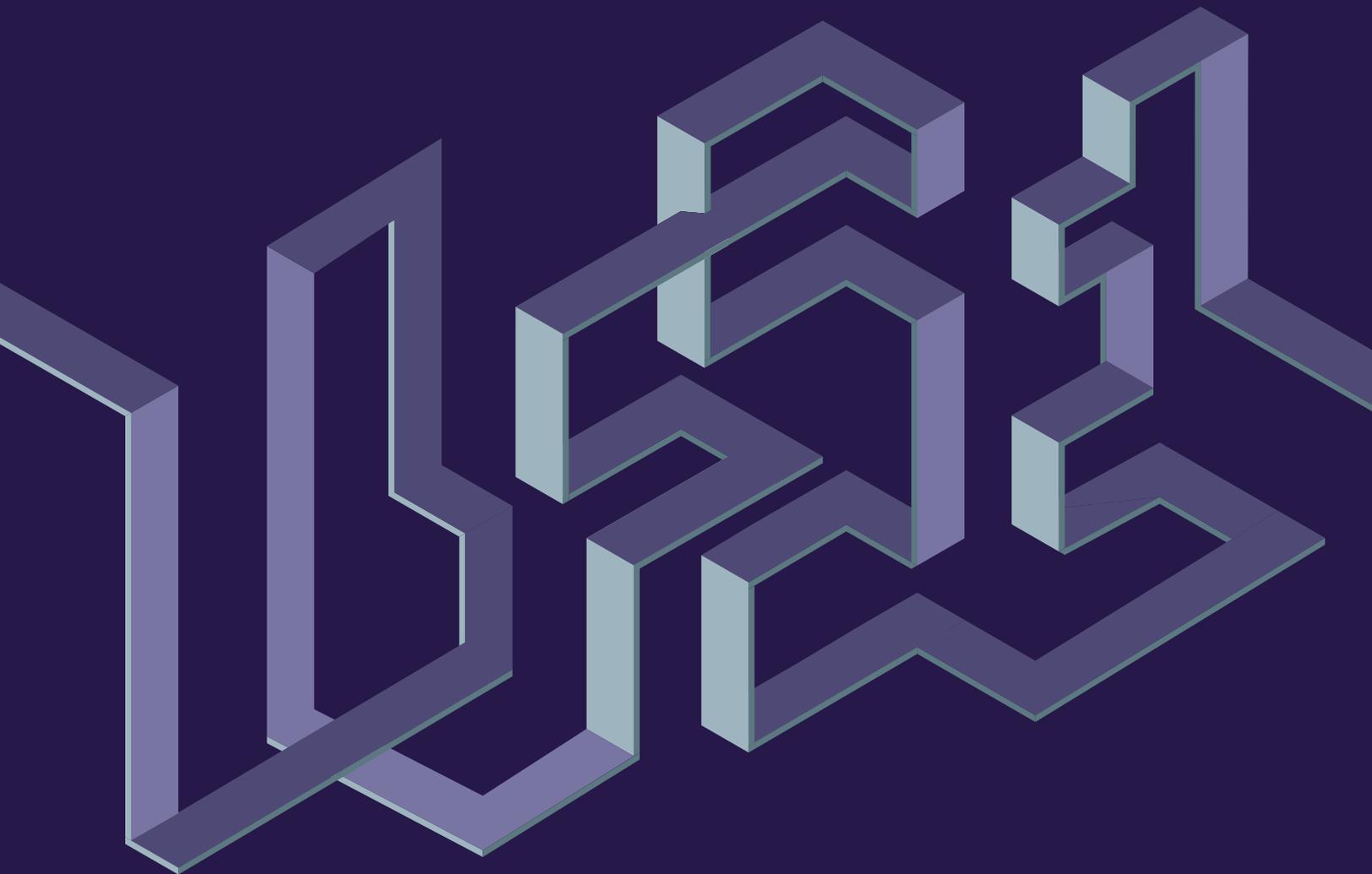
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A Summer of Uncertainty

THE IMPACT ON BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL'S
SUMMER 2025 COHORT

February 2026



Brandeis

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COHEN CENTER FOR
MODERN JEWISH STUDIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Summer 2025 marked a year and a half since the beginning of the war between Israel and Hamas. Although a ceasefire between Hezbollah and Israel had been agreed upon six months earlier, Israel was still experiencing regular Houthi missile and drone attacks from Yemen. Despite multiple military conflicts thousands of American Jewish young adults still chose to apply and participate in Birthright trips. Having made the decision to travel to Israel during this precarious time, many participants found themselves confronting an outbreak of a new war that erupted between Israel and Iran in June 2025. Birthright, which was already tasked with operating successful, safe, and meaningful trips during a time of intense conflict, was now faced with mounting an evacuation operation of all its participants by boat to Cyprus and then to their home countries.

This report focuses on the experience of summer 2025 US participants in Birthright's 10-day trips. The findings are based on a pair of surveys: one survey conducted prior to the trip in spring 2025 (N=2,285 AAPOR RR2=21%) and the other conducted several months after the trip in the fall of 2025 (N=1,384 AAPOR RR2=11%).

Key findings

- **Summer 2025 Birthright participants represented a range of Jewish backgrounds. A plurality had intensive Jewish educational and Israel experiences growing up, but some participants had few Jewish connections growing up.** Among 2025 participants, 38% had attended Jewish day school, 17% identified as Orthodox, and 54% had already visited Israel at least once. Summer 2025 participants were very similar in their Jewish background to those who participated in summer 2024 but, compared to those who participated before October 7, were far more likely to be Orthodox, to have attended Jewish day school, and to have previously been to Israel.
- **More than half of summer 2025 participants (53%) were very connected to Israel before the trip.** Levels of connection to Israel prior to going on the trip were similar to those observed among summer 2024 participants and were markedly higher compared to those who participated before October 7.
- **A plurality of participants in summer 2025 (42%) identified as politically conservative, and about a third identified as liberal (34%).** This finding is similar to that observed in 2024, but compared to summer 2023 participants, the share of conservatives more than doubled (42% in 2025 versus 20% in 2023), and the share of liberals shrank dramatically.
- **Travel to Israel, forging Jewish connections, and having Jewish experiences with peers were the main motivations driving participants to apply.**
- **Virtually all of the participants, regardless of their prior experience and level of Jewish education, rated the trip extremely positively. The majority rated it as one of the best experiences of their lives and described the trip as very meaningful.**

- **Summer 2025 Birthright participants increased their level of connection to Israel despite joining the trip already highly connected** (from 53% very much connected prior to the trip to 74% after the trip, with no observable change among nonparticipants).
- **Participants increased their level of knowledge about various topics related to Israel, despite reporting high levels of knowledge about these topics prior to the trip.** Participants' level of knowledge on topics concerning Arab citizens of Israel and contemporary Israeli politics increased the most.
- **Participation in Birthright increased the importance participants placed on being Jewish to their identity.** This impact was concentrated among those who identified as politically liberal.
- **Participation in Birthright helped maintain participants' connections to Jewish life (Jewish values, Jewish history, Jewish customs and traditions, the worldwide Jewish community), while nonparticipants' levels of connection to Jewish life decreased.**
- **Participation in Birthright increased participants' sense of responsibility toward other Jews and Israel.**
- **Birthright's positive impact on connection to Israel and to the worldwide Jewish community, on Jewish identity and on knowledge about Israel, was evident even among those who attended Jewish day school and tended to be already highly immersed in Jewish life.**

Conclusion

October 7 continues to shape American Jewry in numerous ways, and the 2025 Birthright Israel trips illustrate that. As a result of events in the Middle East, Birthright's applicant pool dramatically changed. At the same time, the broader landscape of young American Jews' relationship to Israel and Jewish life shifted. During the last several months of the war, young Jews who applied to Birthright but did not go became more disconnected from their own Jewish identity, and those who identified as politically liberal became less connected to Israel. Never before in our research on Birthright have we seen such notable declines among nonparticipants. Yet even in such an environment, Birthright produced substantial impact on those who participated in the program, even if their trip was cut short. Birthright arrested declines in connection to Jewish life and reversed declines in connection to Israel while solidifying Jewish identity among those who identify as politically liberal.

Despite Israel continuing to face both security threats and strains on public support, we expect Birthright's role in the coming years to continue to be important. As this study demonstrates, despite pressures on multiple fronts, Birthright remains a formative experience and milestone for a diverse group of American Jewish young adults.

INTRODUCTION

American Jewish young adults who joined Birthright's 10-day trips in summer 2025 chose to travel to Israel well into the second year of the Israel-Hamas war, while Israel was experiencing Houthi missile attacks from Yemen and recovering from Hezbollah attacks in the north. That Jewish young adults would consider traveling to a country with numerous military conflicts underway was remarkable. Not only did participants travel to Israel during this precarious time, many participants found themselves confronting a new war that erupted between Israel and Iran in June 2025. Birthright, which was already tasked with operating successful, safe, and meaningful trips, was now faced with mounting an evacuation operation of all its participants, first by ships to Cypress; and then, for most, by plane back to their home countries.

This report focuses on the experience of summer 2025 US participants in Birthright's 10-day trips. Understanding who participants are; how they perceived the program; and how participation affected their relationship with Israel, their Jewish identity and connections is the focus of this report. In the unprecedented context of summer 2025, the report focuses on the following questions about the Birthright program:

Who were the applicants to Birthright Israel trips in the summer of 2025? How did they differ from those who applied in previous years in terms of their relationship to Israel and their political affiliations? What were their motivations for going on the trip?

How did Birthright participants view their experiences in Israel? For those who were evacuated, what was the experience like? Which parts of the trip did participants find most meaningful?

