

Zionism in Focus: Misconceptions & Messaging

November 2024

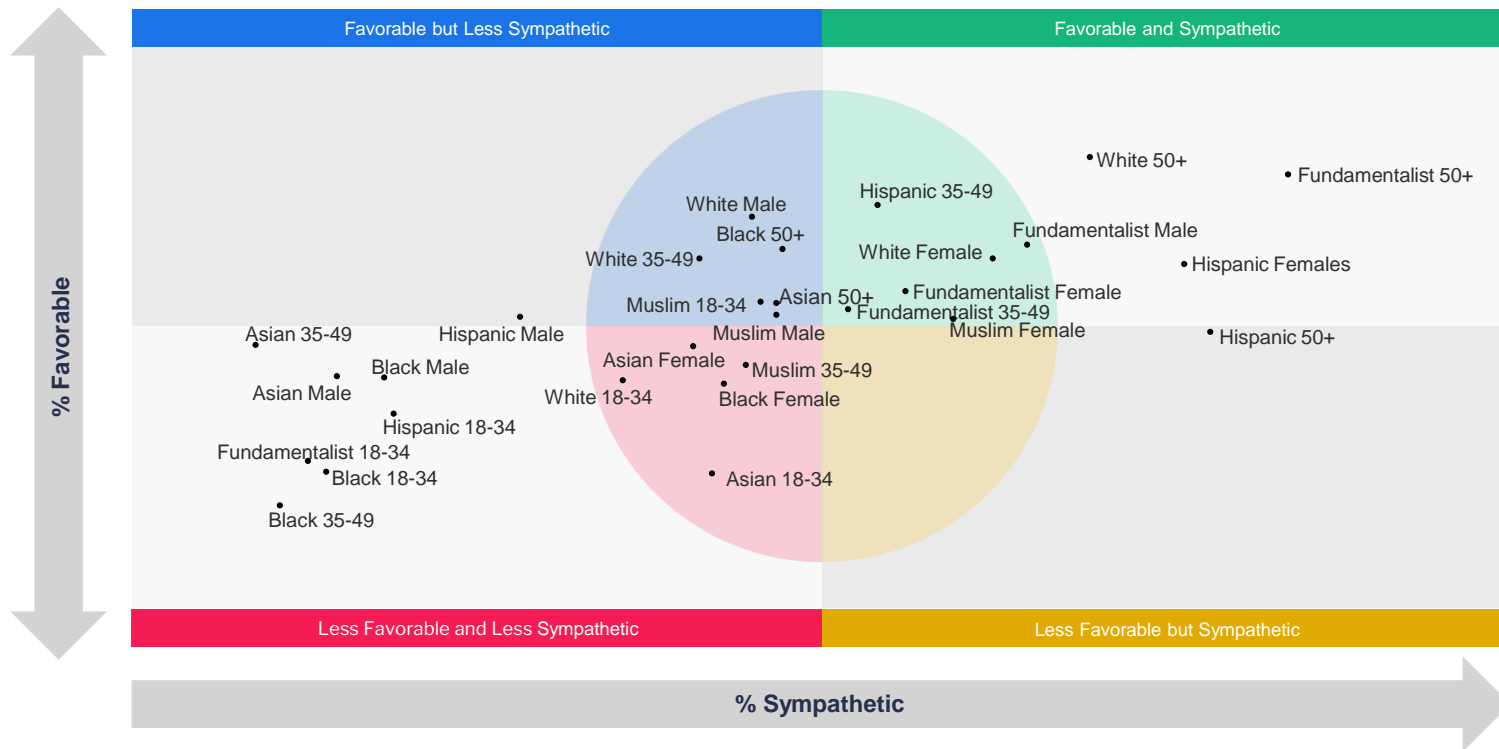
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In 2023, we examined the views and sentiments towards Jewish people among various demographic cohorts of the U.S. population.

