



Publications - Surveys

2000 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion

Introduction

The data reported here are from the 2000 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion, sponsored by the American Jewish Committee, detailing the views of American Jews about a broad range of subjects. Among the topics covered in the present survey are the Israel-Arab peace process, the attachment of American Jews to Israel, political and social issues in the United States, Jewish perceptions of anti-Semitism, Jewish opinion about various countries, and Jewish identity concerns. Some of the questions appearing in the survey are new; others are drawn from previous American Jewish Committee surveys, including the 1997, 1998, and 1999 Annual Surveys of American Jewish Opinion.

The 2000 survey was conducted for the American Jewish Committee by Market Facts, Inc., a leading survey-research organization. Respondents were interviewed by telephone during September 14-28, 2000; no interviewing took place on the Sabbath. The sample consisted of 1,010 self-identified Jewish respondents selected from the Market Facts consumer mail panel. The respondents are demographically representative of the United States adult Jewish population on a variety of measures. The margin of error for the sample as a whole is plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Forty-four percent of the respondents are men and 56 percent are women. Nineteen percent are under age 40, 43 percent are 40-59, and 37 percent are 60 and over. Seventy-seven percent are married and 23 percent are unmarried. Nineteen percent report their household incomes as under \$30,000, 24 percent as \$30,000-49,999, 24 percent as \$50,000-74,999, and 33 percent as \$75,000 and over. Fourteen percent have a high-school education or less, another 25 percent have attended some college, another 23 percent have four years of college, and another 37 percent have five or more years of higher education.

In terms of Jewish background, 10 percent of the respondents identify as Orthodox, 31 percent as Conservative, 31 percent as Reform, 2 percent as

Reconstructionist, and 25 percent as "Just Jewish." Fifty-nine percent of the respondents belong to a synagogue or temple. Of married respondents, 85 percent have Jewish spouses. When asked "How important would you say being Jewish is in your own life?" Fifty-nine percent of the respondents say "very important," 33 percent "fairly important," and 8 percent "not very important."

Israel and the Middle East

1. How close do you feel to Israel?

| | |
|----------------|----|
| Very close | 28 |
| Fairly close | 46 |
| Fairly distant | 18 |
| Very distant | 7 |
| Not sure | 1 |

2. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "Caring about Israel is a very important part of my being a Jew."

Agree 80
 Disagree 18
 Not sure 2

3. Have you ever been to Israel?

No 58
 Yes--once 23
 Yes--more than once 20

4. Looking ahead 3 to 5 years, do you see Jews in Israel and in the United States becoming closer, drifting apart, or neither?

Becoming closer 32
 Drifting apart 12
 Neither 50
 Not sure 6

5. How would you characterize relations between Israel and the United States today? Are they very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative, or very negative?

Very positive 20
 Somewhat positive 70
 Somewhat negative 7
 Very negative 0
 Not sure 2

6. Do you support or oppose the Israeli government's current handling of the peace negotiations with the Arabs?

Support 59
 Oppose 24
 Not sure 17

7. To what extent do each of the following Arab leaders support or oppose peace with Israel?

| | Strongly support | Somewhat support | Somewhat oppose | Strongly oppose | Not sure |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|
| a President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt | 19 | 48 | 12 | 6 | 15 |
| b President Bashar Assad of Syria | 2 | 17 | 28 | 28 | 25 |
| c King Abdullah of Jordan | 17 | 44 | 13 | 8 | 19 |
| d PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat | 7 | 33 | 25 | 28 | 8 |

8. In the framework of a permanent peace with the Palestinians, should Israel be willing to compromise on the status of Jerusalem as a united city under Israeli jurisdiction?

Yes 36
 No 57
 Not sure 7

9. (IF YES IN Q.8 ASK:) In the framework of a permanent peace with the Palestinians, should Israel be willing to relinquish sovereignty of the Old City of Jerusalem?

Yes 17
No 76
Not sure 7

10. If the Palestinian Authority (PLO) unilaterally declares statehood, what response by Israel would you most favor?

Israel should accept the declaration of statehood 24
Israel should break off negotiations with the Palestinians 28
Israel should annex the remainder of the West Bank 17
Other 18
Not sure 13

11. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "The goal of the Arabs is not the return of occupied territories but rather the destruction of Israel."

