

# **A YEAR OF CAMPUS CONFLICT AND GROWTH:**

**An Over-Time Study of the Impact of the  
Israel-Hamas War on U.S. College Students**

Report to the Jim Joseph Foundation

SEPTEMBER 2024

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## Research Team

This research was funded by the **Jim Joseph Foundation** (lead: Stacie Cherner). The Jim Joseph Foundation was established in 2006 to support Jewish education in the United States. See [jimjosephfoundation.org](http://jimjosephfoundation.org) for more information.

The survey was implemented by **College Pulse**, a survey research and analytics company dedicated to understanding the attitudes, preferences, and behaviors of today's college students. See [collegepulse.com](http://collegepulse.com) for more information.

College Pulse worked with **Debra Mashek, PhD**, to conduct focus groups. Visit [debmashek.com](http://debmashek.com) for more information. Dr. Mashek designed the focus group script and led the focus group sessions in consultation with College Pulse and Dr. Eitan Hersh.

The overall study and reports are products of **Hersh Research, LLC**, an entity through which Dr. Eitan Hersh engages in research consulting services on U.S. elections, civic engagement, and on topics of interest to the Jewish community. Hersh is a professor of political science at Tufts University, where he teaches courses on American politics and conducts scholarly research on elections, civic engagement, and other topics.

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We thank Yonatan Brafman, Douglas Friedman, Gabby Hyman, Laura Royden, Brian Schaffner, and Eliyahu Stern for their helpful comments.

This report does not necessarily reflect the views of the Jim Joseph Foundation.

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# Introduction

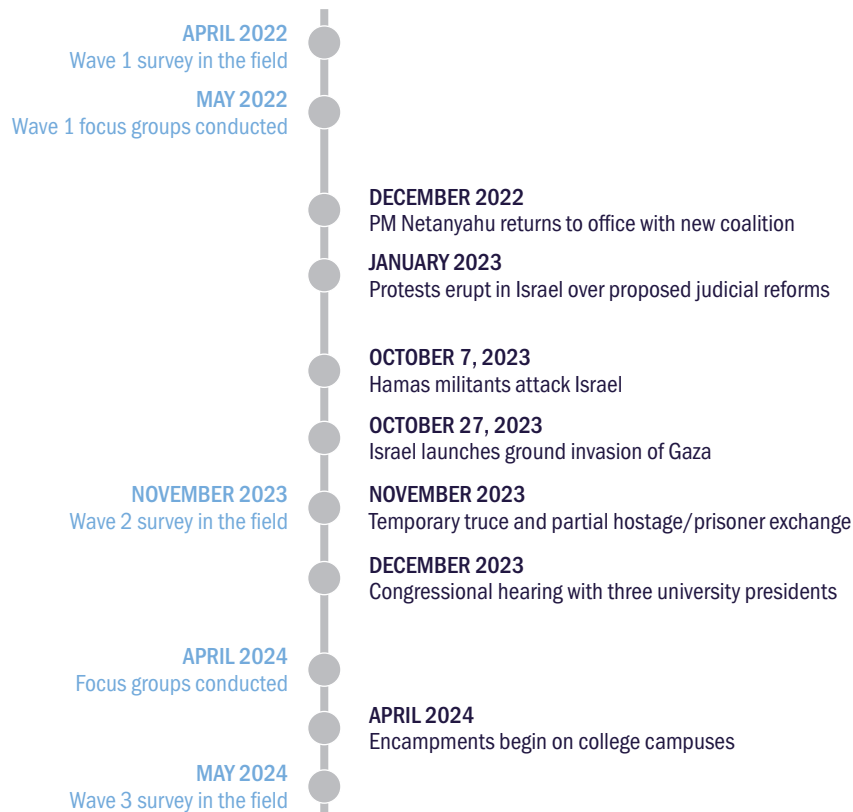
The October 7, 2023 attack on Israel set off a devastating war in Gaza between Israel and Hamas. The attack also set into motion a turbulent year in American higher education. As Jewish Americans began learning of the brutality of Hamas's strike, they simultaneously learned that activists on college campuses were blaming Israel for Hamas's rampage.<sup>1</sup> Some activists went so far as to praise Hamas's tactics.<sup>2</sup> Israel's subsequent ground invasion in Gaza galvanized pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel protesters on campuses across the United States. According to our data, by the end of the school year, about 1 in 5 college students participated in a pro-Palestinian protest or event.

Depending on their campus, students navigated demonstrations, arrests, and media presence throughout the school year. Jewish students confronted chants calling for intifada, signs alleging that Zionism is evil, hostility in classrooms and social settings, and protests targeting Jewish organizations on campus. Many Jewish students processed these events while also trying to develop their own thoughts on what Israel means to them and what to make of the politics of the Middle East.

The activism on campuses led to major turmoil in university communities, as students, faculty, administrators, and boards of directors disagreed about the nature of antisemitism, the limits of free speech, and whether universities had created toxic activist cultures inhospitable to those holding minority viewpoints, including many Jews.

These disputes garnered significant press coverage, particularly as political leaders entered the fray. In a high-profile hearing in Congress, a U.S. Representative asked university presidents of Harvard, MIT, and the University of Pennsylvania whether "calling for the genocide of Jews" was allowed under the codes of conduct of their universities.<sup>3</sup> Two of the three presidents subsequently resigned from their offices after the fallout from their qualified responses.

The tensions on campus persisted through the end of the school year. In April, pro-Palestinian activists set up around-the-clock encampments in central locations on many campuses. As commencement ceremonies approached, university leadership used various tactics, including mass arrests, to remove the encampments, which generated a new round of controversy.



Eighteen months before any of these events transpired, the Jim Joseph Foundation commissioned a study of college students using surveys and focus groups. That study, published in 2022, came on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic and examined the preferences, attitudes, and behaviors of Jewish American college students.<sup>4</sup> The study was not particularly focused on attitudes about Israel, antisemitism, or campus social tensions, though it asked several questions on these topics. Rather, the study aimed to understand who Jewish students are, what motivates them, and the degree to which they engage in Jewish activities on campus.

After October 7, 2023, the Jim Joseph Foundation re-engaged this work. Many of the students we had surveyed in the spring of 2022 were still in college in the 2023-2024 school year. The 2022 survey provided an opportunity to learn how attitudes and behaviors changed over time in reaction to events in the world and on campus.

We decided to embark on an ambitious effort during the 2023-2024 school year to assess attitudes about Israel, antisemitism, and campus unrest. We surveyed Jewish and non-Jewish students in November and December of 2023, soon after the start of the war. Then, in April of 2024, we conducted a dozen focus groups with Jewish and non-Jewish students to dig deeper into their perceptions and experiences. Finally, we conducted a third survey from late April through June of 2024. The surveys included panel designs that enabled us to measure the change in attitudes of students who were surveyed multiple times across years.

The study provides among the most detailed and comprehensive accounts to date of what happened on campuses during this school year from the perspective of students. We hope that the report will be helpful in the short-term by offering guidance to universities, organizations, parents, and governments that are tasked with addressing challenges that surfaced on campuses nationwide. We also hope the report will serve as part of the historical record of this defining moment for both the American Jewish community and higher education in the United States.

## Executive Summary

The report below begins with a detailed summary of our focus groups that we conducted in April 2024. We start with a review of the focus groups to emphasize that behind the summary statistics from thousands of survey participants are real young adults with complex personalities and developing ideas. We strongly encourage readers to read the students' own words from these focus groups. Following the focus group summary, we describe the survey methodology and then present the survey results.

Here, we offer eighteen highlights from the analysis.

1. We measure significant changes in attitudes through the 2022-2024 surveys. The percentage of Jewish students who said their Jewish identity is very important to them increased significantly from 2022 to 2023 to 2024. About half of Jewish students feel their identity is very important. The percentage of students who said they feared antisemitism also increased between 2022 and the 2023-2024 school year. We measure a significant increase in students reporting they had been directly exposed to antisemitic slurs in classrooms as well.
2. We find a persistent, elevated rate at which Jewish students say that they hide their Jewish identity to fit in on campus, that people judge them negatively for participating in Jewish activities, and that Jewish students broadly pay a social cost for supporting the existence of Israel as a Jewish state. Agreement with these statements was 50-100% higher in 2023 than 2022, with no evidence of decline by the end of the 2023-2024 school year.
3. Between 2022 and 2023, we find elevated rates of Jewish students saying they need to hide some of their opinions to fit in at Jewish activities on campus. Although this trend was true for Jewish students regardless of their Jewish backgrounds, students with less robust Jewish backgrounds were most likely to feel they needed to hide their opinions in Jewish spaces.
4. Jewish organizational programs focused on the Israel-Hamas War were not especially popular draws for students. Most Jewish students, even those from robust Jewish backgrounds, did not attend any programs

directly related to the Israel-Hamas war during the 2023-2024 school year. Jewish students who attend Jewish programming on campus primarily participated in Shabbat/holiday or social events.

5. For several survey items, we measure a temporary spike in attitudes or behaviors in the immediate aftermath of the Israel-Hamas War, but then a reversion back to pre-October 7 levels by the end of the year. The percentage of students who said they feel very close to a Jewish community increased in fall 2023 but then fell back to 2022 levels by spring of 2024. The percentage of students saying they attended Jewish events on campus rose and then fell. Jewish students also self-assessed their mental health much lower in the immediate aftermath of the war, but their assessment reverted to a healthier state by the end of the school year.
6. We find the percentage of Jewish students who believe there should not be a Jewish state in Israel-Palestine to be fairly constant, at around 10-15%, in all three years. We see no change in Jewish student opinion after October 7 on the basic question of whether a Jewish state should exist, except for a significant number of students who had said they had no opinion in 2022 forming an opinion in support of a Jewish state by the end of 2023. About a quarter of Jewish students aren't sure whether Israel as a Jewish state should continue to exist.
7. Several demographic characteristics are correlated with Jewish students' views on Israel, including their political ideology, their sexuality, and their family's Jewish background. Among the biggest predictors, however, is the students' socioeconomic class – students from wealthier families are much more supportive of a Jewish state than those from less wealthy families. This pattern is especially strong among students without robust Jewish backgrounds. The same relationship is visible in non-Jewish students too. Jewish and non-Jewish students from upper class homes are twice as likely to believe a Jewish state should exist in general and twice as likely to blame Hamas rather than Israel for the current war, compared to students from lower- or working-class homes.
8. Most non-Jewish students who are from upper-middle-class and upper-class homes personally know Israelis and have at least a few close Jewish friends. Most lower-class and working-class non-Jewish students do not personally know Israelis or have any close Jewish friends. Students who have at least a few Jewish friends and who know Israelis are more likely to blame Hamas rather than Israel for the war.
9. Jewish students blame Hamas for the war more than they blame Israel. Conversely, non-Jewish students blame Israel for the war more than Hamas. Non-Jewish students who are very liberal overwhelmingly blame Israel. Very liberal Jewish students blame Israel more than Hamas, but not at the same rate as non-Jewish students. Across several measures, we find that Jewish students who are very liberal have views somewhere between the views of other Jewish students and the views of non-Jewish students who are very liberal.
10. Non-Jewish students overwhelmingly sympathize with Palestinians rather than with Israelis in the current war. Jewish students mainly sympathize with Israelis. Jewish and non-Jewish students alike believe that their campus community is far more sympathetic to Palestinians. The views are particularly lopsided on elite campuses, such as Ivy League schools.
11. Jewish students are equally likely to follow news about the war, regardless of whether they support or oppose the existence of Israel as a Jewish state. The pattern, however, is different for non-Jewish students. Non-Jewish students who oppose the existence of Israel as a Jewish state are much more engaged in the topic than non-Jewish students who support a Jewish state. They follow the news more, and they are far more likely to have gone to a pro-Palestine event than non-Jewish supporters of Israel went to a pro-Israel event.
12. Students who oppose the existence of Israel as a Jewish state are much more likely to be in social bubbles in which their friends all agree with them compared to those who support a Jewish state. Across all survey waves (including the survey we conducted in 2022 before the current conflict) we see that students who support Israel's existence are in more diverse friend groups in which some people agree with them about Israel and some do not.

13. Jewish activists who oppose a Jewish state and attended pro-Palestine events during the school year have different backgrounds and demographics than Jewish activists who support a Jewish state and attended pro-Israel events during the school year. The former group mostly grew up with less robust Jewish backgrounds. The majority identify as LGBTQ+ and as very liberal. They are also mostly lower/working and middle class. Conversely, the latter group of activists overwhelmingly come from families affiliated with denominations and had many Jewish experiences growing up. They are mostly heterosexual, upper-middle or upper class, and do not identify as very liberal.
14. Most non-Jewish students do not have an opinion about whether Jewish people are indigenous to the land of Israel. Of those who have an opinion, more say that Jews are not indigenous. Christian students are the one group more likely to believe that Jews are indigenous to Israel. Christians make up a minority of non-Jewish college students: they are a smaller share of the sample than those who identify as agnostic, atheist, or having no religion.
15. Between the fall and spring of the 2023-2024 school year, we see a large increase in non-Jewish students saying it would be very hard for pro-Israel and pro-Palestine students to be friends. When asked if they personally lost friends because of conflicting views on the war, a third of Jewish students said they have. A third of Muslim students also reported having lost friends, compared to only 9% of all other students. Almost half (45%) of Jewish students on elite campuses said they lost friends.
16. In 2024, one in five non-Jewish students say they wouldn't want to be friends with someone who supports the existence of Israel as a Jewish state. Forty-five percent said they were not sure. Eight percent said they avoid socializing with Jews because of Jewish students' views on Israel. Agreement with these statements is highest among students who identify as very liberal, students of color, Muslim students, and LGBTQ+ students.
17. Consistent with the survey finding that at least one in five non-Jewish students would not want to be friends with someone who supports the existence of Israel as a Jewish state, the focus groups reveal that, indeed, many non-Jewish students deliberately aim to socially ostracize Jewish peers who support the existence of Israel as a Jewish state. They see students who support Israel as endorsing a hateful position, and they do not want to be friends with people who have bad values. Jewish students recognize this social isolation and largely blame a toxic culture of social media and polarization.
18. There is a profound difference between Jewish and non-Jewish students in how they perceive the political orientation of their schools. The Jewish students see the schools as overwhelmingly aligned against Israel, evidenced by the opinions expressed by faculty, staff, and students. The non-Jewish students tend to see the schools as overwhelmingly aligned with Israel, as evidenced by opinions expressed by their schools' senior leadership.

# Focus Groups

Between April 3 and April 5, 2024, we conducted twelve hour-long focus group sessions via Zoom. Each session had four to five students currently enrolled at a four-year college or university. All focus groups were facilitated by College Pulse's consultant, Dr. Deborah Mashek, a social psychologist who is an expert in qualitative research. The focus group scripts and formats were designed collaboratively by us, Dr. Mashek, College Pulse, and the Jim Joseph Foundation.

## A. FOCUS GROUP METHODOLOGY

Students were recruited with an outreach message that alerted them to the topic of the focus group. The message read:

*You participated in a College Pulse survey about Israel and Palestine about a month ago.*

*Based on your responses, you've been selected to participate in an exclusive focus group with other college students on the same topic. It'll only take about 60 minutes, and you get \$100 for your time.*

*Ready to join the discussion? Just click the link below to pick a time that works for you:*

In the focus groups, the students were informed of the basic guidelines. They would not be identified by name or by school, although they could choose to identify the school they attend if they wished. They could end participation at any time. Dr. Mashek also stayed on the Zoom session afterwards in case a student had a follow-up question or concern. Upon completion of the focus groups, she also sent students links to further mental health resources in case the conversation brought up difficult emotions.

Six of the twelve focus groups exclusively assessed views of Jewish students. Two of these groups drew students from highly selective schools, two groups drew students from moderately selective schools, and two drew students from less selective schools.

For each of these tiers of selectivity, we had one focus group that recruited Jewish students who had said on the fall 2023 survey that they attended Jewish events on campus weekly or

more. The other focus group was for students who attended Jewish events less frequently. In this latter group, about 40% said they had seldom or never attended Jewish events, 30% said they attended a few times a year, and the remaining 30% said they attended once or twice a month.

Three focus groups exclusively assessed views of non-Jewish students. These students were also grouped by school selectivity: high, medium, and low. The three remaining focus groups consisted of both Jewish and non-Jewish students together. These, too, were grouped by selectivity.

The rationale for these divisions is straightforward. We sought a wide range of perspectives from students. Our quantitative research suggested that the Jewish students who are not involved in Jewish activities on campus come from different backgrounds and have different experiences than those who are more involved in Jewish activities. We thought that the students might express themselves more openly if they were in company with students with similar Jewish campus experiences.

## Twelve Focus Groups:

### Jewish Focus Groups

#### REGULAR JEWISH PROGRAM ATTENDEES

1. Highly selective school
2. Moderately selective school
3. Less selective school

#### NOT REGULAR JEWISH PROGRAM ATTENDEES

4. Highly selective school
5. Moderately selective school
6. Less selective school

### Non-Jewish Focus Groups

7. Highly selective school
8. Moderately selective school
9. Less selective school

### Mix of Jewish and Non-Jewish Student Focus Groups

10. Highly selective school
11. Moderately selective school
12. Less selective school

Likewise, the social environments on elite campuses have been somewhat different than those on less elite campuses, in part because of the public scrutiny and news attention focused on elite campuses, so we separated the student groups by level of school selectively.

We also wanted to learn how Jewish and non-Jewish students might express themselves differently in separated focus groups compared to focus groups in which both groups of students were present, hence the inclusion of three mixed groups.

The focus group setting was on Zoom, but it was intimate. Most students were sitting in dorm rooms. Many were in hoodies, t-shirts, or sweaters. They were surrounded by typical dorm room decorations: photographs taped to walls, hanging tapestries, institutional lighting, Christmas lights. There were stuffed animals and unmade beds.

All the focus groups were asked the same set of questions, except for one additional question that was asked to the students in the six Jewish-only focus groups.

The common questions were as follows:

1. *How do you obtain information about Israel and the conflict in Israel and Gaza? To what extent do you actively seek out information vs. passively receive information? Are there particular sources you turn to? What sources do you find most trustworthy?*
2. *How has the conflict in Israel and Gaza affected your experience on campus, if at all?*
3. *Data from our research suggests that nearly one-third of non-Jewish students say they would not want to be friends with someone who supports the existence of Israel as a Jewish state. Why do you think they might believe this? To what extent do you think the opinion is a function of this specific issue vs. a general challenge with being friends with people who see the world differently?*
4. *How do your views about Israel or the conflict in Israel and Gaza compare to those of your friends? How closely aligned are your and your friends' views about Israel or the conflict? How has the conflict affected your relationships with your friends, if at all?*
5. *Best case scenario, how should the conflict in Israel and Gaza be resolved?*

Between questions 2 and 3, the Jewish focus groups were asked the following additional question:

6. *Think for a moment about your relationship with Jewish communities, broadly construed. How has your relationship with Jewish communities changed, if at all, since October 7? Why do you think that change has occurred? What do you think caused that change?*

In places, Dr. Mashek asked students follow up questions, and sometimes students asked each other questions.

Note that question #3 above mentions a statistic from our 2023 survey that a third of non-Jewish students would not want to be friends with someone who supports the existence of Israel as a Jewish state. That statistic is the percent who agree with the statement of those who either agree or disagree, excluding respondents who answer they “don’t know”. As noted below in the section on survey methodology, throughout this report, unlike prior reports in this study, we evaluate agree/disagree statements by measuring the percent who agree without excluding “don’t know” respondents, yielding a lower estimate of the percent who agree. In the case of this particular question, we would calculate that 20% rather than one third would not want to be friends with someone who supports a Jewish state.

All the focus group transcripts are available in full. Here, we provide highlights of the conversations. We hope this summary conveys the variety and complexity of student opinions as revealed in their own words.

## B. NEWS HABITS

Our focus group conversation started off with the most straightforward and non-controversial question: how do the students get their news? In both Jewish and non-Jewish focus groups, the most popular traditional source mentioned was the New York Times. Among both groups, other mainstream news sources were also mentioned, such as CNN, Associated Press, Wall Street Journal, and Washington Post.

In non-Jewish focus groups, foreign news sources were commonly mentioned, such as Al Jazeera, BBC, Reuters, and Sky News Australia. One non-Jewish student at a highly selective school said he prefers foreign media over domestic sources like the New York Times.



**“I feel like they [NYT] are hiding the fact that what’s happening in Israel/Palestine. They are not showing the true picture. I try to avoid the West[ern] media most of the time. I also try to follow some Instagram reporters like Motaz Aziza, where he reports what’s happening on the ground and I feel like that’s more realistic.”**

Jewish students also sometimes look to foreign media for a different perspective. One such student, not a regular participant in Jewish activities, said she follows the news on social media and via the New York Times. But she also said, **“I like the BBC because it is not American so they might have a different viewpoint on the conflict.”**

Jewish students, particularly those more engaged in Jewish life on campus, utilize mainstream news as well as Jewish-specific sources. **“I go to the New York Times for general news,”** one student reflects. **“When I am thinking about news relating to the war in Israel and Gaza, I use a combination of general news outlets and more Jewish outlets.”** A number of students identified sources such as JewishBreakingNews, StandWithUs, and Times of Israel.

Of course, many students only passively receive news about the conflict. They might regularly check a news website where they will happen upon news about Israel, but they will not read about it beyond the headlines. Said one Jewish student:

**“The majority of my news is from newspapers like the Economist, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal. I would say that I don’t go out of my way to read things on the conflict, but it comes up as part of the news.”**

Many students get their passive news from social media. Students mentioned several social media platforms, including TikTok, Twitter, and others, but the most common one mentioned in the focus groups was Instagram. On Instagram, students see information from traditional news sites, as well as posts from their friends, posts from accounts run by student organizations on campus, viral posts, and posts from influencers. They reflected on how they digest this news, often trusting information coming from official media

over information coming from independent influencers or unverified accounts. A Jewish student not involved in Jewish activities at a selective school put it like this:

**“The majority of information I consume is from social media. A lot of people and creators I follow post a lot about [the conflict], including infographics to repost. I, for one, don’t actively seek it out but I remember when the conflict did start to ramp up and was gaining national attention, I did notice more...I think that news feeds that post about it are more trustworthy. Creators sharing personal accounts have more bias.”**

While students get news from Instagram, they often expressed frustration with social media due to its potential for spreading misinformation and its toll on mental health. One student said:

**“I went to a Jewish day school and it felt like I was seeing two extremes where Jewish people were posting things that were extremely to the right and people who I know now were posting things that were more extremely to the left. So, I actively moved away from that, and I have since deleted social media.”**

This student now follows news via the New York Times and listens to podcasts such as the *Ezra Klein Show*.

Another student who is involved in Jewish activity on campus expressed similar frustration:

**“On social media, I have blocked the keyword ‘Palestine’ because I kept getting content that was upsetting me. I think it was getting too distracting. For a lot of people I follow, I muted them, so I stopped seeing their posts. People were posting a lot of misinformation, and it made me upset that people who are such smart people and go to an esteemed institution kind of mindlessly post misinformation.”**

A number of Jewish students mentioned that their engagement with news changed over the course of the year. In the fall, they either sought out more news specifically about the conflict or they saw more social media posts from Jewish entities such as StandWithUs, or both. Over time, they might have seen less Jewish-specific content or sought it out less than at the beginning of the war. One Jewish student reflected:

**“Those accounts like StandWithUS and Jewish-BreakingNews were very active at the beginning... and it’s been like six months since then, so it is more passive...just like what is coming through social media and the news.”**

Several students mentioned they learn news from their parents and other family members. Parents send their children articles. Said one student (a Jewish student, not involved in Jewish life at a less selective school):

**“Most of my information comes from word of mouth and talking to other people – I am not seeking it out myself. I also see it when I am scrolling through other apps like Instagram and Twitter...I think hearing things from my parents, I trust them more than random people on the street.”**

Of course, not all students agree with their parents. One Jewish student who gets articles from her parents thinks they are too pro-Israel. A non-Jewish student said her Christian parents are too pro-Israel, too. **“It’s kind of a stance made on a lack of information,”** she said. But in general, students do seem to hear news from parents and are influenced by their parents’ perspectives.

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## C. EFFECT OF WAR ON CAMPUS EXPERIENCE

The war and subsequent protests affected students differently. For some, especially non-Jewish students, the war and protests were something they were aware of but did not affect them much. In one focus group composed of non-Jewish students at moderately selective universities, a student said the issue was “more in the periphery.” The moderator, Dr. Mashek, asked if other students felt that way. The entire group of students agreed.

But other students, Jewish and non-Jewish, were quite affected. One theme in responses was that the noise and commotion of the protests on some campuses were distracting. Focus group participants mentioned the times that classes near loud protests had to be canceled or university events like career fairs were disrupted.

One woman, a non-Jewish student at selective school in a rural area, described her experience:

**“I think just looking out my window every day and seeing a group of people with flags and all that noise and the police cars surrounding them is just, it’s such a weird experience. And if it was, like, once and it went away, it would be fine. But the fact that it’s every day and it’s recurring. And I do sympathize with what’s happening, and I do understand. But at the same time, it’s hard to go about your normal day when you have to find a different way to get to class where you have to go through everything that’s happening. And there have been some, a few, like, violent incidents on campus. There have been arrests. And having to just go through that and deal with that as part of your daily routine is sort of unnerving for me.”**

Students also saw the protests as places of tension on campus, often taking over central portions of campus and showcasing conflict. They noticed the increased police presence. Students overwhelmingly reported that the campus protests they saw this year were peaceful. Most Jewish students, but not all, said they did not feel physically unsafe. In general, Jewish students articulated a view that even though most protesters probably did not harbor antisemitic attitudes, there are some who clearly did. And while most protests did not escalate to violence, there were some that clearly did. The uncertainty around those possibilities unnerved Jewish students.

ONE JEWISH STUDENT:

**“It felt uncomfortable not knowing what this particular crowd might be feeling or what might come of this protest. I just felt I like I didn’t belong as much as I would normally feel.”**

Another Jewish student reflected on the initial reaction on campus to October 7. She thought about the fact that the protests started **“long before the ground invasion in Gaza began, so the campus demonstrations in support of Palestine seem to be more a response to the initial attack than the response.”** Another Jewish student was stunned by some of the chants, such as one cheering on the Houthis.

Many focus group participants cited the cases where protests got physical or led to damage of property on their campuses. One student mentioned sculptures that were destroyed during a pro-Palestine protest. Another discussed swastikas drawn on the Chabad and Hillel buildings.

A Jewish student at the Ohio State University said that he now tucks in his Star of David necklace at certain times. He said he started doing this after a friend of his was punched for being Jewish and the OSU Hillel was vandalized.

Another student (Jewish student, mixed focus group) reflected on the high tensions on her campus:

**“My school has had a lot of protests, almost solely from one side, and most people at school support said side. It has been almost fully pro-Palestinian support... There have been attacks on our Hillel, which was pretty bad. We had, earlier in November, a student was shot – not on the campus, but by some kind of right-wing Christian Nationalist person – which sparked a lot of protesting and discourse. In general, I feel like the Jewish population has shrunk away and there is a very large Jews for Ceasefire Now movement which has resulted in a lot of destruction of the Jewish community here, which has been really sad to watch.”**

And yet, even though some students point to physical violence or antisemitic actions, Jewish students noted that their campus environment was tamer than media portrayals of campus unrest. Some students had to reassure their family members that they were not feeling physically threatened on campus and that they were safe, in contradiction to alarming media portrayals.

### WHICH SIDE IS THE SCHOOL ON?

A clear contrast between Jewish and non-Jewish students is how they perceived the school, as an institution, as taking a side in the conflict. Jewish students discussed their perception that the student bodies and faculty were overwhelmingly against Israel. They felt socially isolated and that there was no room for nuance: **“I don’t necessarily feel unsafe being Jewish on campus but there is definitely not room to be moderate about this issue: you are either pro or against, which has been very frustrating.”**

Several students also brought up how classrooms were affected. One Jewish student dropped a class that she felt was clearly biased. Another Jewish student confronted a professor whose rhetoric she felt was over the line. The faculty member, she said, doubled down on her commitments to the Palestinian cause and later told the class that they need to **“stand together against apartheid, genocide, and oppression.”** Another student, not Jewish, said that professors made announcements alerting students to when protest activities were happening. Dr. Mashek asked, **“And would you say you’re hearing that kind of information-sharing from different perspectives?”** The student replied, **“Honestly, no. It’s very much on one perspective.”** She clarified it was only pro-Palestine protests that were being advertised in classrooms by faculty.

