Birthright’s Impact on Five Jewish Identity Groups
Findings from the Summer 2018 Cohort

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# Table of Contents

Executive Summary .................................................................................................................. 1  
Introduction............................................................................................................................... 3  
  Study Goals and Research Questions .................................................................................... 4  
  About the Data ...................................................................................................................... 4  
  Roadmap to the Report ......................................................................................................... 4  
About Birthright Israel.............................................................................................................. 5  
Defining Jewish Identity........................................................................................................... 7  
  New Methods for Creating Typologies .................................................................................. 7  
Five Jewish Identity Groups ..................................................................................................... 9  
Reactions to the Trip .................................................................................................................. 13  
  Overall Evaluation ................................................................................................................ 13  
  The Bus Community ............................................................................................................ 14  
  Shabbat ................................................................................................................................ 15  
After the Trip ........................................................................................................................... 17  
  Keeping in Touch .................................................................................................................. 17  
Measuring Birthright’s Impact on the Five Groups ................................................................. 19  
  Trip Impact: Relationship with Israel .................................................................................... 19  
  Trip Impact: Jewish Communities and Jewish Identity ......................................................... 25  
  Jewish Behaviors .................................................................................................................. 30  
Discussion ................................................................................................................................ 33  
Notes ....................................................................................................................................... 35  
References ................................................................................................................................. 37  
Appendix A. Changes in Birthright’s Applicant Pool 2007-18 ................................................ 39  
Appendix B. Latent Class Analysis ......................................................................................... 41  
Appendix C. Detailed Group Profiles ..................................................................................... 45
List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Jewish identity groups .......................................................... 10
Figure 2: Overall rating of the trip ....................................................... 13
Figure 3: Interactions with Israelis on the bus ..................................... 14
Figure 4: Enjoy Shabbat ..................................................................... 15
Figure 5: Keeping in touch ................................................................. 18
Figure 6: Connection to Israel .............................................................. 20
Figure 7: Confidence in understanding the current situation in Israel .... 21
Figure 8: Following news about Israel ................................................ 22
Figure 9: Opinion about the two-state solution .................................... 23
Figure 10: Hearing of and favorability of BDS ...................................... 24
Figure 11: Feeling part of a worldwide Jewish community .................. 25
Figure 12: Importance of being Jewish ................................................ 26
Figure 13: Connection to Jewish values .............................................. 27
Figure 14: Connection to Jewish history .......................................... 28
Figure 15: Importance of raising Jewish children ................................ 29
Figure 16: Any Jewish/Israeli cultural consumption (past three months) 30
Figure 17: Doing anything to mark Shabbat (past weekend) ............... 31
Figure 18: Donating to Jewish/Israeli causes (past three months) .... 32
Figure A1: US Birthright applicants: Jewish background, by year ........ 39
Figure A2: US Birthright applicants: Formal Jewish education, by year ... 40

Table 1. Typical member of Jewish identity group .............................. 11
This study, part of our ongoing program of research on Birthright Israel, focuses on identifying different types of Jewish identity among the young adults who applied to go on a Birthright trip in summer 2018. By examining response patterns to questions about respondents’ Jewish attitudes, the study identified five types of Jewish identity: Ancestry, Secular Peoplehood, Casual Religious, Connected, and Committed. Applicants were then sorted into groups corresponding to their Jewish identity type. Using this multifaceted approach to understanding Jewish identity, the study examines the ways Birthright impacts participants in each of these groups and illuminates the varied ways a highly diverse population of Jewish young adults experiences the program.

The report draws on survey data collected from a pair of surveys sent to US and Canadian young adults who applied to go on Birthright Israel trips during summer 2018: A pre-trip survey (N=10,616) conducted in spring 2018 and a post-trip survey (N=4,396) conducted in fall 2018. Respondents to both surveys included individuals who participated in the programs and those who did not.

The study addressed the following questions:

- What distinguishes different types of Jewish identity?
- Do participants with different types of Jewish identity vary in their views of the Birthright experience?
- Does Birthright influence participants with different types of Jewish identity to the same extent or in the same ways? If not, what are the differences?

**Key findings about the five identity groups:**

- The five identity groups were represented among respondents as follows: Ancestry (17%), Secular Peoplehood (23%), Casual Religious (20%), Connected (29%), and Committed (11%).
- The Ancestry group had the weakest Jewish identity, followed by the Secular Peoplehood and Casual Religious groups. The Connected group had a stronger Jewish identity and the Committed group had the strongest of all.
- The Ancestry and Secular Peoplehood groups shared a relatively negative view of religion and Jewish religious practice compared to the Casual Religious, Connected, and Committed groups that
share a positive view of religion and Jewish religious practice.
- Concerns over antisemitism and efforts to counter it were more central to the Jewish identity of the Secular Peoplehood, Connected, and Committed groups than for the Ancestry and Casual Religious groups.

**Key findings regarding Birthright’s impact:**
- In all five groups, a majority of Birthright participants called the trip “one of the best experiences of my life” and recommended the trip to friends and family. A majority in all five groups also gave very high ratings to the bus community and the Israeli tour educator and had positive views of their interactions with the North American staff and the Israelis on the bus. Participants from the Connected and Committed groups tended to be the most positive in their reactions to the trip.
- The majority of participants in all five groups reported that after the trip they kept in touch with other North American participants from their bus, the Israelis, and their staff. Participants in the Ancestry group were the least likely to keep in contact with others from their bus community.
- Overall, Birthright strengthened participants’ connection to Israel, to Jewish communities, and to their Jewish identities. Birthright’s impact on connection to Israel and on understanding the current situation in Israel was evident among all five groups. Birthright’s impact on strengthening connections to Jewish communities and participants’ Jewish identity was concentrated among the Ancestry, Secular Peoplehood, and Casual Religious groups.

The study found that Birthright had an impact on virtually all participants, despite their disparate Jewish identities. At the same time, although participants with weaker forms of Jewish identity returned from the trip more engaged in Jewish life than before they left, these changes were not always large enough to overcome their pre-trip deficit compared to those with stronger forms of Jewish identity. For Israel-related outcomes however, Birthright’s impact was often so large that it did overcome pre-trip differences among groups.

By using an empirically-based typology of Jewish identity, this study helps explain how the Birthright experience “works” for different types of young Jews. A nuanced understanding of Jewish identity is especially important for organizations like Birthright Israel that serve an increasingly diverse Jewish population. Increasing awareness of the different types of Jewish identity in the Jewish community will help ensure that programs reach their intended audiences and are maximally effective.
In recent decades Jewish organizations have made substantial investments in educational and experiential initiatives specifically targeting Jewish young adults. From organizations working on campuses like Hillel and Chabad, to initiatives focused on community building like OneTable and Moishe House, to peer Israel trips like Birthright Israel and Masa, the Jewish community has made great efforts to promote young adult engagement with Jewish life.

Aiming to serve a broad population, these organizations face a challenge in engaging a group of Jewish young adults with vastly different backgrounds and conceptions of what being Jewish means to them. Some young Jews have had more than a decade of formal Jewish education, while others have had none at all. Some see religion as central to their Jewishness, while others proudly identify as “secular Jews.” Designing programs that appeal to such a diverse population can be daunting, as what appeals to one type of young Jewish adult might be unattractive to others.

This challenge is particularly acute for Birthright Israel. The largest educational intervention in the Jewish world, Birthright attracts an especially diverse population of Jewish young adults. Understanding how participants with different backgrounds and ideas about their Jewish identity experience and are impacted by the program, is key to successful programing and future innovation.

In the case of Birthright, much is known about the program’s overall positive effect on participants (Saxe et al., 2009) and its impact on participants with different Jewish home and educational experiences (Sasson et al., 2015; Saxe et al., 2014; Saxe et al., 2017). However, viewing the program’s impact only through the lens of participants’ early Jewish experiences, results in a partial story. Research has demonstrated that the trajectory of young adults’ engagement with Judaism and involvement in Jewish life is not solely determined by the religious composition of the household they grew up in or by their Jewish experiences during childhood. Jewish experiences throughout the life course, including Jewish experiences in college, can lead to pronounced changes in how millennial US Jews relate to their own Jewish heritage (Sasson et al., 2015). Thus, by the time Jewish young adults go on a Birthright trip, many participants, who appear similar in terms of background, may have dramatically different attitudes toward Israel and the Jewish people and what it means to them to be Jewish.

One participant may see their Jewish identity through a religious lens, while another with a
similar Jewish background may understand their Jewish identity as a connection to Israel or struggle against antisemitism. Although these participants share similar Jewish backgrounds, their contrasting understanding of their Jewish identities may influence them to experience their respective Birthright trips very differently. Conceptualizing a broader understanding of the Jewish identities of young adults who apply to Birthright and examining how the program impacts participants with different types of Jewish identity, underlie the questions at the heart of this report.