Agree 69
Disagree 23
Not sure 8

12. Tension between secular and ultra-Orthodox Jews in Israel is becoming sharper. In your view, who is principally responsible for this increase in tension?

Secular Israelis 7
Ultra-Orthodox Israelis 72
Both equally (Vol.) 12
Not sure 9

13. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "Israel no longer needs the financial support of American Jews."

Agree 10
Disagree 87
Not sure 2

14. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "Regardless of their individual views on the peace negotiations with the Arabs, American Jews should support the policies of the duly elected government of Israel."

Agree 62
Disagree 32
Not sure 7

Domestic Policy

15. Do you favor or oppose establishing a school voucher program that would allow parents to use tax funds to send their children to the school of their choice, even if it were a private school?

Favor 35
Oppose 61
Not sure 4

16. There is increased emphasis in America today on separate group identity--whether racial, ethnic, or religious. Do you see this as a trend that will divide American society, or do you see this as a trend that will enrich American society?

Will divide American society 63

Will enrich American society 28

Not sure 9

17. Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

Favor 67

Oppose 26

Not sure 8

18. Do you favor or oppose government aid to parochial or other religious schools?

Favor 28

Oppose 68

Not sure 4

19. Do you think the number of immigrants from foreign countries who are permitted to come to the United States to live should be increased a lot, increased a little, left the same as it is now, decreased a little, or decreased a lot?

Increased a lot 6

Increased a little 16

Left the same as it is now 46

Decreased a little 15

Decreased a lot 12

Not sure 5

20. Do you think abortions should be legal under any circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances?

Legal under any circumstances 62

Legal only under certain circumstances 31

Illegal in all circumstances 5

Not sure 1

21. Charter schools are independent public schools that operate outside the traditional public school system. Supporters of this new type of school hail it as an innovative and practical response to widespread problems in public education. Opponents of charter schools claim that these schools are not subject to adequate oversight and will weaken traditional public education. Given what you know, do you support or oppose charter schools?

Support 49

Oppose 37

Not sure 14

Voting Patterns

22. In politics, as of today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?

Republican 9
 Democrat 59
 Independent 30
 Not sure 2

23. I'm going to read you a list of political views that people might hold. They are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

Extremely liberal 4
 Liberal 23
 Slightly liberal 18
 Moderate, middle of the road 36
 Slightly conservative 9
 Conservative 8
 Extremely conservative 1
 Not sure 2

24. If the election were held today, whom would you vote for as president of the United States?

Al Gore 75
 George W. Bush 11
 Ralph Nader 3
 Pat Buchanan 0
 Not sure 11

25. Al Gore has selected Senator Joseph Lieberman as his vice-presidential running mate. Do you approve or disapprove of this choice?

Approve 90
 Disapprove 5
 Not Sure 5

International Relations

26. I would like your opinion of some countries today. Is your overall opinion of (INSERT COUNTRY) very favorable, somewhat favorable, neutral, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

| | Very Fav. | Some. Fav. | Neutral | Some. Unfav. | Very Unfav. | Not Sure |
|------------|-----------|------------|---------|--------------|-------------|----------|
| a. Austria | 5 | 16 | 38 | 24 | 11 | 5 |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| b. Saudi Arabia | 1 | 12 | 29 | 34 | 21 | 4 |
| c. Germany | 5 | 24 | 35 | 22 | 12 | 3 |
| d. Jordan | 5 | 28 | 34 | 22 | 8 | 3 |
| e. Switzerland | 13 | 25 | 39 | 15 | 5 | 3 |
| f. Poland | 4 | 21 | 43 | 19 | 9 | 5 |
| g. Israel | 51 | 34 | 10 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| h. Egypt | 4 | 31 | 36 | 20 | 5 | 4 |
| i. China | 3 | 17 | 33 | 31 | 12 | 3 |
| j. Mexico | 9 | 31 | 40 | 13 | 3 | 4 |
| k. Russia | 2 | 18 | 40 | 28 | 9 | 3 |
| l. France | 8 | 24 | 36 | 21 | 7 | 3 |
| m. Argentina | 2 | 17 | 49 | 19 | 5 | 7 |
| n. The Vatican | 7 | 24 | 41 | 19 | 6 | 3 |
| o. Syria | 1 | 5 | 19 | 32 | 38 | 4 |
| p. India | 3 | 22 | 48 | 18 | 4 | 5 |