On the other hand, several of the non-Jewish students focused on the perceived bias from administrators against the pro-Palestine protesters. They saw university leadership as having clamped down on peaceful protesters in an unfair way. As one student put it:

**“I feel more stress[ed] and powerless because the only thing we could do right now is just spreading awareness. And when we are not able to spread awareness because of the management of the university.... We would just want to, like, spread awareness and to show what’s actually happening there instead of the West[ern] media where it’s silencing the people’s voices.”**

Another student demonstrated the unfair treatment of pro-Palestine protesters by explaining how the university dealt with Black Lives Matter protests differently.

**“Well, I was here during the whole 2020 George Floyd situation, and I was also protesting and there was a completely different feel from my administration as there is right now. And you can absolutely tell it’s because my administration is directly responsible and benefiting from Israel’s part in genocide. How it makes me feel personally, like ... why did I even come here?”**

The university’s response to the current protest movement made this student feel like she does not belong at her school. The same student continued:

**“There are many people who I feel are willing to learn and listen and educate themselves about the actual issue that’s going on. It’s really hard to walk by a large portion of the campus who are not willing to do that. And those are the people that are given a voice. And those are the people who are published in the New York Times. And those are the people that are shown world-wide, and those voices are amplified because those are the people that have all this money. And that’s really disheartening because that’s what makes me feel like I won’t belong.”**

DR. MASKEK ASKED,

**“And just so I’m not making assumptions about what you mean about what the actual issue is or who those people are or those voices, would you feel comfortable given some specificity there?”**

**“Sure. I go to Columbia University, which donates so so much money to every kind of terrible industry you can think of because we rely on the backs of so many wealthy Zionist donors and those people have children that go to our school. And those people have opinions that they welcome and rightfully can have. However, that becomes a problem when you hold on to that opinion so intensely that you aren’t willing to educate yourself further to maybe see the incorrectness or futility of your stance.”**

When asked how the campus environment has affected them, a number of Jewish students, particularly those who were less participatory in Jewish life on campus, explained how they increasingly decided to keep quiet and hunker down. For example, one student at a less selective school that does not have enough Jewish students to compose a Hillel board, said:

**“One benefit of having no Jewish student group is that you can blend in. I know that is what I am doing, and what my other Jewish friend is doing, is just laying low. Just lay low and don’t say anything because we don’t have the numbers – it is ten versus a thousand people. Sometimes it comes up in the classroom, but I don’t say anything.”**

Students understand that they have friends with very different views about the conflict and that those views can be a social litmus test. So, some keep quiet because they do not want to be in disagreement with their peers. One said:

**“Just a couple of days ago, I was sitting at lunch with a group of students, and they asked me about my opinion on the conflict. It was tense because they asked questions in an open way, but you can tell by the way they asked it, that they are expecting a specific answer.”**

Some of the Jewish students want to be able to express their mixed feelings about the conflict – a sense of identity connected to Israel but despair about civilian deaths or disagreement with the Israeli government. But they find it difficult to hold a nuanced view in such a polarized environment. An Israeli student expressed it like this, **“Regardless of my opinion on the conflict, even if it is not 100% pro-Israel, just being connected to it by my place of birth is a little bit intimidating and daunting on campus where people are so extremely pro-Palestine.”**

## D. CHANGING RELATIONSHIP INSIDE THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Students in the Jewish-only focus groups were asked about their changing relationship with the Jewish community since October 7. The students who were more engaged typically felt that the school year had been one of increased participation in Jewish life and an increased sense of Jewish identity. One modern Orthodox student put it like this:

**“Everyone is living in the sense that there is war going on in Israel and we want to be more connected...I feel like it has brought people closer, and people have a common ground that ‘we love Israel, we support Israel, and we will continue to share that belief.’”**

This attitude is common among active participants beyond those who identify as Orthodox. There is a common sense of belonging, pride, of being on a ‘team’ among those students who were regular attendees at Jewish events. They described an increased attendance at Hillel and Chabad. A few students mentioned they began to wear Star of David necklaces. Some of these comments were not necessarily positive, but just descriptive: a student felt himself becoming “more insular” as a reaction to social isolation from non-Jewish students on campus, but the move toward insularity may be both positive and negative.

A student who was president of her school’s Hillel chapter felt she learned a lot about life through her engagement in the Jewish community during this difficult year. **“Dealing with helping to navigate the Hillel’s response to October 7th taught me more than any college class ever has.”**

These students -- who, again, were involved in campus Jewish life -- were also attuned to increased tension within the Jewish community. One student said:

**“It can be difficult to all pray in one room together on Friday night and the next Tuesday be on different sides of a protest, and to be in a community together and also be on two different sides of an ideological issue.”**

Another described how he managed friendships with Jewish friends on the other side of the Israel-Palestine conflict. **“I’m not going to let this issue come in between a friendship unless they are just spreading information [that I think is] dangerous.”**

Another student in the focus groups said he is connected to Jewish life and wants to continue to be connected to Jewish life, but Israel advocacy does not resonate with him. This student is in AEPi and on the Chabad student board, but he does not feel personally connected to Israel at all. In his social circle, he is expected to care about Israel. For instance, the AEPi brothers marched around campus with Israeli flags after October 7, but he felt uncomfortable. He thinks that some of his peers are not getting involved in Jewish life because doing so is seen as too political or as too pro-Israel.

In spite of these differing perspectives, the three focus groups targeting Jewish students who are regularly involved in campus Jewish life showcased a clear predominant worldview: increased connection to and increased participation with Jewish life on campus.

In the three Jewish-only focused groups that drew students who were not involved in Jewish life on campus, the experiences were far more variable. Some students said they started attending shabbat dinners and other Jewish programs more **“to show my support for people on campus.”** Others, particularly those who are not supportive of Israel, did not participate before and continued to abstain. As one student said,

**“After October 7<sup>th</sup>, I have felt more alienated from my Judaism because my understanding of Judaism is not reflected in supporting Israel. And I felt unsure about where that put me....I have heard from friends that there are other Jews who have similar opinions to me but I don’t know of any spaces for us to come together... Tying Judaism to a support of Israel is really hard for me because, at the moment, I don’t think I can say I support Israel because it is creating a humanitarian crisis and killing 30,000 people. I feel like that goes against all my beliefs, even just valuing human life.”**

Another student just did not know where she fit in and was trying to find her place in the Jewish community. **“I don’t engage with Hillel because I don’t agree with its stance on Israel, but I still want to engage with the Jewish community, so I am trying to navigate that,”** she said.

Several students, regardless of their participation in programs, did feel an increased personal connection to their Jewish identity and to Israel. Said one, **“Prior to this, I haven’t really considered my connection to Israel, but now I feel kind of like a bond that is pulling me more culturally Jewish.”** Some students also noted that they were communicating with family and with Jewish friends more on account of the war.

The students less engaged in Jewish life were attuned to divisions in the campus Jewish community. Here is one voice:

**“I honestly think it may have divided the Jewish community more than brought them together. At least on my campus, there is a section of pro-Palestinian Jewish people and if you are neutral or pro-Israel, you are on the other side. It has created two different groups of people, and it is really hard to connect to people who are Jewish and also super pro-Palestinian.”**

A Jewish student who is very involved in pro-Palestine activism saw the protest movement as drawing her more closely to the part of the Jewish community that is openly critical of Israel.

**“I have been very involved in protests for divestment. I have definitely felt isolated by the Jewish organizations because of my support for Palestine, like I don’t feel comfortable going into Hillel. Not that I’ve ever been involved, because I’ve always had these views and I’ve never felt comfortable in that space. I have noticed that there is more division but also more of a sense of community within the Jewish students who are working together to protest for divestment and Palestinian liberation. I’ve felt more of a sense of community in a Jewish community than any other time in my life, honestly.”**

ANOTHER STUDENT:

**“Again, within the Jewish community, there is now a growing divide. On my campus they have started a Jewish Voices for Peace organization, which is a pro-Palestine organization. I think that pro-Israel Jews look down on pro-Palestine views and I think that the pro-Palestine Jews are much louder about their opinions.”**

In spite of the tensions, some students mentioned that their campus Jewish leadership was succeeding in keeping the diverse community together.

**“My school and student body do a really good job of separating Judaism from being Zionist or being pro or anti-Israel. Religion and politics are pretty separate in that regard which I appreciate...I feel like the head rabbi was doing a good job of opening the conversation and recognizing that people have different viewpoints. The rabbi was hosting discussions where people could come together and say their opinions.”**

Another student focused on the fact that people come together at the Hillel to eat meals, and she, too, credited the rabbi for making people of different views feel welcome.

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## E. BEING FRIENDS WITH PEOPLE WHO SUPPORT THE EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL

All the focus groups were asked to reflect on findings generated from our fall 2023 survey that a large minority of non-Jewish students say they would not want to be friends with someone who supports the existence of Israel as a Jewish state. We asked participants why students might hold this view and whether the dynamic is typical of others issues as well.

In the Jewish-only focus groups, students were split between thinking it is unique to this issue or whether the dynamic would be similar for other controversial issues.

Most of the Jewish students gravitated toward the idea that social media was to blame for creating a litmus test for friendships. On social media, the Israel-Palestine conflict has been a constant presence. One Jewish student shared the following anecdote:

**Even on Instagram, there are so many accounts that I have blocked because I don't want to see it anymore. I literally clicked on a cooking video and the comments were all 'Free Palestine.'...It feels like a trend where everyone is like 'let's go hate on Israel, let's go hate on Jewish people.'"**

Students described a media environment portraying that Israel is committing genocide and killing 30,000 civilians. One student reasoned that if he was not Jewish and was just seeing what was posted on Snapchat and Instagram, he would probably be against Israel too. If you are bombarded with information about civilian deaths and genocide, he explained, it makes sense to break off ties with people deemed as supporting such evil. Another student walked through the same logic:

**"The next step would be 'well it is completely immoral to support that and, if you support that, I don't think that you have good values and I don't think that you have the same morals that I do, so I don't want to be associated with you.'"**

The Jewish students brought up other explanations as well. Chief among them was a lack of nuance in political debates.

ONE STUDENT SAID:

**"I think there is a conflation with supporting the existence of Israel and supporting every single thing that Israel has ever done. And that is a loss of nuance for highly educated people to be making and yet it is being made... [Zionism] has just become a slur. I have seen people use the word Zionist as a slur."**

ANOTHER:

**"I think people assume that if you are Jewish, that means you are a Zionist. I think that people think that Zionism is equated to conservatism. And people equate all of that to badness. And they can't be friends with a person like that because everything is just so polarized."**

ANOTHER:

**"Unfortunately, Zionism, to some people, has become a label for 'I want to commit genocide against Palestinians.'"**

In the non-Jewish focus groups, the students reacted to the prompt differently. Mainly, they sympathized with students who said they would not want to be friends with someone who supports the existence of Israel as a Jewish state. These students, too, disagreed about whether the dynamic was particular to the Israel-Palestine issue or whether it would similarly apply to other issues, such as support of Donald Trump, support for abortion, or support for Black Lives Matter.

Several students simply articulated the view that not wanting to be friends with someone who holds opposing beliefs is normal. Said one student, **"For some people, some topics are so personal that if someone doesn't share that belief, it's almost like a character judgment about that individual about what side they would support or how they would identify."**

Other students offered more detail about the case of potential friends who might support Israel. **"Some people... don't want to be friends with people who have ideas that are antithetical to promoting peace,"** said one.

ANOTHER:

**"I totally understand not wanting to be friends with somebody who supports the existence of Israel as a Jewish state because in my head that's kind of like, 'well you should be educated more and if you still decide to take that stance, then I can't really swallow that.'"**

ANOTHER:

**"I think I probably do fall into that statistic because it's like, I don't understand how you can defend what's happening, and I don't want to be constantly arguing with somebody who's doing that... I think with this case, it's like the death tolls are just insanely unequal. And it's just heartbreaking what's happening. I don't know that much about the history. I tried to educate myself.... I do a lot of Native American studies too, so I think it's very it's hard for me to think about like just like power and like power dynamics and how it's really hard to see that. There's always one type of people, people with money always win, I guess."**

A couple of non-Jewish students reflected on the role of the media, but they took very different views from one another. One student said that believing Israel should not be a state is **“a bit extreme”** but it is a view reinforced by social media and by students **“hopping on a bandwagon”** to support the popular position.

Another student, who is particularly antagonistic to Israel, had a more complex media narrative. She, the same Columbia student mentioned previously, believes that western media has obscured the Israel-Palestine issue by not sufficiently drawing attention to Palestinians’ plight. She went on:

**“A way that advocates for Palestine have tried to counter that obscurity of Western media has been to paint every single Jewish person that is currently on the planet as the villain. And I think that has had an even bigger effect on making this topic uncomfortable....because yes, there are very clear villains in this genocide. However, there are also people who are villains by ignorance and forced ignorance....I think the way that they are being cast as such intense horrible people is not going to have any kind of positive benefit on them maybe possibly changing their opinions.”**

In other words, this student believes that there is a villainous portrayal of Jews in leftist media that is unhelpful because it leads them to not be open to change. She specified who she thought is being villainized:

**“I’m talking specifically the pro-Israel rich Zionist population and the very intense scrutiny they are getting right now and their reaction from their already frail perspectives from certain historical events that have happened to Jewish people.”**

In the mixed focus groups, containing both Jewish and non-Jewish students, students pointed to different explanations for litmus tests in friendship. Some pointed to an ethos of moral righteousness and a herd mentality among college students. As one student said, **“There is going to be a certain ‘follow the crowd’ mentality, so if everyone is yelling that they hate Israel and wish death, then you’re just gonna follow along with that because you don’t want to step out of line.”**

A couple of Jewish students in the mixed cohorts pointed to a lack of nuance or willingness to dialogue as the reason why people do not want to be friends with those who think Israel should exist. As one said,

**“There are some people who are not willing to believe that I can hold both opinions. That I can both be upset about what’s happening in Gaza and still believe in Israel. Some people just assume that all Zionists believe that it is good to be killing people.”**

But other students said the issue is not about the current conflict but about Zionism and Israel more generally. A self-described non-Zionist Jewish student said this:

**“I do sympathize with people who feel like they can’t be friends with someone who supports Israel. Even if you are a Zionist and you don’t agree with everything that is happening, I think there is an inherent part to Zionism that is, because Israel settled on Palestinian land, there is an inherent violence to Israel. Of course, now you can kind of say you don’t support what is going on now, but I think the term itself has a lot of history that we weren’t alive for that can be hurtful and traumatic to some people. So, I do understand it if someone doesn’t want to be friends with supporters of Israel.”**

A non-Jewish student described the situation as follows:

**“...From my knowledge, Palestine has existed for longer than Israel has. Palestine is not the one that has a captive over Israel, it is the other way around and this war has amplified the feelings of people who don’t want to support that because you obviously haven’t educated yourself on the history if you align yourself with that...That notion of not wanting to be friends with those people comes from a place of ‘you’re just siding with that side because of your religious affiliation, not because you are trying to be knowledgeable about what is going on and how many people are suffering in Palestine and Gaza.”**

One Jewish student in the mixed group reacted to the statistic about not being friends with visible sadness. She was close to tears.



**“There is a constant frustration for me that there is a whole history that people that are really refusing to recognize and that the history did not start 70 years ago like people want to think and there is a much longer history... I feel like people think that they can’t be friends with someone if they don’t hold every single perfect idea that I hold and it makes me sad that that is the only thing you could possibly see in a person.”**

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**F. DIVERSITY IN FRIEND GROUPS**

The next question asked the students about the viewpoints about Israel/Palestine in their friend groups and how the current war has affected their own relationships. Many of the Jewish students have both Jewish and non-Jewish friends. Some of these students have respectful, even enjoyable, conversations with people with whom they disagree. One Jewish student said he has gotten closer specifically to Muslim friends because they have good conversations about the conflict.

Other students said they just try to stay quiet and not talk about the conflict, for fear of disrupting their relationships. **“I think if I weren’t Jewish,”** said one student, **“there would be more of an expectation for me to take a position and I think my friends largely skew pro-Palestine and they understand that because I am Jewish I don’t want to take a side.”**

A non-Jewish student who is against Israel’s actions and who has lots of Jewish friends explained the tightrope she walks:

**“I have a couple people in my life who very much identify with their Jewish identity and are very much on the Israel side. For me, I think I still have a good relationship with them, but you do kind of feel that tension or space where we completely tiptoe around the topic. If we see a protest on campus while we are together, we just pretend we don’t see it so we don’t have to talk about it.”**

Some students, Jewish or not, try to be empathetic and understand where their friends are coming from. Here is one non-Jewish student:

**“I have a friend who is Jewish and his sister lives in Tel Aviv, so when he talks to me about the conflict, it’s more so about safety and wellbeing than being about the overall conflict. With my Muslim friends, it might be less about that and more about the politics and what is going on in the news... It is important to be open and empathetic to the people you are engaging with and to consider their perspectives and experiences.”**

Certainly, one common theme is students tiptoeing around the conflict either because friends are on different sides or because friends have extreme views. A Jewish student reflected:

**“Most of my Jewish friends are pro-Israel in a ‘they should annex the West Bank and Gaza and take over all of the land’ view. But all of my non-Jewish friends believe in Palestinian liberation and think that the land should be returned to them and for the Israeli government to be dissolved. There is almost no one who believes in a two-state solution or a one state solution....There is so much aggression in the Zionist people but the pro-Palestine people don’t believe in the state of Israel period. So, I don’t talk to my friends about Israel at all.”**

Another common theme is frayed relationships on account of the conflict. One Jewish student lost old friendships right after October 7, when she posted an infographic signaling her support for Israel. Another student said he is fine with his friends participating in pro-Palestine protests, **“but ‘from the river to the sea’ crosses a line for me so I haven’t been hanging out with those people as much. And that is definitely unfortunate, but I don’t feel so comfortable hanging out with those people when they hold such a different opinion about the value of Jewish life and Jewish statehood.”**

Another Jewish student who is interested in rabbinical school told his romantic partner that he wanted to work in Israel as a rabbi **“and make some kind of political change and improve the state of Israel. And that, to him [the romantic partner], just appeared like, ‘I’m just trying to support a genocide state.’ And it really upset me.”**

A third theme that emerged from the focus groups with Jewish students was the role they play in giving a “Jewish perspective” on the conflict to their non-Jewish peers.

HERE IS ONE STUDENT:

**“A lot of my friends at school aren’t Jewish and so they don’t have much of a connection to the conflict, so they turn to me to ask me about the conflict and for my opinion. I’m happy to talk to them but I always tell them that I feel bad because I am definitely telling them something biased and I want them to do their own research and come to their own conclusions.”**

ANOTHER:

**“People come to you because you are Jewish, thinking you are an aficionado on the subject, when I probably know less than most because I don’t take the time to understand this super deep and complicated topic. I don’t see the value of understanding something that doesn’t personally affect my life on a daily basis.”**

ANOTHER:

**“When it first happened, I noticed that a bunch of people were asking me for context which I thought was interesting because it is not really something that you receive as a request every day... if it comes up, it is a civil conversation but for most people there are a lot of things going on in the world right now and this is just one of them.”**

A final theme from the Jewish students, particularly those more active in Jewish programming, is that they talked about Israel/Palestine more among other Jewish students with whom they share a basic orientation toward the conflict. Some feel they have grown closer to their Jewish friends. **“I do feel closer to my Jewish friends,”** one student said. **“I have noticed people are able to come out of their shells and talk about what is happening.”**

Among non-Jewish students who are actively engaged in pro-Palestine activities, the conflict has similarly brought students together. One talked about how she and her friends discuss which companies to boycott. **“We’re very active trying to support even the smallest of matters.”**

Another student active in Palestine support: **“My friend group also shares the same views as me. So, nothing has really negatively changed. But it’s definitely brought us closer because we have room to have that conversation and try to inform each other and stay educated and see how we can help in different ways and share materials on social media to try to get that info out there. But no negative consequences I would say.”**

Beyond the students who are active in protests, it was very common in the non-Jewish focus groups for students to say that their social circles are uniformly pro-Palestine. One student said small disagreements about the conflict emerge when debating his friends, but they’re still all squarely in the pro-Palestine camp.

Of course, some students do not like the activism they see among their peers. Here is an anecdote from a student in one of the non-Jewish focus groups:

**“My friends are very, very, activist. So I feel like they’re always posting every day, like, ‘this is what’s going on, blah blah blah.’ And I’m not annoyed that they’re posting.... I’m kind of just trying to drown it out because I have bills. Like, I worked at Starbucks, and now everyone hates Starbucks. And I sometimes go to Starbucks, and then this lady yelled at me... And she’s like, ‘you got Starbucks?’ And I was like, ‘Yeah. I did.’ And she just, like, lost it. I mean, she went to Walmart, so then I just decided to be annoying back. And I feel like this has to do with the framing where it’s like, if you’re gonna call someone a villain, they’re not gonna listen to you. And when she did that to me at the Starbucks, I was like ‘I got it for free because I’ve worked there.’ So I’m like, ‘At this point, I’m just gonna go even more just to spite you because you really irritated me,’ but I think, like, there have been conflicts there....But, I think in general, I do have the same ideas as my friends, but I just don’t have the same level of caring or, like, activism or anything.”**

Outside the activist crowd, some lamented the social tension. One woman, not Jewish but with a Jewish boyfriend, felt saddened that others on the Zoom focus group were in such homogenous social networks in which political views are a

litmus test. She lamented, **“I really love having friends with different perspectives because I feel like I learn so much more than if I’m just talking to someone who believes the same as me....I definitely don’t know everything, not even close, so I love to just hear.”**

Another student felt she learned a lot of different perspectives from an interfaith group she is in, which has produced better conversations than in other settings.

**“In there, there have been interesting conversations. It’s been helping some people sympathize and realize the hurt that the Jewish community on campus has been having.”**

In general, however, the non-Jewish students articulated views that either they are in exclusively pro-Palestine social groups or that they do not talk much about the issue, especially if they are in the company of peers who have different viewpoints. However, some still try to have respectful conversations and debates among their friends.

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## **G. VISIONS FOR RESOLVING THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT**

The last question of the focus group prompted students to think about how the conflict in Israel and Gaza ought to be resolved. Some of the students focused on the immediate war going on. Students talked about a ceasefire and about Hamas and the Netanyahu government being held accountable for crimes. They talked about humanitarian aid and the return of the Israeli hostages. There were some differences in emphasis between the Jewish and non-Jewish focus groups. For instance, the Jewish students mentioned the hostages and their opposition to the Netanyahu government more frequently. In fact, among non-Jewish students, the hostages were largely not part of the conversations. But overall, there was a shared vision for a speedy end to the conflict.

The students also reflected on how the broader conflict between Israelis and Palestinians could be resolved. During the discussion, there were several awkward silences among the non-Jewish students. They expressed a desire for coexistence and an end to violence. Several imagined in a perfect world that the Jewish Israelis would just leave the territory, but had little idea of where they might go.

Below is a brief dialogue between one student and Dr. Mashek:

STUDENT: **“I feel like there is no easy way to resolve this dispute...because Israel is backed by so many other big countries including the US. Things will probably not end up the way we hope.”**

DR. MASHEK: **“What would you hope?”**

STUDENT: **“Probably like everyone else, probably for the land to be returned to Palestinians.”**

DR. MASHEK: **“If we were wave a magic wand...I realize this is a wishful-thinking question, because a number of you had the ideal situation Israelis would leave the land....again wave the wand...where would the Israelis go?”**

STUDENT: **“I honestly have no clue.”**

DR. MASHEK: **“Any other ideas?”**

**[Silence]**

Remarkably, given the wide variety of views expressed throughout the focus groups, students across focus groups mostly landed on a two-state solution as the only practical solution to the conflict. Although it may not be their ideal solution, the students expressed some convergence.

ONE STUDENT IN A NON-JEWISH FOCUS GROUP: **“I think that there should be a compromise where Palestine can be free but Israel can also have its own nation.”**

ANOTHER: **“I believe the land rightfully belongs to the Palestinians who have been there for thousands and thousands of years. Ideally though since that will be very difficult to achieve, um just because of world politics and leaders and everybody involved, coexist in a state that is peaceful, not invasive, and just set clear boundaries what land is this and what land is that.”**

The Jewish students reached the same conclusion. Some focused on the Palestinians getting rid of the Hamas leaders, but the end game is the same:

**“I think that stronger and more fixed boundaries is a pretty good idea. You want give the people who don’t want to have a discussion on either side at least an opportunity to be in their fixed, local spot.”**

ANOTHER:

**“I think there would have to be a two-state solution because Israel is founded on the goal of being an ethnostate, of being an apartheid state and being a separate community just for Jews.”**

ANOTHER:

**“I think that we need people who are less right wing. But overall, I think a two-state solution is one of the best ways that anything can happen.”**

ANOTHER:

**In a perfect world, after the hostages are returned and the IDF forces are pulled out of Gaza, I think that the ideal solution would be a two-state solution.... But I also agree that the conflict may never end.”**

## H. FOCUS GROUP RECAP

These twelve focus groups showcased a wide range of views on campus. One could read the transcripts, or even this summary, and cherry-pick quotations that paint students with different perspectives in negative or positive light. Our hope here is that we have not provided a cherry-picked account but a realistic sense of how different kinds of students think about this year on campus. We encourage others to review the focus group scripts as well.

Here are a few core reflections based on our review:

- ◆ The question of where students get their news and how the news affects their judgments on the conflict merits further study. Jewish community organizations could particularly examine how students engaged with Jewish media (e.g., StandWithUs, Times of Israel) at different moments of the 2023-2024 school year, and how those

sources affected their opinions. Further research would be valuable to understand parents’ influence on the opinions of their young adult children through the news shared with them.

- ◆ Jewish students felt a range of feelings on campus this year, from unsafe to unwelcome to uncomfortable to none of the above. Some factors contributing to negative feelings are related to the specific school they attended, their own personality type, and social and political factors. Nevertheless, Jewish students experienced a general sense of uncertainty about how overt, physical displays of antisemitism could emerge from the anti-Israel protest movement. Jewish students did not describe the bulk of anti-Israel activities as antisemitic or as violent. However, they saw the potential of antisemitism emerging at their schools amidst the protest movement and were unnerved by it.
- ◆ There is a profound difference between Jewish and non-Jewish students in how they perceived the political orientation of their schools. The Jewish students tended to see the schools as overwhelmingly aligned against Israel, evidenced by the opinions expressed by faculty, staff, and students. The non-Jewish students tended to see the schools as overwhelmingly aligned with Israel, as evidenced by opinions expressed by their schools’ senior leadership.
- ◆ A gulf exists between Jewish students who were already involved in Jewish activities (who tend to come from more robust Jewish backgrounds) and those who were less involved. The first group engaged more with Jewish organizations on campus (more learning, more participation) because of the war and its reverberations on campus. The latter group is a mix. Some have leaned into Jewish identity through learning more, overtly identifying as Jewish more, or participating more. Others felt out of place in Jewish spaces because they were not aligned with Jewish organizations about Israel, or they avoided Jewish spaces because they did not want to wade into controversy.

- ◆ The conflict affected relationships in several ways. For one, students who are especially supportive of or opposed to Israel connected more intensely with their own like-minded “side” and experienced a sense of community. Students in religiously or politically diverse social groups tended to stay quiet. Some students embraced the chance to learn from people who are different from them and lean into respectful dialogue, but more did not. Non-Jewish students asked Jewish peers to represent the Jewish side, but not all Jewish students want to, or feel equipped to, serve that role.
- ◆ Our finding that a significant share of non-Jewish students do not want to be friends with someone who supports the existence of Israel as a Jewish state captures a real sense of social tension on campus. Jewish students understood this social isolation is happening and largely blamed a toxic culture of social media and polarization. Non-Jewish students in our focus groups often supported the social isolation, as they believe that support for Israel’s existence is a hateful position that signals a person has bad values.
- ◆ A surprisingly large number of students, including those who are very supportive of the right for Israel to exist and those who are not, believe that the only practical solution to the conflict will be a two-state solution.

## Survey Methodology

The three waves of surveys in this study were conducted by College Pulse. College Pulse is a survey and analytics firm that specializes in polling college students. College Pulse maintains a panel of hundreds of thousands of validated current college students at over 1,500 universities. The firm periodically invites these panelists to participate in short online surveys. Students typically take the surveys on smartphones, and they are incentivized through small rewards such as gift certificates. College Pulse surveys are used by major American and Jewish-American organizations, such as the Knight Foundation, Ford Foundation, Hillel, and the Anti-Defamation League.