How did Birthright Israel influence participants' relationship to and knowledge about Israel? To what extent did participating in a Birthright trip transform how participants relate to Israel and their knowledge about different aspects of life in Israel?

How did Birthright Israel influence participants' relationship to their Jewish identity, Jewish life, and the Jewish community? To what extent did Birthright increase the salience of being Jewish to participants' identity? To what extent did Birthright increase participants' connections to Jewish values, Jewish traditions, and the worldwide Jewish community? To what extent did Birthright increase participants' sense of responsibility related to other Jews and Israel?

Did Birthright's impact differ by participants' Jewish backgrounds? How did participation in Birthright influence Jewish and Israel connection among those who attended day school and joined the trip with very high baseline levels of connection?

About Birthright Israel Programs

Birthright Israel provides Jewish young adults with opportunities to travel to Israel for peer-educational experiences. In summer 2025, Birthright Israel offered three different Israel experiences. In addition to the **classic 10-day Birthright trips**, US Jews could also apply to participate in **Birthright Israel Onward**, a multi-week fellowship and internship program in Israel,¹ or **Birthright Israel Volunteer**, focusing on volunteer work to support Israeli society during the war. Although they all operate under the Birthright Israel brand, these programs offer very different experiences, attract different kinds of applicants, and have different goals. This report only focuses on the traditional 10-day trips.

ABOUT THE DATA

The present findings are based on a pair of surveys of US applicants to summer 2025 Birthright Israel trips. The sample includes both those who participated in Birthright as well as those who applied but did not participate in these programs. Applicants were surveyed at two different time points:

- Shortly before the trip (pre-trip survey) in April and May 2025. (N=2,285 AAPOR RR2=21%.)
- About three to four months after the trip (post-trip survey) in November and December 2025. (N=1,384 AAPOR RR2=11%.)

To address response rate issues, weights were calculated separately for the pre-trip and post-trip surveys to account for the higher likelihood of certain types of applicants to respond. In the pre-trip survey, those who were more likely to respond were individuals ages 18-21, women, those who did not have any formal Jewish education and those who attended day school (compared to those who attended supplementary school), those who identified as Orthodox, those who also applied to one of Birthright's other programs, and those who ended up participating in the Birthright program. In the post-trip survey, those who were more likely to respond were women, those who attended day school, those who identified as Orthodox, and those who participated in the Birthright program. All analyses presented below use either pre- or post-trip weights, which adjust for these differences. Complete methodological details about both surveys can be found in Technical Appendix A.

Program of Research about Birthright Israel

Since Birthright Israel's inception in 1999, the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies has conducted a rigorous evaluation of the program, taking advantage of the fact that demand for the program exceed available spots on the program, creating conditions for a quasi-experimental research design. Participants were surveyed both before and after the trip and were compared to similar individuals who applied to the program but did not go. The studies conducted over more than two decades, focused on the short-term impact of the program, as well as on its long-term effects. Findings from this extensive program of research have been published in books, research reports, and academic journals and may be accessed online: <https://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/birthright/index.html>

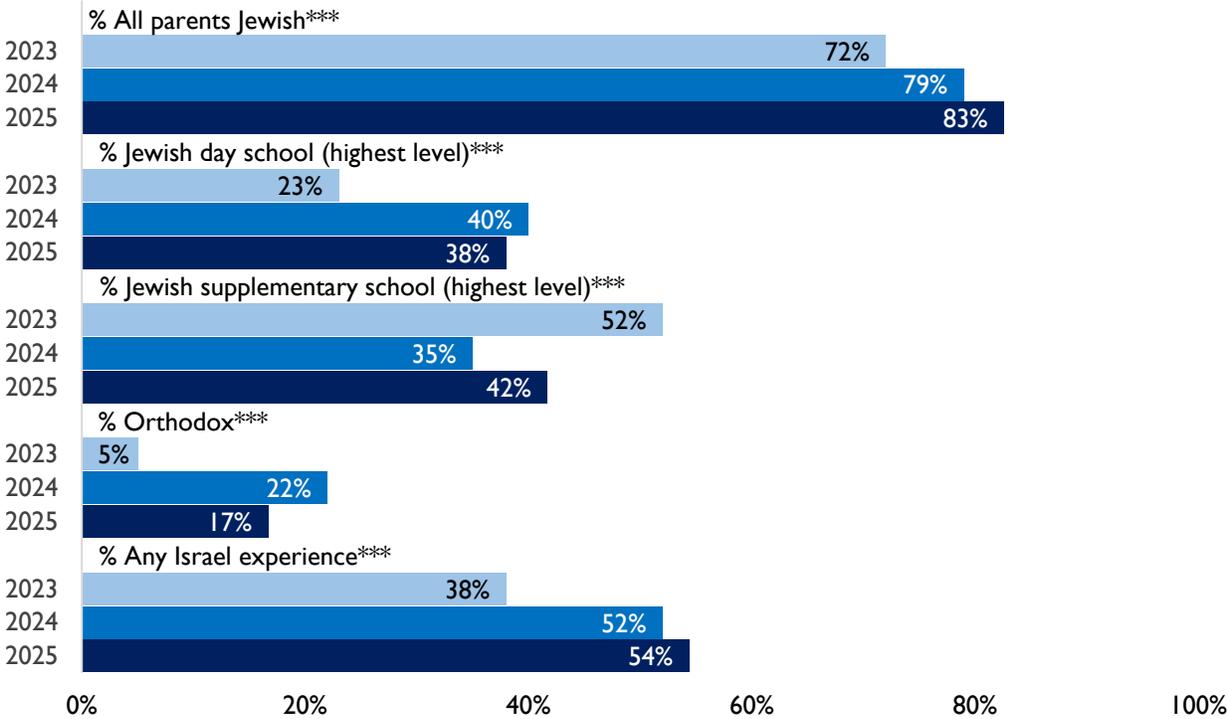
ABOUT SUMMER 2025 PARTICIPANTS

To provide context for the experiences of participants during the trip and to understand how the trip impacted participants’ engagement with Israel and their connection to Jewish life, we first examine the characteristics of participants in summer 2025 trips and compare them (where data are available) to participants in summer 2024, as well as in summer 2023, prior to the events of October 7. We examine participants’ Jewish backgrounds, their political identities, and their relationship with Israel prior to going on the trip. For a fuller historical picture of how Birthright’s applicant pool has changed over the years, see Figure A1 in the Appendix to this report.

Jewish background

Summer 2025 Birthright participants represented a range of Jewish backgrounds, but Birthright participants in both summer 2024 and 2025 were far more likely to have attended day school, identify as Orthodox, and have had Israel experiences compared to their peers who participated prior to October 7. Summer 2025 participants and summer 2024 participants more closely resembled each other in these respects. They were similarly likely to have attended Jewish day school (38% in 2025 versus 40% in 2024), identify as Orthodox (17% in 2025 versus 22% in 2024), and have visited Israel prior to applying to Birthright (54% in 2025 versus 52% in 2024) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Jewish background (summer 2023-25 US Birthright participants)



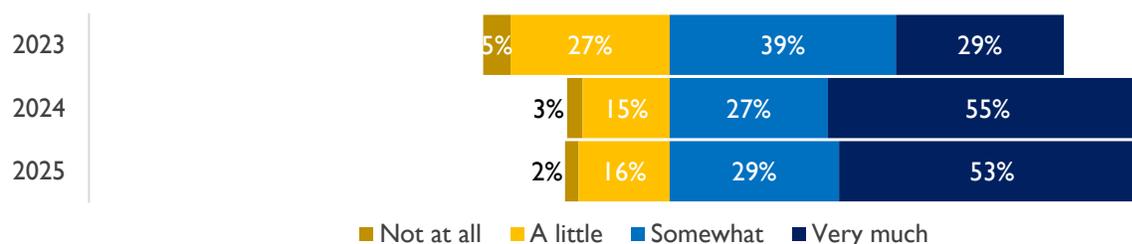
Note: Pre-trip survey data. Design-adjusted Chi square test significant at *= $p < .05$, **= $p < .01$, ***= $p < .001$. See Table B1 in Technical Appendix B for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

Pre-trip connection to Israel

More than half of summer 2025 participants were very connected to Israel before the trip.

Levels of connection to Israel prior to going on the trip were similar to those observed among summer 2024 participants and were markedly higher compared to those who participated before October 7 (53% in 2025 were “very much” connected to Israel versus 29% in 2023) (Figure 2). This high baseline of connection to Israel can be explained both by the stronger Jewish background of participants in 2024 and 2025 compared to 2023, and by the increase in connection to Israel among young adults after October 7.²

Figure 2. Pre-trip connection to Israel (summer 2023-25 US Birthright participants)



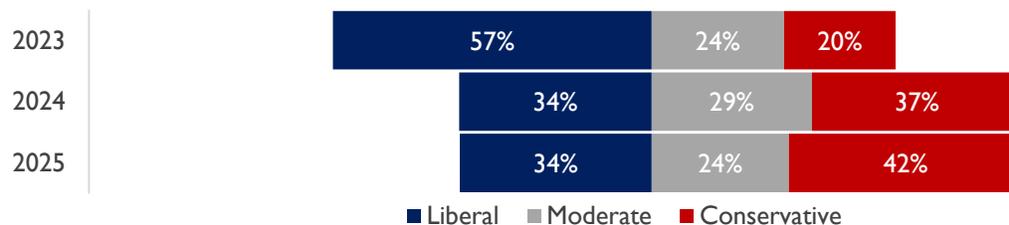
Note: Pre-trip survey data. Design-adjusted Chi square test significant at $p < .001$. Question text: “To what extent do you feel a connection to Israel?” See Table B2 in Technical Appendix B for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

Political identity

A plurality of participants in summer 2025 (42%) identified as politically conservative, and only about a third identified as liberal (34%). Summer 2025 participants were politically similar to those who participated in 2024, but markedly different from those who participated in 2023. Compared to 2023 participants, the share of conservatives more than doubled (42% in 2025 versus 20% in 2023), and the share of liberals shrank dramatically (Figure 3).

