



**ujia**

OUR ISRAEL. OUR FUTURE.

JEWISH LIVES:  
A LONGITUDINAL STUDY  
TO EXPLORE CHANGING  
LIVES OF JEWISH  
SECONDARY SCHOOL  
STUDENTS AND THEIR  
FAMILIES

**FOCUS: ISRAEL**

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foundation

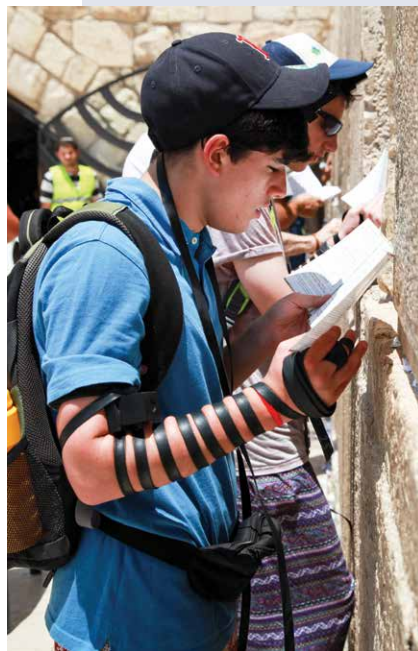
## JEWISH LIVES FOCUS: ISRAEL

**W**hat do Jewish 18 year olds think about Israel and their relationship with the modern State? As this cohort enters late adolescence, their consciousness regarding their relationship with Israel will be forming. They will be leaving secondary school at the end of this academic year and if they continue onto further education, they will be confronted with the complex relationship with Israel that exists on campus. We are interested in the changing lives of adolescents and understanding how this cohort view their relationship to the modern State of Israel.

This study is conducting an in-depth and sustained exploration of the changing Jewish lives of young people and their families. Our data is collected from students in 7 Jewish schools and from students in non-Jewish schools.

We compared data collected before attending the post GCSE Israel Tour with information obtained during Year 13. All the Jewish schools in our sample apart from one offer a Year 9 Israel Trip, which is a two to three week educational tour of the country, taking place towards the end of the summer term. 73% percent of the student sample went on their Year 9 Israel trip. In addition, one of our schools offers a Year 9 extended Israel programme for 10 weeks, which typically attracts 10–20% of the eligible cohort.

The following chart shows the overall percentage of students who participated in Israel Tour after Year 11 in 2016. This ranged from 39% in one school to 92% in another.

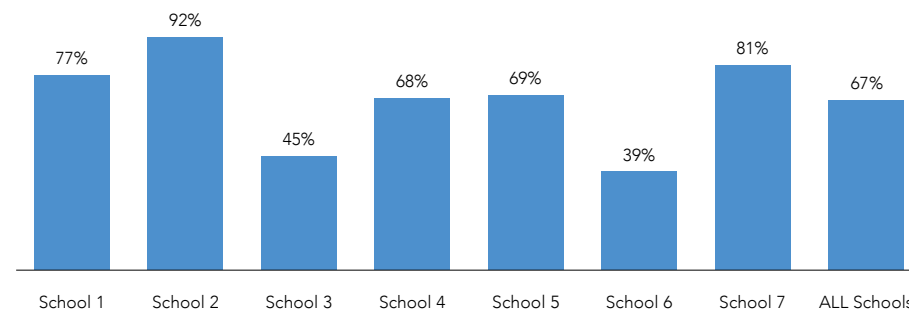


“  
I DO QUITE LIKE  
IT [ISRAEL], BUT  
YOU GET QUITE  
ATTACKED WHEN  
YOU TRY TO  
SAY ANYTHING  
ABOUT IT

”

Student, non-Jewish school

Overall percentage of students who participated in UJIA Israel Experience Israel Tour after Year 11 in 2016



This publication includes findings from our most recent survey (2018) and compares it with the information gleaned from previous years, since our cohort were 11 years old in 2011. It will reveal to what extent our students feel connected to Israel. To what extent do they see Israel as home? We want to find out the role Israel plays in their lives and what may have influenced that relationship.

### CONNECTING TO ISRAEL

By the end of Year 11, almost 90% of all students in the seven schools have been to Israel at least once. This proportion increased from just over 70% when they were in Year 7. In one of our schools, all students who completed the survey in Year 11 had visited Israel.

