

Brandeis University

Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

Antisemitism and the College Campus: Perceptions and Realities



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Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

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Executive Summary

In 2015 US and Canadian college campuses were the settings for a wave of anti-Israel campaigns and events. Coming in the wake of the Israel-Hamas war in summer 2014, the incidents included campaigns to promote Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) of Israel. Although media reports of anti-Israel incidents and antisemitism have attracted substantial attention, there have only been a few attempts to study these issues systematically.

The present study was designed to understand the extent of hostility toward Israel and antisemitism on North American campuses and to assess the relationship between these trends and Jewish students' support for and connection to Israel. The study draws on a survey of US and Canadian college students and young adults who applied to go on a ten-day educational Israel experience with Taglit-Birthright Israel. The survey was conducted in April 2015 before the applicants left for Israel.

Key findings:

- More than one-quarter of undergraduate respondents describe hostility toward Israel on campus by their peers as a “fairly” or “very big” problem and nearly 15 percent perceive this same level of hostility toward Jews.
- Nearly one-quarter of respondents report having been blamed during the past year for the actions of Israel because they were Jewish. Twenty percent report that this happened occasionally and five percent that it happened frequently or all the time. About one-third of college undergraduate respondents report having been verbally harassed during the past year because they were Jewish.
- Nearly three-quarters of respondents report having been exposed at one time during the past year to at least one of six antisemitic statements, including the claims that Jews have too much power and that Israelis behave “like Nazis” toward the Palestinians.
- Connection to Israel is the strongest predictor of perceiving a hostile environment toward Israel and Jews on campus and, to a lesser extent, of personal experiences of antisemitic verbal harassment. It is likely that those who are highly connected to Israel become a target of antisemitic or anti-Israel sentiment because they make their support for Israel known. It is also likely that those who are more connected to Israel are more sensitive to criticism of Israel, or more likely to perceive such criticism as antisemitic.
- A few schools have particularly high levels of hostility toward Jews or Israel. In particular, Canadian universities, schools in the California state system, and, to a lesser extent, large land-grant universities in the Midwest are over-represented among schools with the highest average levels of hostility toward Jews and Israel. There are, however, no systematic differences among universities in average rates of antisemitic verbal harassment.
- Despite a significant number perceiving their campus environment to be hostile to Israel and Jews, students report high levels of connection to Israel: A third report feeling “very much” connected to Israel and another third report feeling “somewhat” connected. These levels of connection are higher than those found among similar individuals in 2014, before the Israel-Hamas conflict.

- Less than a quarter of respondents indicate having followed news of the Israeli elections—which were held in the month prior to the survey—“somewhat” or “very much.” In addition, respondents appear to have a low level of knowledge and/or few firm convictions about Israeli politics.

The present report documents the prevalence of antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment on North American campuses in spring 2015. The findings highlight the complex relationship between emotional attachment to Israel and perceptions of hostility toward Jews and Israel.

Campuses are a focal point for controversy over Israel, and Jewish students are exposed not only to such disputes, but also interventions such as Taglit-Birthright Israel that are designed to strengthen their Jewish identities and connection to Israel. To the extent that anti-Israel hostility and antisemitism on college campuses intensifies, it threatens to make college campuses more problematic places for Jewish students. Although this does not seem to be the case at present, if a significant number of Jewish students choose to avoid Jewish and Israel-related activities (including Taglit), the effects may be widespread and long lasting. The situation calls out for further study.

About this Report

The present study is based on a survey conducted by researchers from the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish studies at Brandeis University. The survey targeted a sample of eligible applicants to summer 2015 Taglit-Birthright Israel trips. Data were collected April 15 – May 7, 2015 before any respondents traveled to Israel. The survey was conducted via an online questionnaire, and respondents were offered the opportunity to win one of three \$100 Amazon.com gift cards. The sample frame included approximately 32,000 individuals. A simple random sample of 12,049 eligible applicants was drawn from the frame. The response rate (AAPOR RR2) was 26.6 percent with 3,199 respondents completing the survey. A more detailed description of the methodology of this study can be found in Technical Appendix B.

Weights were calculated to adjust for differences between the characteristics of respondents and known characteristics of the population and were applied to each analysis as appropriate. The weights adjust for nonresponse bias with respect to gender, age, and number of previous applications to Taglit. There was no nonresponse bias with respect to Jewish denomination or parental intermarriage, so no weighting adjustments were made on these variables. Throughout the report, where descriptive statistics (such as two-way tables of frequencies) are presented, the substantive relationships between the variables has been confirmed by a number of more sophisticated analytic paradigms, including regression analysis and multi-level modeling. The results of all these additional analyses can be found in Technical Appendices C and D.

The analyses described in this report treat respondents who were pursuing undergraduate degrees at the time of the survey, as informants about their campus climate. The experiences of these students are likely to represent those of a “typical” college student living on campus. The analyses focusing on campus climate are limited to these respondents only and are so noted in the description of the charts. Other analyses include all respondents and, where significant differences between undergraduates and other respondents were found, they are reported in the charts and text.

Introduction

In 2015 US and Canadian college campuses experienced a wave of anti-Israel campaigns and events. Coming in the wake of the Israel-Hamas war in summer 2014, the incidents included campaigns to promote Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) of Israel—seen by many as threatening to Israel’s security and as a contemporary manifestation of antisemitism (see Nelson & Brahm, 2014). In response to these events, substantial new resources are being assembled for Israel education and Israel advocacy on American campuses. To inform and guide this response, systematic data about the nature and extent of hostility toward Israel and antisemitism on campus are needed. The present study was designed to provide empirical evidence to assess the extent of hostility toward Israel and antisemitism on North American campuses and to understand their relationship to Jewish students’ support for and connection to Israel.

What do we know already?

Media reports of anti-Israel incidents and antisemitism have been widely disseminated and have attracted substantial attention, yet few studies have collected systematic data about these incidents and their impact on Jewish students.¹ In 2012, the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (Bard & Dawson, 2012) found anti-Israel activity concentrated on a limited number of campuses: One-third of the incidents were on only ten campuses. A more recent assessment by The Israel Campus Coalition (ICC, 2014), of what they characterize as detractor and supporter events on campus, found marked changes since 2012. There had been modest increases in detractor and support events from 2012 to 2013 and, then, a “staggering” increase—in the wake of the Israel-Hamas war—from 2013-14 to 2014-15 in both types

of events. The number of campuses affected by these events also increased with anti- and pro-Israel events occurring at more than 150 institutions in 2014 (ICC, 2014).

An October 2014, Anti-Defamation League (ADL) report focused on the Israel-Hamas war as the cause of a 100 percent increase in the number of anti-Israel events in September and October 2014 compared to the previous year. Almost 40 percent of these events involved BDS. The ADL also reported that more than 50 “extremely one-sided” programs about Israel were sponsored by academic departments in the 2012-13 and 2013-14 academic years.

Along with reports that catalog hostile incidents on campus, several surveys have been conducted to assess students’ perceptions of anti-Israel and antisemitic activity on their campuses. The most prominent is Kosmin and Keysar’s (2015) study of more than 1,000 Jewish students, sampled from college students across the US with Jewish ethnic names. The study, which was conducted in early 2014, reported that more than half of the respondents had experienced or witnessed antisemitism in the previous year.

At the same time that evidence exists of increased anti-Israel and antisemitic activity, there is also evidence that connection to Israel among Jewish young adults increased in the aftermath of the Israel-Hamas war. Surveys of applicants to Taglit-Birthright Israel (Shain, Saxe, Hecht, Wright & Sasson, 2015; Shain, Hecht, & Saxe, 2014) conducted in August and in September of 2014 documented strong support for Israel during the conflict, and found that even those applicants who did not participate in Taglit were more connected to

Israel in September than they were the previous April. Support for Israel's position during the conflict and increased feelings of connection cut across demographic categories and included self-defined liberals as well as moderates and conservatives. These findings were in marked contrast to surveys of the broader American public which showed that young adults (18-29 year olds) were not very supportive of Israel during the war (Pew Research Center, 2014).

The rise in support for Israel over summer 2014 among Jewish students and other young adults is consistent with long-standing trends that show support increasing in the aftermath of attacks against Israel (Phillips, Lengyel, & Saxe, 2002). Participation in Israel educational tourism like Taglit has also likely contributed to increased connection to Israel (Saxe & Chazan, 2008; Shain et al., 2015), since participating in Taglit was found to increase connection to Israel above and beyond the increase observed for nonparticipants. The development of a host of pro-Israel initiatives both on and off campuses may also have played a role (see Koren, Fleisch & Saxe, In press). And finally, the increase in the number of academic course offerings about Israel at the undergraduate level in colleges and universities in North America may have contributed to increased support (see Aronson, Koren, & Saxe, 2013).

What will we learn from this study?