In all waves of this study, we classified students as Jewish based on two screening questions. In the first screening question, students were asked what religion they identify with, if any. Respondents who selected “Jewish”, “Agnostic”, “Atheist”, or “Nothing in particular” were then shown a second screening question. The second question asked if they identify as Jewish in one or more of the following ways:

- ◆ Jewish from a cultural perspective
- ◆ Jewish from a religious perspective
- ◆ Jewish from a spiritual perspective
- ◆ Jewish from an ethnic or family heritage perspective
- ◆ Jewish in another way
- ◆ No, I don’t identify as Jewish

The Jewish samples consisted of respondents who identified as Jewish by religion, as well as respondents who identified as atheist, agnostic, or of no religion but were Jewish in a cultural, spiritual, or ethnic way.

### A. DESCRIPTION OF SURVEY WAVES

#### 1. WAVE 1 – APRIL 2022

The Jim Joseph Foundation initially commissioned a study in 2022 to learn about the lives, interests, and behaviors of Jewish college students, especially those who were not regularly engaged in Jewish life on campus. About half of

Jewish-identifying students seldom or rarely participate in Jewish activities on campus, and the Foundation was interested in learning more about the backgrounds and attitudes of these students so that community leaders could better engage Jewish students on campus. The 2022 questionnaire and report assessed a few items about Israel, antisemitism, and the political and social pressures that might affect Jewish life on campus, but that study was not primarily focused on those issues.

In addition to 1,721 Jewish respondents, the April 2022 survey also included 1,029 non-Jewish students. The non-Jewish sample was designed to be representative of college students nationally. The motivation for surveying non-Jewish students was to provide a comparison set to the Jewish students. For instance, we asked both Jewish and non-Jewish students whether their “religious/ethnic/racial group’s community on campus” was an important factor when they were deciding where to apply to college. About 21% of Jewish students said it was important, which was three times the rate for non-Jewish students (7%). The non-Jewish sample offers a useful benchmark for evaluating whether the answers from Jewish students are high or low when compared to college students at large.

Note that when College Pulse transmitted data in 2023 and 2024, the firm also provided updated weights used to measure the non-Jewish population in 2022. Weights are used for the non-Jewish population in 2022 to make the sample representative of all US college students. Because of the updates to the weights, some of the demographic estimates of the 2022 non-Jewish sample are different than as reported in 2022. In addition, in the updated file, there are 1,033 non-Jewish respondents instead of 1,029.

## 2. WAVE 2 – NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2023

In the wake of the October 7, 2023 attacks in Israel and the following Israel-Hamas war, the Jim Joseph Foundation wanted to understand how the conflict affected Jewish students’ experiences on campus. The focus of the second wave of the study was to learn how the war affected students on campus, from social tension and antisemitism to students’ own interest in and participation in Jewish life on campus. In total, we surveyed 944 Jewish students between November 16 and December 21, 2023.

Some of the students we interviewed in the spring of 2022 were still in college in fall 2023, and we were especially interested in re-engaging them in our research. We were able to re-interview 155 of these students. The 2022-2023 panel allows us to study changes in responses from the very same individuals over time. These changes cannot be attributable to the sampling variation where different types of students might be willing to take surveys at different times. Rather, they are attributable to attitudinal change.

As in the first wave of the study, we surveyed non-Jewish students in wave 2, 1,549 in total. However, in wave 2, we used a slightly different methodology. Since the study was centered around social tensions on campus post-October 7, we surveyed non-Jewish students on campuses with substantial Jewish populations. Those campuses are quite diverse. They include public schools (e.g., Binghamton University, University of Michigan) and private schools (e.g., Columbia University, Tulane University); they are in northeast (e.g., Dartmouth College, Northeastern University), the south (e.g., Emory University, University of Central Florida), the midwest (e.g., Washington University in St. Louis, the Ohio State University), and the west (e.g., University of California at San Diego, University of Arizona).

The benefit of this alternative sampling is that we can ask about non-Jewish students’ experience with, and opinions about, the Jewish community on campus. The drawback is that the non-Jewish sample is not directly comparable to the initial 2022 wave of the study.

## 3. WAVE 3 – APRIL-JUNE 2024

The final wave of the study was conducted from April 28, 2024 to June 26, 2024. The sample includes 1,006 Jewish respondents and 1,516 non-Jewish respondents, both of which were surveyed using the same methods as in wave 2. In order to test for changes in attitudes and behaviors over time, most of the questions that were asked in wave 3 were the same as wave 2. The non-Jewish students were not from exactly the same set of schools as in wave 2, but they were similarly selected because they attend schools that have Jewish communities on campus.

Wave 3 includes a 2023-2024 panel of students who were surveyed both in waves 2 and 3, the fall and spring waves of the 2023-2024 school year. The panel of repeat respondents includes 245 Jewish students and 320 non-Jewish students. Again, we are particularly attentive to within-subject change over time, as we can attribute such changes to attitudinal or behavioral shifts rather than to variations in sampling. Note that a total of 49 respondents were surveyed in all three waves; however, the group is small enough that we do not assess them as a separate subpopulation.

### A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Panel surveys are surveys in which the same respondents are interviewed multiple times. We will reference the first panel of 155 Jewish students as the 2022-2023 panel or the wave 1-2 panel. We will refer to the second panel of 245 Jewish students and 320 non-Jewish students as the 2023-2024 panel or the wave 2-3 panel. The full set of respondents in each wave we will refer to as cross-sections or as waves. We have wave 1 (spring 2022), wave 2 (fall 2023), and wave 3 (spring 2024).

At the end of this report, we include a brief methodological appendix. Here, we will summarize two key takeaways from that appendix that will help explain why we analyze the results the way we do. For one, because the true population characteristics of Jewish college students are unknown, we cannot determine whether one or more of our survey waves is representative or unrepresentative. Accordingly, when we do an over-time analysis to see how students' views changed from 2022 to 2023 to 2024, we focus on the panels

of students surveyed multiple times. As will be clear in the analysis, the trends in the panel are usually consistent with trends in the cross-sections. When we look at the full cross-sectional samples, we focus on comparisons of subgroups (e.g., students with robust Jewish backgrounds versus less robust Jewish backgrounds, students who are very liberal versus students who are not very liberal). We have no reason to expect that our sample would not reflect differences in the population across subsets like these.

Second, as detailed in the methodological appendix, the survey vendor, College Pulse, made an error that affected six of the questions asked to non-Jewish students and six of the questions asked to Jewish students in the final wave of the study. Whereas in previous waves, students could answer “don't know” to agree/disagree questions, in 2024 College Pulse mistakenly shifted the response option to “neither agree nor disagree.” When we learned of the error, we asked College Pulse to conduct an experiment to determine how this may have affected results. The results from that experiment are in the appendix. They suggest that responses to almost all the affected questions are comparable across waves.

However, because of this error, we change the way we analyze agree/disagree questions compared to previous reports. In previous reports, we measured the percentage of respondents who agree with a statement among respondents who either agreed or disagreed (i.e., ignoring “don't knows”). For the sake of comparability across waves, we switch the analysis to the percentage who agree based on all respondents who were shown a question, *including* those who said they did not know (in 2022 and 2023) and who answered they neither agree nor disagree (in 2024). While the experiment gives us some confidence that the error did not likely impact most of the responses, we flag the affected questions throughout the report to remind readers that there was a response-option change between 2023 and 2024.

# Jewish Background, Identity, and Participation

## A. JEWISH BACKGROUND

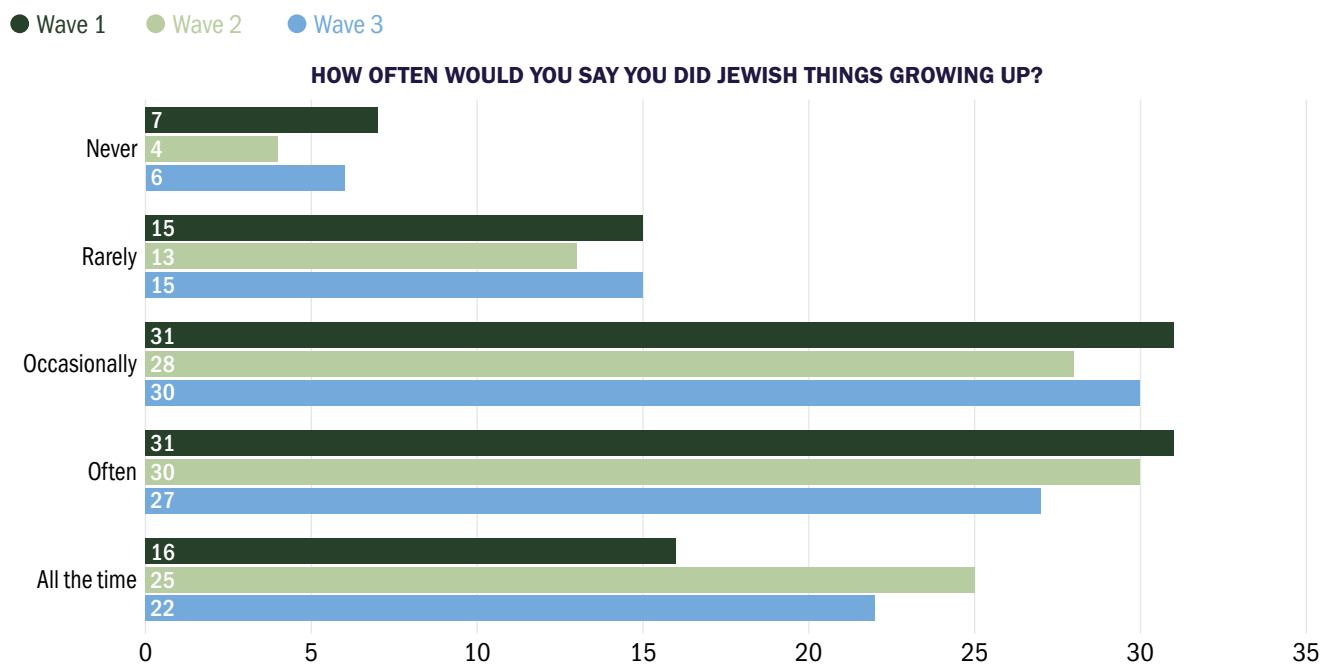
We use several measures to summarize the kind of Jewish upbringing that students had and their level of traditional observance. Our first measure (Fig. 1) asks students how often they did “Jewish things” growing up. Across survey waves, about half of Jewish students answer that they did Jewish things “often” or “all the time”, with 47% answering this way in 2022, 55% in 2023, and 49% in 2024.<sup>5</sup>

Next, we asked specifically about eleven different Jewish behaviors that students may have done growing up. These include attending synagogue services, celebrating Shabbat and other holidays, having a bar/bat mitzvah, attending Hebrew school, visiting Israel, participating in a Jewish youth group, attending a Jewish overnight camp, attending a Jewish day school, cooking Jewish foods, wearing clothing or jewelry with Jewish symbols, and participating in a Jewish community service project.

In all waves, the most common practices were Shabbat/holiday observance, synagogue attendance, and cooking Jewish foods (see Fig. 2). Majorities of all three waves reported having done those things, though they may vary in how often they did them and the extent to which they were connected to organizations while doing them. Day school attendance was the least common, with 15% in wave 1 respondents, 27% in wave 2 respondents, and 22% in wave 3 respondents reporting that they had gone to Jewish day school. In general, as shown in Figure 2, wave 2 respondents came from more engaged Jewish backgrounds compared to wave 1 and wave 3. It may be that immediately after October 7, when wave 2 was administered, a greater number of Jewish respondents *expressed* that they had done these behaviors due to a heightened salience of Jewish identity.

A third measure of Jewish background is whether the students identified with a denomination, which may proxy for closer connections to Jewish institutions and community. In wave 1, 53% identified with a denomination. In wave 2, 65% identified with a denomination. In wave 3, 59% identified with a denomination. The most common denominational affiliation is Reform, with about a quarter to a third of each sample identifying with Reform Judaism.<sup>6</sup>

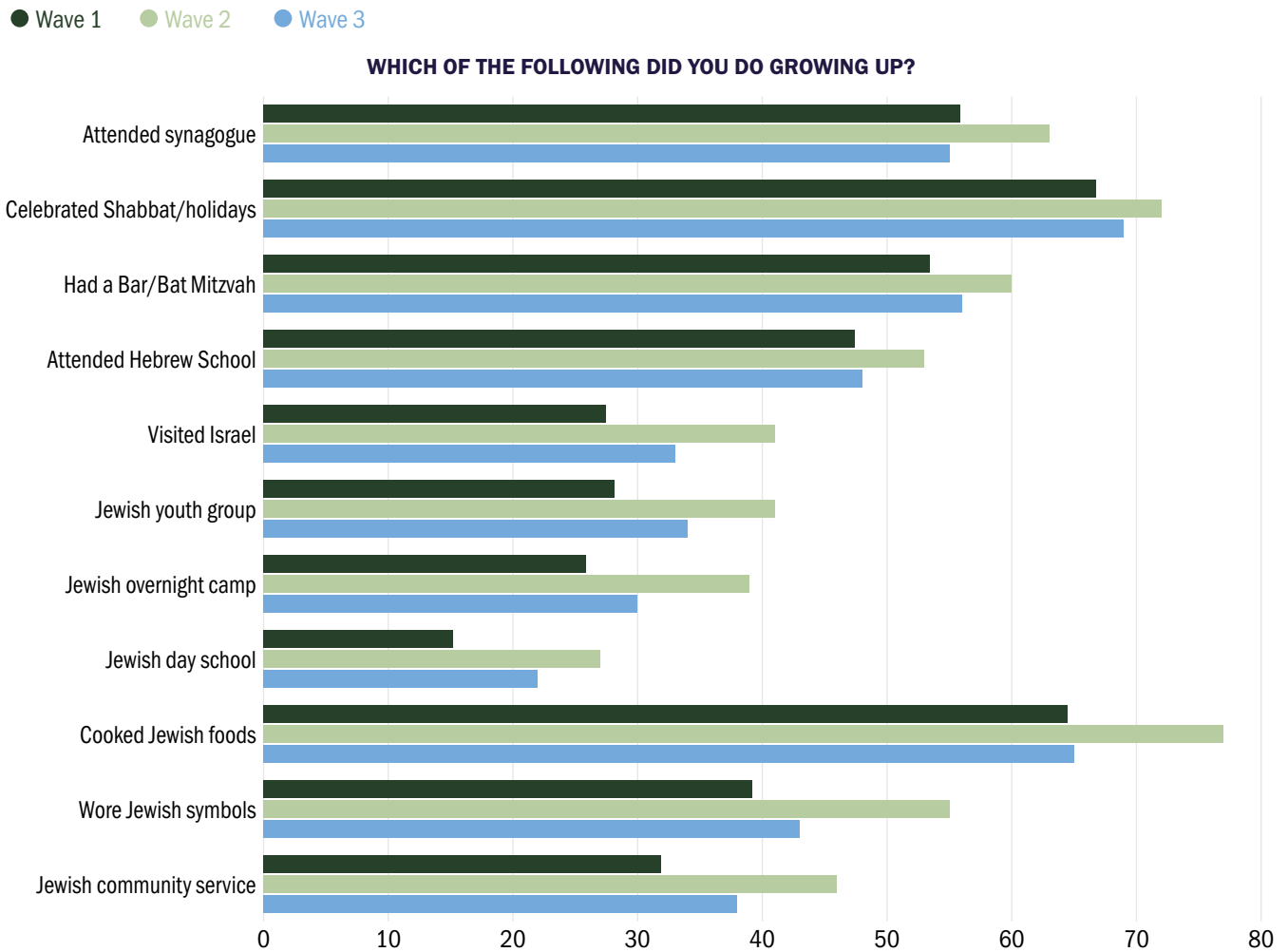
**FIGURE 1**



NOTE: N = 1,721 (wave 1) N = 944 (wave 2) N = 1,006 (wave 3).



**FIGURE 2**



NOTE: N= 1,721 (wave 1) N = 944 (wave 2) N = 1,006 (wave 3).

We combine the three background measures – how often students did “Jewish things”, how many actual concrete behaviors they engaged in, and whether they were part of a denomination – to create a summary measure, which we will call *background*. Below, we will assess different survey questions by dividing students into low, medium, and high background scores. The background scores are not meant to rank or judge students as people, of course, but rather they serve as a simplified way to characterize students of different Jewish backgrounds.

Looking at the 2024 wave, the median student with a low *background* score said they rarely did Jewish things growing up, participated in 2 of the 11 practices (typically some shabbat/holiday practice and Jewish cooking), and did not

affiliate with a denomination (just 13% of low *background* students affiliated). Only 7% of these students had visited Israel. The median student with a middle *background* score occasionally did Jewish things growing up, participated in about 4 of 11 practices, and in two-thirds of cases did affiliate with a denomination. About half of these students said they attended synagogue, had a bar/bat mitzvah, and went to a Hebrew school. A quarter had visited Israel. The median student with a high *background* score said they did Jewish things all the time growing up. They nearly all (96%) identified with a denomination, and they participated in 9 of 11 practices. About half of them went to day schools, two-thirds to Jewish summer camps and two-thirds had visited Israel.

## B. SENSE OF JEWISH IDENTITY AND CONNECTION TO ISRAEL

Across all three waves of the study, we asked students: *How important is your Jewish identity to you?* And we asked, *how close do you feel to a Jewish community right now?* In the post-October 7 surveys, we also asked: *To what extent do you feel a connection to Israel?*

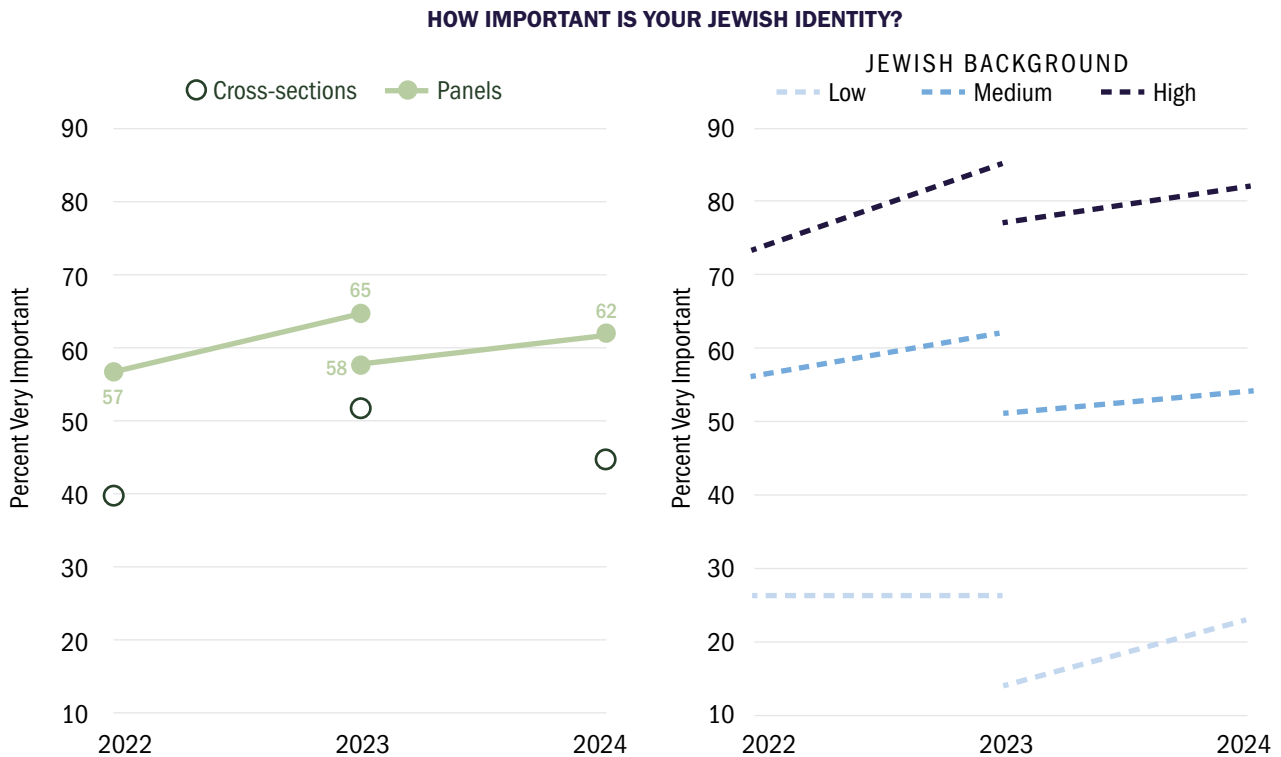
In the next graphs, we show the percent who said their identity is very important (Fig. 3), the percent who said they feel very close to a Jewish community (Fig. 4), and the percent who said they feel very much connected to Israel (Fig. 5).

The green lines show the change in the panel design. As expected, students who are surveyed multiple times tend to be more Jewishly engaged than the typical respondent (as evidenced by higher agreement that Jewish identity is important in the panels compared to in the cross-sections). In the graph, we focus on the change over time. We see that

even though the cross-sections show a smaller number of Jewish students saying their Jewish identity is very important to them, the panel shows no such reduction. In both panels, we see statistically significant increases in the strength of identity. In shades of blue, we display the panel subdivided by high, medium, and low background. The increase in strength of identity is clearest among those with high background scores, but no group shows decreasing strength of identity. In fact, between waves 2 and 3, it is students with low background scores who show the most increase in strength of identity. The evidence here suggests an elevated sense of Jewish identity after October 7.

The next graph depicts how close Jewish students feel to a Jewish community. We see very consistent evidence in the cross-section, in the panel, and within each subgroup of the panel that there was a heightened sense of closeness toward a Jewish community in fall 2023, but then a reversion by spring 2024.

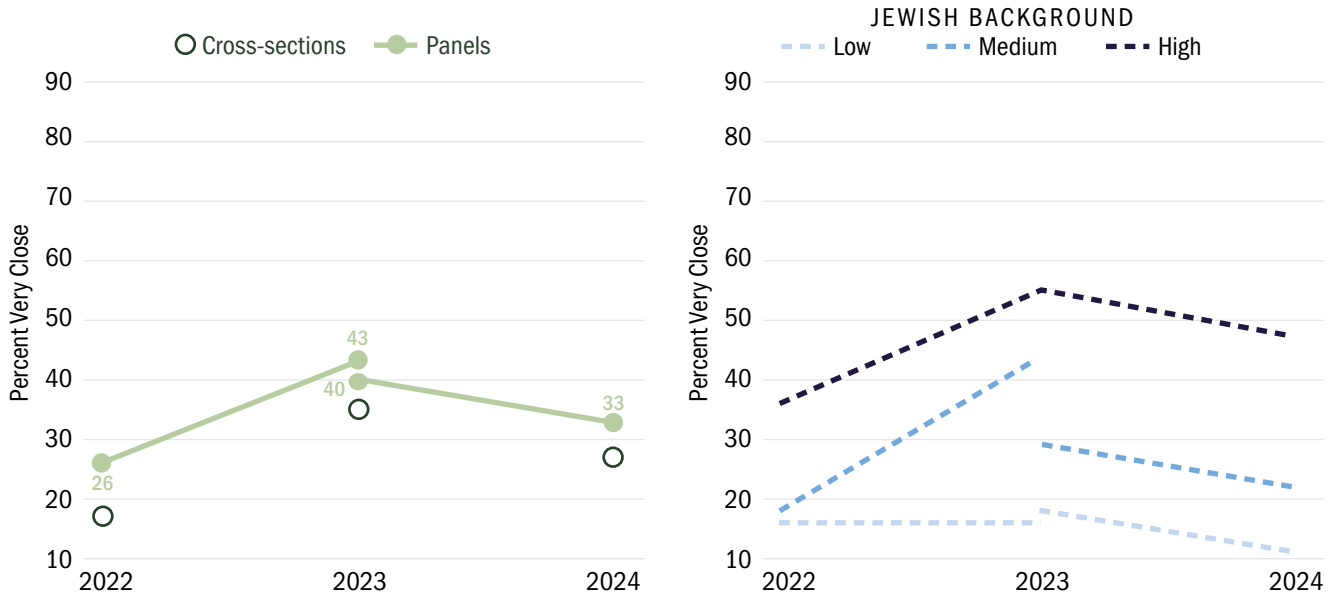
**FIGURE 3**



NOTE: N = 1,721 (wave 1) N = 944 (wave 2) N = 1,006 (wave 3) N = 155 (wave 1-2 panel) N = 245 (wave 2-3 panel). The average agreement in cross-sections is shown in hollow circles. Panel results are shown with green lines on the left. On the right, panels are divided into high, medium, and low Jewish background. The wave 1-2 change overall and among high background respondents is statistically significant. The wave 2-3 change overall and among low background respondents is statistically significant.

**FIGURE 4**

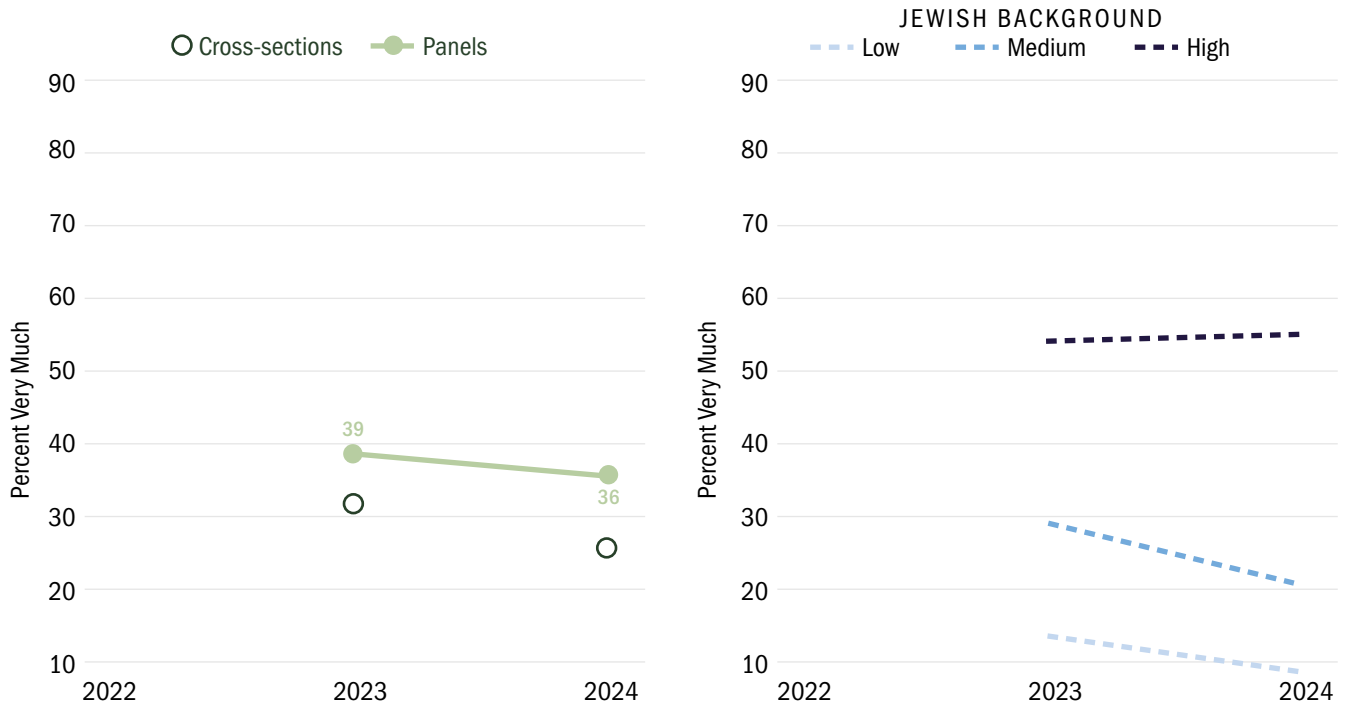
**HOW CLOSE DO YOU FEEL TO A JEWISH COMMUNITY RIGHT NOW?**



Note: N= 1,721 (wave 1) N = 944 (wave 2) N = 1,006 (wave 3) N= 155 (wave 1-2 panel) N = 245 (wave 2-3 panel). The average agreement in cross-sections is shown in hollow circles. Panel results are shown with green lines on the left. On the right, panels are divided into high, medium, and low Jewish background. The overall wave 1-2 and wave 2-3 change is statistically significant. The wave 1-2 change for high and medium background respondents is statistically significant.

**FIGURE 5**

**TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU FEEL A CONNECTION TO ISRAEL?**



Note: N= 1,721 (wave 1) N = 944 (wave 2) N = 1,006 (wave 3) N= 155 (wave 1-2 panel) N = 245 (wave 2-3 panel). The average agreement in cross-sections is shown in hollow circles. Panel results are shown with green lines on the left. On the right, panels are divided into high, medium, and low Jewish background. Wave 2-3 middle background change is statistically significant.