Segments in the US: Race and Religion and Ideology by Age or Gender

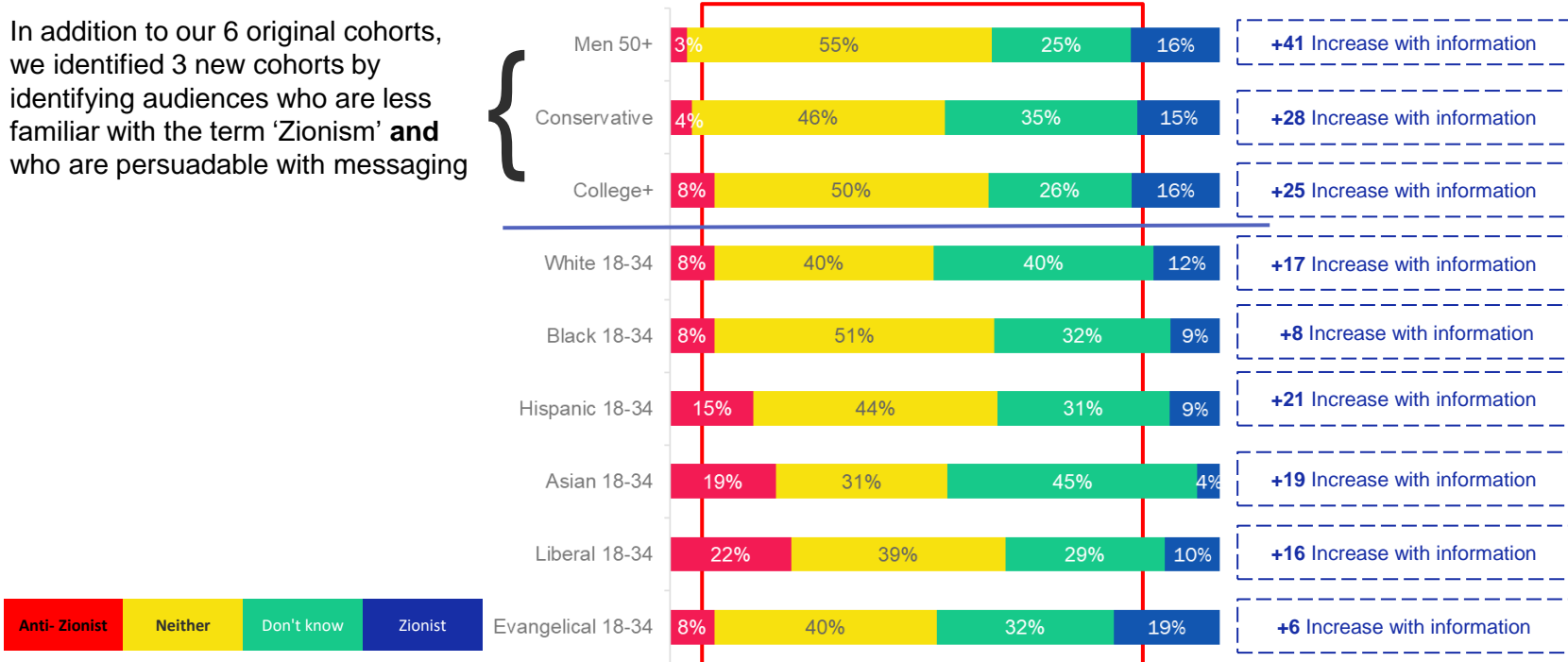
Among US Adults



Three Additional Cohorts Identified when Addressing Zionism

In addition to our 6 original cohorts, we identified 3 new cohorts by identifying audiences who are less familiar with the term 'Zionism' and who are persuadable with messaging

Unaided Zionist Identification (Aug. 2024)



Methodology

BSG conducted a **20-min online quantitative study** between **10/01/24 – 10/11/24** among N=500 adults (gen pop) and numerous oversamples (see below)

Segment	Base Size	Margin of Error
White 18-34	823	3.42%
Black 18-34	593	4.02%
Hispanic 18-34	411	4.83%
Asian 18-34	404	4.88%
Evangelical/Fundamentalist 18-34	484	4.45%
Liberal 18-34	620	3.94%
Zionism Segment	Base Size	Margin of Error
Men 50+	263	6.04%
Conservatives	1598	2.45%
College+	930	3.21%

Summary of Findings

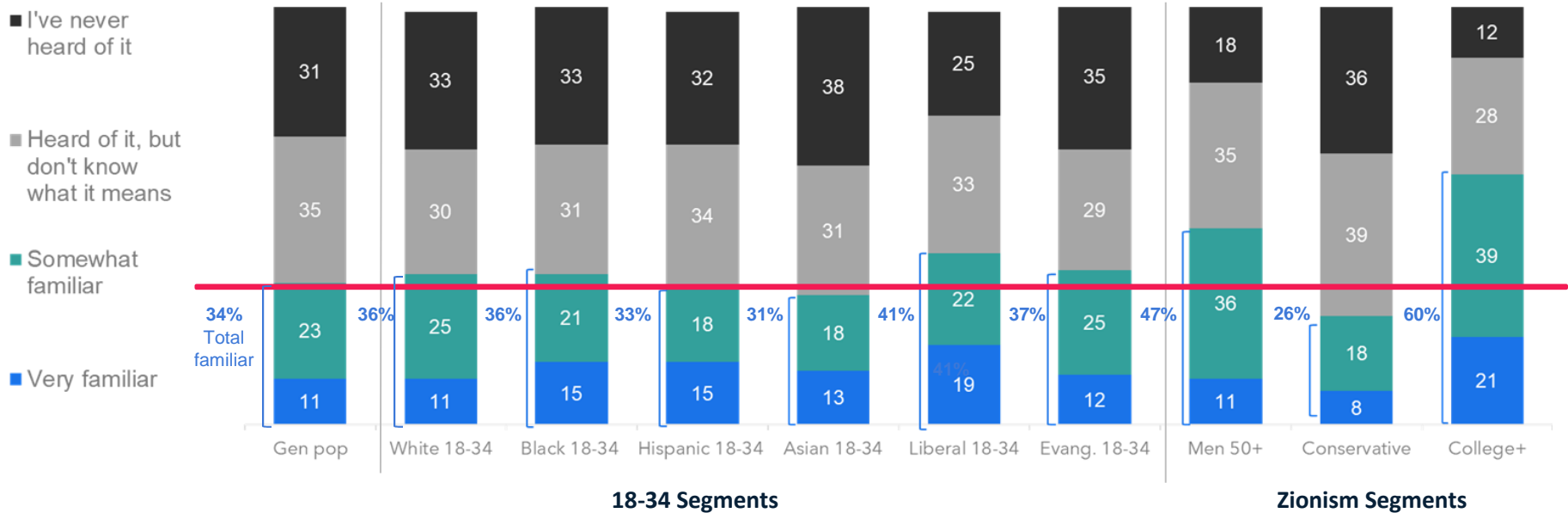
Key Findings: Zionism Messaging and Impact