Without question, Israel is a focus of controversy on many college campuses. The extent to which criticism of Israel's policies has translated into hostility rooted in antisemitism is not known. It is also unclear how the sometimes vitriolic debate about Israel is affecting Jewish students, both in terms of their perception of safety in

expressing their Jewish identities and their involvement with the Jewish community and Israel.

The findings in this report draw on a survey conducted in spring 2015 of US and Canadian college students and other young adults who applied to Taglit-Birthright Israel, but had not yet gone on Taglit trips at the time of the survey. Applicants to Taglit represent the diversity of Jewish students and young adults, not only those who are highly educated Jewishly and already engaged. Their diversity makes them a useful population for studying the attitudes and behaviors of young Jews. Respondents who were undergraduate students at the time of the survey serve, for the purposes of this study, as informants about their campus environments.

This study enables us to explore the prevalence of various forms of antisemitism and hostility toward Israel on campus. It distinguishes between specific incidents of antisemitic harassment and a perceived environment of hostility toward Israel and Jews. In addition, the study explores the extent to which criticism toward Israel evolves into antisemitism and how respondents' views about Israel affect their experience and perceptions of the problem. These findings provide a baseline against which future developments can be assessed.

Anti-Israel Sentiment and Activity on the College Campus

Undergraduate respondents were specifically asked for their personal assessment of hostility toward Israel on their campus, as expressed by their peers and by their professors. **More than one-quarter of these students described hostility toward Israel among their peers as a “fairly” or “very” big problem** (see Figure 1). Hostility emanates mostly from students’ peers, but nearly 10 percent of students reported that hostility from faculty was a problem.

Certain individual characteristics were associated with a greater likelihood of viewing hostility toward Israel as a problem on campus. As shown in Figure 2, higher levels of connection to Israel were most influential in relation to viewing hostility toward Israel as a problem. Although respondents who described their political orientation as conservative (who comprise a small minority of respondents) were more likely to view hostility toward Israel as a problem, this is merely because they tend to be the most connected to Israel.² Similarly, those with more Jewish education and those with unmarried parents were more likely to see

hostility toward Israel as a problem, but this is a function of their higher levels of connection to Israel. Female undergraduates were more likely to see hostility toward Israel as a problem, but the difference is small.

As a way to understand the potential correlation between the increased visibility of the BDS movement and the perception of hostility toward Israel on college campuses, the survey assessed the awareness of the movement among young Jewish adults. All respondents, whether they currently attend college or not, were asked how much they had heard about BDS campaigns (Figure 3). About half of the respondents reported having heard something about BDS; about one-third had heard “some” or “a great deal” of information. Current undergraduates were significantly more likely to have heard about BDS than other young adults. Additionally, those undergraduates who were most familiar with BDS activities were substantially more likely to see hostility toward Israel by students on their campus as a problem.

Figure 1. Hostility toward Israel on campus (undergraduates only)

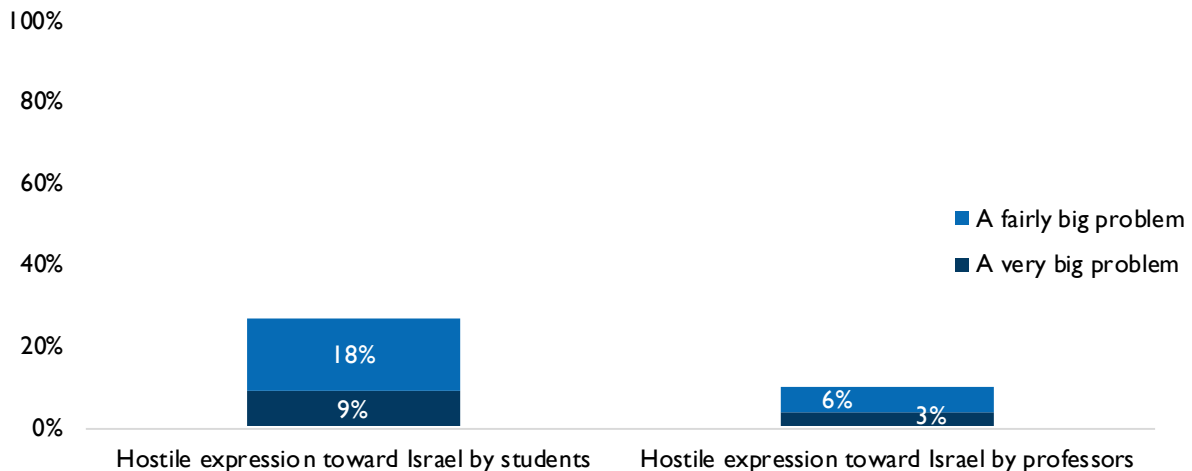
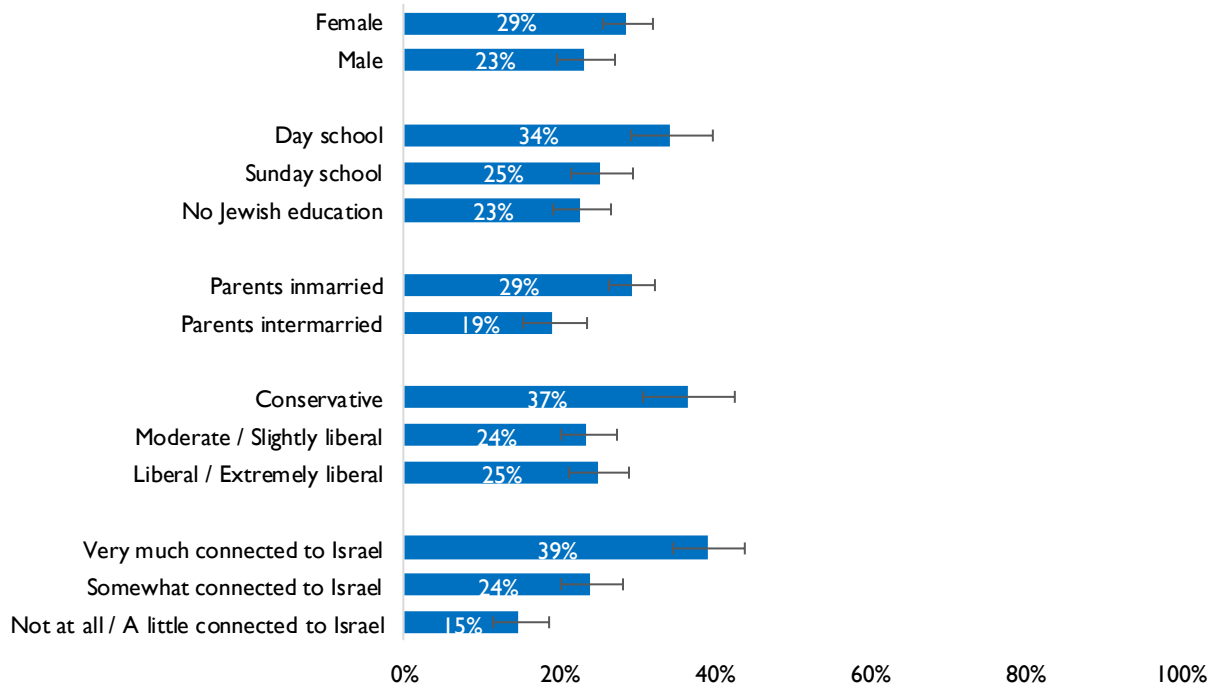
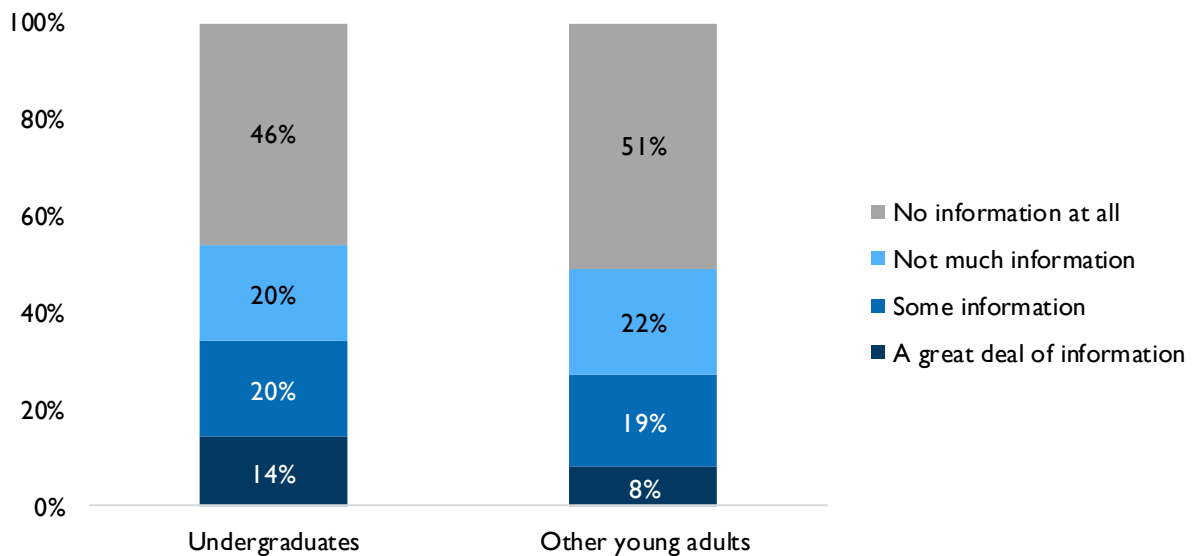