Political liberals were less likely than moderates and conservatives to have attended Jewish day school (23% compared to 32% and 42%, respectively). At the same time, those who had no formal Jewish education at all were equally distributed among the three political identity groups (about 20%) (not shown).

Figure 3. Pre-trip political identity (summer 2023-25 US Birthright participants)

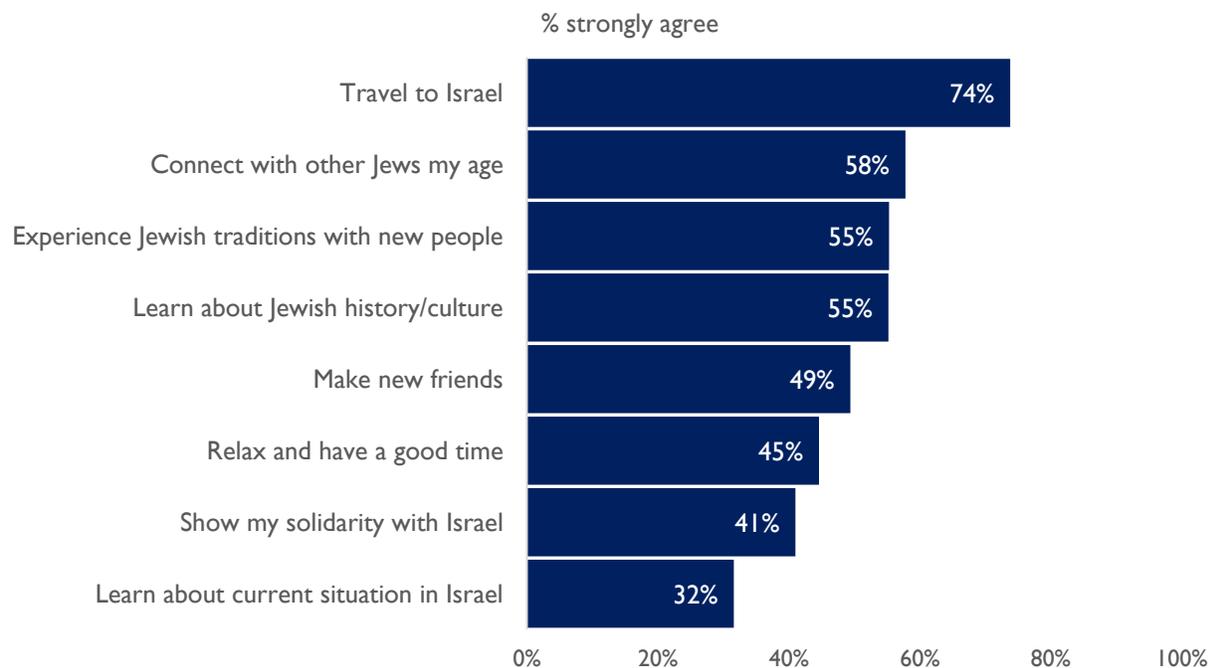


Note: Pre-trip survey data. Design-adjusted Chi square test significant at $p < 0.001$. Question text: “In terms of political views, people often classify themselves as ‘liberal’ or ‘conservative.’ Where would you place yourself on this scale?” See Table B3 in Technical Appendix B for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

Motivations to apply

Travel to Israel, forging Jewish connections, and having Jewish experiences with peers were the main motivations driving participants to apply. Nearly three quarters of summer 2025 Birthright participants strongly agreed that they applied to go on a Birthright trip because they wanted to travel to Israel. Over half strongly agreed that they applied to connect with other Jews their age, experience Jewish traditions with new people, and learn about Jewish history and culture. Only about one third strongly agreed that they applied for the trip because they wanted to learn about the current situation in Israel (Figure 4). Perhaps surprisingly, there were relatively few differences in how participants in 2025 responded to these questions compared to 2023 and 2024 participants (not shown).

Figure 4: Motivations for applying to Birthright (summer 2025 US Birthright participants)



Note: Pre-trip survey data. Question text: “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? I applied to go on a summer 2025 Birthright trip because I wanted to...” See Table B4 in Technical Appendix B for full response options, 95% confidence intervals, and significance tests.

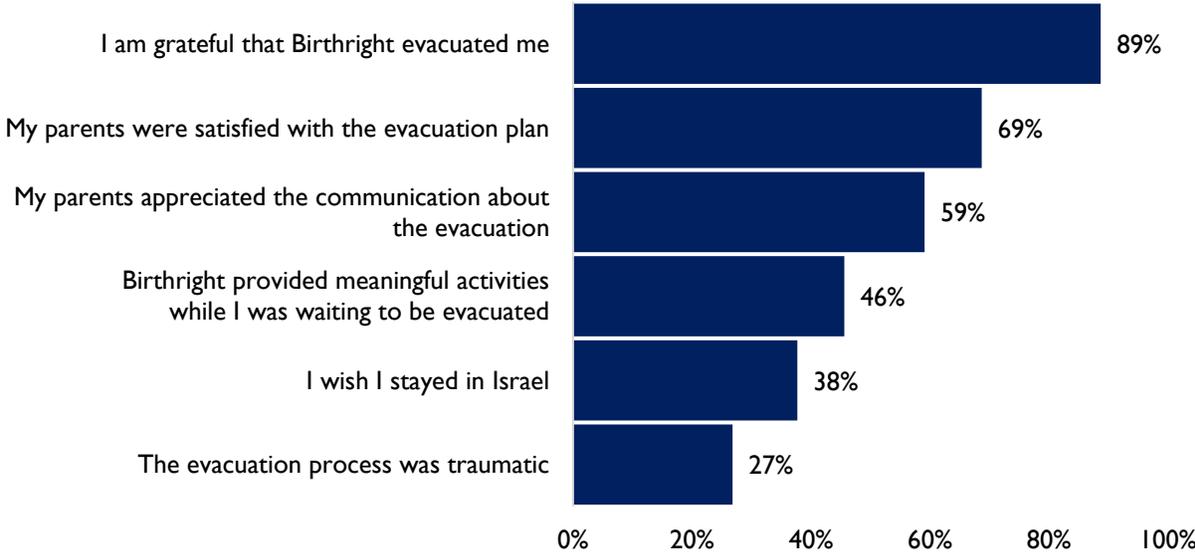
THE TRIP EXPERIENCE

Evacuation during the Israel-Iran war

All participants in Birthright programs who were in Israel during the 12-day Israel-Iran war in June 2025 were evacuated and helped to return to their home countries. Those who were evacuated represent 31% of all summer 2025 participants. For the most part, participants who were evacuated were satisfied with the evacuation process, but slightly over a quarter (27%) described it as traumatic.³

The majority of those who had to leave Israel during the Iran attacks felt grateful that Birthright evacuated them (89%). A little less than half of the evacuees said that Birthright provided meaningful activities while waiting to be evacuated (46%). The majority also reported that their parents were satisfied with the evacuation plan (69%), and that their parents appreciated the communication about the evacuation (59%) (Figure 5). Almost 40% reported that in retrospect, they wish they could have stayed in Israel instead of being evacuated.

Figure 5. Feelings about evacuation process among those who were evacuated (summer 2025 Birthright participants)

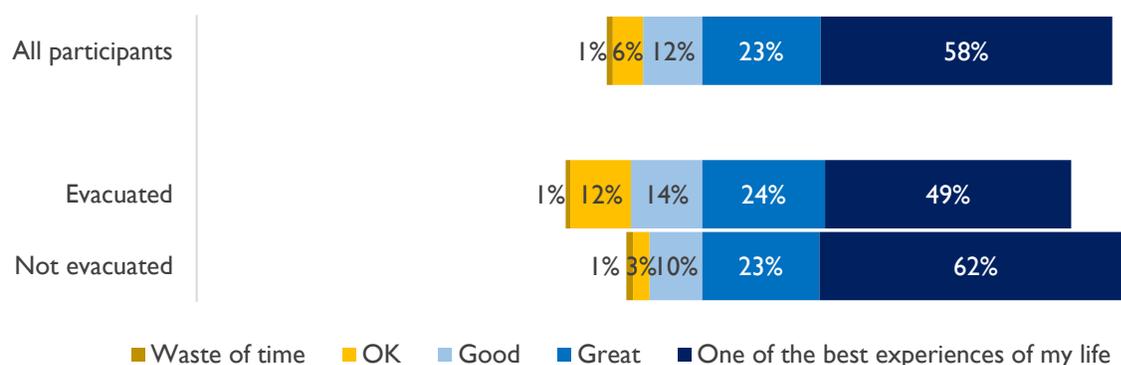


Note: Post-trip survey data. Question text: “Which of the following is true for you? Check all that apply.” See Table B5 in Technical Appendix B for full response options, 95% confidence intervals, and significance tests.

Satisfaction and meaning

Virtually all of the participants rated the trip extremely positively. Over half of Birthright 10-day trip participants viewed the trip as one of the best experiences of their lives, and another 23% evaluated it as “great.” Understandably, participants who were evacuated were slightly less positive about the trip, yet nearly half of those evacuated (49%) rated it as one of the best experiences of their lives (compared to 62% of the non-evacuees) (Figure 6).