Similarly, when we ask students if they feel a connection to Israel, more students report feeling “very much” of a connection in 2023 than in 2024. However, the difference is only statistically significant among those in the middle background group. As is evident from these graphs, students with robust Jewish backgrounds were much more likely than other students to say their identity is important, to feel close to a Jewish community, and to feel connected to Israel.

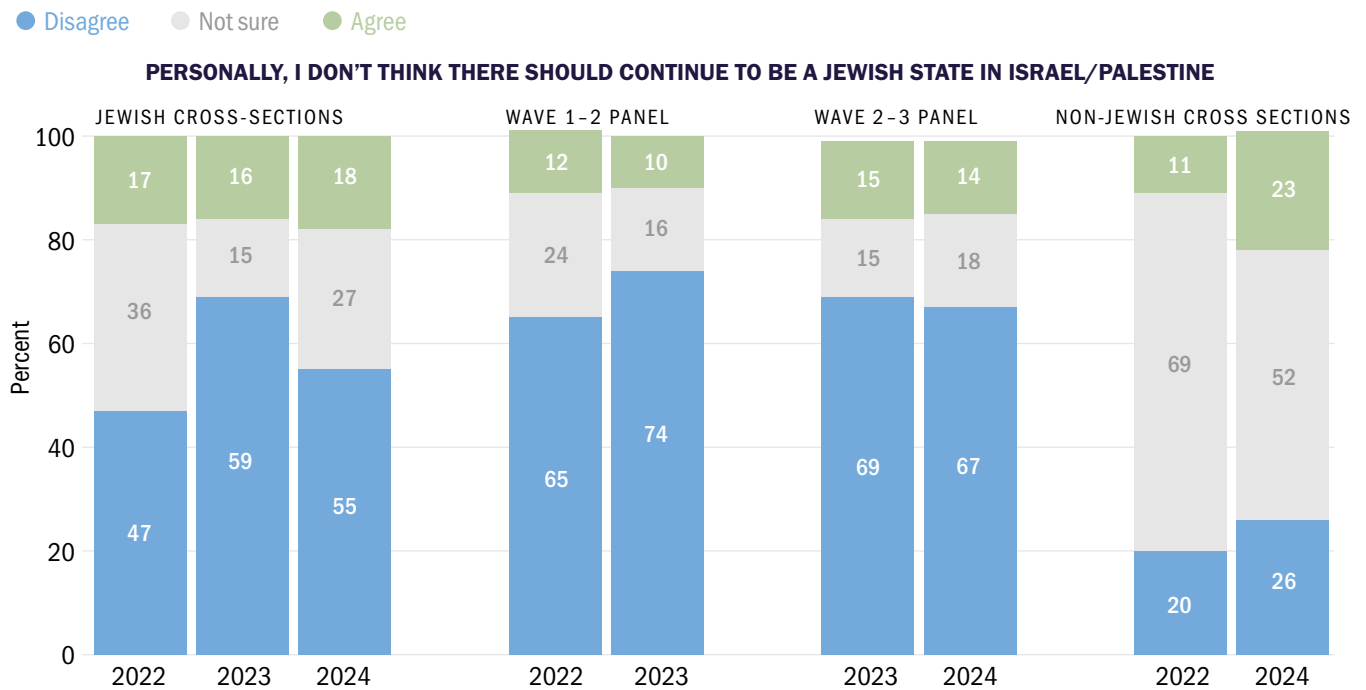
We asked similar questions of non-Jewish students as well. We asked non-Jewish students: *What is the religious, ethnic, or racial group that you personally identify most closely with?* Over half (58%) of non-Jewish students in 2024 identified a group. The others said, “none.” Of those who feel connected to a group, we asked parallel questions to the ones we asked to Jewish students: *How important to you is this religious, ethnic, or racial group identity?* And, *How close do you feel to a religious/ethnic/racial community right now?* Among non-Jewish students with a group identity, 43% said their identity was very important to them (compared to the 45% for Jewish students), and 21% said they feel very close to their community (compared to 27% for Jewish students).

Before presenting additional results related to Jewish identity and participation, we show the responses to the question of whether respondents think there should be a Jewish state of Israel. We analyze this question here to measure how Jewish identity and participation vary based on one’s views about a Jewish state. We asked this agree/disagree question: *Personally, I don’t think there should continue to be a Jewish state in Israel/Palestine.* In Figure 6, we measure the percentage who said “strongly agree” or “agree” (grouped), the percentage who said “strongly disagree” or “disagree” (grouped), and the percentage who said they neither agree nor disagree or did not know.

In all three waves and across the two panels, there is very little movement into or out of the “agree” category among Jewish respondents. About 10-15% of Jewish respondents consistently said they do not think there should be a Jewish state. In the wave 1-2 panel, there is a clear decline of individuals who have no opinion and an increase in those who believe there should be a Jewish state in Israel/Palestine.

This question was asked of both the Jewish and non-Jewish samples in wave 1 and wave 3, but it was not asked of the

**FIGURE 6**



Note: Jewish Respondents: N= 1,721 (wave 1), N = 944 (wave 2), N = 1,006 (wave 3), N= 155 (wave 1-2 panel), N = 245 (wave 2-3 panel). Non-Jewish respondents: 1,033 (wave 1), 1,516 (wave 3). The wave 1-2 panel change is statistically significant.

non-Jewish students in wave 2 (due to a programming error). Approximately twice as many non-Jewish students said there should not be a Jewish state in 2024 (23%) as said the same in 2022 (11%). There is also an increase in the share who believe there should be a Jewish state (26%) in 2024 from 20% in 2022. Recall, however, that the 2022 and 2024 non-Jewish samples were recruited differently, with the latter drawn from students at schools with Jewish communities. As such, we are especially cautious in interpreting any changes between the 2022 and 2024 non-Jewish samples. Approximately twice as many non-Jewish students do not have an opinion about this question compared to Jewish students. If we set aside those who do not have an agree or disagree position (about half the sample), we see that the non-Jewish students are split roughly evenly in 2024 between supporting and opposing a Jewish state. The Jewish students, by comparison, support a Jewish state by a ratio of about 5 to 1. Note that this is the first question in the analysis affected by the change in answer options from “don’t know” to “neither agree nor disagree” between waves 2 and 3. We do not expect that change to affect the percentage of agreement.

Throughout the report, we treat this survey question as a key metric that divides students between those who believe there should be some kind of Jewish state in Israel/Palestine and those who do not. We avoid using the terms “Zionist” and “anti-Zionist” to describe these worldviews because those terms are more complex than the views solicited by this simple survey question. However, given the importance of this question for the report, we examine the kinds of students who agree and disagree with the position. Later, we will also look at other questions to gauge opinions about Israel, such as whether Israel or Hamas is more to blame for the war and what students think about the Netanyahu government.

Jewish students in 2024 who do not believe there should be a Jewish state have a much different sense of Jewish identity compared to Jewish students who do believe there should be a Jewish state in Israel. Among the former group, 23% said

that their Jewish identity is very important to them and 13% said they feel very close to a Jewish community. Among the latter group, 64% said their Jewish identity is very important to them and 42% said they feel very close to a Jewish community.

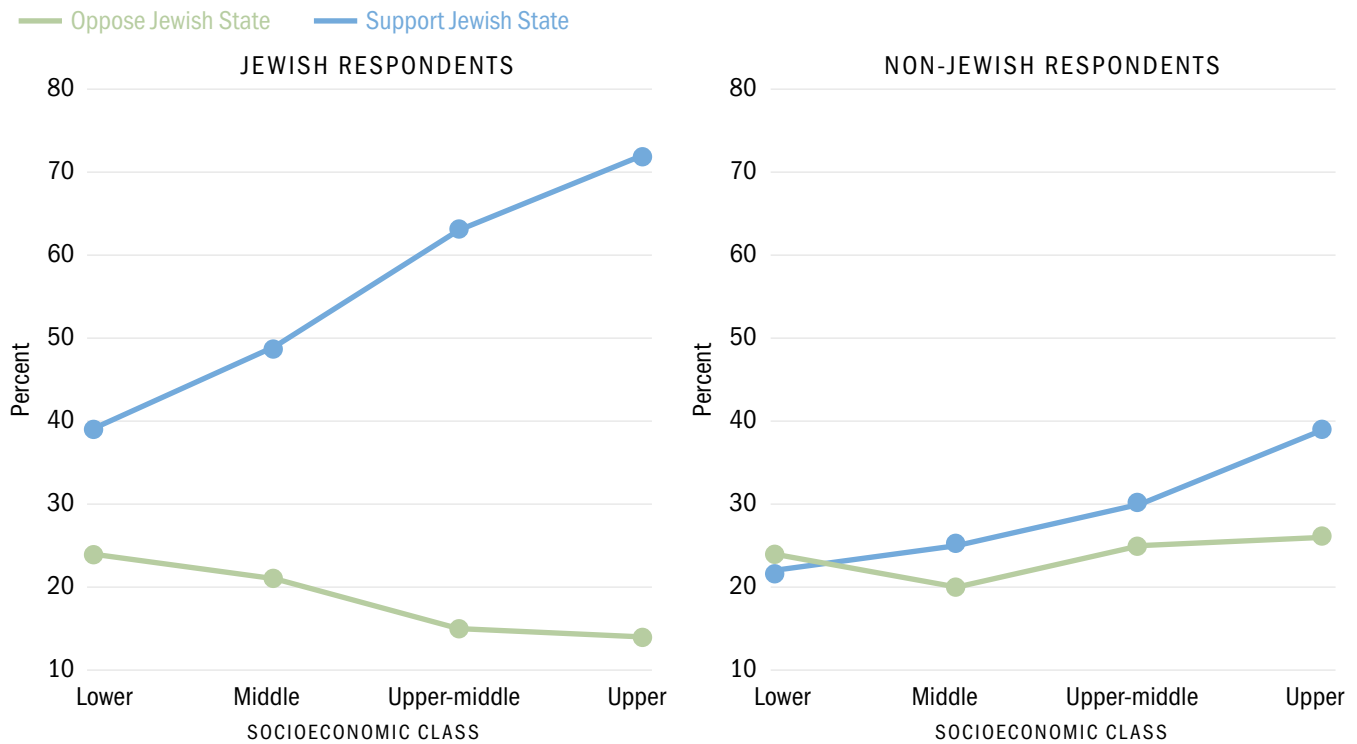
What are the demographic predictors of holding a view that Israel should not exist as a Jewish state? Focusing on the 2024 sample of non-Jewish students first, we find that race, sexual orientation, gender, and ideology are all strong independent predictors. Students who are non-white, female or non-binary, or left-leaning are all significantly more likely to believe that Israel should not exist as a Jewish country compared to non-Jewish students who are white, male, and more conservative.

Among Jewish students, race, gender, and sexual orientation are also predictive of opposing the Jewish state, but other factors are more predictive, namely Jewish background, ideology, and socioeconomic class. Jewish students with a more robust Jewish background and more conservative views are more likely to believe there should be a Jewish state.

What are the demographic predictors of not being sure whether Israel as a Jewish state should continue to exist? Among non-Jewish students, the main predictor is having a more conservative political ideology. Among Jewish students, having a less robust Jewish background, lower socioeconomic class, and identifying as non-white are all predictive of not having an opinion on the matter.

The relationship between socioeconomic class and attitudes toward Israel is worthy of emphasis. In general, there is a strong relationship between Jewish background and class, wherein students with more traditional Jewish backgrounds tend to come from wealthier families. (Note that the college student population includes few *Haredi* Jews, who are on average lower in socioeconomic status but tend not to attend college.) Even upon controlling for Jewish background and political ideology, there is still a strong relationship between class and attitudes toward Israel in 2024. The higher a person is on the socioeconomic spectrum, the more supportive that person is of a Jewish state.

FIGURE 7



Note: 2024 cross-section. Respondents' views on whether they support the existence of Israel as a Jewish state, by their family's socioeconomic class. In the graph, "lower" includes individuals who said their family is either lower class or working class. Sample sizes range from 51 (upper class, not Jewish) to 640 (middle class, not Jewish).

The figure above shows the strength of the relationship between class and Israel attitudes for both Jewish and non-Jewish students in wave 3. For non-Jewish students, students from wealthier backgrounds tend to support the existence of Israel more, with support varying from about 20% among lower- or working-class families to about 40% for upper-class families. Among Jewish students, support goes from about 40% among lower/working class students (about 15% of Jewish students are lower/working class in this sample) to about 75% among upper class students (about 9% of Jewish students in the sample). Among Jewish students, socioeconomic status is negatively correlated with opposition to a Jewish state: an increase in socioeconomic class for Jewish students is correlated with a decline in opposition to a Jewish state, which is not the case for the non-Jewish sample.

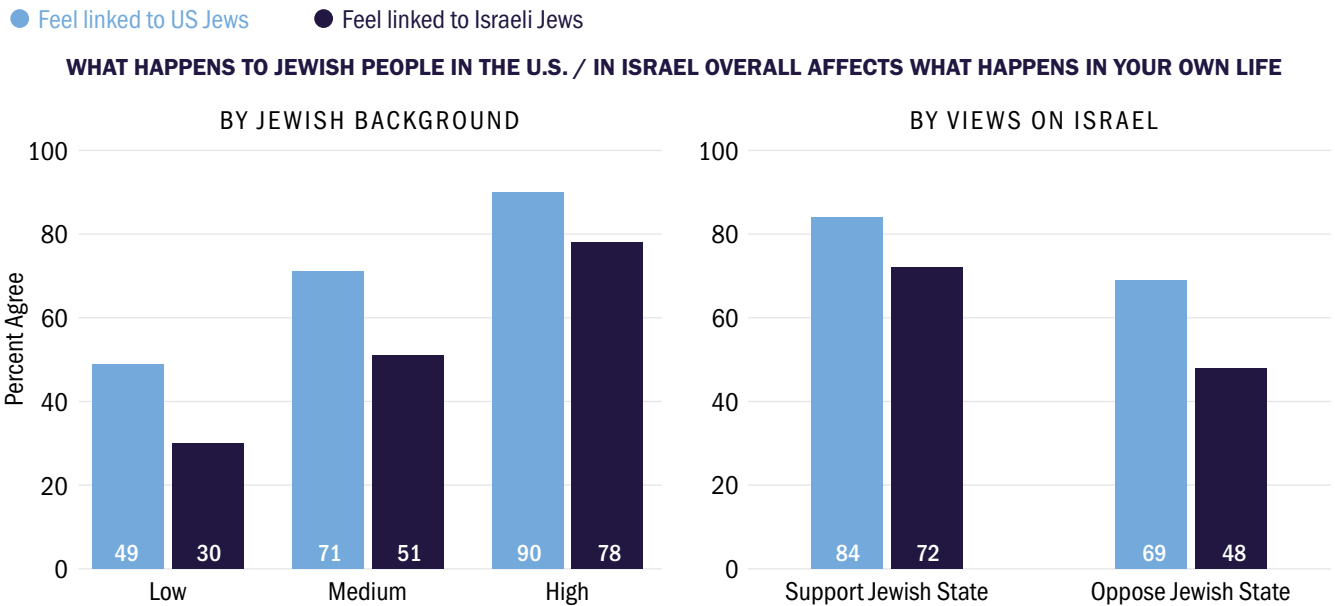
A relationship like this is visible in the 2022 data as well, before the war. Among students with high *background* scores in all samples, there is no relationship between class and Israel attitudes. But among students with lower *background*

scores, there is a consistent effect. Later in the report, we revisit these socioeconomic patterns.

Finally, on the topic of identity, we asked new questions in 2024 that we had not asked in prior waves. These questions measure a sense of *linked fate* that Jewish students feel, a concept we borrow from Prof. Michael Dawson's research on race.<sup>7</sup> To what extent do Jewish students feel that their own well-being is connected to what happens to either Jews in the United States or Jews in Israel? Across the whole sample, 70% of Jewish respondents agreed with the first statement and 54% agreed with the second. Agreement rises with levels of Jewish background, as noted in the next graph.

Responses also vary with views about Israel, but perhaps less than one might expect. Among Jewish students who do not support the Jewish state of Israel, 69% believe that what happens to American Jews overall affects them personally and 48% believe that what happens to Israeli Jews overall affects them personally. These numbers are 84% and 72%, respectively, for students who believe Israel should exist as a Jewish state.

**FIGURE 8**



NOTE: 2024 cross-section. Background N: 344 (low) 300 (medium) 362 (high). Israel attitudes N: 186 (oppose) 550 (support).

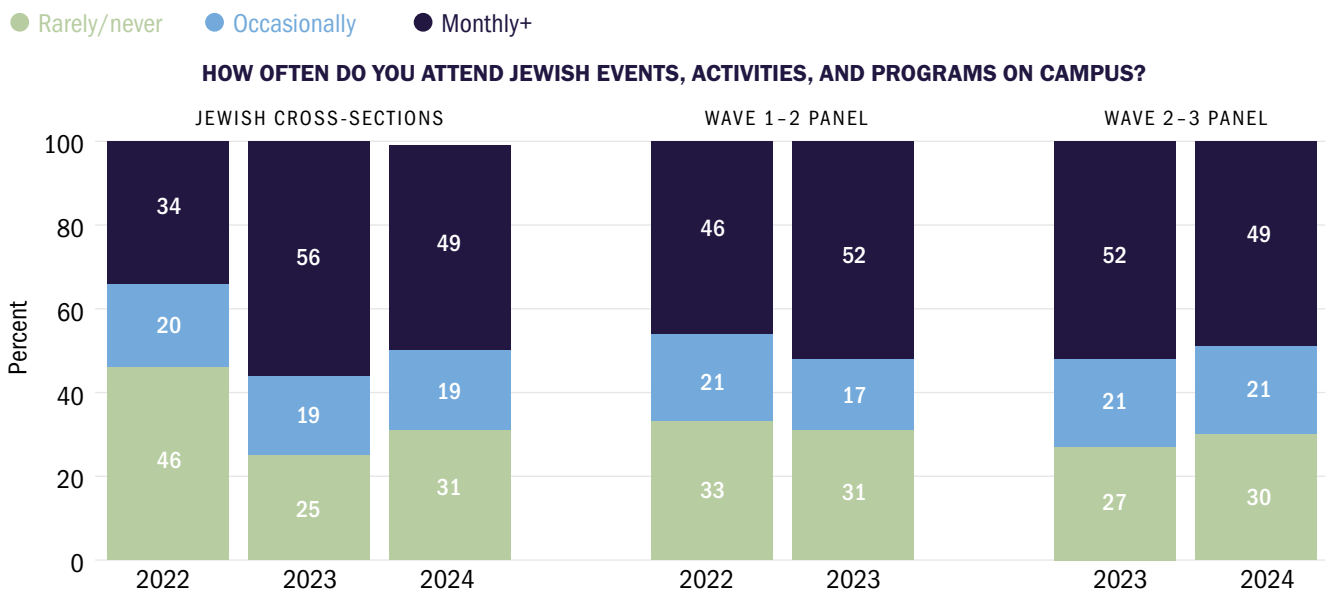
### C. PARTICIPATION

In all three waves, we asked Jewish students about their participation in Jewish activities on campus. We divide the responses into those who attend at least once or twice a

month, those who attend a few times a year, and those who say they seldom or never attend Jewish activities.

Between 2022 and 2023, we see increases in monthly+ participation in the panel (and the cross-sections), though

**FIGURE 9**

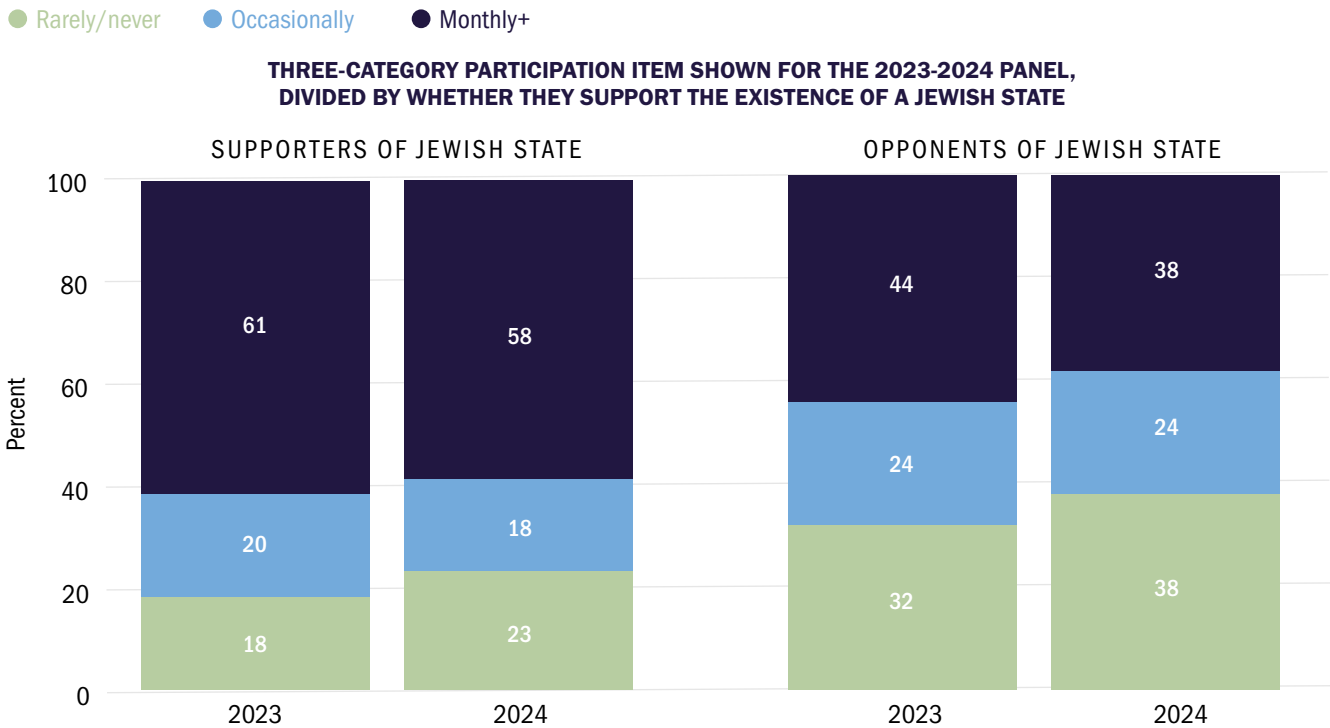


NOTE: N for cross-sections: 1,721 (2022) 944 (2023) 1,006 (2024). N for panels: 155 (wave 1-2) 231 (wave 2-3).

the change in the panel is not statistically significant. The panel suggests a decline between 2023 and 2024 of the same magnitude as the increase. If we subset the Jewish students by level of Jewish background, the panel data suggests the most movement between waves was among students with high *background* scores. In 2023, 72% of them said they were attending monthly or more. In 2024, that percentage dropped to 65%, a statistically significant change. Between 2023-2024, the high *background* students seem to have reverted to their behavior from before the war started.

Looking at the relationship between attendance and attitudes toward Israel in 2024, we see that 65% of monthly attendees support the existence of a Jewish state, 17% do not support a Jewish state, and 18% are not sure. Among occasional attendees, 52% support a Jewish state, 22% do not, and 26% aren't sure. Among those who rarely or never attend, 40% support a Jewish state, 19% do not, and 41% are not sure. Thus, the main difference between attendees and non-attendees on this metric is not that opponents of the Jewish state are less represented among attendees, but rather that those who do not attend Jewish activities are much less likely to have an opinion.

**FIGURE 10**



Note: Three-category participation item shown for the 2023-2024 panel, divided by whether Jewish respondents support the existence of a Jewish state (N=163) or not (N = 34). The change over time is significant for Israel supporters.



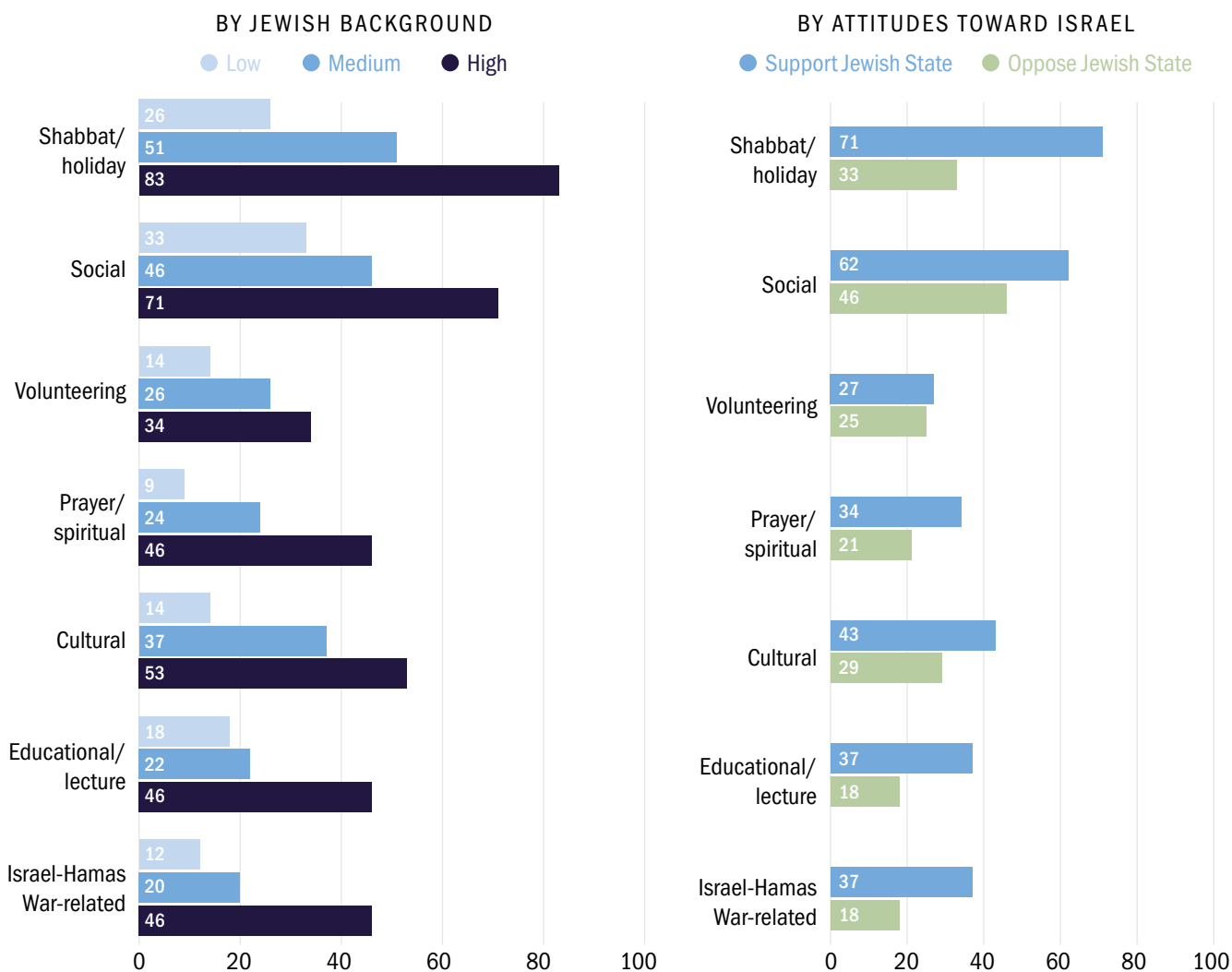
Figure 10 focuses on the 2023-2024 panel and tracks change over time in Jewish activity attendance, subdivided by respondents' support of the existence of a Jewish state. As noted, in both groups, there is an increase of 5-6 percentage points of students saying they rarely or never attend Jewish activities and events. The change is statistically significant for the supporters of a Jewish state. For the opponents, the sample in the panel is small (N=34), and so the results are not significant.

In 2024, we asked students what kind of Jewish events they attended this past year. We were interested to know the extent to which participation was focused on Israel-related programming. We show results for the full sample, divided by students of different backgrounds, and by support of the existence of Israel as a Jewish state.

The most noteworthy finding in Figure 11 is simply that Israel-Hamas War-related programs were not especially popular draws for students. Most students, even most

**FIGURE 11**

**WHAT KINDS OF JEWISH EVENTS, ACTIVITIES, AND PROGRAMS HAVE YOU ATTENDED THIS SCHOOL YEAR?**



NOTE: 2024 cross-section. Percentages shown. N by background: 344 (low) 300 (medium) 362 (high). N by Israel attitudes: 550 (support) 186 (oppose).