The positive connection to Israel is not limited to those students attending Jewish schools. Students at non-Jewish schools also express a positive connection to Israel which appears to be directly correlated with the number of times the family has visited Israel. Many families and students reported that Israel ‘feels like home’. Visiting Israel is a crucial element to experiencing the feeling that Israel feels like home.



“  
ISRAEL IS A  
BEACH HOLIDAY  
WITH MEANING

”

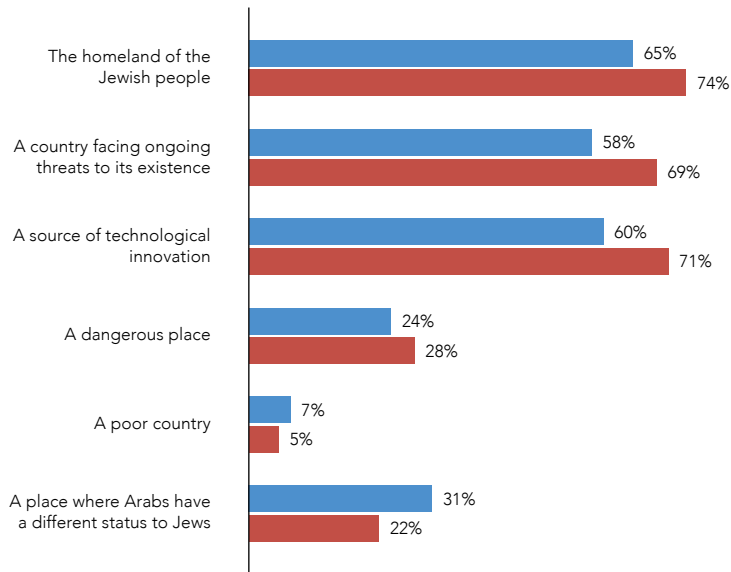
Student, Jewish school

## IMAGES OF ISRAEL

In 2016 we asked the students the extent to which they agreed with a list of 16 positive and negative statements about Israel, such as "Israel is... a spiritual centre; an intolerant society; the homeland of the Jewish people; and my home." The students' responses are consistently positive, compared to when they were surveyed two years previously in 2014.



### Students agreement that Israel is...

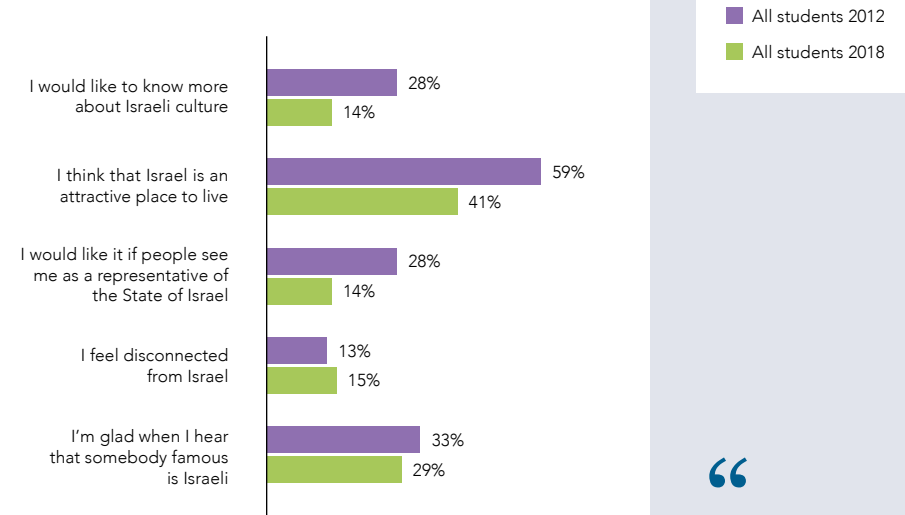


This graph provides examples of statistically significant differences between 2014 and 2016.

Students tend to see Israel in positive terms, whilst being more aware of the dangers it faces.

■ All students 2014  
■ All students 2016

## Student response to statements about Israel



We asked the students to respond to a series of statements about Israel. In general, we have a picture of stability – the differences are small from year to year. The chart above shows some of the differences over time. Whilst they are not disconnected from Israel, there has been a significant drop in the percentage of our cohort who think of Israel as a place to live.

