

# Unserved & Underserved Jewish Research Summary Deck

Albi + Clarafy Research + Jim Joseph Foundation  
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# **OVERVIEW & METHODOLOGY**

# Summary

## Unserved and Underserved Jews grapple with their identity, antisemitism, and the tensions and complexities of Israel and the Gaza War.

Our audiences maintain a deep emotional connection to their Jewish identity and ancestry despite some with misgivings about Israel's conduct since October 7th. For most, pride in their Jewish identity is tied to Israel's actions, rising antisemitism, and the complex political landscape surrounding Israel.

Concerns of safety, social acceptance, and the ongoing war have led to increased anxiety, with Jews navigating their identity carefully in both public and private spheres. Opinions are driven heavily by political outlook, childhood, and Jewish participation.

## Research Overview

### OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate current perceptions of Israel among American Jews underserved by Jewish institutions.
- Assess existing perceptions of Israel and how the past 11 months changed their outlook on being Jewish
- Gauge what role Israel has in participant's Jewish identity.
- Understand differences between unserved vs. underserved, political identification, and other factors.
- Determine how opinions about Israel are shaped.

### METHODOLOGY

- 13 discussions among less affiliated Jews ages 18-49
  - 10 in-person focus groups (FGs) across 4 markets (Los Angeles, Denver, New York City, Chicago), 2 online focus groups, and 1 in-depth interview (IDI)
    - 8 FGs divided by political identity and Jewish affiliation (unserved or underserved)
    - 2 FGs and 1 IDI among Jews of Color
    - 2 FGs among Jewish College Students, divided by political identity

# NEARLY ALL SELF-DESCRIBE AS “CULTURALLY” OR “ETHNICALLY” JEWISH; MANY CONFLICTED WHEN IT COMES TO THEIR OWN JEWISH IDENTITY POST OCTOBER 7TH

## TAKEAWAY

Jewish identity is complex with most openly navigating their own heritage among the backdrop of antisemitism, global tensions, and political divisions, but some - especially Republicans and men - are more openly confident and proud.

For many, Israel is intertwined with identity. Participants mention: Caution (downplaying their Jewishness), Fear (perceived as a monolith supporting Israel), and Conflicted Identity (reconciling “Jewish values” with support for Israel’s killing of Palestinians).

## KEY QUOTES: IDENTITY

“Proud and fearful...I'm leaning into my own Jewishness very hard privately.”

- Chicago Democrat

“Defiant and proud. Watching the rise of mainstream antisemitism is making me see that we never got past it, and a bit depressed we never will. But that just makes me more defiant.”

- NYC Republican

“Depressed and sad...scared at times by current events, and overall sad with all the hate.”

- LA Democrat

# POLITICAL VIEWS DOMINATE ISRAEL OUTLOOK: REPUBLICANS SUPPORT GROWS UNDER ATTACK, MOST DEMOCRATS ARE CONFLICTED AND PUSH AWAY

## TAKEAWAY

For many Democrats, Israel's actions are an obstacle to their Jewish pride, but most Republicans have leaned in, saying Netanyahu is doing the best he can while "under siege."

Yet, most across party are able to separate the Israeli government and military from the State of Israel, and the Israeli people. Despite disagreement regarding Israeli policy, most want to support the Israeli people. To one Democratic participant, not supporting Israelis because of the Gaza War would be as unfair to him being blamed for Trump's actions while president.

## KEY QUOTES: ISRAEL

"I think that Israel should have a right to defend itself, but I feel it **may have gone too far at this point.**"

- Denver Democrat

"I have family & friends there & have traveled there 4x. My connection was already strong, but in difficult times, my connection to Israel always grows."

- NYC  
Republican

"There is so much potential for [Israel] to be a really special, sacred, place, and fear, warmongering, and religious narcissism, make it something else."

- Black Jew of Color

# THERE IS A NEW BREED OF ANTISEMITISM - NOT JUST ASSAULT AND VIOLENCE, BUT MICROAGGRESSIONS IMPACTING SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL SITUATIONS

## TAKEAWAY

Unserved and Underserved Jews lament that non-Jewish audiences are unable to distinguish between Israel and Jew, leading many - particularly Democrats - to shield their Jewish identity at work and socially. This quiet pride leads to feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Many have heard antisemitic tropes used in their presence, with some of the offenders already aware of participants' Jewish identity.