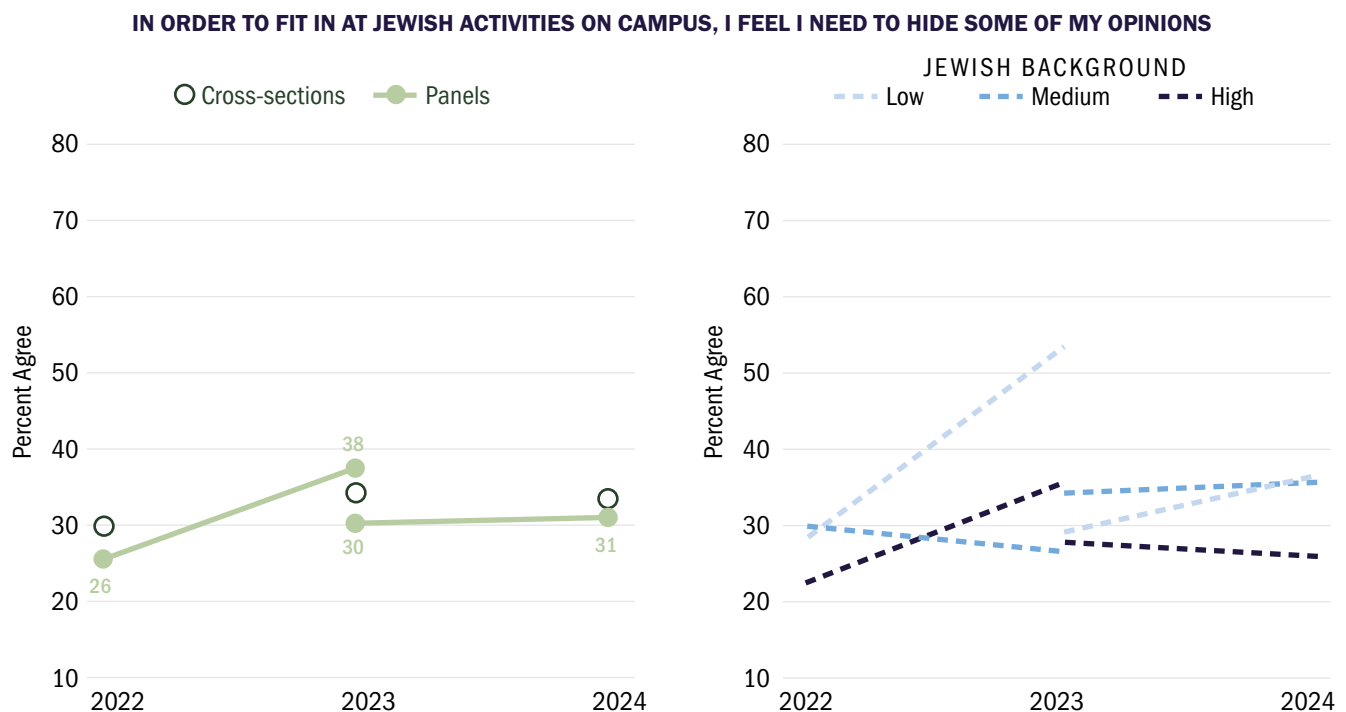
students from more robust Jewish backgrounds, did not attend a program directly related to the war. Across all groups, the most common activities remain Shabbat/holiday programs and social programs. Most Jewish students (54%) attended a Shabbat/holiday program. Most (51%) also attended a social program. About a quarter to a third of Jewish students in the sample participated in other kinds of programs, such as volunteering programs, cultural programs, or programs focused on the war in Israel. For all kinds of programs, students with higher background scores participated more than students with lower background scores. Except for volunteering-oriented programs --- which supporters of a Jewish state did at similar rates as opponents --- students who support the existence of Israel as a Jewish state participated much more than those who do not.

In all three waves, we asked students if they had to hide some of their opinions to fit in at Jewish activities on campus. Figure 12 shows a steep increase in students agreeing with this statement between Waves 1 and 2. The change is statistically significant in the panel overall, as well in both the high *background* and low *background* subgroups. In

other words, students with robust Jewish backgrounds and those with hardly any Jewish background both expressed a heightened sense of needing to hide their views in Jewish spaces on campus from 2022 to 2023. The 2023-2024 panel shows no indication that feelings on this question returned to their 2022 levels. Note that this is the second question affected by the change in response options from “don’t know” to “neither agree nor disagree”; however, the clear change in the graph is the one between 2022 and 2023, when the question wording was identical.

While high-*background* students and low-*background* students both increased their rate of agreeing that they hide their views in Jewish spaces, the students with lower *background* scores were more likely to feel this way. Similarly, in all three waves, students who said that Israel should not continue to exist as a Jewish state were about twice as likely to agree with the statement that they hide some of their views to fit in at Jewish activities, compared to students who did think there should be a Jewish state or to students who were not sure what they think.

**FIGURE 12**



NOTE: N: 1,461 (wave 1), 857 (wave 2), 1,006 (wave 3), 125 (wave 1-2) panel, 212 (wave 2-3) panel. Hollow circles show cross-sections, green lines show panels. In the right-side plot, panels are divided according to Jewish background. Change in wave 1-2 panel is statistically significant overall and for high and low background groups.

# Political Identities and Sympathies

The 2023 and 2024 waves of the study asked about how students perceive politics both in the United States and in Israel. In the previous section, we analyzed one political question: whether Israel should exist as a Jewish country. Here, we explore a broader set of political themes.

## A. IDEOLOGY AND IDEOLOGICAL IDENTITIES

In both waves 2 and 3, we asked students to place themselves on a 5-point scale of political ideology: very liberal, liberal, moderate, conservative, very conservative, or not sure.

**TABLE 1**

Ideology	Jewish		Not Jewish	
	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 2	Wave 3
V. Lib.	19%	19	16	17
Lib.	37	40	43	40
Moderate	30	28	28	31
Con./V. Con.	13	13	12	12
<i>N</i>	903	956	1408	1408

NOTE: Percentages shown. Respondents who answer “not sure” are excluded from the above table. They amount to 4-5% of the Jewish sample and 7-9% of the non-Jewish sample.

The responses are quite consistent across waves. About 15-20% of students, Jewish and non-Jewish, identified as very liberal, about 40% identified as liberal, about 30% identified

as moderate, and 12-13% identified as conservative. We combine the “conservative” and “very conservative” categories because few college students identified as very conservative (about 2%).

In addition, we asked students about their “ideological identities.” Do they identify as leftist, socialist, progressive, libertarian, Christian conservative, or alt-right? Students could choose more than one category, or none at all. The most popular category was progressive. A third of Jewish students (32% in wave 2, 34% in wave 3) identified as progressive, as did 28% of non-Jewish students. The next biggest category was leftist, with a quarter of the samples identifying this way. Socialist garnered about 12% of respondents, and libertarian 5-7% in both Jewish and non-Jewish samples. Some 6-7% of the non-Jewish students identified as Christian conservative. In the 2023 wave, 3% of non-Jewish students and 2% of Jewish students identified as alt-right, but in the 2024 wave, no non-Jewish students and 4% of Jewish students indicated that they identified that way.

When measuring ideology later in this report, we will focus on the 4-point ideological scale rather than the ideological identities. However, it is interesting to note how the ideological identities map onto a standard ideological scale. Students who identified as socialists tend to be the most liberal. Most of them marked “very liberal” when they selected from the ideological scale. Moving left to right in ideological space, the next group is leftists followed by progressives. The median leftist and progressive labeled themselves as liberal rather than very liberal. Next are the libertarians, who typically identified as moderates in this college-student sample, then alt-right, who identified between moderate and conservative. Finally, Christian conservatives primarily identified as conservative on the ideological scale.

## B. OPINION ON POLITICAL LEADERS AND VOTING

Because this survey was conducted during the 2024 presidential election campaign in the United States, the 2023 and 2024 waves asked the students for whom they planned on voting. We asked, *In the 2024 Presidential election, if the Democratic nominee is Joe Biden and the Republican nominee is Donald Trump, who would you vote for?* Students could select Biden, Trump, a third-party candidate, or they could say they did not plan to vote or were not sure. Wave 3 of the study was finished by June, prior to President Biden’s decision not to seek re-election.

As noted in the table below, in both waves the Jewish students were more likely to say they would vote for Biden and Trump, and less likely to say they would vote for a third-party candidate or abstain than the non-Jewish students were. The panel data shows that Jewish and non-Jewish students who were surveyed in both waves demonstrate a shift away from voting for Biden. These changes are statistically significant among Jewish and non-Jewish students alike.

In wave 2 (but not wave 3) we asked Jewish students about the leadership of the Netanyahu government in Israel. We asked: *Overall, how would you rate Benjamin Netanyahu’s leadership of Israel.*

**TABLE 3**

	By Jewish Background			
	Overall	Low	Medium	High
Poor	43%	36	43	51
Only fair	18	16	19	18
Good	15	20	14	10
Excellent	4	5	3	3
Don’t know	21	23	21	18
N	944	322	258	298

NOTE: 2023 cross-section, Jewish respondents. Q: Overall, how would you rate Benjamin Netanyahu’s leadership of Israel? Percentages shown.

Jewish students mostly offered negative reviews of the Israeli Prime Minister. As Table 3 shows, most Jewish students who had an opinion rated Netanyahu poorly. Students from

**TABLE 2**

	Cross-Section				Panel			
	Jewish		Not Jewish		Jewish		Not Jewish	
	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 2	Wave 3
Biden	53%	52	46	42	62	56	47	41
Trump	17	17	12	14	13	16	9	12
Third-party cand.	10	9	13	16	6	8	15	17
Abstain	5	5	9	11	5	5	11	9
Not sure	15	16	19	17	15	15	19	21
N	944	1006	1549	1516	245	245	320	320

NOTE: Q: In the 2024 Presidential election, if the Democratic nominee is Joe Biden and the Republican nominee is Donald Trump, who would you vote for? Percentages shown.

more engaged Jewish backgrounds (who tend to be more supportive of the *existence* of a Jewish state) rated Netanyahu significantly worse than students who are from less engaged backgrounds. That is not only because high-background students were less likely to say they did not know; even among students who offered a view of Netanyahu’s leadership, those with more robust Jewish backgrounds rated his leadership significantly worse.

### C. SYMPATHY AND BLAME

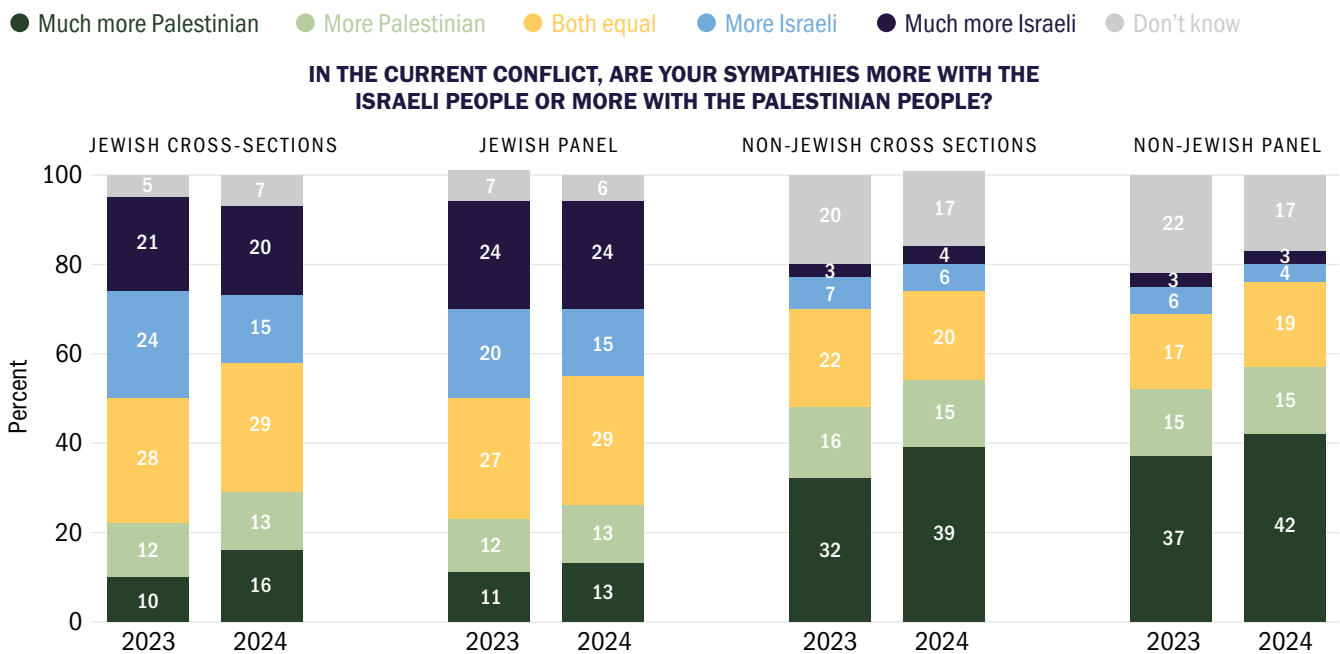
We asked students about their sympathies for Israelis and Palestinians in the current conflict. Students could respond that they sympathized much more with Palestinian people, more with the Palestinian people, both equally, more with the Israeli people, or much more with the Israeli people.

Jewish respondents are fairly evenly distributed across categories. For instance, in the 2024 cross-section, 35% said their sympathies lied more with Israelis, 29% said both equally, and 29% said more with the Palestinians. In the Jewish panel, we do not see much movement across categories from fall 2023 to spring 2024.

The non-Jewish sample is also stable across waves. At the beginning of the war in wave 2, the non-Jewish cross-section was five times more likely to say their sympathies were with Palestinians, and the ratio was similar in wave 3. In the non-Jewish panel, however, we do see a 5-percentage point reduction in the respondents who answered they did not know and a 5-percentage point increase in the respondents who said their sympathies are much more with the Palestinians.

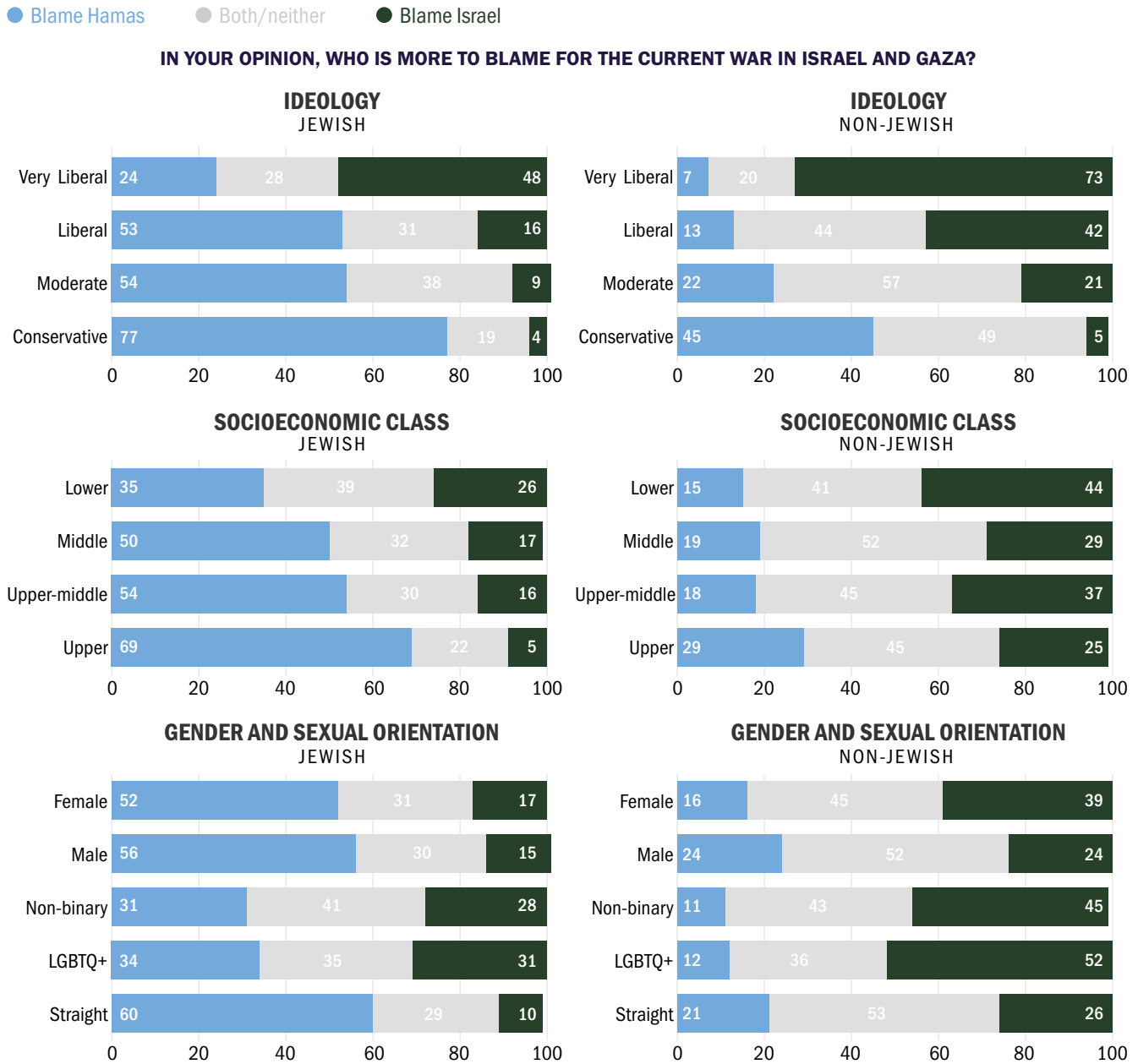
In 2024, we asked an additional question to gauge how students were perceiving the conflict in Israel and Gaza. We asked who they thought was to blame for the current war. They could answer Israel, Hamas, both equally, or neither. The Jewish students overwhelmingly blamed Hamas over Israel and the non-Jewish students felt the opposite. Fifty-one percent of the Jewish students blamed Hamas and 18% of them blamed Israel. The remainder blamed both equally (22%) or thought neither party was to blame (9%). Among non-Jewish students, 18% blamed Hamas, 35% blamed Israel, 30% said both, and 17% said neither party was to blame.

**FIGURE 13**



NOTE: For cross sections. Percentages shown. N = 944 (wave 2, Jewish); 1006 (wave 3, Jewish), 1549 (wave 2, Non-Jewish), 1516 (wave 3, Non-Jewish). For panels, N= 245 (Jewish panel), 320 (non-Jewish panel).

**FIGURE 14**



Note: 2024 cross-section. Category counts range from 51 (Non-Jewish, Upper Class) to 992 (Non-Jewish, Straight).

For the analysis in Figure 14, we combine the “both” and “neither” categories. We find a strong relationship between ideology and the assignment of blame in both the Jewish and non-Jewish samples. Among students who identified as very liberal, Jewish students were 2:1 more likely to blame Israel than Hamas, and non-Jewish students were 10:1 more likely to blame Israel. In all other ideological groups, Jewish

students primarily blamed Hamas. Among non-Jewish students, liberal and moderate students were as likely or more likely to blame Israel than Hamas. The very liberal Jewish students are distinct from other Jewish students in their attitudes about Israel, and they are also distinct from non-Jewish students who are ideologically very liberal. Their views are somewhere in between the patterns we see for other Jews and the patterns we see for very liberal students who are not Jewish.

A Jewish student's socioeconomic status is also a strong indicator of their answer to this question. The wealthier one's family, the more likely they were to blame Hamas for the war. Even when controlling for Jewish background, ideology, and whether one specifically has been to Israel before (all of which are predictive of blame attribution), socioeconomic class remains highly significant as an independent predictor of blame. Sexual orientation is another significant predictor of blame. As noted in the graph, LGBTQ+ students were significantly more likely to blame Israel than heterosexual students, and this relationship holds even when controlling for political ideology.

Among non-Jewish students, religion (not displayed on the graph) is also highly predictive of attitudes. Christians and Hindus are roughly split in their blame attribution with about a quarter blaming Israel, a quarter blaming Hamas, and half blaming both/neither. Atheists and agnostics were much more likely to blame Israel: 43% blamed Israel versus 15% who blamed Hamas. Among Muslims (N=53) 66% blamed Israel, 8% blamed Hamas, and 26% blamed both/neither.

## D. VIEWS ON JEWISH INDIGENOUSNESS AND TARGETING CIVILIANS

In both waves 2 and 3, we asked non-Jewish respondents if they thought Jewish people were indigenous to the land of Israel and if they thought all Israeli civilians should be considered legitimate targets for Hamas. In future research that asks these questions, it would be useful to also ask parallel questions about Palestinian indigeneity and the targeting of Palestinian civilians. We were not able to include those additional items here.

Students in both waves, including in the panels, answered these questions very similarly in 2023 and 2024 (in spite of the answer option shifting from “don't know” to “neither agree nor disagree”). Most students in the cross-sections

(53% in wave 2, 56% in wave 3) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement about indigeneity. Of those who had an opinion, though, they were more likely to believe Jewish people are *not* indigenous (25% said Jews are not indigenous, versus 19% who said Jews are indigenous in 2024). In the panel, the opinion that Jewish people are not indigenous was stable across waves at 30-31%. However, there was a five-percentage point shift away from the view that Jewish people are indigenous, from 18% to 13%, with movement into the “neither agree nor disagree” category.

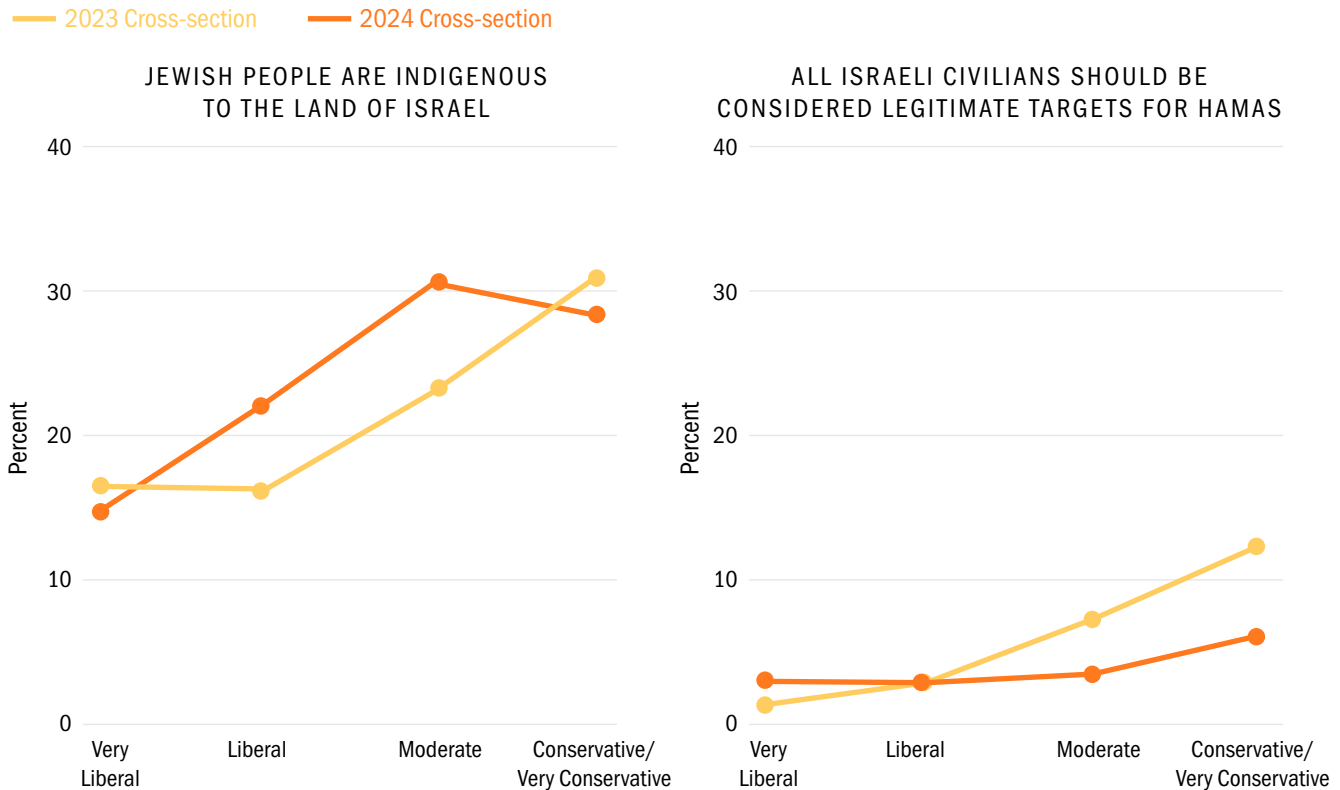
Views on whether all Israeli civilians should be considered legitimate targets of Hamas were stable across waves. In both waves of the panel, 3% agreed with the statement versus 68-70% who disagreed, with the remaining group offering no opinion.

Figure 15 shows the relationship between political ideology and agreement with questions about indigeneity and civilian death in both the 2023 and 2024 cross-sections. The graph shows percentage agreement among all respondents, including those who said they neither agreed nor disagreed. In both years, there is a strong, statistically significant relationship between more conservative ideology and a belief that Jewish people are indigenous to the land of Israel.

The plot on the right shows the relationship with believing Israeli civilians should be considered legitimate targets of Hamas. Again, in both years, there is a significant relationship between conservative ideology and believing Israeli civilians should be considered legitimate targets, though the relationship is more muted in 2024.

Among non-Jewish students, if we look at racial and religious subgroups, only white students and Christian students were more likely to say that Jews are indigenous to the land of Israel than not. But even among these groups, the majority neither agrees nor disagrees with the statement.

**FIGURE 15**



NOTE: N = 1,516 (2023 cross-section), 1,549 (2024 cross-section).

## Effects of the War on Students

The Israel-Hamas War affected not just student opinions, but it also affected their behaviors and experiences. In this section, we focus on four specific ways the war affected them: the effect on news consumption, the effect on mental health, the effect on activism, and the effect on experiences with antisemitism.

### A. NEWS CONSUMPTION

In both 2023 and 2024, we asked students, *How closely have you been following the war between Israel and Hamas?* Their answer options were: not at all, not very closely, somewhat closely, and very closely. The proportion following the news was stable across waves. In both the cross-sections and panels, approximately 50% of non-Jewish students and 74-79% of Jewish students said they followed news about the war somewhat or very closely. For Jewish students, following the news is highly correlated with Jewish background. For students with low *background* scores, 58% said they follow the news (still higher than typical non-Jewish students). Seventy-three percent of students with middle *background* scores and 86% of students with high *background* scores reported following the news.



**TABLE 4**

News-Following by Jewish/Non-Jewish Identity and by Support of a Jewish State

	Oppose Jewish State	Support Jewish State	Neither Support/Oppose
Jewish	81% follow news	81% follow news	49% follow news
Non-Jewish	74% follow news	57% follow news	33% follow news

NOTE: 2024 cross-section. N: 543 (Jewish support), 185 (Jewish oppose), 254 (Jewish neither), 391 (Non-Jewish support), 342 (Non-Jewish oppose), 783 (Non-Jewish neither).

As Table 4 shows, an interesting pattern emerges on this and other questions when we divide students based on whether they are Jewish and whether they support or oppose a Jewish state in Israel. Among Jewish students, there is no difference in news-following between those who support the existence of a Jewish state and those who oppose it. But among non-Jewish students, opponents of the Jewish state are much more likely to follow the news.

As the table also shows, students who say they neither support nor oppose the Jewish state are not typically students who are deeply interested in the topic (as measured by their news interest) yet are unsure what they think of the political and moral issues at hand, though some may fall into this category. Rather, they are students who do not pay as much attention to Israel/Palestine news.

In both 2023 and 2024, we asked students an open-ended question to learn more about how they follow the news. We asked, *In your opinion, which news sources or social media influencers are currently providing the most informative, trustworthy, and unbiased news about the war between Israel and Hamas?*

Not all students named a source. Most respondents either answered that they did not closely follow news about the war or they expressed frustration about media bias and the difficulty of trusting any source. Of the students who answered the question by naming a source, there were some differences between the Jewish and non-Jewish samples.

**TABLE 5**

	Wave 2 (2023)		Wave 3 (2024)	
	Jewish	Non-Jewish	Jewish	Non-Jewish
American News (New York Times, CNN, NPR, etc.)	41%	30	33	28
Social Media	9	14	10	14
Israeli News (Haaretz, Times of Israel, Jerusalem Post, etc.)	8	1	5	0
Palestinian News (Al Jazeera, Times of Gaza, etc.)	4	8	4	7
UK News (BBC, the Guardian, Sky News, etc.)	7	5	3	4
Advocacy Organizations	4	1	3	1
Influencers	7	6	5	7
Personal Contacts	2	1	1	1

NOTE: Table reflects coding of open-ended responses as percent of full samples of Jewish and non-Jewish students in waves 2 and 3 who named a source in the designated category. N: 944 (wave 2, Jewish), 1,549 (wave 2, non-Jewish), 1,006 (wave 3, Jewish), 1,516 (wave 3, non-Jewish).

