

# Connecting to the Jewish People through Singing

*Survey of HaZamir: The  
International Jewish Teen Choir,  
Alumni and Current Singers*



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Research Success  
Technologies

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# Outcomes

## **The teen singers are imbued with:**

- A strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people and connection to Israel
- Motivation to pursue Jewish singing and their personal Jewish growth.
- Confidence in their ability to work with peers and lead a group
- A pluralistic worldview in which the teens views Jews who are different from themselves as sharing in and communicating a common Jewish heritage.

# At HaZamir, I experience...

Answer = “agree” or “strongly agree”

Near-universal (>87%)

Culture of musical excellence

Jewish pluralism

Integrates my Jewish life with my musical life

(Israeli respondents) Connects me to American Jews

Large majority (74-84%)

Safe social environment

Connects me to to Judaism, Jewish tradition, the Jewish people

Boosted my self-confidence

Majority (62-68%)

Connects me to Israel

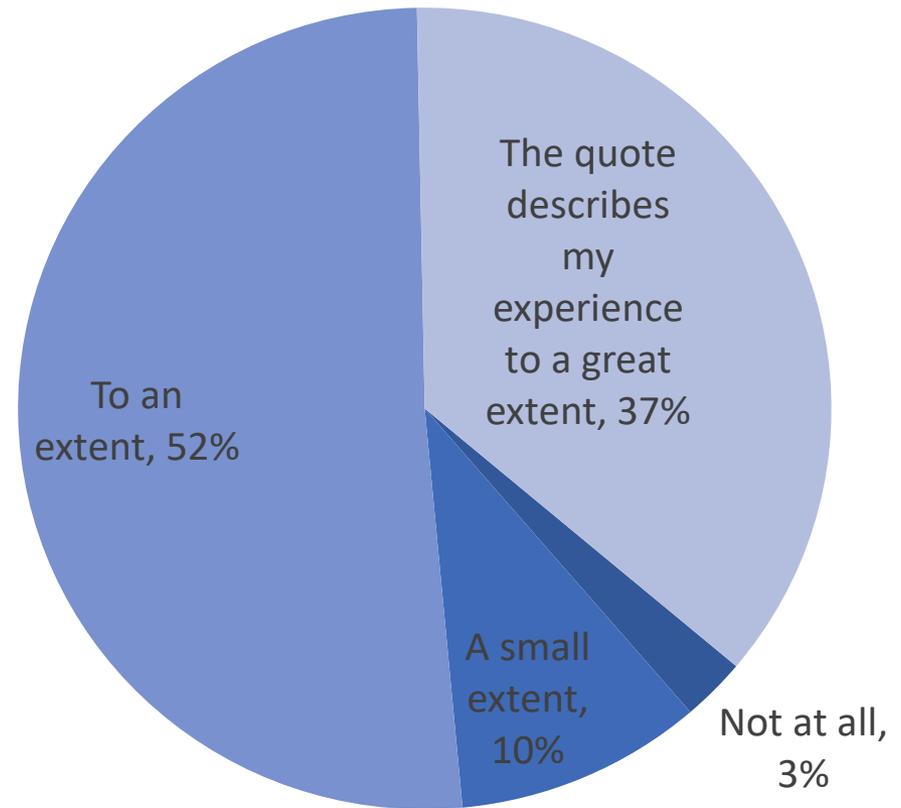
Spiritual expression

Comfortable with Jewish identity

Increases my Jewish knowledge

Respondents were asked if they agree with a quote that describes singing in a choir as an experience of “*flow, a state of complete absorption in an activity.*” 89% of alumni and current participants agree that the statement describes their experience singing in a choir to “an extent” or “to a great extent”.