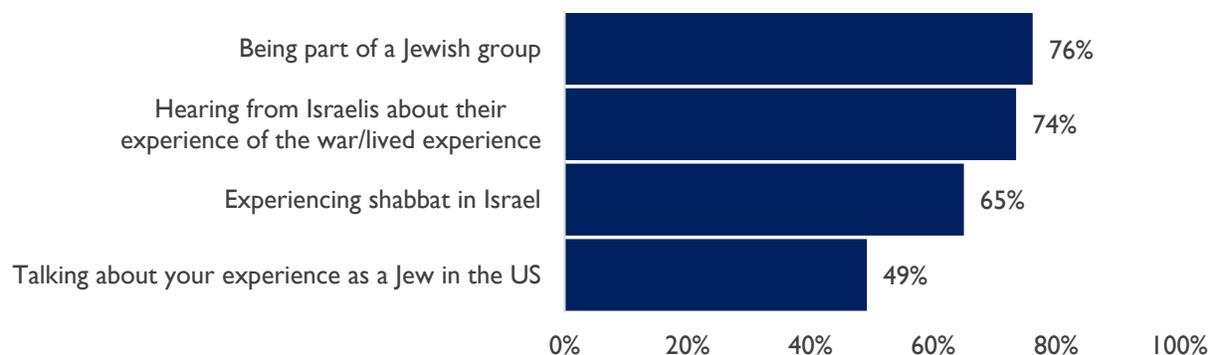
Figure 6. Overall rating of the Birthright 10-day experience (summer 2025 US Birthright participants)



Note: Post-trip survey data. Design-adjusted Chi square test significant at $p < 0.001$. Question text: “Overall, how would you rate your 10-day Birthright trip?” See Table B6 in Technical Appendix B for full response options, 95% confidence intervals, and significance tests.

Summer 2025 participants rated being part of a Jewish group and hearing from Israelis about their experiences of the war as the most meaningful aspects of the trip (76% and 74%, respectively) (Figure 7). The percent of 2025 participants who considered these aspects of the trip as meaningful was slightly lower compared to ratings of those elements in 2024 (not shown).

Figure 7. “Very much” meaningful aspects of Birthright 10-day trip (summer 2025 US Birthright participants)



Note: Post-trip survey data. Question text: “For you personally, how meaningful were the following aspects of the Birthright trip?” See Table B7 in Technical Appendix B for full response options and 95% confidence intervals.

MEASURING BIRTHRIGHT'S IMPACT

Difference-in-differences analysis

Some findings presented in this report about Birthright's impact on participants draw on respondents' responses to identical questions presented both in the pre- and the post-trip surveys. Other findings draw on questions that were only presented to respondents in the post-trip survey. We use different approaches to analyze each type of data.

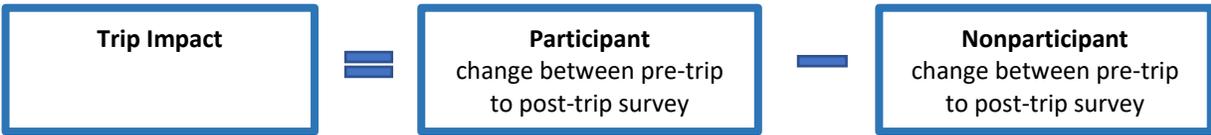
For outcomes that were assessed in both the pre- and post-trip surveys, the impact of the trip is determined through an approach known as difference-in-differences analysis. In this analysis, we look at:

How the responses of participants changed between the pre-trip and post-trip surveys.

How the responses of applicants who did NOT go on the trip changed during this same period.

The changes among nonparticipants reflect what we assume *would* have happened to participants if they had not gone on the trip. This is especially important to know when major events, such as changes in the security situation in Israel, occur between the pre- and post-trip surveys. Because these events can impact how *all* respondents (whether they participated in Birthright or not) respond to questions about Israel or Jewish life, Birthright's impact cannot be assessed by merely looking at how participants alone changed between the pre- and post-trip surveys.

The full impact of the trip is represented by comparing the change over time among participants to the change over time among non-participants.

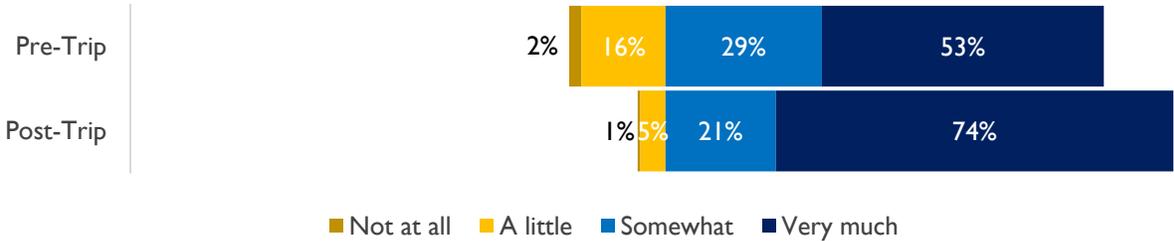


HOW THE TRIP AFFECTED PARTICIPANTS

Connection to Israel

Summer 2025 Birthright participants increased their level of connection to Israel despite joining the trip already highly connected. The majority (53%) of participants were “very much” connected to Israel before their trip. In the post-trip survey, nearly three quarters of participants (74%) reported being “very connected” (Figure 8). The nonparticipant comparison group had the same level of connection to Israel as participants did prior to the trip, and that did not change with the passage of time (not shown).

Figure 8: Connection to Israel pre- and post-trip (summer 2025 US Birthright participants)

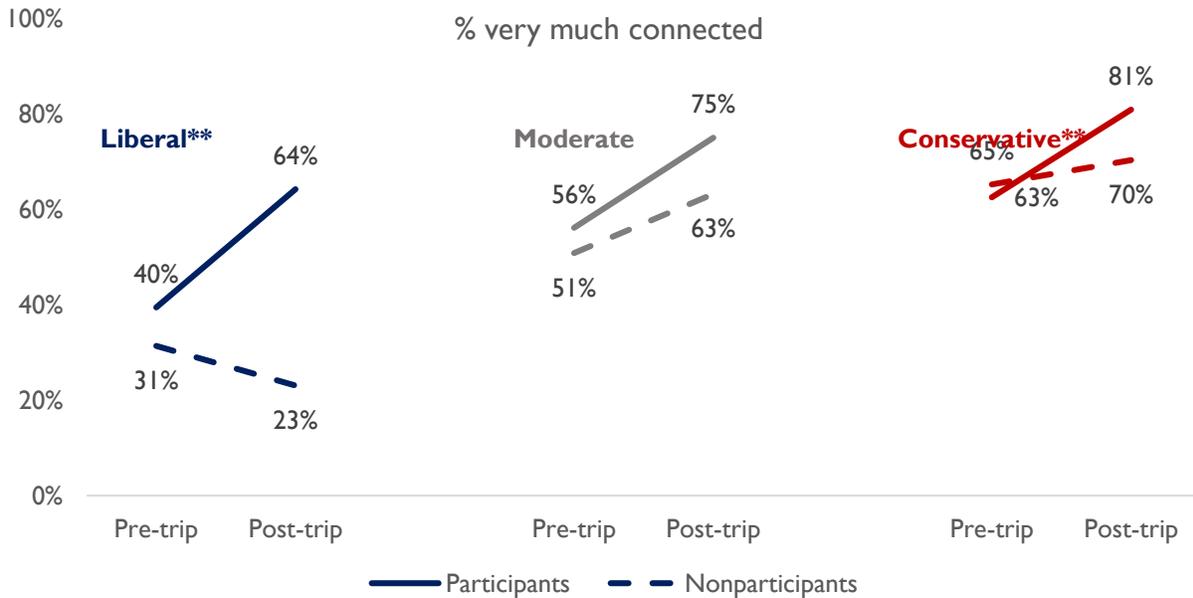


Note: Pre- and post-trip survey data. Design-adjusted Chi square test significant at $p < 0.001$. Question text: “To what extent do you feel a connection to Israel?” See B8 in Technical Appendix B for full results, 95% confidence intervals, and significance tests.

Birthright has an impact on connection to Israel for both politically liberal and conservative participants. Figure 9 shows how connection to Israel changed for trip participants and the nonparticipant control group among those who identified as politically liberal, moderate, or conservative. The liberal applicants who participated in the trip were far more connected to Israel than the liberal individuals who applied but did not go.⁴ After the trip, liberal participants’ connection to Israel increased dramatically (from 40% to 64%) while connection to Israel among the nonparticipant group declined (from 31% to 23%), dramatically increasing the gap between those who went and those who did not.

Among conservatives prior to the trip, participants and nonparticipants were equally likely to be connected to Israel. While conservative participants’ connection to Israel increased after the trip, the connection to Israel among conservative nonparticipants remained roughly the same. Political moderates—both participants and nonparticipants—became more connected to Israel in the period between the pre- and post-trip surveys at similar rates (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Connection to Israel by political views (summer 2025 US Birthright participants and nonparticipants)