Jewish respondents were more likely to name American news, Israeli news, and news from advocacy organizations than their non-Jewish counterparts. Non-Jewish students were more likely to mention news from social media and Palestinian sources than Jewish students were. Regarding social media, it is clear from the focus groups that students are getting a mix of traditional news sources (e.g., *New York Times* Instagram posts) and non-traditional news on social media. While some Jewish students turn to Palestinian news sources as trusted sources, almost no non-Jewish students turn to Israeli media. Furthermore, the influencers that non-Jewish students named were overwhelmingly Palestinian. For instance, students wrote that they got their information from Bella Hadid (a Palestinian model), and Palestinian journalists such as Bisan Owda, Motaz Aziza, and Hasan Piker.

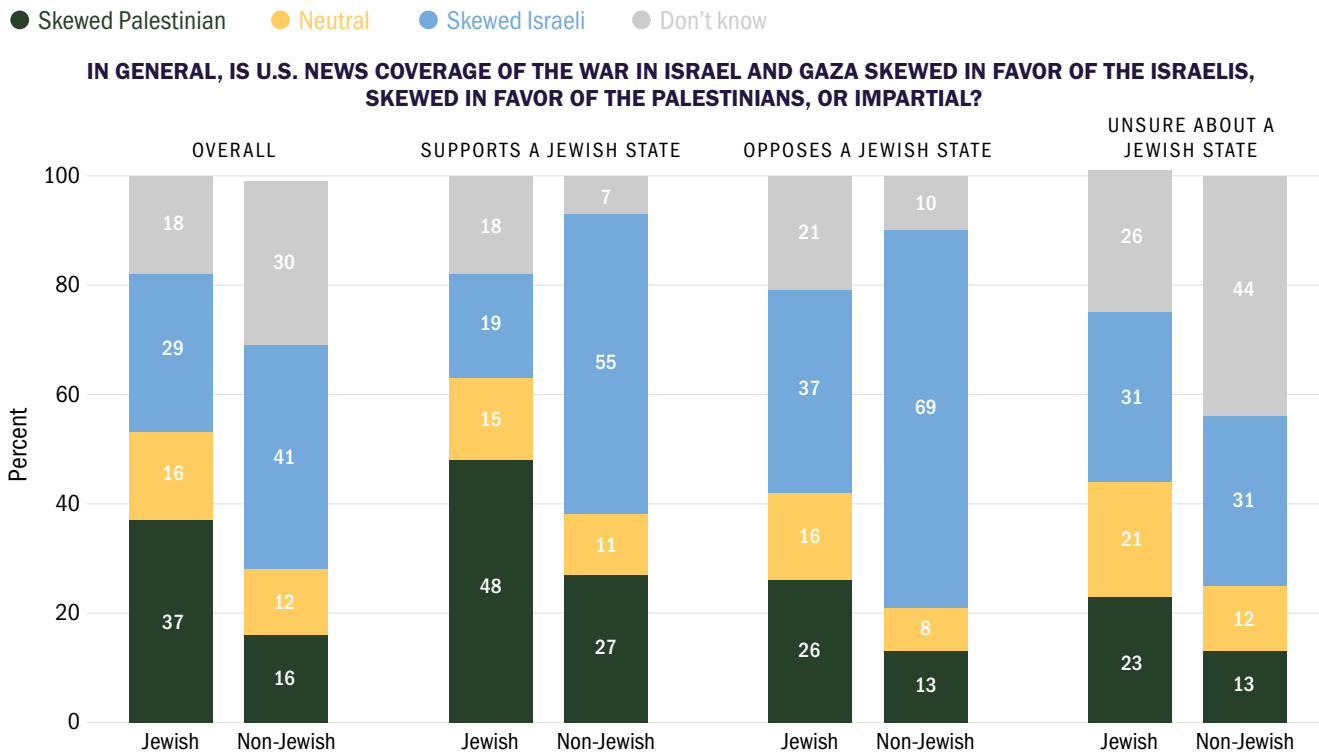
As a final measure of news-following, in 2024, we asked students whether they thought U.S. news coverage was biased in favor of one side or the other. Jewish students were more likely to think the news was skewed in favor of Palestinians and non-Jewish students thought the opposite. Figure 16

shows the responses of Jewish students compared to non-Jewish students. The graph also divides Jewish and non-Jewish students based on their opinions about the existence of a Jewish state.

Here, again, we see a difference when we look at Jewish versus non-Jewish students based on their view of Israel. Among Jewish students, those who believe there should be a Jewish state were much more likely to think U.S. news is skewed toward Palestinians than toward Israelis (48% versus 19%), and those who believe there should not be a Jewish state thought the opposite (27% versus 55%). But among non-Jewish students, students on both sides of the question of whether Israel should exist believe that U.S. news favors the Israeli position.

Again, this graph speaks to a recurring theme that Jewish students who oppose a Jewish state (18% of the 2024 wave) are distinct both from other Jewish students and from non-Jewish students who hold the same political viewpoint as them.

**FIGURE 16**



NOTE: 2024 cross-section. N: 1,006 (Jewish), 1,516 (Non-Jewish).

## B. MENTAL HEALTH

Borrowing language from Gallup, we asked respondents in both 2023 and 2024, *How would you describe your own mental health or emotional well-being at this time?*

Looking at wave 3 (April-June 2024) cross-sectional results in Table 6, there are no large differences in the ways Jewish and non-Jewish students evaluate their mental health. But looking at wave 2 (November-December 2023) results, Jewish students were about 10 percentage points more likely to rate their mental health as poor. The panel shows that this difference reflects change in individual students over

time. In the Jewish panel, the percentage of students rating their mental health as poor reduced by 10 percentage points between the two waves. This implies that Jewish students at the start of the war had a temporary decline in self-reported mental health, but then returned to more typical responses on this survey item. The change is statistically significant.

After students were asked about the current state of their mental health, they were then asked a follow-up question: *How would you have rated your mental health before hostilities between Israel and Hamas broke out?* Students used the same 4-point scale (poor, fair, good, excellent) as before.

**TABLE 6**

	Cross-Section				Panel			
	Wave 2		Wave 3		Wave 2		Wave 3	
	Jewish	Non-Jewish	Jewish	Non-Jewish	Jewish	Non-Jewish	Jewish	Non-Jewish
Poor	25%	16	13	10	25	13	15	9
Fair	39	39	36	37	37	47	39	46
Good	29	36	41	41	31	33	37	38
Excellent	7	9	10	12	8	6	8	8
N	916	1422	961	1395	230	276	230	276

Note: “Don’t know” responses are excluded here.

**TABLE 7**

Percent of students rating mental health lower than they say they would have rated it before the war.

	Jewish Students	N	Non-Jewish	N
2023 Cross-Section	44%	1006	16%	1357
2023 Panel	44	237	16	280
2024 Cross-Section	33	961	17	1395
2024 Panel	41	237	16	280

NOTE: Q: “How would you have rated your mental health before hostilities between Israel and Hamas broke out?” Table depicts percent with higher rating than the rating they offered for their current mental health.

In Table 7, we show the percentage of students who rate their current mental health lower than they say they would have rated it before the war. Over 40% of Jewish students in 2023 (cross-section and panel) rated their mental health lower than they would have before the war. This compares to only 16% of non-Jewish students. In 2024, the non-Jewish students answer similarly as they did in 2023. For Jewish students, 41% of the panel still said their mental health would have been better before the war, but only 33% of the Jewish-cross section reported this way.

Muslim students responded to the survey question about mental health similarly to the Jewish students. In 2024, 42% of Muslim students rated their mental health lower than they said they would have rated it before the war. No other religious group or racial group responded to the mental health question similarly to Jews and Muslims.

### C. ACTIVISM AND DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE CONFLICT

Students across the country had opportunities to engage in various forms of activism related to the Israel-Hamas War, and we were interested in the extent to which they engaged in activism. We asked students: *Since the outbreak of hostilities between Israel and Hamas, have you participated in any of the following activities?* We asked about events sponsored by pro-Israel groups, events sponsored by pro-Palestine groups, and war-related events sponsored by other groups. We also asked students if they attended political events unrelated to the war in order to gauge how much the war stood out from other topics of activism. In this battery of questions, we also asked students if they posted about the war on social media

or participated in a class discussion about the conflict.

On the left side of Figure 17, we show results for Jewish students, Muslim students, and all other students. We draw attention to Muslim students because, like the Jewish students, they were affected by the war in ways that were different from most other students on campus.

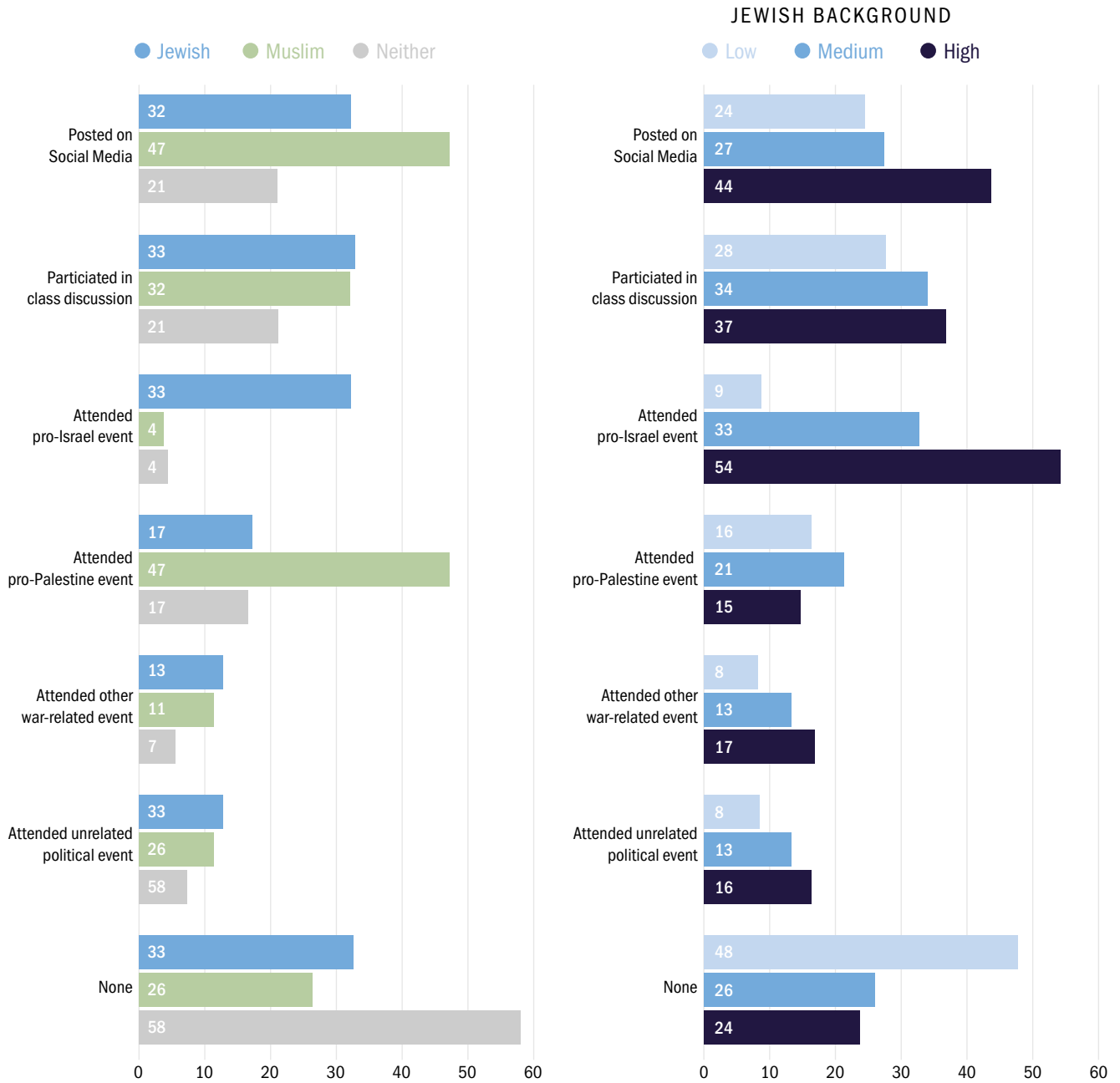
As noted, most non-Jewish and non-Muslim students did not participate in any form of activism, whereas two-thirds of Jewish students and three-quarters of Muslim students did at least one of the actions asked about here. A third of Jewish students reported posting on social media, attending a pro-Israel event, and talking about the conflict in class. The Muslim students in the sample were significantly more likely to post on social media or attend a pro-Palestine event than Jewish students were to post on social media and attend a pro-Israel event.

One big difference between pro-Israel events and pro-Palestine events is the rate at which non-Jews and non-Muslims participate. Only 4% of non-Jewish students attended events sponsored by pro-Israel groups. For events sponsored by pro-Palestine groups, 17% of non-Muslims attended, including 17% of Jewish students. Importantly, because the non-Jewish students who were surveyed attend schools with Jewish populations, the asymmetry here is unlikely to be the result of non-Jewish students not having the opportunity to attend pro-Israel events.

The right side of Figure 17 focuses only on Jewish students and divides the sample by their level of Jewish background. As shown, the big differences across categories are in posting on social media and in attending pro-Israel events, both of which are significantly correlated with one’s Jewish background.

**FIGURE 17**

**SINCE THE OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES BETWEEN ISRAEL AND HAMAS, HAVE YOU PARTICIPATED IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES?**



NOTE: 2024 cross-section. N = 1,006 (Jewish), 53 (Muslim), 1,463 (Other), 344 (low background), 300 (medium background), 362 (high background).

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JEWISH BACKGROUND AND ACTIVISM

We now take a deeper dive into students who participated in activism on campus. We focus on three groups of students: Jewish students who attended a pro-Palestine event and who themselves believe that there should not continue to be a Jewish state (7% of the Jewish sample), Jewish students who attended a pro-Israel event and believe that there should continue to be a Jewish state (25% of the sample), and everyone else in the Jewish sample (68%). We cut the data this way because there are students who attended a pro-Palestine event but who support the existence of Israel or who attended a pro-Israel event but oppose the existence of Israel. Here, we focus on a combination of behavior *and* attitudes to examine the pro-Palestine and the pro-Israel activist communities.

We do this analysis with particular questions in mind: are the Jewish students who participated in pro-Palestine activities mostly individuals who grew up in Jewish camps, schools, and denominational movements (which are overwhelmingly

Zionist in orientation) but who then adopted pro-Palestine positions? Or are they students who mostly did not grow up in Jewish activities and denominational movements? Similarly, are students who participated in pro-Israel activities on campus a concentrated group of students with robust Jewish backgrounds? Or do they represent a diverse array of Jewish students who just happen to have common views on Israel?

What the table shows is that on measures of Jewish background, the pro-Israel activists are quite different from *both* pro-Palestinian activists and from Jewish students who are in neither category. The pro-Israel activist group is a concentrated group of high *background* students. They almost all attended synagogue, celebrated Shabbat and other holidays, and had bar/bat mitzvahs. Seven in ten had visited Israel, and about half went to Jewish day school or overnight camp. Altogether, about 85% of pro-Israel activists grew up in a denominational movement. Pro-Israel Jewish activists are also distinctive from both pro-Palestine Jewish activists and other Jewish students in socioeconomic status: most pro-Israel activists identified as upper-middle-class or upper-class.

**TABLE 8**

	Pro-Israel Activists	Pro-Palestinian Activists	Neither
Attended synagogue	85%	40	46
Celebrated Shabbat/holidays	90	68	61
Had a Bar/Bat Mitzvah	86	46	46
Hebrew School	71	39	41
Visited Israel	69	21	21
Jewish youth group	59	24	26
Jewish overnight camp	52	26	22
Jewish day school	48	10	14
No Denomination	16	51	49
Reform	30	25	25
Conservative	20	10	14
Orthodox	33	8	10
Upper-middle/Upper Class	57	44	45
Pct. Very Liberal	8	54	19
Pct. LGBTQ+	25	61	36
<i>N</i>	249	72	685

NOTE: Jewish students, 2024 cross-section. Pro-Israel activists are defined as those who believe that there should continue to be a Jewish state and who participated in an event sponsored by a pro-Israel group. Pro-Palestine activists are defined as those who believe there should not continue to be a Jewish state and who attended an event sponsored by a pro-Palestine group. The third group represents all other Jewish students. Percentages shown.

For those trying to understand who gets involved in activism and why, it is important to consider the social nature of political participation. In the case of pro-Israel activism, the concentration of high-socioeconomic status students who had many common Jewish experiences may help like-minded students form social bonds together but also may create the perception among other students who are also supportive of Israel that pro-Israel activism is for only this one type of student.

The pro-Palestine Jewish activists look like non-activists in terms of their Jewish upbringing. Most did not attend synagogue services, have bar/bat mitzvahs, or have Jewish educational experiences such as Hebrew school, day school, summer camps, or youth groups. But Jewish pro-Palestine activists are distinctive in other ways. As the bottom of Table 8 shows, the majority of Jewish students who are pro-Palestine activists identified as very liberal and as LGBTQ+.

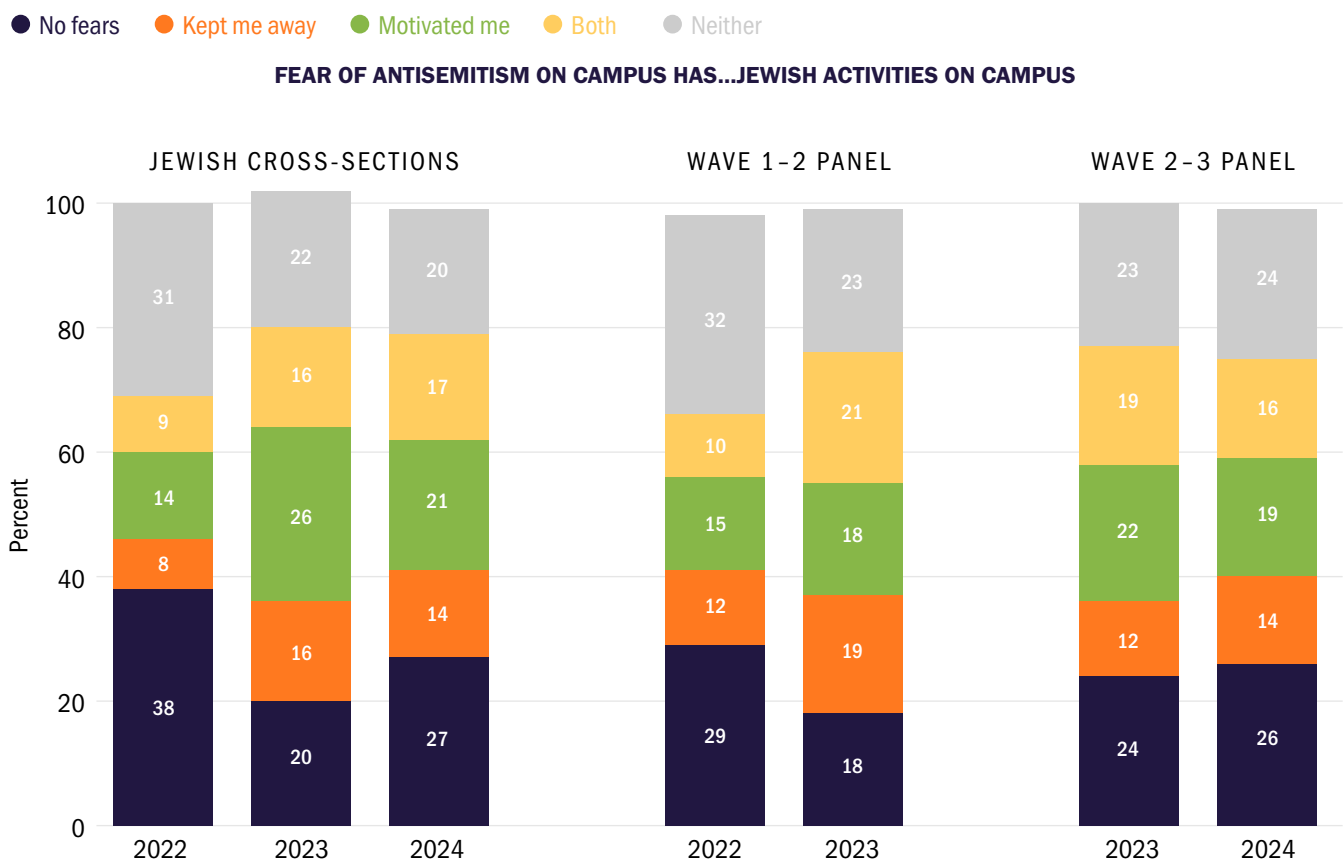
On these characteristics, the Jewish students not engaged in activism appear closer to the pro-Israel activists. For the pro-Palestine activists, a common ideology and sexual orientation may create social bonds among those with similar traits but also may create barriers to entry for otherwise like-minded students who do not share the traits.

## D. ANTISEMITISM

Across all three waves of this study, we asked students whether “fear of antisemitism on campus has...

- ◆ Kept me away from Jewish activities on campus
- ◆ Motivated me to participate in Jewish activities on campus
- ◆ Both
- ◆ Neither
- ◆ I don’t have any fears about antisemitism on campus

**FIGURE 18**



NOTE: This figure depicts respondents’ views on how fears of antisemitism affect participation in Jewish activities. N for cross-sections: 1,721 (2022), 944 (2023), 1,006 (2024). N for panels: 155 (wave 1-2) 231 (wave 2-3).

Figure 18 shows how answers to this question changed across waves. Focusing first on the cross sections, we see that the number of students who said fears of antisemitism kept them away from Jewish activities on campus doubled from 8% to 16% between 2022 and 2023. During the same time, the number of students who said they had no fears of antisemitism dropped precipitously from 38% to 20%. The 2022-2023 panel confirms that this is not the result of sampling – the same students surveyed in 2022 felt a heightened sense of antisemitism when surveyed again in 2023. There is a statistically significant increase in students in the panel reporting that fears of antisemitism kept them from engaging in Jewish activities. But unlike some findings in previous sections, the 2023-2024 panel shows there was no reversion to pre-October 7 attitudes in experience with antisemitism by the end of the school year.

In the 2023 and 2024 waves, we asked students: *Since the outbreak of hostilities between Israel and Hamas, have you been personally targeted by antisemitic comments, slurs, or threats?* We purposefully asked if they were themselves targeted rather than if they merely witnessed antisemitism or heard about incidents. In both waves, we asked if they experienced

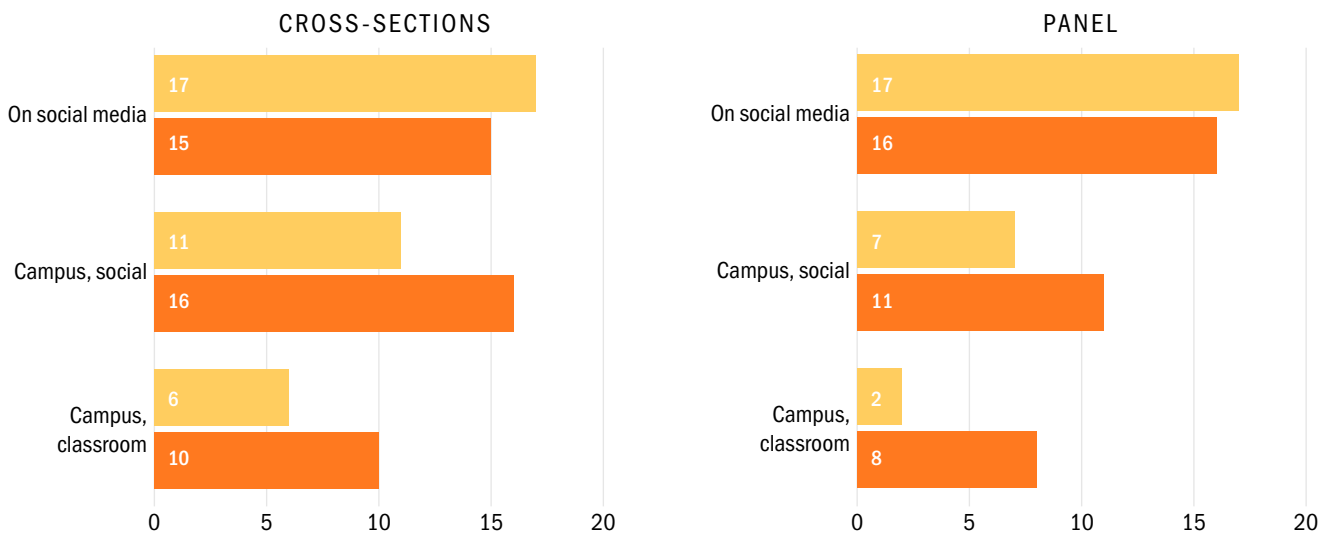
antisemitic comments on social media, in a classroom environment on campus, or in a social environment on campus. Respondents could select more than one option or could select “no” or “not sure”. Respondents in 2023 were also asked if they experienced antisemitism in an off-campus environment. Here, we just focus on the on-campus exposure that was asked about in both waves.

About 15-17% of Jewish students (1 in 6) in both waves said they had been targeted with antisemitic messages on social media. The slight decrease in exposure to antisemitic comments on social media is not statistically significant. In 2023, 11% reported experiencing direct antisemitism in a campus social environment. The percentage increased to 16% in 2024. There is a similar increase in the panel, though it is not statistically significant. The increase in students saying they were personally targeted with antisemitic messages in a campus classroom environment is highly statistically significant. This change suggests that over the 2023-2024 school year, a greater share of students felt personally targeted with antisemitic comments, slurs, and threats in a classroom setting.

**FIGURE 19**

● 2023 ● 2024

**SINCE THE OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES BETWEEN ISRAEL AND HAMAS, HAVE YOU BEEN PERSONALLY TARGETED BY ANTISEMITIC COMMENTS, SLURS, OR THREATS?**



NOTE: N: 944 (2023 cross-section), 1,006 (2024 cross-section) 231 (wave 2-3 panel). Percentages shown.



# Social Tensions on Campus

In previous sections, we studied the students’ own attitudes about Israel and the ongoing war. Here, we broaden the analysis to examine the social ecosystem on campus.

## A. CAMPUS DIVERSITY IN VIEWS ABOUT ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

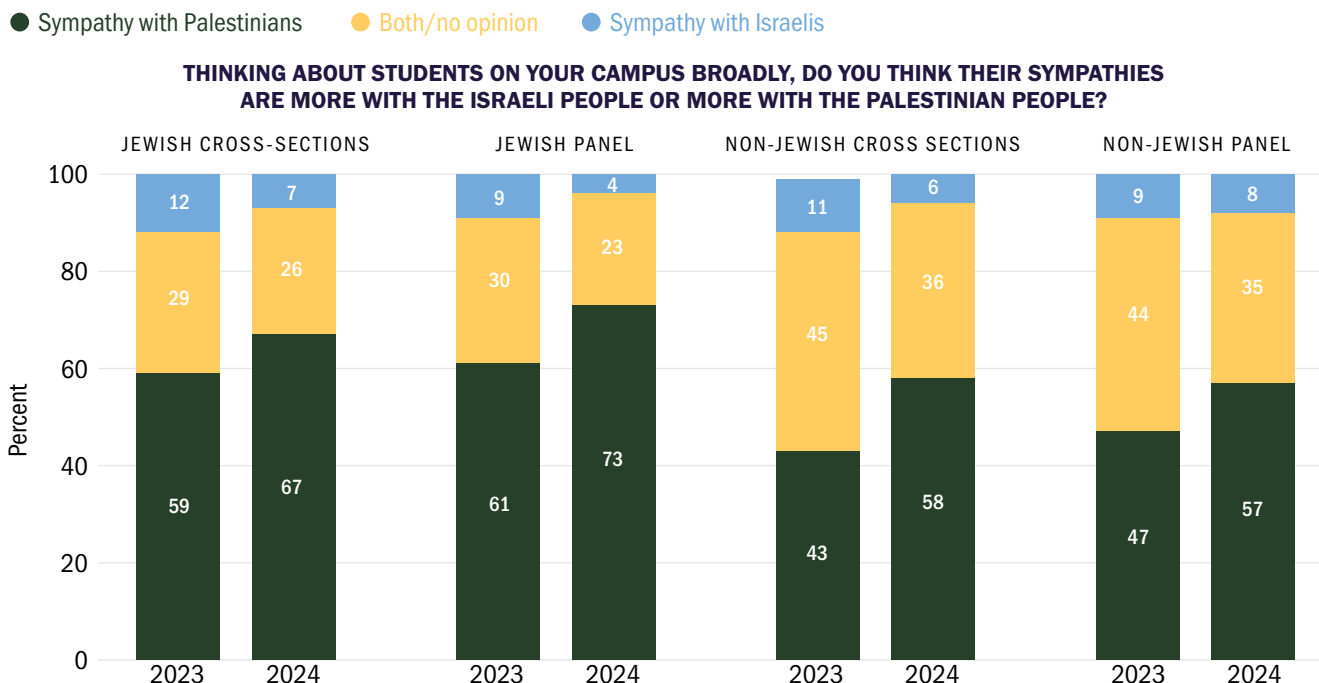
Our first line of inquiry in this section is to examine whether Jewish and non-Jewish students perceive that they are in social bubbles where nearly everyone agrees with them about the Israel-Palestine conflict. Jewish students and non-Jewish students may perceive that they are in the same ideological bubble, no ideological bubble, or in siloed bubbles.