Study Goals and Research Questions

This report uses a multivariate statistical approach to distinguish five different types of Jewish identity among summer 2018 Birthright applicants (Aronson, Saxe, Kadushin, Boxer, & Brookner, 2018). Applicants were then sorted into five different groups corresponding to their Jewish identity type. This method allows us to better understand how a program like Birthright can have differential impacts on its participants. In particular, the study addresses the following questions:

- What distinguishes different types of Jewish identity?
- Do participants with different types of Jewish identity vary in their views of the Birthright experience?
- Does Birthright influence participants with different types of Jewish identity to the same extent or in the same ways? If not, what are the differences?

About the Data

This report draws on survey data collected from a pair of surveys of US and Canadian applicants who applied to participate in Birthright Israel during summer 2018. In April 2018, a pre-trip survey was sent to all eligible summer 2018 Birthright applicants, whether they were assigned to a trip or not. This pre-trip survey achieved an overall response rate of 31% (N=10,616). In November 2018, these same applicants were sent a post-trip survey, whether they went on a trip or not. The post-trip survey achieved an overall response rate of 13% (N=4,396). Complete methodological details about both surveys can be found in Technical Appendix A.

Because responses from Birthright participants and nonparticipants were gathered before and after the trip, we were able to use a method of analysis known as “difference-in-differences” to study Birthright’s impact. This method compares the changes observed for Birthright participants to the changes observed for nonparticipants over the same time period. In this report, however, we only present pre- and post-trip changes for Birthright participants, because there was little or no change among nonparticipants. Additional details about the analysis paradigm can be found in Technical Appendix B.

Roadmap to the Report

After describing some of the challenges in defining Jewish identity, we present five types of Jewish identity and their characteristics. We discuss Birthright’s impact on participants of each type in terms of their relationship with Israel and their Jewish identity. The report concludes with a discussion of our findings.
Findings from the Summer 2018 Cohort

Over the past two decades Birthright Israel has provided free, 10-day educational trips to over 700,000 Jewish young adults from across the world, including Israel. The program was established with the ambitious goal of strengthening Jewish identity, Jewish community, and connection to Israel among young Jews around the world (Saxe & Chazan, 2008). Over the years, Birthright has attracted an increasingly large and diverse group of North American Jewish young adults; in particular, a greater number of applicants from intermarried households and from backgrounds that do not include formal Jewish education. Birthright’s applicant pool has increasingly come to resemble that of the US population of Jewish young adults in general—in terms of the religious composition of the homes they grew up in and the Jewish experiences they had during childhood (Shain et al., 2015; see also Appendix A).

Evidence that Birthright has a long-lasting, positive impact on participants’ Jewish identity and connection to Israel (Saxe, Shain, Wright, Hecht, & Sasson, 2017; Shain, Saxe, Hecht, Wright, & Sasson, 2015) and, over the long-term, a demonstrable impact on a broad set of behaviors is strong. Participants in Birthright are more likely to marry a Jewish spouse, raise Jewish children, and be engaged in Jewish life than other young Jewish adults who did not participate in the trip (Saxe et al., 2017).
Birthright’s Impact on Five Jewish Identity Groups
Defining Jewish Identity

Researchers and practitioners in the Jewish world have long understood that Jewish identity and views of Jewish life can change over time and be expressed in multiple forms (see e.g., Hartman, 2014; Horowitz 1998). However, past attempts to categorize different forms of Jewish identity or Jewish behaviors using pre-existing schemes have run into serious difficulties.

For years, denominational affiliation (e.g., Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox) served as a useful proxy for Jewish identity and behaviors (Himmelfarb, 1982). Over time, however, as formal affiliation with Jewish denominations declined (Pew Research Center, 2013), denominational affiliation became a less useful way to describe the diversity of the Jewish community. Other attempts to group the Jewish community into “Jews by religion” (JBR) and “Jews of no religion” (JNR) (Kosmin et al., 1991; Pew Research Center, 2013) also faced challenges in accounting for the wide range of attitudes and Jewish practices within each group (Sasson 2017; Saxe et al., 2014). Similarly, although research suggests that there are systematic differences in the Jewish engagement levels of intermarried families and adult children of intermarriage compared to their inmarried peers (Fishman & Cohen, 2017; Phillips, 2017; Shain et. al., 2019), classifying individuals based on their own or their parental intermarriage status still obscures the diversity of Jewish experience within each group (Phillips, 2017; Sasson, 2013; Sasson et al., 2015). In light of these challenges, researchers have begun to move beyond these categories to create a series of analytic methods intended to develop new typologies of Jewish life that better reflect the patterns of attitudes and behaviors that exist among contemporary Jews.

New Methods for Creating Typologies

The challenge of creating succinct, yet accurate, typologies of individuals is not unique to the Jewish community. Psychologists have long categorized individuals into different personality types (e.g. “introvert/extrovert”) based on responses to survey questions (McCrae & Costa, 1989; Oliver & Srivastava, 1999). More recently, researchers have been using a family of related analytic methods to better understand the dimensions of religious and political life in America. Although they go by different names (e.g., factor analysis, cluster analysis, similarity structure analysis) these methods all search for underlying patterns in how individuals respond to a long series of questions related to their opinions and behaviors.
In 2018, the Pew Research Center used this approach to identify patterns of belief and behavior that unite people of different faiths or that divide people of the same religious affiliation. These patterns were then used to produce a new typology of religion in America, dividing Americans into a series of distinct categories, running from the highly religious “Sunday Stalwarts” to the “Solidly Secular” (Pew Research Center, 2018). A similar approach was employed to further the understanding of American political attitudes. Pre-existing labels like “conservative” or “democrat” do not necessarily tell us much about an American’s political identity or political behaviors. One group of researchers (Hawkins, Yudkin, Juan-Torres, & Dixon, 2018) used multivariate methods to group Americans into one of seven categories (e.g., “Passive Liberals,” “Politically Disengaged,” “Devoted Conservatives”) based on their responses to questions about politics, activism and civic engagement, core beliefs, and lived experiences.

These methods have also been used within the Jewish world, as a way of understanding patterns of Jewish engagement (Graham, 2014; Hartman, Sheskin, & Cohen, 2017). Researchers studying local Jewish communities have used a multivariate method known as “Latent Class Analysis” (LCA) to identify distinct patterns of Jewish engagement within a community (Aronson et al., 2018). The study of the Jewish community in Boston, for example, identified five patterns of involvement in Jewish life that included “Immersed,” “Familial,” “Affiliated,” “Cultural,” and “Minimally Involved” (Aronson, Boxer, Brookner, Kadushin, & Saxe, 2016).

In this study, we use the Latent Class Analysis method to better understand the diverse population of Birthright applicants. Instead of looking at patterns in Jewish behaviors, however, we look at patterns in the Jewish attitudes of Birthright applicants. This allows us to study how the program is perceived by and impacts participants with very different notions of “what it means to be Jewish.” Our goal in this report is twofold: First, to identify patterns in the religious and Jewish attitudes of Birthright applicants that express what it means to them to be a Jew. Second, to understand the ways in which different groups of applicants are impacted by the program.
This report focuses on all eligible summer 2018 applicants. Applicants were assigned into five Jewish identity groups on the basis of their pre-trip responses to 14 questions related to feelings and beliefs about being Jewish. We named the five groups in an attempt to characterize how each group thinks about its Jewish identity:

- **Ancestry**
- **Secular Peoplehood**
- **Casual Religious**
- **Connected**
- **Committed**

Figure 1 describes key characteristics of each of the five Jewish identity groups and their relative size among all summer 2018 applicants. More details about the method used to identify the groups is available in Appendix B, and a detailed profile of each group is available in Appendix C.

Table 1 illustrates how a typical member of each identity group would respond to six of the items used to identify the groups.
Figure 1. Jewish identity groups

**ANCESTRY (17%)**
Jewish background is the weakest among all identity groups. Very little commitment to Jewish continuity and, aside from celebrating Jewish holidays, hardly engaged in Jewish life. Negative feelings toward religion and Jewish religious practice, such as observing Shabbat and attending synagogue. Not very connected to Israel. Little concern about antisemitism and countering it. “Being Jewish is part of my ancestry, but it carries little meaning to me otherwise.”

**SECULAR PEOPLEHOOD (23%)**
Jewish background weak but stronger than Ancestry group. Little commitment to Jewish continuity and relatively low engagement in Jewish life. Relatively negative feelings toward religion and Jewish religious practice, such as observing Shabbat and attending synagogue. Strong concern about antisemitism and countering it but not strongly connected to Israel. “It’s important to remember Jewish history, but the religious aspect of Judaism is less important.”