## Singing in a Choir Provides an Experience of “Flow”



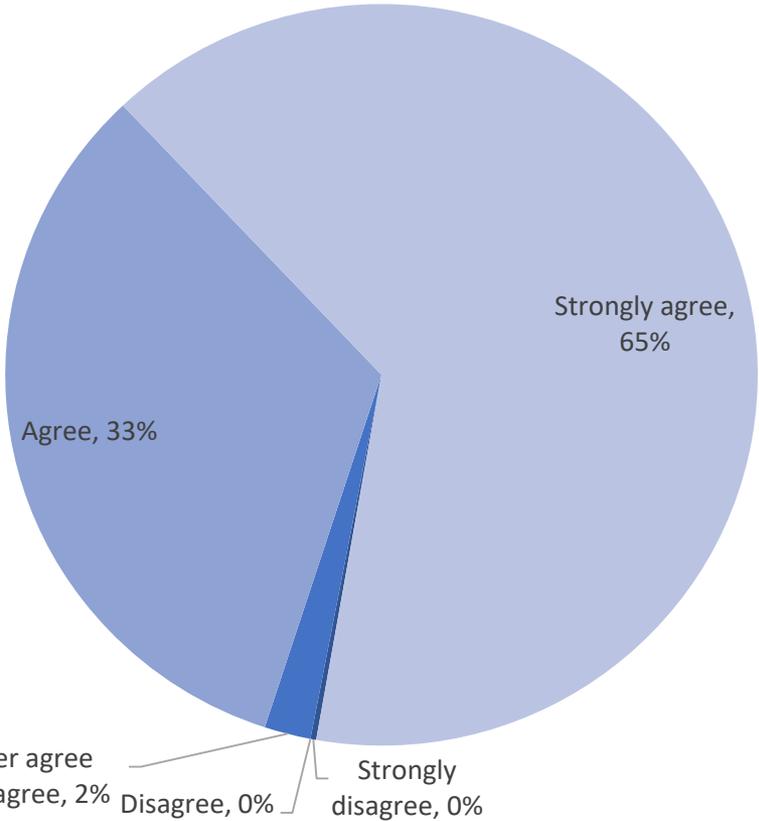
# Core Experience of Jewish Singing

The core experience of Jewish singing, as shown in the previous slide, is both musical and social, occurring as a result of singing with others in an organized group. In so doing, the singers report that they integrate music into their Jewish lives.

*"When you are singing something that was written hundreds of years ago, and you are sitting amongst 400 peers from across the country, and you are singing in a way that evokes certain undeniable emotions, and doing it all at the same time. I think that is the recipe for what makes this connection happen. I feel very strongly that I feel very connected to the other people that I've sung with. ... And also, definitely to the words that I'm singing and the meaning of the words that I'm saying."*

The experience of musical excellence is common to almost all the current participants and alumni, with 98% agreeing. Of those, 65% strongly agree.

At HaZamir, I experience a culture of musical excellence



Core HaZamir  
Experience:  
**Musical  
Excellence**

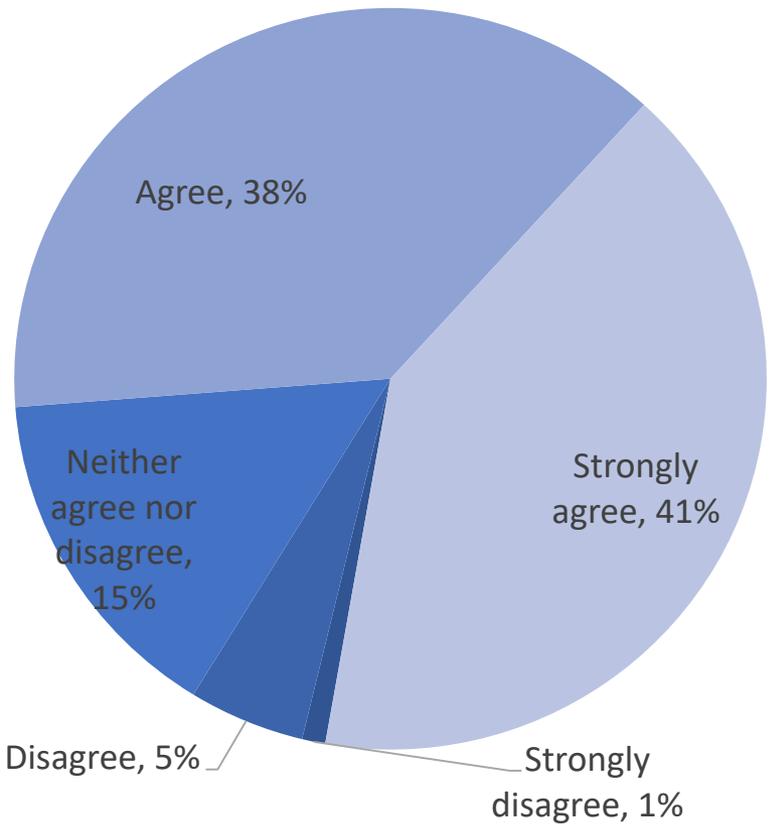
**Question: What does a “culture of musical excellence” mean to you, and how did the HaZamir directors inspire the participants in the choir to meet that standard?**