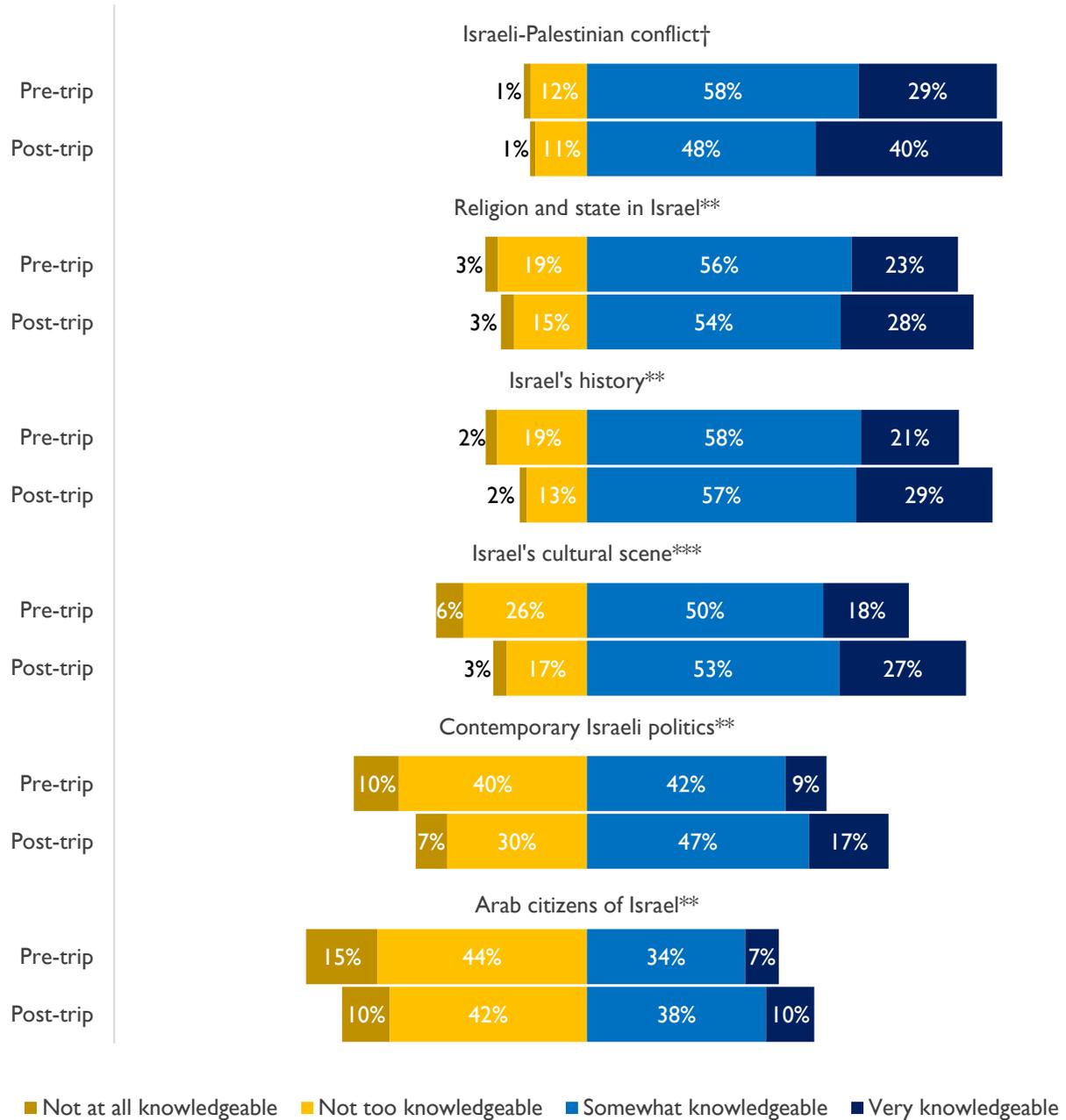


Note: Pre- and post-trip surveys. Design-adjusted Chi square tests significant at $*=p<.05$, $**=p<.01$, $***=p<.001$. Question text: “To what extent do you feel a connection to Israel?” The independent effect of Birthright participation within each ideological group was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. See Table B9 in Technical Appendix B for full results, 95% confidence intervals, and significance tests.

Knowledge about Israel

Participants increased their level of knowledge about various topics related to Israel, despite reporting high levels of knowledge about these topics prior to the trip. Prior to the trip, the majority of participants reported that they were at least “somewhat” knowledgeable about various topics related to Israel. The topic participants were most knowledgeable about was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the topics they were least knowledgeable about were contemporary Israeli politics and Arab citizens of Israel (Figure 10). For all items, levels of knowledge increased after the trip and, with the exception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the increase among participants was significantly greater than the increase seen among nonparticipants (not shown).⁵ The greatest gains occurred in the areas in which participants knew least about. Nonparticipants who demonstrated similar levels of knowledge as participants did prior to the trip did not change in their level of knowledge (not shown).

Figure 10. Knowledge about Israel (summer 2025 US Birthright participants)

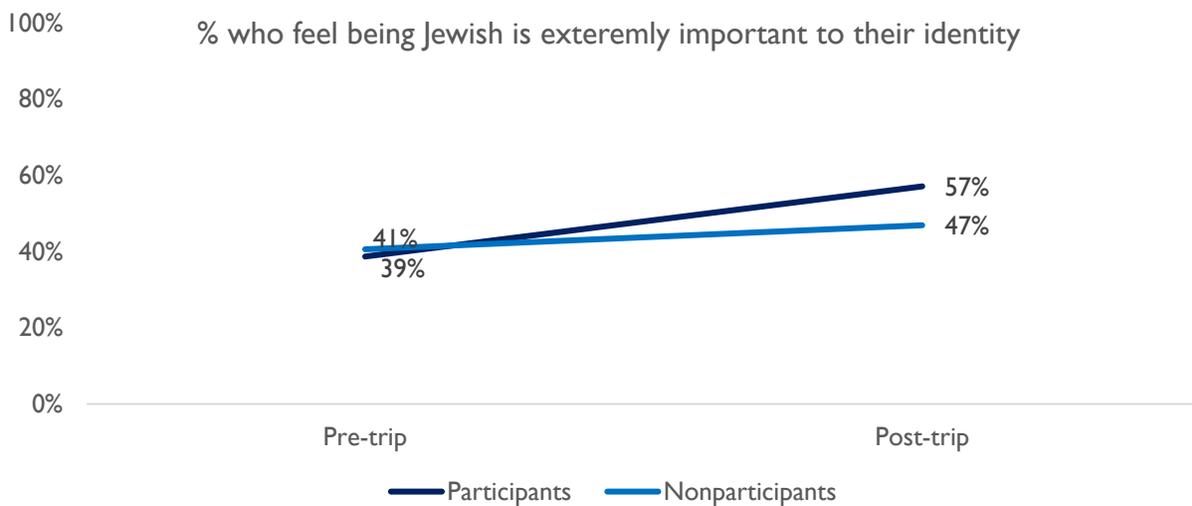


Note: Pre- and post-trip surveys. Design-adjusted Chi square tests significant at †=p<.1 **=p<.05, ***=p<.01, ****=p<.001. Question text: “To what extent do you feel KNOWLEDGEABLE about the following topics related to Israel? KNOWLEDGEABLE means you have deep content expertise and can discuss it with others.” The independent effect of Birthright participation within each ideological group was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. See Table B10 in Technical Appendix B for full results, 95% confidence intervals, and significance tests.

Importance of being Jewish and Jewish connections

Participation in Birthright increased the importance participants placed on their Jewish identity. The share of participants and nonparticipants who reported being Jewish was extremely important to their identity was similar prior to the trip (39% and 41%, respectively). After the trip, the share of participants who felt that being Jewish was extremely important to their identity rose to 57% compared to a smaller increase among nonparticipants.

Figure 11. Importance of being Jewish (summer 2025 US Birthright participants and nonparticipants)

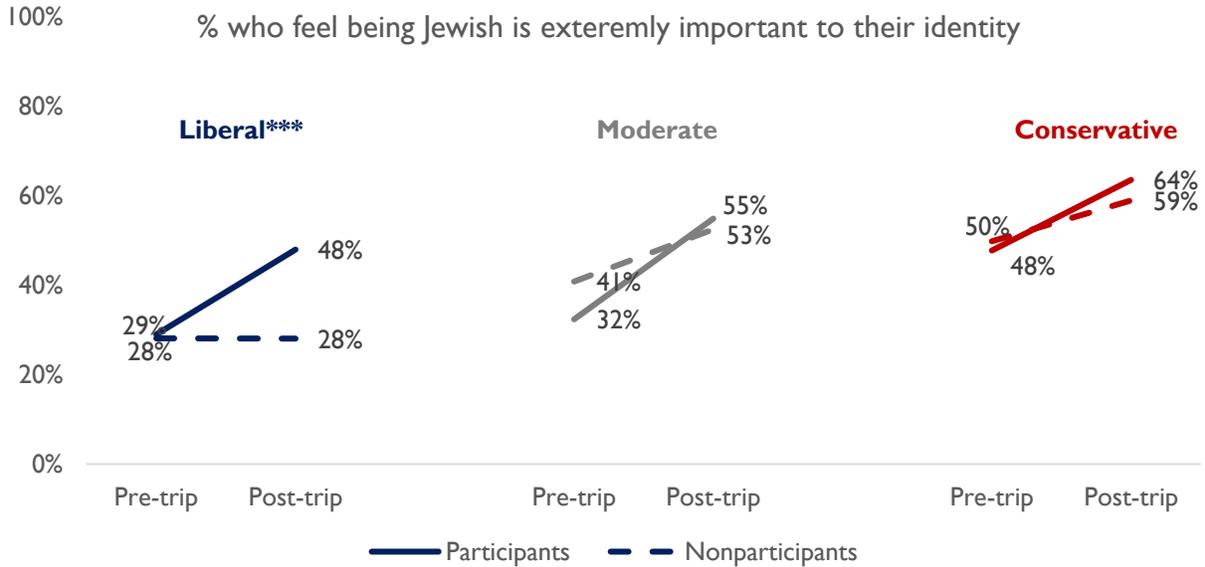


Note: Pre- and post-trip surveys. Design-adjusted Chi square test significant at $p < 0.001$. Question text: “To what extent is being Jewish important to your identity?” The independent effect of Birthright participation within each ideological group was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. See Table B11 in Technical Appendix B for full results, 95% confidence intervals, and significance tests.

Birthright’s impact on importance of being Jewish was concentrated among those who identified as politically liberal. Figure 12 shows how the importance of being Jewish changed for trip participants and the nonparticipant control group among those who identified as politically liberal, moderate, or conservative. Before the trip, participant and nonparticipant applicants who were politically liberal were equally likely to say that being Jewish was extremely important to their identity. After the trip, liberal participants were far more likely to feel that being Jewish was extremely important to their identity (48% after the trip compared to 29% before the trip), while those who did not participate showed no change.