## KEY QUOTES: JEW HATE

"I was walking down the Brooklyn Bridge. [A pro-Palestinian protestor] saw my Star of David and they spit on my face."  
- Latino Jew of Color, NYC

"[Protestors] are just trying to jump on board and be trendy."  
- LA Republican

"I don't want to walk on the street and have a man yelling 'kill the Jews' and I'm just trying to get a donut. I'm not personally responsible for what happened."  
- NYC Democrat

"I saw his text: 'Jessica looks like she just saw a Hamas soldier.' I just shut down and got really uncomfortable."  
- College Democrat

# JEWES OF COLOR EXPERIENCE A DIFFERENT STRAIN OF ANTISEMITISM - FROM DISBELIEF TO DENIAL

## TAKEAWAY

When disclosing their Jewish identity, Jews of Color are met with “you can’t be Jewish” because of how you look. Yet, for Jews of Color who grew up more affiliated and are now underserved, they experienced more racism than antisemitism because of their ability to “fit in” to Jewish life.

## KEY QUOTES: RACISM

“I have to navigate two worlds: one where I’m seen as Jewish and another where I’m seen as Black—but rarely both at the same time.”

- Black Jew of Color, NYC

“I saw much more racism growing up than I did antisemitism.”

- Black Jew of Color, LA

“I have to show people my ‘23 & Me’ results because they tell me, ‘you can’t be Jewish.’”

- AAPI Jew of Color, LA

## ⚡ COLLEGE JEWS INSIGHTS

It's a similar theme among College Jews, but College Republicans are more "inconvenienced" by protestors than any other emotion - they don't share the same anger and frustration as other Republicans.

Some College Democrats - who described themselves as "anti-Zionist" - participated in pro-Palestinian protests, which they did not find antisemitic at all. Other Democrats are fearful of how friends and classmates will react knowing they are Jewish.

College women across political groups are more scared of the protests than men.

# CAMPUS PROTESTS: REPUBLICANS CALL PROTESTORS "BRAINWASHED"; DEMOCRATS SPLIT

## TAKEAWAY

Republicans express bewilderment, anger, and frustration more than any other emotion. "They don't know why they are protesting"; "They are supporting a friend who asked them to go"; or, "It's 'trendy' to be antisemitic."

Most Democrats are torn - they see the "injustice" of the Palestinians, but usually don't agree with the way the protests are being conducted. Many believe they are antisemitic, but most believe the protests gives rise to antisemitism.



## ⚡ IDENTITY INSIGHTS

More than half of participants said October 7th “reinforced” their Jewish identity (36 of 65). Far fewer (10 of 65) said the events made them “distance” themselves.

### 🗨️ KEY QUOTES: LIBERALS

“I do think [Israel] has failed in handling the [Gaza War]. The whole Jewish thing is not about religion at all, but tikkun olam is a big deal, and [Israel isn't] doing any of that.” - NYC Democrat

“I'm pretty hard line against what Israel's done both in recent context. And I get labeled as being anti-Semitic as a Jew for taking a stance that aligns with my politics and principles against the Israeli state.” - LA Democrat

# MANY DEMOCRATS USE THEIR JEWISH IDENTITY AS IMPETUS TO SPEAK OUT ABOUT THE INJUSTICE THEY SEE

## TAKEAWAY

A small, but meaningful handful of Democrats were highly critical of Israel, some of whom described themselves as “anti-Zionists.”

Some call out “propaganda” from Israel and how it seeks to influence young Jews on Birthright or at Jewish summer camps with Israel Days.

Others object to AIPAC's political influence - “lumping in” any criticism of Israel as “antisemitic.”

# DEMOCRATS TENDED TO BE MORE ENGAGED AND MORE APPRECIATIVE OF GENERAL DISCUSSIONS - MANY APPLIED JEWISH VALUES FROM CHILDHOOD TO CURRENT EVENTS

## TAKEAWAY

While we saw emotions from Republicans, largely around Israel and animosity toward protestors, we witnessed a deeper passion for Jewish issues and engagement from many Underserved and some Unserved Democrats.

Outspoken Democrats felt empowered having an outlet to share their complicated views. Some remarked that it was “good to be with other Jews” and that having a forum like this made it “easy to share.” There was a feeling among most that their non-Jewish friends just didn’t “get it.” Self-described anti-Zionist Democrats also seek belonging with like-minded Jews.