*"I would say from Day 1 we were told that this is like a professional choir. We were told from Day 1 that we have to sit up, backs straight, pay attention to the conductor, hold up our binders when we sing. There is a standard of excellence from the minute you walk in. It's fun, it's there to be fun, but when rehearsal starts, we get serious. We are on time. We are professional. We are good, and we are going to hold you to this high standard because that's what this is. And that translates throughout all of HaZamir."*



A derivative of the experience of musical excellence is the role such an experience plays in developing a sense of self-confidence for the singer. 79% agree that their HaZamir experience boosted their sense of self-confidence, with 41% strongly agreeing.

My experience in HaZamir gave me a greater sense of confidence



Core HaZamir Experience:  
Self-Confidence

# Self- Confidence



*"HaZamir really helped me form not just who I am Jewishly and who I am musically, but also just a very sound emotional self, and believing that I was capable of doing a lot. Part of what I learned from HaZamir is that there are songs that you feel like you will never be able to sing, and there are notes you feel like you will never be able to hit, or you will never be able to hold long enough, and if you try hard enough and you work hard enough, and if you ask for the right help, then you can do it. That message stuck with me in a multitude of ways and not just in [terms of] music, but in other facets of my life, and has led to a certain self-confidence in believing that I'm capable, that I don't know if I would've gotten anywhere else. And I feel tremendously grateful to have received that and to have really grown up in such a loving, warm, and giving and understanding and meaningful context. I'm very lucky."*

HaZamir recruits participants from across the Jewish religious spectrum, and they remain a diverse group into adulthood.

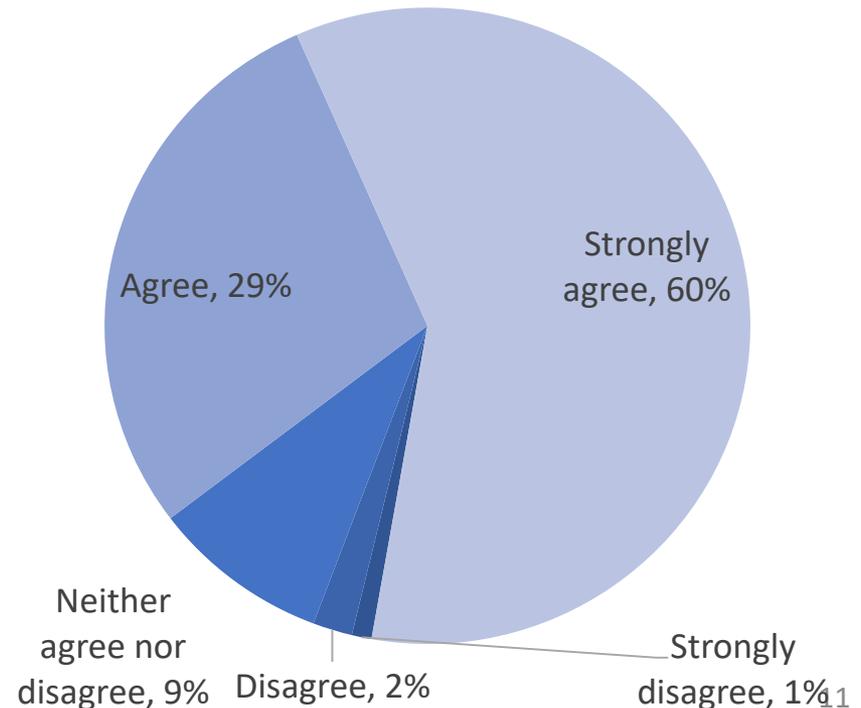
*Referring to Jewish religious denominations, in which of the following were you raised, and which, if any, do you consider yourself now?*