Among politically moderates and conservatives, both participants and nonparticipants showed post-trip increases in the importance they placed on being Jewish, but the differences between the participants and nonparticipants were not statistically significant.

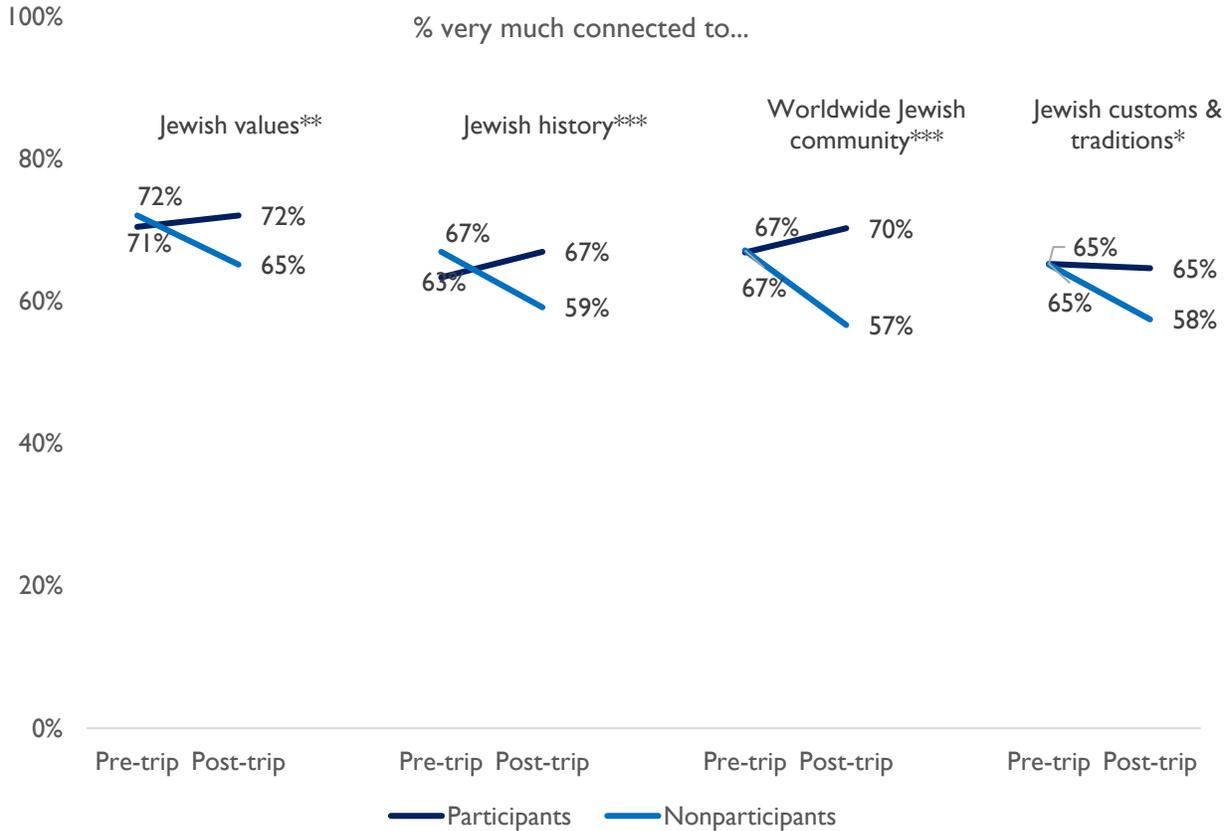
Figure 12. Importance of being Jewish by political views (summer 2025 US Birthright participants and nonparticipants)



Note: Pre- and post-trip surveys. Design-adjusted Chi square test significant at $p < 0.001$. Question text: “To what extent is being Jewish important to your identity?” The independent effect of Birthright participation within each ideological group was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. See Table B12 in Technical Appendix B for full results, 95% confidence intervals, and significance tests.

Participation in Birthright helped maintain participants’ connections to Jewish life, while nonparticipants’ levels of connection to Jewish life decreased. Prior to any trips departing, the majority of summer 2025 Birthright applicants felt “very much” connected to Jewish values, Jewish history, the worldwide Jewish community, and to Jewish customs and traditions. While for some outcomes there was little to no change among participants after the trip, nonparticipants’ levels of connection declined during the same period (Figure 13). Therefore, Birthright’s impact served to *maintain* these outcomes which would have otherwise have likely declined.

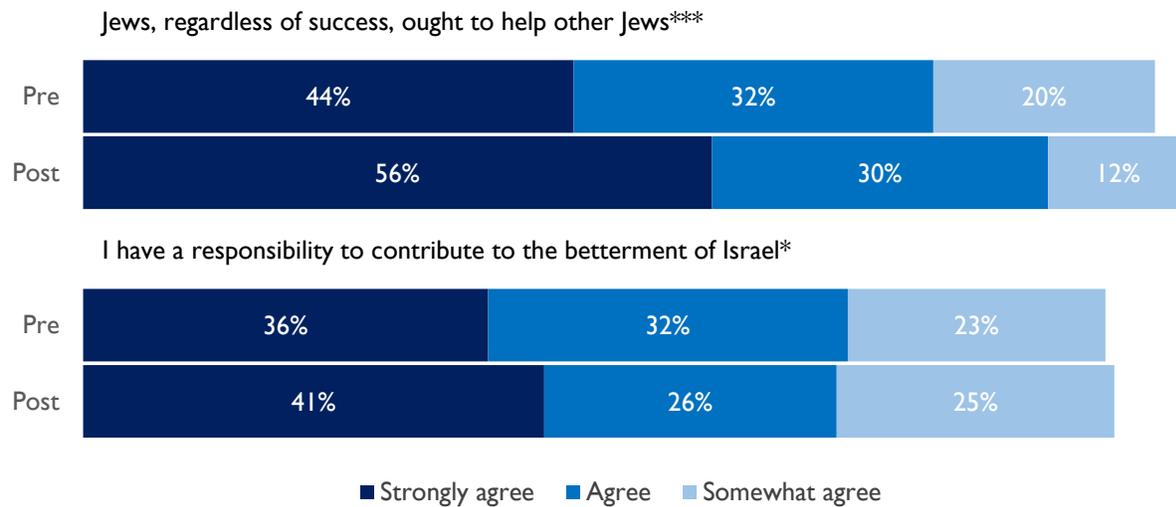
Figure 13. Connection to Jewish life (summer 2025 US Birthright participants and nonparticipants)



Note: Pre- and post-trip surveys. Design-adjusted Chi square test significant at *=p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001. Question text: “To what extent do you feel a connection to...?” The independent effect of Birthright participation within each ideological group was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. See Table B13 in Technical Appendix B for full results, 95% confidence intervals, and significance tests.

Participation in Birthright increased participants’ sense of responsibility with respect to other Jews and Israel. Before the trip, most participants already agreed that Jews have a responsibility toward other Jews and that Jews have a responsibility to contribute to the betterment of Israel (Figure 14). After the trip, the share of participants who strongly agreed with these statements increased, while there was no significant increase among nonparticipants during the same period (not shown).

Figure 14. Responsibility toward other Jews and the betterment of Israel (summer 2025 US Birthright participants)



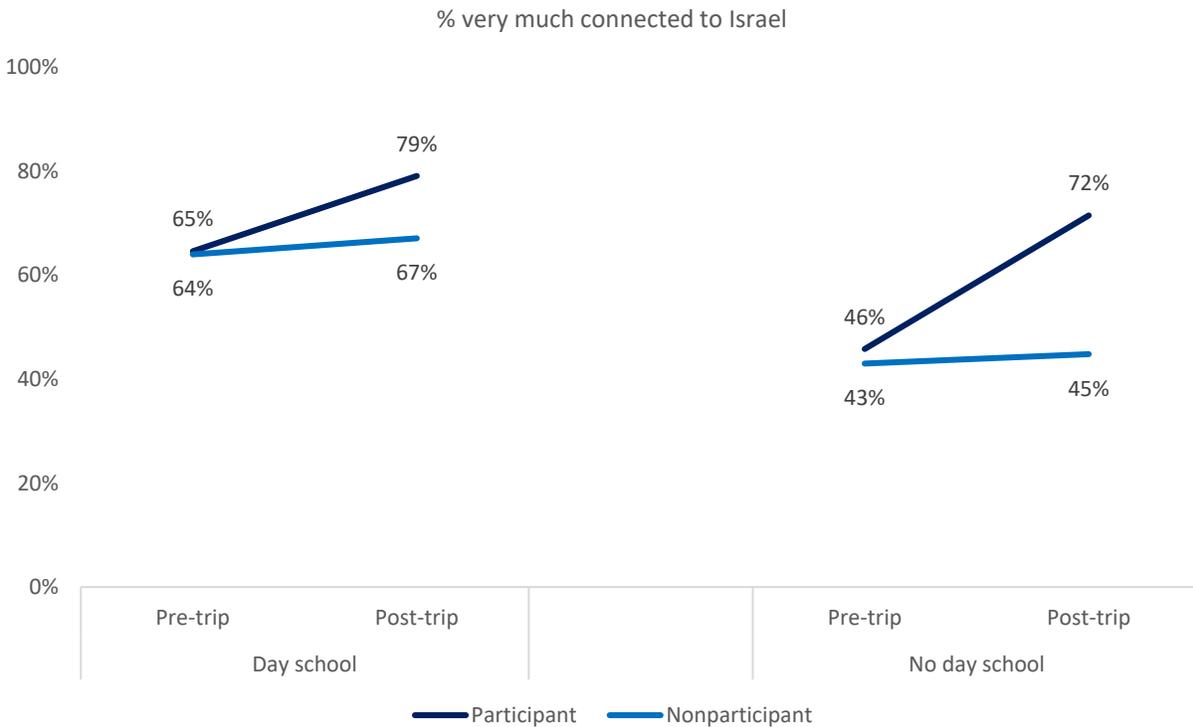
Note: Pre- and post-trip surveys. Design-adjusted Chi square test significant at *=p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001. Question text: “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?” The independent effect of Birthright participation within each ideological group was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. See Table B14 in Technical Appendix B for full results, 95% confidence intervals, and significance tests.

