

ALONE ON THE QUAD

UNDERSTANDING JEWISH STUDENT ISOLATION ON CAMPUS

ARYEH WEINBERG

INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH & COMMUNITY RESEARCH

ALONE ON THE QUAD: Understanding Jewish Student Isolation on Campus presents selected findings from a larger study of college student experiences with religious intolerance on campus. Conducted by the Institute for Jewish & Community Research, the Study of Religious Tolerance on Campus surveyed over 1,400 students nationally, including oversamples of minority religious groups. It is one of the largest and most comprehensive surveys of its kind.

The following is the first in a series of summaries, which provide concise analysis of selected student survey data. The complete study will be made available in publications in 2012. To receive future summaries and publications, please click [here](#).

INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH & COMMUNITY RESEARCH

The Institute for Jewish & Community Research (IJCR) is an independent, non-partisan think tank that provides innovative research and pragmatic policy analysis on a broad range of issues including racial and religious identity, philanthropy, and anti-Semitism.



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INTRODUCTION

Ample anecdotal evidence suggests that, over the last decade, Jewish college students have faced rising levels of anti-Semitism on campuses across the United States. Divestment campaigns, protests, rallies, guerrilla theater and inflammatory speakers have featured anti-Jewish rhetoric. With insufficient response from administrators, these events have devolved into hostile environments where Jewish students and others have been maligned and threatened.

Over the last decade, the Jewish community has made significant investment in addressing rising anti-Semitism on university and college campuses. Important questions remain about the existence of a problem, the extent of the problem and how best to address it. IJCR fielded the survey of college students to answer some of these questions and to help effectively direct community efforts and funding strategies.

The student survey findings confirm that a serious problem does indeed exist on campuses for Jewish students, and all students by extension. It also critically informs the Jewish community on how students perceive anti-Semitism. While the data proves the existence of the problem, it also reveals that the vast majority of students remain un-opinionated, un-indoctrinated and therefore potentially open to fair and accurate information on Israel, the Jewish people and Judaism.

MAJOR FINDINGS

ALONE ON THE QUAD

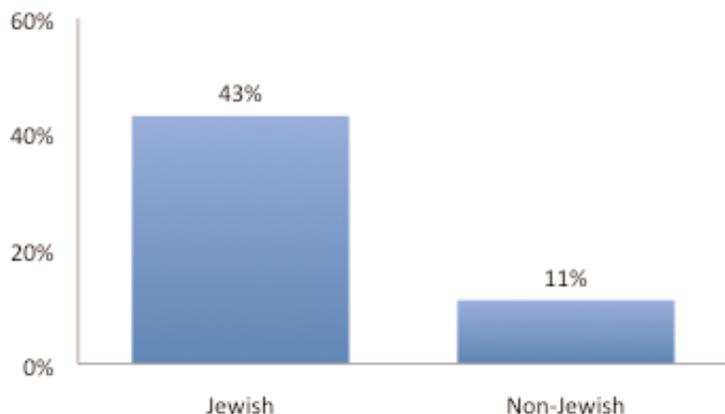
1. Over 40% of Jewish Students Confirm Anti-Semitism on Their Campuses
2. Jewish Students Face Anti-Semitism Alone
3. Jewish Students Report Anti-Israelism Creeping into the Classroom
4. Anti-Semitism is Being Normalized and Underreported
5. A Significant Minority of Jewish Students Say Anti-Israel Protest Targets Jews
6. The Majority of Non-Jewish Students Do Not Hold Opinions on Israel

1. MORE THAN 2 IN 5 JEWISH STUDENTS CONFIRM ANTI-SEMITISM ON THEIR CAMPUSES

Over 40% of Jewish students surveyed answered that they are aware of or have personally experienced anti-Semitism on their campus.

A Jewish student has a good chance that he or she will encounter anti-Semitism while in college today. Every campus is different, but a national average of 43% warrants attention and demonstrates the existence of a problem.