	Raised	Now
<b>Orthodox</b>	15%	17%
<b>Traditional</b>	9%	7%
<b>Conservative</b>	48%	33%
<b>Reform</b>	13%	14%
<b>Reconstructionist + Renewal + Secular + Post-denominational + Just Jewish + Other Jewish</b>	15%	29%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Core HaZamir  
Experience:  
Jewish  
Pluralism

89% of the respondents agree that interacting with Jews from different Jewish backgrounds was an important part of their HaZamir experience, with 60% strongly agreeing.

A significant part of the HaZamir experience includes interacting with Jews who were different from me in terms of their Jewish background

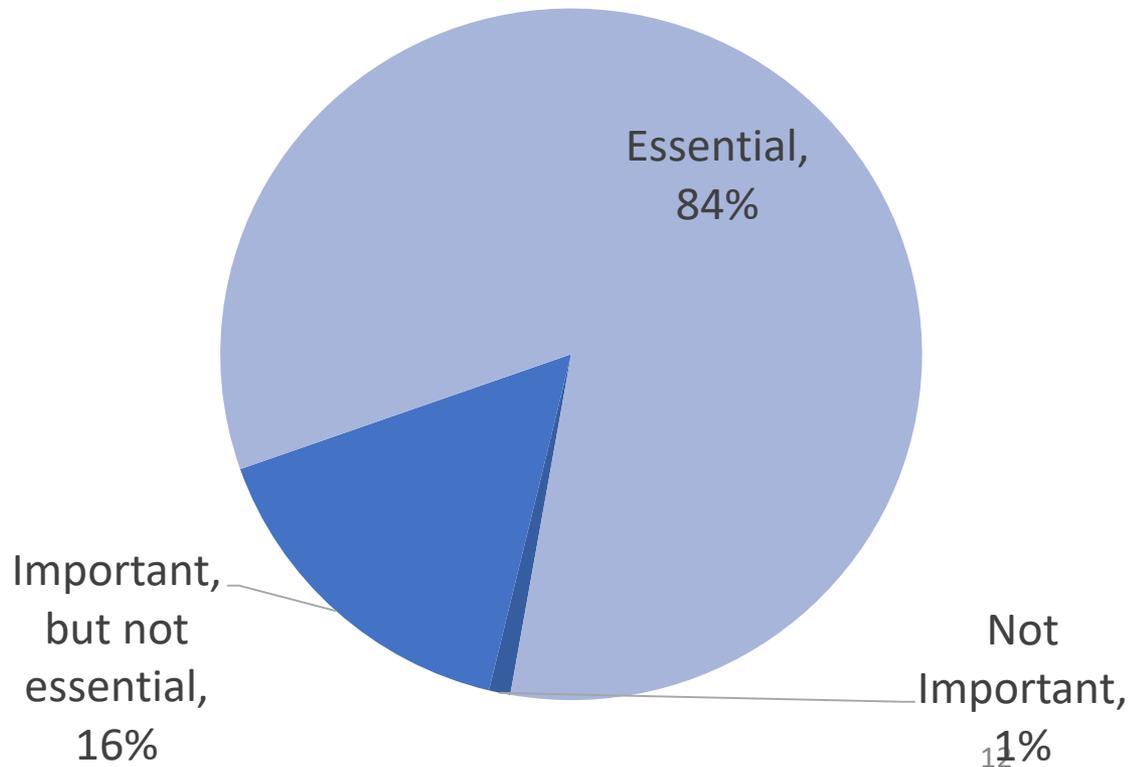


Core HaZamir  
Experience:  
Jewish  
Pluralism

84% regard the value of respecting diversity and pluralism in the Jewish world as essential. Just 1% of the respondents regarded Jewish pluralism as an unimportant value. The value of Jewish pluralism also outranked all other Jewish values in terms of the importance attributed by the respondents.