- Only one-third (34%) of the general population says they are familiar with the term “Zionism”
 - Among those who claim to know what it is, we saw confusion and uncertainty
 - Just 14% could correctly define Zionism
- Providing a small amount of education on what Zionism is quadruples the number of people who identify as a Zionist (9% -> 38%)
- Messaging around Zionism was able to significantly increase favorability and support for Israel and Jewish people, and the belief that Israel should exist as the Jewish state
- The most impactful messages describe Israel as a safe haven for Jewish people and Israel shares Western democratic values
- Fewer than half of Americans (40%) are willing to report an antisemitic incident
- Most Americans don't recognize genocidal rhetoric as being problematic (e.g., 'From the River to the Sea' and 'By all means necessary')

Familiarity with Zionism & Impact of Education

Only one third of the general population is familiar with the term “Zionism”

How familiar are you with the term “Zionism”?



However, when pressed, just 14% can accurately define and explain Zionism

Only 14% have the correct definition of Zionism

“Zionism supports a Jewish state. It's a major force in Jewish history. It played a role in creating Israel.”

- Female, 27 Years Old

“Zionism is a movement advocating for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Israel addressing self-determination and safety.”

- Male, 32 Years Old

The rest admit they are unsure...

“I have heard of the term Zionism but I can't describe it. To me it is just indescribable and I feel like I'm always hearing a different version of what it is.”

- Male, 29 Years Old

“I used to know what it means but now I feel like they change the definition of it so much that now I don't really have a good understanding of what it is supposed to mean anymore.”

- Female, 27 Years Old

...and some are just completely wrong

“I believe that Zionism means hate against Jewish people because of Palestine and Israeli conflict.”

- Male, 25 Years Old

“A Zionist is someone who supports the aggressive and violent actions of Israel against Palestine.”

- Male, 33 Years Old

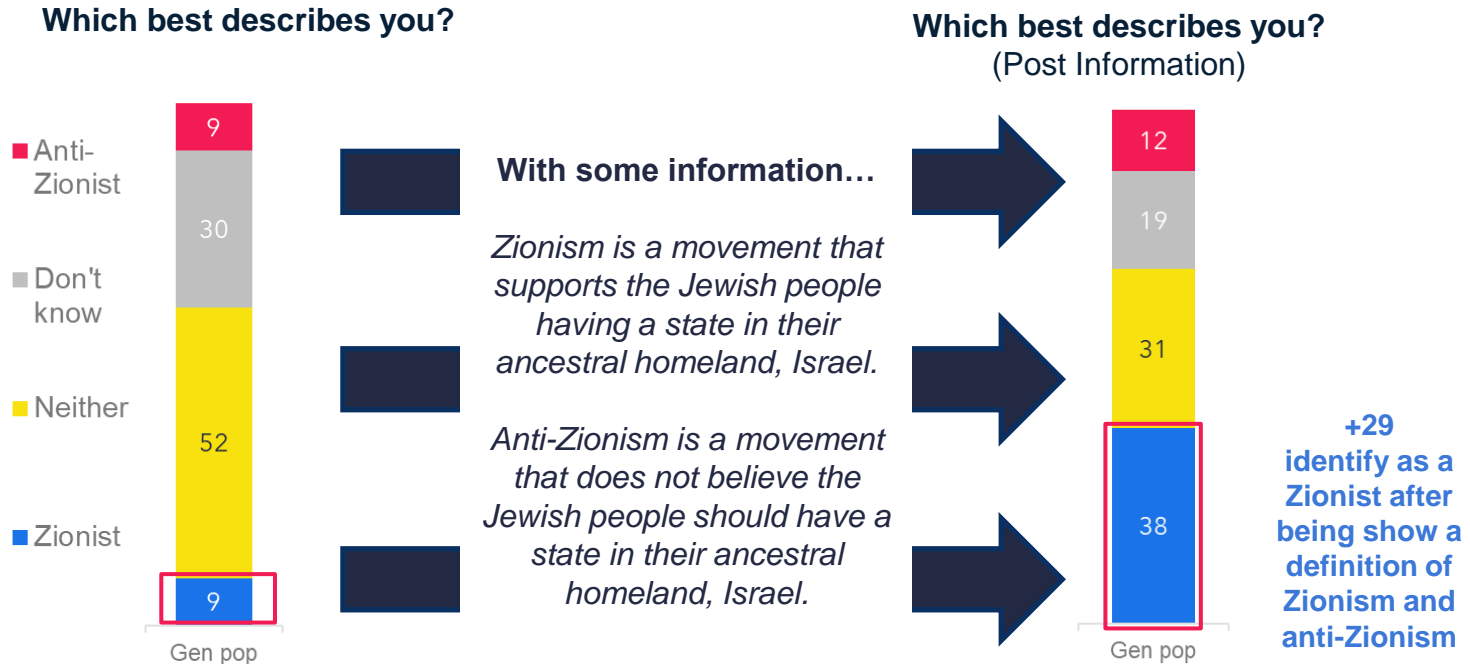
Other than older men and college graduates, our key cohorts are even less likely to know what Zionism means

How would you describe what “Zionism” is?