We asked students in 2023 and 2024 the following question: *Thinking about students on your campus broadly, do you think their sympathies are more with the Israeli people or more with the Palestinian people?* Figure 20 shows three noteworthy patterns. First, both Jewish and non-Jewish students are overwhelmingly more likely to believe that students on their

campus, in general, sympathize mainly with Palestinians rather than mainly with Israelis. Second, Jewish students perceive the sympathies to be more lopsided than non-Jewish students do. For instance, in the 2024 cross-section, 67% of Jewish students versus 58% of non-Jewish students said that students were mostly sympathetic to Palestinians. Third, in both the Jewish and non-Jewish panels, there is a clear, statistically significant increase between 2023 and 2024 in students believing their peers sympathize more with Palestinians.

Given that much of the news media attention around campuses this past year was focused on elite schools, we checked whether the social environment differed at these schools. We group students who attend Ivy League schools, plus Stanford, Berkeley, U Chicago, and MIT. We have 155 Jewish students and 168 non-Jewish students in our sample from these schools. For both Jewish and non-Jewish students, those at the elite schools are much more likely to believe that their campus sympathizes mainly with Palestinians. At the elite schools, 73% of non-Jewish students and 83% of Jewish students feel this way, versus at non-elite schools, where only 56% of non-Jewish students and 64% of Jewish students do.

**FIGURE 20**



NOTE: N for Jewish respondents: 918 (2023), 985 (2024), 237 (wave 2-3 panel). N for non-Jewish respondents: 1,549 (2023), 1,516 (2024), 320 (wave 2-3 panel).

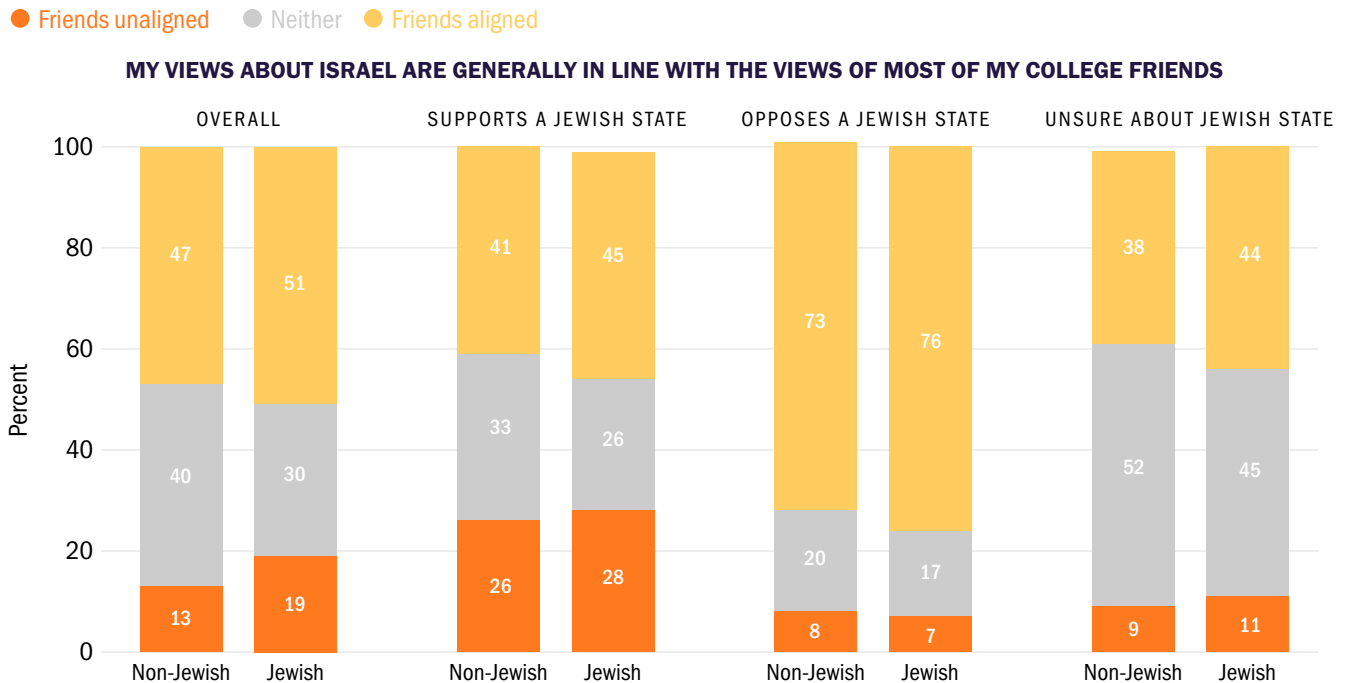
We asked non-Jewish students in 2023 and 2024 to categorize the social media posts they see from peers at school. Were the social media posts they see pro-Israeli, pro-Palestinian, or a mix of both. In 2024, 6% of students said they saw mainly pro-Israeli posts and 20% said they saw a mix of perspectives. Three in four non-Jewish students (74%) said the social media posts they saw from students at school were mostly pro-Palestinian rather than mixed or mostly pro-Israeli. In the 2023-2024 panel, we see that this lopsidedness increased over the course of the school year. In 2023, 62% of students said that social media posts from peers were mostly pro-Palestinian, 34% said mixed, and 4% mostly pro-Israeli. By 2024, 76% of those same students said the social media posts they saw were pro-Palestinian, and only 18% said they were mixed in perspective. This change is statistically significant. On this item, there are no differences in perceptions between students at elite schools and non-elite schools, or between supporters or opponents of the Jewish state.

We drill down farther in social relationships to the students' own friend group. We asked whether their views on Israel align with the views of most of their friends. For both

Jewish and non-Jewish students, about half (51% and 47%, respectively) say that most of their friends agree with them on Israel, whereas 19% and 13% disagree. We see no noticeable movement in the Jewish or non-Jewish panel between 2023 and 2024. Note that this question is one in which the answer options changed from “don't know” to “neither agree nor disagree” between wave 2 and wave 3.

Figure 21 shows, however, there are clear differences between the social bubbles of students who support the existence of Israel and those who oppose it. Students who support the existence of Israel, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, are much more likely to be in social networks with friends who primarily disagree with them about Israel compared to students who oppose the existence of the state of Israel. Just 7% of Jewish students who oppose a Jewish state say their social network is mostly unaligned with them. The same pattern holds if we look at the question of who is to blame for the current war. Jewish students who blame Israel for the current war are 24 percentage points more likely to say their friends are aligned with them than Jewish students who blame Hamas for the current war.

**FIGURE 21**



NOTE: 2024 cross-section. Samples size range from 186 (Jewish, opposes Jewish state) to 1,516 (Non-Jewish, overall).

**TABLE 9**

		2022	2023	2024
Supporters of a Jewish State	Friends Aligned	42%	44	45
	Friends Unaligned	30	37	28
Opponents of a Jewish State	Friends Aligned	65	68	76
	Friends Unaligned	17	26	7

Note: Jewish students only. Cell percentages show the rate of agreement or disagreement with the statement: “My views about Israel are generally in line with the views of most of my college friends.” N ranges from 155 (2023 opponents of Jewish state) to 817 (2022 supporters of a Jewish state).

Table 9 shows that this pattern is consistent with what we saw in 2022 and 2023. The relative political homogeneity of students who oppose a Jewish state is not a function of the current war in Israel. It is a persistent finding that is clear across survey waves.

Interestingly, if we look at opinion of the Netanyahu government in the 2023 wave, we find that 60% of Jewish students who rated the government good or excellent said their friends mostly align with them (N=175), whereas 47% of Jewish students who rated the government poor said their friends mostly align with them (N=414). Recall that

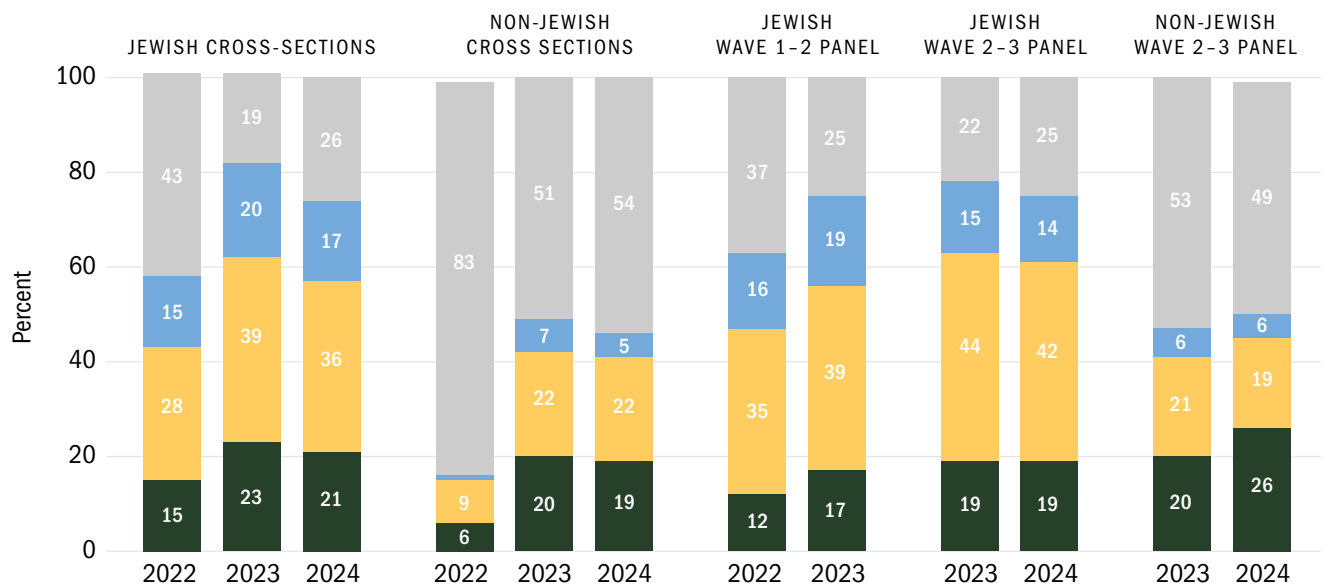
students with robust Jewish backgrounds are both more likely to support the existence of a Jewish state *and* oppose the Netanyahu government. These are the students least likely to be in social bubbles with like-minded students.

Next, in Figure 22, we examine respondents’ evaluations of the Jewish community on campus, in terms of how they believe the Jewish community deals with Israel politics. In all three waves, we asked students if they thought the Jewish community on campus was too supportive of Israel, not supportive enough of Israel, about right, or they did not know.

**FIGURE 22**

● Too supportive of Israel ● About right ● Not supportive enough ● Don't know

**WHICH OF THESE STATEMENTS COMES CLOSEST TO YOUR VIEWS ABOUT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY ON CAMPUS?**



Note: Q: Which of these statements comes closest to your views about the Jewish community on campus? The Jewish community on campus...a.) is too supportive of Israel, b.) is not supportive enough of Israel, c.) supports Israel at about the right level, d.) I don't know. N ranges from 155 (wave 1-2 Jewish panel) to 1,721 (wave 1 Jewish cross-section).

Between waves 1 and 2, more Jewish students formed a view on this question, as evidenced by the decline of “don’t know” answers. Of those who offered an opinion, the plurality of Jewish students across all waves and panels said the Jewish community on their campus supports Israel at the right level. The rest were evenly split between thinking the community is too pro-Israel and not pro-Israel enough.

As the graph above shows, the non-Jewish students mostly had no opinion on this matter in 2022. Recall, though, that in 2022 our sample of non-Jewish students was representative of all four-year college students, including those on campuses without a Jewish community. But in the 2023 and 2024 waves, with non-Jewish respondent coming from campuses with Jewish communities, still only about half of non-Jewish students had an opinion on this question.

There is a noteworthy difference in responses from students at elite universities. At those schools, Jewish students were twice as likely to think the Jewish community is too supportive of Israel versus not supportive enough (26% versus 14%). The non-Jewish students on these campuses were also more likely to think the Jewish community was too supportive of Israel compared to non-Jewish students at other schools. So, Jewish and non-Jewish students at elite schools are not only much more likely to say that their campuses are sympathetic to Palestinians over Israelis than other schools, but they are also more likely to perceive their Jewish communities as especially pro-Israel. These findings suggest that elite schools have more polarized cultures around Israel-Palestine social dynamics than other schools have.

.....  
**B. MAKING AND LOSING FRIENDS**

In all three waves, we asked non-Jewish students how many of their closest friends are Jewish. In the 2022 wave, we also asked this question to Jewish respondents. Additionally, we asked in the 2023 and 2024 waves if non-Jewish students personally knew any Israelis or Palestinians. These survey questions are interesting in and of themselves, but they also help us weigh in on two broader questions: a.) how social networks (e.g., having Jewish friends) correspond to opinions about Israel, and b.) how socioeconomic class relates to social networks. The latter question is important given the strong relationship uncovered between class and views toward Israel. A likely explanation for this relationship is that those

in higher socioeconomic classes in the United States may have more Jews and/or Israelis in their social networks, a hypothesis that we can test here.

**TABLE 10**

Close Jewish Friends	2022		2023	2024
	Jewish	Not Jewish	Not Jewish	Not Jewish
None	23%	65	37	43
A few	47	30	48	49
Half or more	31	5	15	8

NOTE: Q: How many of your closest friends at college identify as Jewish? Percentages shown. N: 1,721 (Jewish, 2022), 1,033 (Non-Jewish, 2022), 1,549 (2023), 1,516 (2024).

**TABLE 11**

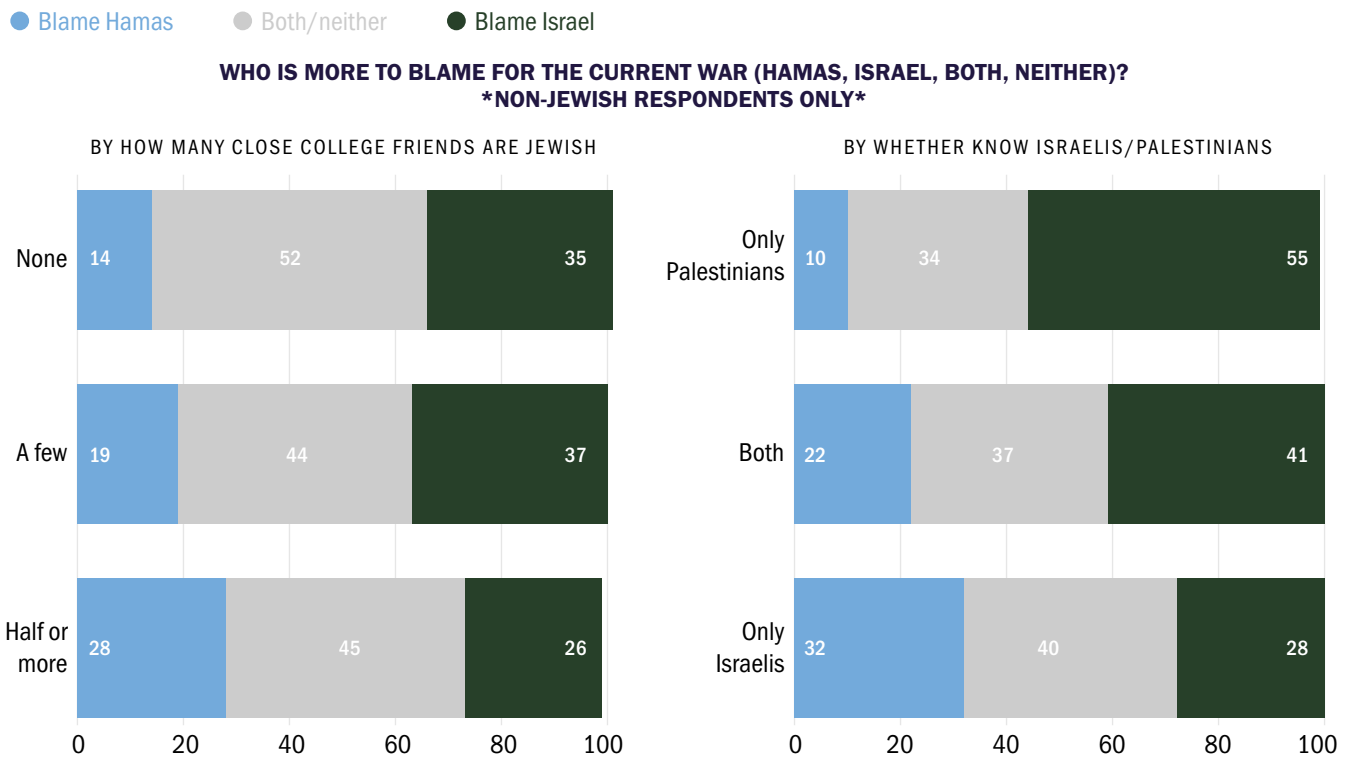
Students’ Personal Acquaintance with Israelis and Palestinians (Non-Jewish Respondents only)

	2023	2024
Know Israelis	9%	10
Know Palestinians	13	9
Know Both	32	32
None or Not Sure	45	49

Note: Q: Do you personally know any Israelis or Palestinians? Percentages shown. Non-Jewish Respondents only. N: 1,549 (2023), 1,516 (2024).

When we asked Jewish students in 2022 about their closest friends on campus, 31% said that half or more of their close friends are Jewish, 47% said a few are, and 23% said none are. In 2022, when we surveyed non-Jewish students across all types of four-year schools, two-thirds said none of their close college friends are Jewish. In the 2023 and 2024 waves, the majority of non-Jewish students (who, again, had been sampled because they go to schools with substantial Jewish populations) said that at least a few of their close college friends are Jewish. About 40% of non-Jewish students said they personally know Israelis and about 40% said they personally know Palestinians. (We suspect that some respondents may be conflating Israeli with Jewish and conflating Palestinian with Arab or Muslim when answering this question.)

**FIGURE 23**



Note: Non-Jewish students only, 2024 wave. The plot shows responses to who is more to blame for the current war (Hamas, Israel, both, neither). Percentages shown. N range from 125 (half or more friends Jewish) to 745 (a few friends Jewish).

We then examine how these social ties relate to other opinions, beginning with whether respondents think Israel or Hamas (or both or neither) is more to blame for the current war. Figure 23 plots the results and shows a relationship between social networks and blame. Students who are friends with Jews were more likely to have an opinion blaming one side or the other, and they were modestly more likely to blame Hamas. Knowing only Palestinians versus knowing Israelis corresponds to a much bigger difference in views toward the conflict. Both relationships are statistically significant.

Having close Jewish friends and knowing Israelis are both highly correlated with socioeconomic class, as well. In 2024, only 35% of non-Jewish students from lower-/working-class families knew any Israelis compared to 40% of those in the middle class, 50% in the upper-middle class, and 63% in the upper class. Similarly, most lower-/working-class non-Jewish

students had no close Jewish friends (52%), which drops to 45% in the middle class, 31% in the upper-middle class and 27% in the upper class. We observed a similar pattern when we asked Jewish respondents in 2022 about their close friend group. A third (35%) of Jewish students who identified as lower-working class reported no close Jewish friends. For middle-class and upper-middle-class students, 25% and 19% reported no close Jewish friends, respectively. And only 15% of upper-class Jewish students report no close Jewish friends.

Understanding the complex relationship between social networks, economic class, and opinions about Israel demands too much of the sample size here, but it is worthy of deeper analysis and dedicated future study. Students who are in higher socioeconomic classes, Jewish and non-Jewish, are both much more likely to have Jews in their close social network and to view Israel more positively.

TABLE 12

Percent Who Lost Friends	Jewish	Non-Jewish
All	33%	10
Supporters of a Jewish State	39	9
Unsure about a Jewish State	16	6
Opponents of a Jewish State	41	18
Elite School	45	11
Non-Elite School	31	9
Low Jewish Background	21	
Medium Jewish Background	34	
High Jewish Background	45	

NOTE: 2024 wave. N range from 155 (Jewish, elite school) to 1,516 (Non-Jewish, all).

In the 2024 wave, we asked all the students if they agreed or disagreed with this statement: *I have lost friends on campus because of our conflicting viewpoints on the war in Israel and Gaza.* Jewish students were three times more likely than non-Jewish students to agree. Notably, a similar percentage of Muslim students (32%, N=53) said they lost friends as Jewish students (33%).

Among Jewish respondents, those who support a Jewish state and oppose a Jewish state were equally likely to say they lost friends. Among non-Jewish students, opponents of a Jewish state were twice as likely to lose friends. Among Jewish students, those at elite schools were far more likely to say they lost friends: nearly half (45%) of Jewish students at elite schools reported they lost friends because of conflicting viewpoints. Losing friends is not correlated with a particular opinion about Israel but it is correlated with Jewish background. Those with more robust Jewish backgrounds were twice as likely to report losing friends.

In 2023 and 2024, we asked non-Jewish students, *Thinking about the atmosphere on your campus, how difficult do you think it would be for pro-Israel and pro-Palestine students to be friends?* The students could answer “not difficult at all,” “not so difficult,”

“somewhat difficult,” “very difficult,” or they could say they did not know. Nearly a third of non-Jewish students (including 42% of Muslim students and 42% of very liberal students) said that it would be very difficult. In 2024, only 3% of students said, “not difficult at all” and only 11% said, “not so difficult.”

The Wave 2-3 panel shows a large increase in students saying it would be very difficult for pro-Israel and pro-Palestine students to be friends. In the panel, the percentage agreeing it would be very difficult rose from 22% to 32%, a large and statistically significant jump.

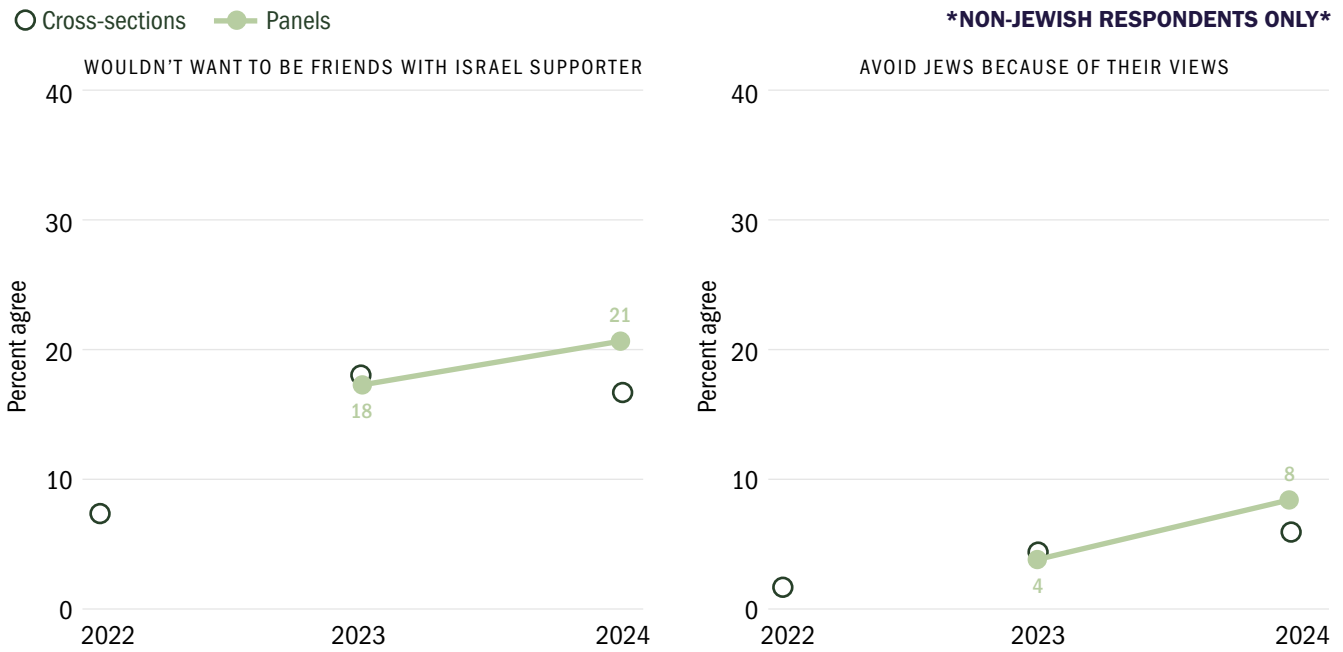
## C. SOCIAL SANCTION

Across all three waves, we asked non-Jewish students two questions to gauge whether they personally impose social sanctions on Jewish students or those who support the existence of a Jewish state. The students were asked if they agree with the following statements:

- ◆ *I wouldn't want to be friends with someone who supports the existence of Israel as a Jewish state.*
- ◆ *I avoid socializing with Jewish students because of their views about Israel.*

As Figure 24 shows, agreement with these statements among non-Jewish students was far lower in 2022 than in 2023 or 2024. Of course, the 2022 non-Jewish sample was formulated differently, so it is not directly comparable. However, the 2023 and 2024 data, particularly the panel data, are comparable, and we find that the rate of agreement with these statements was as high or higher in 2024 than in 2023. These questions were affected by the change in response options between 2023 and 2024, but as the experiment in the appendix shows, the change does not seem to affect levels of agreement. One in five non-Jewish students said they would not want to be friends with someone who supports the existence of the state of Israel as a Jewish state. The number was higher in 2024 than 2023, but the change is not statistically significant. Eight percent of students said they

**FIGURE 24**



Note: Non-Jewish students only. N for panel: 320. The difference in means for the panel answering they “avoid Jewish students” is statistically significant. Means from cross-sections are shown in hollow circles.

avoid socializing with Jewish students, double the amount that said so in 2023 (and a statistically significant change).

Figure 25 shows agreement with these items in 2023 and 2024 by political ideology. In both years, not wanting to be friends with an Israel supporter was much more common among those who identified as very liberal. In 2023, however, conservative students were more likely to agree than moderate students. In the 2024 sample, agreement with the statement decreased moving from the political left to the political right.

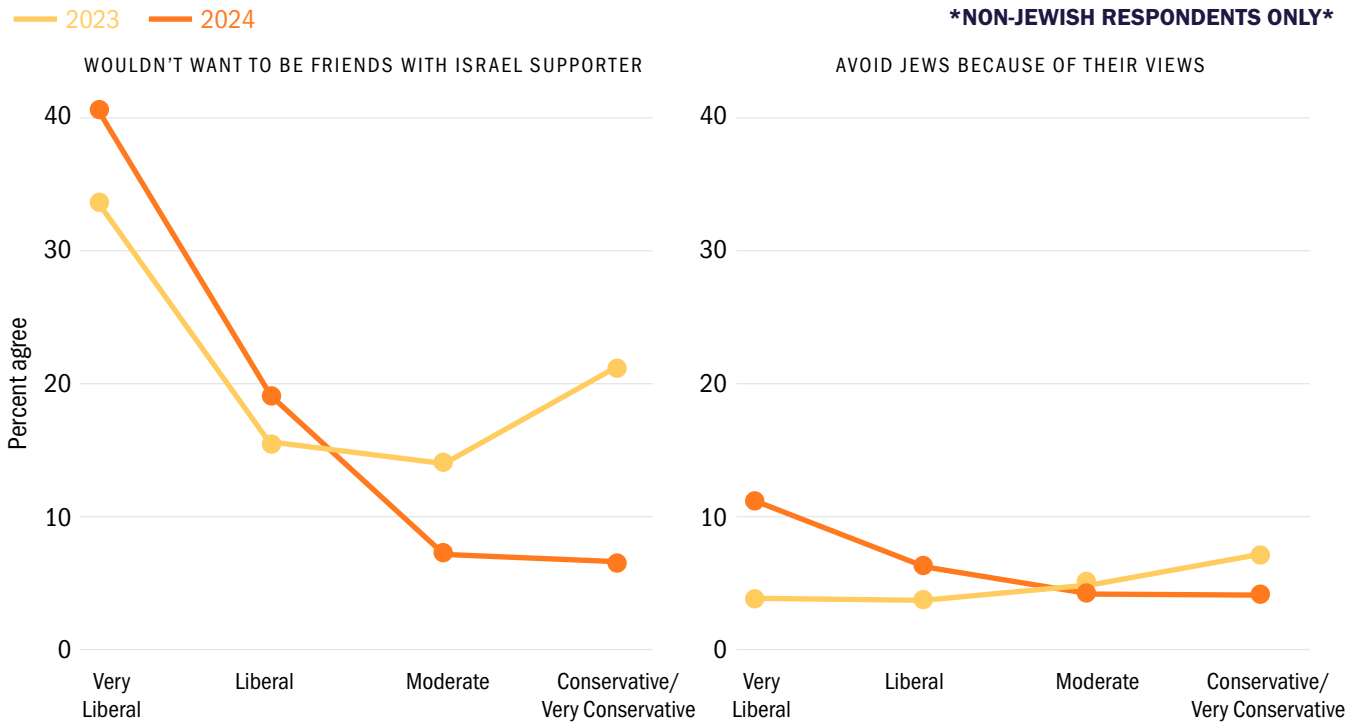
Looking at the statement about avoiding Jews, agreement in 2023 was slightly increasing with ideology, with conservatives slightly more likely than liberals to agree. In the 2024 data, the relationship is reversed: those who identified as very liberal were by far the most likely to report that they avoid Jews.

