



**Institute For Liberty and Responsibility**  
**Reichman University**

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**Israeli Public Opinion on Operating  
Transportation on Shabbat**

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**Report**

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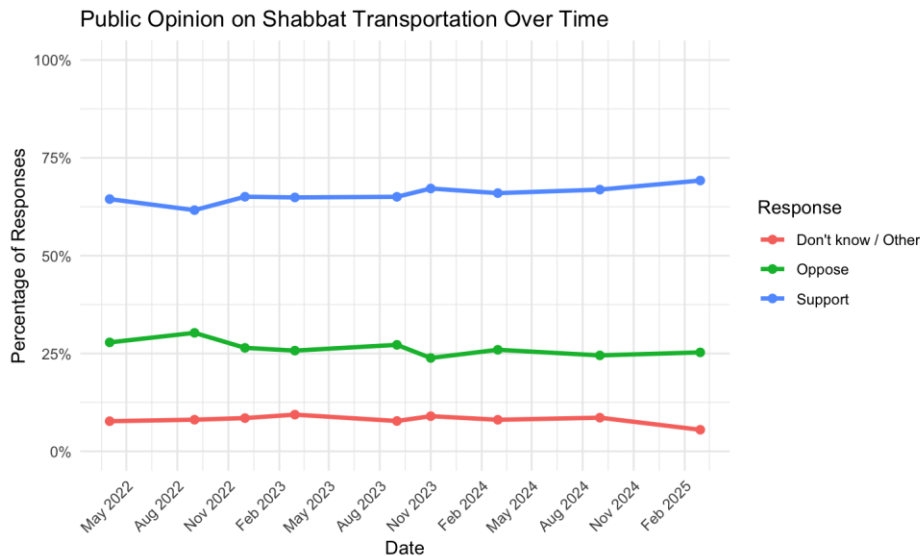
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## Israeli Public Opinion on Operating Transportation on Shabbat

Israel's identity as a Jewish and democratic state has made it challenging to establish the right balance between religion and state. One of the issues at stake is how the public sphere should look like during the Shabbat. Since Israel's founding in 1948, public transportation has been restricted on Shabbat, except in areas like Haifa which have a more mixed Jewish-Arab population as well as in predominantly Arab communities.<sup>1</sup> Lately though, Israelis have been pushing to change the current "status quo" regarding the ban on transportation on Shabbat. This report aims to analyze Israel public opinion regarding whether public transportation should operate on Shabbat. The data used are drawn from surveys conducted by the Institute for Liberty and Responsibility at Reichman University between April of 2022 and March of 2025. Focusing only on Jewish respondents, the report reveals that support for operating transportation on Shabbat is high and increasing, yet demonstrates important variation along religiosity, ideology, and age.<sup>2</sup>