*How important is respecting diversity and pluralism in the Jewish world to you?*

Core HaZamir  
Experience:  
Jewish  
Pluralism



# Jewish Pluralism

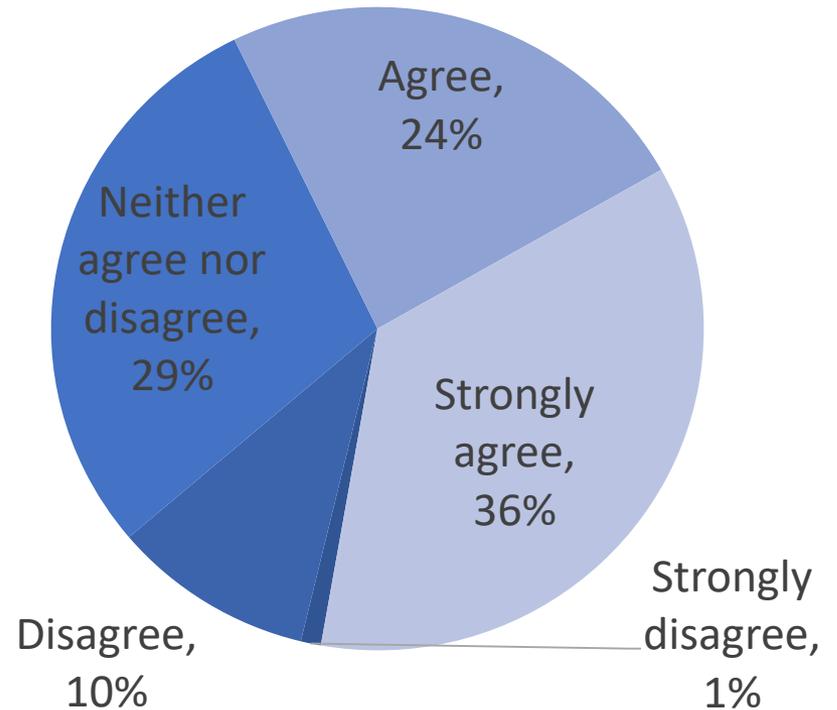


*"I was involved in Hebrew School, I didn't drop out after my Bar Mitzvah because I enjoyed going. My family went to services together every single week for five straight years leading up to my Bar Mitzvah, and even after. In HaZamir, everything changed. Not only being exposed to other sects of Judaism so directly, but being exposed to other sects of Judaism who were as clueless about me as I was about them, in the beginning, was what started to open my eyes to what is really going on in the Jewish world. The pluralistic community that HaZamir forms, didn't happen by accident. Mati [Lazar] knew that we needed to bridge the gaps. While we celebrate Shabbat in separate services, we all have opportunities to share with one another what our beliefs are, and why we practice Judaism the way we do."*

# Leadership

Sixty percent of the respondents agree that HaZamir helped them to develop as a leader, with 36% strongly agreeing.