**CASUAL RELIGIOUS (20%)**
Jewish background weak but stronger than Ancestry group. Little commitment to Jewish continuity and relatively low engagement in Jewish life. Relatively positive feelings toward religion and Jewish religious practice, such as observing Shabbat and attending synagogue. Relatively little concern about antisemitism and countering it. Two thirds view Israel as the religious homeland of the Jews but are not very connected to Israel. “It’s important to pass on Jewish values and traditions.”

**CONNECTED (29%)**
Fairly strong Jewish backgrounds, committed to Jewish continuity, currently engaged in Jewish life. Relatively strong positive feelings toward religion and Jewish religious practice such as observing Shabbat and attending synagogue. Strong concern about antisemitism and countering it. The vast majority view Israel as the religious homeland of the Jews and are connected to Israel. “I love being Jewish. It’s a big part of my identity.”

**COMMITTED (11%)**
Strong Jewish backgrounds. Most committed to Jewish continuity and most engaged in Jewish life. Very strong positive feelings toward religion and Jewish religious practice such as observing Shabbat and attending synagogue. Strong concern about antisemitism but somewhat lower concern about countering it. The vast majority view Israel as the religious homeland of the Jews and are highly connected to Israel. “Being Jewish is essential to who I am.”

Source: Pre-trip survey
Table 1. Typical member of Jewish identity group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little Not very/not too</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feels religion is important</td>
<td>Ancestry</td>
<td>Secular Peoplehood</td>
<td>Casual Religious</td>
<td>Committed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Connected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels being Jewish is important</td>
<td>Ancestry</td>
<td>Secular Peoplehood</td>
<td>Casual Religious</td>
<td>Committed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Connected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels connected to Jewish values</td>
<td>Ancestry</td>
<td>Casual Religious</td>
<td>Secular Peoplehood</td>
<td>Connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Connected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels being Jewish involves helping Jews in need</td>
<td>Ancestry</td>
<td>Secular Peoplehood</td>
<td>Casual Religious</td>
<td>Connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Connected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels concerned about antisemitism</td>
<td>Ancestry</td>
<td>Secular Peoplehood</td>
<td>Casual Religious</td>
<td>Connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Connected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally attached to Israel</td>
<td>Ancestry</td>
<td>Connected</td>
<td>Secular Peoplehood</td>
<td>Committed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Casual Religious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Pre-trip survey
Birthright’s Impact on Five Jewish Identity Groups
Reactions to the Trip

Key Findings

The majority of Birthright participants in all five groups described the trip as one of the best experiences of their lives and recommended the trip to friends and family at least once. The majority in all five groups also gave very high ratings to the bus community and the Israeli tour educator and viewed their interactions with the North American staff and the Israelis on the bus positively. Participants from the Connected and Committed groups tended to be the most positive in their reactions to the trip.

Overall Evaluation

With the exception of those in the Ancestry group, the majority of Birthright participants called the trip “one of the best experiences of my life.” Even among the Ancestry group, very few participants called it a “waste of time” or even just “ok” (Figure 2). Compared to participants from other groups, participants from the Connected and Committed groups gave the trips the highest ratings.

Figure 2. Overall rating of the trip

Source: post-trip survey. Question text: “Overall, how would you rate your Birthright Israel experience?” Chi-square test significant at p<.001. See Table C1 in Technical Appendix C for confidence intervals and significance tests.
The Bus Community

Participants rated their bus community, their tour educator, and their interactions with the North American staff and the Israelis who joined the bus very highly. There were few substantive differences in how participants from different groups felt about the bus community or tour educators or in how they rated their interactions with the North American staff. There were, however, small differences in how participants in each group viewed their interactions with the Israelis on their bus—with the Secular Peoplehood, Committed, and Connected groups rating these interactions most positively (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Interactions with Israelis on the bus

Source: post-trip survey. Question text: “Overall, how would you describe your interactions with...The Israeli participants who joined your bus?” Chi-square test significant at p<.001. See Table C2 in Technical Appendix C for confidence intervals and significance tests.
**Shabbat**

The majority of participants from all five groups “very much” enjoyed celebrating Shabbat during their Birthright trips. Participants from the Committed and Connected groups gave the highest ratings on this measure (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Enjoy Shabbat**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ancestry</th>
<th>Secular Peoplehood</th>
<th>Casual Religious</th>
<th>Connected</th>
<th>Committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: post-trip survey. Question text: “To what extent did you enjoy celebrating Shabbat during your Birthright trip?” Chi-square test significant at $p<.001$. See Table C3 in Technical Appendix C for confidence intervals and significance tests.
After the Trip

Key Findings

The majority of participants in all five groups reported that after the trip they kept in touch with other North American participants from their bus, the Israelis, and their staff. Participants in the Ancestry group were the least likely to keep in touch with others from their bus community. Birthright had an impact on strengthening participants’ connection to Israel, to Jewish communities, and to their Jewish identities. Birthright’s impact on connection to Israel and on understanding the current situation in Israel was robust and evident among all five groups. Birthright’s impact on strengthening connections to Jewish communities and participants’ Jewish identity was concentrated among the Ancestry, Secular Peoplehood, and Casual Religious groups.

Keeping in Touch

The vast majority of participants kept in touch with other participants from their bus. Participants in the Ancestry group were the least likely to keep in touch with other North American participants, the Israeli participants, and the North American staff (Figure 5).
Figure 5. Keeping in touch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Once</th>
<th>Twice</th>
<th>3-5 times</th>
<th>6 times or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other North American participants</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancestry</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secular Peoplehood</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Religious</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Israeli participants</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancestry</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secular Peoplehood</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Religious</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed</td>
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<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>18%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secular Peoplehood</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Religious</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: post-trip survey. Question text: “Since your return from the trip, how often have you been in touch with...?” All Chi-square tests significant at p<.001. See Table C4 in Technical Appendix C for confidence intervals and significance tests.
Findings from the Summer 2018 Cohort

**Measuring Birthright’s Impact on the Five Groups**

This section assesses the impact of the Birthright Israel trip on members of each of the five groups in three areas: Israel, Jewish communities, and Jewish identity. Before the trip, there were wide differences between participants in different groups in their responses to all of the outcomes: Participants from the Committed group had the highest baseline levels of connection with Israel and all aspects of Jewish life, while those in the Ancestry group had the lowest. This finding is unsurprising since respondents’ pre-trip responses on some of these items were used to define what it means to be a “Committed” or “Ancestry” Jew. Our key question in this report is whether or not Birthright’s impact appears in the same way for participants from each of the five groups. Even though participants from each group start at different levels, do participants in each group change after participating in a Birthright trip? In other words, is Birthright’s impact concentrated among participants from particular groups?

The analytic paradigm we used looks at participants’ pre- and post-trip responses and then compared any changes to those found in the nonparticipant comparison group over the same time period. In most cases, the nonparticipant comparison group did not appreciably change during the study period. In those instances, we attributed the difference between participants’ pre- and post-trip responses to the impact of Birthright Israel.²

**Trip Impact: Relationship with Israel**

Birthright’s long-documented positive impact with regard to participants’ views of Israel appeared in all five groups. Although participants from the Committed and Connected groups started with higher baseline levels of connection to Israel, participants in all five groups became more connected to Israel after returning from the trip (Figure 6). Participants from all five groups also felt more confident they understood the situation in Israel after the trip (Figure 7). Participants from all five groups followed news about Israel more closely after the trip than they did prior to the trip (Figure 8). The trip’s impact on this measure for the Committed group—which was highly likely to follow news about Israel before the trip—is less dramatic than for the other four groups and not statistically significant.
### Figure 6. Connection to Israel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ancestry</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secular Peoplehood</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>39%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Casual Religious</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connected</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Committed</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: pre- and post-trip surveys. Question text: “To what extent do you feel a connection to Israel?” The independent effect of Birthright participation was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. Chi square test significant for all groups at p<.001. See Table C5 in Technical Appendix C for confidence intervals and significance tests.
Source: pre- and post-trip surveys. Question text: “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements… I feel confident that I understand the current situation in Israel?” The independent effect of Birthright participation was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. Chi square tests significant for all groups at p<.001. See Table C6 in Technical Appendix C for confidence intervals and significance tests.
Figure 8. Following news about Israel

**Source**: pre- and post-trip surveys. Question text: “How closely do you follow news about Israel on TV, radio, newspapers, or the Internet?” The independent effect of Birthright participation was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. Chi square tests significant at p<.001 for Ancestry, Secular Peoplehood, Casual Religious, and Connected groups, and non-significant for Committed group. See Table C7 in Technical Appendix C for confidence intervals and significance tests.
Birthright also had an impact on participants’ awareness of contentious issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, without pushing participants toward a particular position. Before the trip, those in the Ancestry and Secular Peoplehood groups were the most supportive of the two-state solution, and those in the Committed group were the most opposed. Birthright had an impact on having any opinion on the issue (reducing the proportion who replied “don’t know”) for participants from the Ancestry, Secular Peoplehood, Causal Religious, and Connected groups (Figure 9). The program’s impact on the Committed group was much smaller and not statistically significant. At the same time, as seen in Figure 9, it appears that, among those in the Ancestry, Secular Peoplehood, Causal Religious, and Connected groups, participation in Birthright was also associated with an increased likelihood of supporting the two-state solution after the trip. However, this result is not statistically significant and should therefore be considered tentative.