Figure 2. Hostility toward Israel on campus is a “fairly” or “very” big problem (undergraduates only) by individual characteristics



Note: Figure shows results of weighted cross-tabs. Error bars denote 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 3. Awareness of BDS campaigns



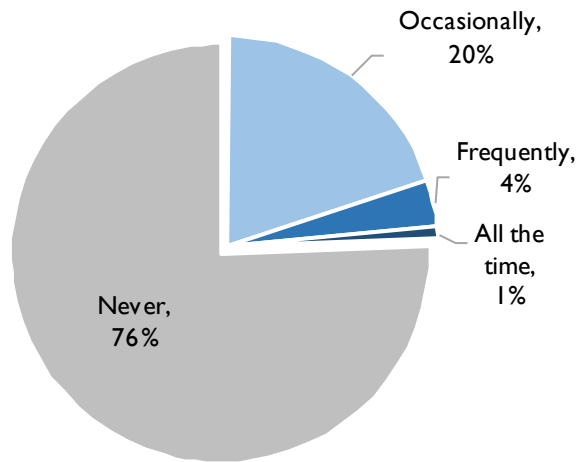
Note: How much have you heard about the Boycotts, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign?

Antisemitism on the College Campus

To what extent has anti-Israel sentiment and activity translated into antisemitism? Nearly one in four respondents reported that he or she had at one point in the past year been blamed for the actions of Israel because he or she was Jewish. Twenty percent of respondents reported that this happened occasionally, 4 percent said it happened frequently and 1 percent reported it happening all the time (Figure 4). Undergraduates and non-undergraduates were equally likely to report being blamed for Israel’s actions.

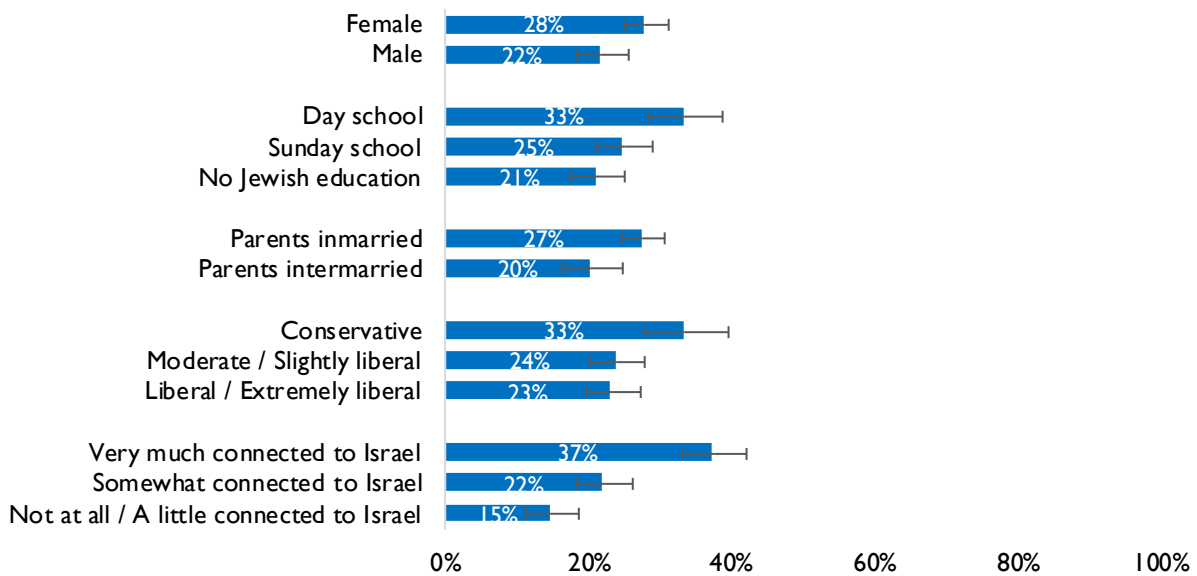
due to their higher levels of connection to Israel.³

Figure 4. Being blamed for Israel’s actions because you’re a Jew



As shown in Figure 5, females and respondents with higher levels of connection to Israel were more likely to say they have been blamed for Israel’s actions. As with hostility toward Israel, while political conservatives and those with more Jewish education appear to be more likely to report being blamed for Israel’s actions, this is merely

Figure 5. Being blamed for Israel’s actions because you’re a Jew at least “occasionally” by individual characteristics



Note: Figure shows results of weighted cross-tabs. Error bars denote 95% confidence intervals.

Respondents were asked for their personal assessment of hostility toward Jews on their campus, as expressed by their peers and by their professors (see Figure 6). **Although hostility toward Jews was perceived as less common than hostility toward Israel, around 13 percent of current undergraduates perceived hostility toward Jews as a “fairly” or “very” big problem.**

As with hostility toward Israel, professors were seen as less likely to be a source of hostility. Those who were more connected to Israel were more likely to see hostility toward Jews on campus as a problem (Figure 7).

Political conservatives were also more likely to see hostility toward Jews as a problem than moderates or liberals, and this difference remains even after controlling for this group’s higher level of connection to Israel.⁴ After controlling for connection to Israel and political conservatism, there were no meaningful or significant differences with respect to seeing hostility toward Jews as a problem between men and women, those with different levels of Jewish education, or those with intermarried versus inmarried parents.

Figure 6. Hostility toward Jews a problem on campus (undergraduates only)

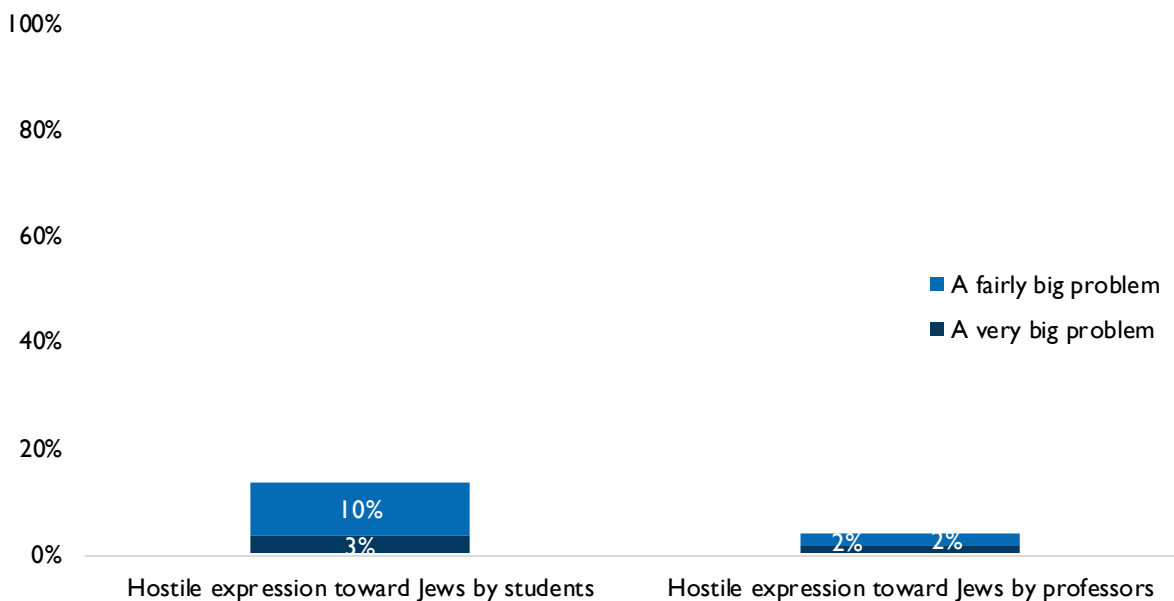
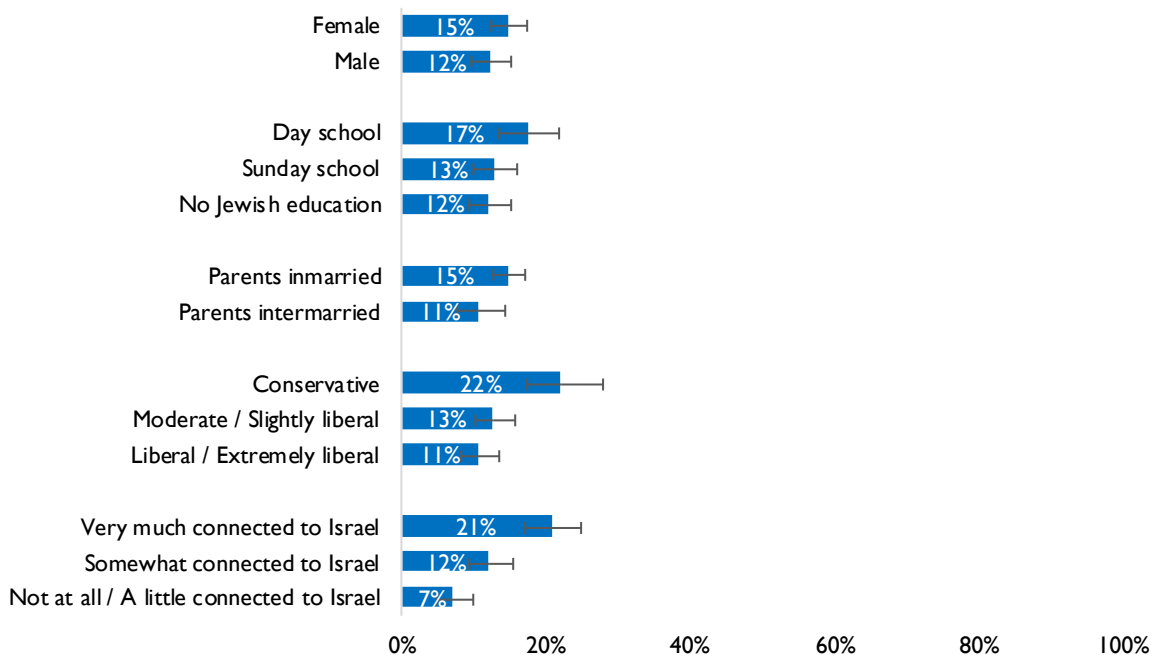