My experience in HaZamir helped me to develop as a leader



# Leadership



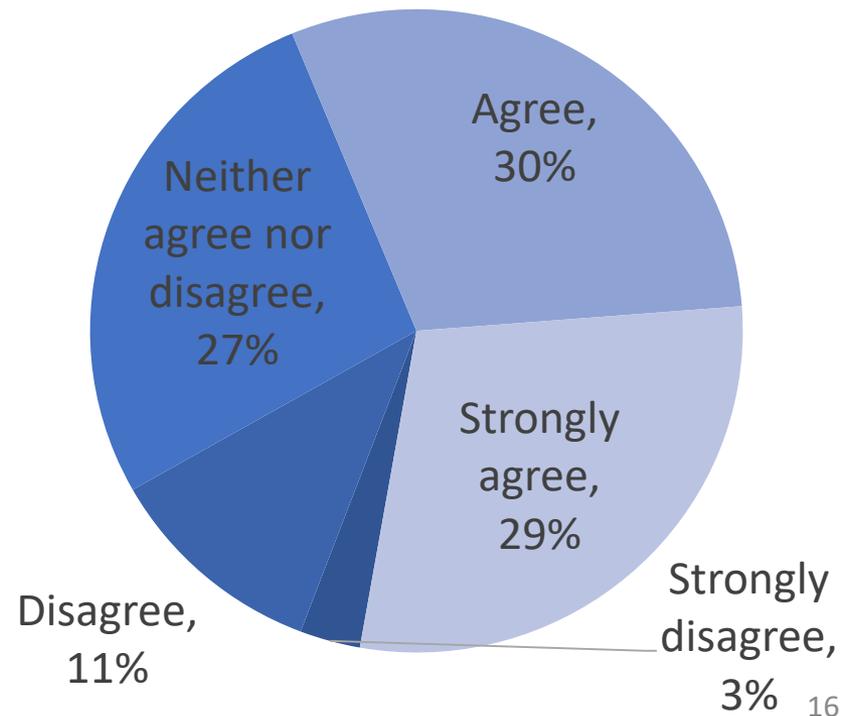
*"HaZamir helped me grow as a leader because I felt a responsibility to help others learn music and perform their best. I always wanted my chapter to be upstanding and wanted everyone to get the most out of their experience in HaZamir, so I took it upon myself in my last few years to become a section leader and group role model. This taught me a lot about leadership and devotion to what I am passionate about."*

*"As a teenager, HaZamir helped me come out of my shell and express myself freely - this started through music, but led to a freedom of expression in other areas. In doing so, I felt an ability to corral others in my group to work together as a team of singers."*

# Connection to Israel

- 59% agree that their HaZamir experience has deepened their sense of connection to Israel.
- Between 59% and 67% agree that interaction with the Israelis has raised their motivation to speak out on behalf of Israel and Israelis, increased their desire for a meaningful connection to Israelis, and increased a positive sense of attachment to Israel.

My experience in HaZamir deepened my sense of connection to Israel



## Impact from Interacting with Israelis

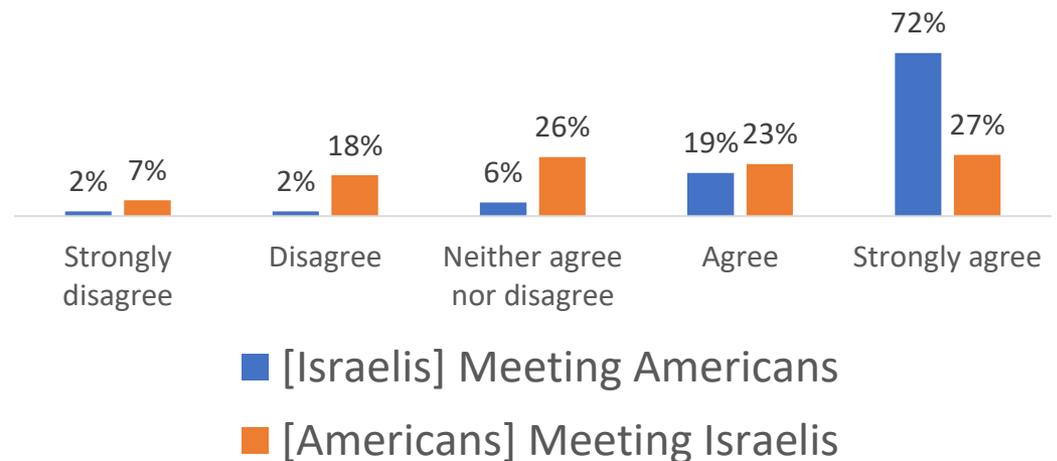
HaZamir places a strong emphasis on developing a strong positive connection to Israel and Israelis. All the interviewees (who are also all Americans) reported strong positive impact from exposure to Israel and Israelis at HaZamir. For example:

*"Really, a big thing with HaZamir is honoring Israel and honoring the soldiers, so one of our songs that we sing is a Prayer for Peace in Israel. It was always a huge deal and a huge part of HaZamir because we always had Israelis in our choir. We grew to know and love these people, and every year, the seniors, we knew that they were going to go off into the army, and everybody would get very emotional that part of our HaZamir family has to go into the army and we just want them to be safe and we send our love to them. So that's such an emotional song every year that all the seniors just get hysterical because our heart is with these people that we know so personally."*

# Extent of Interaction with the Israelis Matters

- There are fewer Israeli HaZamir chapters, many of which are new. The result is that the Israeli participants have a more intensive social experience interacting with Americans than is the case for the average American participant interacting with the Israelis.
- Almost all of the Israelis agree that a significant part of the HaZamir experience is meeting Americans (91%) and that they made meaningful friendships (89%); as opposed to 50% (meeting Israelis) and 47% (meaningful) of the Americans.
- For those Americans that do have personal contact with the Israelis and participate in the organized dialogue, the impact is high.

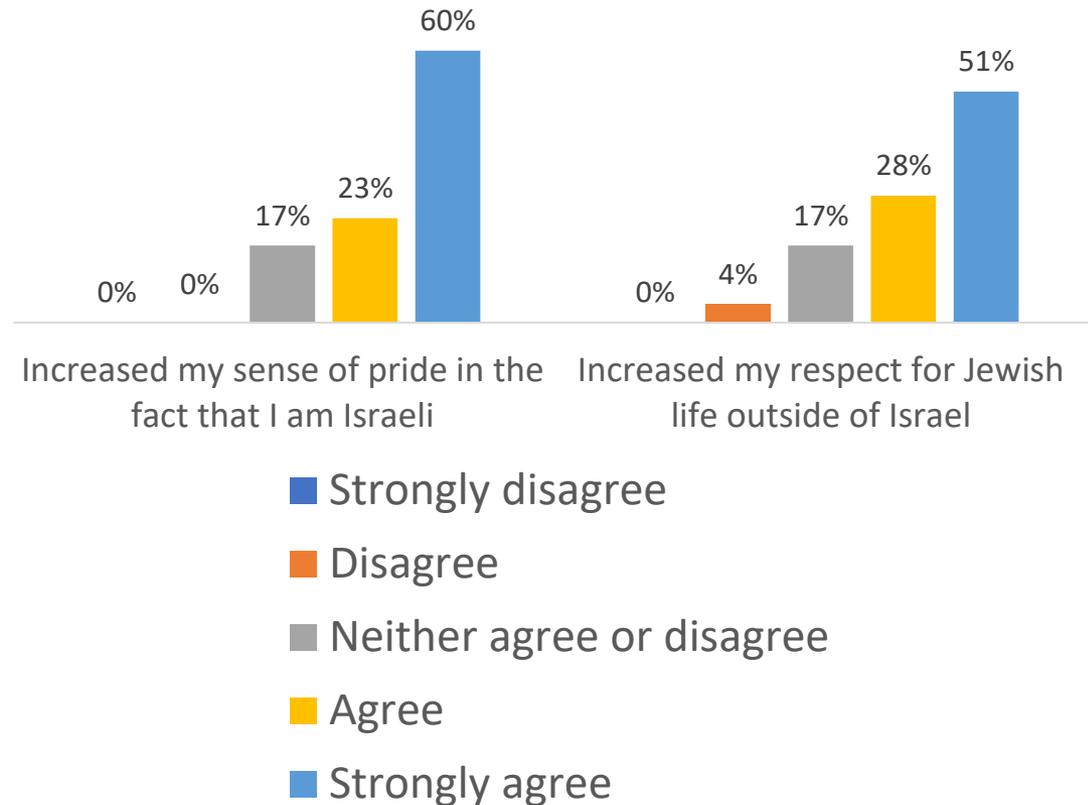
A significant part of the HaZamir experience for me is meeting Americans / meeting Israelis