**Figure 9. Opinion about the two-state solution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Statistically Significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ancestry</td>
<td>2% 4% 14%</td>
<td>1% 6% 17%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secular Peoplehood</td>
<td>1% 5% 15%</td>
<td>3% 5% 14%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Religious</td>
<td>2% 7% 20%</td>
<td>1% 7% 20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected</td>
<td>10% 12% 16% 19% 13%</td>
<td>8% 13% 16% 26% 15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: pre- and post-trip surveys. Question text: “Do you support or oppose the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, known as the two-state solution?” The independent effect of Birthright participation was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. Chi square tests significant at p<.05 for Ancestry and Secular Peoplehood groups, p<.01 for Causal Religious and Connected groups, and non-significant for Committed group. See Table C8 in Technical Appendix C for confidence intervals and significance tests.
For American participants, the trip also increased awareness of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. Before the trip, more than half of the US participants in the Ancestry, Secular Peoplehood, and Casual Religious groups had not heard of the BDS movement. Even among the Committed and Connected groups about one third had never heard about BDS prior to the trip. Participants in the Secular Peoplehood group were significantly more likely to have an opinion with regard to the BDS movement after returning from the trip, but there was no change for the other four groups (Figure 10). Figure 10 also suggests that Birthright participants from all five groups became less supportive of BDS after returning from the trip, although this results is not statistically significant, and should be considered tentative.

Figure 10. Hearing of and favorability of BDS

Source: pre- and post-trip surveys. Question text: “To what extent is your overall opinion of the following favorable or unfavorable … The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement?” The independent effect of Birthright participation was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. Chi square tests significant at p<.05 for Secular Peoplehood group and non-significant for all other groups. See Table C9 in Technical Appendix C for confidence intervals and significance tests.
Birthright had no statistically significant impact on:

- Participants’ willingness to express their opinions about Israel around people they did not know,
- Participants’ involvement in Israel activism,
- Participants having heard of AIPAC or J Street, or their overall opinion of these organizations among those who were familiar with them.\(^4\)

**Trip Impact: Jewish Communities and Jewish Identity**

Birthright had a robust impact on participants’ feeling part of a worldwide Jewish community for Ancestry, Secular Peoplehood, and Causal Religious participants (Figure 11). Birthright’s impact was smaller and not statistically significant for participants in the Connected and Committed groups.

In the three to six months after the trip, Birthright had no discernable impact on the extent to which participants felt a connection...
to the Jewish community where they lived, how often participants participated in social activities in the Jewish community, or what proportion of their close friends were Jewish.

Birthright had a substantive impact on the importance participants from the Ancestry, Secular Peoplehood, and Causal Religious groups placed on being Jewish (Figure 12). There was no discernible impact for participants from the Connected and Committed groups.

Birthright’s impact on participants’ connection to Jewish values (Figure 13) and Jewish history (Figure 14) was similar. Birthright had a strong impact on participants from the Ancestry and Casual Religious group and a smaller (and not statistically significant) impact on participants in the Secular Peoplehood group. There appeared to be no appreciable impact on participants from the Connected group on connection to Jewish values and only a small impact on connection to Jewish history. There was no discernable impact on participants in the Committed group on both of these measures.

**Figure 12. Importance of being Jewish**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ancestry</th>
<th>Pre</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>62%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secular Peoplehood</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
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<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committed</th>
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<th>Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>99%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>94%</td>
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</table>

Source: pre- and post-trip surveys. Question text: “How important are the following in your life…being Jewish?” The independent effect of Birthright participation was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. Chi square test significant at $p<.001$ for Ancestry and Casual Religious groups, significant at $p<.01$ for Secular Peoplehood and non-significant for Connected and Committed groups. See Table C11 in Technical Appendix C for confidence intervals and significance tests.
Findings from the Summer 2018 Cohort

Figure 13. Connection to Jewish values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Ancestry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>post</td>
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<td>Secular Peoplehood</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Religious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: pre- and post-trip surveys. Question text: “To what extent do you feel...a connection to Jewish values?” The independent effect of Birthright participation was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. Chi square tests significant at p<.001 for Ancestry, and Casual Religious groups, and non-significant for Secular Peoplehood, Connected, and Committed groups. See Table C12 in Technical Appendix C for confidence intervals and significance tests.
Figure 14. Connection to Jewish history

Ancestry
pre
post

Secular Peoplehood
pre
post

Casual Religious
pre
post

Connected
pre
post

Committed
pre
post

Source: pre- and post-trip surveys. Question text: “To what extent do you feel...a connection to Jewish history?” The independent effect of Birthright participation was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. Chi square test significant at p<.001 for the Causal Religious group, p<.01 for the Ancestry group, p<.05 for Connected and Secular Peoplehood groups, and non-significant for Committed group. See Table C13 in Technical Appendix C for confidence intervals and significance tests.
Birthright’s impact on the importance of raising Jewish children (Figure 15) was concentrated among participants in the Ancestry and Secular Peoplehood groups. For the other three groups there was no significant change in participants’ views before and after the trip.

Figure 15. Importance of raising Jewish children

Ancestry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>pre</th>
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<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little important</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t plan to have kids</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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Secular Peoplehood

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>post</th>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little important</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t plan to have kids</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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Casual Religious

<table>
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<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little important</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t plan to have kids</td>
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<td>5%</td>
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Connected

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
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<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2%</td>
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Committed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tr>
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<td>92%</td>
<td>89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: pre- and post-trip surveys. Question text: “Thinking about the future, how important is it to you to raise your children Jewish?” The independent effect of Birthright participation was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. Excludes participants who do not have children. Chi square tests significant at p<.01 for Ancestry group, p<.05 for the Secular Peoplehood group, and non-significant for all other groups. See Table C14 in Technical Appendix C for confidence intervals and significance tests.
Jewish Behaviors

Birthright’s impact on the consumption of any Jewish/Israeli cultural content was evident for all groups, with the exception of the Committed group whose members virtually all already consumed at least some Jewish/Israeli cultural content before the trip (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Any Jewish/Israeli cultural consumption (past three months)

Source: pre- and post-trip surveys. Question text: "Since August 2018, how often have you done any of the following … Listened to Jewish/Israeli music, Read Jewish/Israeli literature and/or nonfiction, Viewed Jewish/Israeli films and/or TV shows, Visited Jewish/Israeli websites, blogs, social media forums/groups?" The independent effect of Birthright participation was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. Chi square tests significant at p<.001 for Ancestry, Secular Peoplehood, Casual Religious, and Connected groups, and non-significant for Committed group. See Table C15 in Technical Appendix C for confidence intervals and significance tests.
Birthright’s impact on marking Shabbat in some way was concentrated among the Secular Peoplehood and Connected groups (Figure 17). Among the other three groups, there was no significant change in participant’s likelihood of doing anything to mark Shabbat before and after the trip.

Figure 17. Doing anything to mark Shabbat (past weekend)

Source: pre- and post-trip surveys. Question text: “Last weekend, did you do ANYTHING to mark Shabbat in any way?” (Question wording was adjusted based on the timing of survey completion so that when Shabbat coincided with Passover, respondents were asked about the weekend prior to the holiday). The independent effect of Birthright participation was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. Chi square test significant at p<.01 for Secular Peoplehood and Connected groups, and non-significant for Ancestry, Casual Religious, and Committed groups. See Table C16 in Technical Appendix C for confidence intervals and significance tests.
Birthright’s impact was also evident for Ancestry, Secular Peoplehood, Causal Religious and Connected participants with regard to making donations to Jewish/Israeli causes (Figure 18). For the Committed participants, Birthright’s impact was less dramatic and not statistically significant.