Among those who are familiar (open end)

	Gen Pop	White 18-34	Black 18-34	Hispanic 18-34	Asian 18-34	Liberal 18-34	Evan. 18-34	Men 50+	Conservative	College+
Unfamiliar with Zionism	66%	63%	64%	66%	69%	58%	64%	53%	75%	40%
Familiar with Zionism, but <u>incorrectly</u> define Zionism	20%	27%	29%	22%	23%	30%	27%	18%	13%	31%
Familiar with Zionism AND can <u>correctly</u> define Zionism	14%	10%	7%	12%	8%	12%	9%	29%	12%	29%

Willingness to identify as a Zionist quadruples after people are shown the definition of Zionism and anti-Zionism



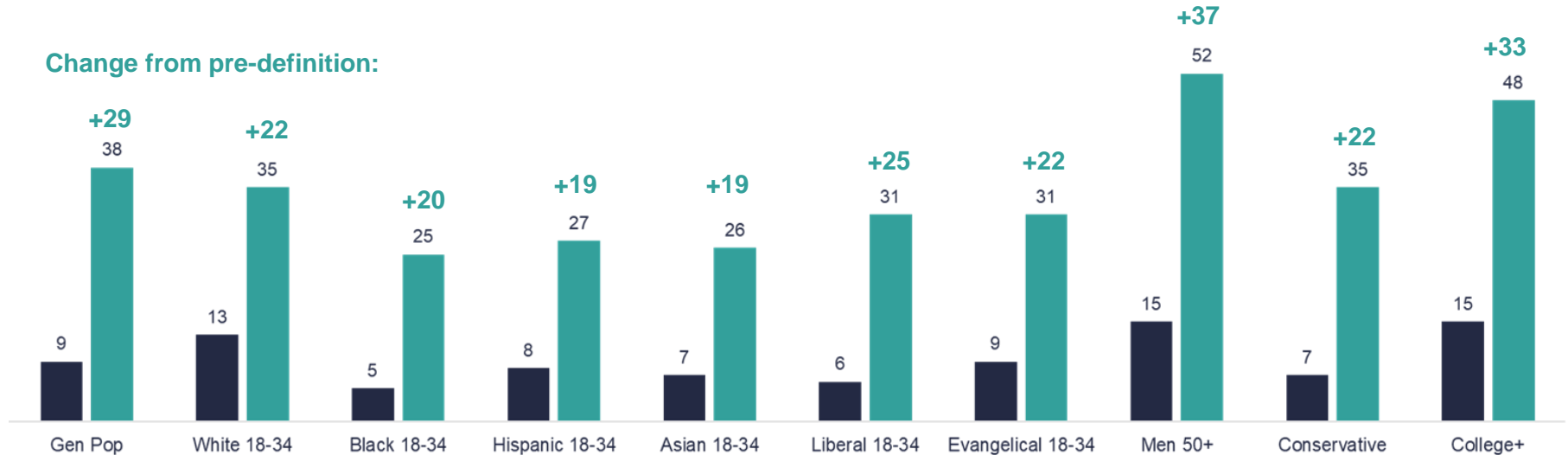
Q11. Do you identify as a Zionist or Anti-Zionist? / Q12. Sometimes with more information, people change their minds. After reading these definitions, how do you identify?

After being shown the definitions of Zionism & anti-Zionism, every cohort was more likely to identify with Zionism

Zionism Identification among key cohorts

■ Pre-Definition ■ Post-Definition

Change from pre-definition:

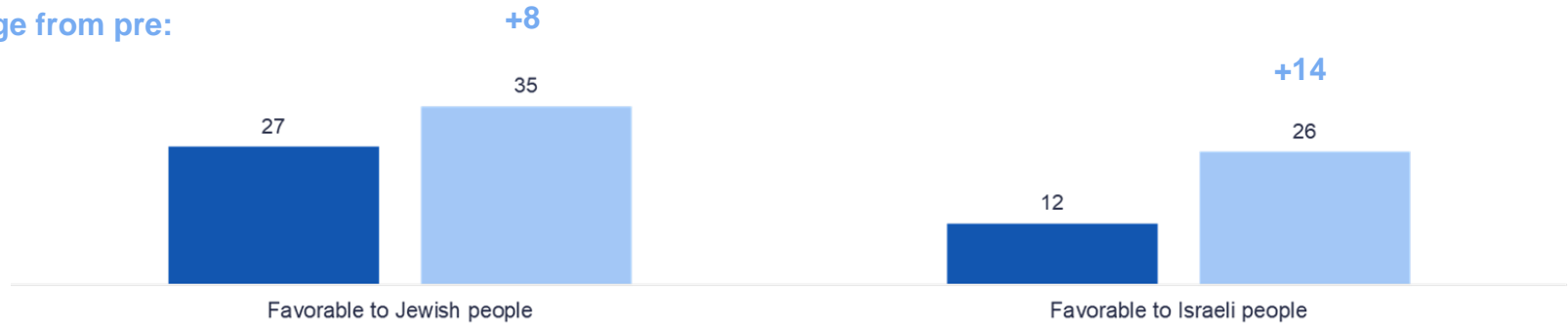


Learning about Zionism increases favorability toward Jews and Israelis

Key metrics among Gen Pop unaware of Zionism

■ Pre-Messaging ■ Post-Messaging

Change from pre:



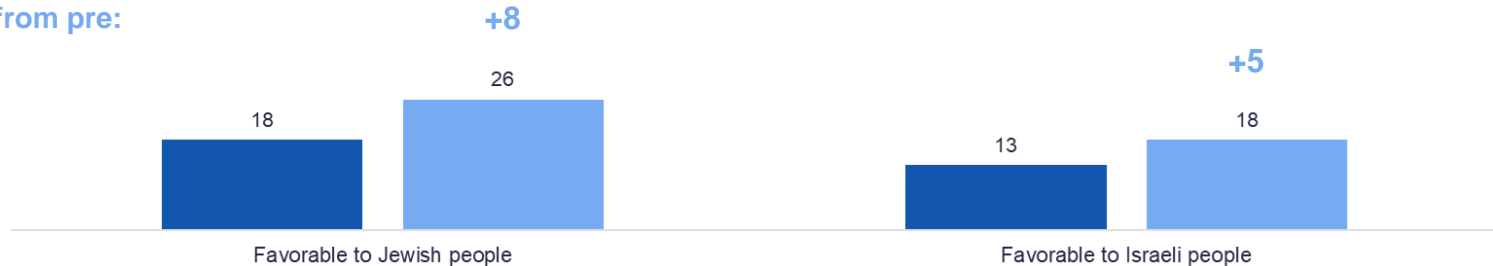
Educating 18-34-year-olds about Zionism positively impacts their attitudes toward Israel and Jews

Key metrics among 18-34-yr-olds unaware of Zionism

■ Pre-Messaging ■ Post-Messaging

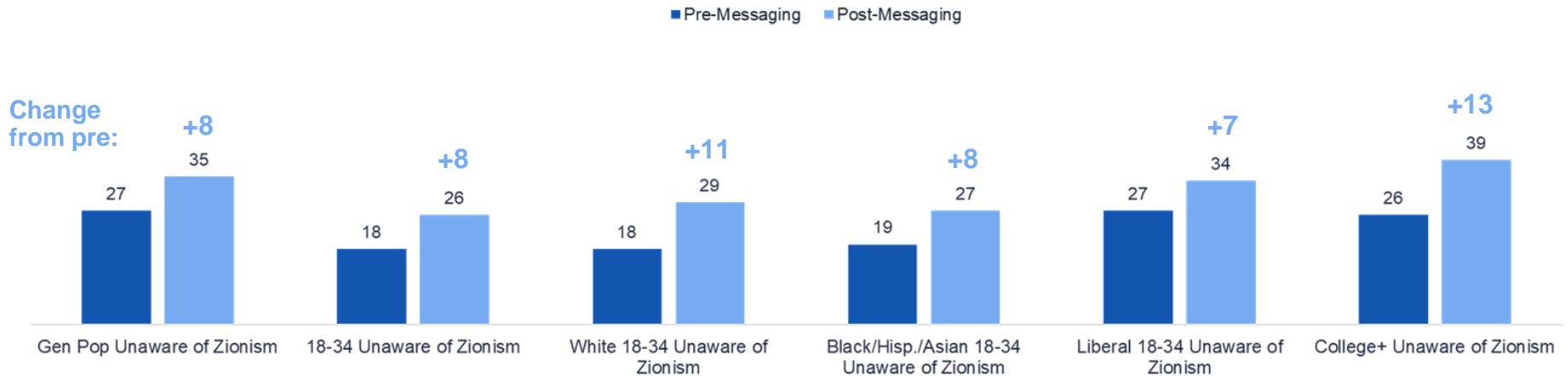
+6 change among White 18-34
year olds &
+10 change among Conservatives

Change from pre:



Educating about Zionism improves favorability toward Jews across all populations

Change in favorability toward Jewish people among those who were unaware of Zionism



Zionism Messaging

Several messages and statements were tested to identify the best ways to:

1. Define Zionism
2. Communicate reasons to support Zionism
3. Explain Israel as the Jewish State

The most impactful explanations of Zionism address the Jewish people's cultural connection, Jewish security, and religious connection