Percent of Students Who Perceive Anti-Semitism on Campus



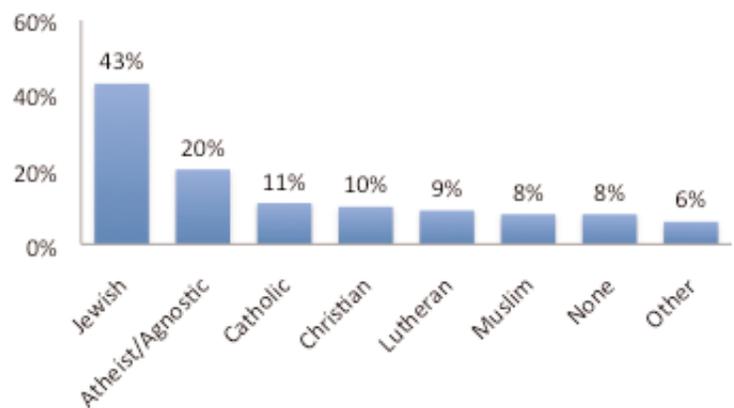
A slightly higher percentage of Muslim students (49%) perceive anti-Muslim bias on campus, while only 18% of Christians are aware of anti-Christian bias. These numbers speak poorly of administrative efforts to encourage acceptance of religious minorities. Furthermore, they underscore the fact that Jews, despite significant gains toward American social acceptance, remain targets of prejudice on campus.

2. JEWISH STUDENTS FACE ANTI-SEMITISM ALONE

While 43% of Jewish students perceive anti-Semitism on their campuses, only 11% of non-Jewish students recognize the existence of anti-Jewish bigotry on campus. Among religious groups, Atheist/Agnostics are a distant second to Jews (20%), and are a small group that likely includes some number of Jews who do not identify religiously.

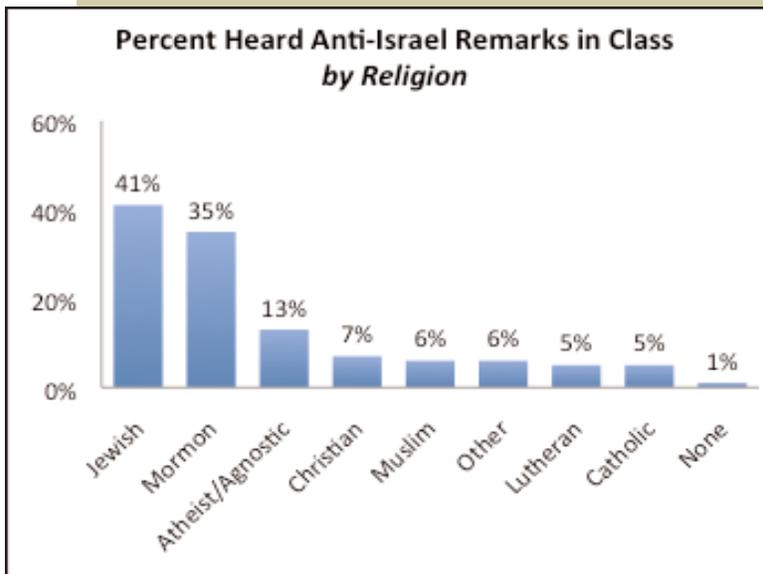
The significant disparity between Jewish and non-Jewish students highlights the isolation Jewish students face in addressing anti-Semitism on campus. Whether non-Jewish students don't know anti-Semitism when they see it, don't pay attention enough to recognize it, disagree with Jewish students on the definition of anti-Semitism or condone it, the result is the same: the Jewish student community is often alone in attempting to raise awareness, spur administrative action, or rally campus support. The percentage of Jewish students answering that anti-Semitism exists on their campus is a troubling trend, compounded by the lack of obvious allies on campus for Jewish students to turn to.