**Figure 18. Donating to Jewish/Israeli causes (past three months)**

**Ancestry**
- **Pre**:
  - 97% Never
  - 3% Once or Twice
  - 0% Three or more times
- **Post**:
  - 88% Never
  - 11% Once or Twice
  - 1% Three or more times

**Secular Peoplehood**
- **Pre**:
  - 88% Never
  - 10% Once or Twice
  - 2% Three or more times
- **Post**:
  - 80% Never
  - 18% Once or Twice
  - 2% Three or more times

**Casual Religious**
- **Pre**:
  - 86% Never
  - 13% Once or Twice
  - 1% Three or more times
- **Post**:
  - 77% Never
  - 21% Once or Twice
  - 1% Three or more times

**Connected**
- **Pre**:
  - 71% Never
  - 25% Once or Twice
  - 5% Three or more times
- **Post**:
  - 58% Never
  - 35% Once or Twice
  - 7% Three or more times

**Committed**
- **Pre**:
  - 42% Never
  - 38% Once or Twice
  - 20% Three or more times
- **Post**:
  - 34% Never
  - 42% Once or Twice
  - 24% Three or more times

Source: pre- and post-trip surveys. Question text: “Since August 2018, how often have you done any of the following … Made charitable contributions supporting Jewish/Israeli organizations or causes?” The independent effect of Birthright participation was confirmed statistically using difference-in-difference models. Chi square tests significant at p<.001 for Ancestry and Connected groups, p<.01 for Causal Religious and Secular Peoplehood groups, and non-significant for Committed group. See Table C17 in Technical Appendix C for confidence intervals and significance tests.
Discussion

The present study was designed to understand Birthright Israel’s impact on participants with different types of Jewish identity. The methodological approach in this study extends earlier efforts to categorize Jews based on their upbringing, including the religious composition of their household, or by denominational categories. By examining response patterns to questions about Jewish attitudes, the study identified five types of Jewish identity and sorted respondents into groups: Ancestry, Secular Peoplehood, Casual Religious, Connected, and Committed.

Viewing Birthright through this lens of multi-faceted Jewish identity helps clarify the extent to which Birthright is experienced in different ways by the highly diverse population of Jewish young adults who participate in the program. Additionally, by examining pre-trip to post-trip change in responses of participants in each of these five groups—and comparing these changes to those experienced by a group of applicants in each group who did not participate—we identified how Birthright’s impact differs across groups.

These analyses found that, overall, Birthright had a significant impact on virtually all types of participants, despite their disparate Jewish identities. Participants from all five groups were more connected to Israel and more confident in explaining the situation in Israel after returning from the trip—and no such change was observed for their peers who did not participate in Birthright. At the same time, Birthright’s impact in some areas—particularly those related to Jewish identity and behaviors—was concentrated among participants in the Ancestry, Casual Religious, and Secular Peoplehood groups. For participants in these groups, who had a weaker Jewish identity compared to those in the Connected and Committed group, Birthright had a substantial, positive impact on feeling part of a worldwide Jewish community, the importance of being Jewish, feelings of connection to Jewish values and to Jewish history, and on the consumption of Jewish and Israeli cultural content and donations to Jewish or Israeli causes.

At the same time, although participants with weaker forms of Jewish identity returned from the trip more engaged in Jewish life than before they left, these changes were not always large enough to overcome their pre-trip deficit compared to those with stronger forms of Jewish identity. Given that the trip was only ten days long, it is not surprising that the impact of Birthright on participants in these groups was smaller than the gap between them and participants who had had a lifetime of Jewish experiences.
For Israel-related outcomes however, Birthright’s impact was often so large that it did overcome pre-trip differences between different groups. After the trip, participants from the Ancestry group were more confident in their understanding of the situation in Israel than were the Secular Peoplehood or Casual Religious participants before the trip, and were close to the baseline levels of confidence reported by Connected and Committed participants. Similarly, after the trip, participants in the Ancestry group showed similar levels of connection to Israel than pre-trip levels of connection in the Secular Peoplehood and Casual Religious groups.

After the trip, those in the Secular Peoplehood group were also as connected to Israel as their peers in the Connected group pre-trip and, in turn, the latter group was as connected to Israel as those in the Committed group pre-trip.

One notable finding was that Birthright’s impact on participants in the Committed group was evident for only two measures: connection to Israel and confidence in understanding the current situation in Israel. On all other measures, Birthright had no significant impact on this group. Our inability to detect a significant trip effect for this group might be due to the smaller number of respondents in this group which, by limiting our statistical power, made it difficult to detect small changes. However, we mainly attribute Birthright’s limited impact on this group to “ceiling effects.” Even before the trip, for most of the measures examined, the majority—and in some cases almost the entirety—of the Committed participants gave the highest or most positive response possible to our questions. These participants had no “room” to improve as a result of Birthright, or any other intervention, because they were already so highly engaged in Jewish life.

Even if Birthright’s impact on the Committed group was—for understandable reasons—somewhat limited, this is not to say that the presence of these individuals on Birthright trips was a “waste of space.” The presence of highly engaged Committed Jewish young adults on Birthright buses might be a key component of the trip’s impact on participants with other types of Jewish identity. Meeting and interacting with highly engaged North American Jewish peers may help participants from the Ancestry, Secular Peoplehood, Casual Religious and even Connected groups conceptualize what a stronger connection to Israel, Jewish culture, and religion might look like in their own lives.

The findings of this study suggest that Birthright has the power to transform participants’ understanding and connection to Israel, regardless of their knowledge and feelings prior to the trip. The findings also indicate that participants from the least connected identity groups are also those who make gains on the broadest range of measures (see also Sasson et al., 2015). While a 10-day trip cannot overcome a lifetime of Jewish experiences, it can positively, even if modestly, shape participants’ engagement with Jewish life. By using an empirically-based typology of Jewish identity, this study helps explain how the Birthright experience “works” for different types of young Jews. A nuanced understanding of Jewish identity is especially important for organizations like Birthright Israel that serve an increasingly diverse Jewish population. Increasing awareness of the different types of Jewish identity in the Jewish community will help ensure that programs reach their intended audiences and are maximally effective.
Notes

1 All response rates are AAPOR RR2.

2 There were only a few items where nonparticipants substantively changed during the six to eight months between the pre- and post-trip surveys. Although we do not discuss these changes in this report, the possibility of nonparticipant movement is accounted for in the difference-in-differences models used to validate these results. See Technical Appendix B for more details.

3 This question was not presented to respondents who indicated they lived in Canada.

4 Results of difference-in-differences models available upon request.
Birthright’s Impact on Five Jewish Identity Groups


Appendix A: Changes in Birthright’s Applicant Pool 2007-18

Between summer 2007 and summer 2018, there was a decrease in the proportion of Birthright applicants who had two Jewish parents, although Birthright applicants are still more likely to have two Jewish parents than the Jewish young adult population as a whole (Figure A1). The years between summer 2007 and summer 2018 also saw a decrease in the proportion of Birthright applicants who had a bar or bat mitzvah ceremony or had formal Jewish education. On these measures, Birthright applicants are now roughly comparable to all Jewish young adults in the United States.

Figure A1. US Birthright applicants: Jewish background, by year

Source: Birthright registration data and author analysis of Pew 2013 data. Note: Bar/bat mitzvah not asked of 2014 Birthright applicants. Childhood observance of kashrut not asked in Pew 2013 study. Starting in summer 2014 Birthright changed the eligibility criteria for the trip to allow applicants who had participated in previous peer-trips to Israel, who had been ineligible for earlier rounds. To ensure comparability between rounds these applicants are excluded from summer 2014-18 data above. In addition, starting in summer 2018 Birthright changed the eligibility criteria for the trip to allow applicants aged 27-32 to participate. These applicants are likewise excluded from summer 2018 data to facilitate comparison with earlier cohorts.
Between summer 2007 and summer 2018 the number and proportion of applicants with Jewish day school education has held relatively steady, while the number and proportion of applicants with no formal Jewish education has increased substantially, and the “middle” has shrunk (Figure A2). The decline in supplementary school education is evident among applicants with one and two Jewish parents (not shown).

Figure A2. US Birthright applicants: Formal Jewish education, by year

Source: Birthright registration data. Note: Starting in summer 2014 Birthright changed the eligibility criteria for the trip to allow applicants who had participated in previous peer-trips to Israel, who had been ineligible for earlier rounds. To ensure comparability between rounds these applicants are excluded from summer 2014-18 data above. In addition, starting in summer 2018 Birthright changed the eligibility criteria for the trip to allow applicants aged 27-32 to participate. These applicants are likewise excluded from summer 2018 data to facilitate comparison with earlier cohorts.
The analytic method used in this report, known as Latent Class Analysis (LCA), is premised on the assumption that collective identity, including Jewish identity, is a “latent” or underlying construct that cannot be observed or measured directly (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004). It is, however, possible to measure a variety of indicators of Jewish identity, including feelings, beliefs, and behaviors. We used 14 survey questions related to feelings and beliefs about being Jewish and applied the statistical method of LCA to identify patterns of responses to these questions among respondents to the summer 2018 pre-trip survey of Birthright applicants. In this way, we identified a latent “Jewish identity” variable consisting of five distinct “classes” or groups (Lazarsfeld & Henry, 1968). The LCA in this report was conducted using the “DoCLA” Stata Plugin (version 1.2) developed by The Methodology Center at Penn State (Lanza, Dziak, Huang, Wagner, & Collins, 2015). Because LCA requires a decision regarding the number of latent classes to fit, models with successively larger numbers of classes were fitted, and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) was used to determine which model to use. A five-class solution was found to be parsimonious and with high goodness of fit-values. Names were assigned to these classes on the basis of the variables which most strongly predicted membership in each class.