27. Is your opinion of the United Nations very favorable, somewhat favorable, neutral, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Very favorable | 19 |
| Somewhat favorable | 36 |
| Neutral | 25 |
| Somewhat unfavorable | 15 |
| Very unfavorable | 4 |
| Not sure | 1 |

28. Please tell me if you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with the following statement: "Germany today is making a sincere effort to deal with the legacy of the Holocaust."

| | |
|-------------------|----|
| Agree strongly | 18 |
| Agree somewhat | 51 |
| Disagree somewhat | 18 |
| Disagree strongly | 10 |
| Not sure | 3 |

Jewish Life

29. How important would you say being Jewish is in your own life?

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| Very important | 59 |
| Fairly important | 33 |
| Not very important | 8 |

30. Which one of the following qualities do you consider most important to your Jewish identity?

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Being part of the Jewish people | 45 |
| Religious observance | 16 |
| Support for Israel | 3 |
| A commitment to social justice | 21 |
| Something else | 13 |
| Not sure | 2 |

31. Does your household do the following things all the time, usually, sometimes, or never?

| | All the Time | Usually | Sometimes | Never |
|----------------------------|--------------|---------|-----------|-------|
| a. Light Hanukkah candles | 75 | 6 | 10 | 8 |
| b. Attend a Passover seder | 71 | 7 | 16 | 6 |
| c. Have a Christmas tree | 9 | 1 | 7 | 82 |
| d. Celebrate Purim | 35 | 10 | 30 | 25 |

32. Please rate the importance of each of the following to your Jewish identity, indicating whether it is extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not important.

| | Extreme. Import. | Very Import. | Some. Import. | Not Import. |
|--|------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| a. Participation in synagogue services | 10 | 27 | 40 | 23 |
| b. Jewish study | 9 | 31 | 44 | 16 |
| c. Travel to Israel | 6 | 21 | 41 | 32 |
| d. Jewish organizational activity | 6 | 22 | 49 | 23 |
| e. Celebration of Jewish holidays | 18 | 50 | 27 | 6 |
| f. Remembrance of the Holocaust | 27 | 54 | 16 | 3 |

33. Do you think of yourself as . . .

| | |
|-------------------|----|
| Orthodox | 10 |
| Conservative | 31 |
| Reconstructionist | 2 |
| Reform | 31 |
| Just Jewish | 25 |

34. Do you belong to a synagogue or temple?

| | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | 59 |
| No | 40 |

35. Do you think that tensions between Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews in the United States today are a very serious problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem at all?

| | |
|-----------------------|----|
| Very serious problem | 13 |
| Somewhat of a problem | 55 |
| Not a problem at all | 30 |
| Not sure | 2 |

36. Looking ahead over the next several years, do you think that tensions between Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews in the United States will increase greatly, increase somewhat, remain the same, decrease somewhat, or decrease greatly?

| | |
|-------------------|----|
| Increase greatly | 5 |
| Increase somewhat | 25 |
| Remain the same | 51 |
| Decrease somewhat | 12 |
| Decrease greatly | 2 |
| Not sure | 4 |

37. In your opinion, which is a greater threat to Jewish life in the United States today--intermarriage or anti-Semitism?

| | |
|---------------------|----|
| Intermarriage | 41 |
| Anti-Semitism | 50 |
| Both equally (Vol.) | 7 |
| Not sure | 2 |

Anti-Semitism in the U.S.