Percent of Students Who Perceive Anti-Semitism on Campus by Religion



3. JEWISH STUDENTS REPORT ANTI-ISRAELISM IN THE CLASSROOM

Forty-one percent of Jewish students have heard anti-Israel remarks made in class by a professor, confirming that the academic experience of students is being impacted by anti-Israel activism on campus. Other than Mormons, few non-Jewish students perceive anti-Israel remarks in class.

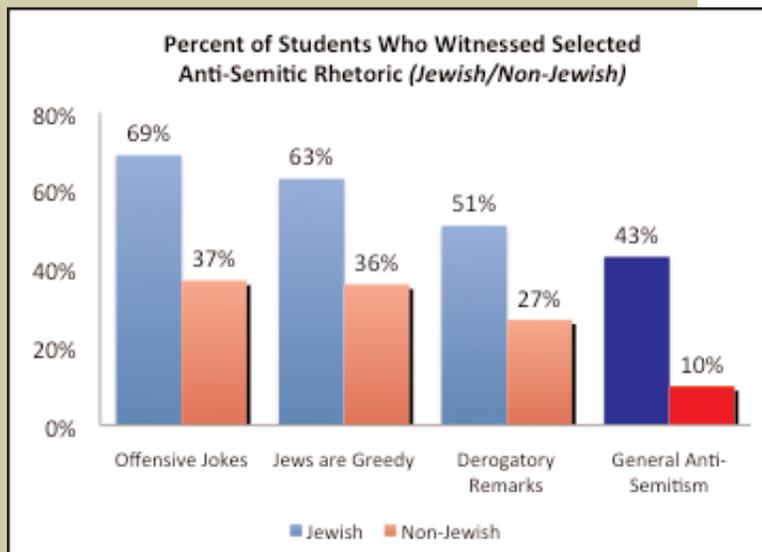


Faculty play a significant role in forming student opinions, especially where they cross over from instruction to indoctrination. Many students do not hold strong opinions on the Middle East conflict and are particularly susceptible to accepting faculty points of view as truth, especially when offered in class. It may, therefore, be unsurprising that non-Jewish students, with little previous knowledge of Israel or the Middle East, do not recognize anti-Israel comments made in class.

4. ANTI-SEMITISM IS BEING NORMALIZED AND UNDERREPORTED

Significantly more Jewish and non-Jewish students reported specific anti-Semitic statements heard on campus than reported anti-Semitism in general. This finding calls into question what students consider anti-Semitism. Perhaps many do not consider rhetoric or stereotypes meaningful offensive behavior. Yet, one must consider that college campuses are particularly sensitive to issues of tolerance and whether similar rhetoric about other minority groups would be tolerated.

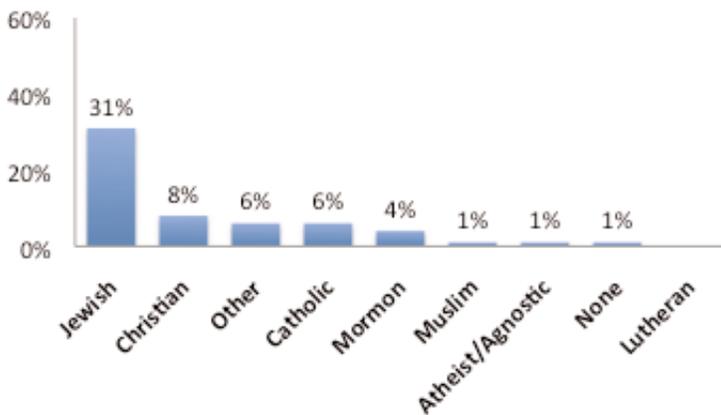
The finding contradicts claims that Jews are overly sensitive and quick to claim anti-Semitism. The opposite seems to be true. Jewish students tend to dismiss a good deal of the anti-Semitic rhetoric they encounter. The same is true for non-Jewish students. This trend hints at a creeping normalization of anti-Jewish sentiment on campus, which can quickly devolve into an environment where Jews feel unsafe and unwanted. The dismissal of anti-Jewish statements is particularly troubling considering the high level of vigilance against most forms of racism and bigotry on campus.