Based on the responses of survey respondents to the 14 questions in the pre-trip survey, we then assigned survey respondents to the group or class in which they had the highest probability of membership. Respondents were therefore not assigned to classes based on their upbringing or Jewish denomination (Reform, Conservative, etc.) nor their Jewish behaviors. Instead, they were assigned to classes based solely on how they thought and felt about being Jewish at the time of their application to Birthright. This method enabled us to explore how Jewish identity—thoughts and feelings about being Jewish—was related to Jewish upbringing and behaviors, without defining Jewish identity around those parameters. We were also able to see that different groups we are used to thinking of as distinct and monolithic—e.g., individuals with one Jewish parent, Reform Jews, etc.—actually think about their Jewish identity in diverse ways. This method also allowed us to perceive commonalities between groups often viewed as having little in common.

In Latent Class Analysis, class probability parameters specify the relative prevalence (size) of each class, and item parameters indicate the probability of an individual in that class to give each response. All of these model parameters are shown in Table B1.
**Figure B1. Latent class model parameters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class probability parameters</th>
<th>Ancestry</th>
<th>Secular Peoplehood</th>
<th>Casual Religious</th>
<th>Connected</th>
<th>Committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item parameters</th>
<th>How concerned are you about antisemitism around the world?</th>
<th>Not at all, A little, Somewhat</th>
<th>Very much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How emotionally attached are you to Israel?</th>
<th>Not at all attached, Not very attached</th>
<th>Somewhat attached</th>
<th>Very attached</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent do you feel a connection to the Jewish community where you live?</th>
<th>Not at all, A little, Somewhat</th>
<th>Very much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent do you feel a connection to Jewish values?</th>
<th>Not at all, A little, Somewhat</th>
<th>Very much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important are the following in your life … being Jewish?</th>
<th>Not at all important, Not too important, Somewhat important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Findings from the Summer 2018 Cohort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important are the following in your life … religion?</th>
<th>Ancestry</th>
<th>Secular Peoplehood</th>
<th>Casual Religious</th>
<th>Connected</th>
<th>Committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important, Not too important</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For you personally, how much does being Jewish involve countering antisemitism?</th>
<th>Ancestry</th>
<th>Secular Peoplehood</th>
<th>Casual Religious</th>
<th>Connected</th>
<th>Committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all, A little, Somewhat</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For you personally, how much does being Jewish involve taking care of other Jews who are in need?</th>
<th>Ancestry</th>
<th>Secular Peoplehood</th>
<th>Casual Religious</th>
<th>Connected</th>
<th>Committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all, A little, Somewhat</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For you personally, how much does being Jewish involve remembering the Holocaust?</th>
<th>Ancestry</th>
<th>Secular Peoplehood</th>
<th>Casual Religious</th>
<th>Connected</th>
<th>Committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all, A little, Somewhat</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For you personally, how much does being Jewish involve leading an ethical and moral life?</th>
<th>Ancestry</th>
<th>Secular Peoplehood</th>
<th>Casual Religious</th>
<th>Connected</th>
<th>Committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all, A little, Somewhat</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For you personally, how much does being Jewish involve observing Shabbat?</th>
<th>Ancestry</th>
<th>Secular Peoplehood</th>
<th>Casual Religious</th>
<th>Connected</th>
<th>Committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all, A little</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For you personally, how much does being Jewish involve attending synagogue?</th>
<th>Ancestry</th>
<th>Secular Peoplehood</th>
<th>Casual Religious</th>
<th>Connected</th>
<th>Committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all, A little</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is it to you to keep kosher?</th>
<th>Ancestry</th>
<th>Secular Peoplehood</th>
<th>Casual Religious</th>
<th>Connected</th>
<th>Committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important, Very important, Essential</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Birthright’s Impact on Five Jewish Identity Groups
Appendix C: Detailed Group Profiles

The following summaries detail the unique profile of each of the five identity groups. For each group we include information about their demographics, how they grew up, how they think about religion, being Jewish and peoplehood. We also describe how they engage with Jewish life and Israel. We conclude with how participants describe their Jewish identity in their own words.
ANCESTRY

The Jewish background of group members is the weakest compared to the other groups. They have very little commitment to Jewish continuity and aside from celebrating Jewish holidays are hardly engaged in Jewish life. They are not very connected to Israel and just under half are critical of its policies regarding the Palestinians. Less than half (45%) are 22 years old or younger and women are underrepresented in the group (50%, compared to 57% of all applicants). 8% are politically conservative, 17% are moderate, and 76% are liberal. In their own words, they describe being Jewish as part of their ancestry, but say that it carries little meaning to them otherwise. This group represents 16% of the summer 2018 Birthright applicant cohort.

HOW THEY GREW UP:

- 49% have two Jewish parents
- 80% had a Passover seder when growing up, 50% celebrated a bar/bat mitzvah, 7% kept kosher at home, and 11% attended Jewish day school
- 4% said that being Jewish was very important in their lives growing up

HOW THEY THINK ABOUT RELIGION:

- None say religion is very important in their lives, 4% say it is somewhat important
- None believe that being Jewish very much involves observing Shabbat and 5% believe that it somewhat involves observing Shabbat. None believe that being Jewish very much involves attending synagogue and 4% believe that it somewhat involves attending synagogue
- 14% strongly agree and 19% agree that religion causes more problem than it solves
- None strongly agree and 1% agree that God chose the Jewish people for a particular purpose

HOW THEY THINK ABOUT BEING JEWISH:

- 44% identify their current religion as Jewish, 52% say they are atheist, agnostic or nothing in particular
- None identify as Orthodox, 1% as Conservative, and 14% as Reform
- 5% say it is very important to them to be Jewish
- 5% say it is very important to them to raise Jewish children and 2% say it is very important to marry someone Jewish
- 20% feel that being Jewish is very much about passing on Jewish traditions and culture to the next generation

HOW THEY THINK ABOUT PEOPLEHOOD:

- 2% feel that being Jewish is very much about taking care of other Jews who are in need
- 3% feel that being Jewish is very much about being part of a worldwide Jewish community
- 25% feel that being Jewish is very much about countering antisemitism
HOW THEY ENGAGE IN JEWISH LIFE:

- None say that being Jewish is very much and 9% say it is somewhat part of their daily lives
- 77% did something to observe Hanukkah, 48% Rosh Hashanah, 40% Yom Kippur, 7% Sukkot in the past year
- 31% consumed Jewish/Israeli music, literature, nonfiction, films and/or TV in past 3 months
- 7% did something to mark Shabbat the weekend before completing the survey
- 4% volunteered through or for a Jewish/Israeli organization or cause in past 3 months
- 11% attended a lecture or class on a topic related to Judaism and/or Israel in past 3 months
- 19% participated in a Jewish social activity or event in past month
- 8% say that most or all of their close friends are Jewish

HOW THEY THINK ABOUT ISRAEL:

- 25% agree at least somewhat that Israel is part of God’s plan for the Jewish people
- 8% feel that being Jewish very much involves caring about Israel
- 2% feel very much connected to Israel (pre-trip)
- 45% agree at least somewhat that Israel is guilty of violating the human rights of the Palestinians

HOW THEY DESCRIBE, IN THEIR OWN WORDS, WHAT BEING JEWISH MEANS TO THEM:

“Honestly, it’s not a very big part of my life (by personal choice). The subject of my family and religious background comes up occasionally, but having been born to a Jewish father and raised as a super reformed Jew is pretty incidental to my life right now.” (Man, age 25)

“I consider my Jewish heritage an ethnic link more than a religious identity, and for that reason more of a technicality. However, I still find it important and identify as Jewish but atheist when asked, despite the apparent contradiction.” (Man, age 23)

“I don’t want to seem like a bad Jew who doesn’t know anything about her religion, but unfortunately that is the case.” (Woman, age 20)

“Being a young American Jewish adult has not really affected my life apart from it being in my blood.” (Man, age 23)

“Being Jewish does not affect my life or lifestyle. It is only a part of my identity to the extent that it is a fact about my ancestry.” (Man, age 19)
SECULAR PEOPLEHOOD

Group members have weak Jewish backgrounds but stronger than that of the Ancestry group. They have little commitment to Jewish continuity and low engagement in Jewish life, although they are highly concerned about antisemitism. They are not strongly connected to Israel, and a substantial minority are critical of its policies regarding the Palestinians. Over half (53%) are 22 years old or younger and 56% of the group is comprised of women (compared to 57% of all applicants). 9% are politically conservative, 18% are moderate, and 74% are liberal. In their own words, they describe the importance of remembering Jewish history while deemphasizing the religious aspect of Judaism.