How to Define Zionism

Showing % Total compelling reason to identify as a Zionist	Gen Pop	White 18-34	Black 18-34	Hispanic 18-34	Asian 18-34	Liberal 18-34	Evang. 18-34	Men 50+	Conservative	College+
Zionism is grounded in reclaiming and protecting the Jewish people's cultural connection to the land of Israel.	69	64	63	70	48	65	72	77	64	77
Zionism advocates for the security and protection of Jewish people and their rights, especially in the face of external threats and antisemitism .	65	61	66	51	55	57	56	72	62	76
Zionism is grounded in reclaiming and protecting the Jewish people's religious connection to the land of Israel.	64	60	52	52	54	49	58	67	62	79
Zionism's core goal is to ensure that Jews worldwide have a safe haven , where they can be free from discrimination, oppression and persecution .	63	53	61	56	57	58	58	73	61	80
Zionism promotes Jewish connection by linking Jewish communities worldwide to the state of Israel.	63	64	53	53	34	60	58	67	61	70
Zionism represents the fulfillment of the Jewish aspiration for self-governance and national autonomy in their historical homeland.	62	62	65	57	44	68	61	77	59	80
Zionism began as a political movement that supports a national homeland for the Jewish people in Israel.	62	58	61	47	43	56	71	73	57	71
Zionism is grounded in reclaiming and protecting the Jewish people's historical connection to the land of Israel.	61	52	51	45	43	44	57	80	57	73
Zionism supports a democratic state in the region that reflects Jewish values and traditions.	61	55	54	48	33	53	48	73	55	75
Zionism was founded on the idea that Jews should have self-determination to establish a sovereign country in which Jews are the majority.	60	49	62	49	45	49	60	59	57	71

Q16. Next, you will be shown some statements that people have said to describe Zionism. For each, please indicate how compelling of a reason the statement is for you to identify as a Zionist.

We Tested 7 Messages to Frame Support for Zionism

Shares Democratic & Western Values	It is important for Americans to support Israel and its right to exist. Israel is a democratic country that shares many of the same values as Western nations, including freedom, democracy, and human rights. As such, supporting Israel helps to defend these values in the Middle East and beyond.
A Safe Haven for Jewish People	For centuries, Jews have been dispersed throughout the world, often facing discrimination. The establishment of Israel as a Jewish state in 1948 by the United Nations provided a safe haven for Jewish people to live freely, speak their language, and practice their religion without fear of persecution. Modern Israel serves as a symbol of hope, where Jews have self-determination, find community and belonging, and don't have to worry about antisemitism or persecution.
Central Part of Jewish Life and Culture	Jewish people have a long and complex history in the land of Israel, dating back over 3,000 years, and it has been a central part of Jewish identity and culture ever since. Today, Israel remains a vital center of Jewish life and culture, attracting Jews from around the world who seek to connect with their heritage and build a future for themselves and their families. Ignoring the history of Jewish people in Israel undermines peace efforts and contributes to the ongoing conflict in the region by fueling the belief that Jewish people have no legitimate connection to Israel which therefore has no right to exist.
Supports Stability in Region	As a vital ally of the United States and other Western countries, Israel provides strategic intelligence and military cooperation in an often-unstable region. Supporting Israel is essential for promoting peace and stability in the region. Israel has faced numerous threats to its existence, and supporting its right to exist sends a clear message to the world that aggression and violence will not be tolerated.
Can't Blame Jews for Israel's Actions	Blaming American Jews for the actions of the Israeli government or the ongoing conflict with Hamas is both unfair and harmful. Such generalizations unjustly lay the blame on an entire community for the policies and decisions of a foreign government, leading to increased hatred and discrimination toward Jews. It's essential to distinguish between individuals and the actions of a state to prevent the spread of prejudice and foster more constructive dialogue.
Silence Contributes to Antisemitism	Remaining silent to those who seek to destroy Israel or deny its legitimacy can inadvertently contribute to rising antisemitism in America, as the hostility towards Israel is sometimes also directed towards Jewish people. When Jews are blamed for the actions of Israel or called Zionist instead of 'Jewish', it can lead to discrimination against Jews more broadly. Not speaking out undermines the fight against antisemitism by blurring the line between legitimate political discourse and hate. By standing against such prejudices and supporting Israel, Americans can help combat antisemitism and reinforce a commitment to equality and justice for all.
Criticism vs Denying Right to Exist	It's completely valid to be critical of the Israeli government or to hold unfavorable views about its policies or military actions. However, it's important to draw a clear line between such criticisms and denying Israel's right to exist. The latter can easily veer into antisemitism, which is unacceptable. Healthy debate should focus on policies and actions, not questioning the legitimacy of a nation's existence.

The most impactful messages in support of Zionism address Israel's democratic values and the Jewish people's need for a safe haven from persecution.

Note: important nuances exist by cohort

Reasons to Support Zionism

<i>Showing % Total more likely to believe that Jewish people have a right to a state in their ancestral homeland, Israel</i>	Gen Pop	White 18-34	Black 18-34	Hisp. 18-34	Asian 18-34	Lib. 18-34	Evang. 18-34	Men 50+	Cons.	Coll+
Shares Democratic & Western Values	62	52	53	48	30	46	60	62	56	71
A Safe Haven for Jewish People	60	60	32	49	30	63	50	73	59	64
Central Part of Jewish Life and Culture	55	37	46	41	24	33	47	75	54	67
Supports Stability in Region	55	43	51	43	33	45	52	66	51	64
Can't Blame Jews for Israel's Actions	54	35	52	38	47	42	48	65	48	61
Silence Contributes to Antisemitism	51	57	53	37	49	48	61	54	48	74
Criticism vs Denying Right to Exist	50	48	54	46	45	43	61	62	49	56

The most impactful messages to explain why Israel should exist as a Jewish state address Israel as a component of Jewish identity & the Jewish people's historical and religious ties to the land