5. ANTI-ISRAELISM TARGETS JEWS

Nearly one-third of Jewish students agree that anti-Israel protest targets Jews. Fifteen percent believe it always or usually does and 16% believe it sometimes does.

**Anti-Israel Protest Targets Jews
Always/Usually/Sometimes
by Religion**



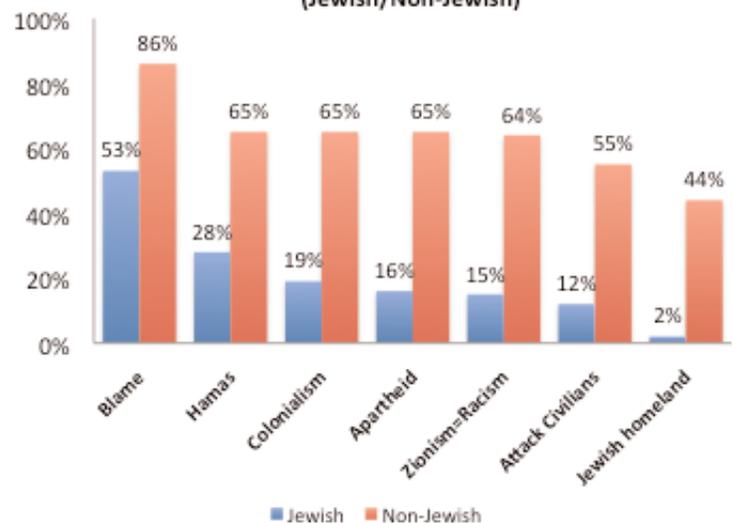
The line between anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism is unclear and certainly not all criticism of Israel contains anti-Semitism. However, anti-Israel protest lowers the norms against anti-Jewish bigotry. It provides a convenient venue for anti-Semitic expression and embraces anti-Semitic stereotypes under the guise of political activism. The blurring between anti-Israelism and anti-Semitism is recognized by nearly one-third of Jewish students. Less than one-in-ten non-Jewish students recognize anti-Jewish attacks within anti-Israel protest, underscoring the dilemma Jews face on campus addressing problems few other students recognize.

6. THE MAJORITY OF STUDENTS ARE UNINFORMED ABOUT ISRAEL

Despite significant efforts by anti- and pro-Israel groups, most students do not hold strong opinions, or any at all, related to Israel and the Middle East.

The majority of non-Jewish students simply do not know what to think about the most widespread anti-Israel statements. The vast majority do not blame either the Palestinians or Israel for failure to achieve peace in the Middle East. Whether this represents a gap in opinion or in knowledge is unclear. It is an important finding, signaling the opportunity to educate about Israel and the need to develop more engaging approaches.

**Percent Without Opinion on Anti-Israel Claims
(Jewish/Non-Jewish)**



CONCLUSION

Jewish students have access to a wide range of opportunities in college and continue to be represented on campus well above national population numbers. However, the quality of their experience is in question.

Nearly half of young Jewish adults entering college can expect to be confronted by anti-Semitism on their campus. Contrary to the experience of many other minorities, Jewish students face isolation in attempting to raise awareness and combat anti-Jewish bigotry. Moreover, anti-Israel protest, for many Jews, include attacks on the Jewish people and faith. Deeply concerning is evidence that anti-Israel rhetoric has made its way into the classroom, increasing the alienation of Jewish students on campus.

The vast majority of non-Jewish students remain neutral or unaware of issues related to Israel and the Middle East. These students present an opportunity, and engaging the undecided majority offers significant potential for both immediate and long term progress.

FORTHCOMING

Upcoming major findings summaries will cover topics including student opinions of Jewish campus organizations, opinions of entrepreneurship, views of the Middle East conflict and profiles of core anti-Israel activists.

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