Figure 7. Hostility toward Jews on campus is a “fairly” or “very” big problem (undergraduates only) by individual characteristics



Note: Figure shows results of weighted cross-tabs. Error bars denote 95% confidence intervals.

Respondents were asked how often they had experienced specific instances of antisemitic harassment in the past year. Although physical harassment was rarely experienced by the respondents, verbal harassment is apparently a fact of life for a substantial portion of young Jewish adults. This is especially so for current undergraduates. **About one-third of undergraduate respondents reported having been verbally harassed during the past year** (see Figure 8). It is important to note that verbal harassment occurs in face-to-face encounters, but as some respondents suggested in their comments at the end of the survey, it is also increasingly common online; in particular, on social media platforms.

Female undergraduates and those with inmarried parents were both slightly more likely to have reported verbal harassment compared to males and those with intermarried parents. Respondents' political views and levels of Jewish education were not significantly related to being verbally harassed. Respondents more connected to Israel were more likely to have experienced verbal harassment, although the differences in concrete experiences are much smaller than the differences in perceptions of hostility toward Israel or Jews as a problem on campus (Figure 9).⁵

Figure 8. Physical and verbal harassment in the past year

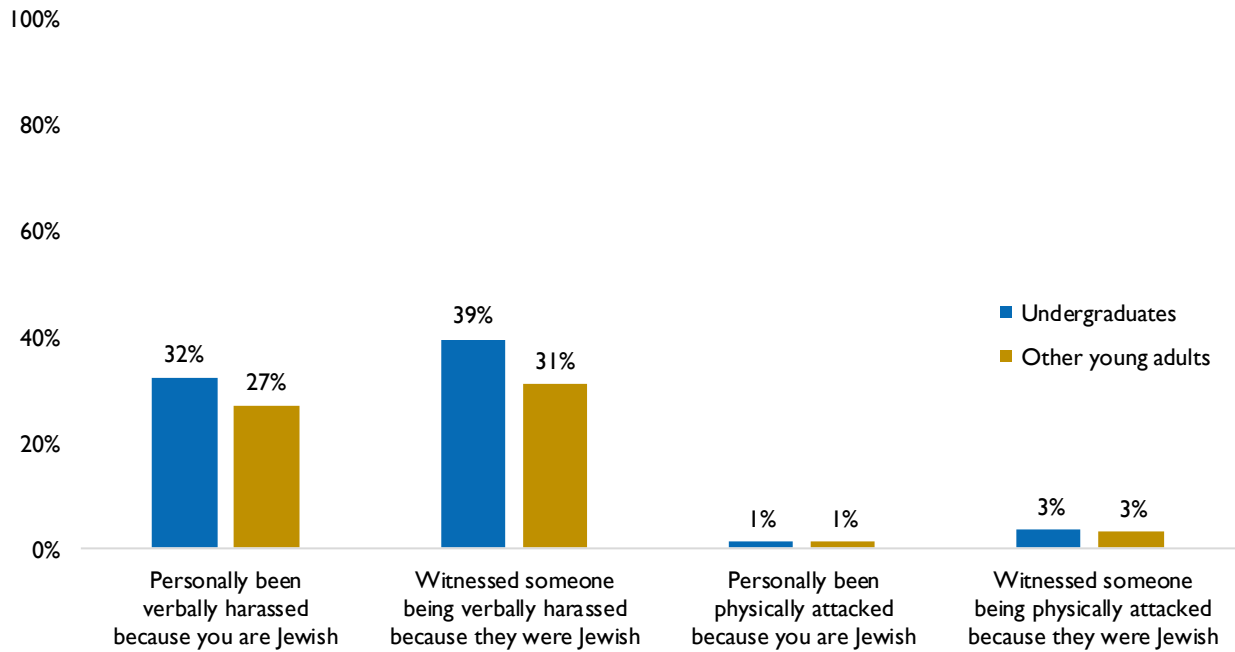
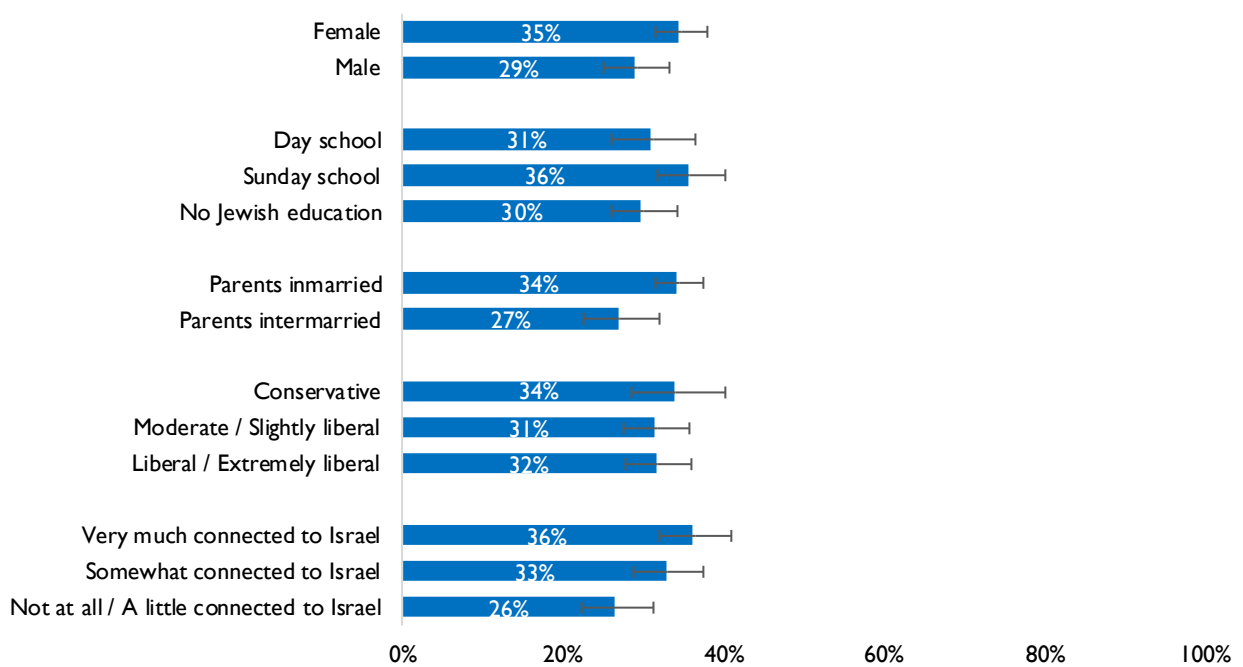