This group represents 23% of the summer 2018 Birthright applicant cohort.

HOW THEY GREW UP:

- 53% have two Jewish parents
- 84% had a Passover seder when growing up, 56% celebrated a bar/bat mitzvah, 8% kept kosher at home, and 14% attended Jewish day school
- 13% said that being Jewish was very important in their lives growing up

HOW THEY THINK ABOUT RELIGION:

- None say religion is very important in their lives, 19% say it is somewhat important
- 1% believe that being Jewish involves very much observing Shabbat and 16% believe that it somewhat involves observing Shabbat. 1% believe that being Jewish very much involves attending synagogue and 15% believe that it somewhat involves attending synagogue
- 11% strongly agree and 17% agree that religion causes more problem than it solves
- 2% strongly agree and 8% agree that God chose the Jewish people for a particular purpose

HOW THEY THINK ABOUT BEING JEWISH:

- 64% identify their current religion as Jewish, 31% say they are atheist, agnostic or nothing in particular
- None identify as Orthodox, 3% as Conservative, and 26% as Reform
- 35% say it is very important to them to be Jewish
- 23% say it is very important to raise Jewish children and 5% say it is very important to marry someone Jewish
- 58% feel that being Jewish is very much about passing on Jewish traditions and culture to the next generation

HOW THEY THINK ABOUT PEOPLEHOOD:

- 56% feel that being Jewish is very much about taking care of other Jews who are in need
- 21% feel that being Jewish is very much about being part of a worldwide Jewish community
- 87% feel that being Jewish is very much about countering antisemitism
HOW THEY THINK ABOUT ISRAEL:

- 46% agree at least somewhat that Israel is part of God’s plan for the Jewish people
- 38% feel that being Jewish very much involves caring about Israel
- 13% feel very much connected to Israel (pre-trip)
- 42% agree at least somewhat that Israel is guilty of violating the human rights of the Palestinians

HOW THEY ENGAGE IN JEWISH LIFE:

- 7% say that being Jewish is very much part of their daily lives
- 85% did something to observe Hanukkah, 64% Rosh Hashanah, 57% Yom Kippur, 12% Sukkot in the past year
- 49% consumed Jewish/Israeli music, literature, nonfiction, films and/or TV in past 3 months
- 10% did something to mark Shabbat the weekend before completing the survey
- 10% volunteered through or for a Jewish/Israeli organization or cause in past 3 months
- 17% attended a lecture or class on a topic related to Judaism and/or Israel in past 3 months
- 29% participated in a Jewish social activity or event in past month
- 13% say that most or all of their close friends are Jewish

HOW THEY DESCRIBE, IN THEIR OWN WORDS, WHAT BEING JEWISH MEANS TO THEM:

“Being Jewish is much broader than the religion itself. Because of all of the hostility towards us, it pushes us to try our hardest and to prove wrong those who oppose our very existence. I take a lot of pride in my heritage and background.” (Man, age 19)

“I believe being Jewish is more than a religion but part of your blood and history. I think remembering your history and the suffering your people endured is extremely important and it is important to pass down this history for generations to come to prevent antisemitism to continue to happen to the Jewish people.” (Woman, age 21)

“Being the grandchild of Holocaust survivors, it is extremely important to me that I pass on what it means to be Jewish and to be proud of your heritage. I do not consider myself to be religious by any means, but more traditional.” (Woman, age 20)

“Amongst my friends, religion doesn’t really come up in conversation, so it’s not a dominating part of my daily life or friendships, but I do feel a connection to the Jewish community through my upbringing and family. I think that being raised Jewish helped shape my social beliefs about social justice, fighting racism and discrimination, and doing what I can to help others.” (Woman, age 26)

“While I have lost touch with some of my religious practices from my childhood, I still remain very culturally involved. Judaism to me is about honoring our family and our history. It is about teaching kindness and the power of community and tradition. I am a better, more generous person today because of my Jewish upbringing.” (Woman, age 22)
CASUAL RELIGIOUS

Group members have weak Jewish backgrounds but stronger than that of the Ancestry group. They have little commitment to Jewish continuity and low engagement in Jewish life. They think about Israel as the religious homeland of the Jews, but they are not very connected to Israel, and one third are critical of its policies regarding the Palestinians. Over half (59%) are 22 years old or younger and about half of the group is comprised of women (54%). 15% are politically conservative, 27% are moderate, and 58% are liberal. In their own words, they describe the importance of passing on Jewish values and traditions. This group represents 19% of the summer 2018 Birthright applicant cohort.

HOW THEY GREW UP:

- 58% have two Jewish parents
- 86% had a Passover seder when growing up, 67% celebrated a bar/bat mitzvah, 17% kept kosher at home, and 19% attended Jewish day school
- 16% said that being Jewish was very important in their lives growing up

HOW THEY THINK ABOUT RELIGION:

- 3% say religion is very important in their lives, 57% say it is somewhat important
- 7% believe that being Jewish very much involves observing Shabbat and 38% believe that it somewhat involves observing Shabbat. 6% believe that being Jewish very much involves attending synagogue and 34% believe that it somewhat involves attending synagogue
- 4% strongly agree and 11% agree that religion causes more problem than it solves
- 3% strongly agree and 12% agree that God chose the Jewish people for a particular purpose

HOW THEY THINK ABOUT BEING JEWISH:

- 79% identify their current religion as Jewish, 16% say they are atheist, agnostic or nothing in particular
- 3% identify as Orthodox, 11% as Conservative, and 32% as Reform
- 27% say it is very important to them to be Jewish
- 28% say it is very important to them to raise Jewish children and 13% say it is very important to marry someone Jewish
- 52% feel that being Jewish is very much about passing on Jewish traditions and culture to the next generation

HOW THEY THINK ABOUT PEOPLEHOOD:

- 26% feel that being Jewish is very much about taking care of other Jews who are in need
- 13% feel that being Jewish is very much about being part of a worldwide Jewish community
- 19% feel that being Jewish is very much about countering antisemitism
HOW THEY THINK ABOUT ISRAEL:

- 8% say that being Jewish is very much part of their daily lives
- 88% did something to observe Hanukkah, 74% Rosh Hashanah, 71% Yom Kippur, 20% Sukkot in the past year
- 53% consumed Jewish/Israeli music, literature, nonfiction, films and/or TV in past 3 months
- 19% did something to mark Shabbat the weekend before completing the survey
- 14% volunteered through or for a Jewish/Israeli organization or cause in past 3 months
- 19% attended a lecture or class on a topic related to Judaism and/or Israel in past 3 months
- 36% participated in a Jewish social activity or event in past month
- 18% say that most or all of their close friends are Jewish

HOW THEY ENGAGE IN JEWISH LIFE:

- 8% say that being Jewish is very much part of their daily lives
- 88% did something to observe Hanukkah, 74% Rosh Hashanah, 71% Yom Kippur, 20% Sukkot in the past year
- 53% consumed Jewish/Israeli music, literature, nonfiction, films and/or TV in past 3 months
- 19% did something to mark Shabbat the weekend before completing the survey
- 14% volunteered through or for a Jewish/Israeli organization or cause in past 3 months
- 19% attended a lecture or class on a topic related to Judaism and/or Israel in past 3 months
- 36% participated in a Jewish social activity or event in past month
- 18% say that most or all of their close friends are Jewish

HOW THEY DESCRIBE, IN THEIR OWN WORDS, WHAT BEING JEWISH MEANS TO THEM:

“I view my religion as more of a guide on how to live life rather than the more literal sense. Jewish principles definitely help me lead my life.” (Man, 19 years old)

“I believe being Jewish today is not taking the Torah as law, but rather keeping tradition alive and passing on the values to younger Jewish generations.” (Man, 22 years old)

“I’m proud and I respect my ancestors and the situations they have all endured. I shall continue and pass this religion to the next generations of my family.” (Woman, age 18)

“My entire sense of Jewish culture and identity was born from my grandparents who survived the Holocaust and emigrated after the war. My grandparents were orthodox, my parents are conservative, and I align more with a Reform identity. Nevertheless, regardless of my decisions to either follow or not follow certain mitzvos and beliefs, I strongly value keeping my Jewish identity and values given that’s how my family was raised and it is what my wonderful grandparents cherished and instilled in us.” (Man, age 22)

“My most profound Jewish belief comes from the story of Jacob wrestling with the angel of G-d. I believe Judaism to be founded on values of questioning, evolution, and active engagement. This is evident in the importance of Midrash in our Jewish texts, the incredible intellectual achievements made by Jews throughout history, and the association between American Jewish communities and leftist movements (especially relevant in my family – my paternal grandparents were American Communists). I do not believe in G-d in what would be considered a traditional sense, but I do believe that as a Jew I was born into an ancient injunction to wrestle with authority and the status quo whenever necessary.” (Woman, age 26)
CONNECTED

Group members have fairly strong Jewish backgrounds, are committed to Jewish continuity and are currently engaged in Jewish life. They are connected to Israel and fairly uncritical of its policies regarding the Palestinians. Almost two thirds (68%) are 22 years old or younger and this group is disproportionally comprised of women (62%, compared to 57% of all applicants). 19% are politically conservative, 23% are moderate, and 57% are liberal. In their own words, they love being Jewish and describe it as a big part of their identities. This group represents 30% of the summer 2018 Birthright applicant cohort.