Impact on participants who attended Jewish day school

With the Birthright applicant pool shifting toward those who join the trip with stronger ties to Israel and to Jewish life, an important question is whether the trip can still achieve its goal of strengthening Jewish identity and connections for an already highly engaged group. About 40% of Birthright participants in 2024 and 2025 attended Jewish day school for at least some part of their education. To understand whether Birthright was able to influence those connections, we examined whether the impact observed among all participants was evident also among those who attended Jewish day school.

Birthright had a positive impact on connection to Israel for those who attended Jewish day school and those who did not. The majority of Birthright participants who attended Jewish day school joined the trip already very connected to Israel, yet after the trip the share of those who were very connected increased from 65% to 79%. Such an increase was also evident among those who did not attend Jewish day school (from 46% before the trip to 72% after the trip). No similar change was evident among nonparticipants in both groups (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Connection to Israel by Jewish day school attendance (summer 2025 US Birthright participants and nonparticipants)



Note: Pre- and post-trip surveys. Design-adjusted Chi square test significant at $p < 0.001$. Question text: “To what extent do feel a connection to Israel?” The independent effect of Birthright participation within each ideological group was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. See Table B15 in Technical Appendix B for full results, 95% confidence intervals, and significance tests.

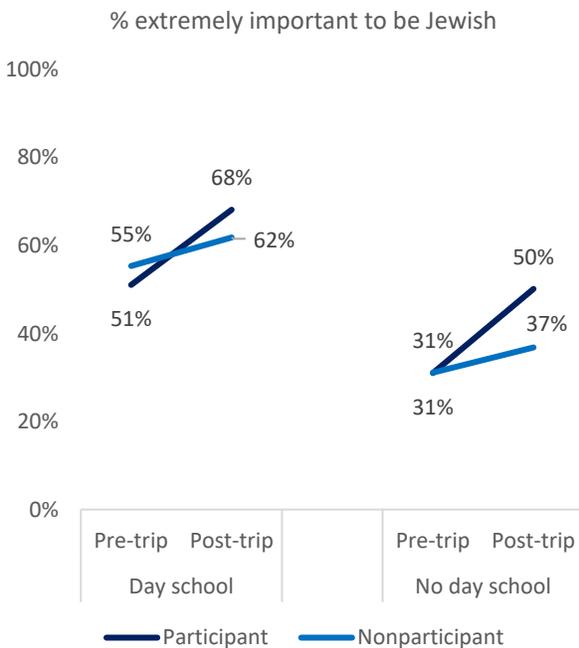
Birthright had a positive impact on level of knowledge about Israel for those who attended Jewish day school and those who did not. Birthright increased levels of knowledge among both groups with respect to Israel’s history, Israel’s cultural scene, and Arab citizens of Israel. Birthright’s impact on knowledge about religion in and state in Israel and about contemporary Israeli politics was concentrated among those who did not attend Jewish day school (not shown).

Even for those with day school backgrounds, participation in Birthright increased the importance they placed on being Jewish. The share of Birthright participants who attended Jewish day school who said that being Jewish was extremely important to their Jewish identity increased from 51% before the trip to 68% after the trip. An increase was also evident among those who did not attend Jewish day school, although this group started with a substantially smaller share who felt that their Jewish identity was extremely important. Slight changes in the importance of being Jewish were observed among nonparticipants in both groups, however, these changes were not statistically significant (Figure 16).

Birthright’s impact with respect to feeling a connection to the worldwide Jewish community also appeared for those with day school backgrounds. The impact was observed in participants’ high levels of connection being maintained, while the feeling of connection to the worldwide Jewish community among their peers who did not go on the trips declined (Figure 17). Maintaining the feeling connection to the worldwide Jewish community was also evident for participants who did not attend day school.

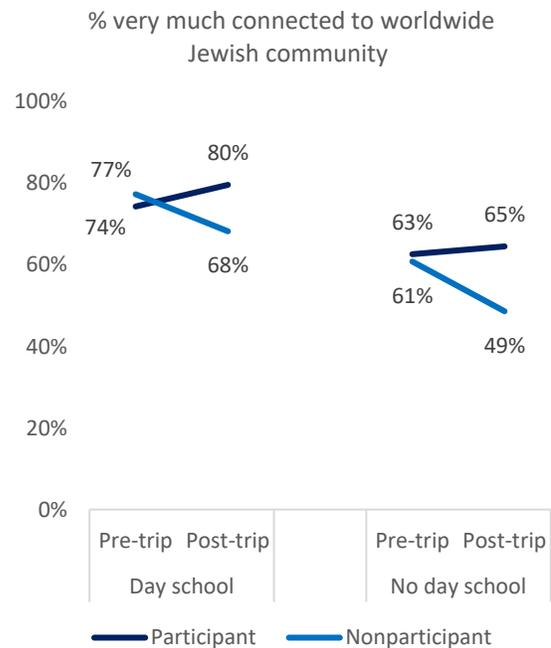
Birthright’s impact with respect to connection to Jewish history and with respect to feeling that Jews have a responsibility to help other Jews was also evident both for those who attended Jewish day school and those who did not (not shown). In contrast, Birthright’s impact on connection to Jewish values, connection to Jewish traditions, and feeling that Jews have a responsibility for the betterment of Israel was only evident among participants who did not attend Jewish days school (not shown).

Figure 16. Importance of being Jewish by day school attendance (summer 2025 US Birthright participants and nonparticipants)



Note: Pre- and post-trip surveys. Design-adjusted Chi square test significant at $p < 0.001$. Question text: “To what extent is being Jewish important to your identity?” The independent effect of Birthright participation within each ideological group was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. See Table B16 in Technical Appendix B for full results, 95% confidence intervals, and significance tests.

Figure 17. Connection to worldwide Jewish community by day school attendance (summer 2025 US Birthright participants and nonparticipants)



Note: Pre- and post-trip surveys. Design-adjusted Chi square test significant at $p < 0.001$. Question text: “To what extent do you feel connected to a worldwide Jewish community?” The independent effect of Birthright participation within each ideological group was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. See Table B17 in Technical Appendix B for full results, 95% confidence intervals, and significance tests.

DISCUSSION

Although Birthright has continued to attract a large number of applicants, those who chose to participate after October 7 have done so in the context of an ongoing, volatile political situation. Participants who chose to join Birthright trips in summer 2025 did so in the middle of one war, and many found themselves engulfed in an even more chaotic situation with the outbreak of the Israel-Iran war. These participants, like those in 2024, tended to come from more engaged Jewish backgrounds compared to those who had applied in earlier years. Participants in 2024 and 2025 were more likely to have previously been to Israel, to already be highly connected to Israel even before the trip, and far more likely to be politically conservative.⁶ Nevertheless, nearly half of the participants had no prior Israel experience, and almost one fifth had little or no connection to Israel prior to their trip.

During summer 2025, Birthright's programming had to be adjusted in line with security considerations but, with the outbreak of the Israel-Iran war, a more complicated set of challenges arose that required the evacuation of participants from Israel. The evacuees represented about one third of all summer 2025 US participants. Despite the upheaval and abrupt change in plans, those participants still had very positive views of Birthright and their time in Israel.

Although unsurprisingly the trip was rated higher by those who were *not* evacuated, even those who had to leave Israel gave the trip fairly high ratings. Over half of those who were evacuated said it was the best experience of their life, and few said it was a waste of time. In retrospect, around 40% of those who were evacuated wished they could have stayed in Israel. Participants also continued to feel that the trip was meaningful, especially the connections they made with Israelis and other Jews in their group. That Birthright was able to provide a program that was perceived as valuable and meaningful during such a stressful time is a testament to the power of shared group experiences to foster resilience and community among young adults.

In addition to Birthright's success in providing a positive experience in summer 2025, the data suggest that it had a transformational effect in several areas. Considering participants' very high baseline levels, we were expecting to see few changes as participants were already at the "ceiling" on the measures we examined. Instead, we observed broad impacts related to connection to Israel and Jewish identity and connections. Birthright's impact on a broad set of metrics was evident among those with different political perspectives and those with those with different levels of Jewish education.

Birthright's impact across the political spectrum

Summer 2025 participants had an extremely high baseline level of connection to Israel *before* the trip, yet Birthright still had an impact on their emotional connection to Israel, as seen in the post-trip survey (and in comparison to similar applicants who did not participate). In light of the changes in Birthright's applicant pool, with the share of political conservatives doubling compared to their share prior to October 7, it is important to note that, as in previous years, Birthright's impact on connection to Israel was evident among participants from different political backgrounds.

In fact, the data indicate that Birthright's impact was most prominent among participants who identified as politically liberal. Connection to Israel dramatically *increased* among liberal Birthright participants after the trip but *decreased* among young liberal Jews who applied to Birthright but did not participate. This pattern contrasts with moderate and conservative nonparticipants whose levels of connection to Israel stayed the same or increased. Therefore, at least in 2025, Birthright's impact on connection to Israel appears to be especially concentrated among political liberals, a group that has also become less likely to apply since the start of the Israel-Hamas war.⁷ Ensuring that Birthright continues to be attractive to liberal Jews is essential to its continued success.