Ideology is not the only predictor of agreeing with these items, however. Even controlling for ideology, there are significant relationships with other demographic variables. Students of color, LGBTQ+ students, students with lower socioeconomic status, and Muslim students were all much more likely to say that they would not want to be friends with someone who supports the existence of Israel as a Jewish state.

For example, 12% of white students agreed with the statement about not being friends with Israel-supporters (the lowest of any racial group) versus 22% of Black students (the highest of any racial group). Agreement was 12% for straight students versus 25% for LGBTQ+ students. Agreement was 9% for Christian students versus 40% for Muslim students.

Race and religion are also among the most salient predictors of avoiding Jews, again even when controlling for political ideology. Whereas 5% of Christian students said they avoid Jews, 15% of Muslims answered that way in 2024. Whereas 4% of white students said they avoid Jews, 7-8% of Black students, Hispanic students, and Asian students answered that way in 2024.

**FIGURE 25**



NOTE: 2023 and 2024 Non-Jewish cross-sections. N: 1,549 (2023), 1,516 (2024).

To gauge social tensions from the perspective of Jewish students, we asked a battery of three agree/disagree questions on all waves. Those questions are as follows:

- ◆ *In order to fit in on my campus, I feel the need to hide that I am Jewish.*
- ◆ *People will judge me negatively if I participate in Jewish activities on campus.*
- ◆ *On my campus, Jewish students pay a social penalty for supporting the existence of Israel as a Jewish state.*

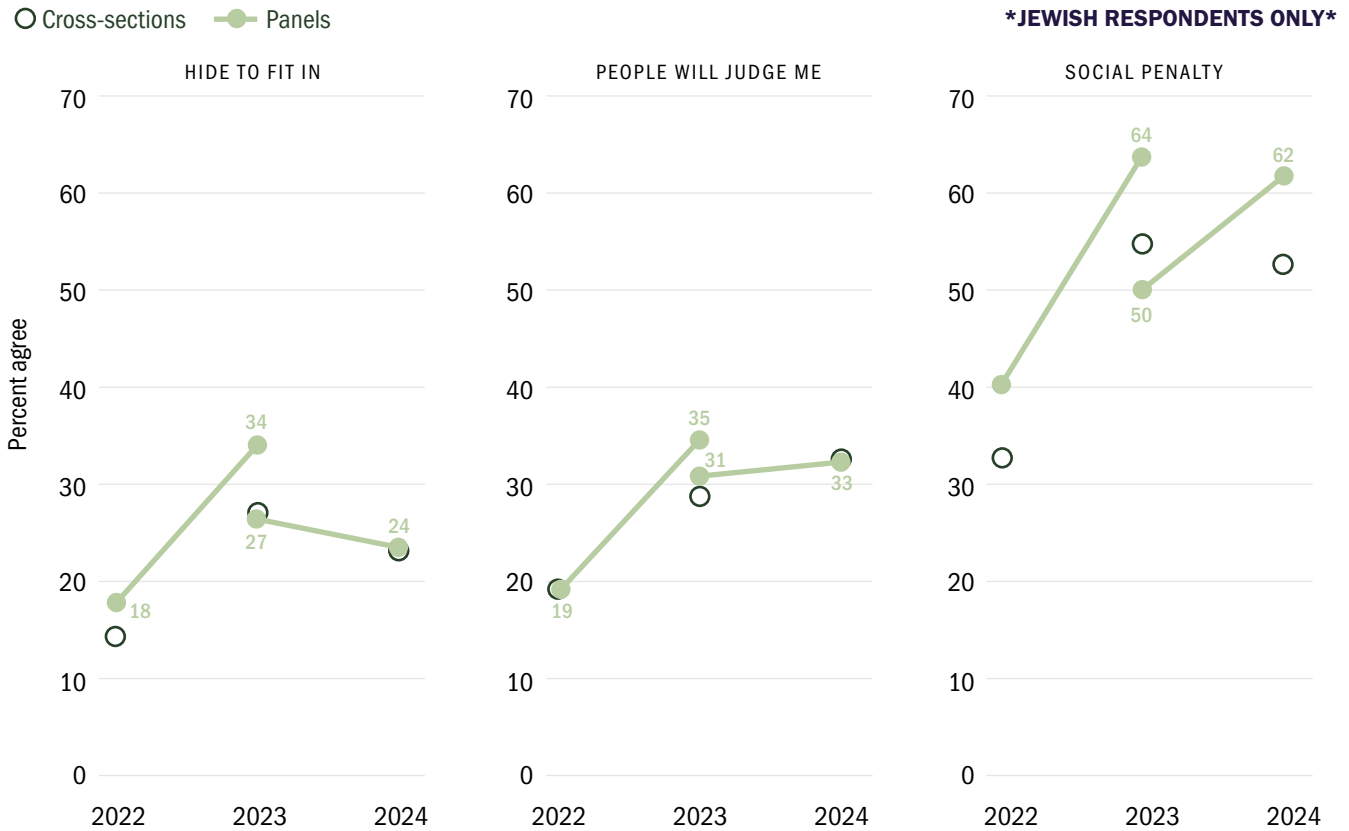
Note that only the third of these questions relates to any policy position a student may have. The other two items gauge a sense of whether the students need to hide that they are Jewish or that they are socially burdened for engaging in Jewish activities regardless of any political or religious views they have.

As Figure 26 visualizes, there were massive increases in agreement with these statements for Jewish students between 2022 and 2023. The rate at which Jewish students said they hide their Jewish identity to fit in doubled. The rate of agreement with people negatively judging students for participating in Jewish activities went from 19% to 35%. Moreover, the rate of students agreeing that Jewish students pay a social penalty for supporting the existence of Israel went from 41% to 64%. Again, these are results from the first panel – the exact same students surveyed over time with the exact same question wording.

The change in the 2023-2024 panel is less pronounced. On the first two items, there is no significant relationship either way: not a reversion back to 2022 levels of agreement nor an increase above and beyond what we measured in 2023. On the third item, it appears that the wave 2-3 panel had significantly lower agreement with the statement in



**FIGURE 26**



NOTE: Jewish respondents only. Hollow circles show means for each cross-section. Connected lines show means for the two panels. N for cross sections: 1,721 (2022), 918 (2023), 985 (2024). N for panels: 155 (wave 1-2), 223 (wave 2-3).

2023 compared to the wave 1-2 panel. (See the vertical gap between the dots in 2023). But agreement in the second panel increased significantly in 2024, reaching similar levels as the first panel in 2023.

The “social penalty” results are also distinctive for other reasons. Agreement with this statement is much more highly correlated with one’s Jewish background: the students with more robust Jewish backgrounds were far more likely to say that Jewish students pay a penalty. Furthermore, this is the only one of the three items here with different rates of agreement between respondents at elite schools and other schools. A third of Jewish students at both elite and other schools say they need to hide their Jewishness to fit in, and four in ten at both types of schools agree they will

be negatively judged for participating in Jewish activities. But 70% of students on elite campuses feel Jewish students pay a social penalty for supporting the existence of Israel as a Jewish state, compared to only 50% of students on other campuses.

The 2023-2024 panel data, however, must be assessed with caution due to the change in the answer options. The experiment described in the appendix section suggests that the 2024 question wording might garner *lower* agreement with these statements than the 2022 and 2023 question wording, particularly on the “social penalty” item. This suggests that agreement with these statements remains significantly elevated from 2022 and was at least as high, if not higher, in 2024 than in 2023.

## Conclusions

After measuring the opinions of college students over three years, the intensity of conflict on campuses in 2023-2024 is perhaps easy to understand. Jewish students on campuses overwhelmingly support a Jewish state in Israel, with only 15% of Jewish students dissenting from that position (and 15-25% saying they are not sure). Furthermore, Jewish students tend to sympathize with Israelis over Palestinians or sympathize with both sides, and they largely blame Hamas for the current war. All of these positions are unpopular on the campuses where Jewish students attend college. As explored in focus groups, Israel's supporters are seen by some non-Jewish students as, at best, miseducated and, at worst, bad people. Social ostracization is common and even considered to be appropriate.

Anti-Israel attitudes are not only far more common than pro-Israel attitudes on campuses, but there is a sharp asymmetry between non-Jewish students who support and oppose a Jewish state in terms of their interest in the topic and their appetite for activism. Students who oppose a Jewish state consume more news about the conflict and take more interest in advocacy for their cause.

Though Jewish students overwhelmingly support a Jewish state, their views are nuanced – they have conflicting values and cross-pressures in their evaluation of the conflict – and there is internal disagreement within Jewish communities on campus. Jewish students navigate complicated social dynamics as they encounter students in and out of Jewish spaces on campus who hold a wide variety of views about Israel. Jewish students who are in social groups that overwhelmingly oppose Israel likely experience the most social tension. Jewish students who identify as very liberal

or as LGBTQ+, for instance, are far less likely to be critical of Israel than non-Jewish students in those cohorts but far more likely to be critical of Israel than other Jewish students.

Jewish students in our surveys and focus groups feel more connected to their Jewish identity despite (or perhaps because of) their heightened fears of antisemitism and recent experiences with antisemitism. The plurality of Jewish respondents also believe that their campus Jewish community is getting its approach to Israel right, with smaller numbers of students equally split between believing the campus Jewish community is too supportive of Israel and too critical of Israel.

Students who grew up connected to Jewish institutions such as synagogues, summer camps, and denominational movements are strongly connected to their Jewish identity and feel a sense of connection to American Jews and Israeli Jews alike.

The evidence here leads to several recommendations for future research. We will reflect on three of them. For one, we would encourage more research on news consumption and educational interventions related to Judaism and Israel. The extent to which Jewish students learn about Judaism and Israel from social media, general news sources, Jewish-specific news sources, parental advice, teachers, or other sources merits more attention. With respect to education targeted to non-Jewish students, more research is needed to understand how the increasingly secular population, which may have limited exposure to any kind of bible study, understands the relationship between Jewish people and the land of Israel.

A second area of focus we would recommend is socioeconomic status. As discussed in this report, there are strong relationships between socioeconomic class and Jewish background experiences, between socioeconomic class and attitudes about Israel, and between socioeconomic class and activism for Israel and Palestine. There are many Jewish students from middle- and lower-class environments where the social structure and opportunities for Jewish learning and engagement may be quite limited compared to what is available to Jewish students from upper-middle-class and upper-class environments. Researchers could do more to study how socioeconomic class shapes attitudes about Jews and Israel.

Finally, the responses to the survey questions and focus groups from non-Jewish students raise alarm about the social tensions on campus. While our research suggests Jewish students mostly felt physically safe during a year of heightened tensions, the attitudes of their non-Jewish peers expressed in surveys and focus groups suggest that universities ought to be quite concerned about the social and educational environment on campus. Jewish students hold a set of values around Israel that are unpopular among most students and unwelcome among a small but nontrivial portion of them. Meanwhile, as our report details, we have seen statistically significant increases in Jewish students saying they avoid Jewish programs for fear of antisemitism, that they were personally targeted by antisemitism in classroom settings, and that they feel a need to hide their Jewish identity. Researchers should continue to analyze social tensions to inform how parents, students, organizations, governments, and universities themselves work to improve the situation.

# Methodological Appendix

## A. COMPARABILITY OF SURVEY WAVES

When comparing respondents across waves, it is important to consider several limitations. First, the context in which students were taking the survey varies across time. For instance, the 2022 wave partially overlapped with the Passover holiday, the 2023 partially overlapped with the Thanksgiving holiday, and the 2024 survey partially overlapped with the end of the school year on most campuses. Whether students took the survey on campus, at their parents’ homes, or elsewhere may have affected their answers. Furthermore, day-to-day news events, including campus-specific news events, may have affected respondents in ways that are difficult to assess. For instance, a student who took the survey at their parents’ house while on vacation might answer differently than a student who took the survey from their dorm room directly overlooking a protest encampment, and these two students could attend the same school and could have taken the survey at the same time.

Second, there is variation in the number of students surveyed per school. For instance, wave 2 contained 64 Jewish students from Columbia University, while there were only 31 Jewish Columbia students in the wave 3 sample. This variation could present a problem if students at Columbia (as an example) have different attitudes and experiences from other students.

**TABLE A1**

Non-Jewish Respondents	WAVE 1	WAVE 2	WAVE 3
White	36%	35	33
Straight	77	66	65
Women	63	59	62
Non-Binary	3	15	9
Public School	79	73	69
On Financial Aid	86	63	66
Upper/Upper-Middle Class	20	34	29
<i>N</i>	1,033	1,549	1,516

NOTE: All rows except the bottom row reflect percentages.

Third, the basic demographic traits of students vary across waves. Table A1 summarizes a few key demographic characteristics of the non-Jewish sample across the three waves of the study. Recall that the first wave is not comparable to waves 2 and 3, as the first wave was meant to be representative of college students in general (circa 2022), whereas waves 2 and 3 focused on students who attended schools with substantial Jewish populations. Wave 1 students are much more likely to be on financial aid and to come from lower-, working-, and middle-class families. The major fluctuation between waves 2 and waves 3 here are in the gender make-up of the sample: there are fewer non-binary identifiers. Note that there are some differences between the Wave 1 demographics described here and the Wave 1 demographics described in the 2022 report, “Jewish College Students in America,” due to an updated set of weights recommended by College Pulse.

The racial composition of the 2023 and 2024 non-Jewish samples are approximately 33-35% white. In the 2023 and 2024 waves, the samples are a third Asian, 12% Hispanic, 6% Black, 11% multiracial or other. The religious composition of the non-Jewish sample at these schools is about 50% atheist or agnostic, 30% Christian (including Catholic), 6% Hindu, 4% Muslim, and 10% other.

**TABLE A2**

Jewish Respondents	WAVE 1	WAVE 2	WAVE 3
White	73%	68	63
Straight	64	63	65
Women	49	53	56
Non-Binary	12	15	9
Public School	59	49	53
On Financial Aid	51	51	51
Upper/Upper-Middle Class	52	59	48
<i>N</i>	1,721	944	1,006

The Jewish sample, like the non-Jewish sample, has fluctuation across waves in gender identification. In all waves and in both Jewish and non-Jewish samples, there are more women than men, which reflects the imbalance in the college population in general. The Jewish sample also exhibits some fluctuation in race and socioeconomic status. In the second wave, 68% of the respondents identified as white. The next largest categories were multiracial (6%), Middle Eastern (5%), Hispanic (5%), and Asian (4%). In the third wave, 63% of Jewish students identified as white, with 10% identifying as Hispanic, 9% identifying as multiracial, 8% as Asian, and 2% as Middle Eastern.

These fluctuations are likely the result of different subsets of Jewish students participating in different waves of the study. Due to the fluctuations both in school representation and in demographic representation, we considered analyzing the data with weights but ultimately decided against doing so. Weights could be used to make the three waves of the study more comparable with each other. For instance, with regard to school representation, we considered down-weighting Columbia students in Wave 2 and up-weighting them in Wave 3, so that both waves have the same share of Columbia students. We found that these sorts of weighting strategies did not actually meaningfully affect the results. Moreover, since we do not know the *true* demographics of Jewish students, we do not know which, if any, of the waves most accurately represents Jewish college students.

We decided not to analyze the data with weights to make the waves more comparable. Instead, we rely exclusively on the panels when we draw inferences about change over time. Even though the samples in the panels are smaller than the full cross-sections, we are much more confident in assessing change by looking over time at the same students rather than looking across two, potentially unrepresentative, snapshots.

Second, when we look *within* any one cross-section, our analysis focuses on how subgroups differ. We focus on how students from different types of Jewish backgrounds or with different political ideologies differ in their attitudes. While the study design would not allow us to gauge the true proportion of the population that attended Jewish summer camps or visited Israel with their family, our design should allow us to compare the attitudes of students who attended camps or visited Israel with students who did not have these experiences. We have no reason to expect that our sample would not reflect differences in the population across subsets like these.

But in the end, we must approach this study with modesty. Surveying even the general public is challenging. In all public opinion research, scholars worry about whether the people who decided to respond to the survey differ on key measures from the people who decided not to respond. They worry whether respondents understand all the questions and answer them truthfully. In this study, we have an added challenge: we do not have clear benchmarks to assess the representativeness of the Jewish student population. We also do not have a benchmark to assess the representativeness of a sample of non-Jewish students who go to schools where Jews are present. No government entity equivalent to the U.S. Census Bureau collects statistics on Jewish identity and college attendance. As a result, we do not know what the basic demographics – breakdowns by gender, race, geography, political views, and so forth – are expected to look like. Despite these challenges, we do our best to analyze the data transparently and with integrity. We recognize that our approach in answering questions about the social and political landscapes of Jewish students on college campuses is just one approach among other valid attempts.

## B. ADDRESSING AN ERROR

After completing the third and final wave of this study, we learned that College Pulse made an error in wave 3 on agree/disagree questions. The response options on agree/disagree questions differ slightly in wave 3 than in previous waves. In previous waves, respondents were given options: “strongly agree,” “agree,” “disagree,” “strongly disagree,” and “I don’t know.” Just prior to fielding, College Pulse switched “I don’t know” with the option “neither agree nor disagree,” believing this wording was superior and not realizing that this question had been asked repeatedly across waves and was meant to have been kept consistent for the sake of comparability.

While the change may seem slight and inconsequential, we worried to what extent this might have affected answers. To respond to this worry, we asked College Pulse to conduct an experiment in July/August 2024. Six agree/disagree questions were asked over time to Jewish students and six agree/disagree questions were asked to non-Jewish students that

could have been affected by the error. In this experiment, we sampled Jewish and non-Jewish students who had not taken our main surveys. They were randomly assigned to either a treatment condition or a control condition. In the control condition, they saw the battery of agree/disagree questions with the “don’t know” option used in waves 1 and 2. In the treatment condition, the “don’t know” response was replaced with “neither agree nor disagree.”

Table A3 shows the results of this experiment for non-Jewish respondents. In the first two columns, we compare the percentage of respondents who answered, “don’t know,” with the percentage of respondents who answered, “neither agree nor disagree.” In all cases, respondents were more likely to answer questions as “neither agree nor disagree” than to answer “don’t know”; however, in 4 out of 6 cases, the differences are modest (3-4 percentage points) and not statistically significant. On two questions, the differences are statistically significant.

**TABLE A3** Non-Jewish Student Experiment

Question	Condition 1	Condition 2	P-value	Condition 1	Condition 2	P-value
	Don't Know	Neither Agree nor Disagree		Agree	Agree	
Personally, I don't think there should continue to be a Jewish state in Israel/Palestine.	48.5%	52.8%	0.39	19.1%	13.7%	0.15
My views about Israel are generally in line with the views of most of my college friends.	35.1	45.2	0.04	47.9	36.5	0.02
I wouldn't want to be friends with someone who supports the existence of Israel as a Jewish state.	37.6	40.1	0.62	11.3	12.7	0.68
I avoid socializing with Jewish students because of their views about Israel.	15.5	24.9	0.02	3.6	4.1	0.81
All Israeli civilians should be considered legitimate targets for Hamas.	28.4	31.0	0.57	2.1	2.0	0.98
Jewish people are indigenous to the land of Israel.	54.6	58.9	0.40	22.7	18.3	0.28

NOTE: Each of the questions was given to non-Jewish respondents not surveyed as part of our main study. N = 194 (“don’t know” condition), 197 (“neither agree nor disagree” condition). The first two columns show the percent of respondents that either said they didn’t know or they neither agreed nor disagreed. The third column represents a result of a difference of means t-test. Values less than 0.05 are considered statistically significant. The next two columns show the percent who agree with the statement divided by all respondents who answered the question. A difference of means t-test is shown in the final column.

Next, in the table, we give the percentage of respondents who agree with the statement, as a percentage of all who either agreed, disagreed, or said they don't know or neither agree nor disagree. This mimics how we assess these survey items in the body of the report. Respondents in the two conditions line up quite closely in the percent who agree with the statement. The exception is the question that asked whether the respondents' views on Israel align with most of their college friends' views. On that item, respondents were about 10 percentage points less likely to say they agree when responding to the question wording used in wave 3 of the study.

For Jewish students, the experiment tested five out of the six questions affected by the error. The remaining question, which asked whether respondents hide their views in Jewish spaces on campus, was complicated to test with this experimental design because the answer depended on how respondents answered a prior question about whether they attend Jewish events on campus. The experiment here focuses on the other five questions.

A comparison between the first and second columns of percentages in Table A4 shows that in all five of the questions, Jewish students were more likely to answer they neither agreed nor disagreed than to answer they did not know. However, when we look at the percentage who agree with each statement, in four out of five cases the two conditions show very similar percentages. The differences between these conditions are not statistically significant. In the fifth case – the question of whether Jewish students pay a social penalty for supporting the existence of Israel – students were less likely to agree in the condition that offered “neither agree nor disagree” as an option.

Altogether, out of the eleven questions assessed in this experiment, we find that one question asked to non-Jewish students and one question asked to Jewish students demonstrate differences in the percentage who agree with the statement depending on whether “don't know” or “neither agree nor disagree” are offered as response options. We urge particular caution in interpreting change over time on these questions.

**TABLE A4** Jewish Student Experiment

Question	Condition 1	Condition 2	P-value	Condition 1	Condition 2	P-value
	Don't Know	Neither Agree nor Disagree		Agree	Agree	
People will judge me negatively if I participate in Jewish activities on campus.	12.4%	33.5%	0.00	32.0%	28.4%	0.45
Personally, I don't think there should continue to be a Jewish state in Israel/Palestine.	15.0	27.4	0.00	18.6	17.8	0.84
My views about Israel are generally in line with the views of most of my college friends.	21.6	28.9	0.10	44.8	48.2	0.50
On my campus, Jewish students pay a social penalty for supporting the existence of Israel as a Jewish state.	17.5	25.4	0.06	57.2	44.2	0.01
In order to fit in on my campus, I feel the need to hide that I am Jewish.	12.9	25.4	0.00	29.9	24.4	0.22

NOTE: Each of the questions was given to Jewish respondents not surveyed as part of our main study. N = 194 (“don't know” condition), 197 (“neither agree nor disagree” condition). The first two columns show the percent of respondents that either said they didn't know or they neither agreed nor disagreed. The third column represents a result of a difference of means t-test. Values less than 0.05 are considered statistically significant. The next two columns show the percent who agree with the statement divided by all respondents who answered the question. A difference of means t-test is shown in the final column.

## C. COMPARABILITY WITH OTHER METHODOLOGIES

Because there is no obvious way to gauge representativeness, we instead compare our key findings to other surveys using different methodologies. When drawing comparisons across samples, it is important to understand how the study design might affect results. Consider two illustrative comparisons.

In November of 2023, Prof. Brian Schaffner of Tufts University generously placed two questions from our study on a nationally representative survey of U.S. adults called the Cooperative Election Study (CES). In one question, respondents who said they were current students were asked, “Thinking about students on your campus broadly, do you think their sympathies are more with the Israeli people or more with the Palestinian people?”

**TABLE A5**

Comparison between responses to the same question asked in Fall 2023 in College Pulse (4-year undergraduate students on campuses) versus the Cooperative Election Study (all students)

Response Options	CES	College Pulse
Not sure	28%	25
Students mostly sympathize with Israelis	16	11
Students mostly sympathize with Palestinians	29	43
Students mostly sympathize with both groups equally	20	16
Students mostly have no opinion or are unaware of the conflict	7	4
<i>N</i>	1808	1518

In both samples, substantially more respondents reported that the students on their campus mostly sympathize with Palestinians than with Israelis (see Table A5). However, the College Pulse respondents were 14 percentage points more likely than CES respondents to say that students on their campuses mostly sympathized with Palestinians. CES respondents were about twice as likely to say their campus mostly sympathized with Palestinians than with Israelis, whereas College Pulse respondents in our survey were four times more likely to say so.

However, this is not quite an apples-to-apples comparison. The College Pulse survey assesses non-Jewish students at four-year-colleges with substantial Jewish populations. The CES survey does not distinguish students who are in two-year versus four-year programs nor undergraduate students from graduate students. Across the country, only about 58% of post-secondary students are in four-year undergraduate programs (the population targeted by College Pulse).<sup>8</sup> Moreover, even the four-year college population itself might have different views than the subset of campuses that have Jewish communities present.

For another comparison, consider a contemporaneous survey of Jewish Birthright Israel applicants conducted by the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University.<sup>9</sup> Our study used screening questions and the College Pulse panel to identify Jewish students. The Cohen Center accesses lists of students who had applied to Birthright Israel and surveys students from those lists. Since researchers know the demographics of Birthright applicants, they are able to weight data to match those population parameters instead of relying on a convenience sample.

This comparison, too, is not perfect, since not all Jewish identifying students apply to Birthright, and our sample would include those students whereas the Cohen Center data would exclude them. Nevertheless, the numbers line up quite well. In the Cohen Center survey conducted in November-December 2023, 25% of their sample had attended Jewish day schools, and 56% had attended Hebrew schools. In our November-December 2023 survey, 27% of the Jewish respondents attended day school, and 53% attended Hebrew schools. In the Cohen Center survey, 54% of respondents identified as liberal and 8% as conservative. In our Fall 2023 survey, 56% of respondents identified as liberal and 12% as conservative. Thus, even though these studies used completely different methodologies and have different target populations, the fact that numbers like these line up so well gives us more confidence in the integrity of our findings.



# Endnotes

1. J. Sellers Hill and Nia L. Orakwue, “Harvard Student Groups Face Intense Backlash for Statement Calling Israel ‘Entirely Responsible’ for Hamas Attack,” *Harvard Crimson*, October 10, 2023.
2. Travis Anderson, “Tufts University Student Group Faces Criticism for Commending the ‘Creativity’ of Hamas Militants,” *Boston Globe*, October 11, 2023.
3. Annie Karni, “Questioning University Presidents on Antisemitism, Stefanik Goes Viral,” *New York Times*, December 7, 2023.
4. Eitan Hersh, “Jewish College Students in America,” Report to the Jim Joseph Foundation, 2022.
5. These numbers line up with a 2020 survey of Jewish American young adults (ages 18-40) that asked this question in the same way. In that survey, 5% said never, 11% rarely, 30% occasionally, 36% often, and 18% all the time. See Tobin Marcus (Benenson Strategy Group), “2020 Young Jewish Adults: COVID and Jewish Virtual Engagement,” Schusterman Family Foundation and Jim Joseph Foundation, 2020.
6. Waves 2 and 3 have more Orthodox-identifying students than wave 1, in part because College Pulse began surveying students at Yeshiva University. Including or excluding Yeshiva students from this analysis does not affect the substantive results, as there are only a handful of such students in the sample. However, in analyses below that focus on social tensions on campus, Yeshiva University students are excluded since the undergraduate population is exclusively Jewish.
7. See, Michael Dawson, *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.
8. National Center for Educational Statistics, “Characteristics of Postsecondary Students,” U.S. Department of Education, August 2023, <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/csb/postsecondary-students#:~:text=In%20fall%202021%2C%20approximately%2010.8,enrolled%20at%20%2Dyear%20institutions>.
9. Graham Wright, et al., “In the Shadow of War: Hotspots of Antisemitism on US College Campuses,” Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University, December 2023.