## KEY QUOTES: ENGAGEMENT

“After 5 years of Hebrew School and a Bar Mitzvah, I have the childhood to maintain a certain sense of connection.” - Chicago Democrat

“I prefer to talk to other Jews about how my Jewish identity relates to Israel because I feel like other Americans don’t understand it in the same way.” - Denver Democrat

“10 years from now I see myself...a member of a synagogue, with more Jewish activist connections.” - Chicago Democrat (anti-Zionist)

# MOST WILL GET MAINSTREAM NEWS, MANY SUPPLEMENT WITH SOCIAL MEDIA (FRIENDS NOT INFLUENCERS), AND MESSENGERS

## TAKEAWAY

Most have a mix of Jewish and non-Jewish friends, or are the only Jew in their social circle. Many are dating or married to non-Jews which heavily influence their outlook toward their own identity and toward Israel. Excluding those in college (Jewish fraternities), few have exclusively Jewish friends.

## ⚡ AFFILIATION INSIGHTS

Unserved Jews heavily defer to others on Israel/Gaza issues having insufficient background. Their circle of trust is small.

Underserved Jews understand the dangers of mis- and dis-information and want to get at the “truth.” Their circle of trust is larger but more specific.

# TRUSTED MESSENGERS INCLUDE THOSE “ON THE GROUND” AND WITHOUT BIAS; OPINIONS OF ISRAEL AND ISRAELIS MIXED

## TAKEAWAY

Top voices include: Israelis, Palestinians, and International Aid Organizations; as well as historians, academics, and professors. Unserved Jews - understand the conflict is complex, and recognize they are not experts. By contrast, Underserved Jews are more likely to articulate formed opinions.

## KEY QUOTES: VOICES

“[Academics] have studied it. They know how to research it, they know where to look for proper information, just things that me or the guy next to me doesn't, not you specifically in general, just being the random Joe next to me kind of thing.

- LA Unserved Democrat

“People that are being affected by the situation. Obviously, especially from news, it seems the Palestinians are definitely getting the worst of it. But Israelis, and when I say Israelis and Palestinians, I mean more like the civilian population.”

- Chicago Underserved Democrat

# MESSAGES RECEPTIVITY DRIVEN BY PARTISANSHIP - YET, PRIDE IN SECULARISM HAS BROAD APPEAL ACROSS PARTY

## TAKEAWAY

Most accepted messages include pride in Jewish secularism, followed by more political messages including Israel's strategic regional importance (Top R Message), Support for Israelis irrespective of government decisions (More D), call for ceasefire (Top D Message), Israel as a safe haven from global antisemitism (More R)

## KEY QUOTES: MESSAGES

"[If I'm a country and] a powerful force like America is not going to support Israel, like, why should I or why should we support Israel?"  
- NYC Republican

"I feel like the scale of civilian death and particularly of kids is pretty horrifying...in addition I just worry about the future of the war and what that means for the future of Israel and waning support in the US and other places." - Denver Democrat

# A PERSONAL “10 YEAR FORECAST” ON JEWISH IDENTITY AND ISRAEL SHOWS HOPE FOR EACH; COMMUNITY, ANCESTRY, CULTURE ARE CLEAR ENTRY POINTS

## TAKEAWAY

When asked to predict how they might feel about their own Jewish identity and Israel in 10 years, most would continue with the same level of participation or would look for a way to increase that level of participation.

And even the sharpest Israel critics - exclusively Democrats - were “hopeful” they would feel more positively toward Israel in 10 years. A leadership change from Netanyahu, would be “a good start” but would need to see a shift in Israel’s policy to show that Israel was serious about “repairing the damage” done during the Gaza War. Republicans predict they will remain proud.

## KEY QUOTES: FORECAST

“I just want to not have to think about Israel so much.” - LA Democrat

“I have no idea how I’ll actually feel about Israel, but I hope that, everyone who loves that piece of land is equally free to live there so that I can visit and be proud to do so.” - Chicago Democrat

“As far as Israel’s concerned, I think we’ll be proud of Israel in 10 years. I think they’ll keep doing good things and advancing even further.” - Denver Republican

## KEY QUOTES: ENGAGEMENT

# AGAIN, IT'S DEMOCRATS WHO EXPRESS GREATER LIKELIHOOD OF FUTURE ENGAGEMENT

### TAKEAWAY

Republicans tend to say they are “fine” or “good” with their current level of Jewish involvement. Only 6 Republicans out of 22 total participants said they plan to increase their participation with Jewish activities in the future.

Democrats see themselves engaging far more in the future by comparison. More than half the group (14 out of 24) project they would do more in the next 10 years.

“Cultural observance and community; giving my potential children full agency to define their own involvement in Judaism, by giving them many opportunities to engage with it when they're young.”

- LA Democrat

“Not more than now, [only] family gatherings.”