### Overall Trends

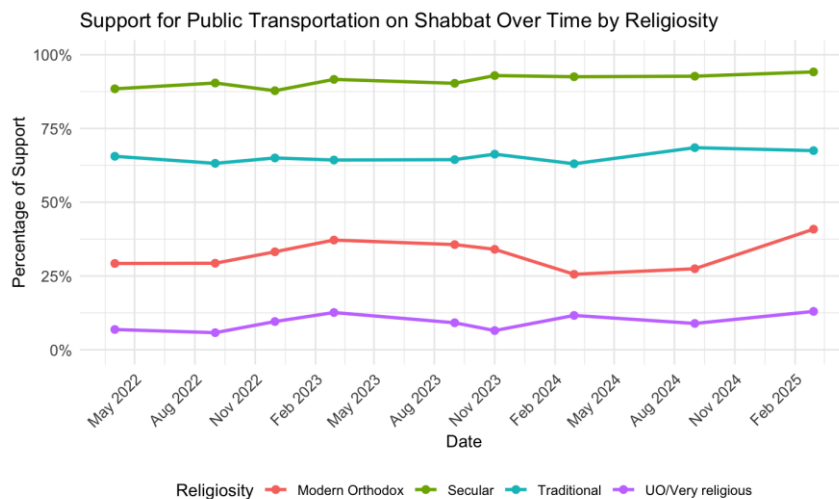


Looking at the overall trends shows that support is consistently high, fluctuating between 67.1% and 73.8%. Additionally, support has gradually increased since 2022. Opposition remains somewhat low, fluctuating between 26.2% and 32.9%, and has been trending downward since 2022. While there have been some fluctuations, specifically in 2022, they are relatively minor and do not alter the overall upward trend. This reveals that over the past four years, Jewish Israelis have become slightly more supportive of offering public transportation on Shabbat.

<sup>1</sup> Golan-Nadir, Niva, and Tom Christensen. "Collective Action and Co-production of Public Services as Alternative Politics: The Case of Public Transportation in Israel." *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 82, no. 1 (February 22, 2023): 96–115. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8500.12578>.

<sup>2</sup> The report focuses on the following survey question: "Do you support or oppose operating public transportation on Saturdays (Shabbat) throughout the country, except in areas with major ultra-orthodox or religious populations?" Respondents were then given five answer choices to select from: "strongly support", "support", "oppose", "strongly oppose", and "don't know". However, in the analysis the "don't know" responses were filtered out.

## Level of Support by Religiosity



Looking at the level of support by religiosity group (Ultra-Orthodox (Haredim), religious, traditionalist, and secular), reveals that secular and traditional Jews are the most supportive of offering transportation on Shabbat while Ultra-Orthodox and religious Jews show the most opposition. Since the first survey (April of 2022), secular Jews have remained fairly constant in their level of support, ranging between 87.6% and 92.5%. Traditional Jews have increased their support slightly. In April of 2022, 65.3% supported and by March of 2025 68.4% supported. Religious Jews have experienced the most fluctuation in their support compared to the other three groups. In April of 2022, 35.5% supported and that number increased to 42.0% by March of 2023. Support then remained constant until dropping to 35.0% in March of 2024 and remained at that level until it jumped back up to 45.0% in March of 2025. Ultra-Orthodox Jew have fluctuated in their support but not as drastically as Religious Jews. In April of 2022, 11.2% of religious Jews supported but that number only rose slightly to 16.2% in March of 2025.

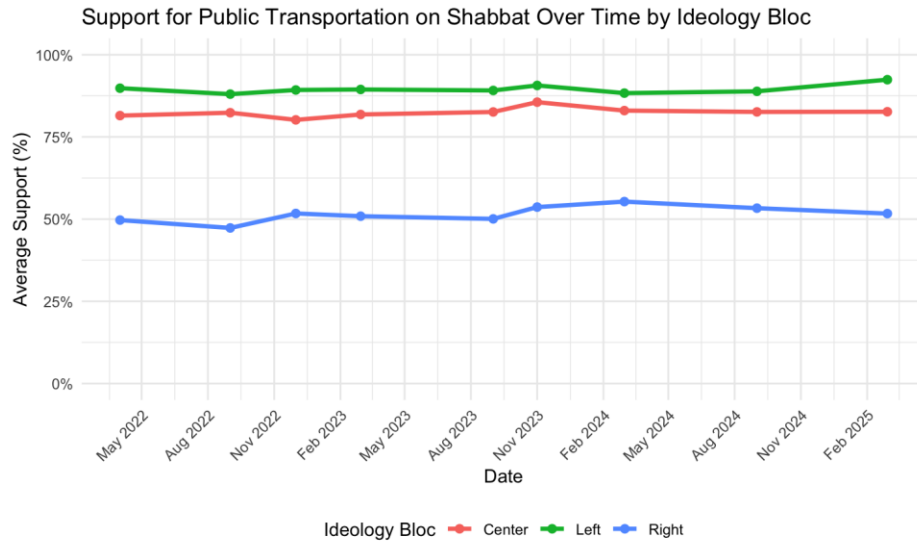
These trends reveal that religion is an important indicator of support for public transportation. Not surprisingly, less religious Jews (secular and traditional) are likely to show the highest support while more religious Jews show much less support. Although the ultra-Orthodox and religious Jews show significantly less support, their level of support has risen slightly since 2025 perhaps indicating an overall shift among the entire Jewish Israeli population towards a more secular stance on offering public transportation on Shabbat.