38. Do you think that anti-Semitism in the United States is currently a very serious problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem at all?

| | |
|-----------------------|----|
| Very serious problem | 32 |
| Somewhat of a problem | 63 |
| Not a problem at all | 5 |
| Not sure | 0 |

39. Looking ahead over the next several years, do you think that anti-Semitism in the United States will increase greatly, increase somewhat, remain the same, decrease somewhat, or decrease greatly?

| | |
|-------------------|----|
| Increase greatly | 9 |
| Increase somewhat | 28 |
| Remain the same | 45 |
| Decrease somewhat | 12 |
| Decrease greatly | 1 |
| Not sure | 4 |

40. In your opinion, what proportion of each of the following groups in the United States is anti-Semitic—most, many, some, very few, or none?

Very Not

Most Many Some few None sure

a. Asians 2 3 30 39 10 15

b. Moslems 19 22 36 9 2 11

c. Hispanics 3 5 44 29 6 13

d. Blacks 6 16 52 16 2 8

e. The Religious Right 23 26 30 8 1 1

f. Liberals 2 4 34 37 12 11

g. Conservatives 4 15 49 15 4 13

h. Catholics 4 9 55 22 3 7

i. Mainstream

Protestants 3 8 49 24 4 11

j. Fundamentalist

Protestants 11 20 41 11 2 16

41. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "Virtually all positions of influence in the United States are open to Jews."

Agree 51

Disagree 47

Not sure 3

Intermarriage

42. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Agree Disagree Not sure a. "It would pain me if my child married a gentile." 39 56 4 b. "Intermarriage is inevitable in an open society." 80 18 2 c. "The best response to intermarriage is to encourage 25 68 7 the gentile to convert to Judaism." d. "The Jewish community has an obligation to reach out to 81 16 4 intermarried couples." e. "It is racist to oppose Jewish-gentile marriages." 50 47 4 f. "The Jewish community has an obligation to urge Jews to 69 27 4 marry Jews."

43. Which of the following statements comes closest to expressing your own view about marriage between a Jew and a gentile:

"I strongly disapprove of marriage between a Jew 12 and a gentile."

"I am disappointed by marriage between a Jew and a gentile 30 without conversion to Judaism."

"I am neutral about marriage between a Jew and a gentile." 40

"I see marriage between a Jew and gentile as a positive good." 16

Not sure 2

Ask of Half Sample

44a. Rabbinic officiation at a mixed marriage, that is, a marriage between a Jew and a gentile, is a controversial issue in American Jewish life. Which of the following positions comes closest to your own view about the matter?

Rabbis should refuse to officiate at any marriage between a Jew and a gentile.

Rabbis should officiate at a marriage between a Jew and a gentile only if the non-Jewish partner agrees to raise the children as Jews.

Rabbis should officiate at a marriage between a Jew and a gentile as a last resort, if there is no other way of providing some Jewish connection.

Rabbis should officiate at a marriage between a Jew and a gentile only if no gentile clergyman is involved in the ceremony.

Rabbis should officiate at a marriage between a Jew and a gentile even if a gentile clergyman is involved in the ceremony.

Not sure 6

Ask of Half Sample

44b. Rabbinic officiation at a mixed marriage, that is, a marriage between a Jew and a gentile, is a controversial issue in American Jewish life. Which of the following positions comes closest to your own view about the matter?

Rabbis should refuse to officiate at any marriage between a Jew and a gentile.

Rabbis should officiate at a marriage between a Jew and a gentile only if no gentile clergyman is involved in the ceremony.

Rabbis should officiate at a marriage between a Jew and a gentile even if a gentile clergyman is involved in the ceremony.

Not sure 5

45. Should a rabbi officiate at a same sex marriage, that is, a marriage involving two men or two women, if both are Jewish?

Yes 46 No 44 Not sure 10

46. Are you currently married?

Yes 77 No 23

47. (IF YES IN Q.46, ASK:) Is your spouse Jewish?

Yes—spouse Jewish 85 No—spouse not Jewish 15

48. Do you have any children?

Yes 83 No 17

49. (IF YES IN Q.48, ASK:) Are any of your children married?

Yes 52 No 48

50. (IF YES IN Q.49, ASK:) Do any of your children have a spouse who is not Jewish?

Yes 64 No 36

Age of Participants

51. What is your age as of your last birthday?

| | |
|----------|----|
| Under 30 | 5 |
| 30-39 | 14 |
| 40-49 | 20 |
| 50-59 | 23 |

60-69 16

70 or over 21

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