- Chicago Republican

“Similar to now. More cultural than religious. Participation in the core holidays.” - NYC Republican

“I see myself finding a Jewish institution or lay group that aligns with me and hopefully family.” - NYC Democrat

# Conclusions

**Jewish pride in heritage remains strong. Democrats tended to see a more Jewish future for themselves despite conflicted feelings about Israel. Republicans expressed loyalty to Israel, anger at protestors, but little interest in deeper personal involvement.**

Everyone is (still) proud to be Jewish through connections to other Jews, ancestors, history, culture, and food - from anti-Zionists to Netanyahu stalwarts.

Democrats used the discussions as an opportunity to kvetch. Many expressed how great it was to talk with other Jews, and others appeared to leave the group feeling relieved: They had been able to articulate their conflicted feelings - perhaps for the first time - and to do so within the safe space of other Jews.

Research shows a greater potential for engagement among Democrats based on vast issues - more so than Republicans' narrow focus on Israel military defense & campus protests.

## Summary Findings

### 🔍 JEWISHNESS

Despite the Gaza War, Jewish pride remains across affiliation, political party, and geography. Many - across groups - are drawn to a message of celebrating secular Judaism.

### 🔍 OPINION DEVELOPMENT

Unserved need “unbiased” messengers to help them understand the history and issues. Underserved need facts from those on the ground to build on their knowledge, and fight misinformation.

### 🔍 RELATIONSHIP TO ISRAEL

Political affiliation dictates opinions. Republicans are in lock-step support, Democrats are mixed with most critical of Netanyahu and military action; other Dems range from war supporters to self-described “anti-Zionists.”

### 🔍 ENGAGEMENT

Democrats appear more keen to engage in their secular Jewish identity - some as activists. Worries of antisemitism and conversations with non-Jews make most lean away. Talking with Jews may have helped them cope.



# Discussion of Next Steps

Our initial research has spawned new ideas on potential paths for deeper understanding and new programs.

## The Future of This Research

How can we best leverage this body of research through publishing, presentations, or community sharing?

What organizations and influencers are most important to enter conversations with?

## Program Design Ideas

Could moderated conversations help to recreate the belonging that many felt leaving the focus groups?

Does leaning in on tough conversations - like how to reconcile criticism of Israel with American Jewish identity or talking about microaggressions - help foster a new sense of community?

Will talking through the horrors of Israeli hostages or October 7th or what might happen in the US provide comfort...because other Jews are the only ones to “get it”?

## Further Research Exploration

### SURVEY RESEARCH

Statistically quantify findings and audience sizes from the focus groups.

Determine how to match the right messages to the right audience to influence action.

Quantifying Unserved and Underserved Jews (Seekers, Socializers, and Questioners within), anti-Zionists, and others can determine the groups most open to programming, providing clues about which programs are most promising.

### JEWISH AFFINITY

With groups showing Underserved Democrats are the low-hanging fruit to reintegrate, understand the avenues to persuade - test programming ideas, subjects, enthusiasm. Develop strategies for white Jews and Jews of Color.

### JEWISH STUDENTS

Revisit and track opinions among Jewish college students to assess life following last year's campus protests.

# QUESTIONS

About

Albi

Albi is a new fund, institute and lab that uses cultural vehicles to establish paradigm-shifting narratives by and about Palestinians and Jews.

One way to understand Albi's work is through a simple matrix. On one axis, three spaces where narratives have the greatest impact on our collective understanding: mass media, mass culture, and mass movements. On the other axis, three moments when interventions in the storytelling process are possible: development, production, and distribution.

This matrix is our playing field, an enormous range of opportunities wherein we can transform "the air we're breathing" – which, in turn, will transform us.

Albi exists to leverage these opportunities to impact how people in Israel-Palestine think about what kind of country they want to live in, thrive in, and help build.

Learn more at: [www.albi.org](http://www.albi.org)

About



Clarafy Research is an opinion research firm that helps communicators and strategists connect with their audience, craft compelling messages, and measure impact.

We provide insights-based strategies through quantitative and qualitative research (like surveys, focus groups, and emerging research methods), translating complex problems into clear strategies that give organizations an definitive path forward.

Clarafy's research approach gets to the heart of the issue, uncovering the emotions that shape perceptions and drive decision making.

Clarafy specialties in understanding modern Jewish thought through research, as well as expertise in public affairs issues, narrative development, reputational and crisis research, message testing, audience targeting.

Learn more at: [www.clarafy.co](http://www.clarafy.co)