Figure 9. Being personally verbally harassed by individual characteristics

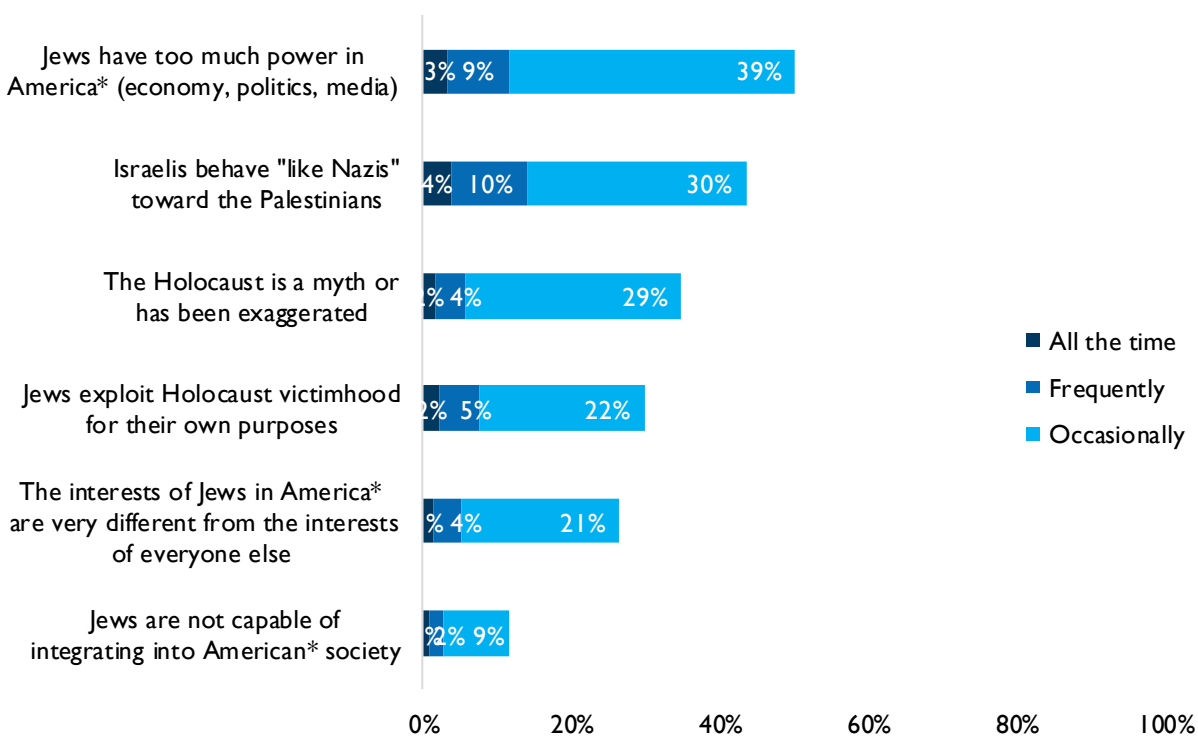


Note: Figure shows results of weighted cross-tabs. Error bars denote 95% confidence intervals.

To draw a more detailed picture of verbal antisemitic harassment, respondents were also asked how often they had heard non-Jews make any of six antisemitic statements (Figure 10). The most commonly heard statements were that Jews have too much power in the economic, political, or media spheres and that Israelis behave “like Nazis” toward Palestinians.

Nearly three-quarters of the respondents reported being exposed to at least one of these six antisemitic statements at least occasionally in the past year. In general, there was no difference between undergraduates and other young adult Jews in terms of their exposure to these statements; however, 37 percent of current undergraduates reported hearing that the Holocaust was a myth or was exaggerated, compared to only 33 percent for non-undergraduates.⁶

Figure 10. Exposure to antisemitic statements in the past year

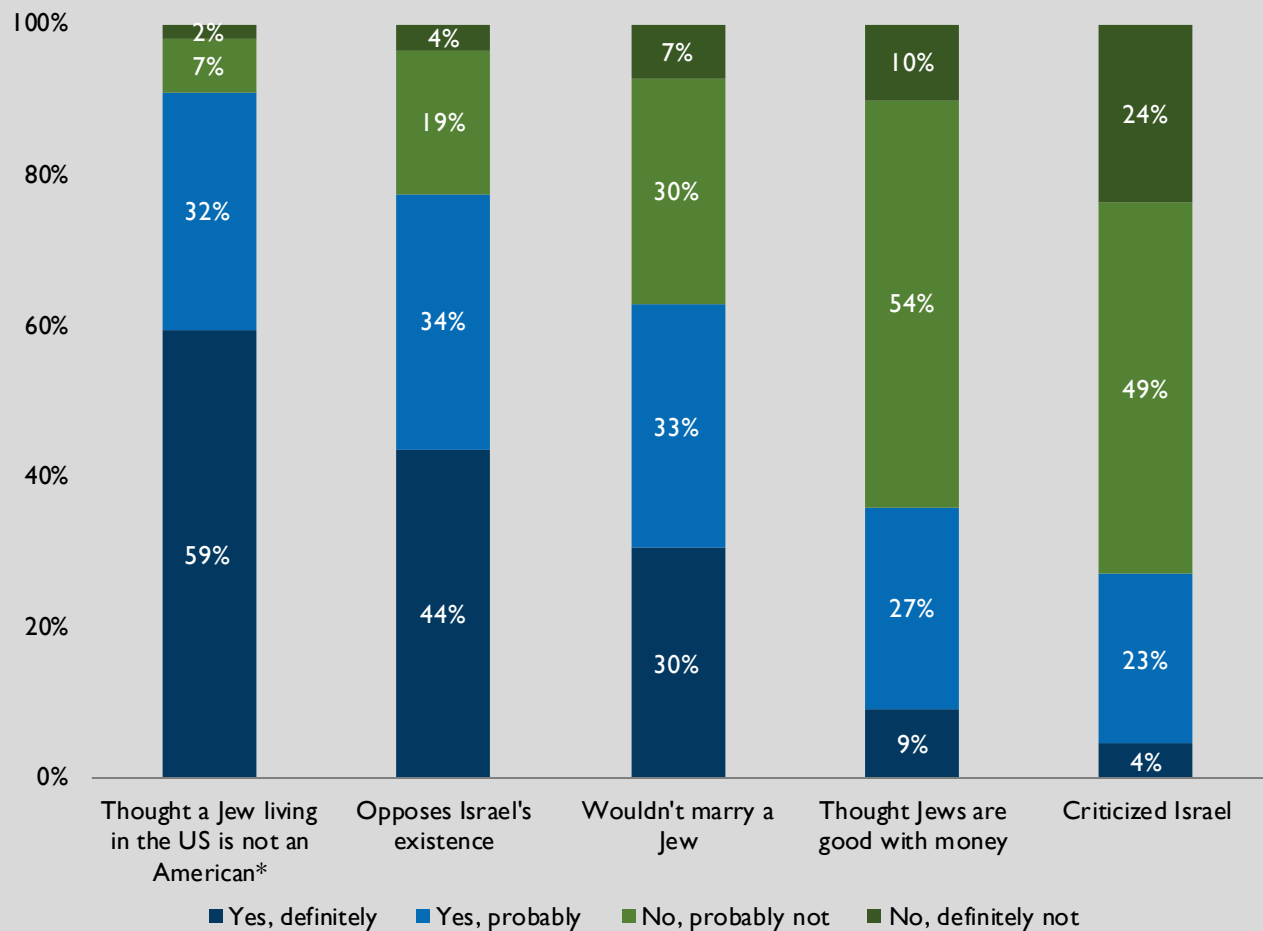


Note: *Replaced with "Canada" or "Canadian" for Canadian respondents.

Defining Antisemitism

In order to assess how respondents think about antisemitism, a battery of questions were asked about which behaviors respondents consider to be antisemitic. A large majority of respondents defined the claim that Jews living in the United States were not Americans (or in Canada, Canadian) as antisemitic. More than three-quarters similarly defined opposition to Israel's existence as antisemitism. A much smaller proportion—just 27 percent—defined criticism of Israeli policies as antisemitic (Figure 11). There was no difference between those who are currently undergraduates and other Jewish young adults in their perceptions of what views qualify as antisemitic.

Figure 11. Defining antisemitic statements



Notes: *Replaced with "Canada" or "Canadian" for Canadian respondents.
Would you think a non-Jew was antisemitic if he/she...

Differences in Antisemitism and Anti-Israel Sentiment by Campus

To what extent is antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment concentrated on particular campuses? This is a complicated question because certain types of respondents are more likely to report experiencing verbal harassment and seeing expressions of hostility toward Israel and Jews as a problem, regardless of what university they attend, and such individuals may be concentrated in particular schools. One way to sort out this issue is to control for these differences statistically and then estimate the “average” level of antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment at a given school. This allows for a fair comparison that enables us to see whether some schools have higher average rates of reported antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment than others (See Technical Appendix D for analytic details).

The findings indicated that **antisemitic verbal harassment occurs at similar rates across campuses**. Regardless of the Jewish and demographic characteristics of the students from the campus, the average rates of verbal harassment were essentially the same.