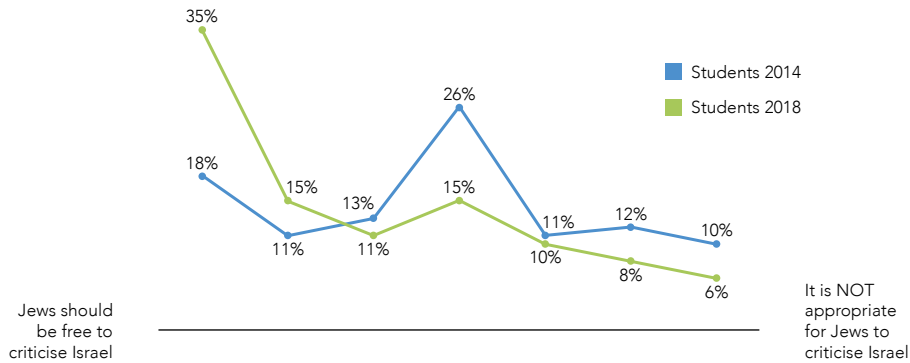
## THINKING ABOUT ISRAEL

The generally positive perception of Israel that students expressed in the surveys and interviews does not mean that they are unthinking or uncritical of the country. Just over half of respondents believe that Jews should be free to criticise Israel which is five percentage points higher than that of their parents. The following graph shows that, as the years have passed, the students have felt freer to criticise Israel. They generally show a healthy receptiveness to critical thinking, while relating positively to Israel.

“  
GIVEN A CHOICE,  
I WOULDN'T  
WANT TO LIVE  
THERE. I DO LIKE  
A CONNECTION,  
BUT I'M ALSO  
VERY HAPPY TO  
COME HOME  
”

Parent, Jewish school





## SUPPORTERS OF ISRAEL

Students' responses in 2018 to a question about how they would place themselves within the circle of supporters of Israel can be compared to previous collections of data. There is a small shift from the centre to the outsider over the seven year period. A trip to Israel with school and an increased consciousness of Israel in the media has not radically altered the students' self-perception of their support of Israel. Overall, we see a strong emotional and geographical connection to the land and people of Israel, with a critical view of the State of Israel through its politics.

Students said:  
 "I wouldn't say I'm a strong Zionist, but I love Israel."  
 "I walk off the plane [in Israel] and I am happy."  
 "It never gets boring because there's always something new that you can see. It's just... it takes my breath away."

Other comments reflect a more critical approach:  
 "I have my political disagreements with it all."  
 "I am so worried that it [Israel] is going to spin out of control."  
 "I'm not entirely happy in terms of [Israeli] government rule."

Many students are able to reflect both support and criticism in the same sentence, illustrating a complex relationship with Israel.

“  
**I FEEL LIKE  
 I REALLY  
 CONNECT...  
 IT'S A STRONG  
 CONNECTION,  
 BUT I DO HAVE  
 MY POLITICAL  
 DISAGREEMENTS  
 WITH IT ALL**  
 ”

Student, Jewish school

Not surprisingly, continued visits to Israel and intensive experiences such as the Year 9 Israel trip and Israel tour at the end of Year 11 are, for a vast majority of students, very positive experiences that leave a lasting impression on our students. We found that the more often the students visited Israel, the more engaged they were, and the more likely they were to want to spend a gap year in Israel.

A minority of students continue to have an engagement with Israel. Almost 15% of the students had returned to Israel in the eighteen months since their Year 11 Israel Tour. A minority indicated that following Israel Tour at the end of Year 11, they now plan to do a Gap Year in Israel.

Of those students at Jewish schools who did not participate in a Year 9 and post Year 11 Israel Tour, the most often cited reason was the prohibitive cost of the trip. This suggests that bursaries should continue to be made available, or fundraising initiatives should take place so that students are not restricted from attending because of financial constraints. Of those families at non-Jewish schools, the most often cited reason for not participating in a post Year 11 Israel Tour was social – friends not going.

## IN CONCLUSION

- 1) In general, our cohort's relationship to Israel has been stable over time.
- 2) Our cohort are positive about Israel without being afraid to criticise Israel.
- 3) The more visits they have made to Israel, the more engaged they are.
- 4) Participating in a Year 9 trip to Israel, does not make you less likely to go on a post Year 11 Israel Tour.

“  
**I REALISED  
 I DEFINITELY  
 WANT TO  
 GO TO ISRAEL  
 FOR MY  
 GAP YEAR**  
 ”

Student, Jewish school

“  
**I'M DOING  
 SHERUT LEUMI  
 IN AN  
 ORGANISATION  
 THAT WE  
 VISITED ON  
 TOUR**  
 ”

Student, Jewish school



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## FIND OUT MORE

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