# Impact on Israeli Participants

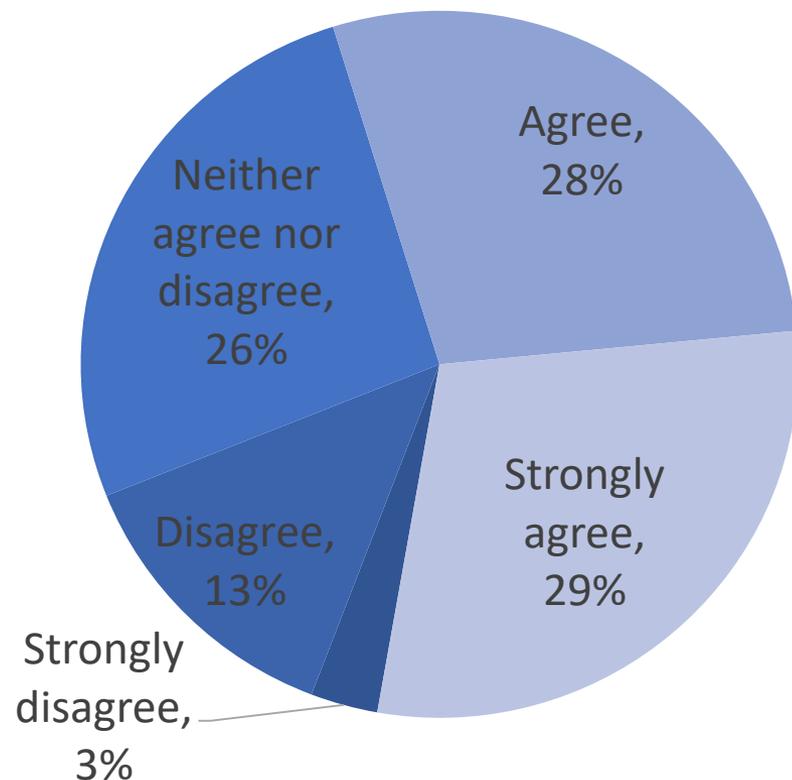
The Israeli participants and alumni report high impact on their Jewish identity. 83% agree that participation in HaZamir increased their sense of pride in being Israeli; and 79% agree that participation in HaZamir increased their respect for Jewish life outside of Israel.

Impact of HaZamir Participation on Israeli Jewish Identity



57% agree that "the Jewish life I live today is strongly impacted by my participation in HaZamir," of whom 29% "strongly agree". In the coming pages, we will explore the nature of that impact and also gain an understanding of the differences between those whose Jewishness is more and less impacted by their participation in HaZamir.

The Jewish life I live today is strongly impacted by my participation in HaZamir



Participants'  
Attribution of:  
Jewish  
Impact

## A Unique Educational Approach

- HaZamir provides a highly sophisticated experiential educational environment.
- The singers report a high level educational experience involving the interaction of social enjoyment and the acquisition of Jewish and musical skills and knowledge.
- The education is experiential. The teens are pulled into an intensive experience of Jewish socialization and knowledge acquisition without the resistance they are likely to feel in school based settings.
- A common love of singing, not Jewish education, is at center; the result is an intensive and impactful Jewish education.

## Recommendations

- **Longer involvement** leads to greater impact. HaZamir should continue to grow HaZaPrep, to create a longer engagement pathway beginning in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.
- **Interaction with Israelis** increases impact. Provide the American HaZamir participants more opportunities to interact with Israelis.
- **Leadership opportunities** increase impact. Provide leadership training and formal leadership responsibilities to more participants, including those who have stronger Jewish background.
- Musical repertoire is a gateway to **Jewish learning**. Continue to refine education curriculum and resources.