In contrast, there were a number of schools that showed significantly higher-than-average levels of hostility toward Israel, regardless of the characteristics of the students reporting on the hostility. **Canadian universities, schools in the California state system, and, to a lesser extent, large land-grant universities in the Midwest are over-represented among those schools with the highest average levels of hostility toward Israel.**

With respect to the average level of hostility toward Jews, there were few differences across schools overall. However, as discussed above, respondents who were more politically conservative and more connected to Israel were more likely to perceive their campus climate as hostile toward Jews, and those respondents were not distributed evenly across campuses. There are some schools where reported hostility to Jews was not particularly high in absolute terms, but where it is substantially higher than other schools with similar Jewish populations. The relationship between campus climate, personal characteristics, and perception of hostility is complex and deserving of further study.

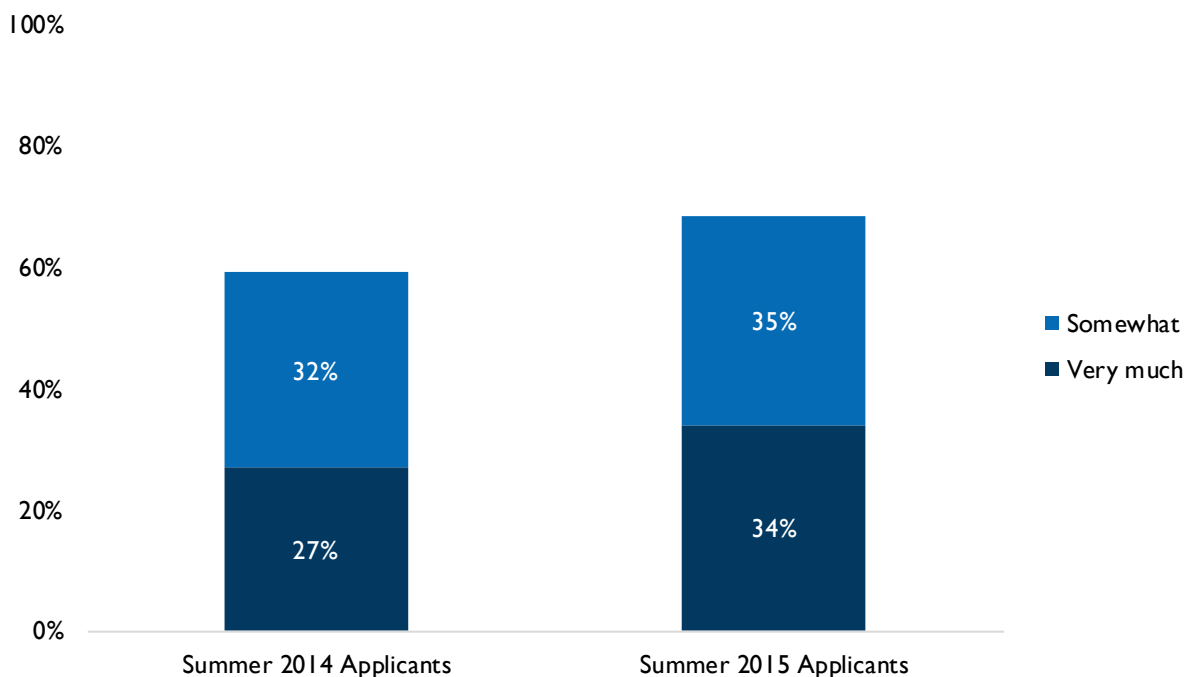
Attitudes toward Israel

In addition to measuring applicants’ perceptions of hostility toward Israel, the survey also explored applicants’ own views about Israel and their interest in and knowledge about Israeli affairs. On these items there were few differences between undergraduates and other young adults, so except where noted, the data reported are for all respondents.

Despite the hostility some students perceive as directed toward Israel by their peers, respondents appear highly connected to Israel. In line with previous findings that showed increases in connection to Israel in the wake

of the 2014 Israel-Hamas conflict (Shain et al., 2015), around a third of the summer 2015 Taglit applicants surveyed for this study reported feeling “very much” connected to Israel. This is a substantially higher rate than was the case for applicants to summer 2014 trips (Figure 12). Although the applicant pool for the 2015 trips was somewhat smaller than in 2014, the demographic profile of applicants was nearly identical (see description of the sample in Technical Appendix A). Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that connection to Israel among Jewish young adults in general increased between spring 2014 and spring 2015.

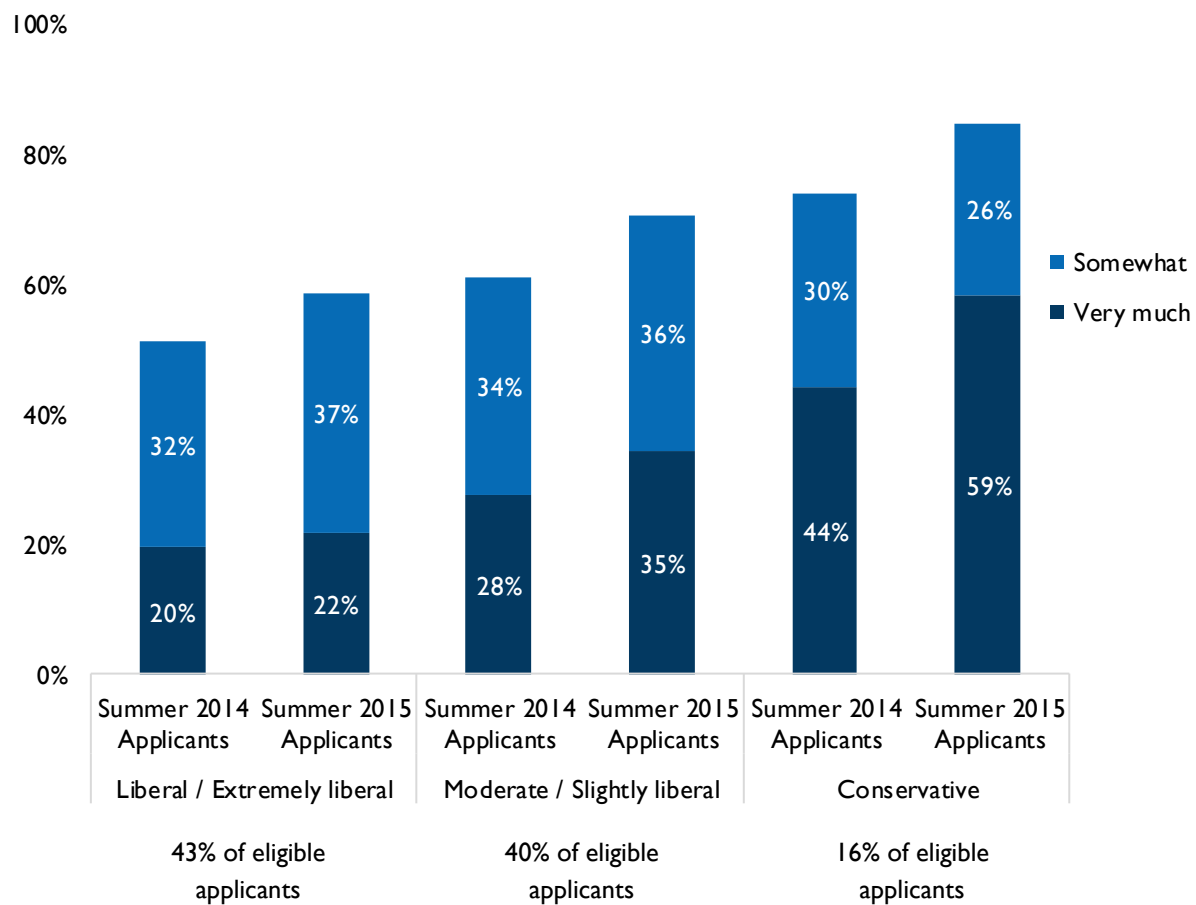
Figure 12. Connection to Israel (summer 2014 and summer 2015 Taglit applicants pre trip)



Previous research has demonstrated that the increase in connection to Israel occurred across all political orientations (Shain et al., 2015). Liberals, conservatives, and moderates all became more connected to Israel after the

Israel-Hamas war. This same pattern emerges among 2015 applicants—a broad increase in connection across the political spectrum compared to 2014 applicants (See Figure 13).