Rationale for Israel as the Jewish State

Showing % Total more likely to believe that Jewish people have a right to a state in their ancestral homeland, Israel	Gen Pop	White 18-34	Black 18-34	Hispanic 18-34	Asian 18-34	Liberal 18-34	Evang.	Men 50+	Conservative	College+
Israel is key to global Jewish identity , fostering connections among Jewish communities around the world	55	46	41	42	43	48	47	73	52	67
The State of Israel acts as a center for Jewish culture, religion, and heritage , preserving and promoting Jewish traditions	55	48	52	37	38	51	43	70	54	64
Israel is the ancestral homeland of Jewish people and there is significant archaeological evidence that supports this	54	48	52	46	35	44	70	63	49	64
Israel's ongoing survival and success are seen as a symbol of Jewish resilience and continuity throughout history	54	42	52	40	42	45	43	53	51	66
The establishment of Israel provided a refuge and sanctuary for Jews facing persecution and displacement worldwide after decades of oppression and the Holocaust	54	41	34	44	30	45	56	64	49	61
Israel serves as a vital ally to Western countries, sharing common values such as human rights, rule of law, free speech, and democratic governance	48	46	46	32	35	32	48	64	46	59
Israel as a Jewish state is fulfilling the historical and cultural connection that the Jewish people have to the land of Israel	47	40	39	43	36	47	35	45	46	63
As a democracy, Israel stands as an outlier in a region often marked by authoritarianism	46	36	40	36	41	34	45	65	43	58
Israel's commitment to equality and diversity, including protection for LGBTQ+, women and other minority rights, is critical in the region where other countries want to punish or remove rights from these communities	44	44	40	42	33	53	48	47	45	51

Q14IN. For each, please indicate what impact, if any, it has on your opinion that Jewish people have a right to a state in their ancestral homeland, Israel. Does each statement make you...

Messaging Recommendation

- ✓ Zionism is the belief that Jewish people have the right to a state of their own in their ancestral homeland, Israel.
- ✓ Israel is the ancestral homeland of Jewish people and there is significant archaeological evidence that supports this. Zionism is grounded in protecting the Jewish people's cultural and religious connection to the land.
- ✓ After centuries of oppression, the establishment of Israel as a Jewish state in 1948 by the United Nations provided a safe haven for Jewish people to live freely, speak their language, and practice their religion without fear of persecution.
- ✓ Today, Israel is central to global Jewish identity, fostering connections among Jewish communities around the world. It acts as a center for Jewish culture, religion, and heritage, preserving and promoting Jewish traditions
- ✓ Further, Israel provides a place where Jews find community and belonging and don't have to worry about antisemitism or persecution.
- ✓ Israel is a democratic country that shares many of our same values, including freedom, democracy, and human rights. As such, supporting Israel helps to defend these values in the Middle East and beyond.

Why it works:

→ Educates people on what Zionism means, and dispels any misperceptions

→ Connects the land of Israel to the history of Jewish people, establishes a “why” it is important for Jewish people to be in Israel, and lends international credibility

→ Makes it about today and explains the importance of Israel to today's Jewish people globally

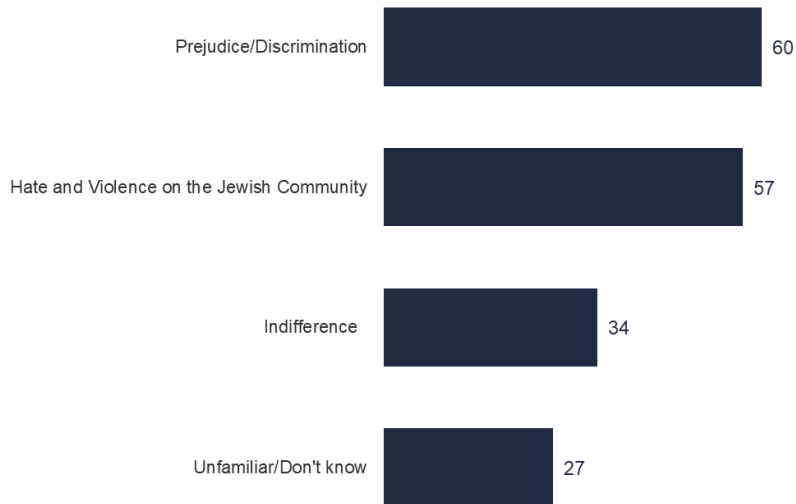
→ Make an emotional connection for our audiences

→ Call to action + a meaningful benefit for acting (protect democracy and our values in the region)

Defining & Taking Action Against Antisemitism

When asked to define one of three terms, most people understand them to mean discrimination against Jewish people. One quarter do not know what “antisemitism” means

How would you describe what [hate against Jewish people / antisemitism / Jew hatred] is or means? Who does it impact and how? (open end)



	Antisemitism	Hate against Jewish people	Jew hatred
Prejudice/Discrimination	47	59	57
Hate and Violence on the Jewish Community	55	49	60
Indifference	30	48	31
Unfamiliar/Don't know	34	22	26

Only 2 out of 5 Americans say they are willing to report an antisemitic incident

Willingness to Take Action Against Antisemitism



76% of the general population say they are willing to take at least one action

52% are willing to do so on social media

The groups who say they are most willing to act against antisemitism are liberal, older, college educated Americans