## Level of Support by Ideology

When looking at the level of support by ideology, Leftist and Centrist show significantly higher support than those on the Right.<sup>3</sup> Leftists show the highest level of support among the three groups. In April of 2022, Leftist showed 89.9% support and that level remained stable, rising slightly to 92.4% in March of 2025. Centrist offers slightly less support than Leftist but still features consistently strong support. Support peaks at 85.6% in November of 2023, then dips back to 83.0% in March of 2024 but then remains stable through March of 2025. The Right Bloc offers significantly less support compared to the Left and Center.

<sup>3</sup> When responding to each survey, respondents were asked to rank their political ideology on a scale from 1-7 with 1-3 indicating a more right-leaning view, 4 indicating a centrist view, and 5-7 indicating a more left-leaning view.

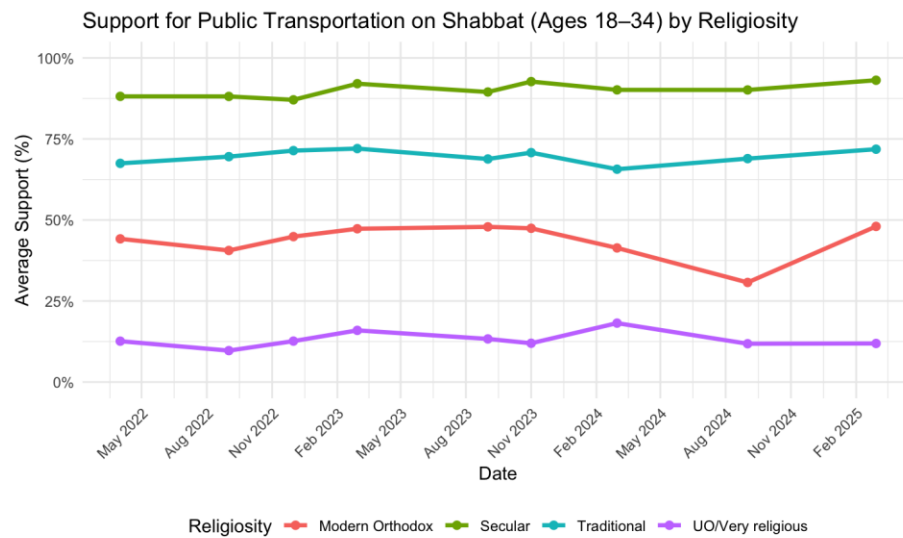
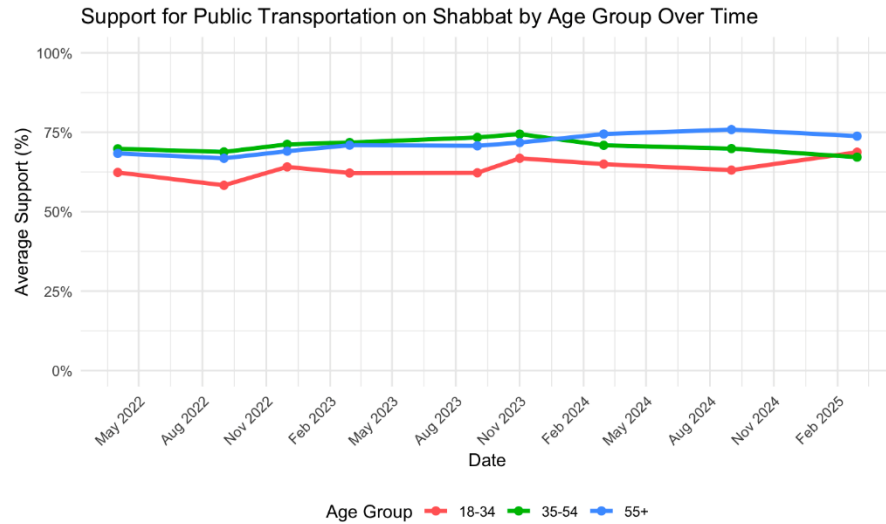
Support dips to its lowest point in September of 2022, 47.3%, and peaks in March of 2024 at 55.3% but then drops slightly to 51.7% in March of 2025. Despite offering the lowest support, the Right Bloc still exhibits an upward trend in support over the past four years. This suggests that some members of the Right Bloc might be more open to changing the “status quo” around offering transportation on Shabbat.