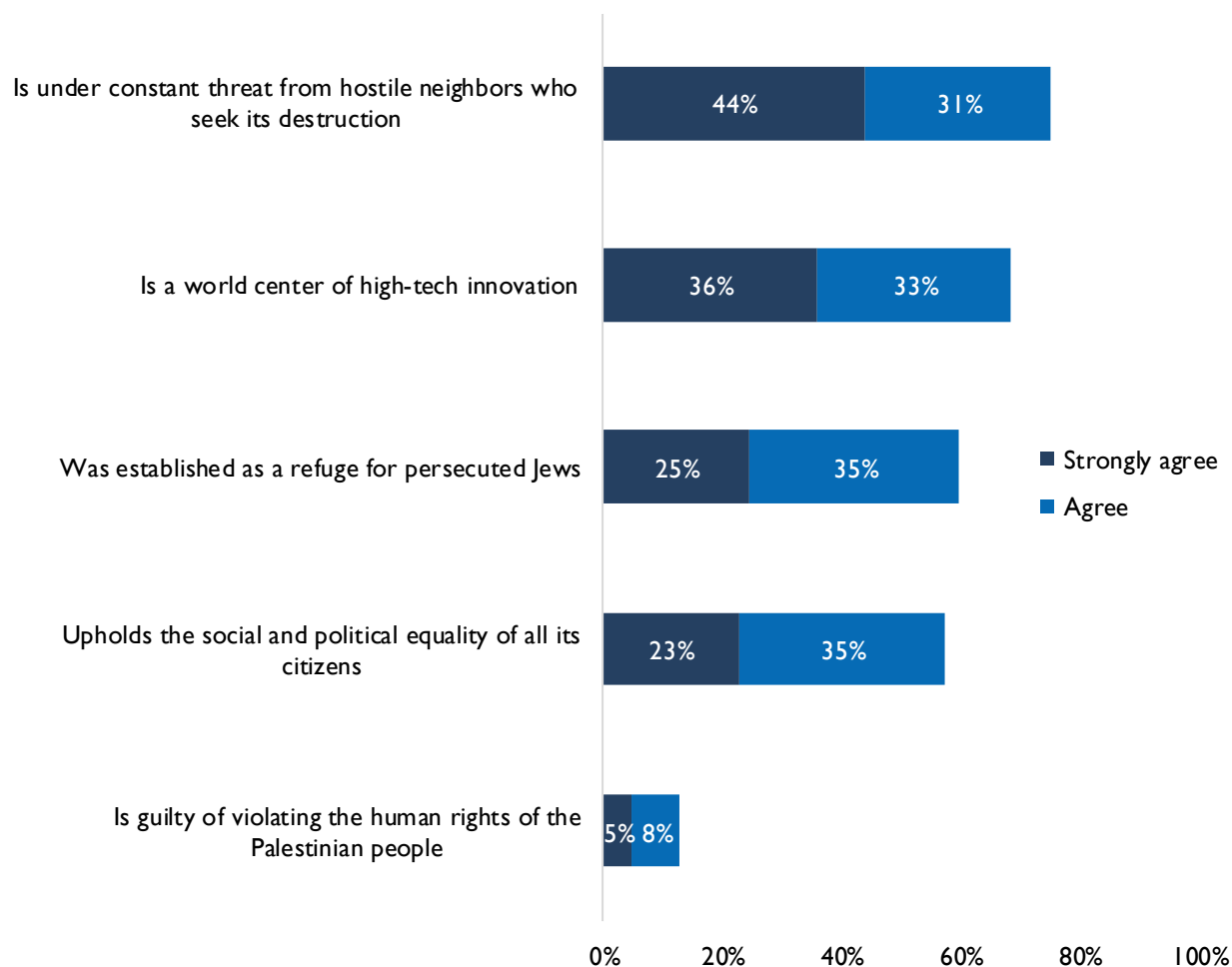
Figure 13. Connection to Israel by political ideology (summer 2014 and summer 2015 Taglit applicants, pre trip)



The survey also explored respondents' perceptions of Israel. Figure 14 shows to what extent respondents agreed with select statements. Overall, respondents viewed Israel in a favorable light. Three-quarters of respondents agreed that Israel is under constant threat from those who seek its

destruction and most agreed that Israel upholds the social and political equality of its citizens. Only a small minority believed Israel violates Palestinian human rights. The responses were nearly identical to those of 2014 program applicants (Shain et al, 2015).

Figure 14. Perceptions of Israel

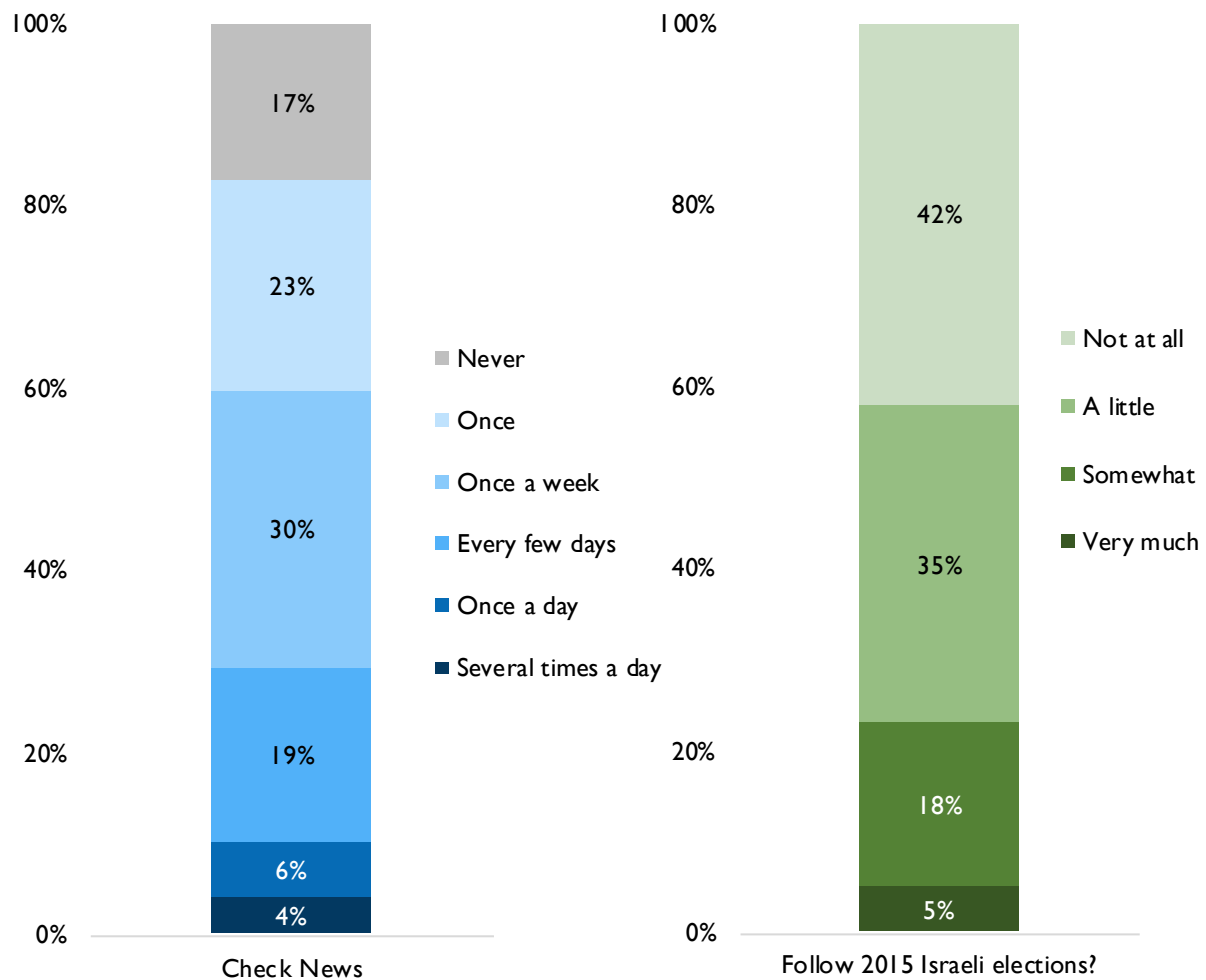


Note: To what extent do you agree that Israel...?

Respondents were also asked how frequently they sought news about Israel. Considering the fact that respondents recently applied to go on a trip to Israel, it is not surprising that fifty-nine percent reported having “actively sought news” about Israel at least once a week

during the previous month. Twenty-three percent indicated having followed news of Israeli elections—which were held in the month prior to the survey—“somewhat” or very much” and 35 percent followed the elections “a little” (Figure 15).