	Gen Pop	White 18-34	Black 18-34	Hispanic 18-34	Asian 18-34	Liberal 18-34	Evangelical 18-34	Men 50+	Conservative	College+
NET Take Any Action	76	74	84	79	64	83	82	77	70	86
Report an antisemitic act	40	32	34	29	21	43	36	47	38	45
Challenge or point out to a friend or family when they make an antisemitic statement	40	37	41	40	24	48	39	51	37	52
Like or respond positively to someone else's post pushing back against antisemitism	36	34	36	34	31	40	28	37	30	45
Do research to learn more about what antisemitism is	33	34	33	25	30	36	34	29	29	43
Call a member of Congress or other elected official and urge them to stand up to antisemitism	23	15	16	13	11	15	22	33	17	31
Attend a protest, rally, or march against antisemitism	20	21	23	22	14	30	26	29	13	29
Contribute financially to an organization that stands up to antisemitism	17	15	12	13	15	15	17	15	14	27

Political Protest vs. Genocidal Rhetoric & Antisemitism

Most people said it's inappropriate to protest Israel through violence, vandalism, and harassment of Jews, but speech is seen as legitimate

When expressing feelings toward Israel and its government, do you feel it is...?

<i>Showing % Inappropriate</i>	Gen Pop	White 18-34	Black 18-34	Hispanic 18-34	Asian 18-34	Liberal 18-34	Evang. 18-34	Men 50+	Cons.	Coll+
Protesting against Israel's military actions in Lebanon	31	24	23	22	20	21	23	36	36	34
Chanting or posting on social media 'End the Occupation'	31	27	34	29	20	35	25	50	31	38
Protesting / attending a rally in front of a U.S. Government office	32	40	15	18	29	20	12	37	32	28
Protesting against Israel's military actions in Gaza	33	30	14	21	21	23	28	40	38	36
Chanting 'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free'	34	24	23	25	24	27	26	46	38	41
Vandalizing Jewish-owned businesses	65	45	51	51	78	54	63	72	64	66
Vandalizing a synagogue or Jewish school	66	48	54	64	57	73	55	81	62	74
Shouting slurs or verbally harassing a Jewish person	68	56	63	50	64	64	51	57	69	76
Burning the American flag	71	54	57	74	60	58	66	85	80	86
Committing physical violence against a Jewish person	72	63	40	41	62	55	52	84	75	77

Most Acceptable



Least Acceptable

Q27. For each of the following actions, please indicate if you feel it is appropriate or inappropriate for someone to do, when it comes to expressing their feelings toward Israel and its government.

Most Americans don't recognize genocidal rhetoric

Do you agree or disagree with each statement?

Showing % Agree		Gen Pop	White 18-34	Black 18-34	Hispanic 18-34	Asian 18-34	Liberal 18-34	Evang. 18-34	Men 50+	Conservative	College+
Slogans like “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” or “By All Means Necessary” can be considered...	...Supportive of the destruction of the State of Israel and calling for the genocide of Jewish people in Israel	43	37	50	39	42	41	44	30	41	56
	... Antisemitic and lead to violence against American Jews	48	38	39	47	21	38	48	61	45	56

It is imperative to use different messaging for different audiences when explaining why genocidal rhetoric is unacceptable

Message Testing to Explain Why Genocidal Rhetoric is Inappropriate

<i>Showing Total compelling</i>	Gen Pop	White 18-34	Black 18-34	Hispanic 18-34	Asian 18-34	Liberal 18-34	Evang. 18-34	Men 50+	Conservative	College+
Phrases such as 'From the river to the sea' or 'By All Means Necessary' can contribute to an atmosphere of hostility toward Jewish people and unfairly lay the blame on American Jews for a conflict in the Middle East	62	52	54	65	44	65	49	66	59	69
While posting or sharing pro-Palestinian slogans and chants is a valid form of opposing war or expressing solidarity with Palestinian people, it's crucial to be mindful of the line between criticizing Israeli government policies and singling out American Jews and blaming them for events on the other side of the world.	61	54	60	49	47	50	66	67	61	73
Using the same language that terror leaders in Hamas and Hezbollah use legitimizes extremist views, fostering an environment where harassment and violence against American Jews becomes more acceptable	59	57	57	42	45	56	61	68	56	68
Sharing pro-Palestinian slogans on social media, even if intended to show support of Palestinian rights, can unintentionally amplify messages that perpetuate harmful Jewish stereotypes and contribute to antisemitism. It's important to be mindful of the language used to avoid furthering hate or marginalization	59	54	58	51	47	63	54	57	58	64
Using slogans that call for the destruction of Israel may contribute to an atmosphere of hostility towards American Jews by denying their religious freedom and endangering their safety because of their connection to Israel	58	50	58	55	58	53	70	69	57	67
Using such language to vocalize support for Palestinians might legitimize extremist views , fostering an environment where harassment and violence against American Jews becomes more acceptable	57	51	65	51	56	54	60	59	56	62
Chanting 'From the river to the sea' or 'By All Means Necessary' is antisemitic because it calls for the elimination of Israel and endorses violence against Israelis and Jewish people	53	43	47	42	60	45	43	57	52	64

Q30. The following are some reasons people have given for why it should not be OK to say or post on social media slogans like "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" or "By All Means Necessary". For each, please indicate how compelling of a reason is it to speak out against people saying or posting on social media slogans like this.