HOW THEY GREW UP:

- 71% have two Jewish parents
- 92% had a Passover seder when growing up, 76% celebrated a bar/bat mitzvah, 22% kept kosher at home, and 23% attended Jewish day school
- 51% said that being Jewish was very important in their lives growing up

HOW THEY THINK ABOUT RELIGION:

- 21% say religion is very important in their lives, 64% say it is somewhat important
- 13% believe that being Jewish very much involves observing Shabbat and 46% believe that it somewhat involves observing Shabbat. 9% believe that being Jewish very much involves attending synagogue and 49% believe that it somewhat involves attending synagogue
- 3% strongly agree and 7% agree that religion causes more problem than it solves
- 12% strongly agree and 29% agree that God chose the Jewish people for a particular purpose

HOW THEY THINK ABOUT BEING JEWISH:

- 93% identify their current religion as Jewish
- 3% identify as Orthodox, 22% as Conservative, and 42% as Reform
- 85% say it is very important to them to be Jewish
- 68% say it is very important to them to raise Jewish children and 33% say it is very important to marry someone Jewish
- 88% feel that being Jewish very much involves passing on Jewish traditions and culture to the next generation

HOW THEY THINK ABOUT PEOPLEHOOD:

- 76% feel that being Jewish is very much about taking care of other Jews who are in need
- 50% feel that being Jewish is very much about being part of a worldwide Jewish community
- 77% feel that being Jewish is very much about countering antisemitism
### HOW THEY ENGAGE IN JEWISH LIFE:

- 37% say that being Jewish is very much part of their daily lives
- 95% did something to observe Hanukkah, 87% Rosh Hashanah, 85% Yom Kippur, 36% Sukkot in the past year
- 71% consumed Jewish/Israeli music, literature, nonfiction, films and/or TV in past 3 months
- 28% did something to mark Shabbat the weekend before completing the survey
- 25% volunteered through or for a Jewish/Israeli organization or cause in past 3 months
- 32% attended a lecture or class on a topic related to Judaism and/or Israel in past 3 months
- 54% participated in a Jewish social activity or event in past month
- 30% say that most or all of their close friends are Jewish

### HOW THEY THINK ABOUT ISRAEL:

- 80% agree at least somewhat that Israel is part of God’s plan for the Jewish people
- 68% very much feel that being Jewish involves caring about Israel
- 37% feel very much connected to Israel (pre-trip)
- 27% agree at least somewhat that Israel is guilty of violating the human rights of the Palestinians

### HOW THEY DESCRIBE, IN THEIR OWN WORDS, WHAT BEING JEWISH MEANS TO THEM:

“I love my religion and the sense of community it brings to the people around me.” (Woman, age 18)

“I am extremely proud to have been raised in a Jewish home while keeping almost all the traditions.” (Man, age 18)

“A huge part of my identity revolves around being Jewish and I take it very seriously. It makes me feel special to be chosen by God to be a Jew. If in the case that I do not marry a Jewish person, I will still instill the Jewish religion and its values in my kids.” (Woman, age 20)

“My father’s family was on the run throughout the war and he was born in a DP camp in 1947. Many of his extended family perished in the concentration camps. I think it’s incredibly important for the young Jewish population to not only remember the Holocaust but to also keep the Jewish traditions and customs alive. We are such a small number and we should stick together, always. Especially in the political climate of the world today.” (Woman, age 27)

“Being Jewish is a huge part of my identity. It is the way I grew up and I see it as a defining factor in who I am. It changes the people who I chose to surround myself with and the ways in which I chose to live my life.” (Woman, age 22)
COMMITTED

Group members have strong Jewish backgrounds and are very religious. Of all the groups, this group is the most committed to Jewish continuity and the most engaged in Jewish life. They are highly connected to Israel and uncritical of its policies regarding the Palestinians. The vast majority (80%) are 22 years old or younger and 58% are women (compared to 57% of all applicants). 42% are politically conservative, 33% are moderate, and 25% are liberal. In their own words, they describe being Jewish as essential to who they are. This group represents 12% of the summer 2018 Birthright applicant cohort.

HOW THEY GREW UP:
- 85% have two Jewish parents
- 91% had a Passover seder when growing up, 84% celebrated a bar/bat mitzvah, 70% kept kosher at home, and 54% attended Jewish day school
- 89% said that being Jewish was very important in their lives growing up

HOW THEY THINK ABOUT RELIGION:
- 92% say religion is very important in their lives
- 89% believe that being Jewish very much involves observing Shabbat and 69% believe that it very much involves attending synagogue
- 2% strongly agree and 4% agree that religion causes more problem than it solves
- 58% strongly agree that God chose the Jewish people for a particular purpose

HOW THEY THINK ABOUT BEING JEWISH:
- 98% identify their current religion as Jewish
- 47% identify as Orthodox, 21% as Conservative, and 14% as Reform
- 99% say it is very important to them to be Jewish
- 88% say it is very important to them to raise Jewish children and 84% say it is very important to marry someone Jewish
- 97% feel that being Jewish very much involves passing on Jewish traditions and culture to the next generation

HOW THEY THINK ABOUT PEOPLEHOOD:
- 92% feel that being Jewish is very much about taking care of other Jews who are in need
- 79% feel that being Jewish is very much about being part of a worldwide Jewish community
- 60% feel that being Jewish is very much about countering antisemitism
HOW THEY ENGAGE IN JEWISH LIFE:

- 87% say that being Jewish is very much part of their daily lives
- 96% did something to observe Hanukkah, 95% Rosh Hashanah, 95% Yom Kippur, 82% Sukkot in the past year
- 92% consumed Jewish/Israeli music, literature, nonfiction, films and/or TV in past 3 months
- 78% did something to mark Shabbat the weekend before completing the survey
- 50% volunteered through or for a Jewish/Israeli organization or cause in past 3 months
- 61% attended a lecture or class on a topic related to Judaism and/or Israel in past 3 months
- 70% participated in a Jewish social activity or event in past month
- 70% say that most or all of their close friends are Jewish

HOW THEY THINK ABOUT ISRAEL:

- 91% agree at least somewhat that Israel is part of God’s plan for the Jewish people
- 82% very much feel that being Jewish involves caring about Israel
- 65% feel very much connected to Israel (pre-trip)
- 14% agree at least somewhat that Israel is guilty of violating the human rights of the Palestinians

HOW THEY DESCRIBE, IN THEIR OWN WORDS, WHAT BEING JEWISH MEANS TO THEM:

“It is my whole life and everything that has happened to me or will happen to me is influenced by the fact that I am Jewish.” (Man, age 20)

“Being Jewish is the singularly most important thing in my life, having been raised ultra-orthodox. I believe that maintaining a close relationship with God is extremely important and is what keeps me grounded and moral.” (Man, age 18)

“I am very proud to call myself a Jew and I feel that [me] and American Jews as a whole are extremely fortunate that we are able to practice our religion with freedom and without having to face major antisemitism like other countries do. I try to show the world what it means to be a Jew when I go out in the public, with the way I dress, act, and interact with others. I hope to be able to take this Jewish pride and be able to instill it into my (future) children so they can lead a proud, Jewish life.” (Woman, age 17)

“I grew up religious, and believe Judaism is an essential part of my existence. In the world we live in, something has to anchor us (especially young adults) and keep us sane. With the overload of so much controversial subject matters, without the base of religion keeping me beholden to something greater and wiser than me, I would feel very vulnerable and unsafe.” (Woman, age 19)

“As an American Jewish young adult everything I do, my entire life is based off of being Jewish.” (Man, age 17)