Overall, all three blocs show either consistent support or slightly increasing support. However, the persistence of an ideological gap still occurs with the Left and Center Bloc offering about 40 percentage points more support than the Right Bloc. This shows that ideology is also an important predictor of support.

### Level of Support by Age

Looking at the level of support by age group reveals that those between the youngest age group consistently show the lowest level of support for transportation on Shabbat. Among the three groups, those ages 35-54 experienced the most fluctuation in their support. From April of 2022 until it peaked at 74.4% in November of 2023 those 35-54 provided the highest level of support. Shortly after peaking in November of 2023, support entered a downward trend that persisted through March of 2025 with levels dropping below those 55 and older. Individuals 55 and older have experienced a consistently upwards trend in support between April 2022 and March of 2025.



The persistent and increasing support among this group could be influenced by the introduction and continued existence of civic initiatives to offer public transportation during Shabbat. Since 2015, *Shabus* in Jerusalem and *Noa Tanoa* in Tel Aviv are two public initiatives that have implemented services in “more than 15 cities across Israel” (Golan-Nadir, 2023). In 2019, transport coverage expanded even further due to the implementation of Na’im Busofash, which is a municipal-funded bus system offering free transportation in the Gush Dan area and beyond. These initiatives targeted “young people, senior citizens, tourists, and people with physical disabilities” (Golan-Nadir, 2023). These initiatives aimed at helping senior citizens and people with physical disabilities most likely would help those who are 55 and older which explains their increasing support. This trend likely signals that reliance on civic transport initiatives likely enhances support for offering transportation on Shabbat, especially among demographics who benefit the most. A closer look at Israelis aged 18-34 reveals, as expected, secular 18–24-year-olds demonstrate the highest support, followed by traditional Jews. Among religious respondents ages 18-34 support fluctuates more noticeably; Support peaks in March of 2023, then decreases until September of 2024 but then increases drastically March of 2025. The rapid increase in support among this group could indicate a rising number of younger religious Israelis. Ultra-Orthodox 18–24-year-olds offer the least

amount of support. Although their support remains the lowest of the three groups, it still trends upwards between April of 2022 and March of 2025. The low support among young people, those 18-34, likely reflects their greater physical mobility and limited reliance on public transport. However, the increase in support among 18–34-year-olds could be attributed to a growing religious group among younger generations as well as increasing demand by young people for affordable transportation services on the weekends.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, much of the Jewish Israeli population is supportive of providing public transportation on Shabbat and over the past four years, support has steadily increased. Secular and traditional Jews offer the highest levels of support with religious and Ultra-Orthodox Jews offering considerably less support. Despite their lower levels of support, the past 4 years have seen an increase in support among religious Jews suggesting a more tolerant outlook towards offering transportation on Shabbat. With respect to ideology, those on the Left and at the Center are most supportive while those on the Right show less support but do not outright oppose. Older citizens, especially those ages 55 and older, tend to show the highest level of support. Altogether, the trends presented in the data illustrate a general shift among Israeli Jews towards acceptance of public transportation on Shabbat.

## Bibliography

Golan-Nadir, Niva, and Tom Christensen. "Collective Action and Co-production of Public Services as Alternative Politics: The Case of Public Transportation in Israel." *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 82, no. 1 (February 22, 2023): 96–115. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8500.12578>.

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