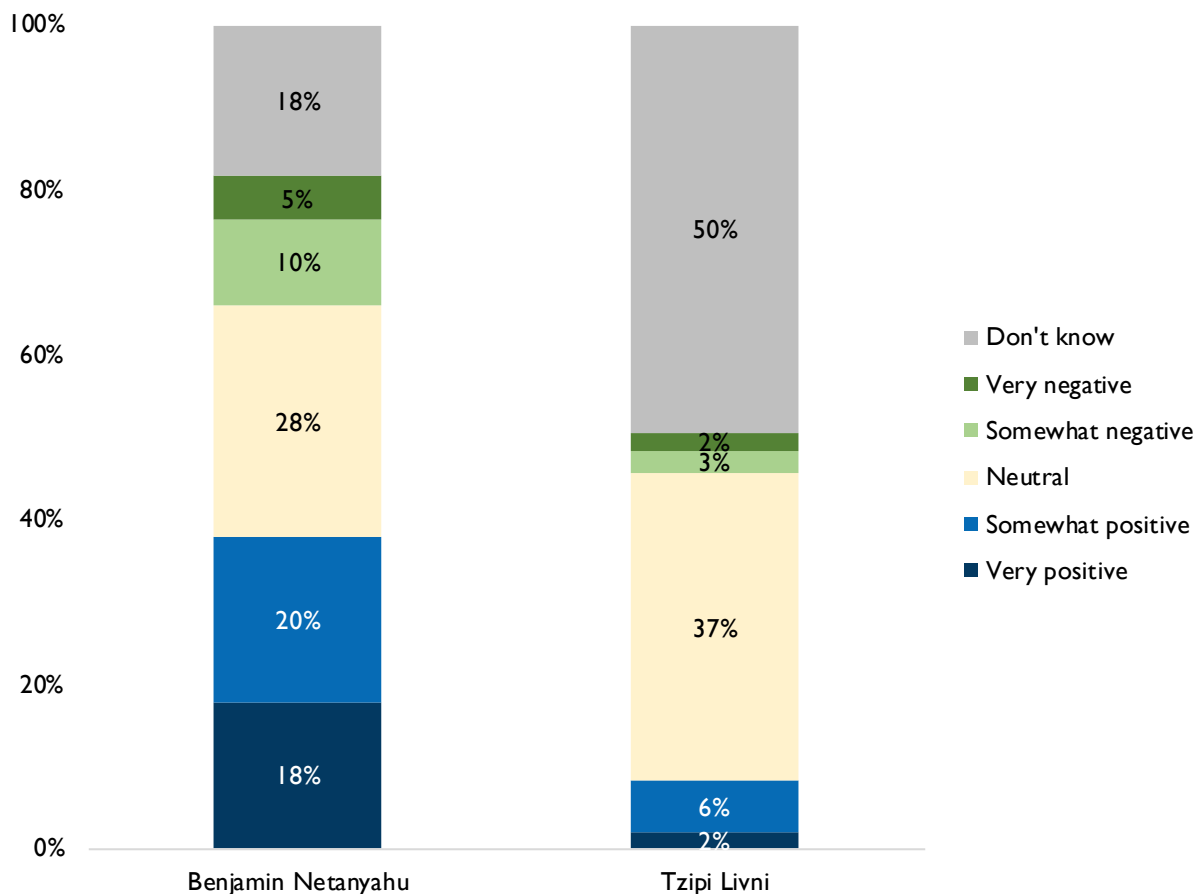
Figure 15. Checking news about Israel in the past month and following the 2015 Israeli election



When asked, in the run-up to the 2015 Israeli parliamentary elections, which political bloc (center-left or center-right) they wanted to form a government, over 60 percent replied “don’t know,” implying a low level of knowledge and/or few firm opinions about Israeli politics.

Notably, most respondents had scant knowledge of Israel’s leading politicians, other than Benjamin Netanyahu. For example, half of the respondents reported having no opinion about former Justice Minister Tzipi Livni who co-led the Zionist Union party (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Favorability of Israeli politicians



Note: How would you rate your feelings toward...?

Discussion

This study joins a number of recent reports on anti-Israel activities and their effects on Jewish undergraduate students. The findings draw from a survey conducted in spring 2015 of North American applicants to Taglit-Birthright Israel. These young adults represent the diversity of Jewish experience and backgrounds. Those who were undergraduate students serve as informants about antisemitism and hostility toward Israel and Jews on campus.

Hostility toward Jews and Israel appears to be a problem for a significant number of Jewish students. The findings indicate that more than a quarter believe that hostility toward Israel is a problem in their campus environment. Hostility emanates mostly from students' peers, but nearly ten percent of students reported that hostility from faculty was a problem. About one-quarter reported being blamed for Israel's actions because they were Jewish. Although few respondents reported physical attacks, about one-third reported having experienced verbal harassment in the past year, and a larger proportion reported some exposure to antisemitic remarks. More than half reported hearing that Jews have too much power, and nearly half heard that Israelis behave "like Nazis" toward the Palestinians. More than one-third heard that the Holocaust is either a myth or often exaggerated.

Connection to Israel was the strongest predictor of perceiving a hostile environment toward Israel and Jews on campus and to a lesser extent a predictor of personal experiences of antisemitic verbal harassment. Those who were highly connected to Israel were more likely to perceive their campus environment as hostile toward Jews and Israel

and to report being blamed for Israel's actions. The underlying dynamic is unclear, but it is likely that those who are highly connected to Israel become a target of antisemitic or anti-Israel sentiment because they make their support for Israel known. It is also likely that those who are more connected to Israel are more sensitive to criticism of Israel, or more likely to perceive such criticism as antisemitic. Both dynamics are, perhaps, in play.

At the campus level, the findings indicate that perceived hostility toward Israel is more prevalent on some campuses than others. To a lesser extent, there are differences across campuses in a perceived hostile climate toward Jews. The present study was not designed to assess individual campus climates, but hostility toward Jews and Israel appear to be particularly pronounced in specific schools, including a number in Canada, those that are part of the California state system, and a few land-grant universities in the Midwest. Notably, a number of these campuses were sites of antisemitic incidents reported prominently in the Canadian and American news media. Perceptions of hostility toward Jews and Israel are likely influenced by media coverage of related events, including those that take place off campus. At the same time, media coverage and social media networks can at times promote hostility and verbal harassment online and in person. Since these issues are not uniform or consistent across campuses, further monitoring is needed to understand developing trends.

In contrast to the views of some who believe that controversy over Israel, particularly that accompanied by hostility, is pushing young Jews away from the community (Beinart, 2012), the evidence suggests the opposite.

Respondents to this survey seemed to draw a distinction between criticism of Israel's policies and the denial of Israel's right to exist. In addition, despite a seemingly high level of hostility toward Israel among some of their peers, connection to Israel among Jewish young adults has increased in the past year. This is due in part to the feelings of solidarity arising from the 2014 Israel-Hamas war. Analyses of attitudes toward Israel among Taglit applicants before and after the war found significant increases in emotional connection even among nonparticipants, but an even greater increase for participants (Shain et al., 2015). The present findings suggest that the higher levels of connection recorded immediately after the war persisted through April 2015, establishing a new baseline.

Although respondents reported high levels of attachment to Israel, they appear to have limited knowledge and/or firm ideas about the political situation in Israel. Despite the fact that the survey was conducted shortly after the March 2015 Israeli elections, and while coalition negotiations were a major news story in US media, most reported paying little attention to this issue. Thus, some Jewish students may feel especially vulnerable to anti-Israel agitation because they feel emotionally connected to Israel, but not well versed in Israel's politics and therefore find it difficult to respond to hostile criticism of Israel. The disjuncture between connection to Israel and knowing little about it may elucidate why so many Jewish young adults seek to learn first hand about the situation in Israel, specifically through participation in Israel experience programs like Taglit. As we continue to follow Taglit applicants, it will be important to assess the degree to which their connection to Israel is buttressed by an increase in their knowledge and interest in following events in Israel.

Almost all Jewish young adults attend college and most do so in traditional campus environments. Substantial past research on the experience of Taglit participants (see, e.g., Saxe et al., 2013; Saxe et al., 2014; Saxe et al., 2012), along with new research on millennial generation children of intermarriage (Sasson, Saxe, Chertok, & Shain, In preparation) underscores how the college years are a critical period of Jewish identity formation. Taglit is one of the pivotal Jewish experiences during this period, and substantial research has demonstrated that the program simultaneously strengthens Jewish identity and promotes strong connections to Israel.

The summer of 2015 has fortunately not witnessed the level of violence in Israel and Gaza that marked last summer's conflict. At the same time, the Iran agreement and claims and counter-claims of human rights violations in last summer's war (among other debates) ensure that the war of words will persist. Many expect that the new academic year will feature continued anti-Israel activism and antisemitism on campuses. These activities threaten to make college campuses more problematic places for Jewish students. If as a result, a significant number of Jewish students choose to avoid Jewish and Israel-related activities (including Taglit), the effects may be widespread and long lasting. It is therefore imperative that the present efforts to understand the situation on campuses be followed by a comprehensive program of research that can monitor dynamics related to Israel and Jewish life on college campuses.

Notes

1. For a detailed review of Jewish life on campus, see Koren, Saxe & Fleisch (In press).
2. These conclusions reflect the result of the logistic regression analysis shown in Table 2 in Technical Appendix C.
3. These conclusions reflect the result of the logistic regression analysis shown in Table 3 in Technical Appendix C.
4. These conclusions reflect the result of the logistic regression analysis shown in Table 4 in Technical Appendix C.
5. These conclusions reflect the result of the logistic regression analysis shown in Table 5 in Technical Appendix C.
6. The difference between current undergraduates and non-undergraduates was found to be statistically significant at $p < .05$ by a Chi square test with 3 degrees of freedom.

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