Another area in which we observed an impact across the political spectrum relates to Jewish identity. Birthright had an impact on the salience of participants' Jewish identity, with a significant increase seen after the trip in the share of participants who felt that being Jewish was extremely important to their identity. This impact was primarily concentrated among those who identified as politically liberal. The discourse about Jewish identity on the political left has often suggested that Israel is alienating Jewish young adults and is no longer a salient part of their identity.⁸ These data suggest, that travel to Israel with Birthright can play an important role in solidifying liberal Jewish young adults' Jewish identity.

Impact on those with different levels of Jewish education

With the Birthright applicant pool shifting toward those who join the trip with stronger ties to Israel and to Jewish life, one question is whether the trip produces added value in terms of strengthening Jewish identity and connections for this already highly engaged group. The data suggest that even Jewish young adults with Jewish day school experience benefited from their participation on many of the outcomes examined, including connection to Israel, knowledge about Israel, importance of being Jewish, and connection to the worldwide Jewish community. To the extent that Birthright continues to attract this population, it is uniquely positioned to contribute to their engagement in Jewish life. At the same time, these data also confirm earlier findings that Birthright's impact is more robust among those who come from less engaged Jewish backgrounds, including those who did not attend Jewish day school.⁹ Ensuring that Birthright continues to attract those with less exposure to Jewish education is key to its continued success.

Other areas of impact

As a testament to Birthright's success as an educational program, the program appears to increase participants' knowledge about Israel in many areas, including Israeli politics and Arab citizens of Israel.¹⁰ Increasing participants' level of knowledge about many areas of Israeli life is also an important factor in cementing participants' connection to Israel.

Finally, with respect to the relationship to Jewish life, the data indicate that between the spring and fall of 2025, young American Jews, at least those who applied to Birthright Israel, became *less* connected to different facets of Jewish life. This fact might be due to tensions related to the war and how Israel has become enmeshed in a wider political debate in the United States. Yet these declines were not apparent among the young Jews who participated in Birthright trips, indicating that Birthright helped to *preserve* a connection to Jewish life, even during a period when that connection was under stress. At the same time, participation in Birthright appeared to produce increased feelings of responsibility toward other Jews and to Israel that were not evident among the nonparticipant comparison group.

Overall, considering the high baseline levels of connection to Israel and Jewish life participants demonstrated prior to the trip, and the fact that many of the participants did not experience the trip in full, it is remarkable that the trip produced broad and substantial impact on its participants.

Conclusion

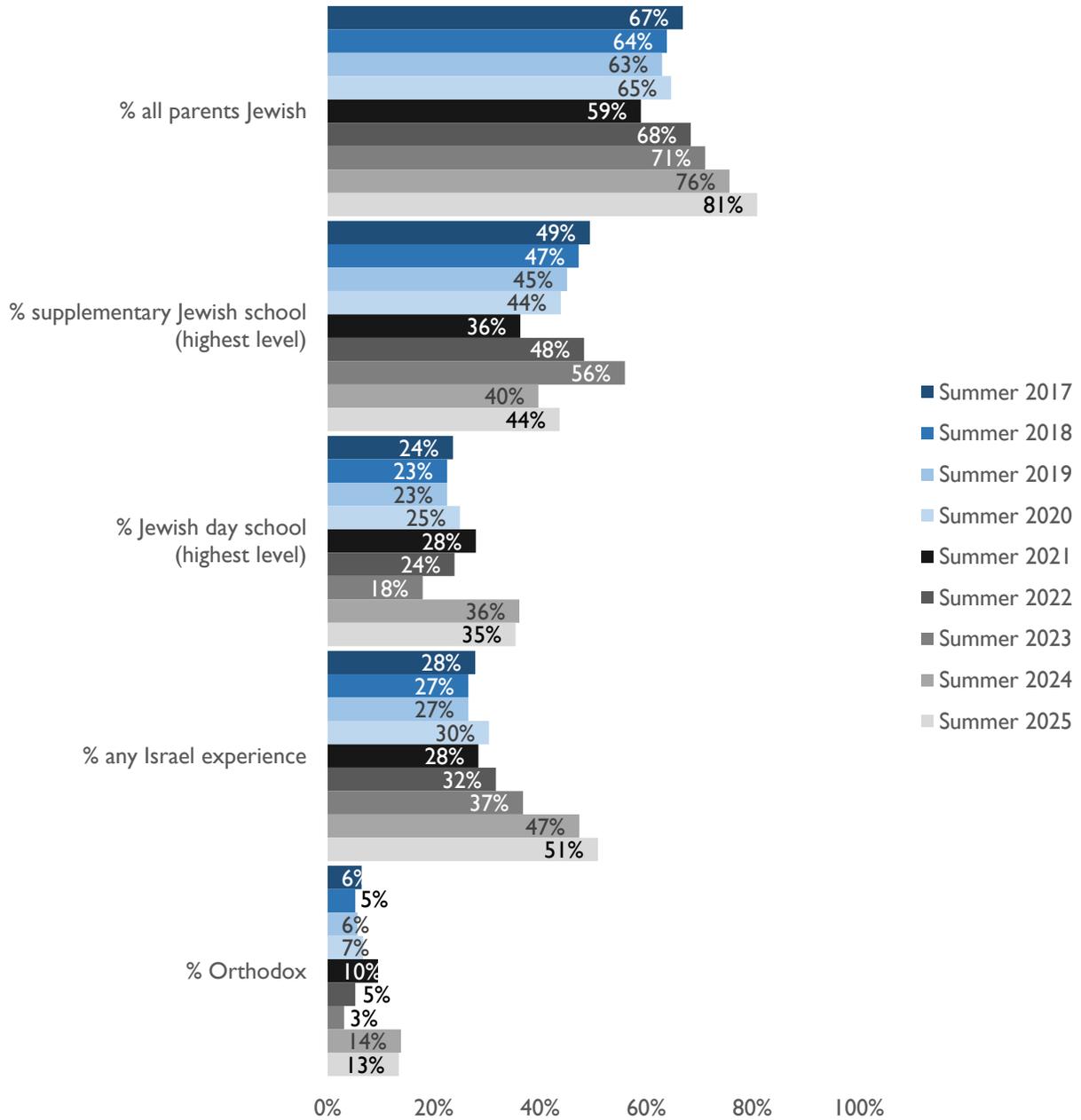
October 7 continues to shape American Jewry in numerous ways, and the 2025 Birthright Israel trips illustrate that. As a result of events in the Middle East, Birthright's applicant pool dramatically changed. At the same time, the broader landscape of young American Jews' relationship to Israel and Jewish life shifted. During the last several months of the war, young Jews who applied to Birthright but did not go became more disconnected from their own Jewish identity, and those who identified as politically liberal became less connected to Israel. Never before in our research on Birthright have we seen such notable declines among nonparticipants.

Yet even in such an environment, Birthright produced substantial impact on those who participated in the program, even when the trip was cut short. Birthright arrested declines in connection to Jewish life and reversed declines in connection to Israel while solidifying Jewish identity among those who identify as politically liberal.

Despite Israel continuing to face both security threats and strains on public support, we expect Birthright's role in the coming years to continue to be important. As this study demonstrates, despite pressures on multiple fronts, Birthright remains a formative experience and milestone for a diverse group of American Jewish young adults.

APPENDIX 1: BIRTHRIGHT'S 10-DAY TRIP APPLICANT POOL

Figure A1. Jewish background of US Birthright applicants ages 18-26 (summer trips 2017-25)



Note: Birthright Israel administrative data.

NOTES

¹ Shahr Hecht et al., *Evaluating the Program Impact of Birthright Israel Onward: Findings from the Summer 2023 Cohort* (Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University, 2024), <https://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/birthright/birthright-onward-2023.html>.

² Graham Wright et al., *Birthright Israel's Impact in the Shadow of the Israel-Hamas War: Findings from the Summer 2023 Cohort* (Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University, 2024), <https://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/birthright/birthright-summer-2023.html>.

³ When responding to the question, participants may have meant the process itself was traumatic, that the circumstances around the evacuation (evacuating while missiles being fired) was traumatic, or both.

⁴ Politically liberal participants who did not go on the trip mostly cited as reasons other priorities and concerns about safety and security. Political reasons were a rare reason for not going.

⁵ Birthright's effect for the knowledge about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is significant at 90%.

⁶ Graham Wright et al., *Connection, Solidarity, and Activism: The Experience of Birthright Israel's Summer 2024 Cohort* (Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University, 2025), <https://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/birthright/birthright-summer-2024.html>.

⁷ The concentration of Birthright's impact on liberal participants with respect to connection to Israel was also evident in earlier Birthright cohorts. See, for example: Wright et al., *Connection, Solidarity, and Activism*; and Graham Wright et al., *Birthright Israel during Covid-19: Program Impact on Summer 2021 Participants* (Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University, 2022), <https://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/birthright/birthright-covid.html>.

⁸ Emma Goldberg, "What the Jewish Left Is Building for Itself," Style, *The New York Times*, October 30, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/30/style/israel-gaza-war-jewish-left-zionism.html>.

⁹ Graham Wright et al., "Jewish Educational Interventions in an Era of Diversity: Birthright Israel's Impact on Participants from Different Religious and Cultural Backgrounds," *Contemporary Jewry* 46, no. 1 (2026): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12397-025-09693-8>.

¹⁰ Using both pre- and post-trip data about summer 2025 participants and nonparticipants, we failed to find statistically significant evidence of Birthright's impact on how summer 2025 participants responded to critical statements about Israel either in person or on social media. This finding differs from our analysis of 2024 applicants, using only post-trip data, that compared participants and nonparticipants and found that participants were slightly more likely than nonparticipants to present counter arguments when presented with the statement about Israel committing genocide.