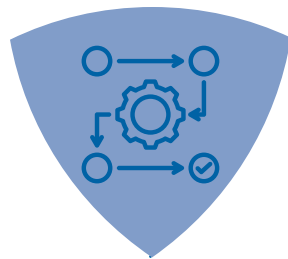


Hot Topics

 **PERSPECTIVES ON THE ORANGE COUNTY
JEWISH COMMUNITY**

Insights from the Orange County Jewish Demographic Study »





A FEW NOTES ON HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

The findings presented draw on both quantitative and qualitative survey responses.* We've integrated them to offer a more complete and nuanced understanding of the community, but please note that the qualitative insights do not carry the same statistical significance as the quantitative results do.

All percentages in these reports are rounded to the nearest whole number. As a result, totals in some tables and figures may not equal exactly 100 percent.

Throughout the reports, we reference different population groups. Readers should note the population being referenced when interpreting each statistic. In each data chart, we will indicate the reference population in italicized text beneath the title:

- "OC Jewish households": OC households with at least one Jewish member
- "OC Jewish adults": OC individuals ages 18+ who identify as Jewish
- "Younger OC adults": OC individuals ages 22–44
- "U.S. Jewish population": data on the national Jewish population
- "OC general population": data on the OC general population, including but not specific to the Jewish population

We also use a few terms that are defined in line in specific sections. For reference, we've included them here as well:

- "Financially struggling households": Households that responded they cannot make ends meet or are just managing to make ends meet when asked to describe their household's financial situation
- "Mixed-faith families": Families in which a Jewish individual is partnered with a non-Jewish individual
- "Newcomers": Jewish adults who have been residence in Orange County for less than ten years
- "Religious institutions": Brick-and-mortar synagogues, Chabads, and other congregations—Orange County is home to roughly 30 such institutions
- "Communal institutions": Brick-and-mortar communal organizations, including JCCs, day schools, and other non-religious institutions—Orange County is home to roughly 20 such institutions

Refer to the **Overview** report for additional context on the study design, goals, and approach.

*The following two open-response questions were asked at the end of the survey: "What are the strengths and gaps of the Orange County Jewish community?" & "What should be the priorities of the Orange County Jewish community?" In addition, some questions had open-response options when an "Other" category was indicated.



We all love being Jewish—we need to stick together and support each other and be more cohesive.

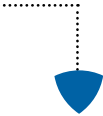
— Community member



This year, the community appeared divided politically with too much polarization. I'd like to see more things we can come together on.

— Community member





Section Overview

Note: This study was conducted following the events of October 7th, 2023 (data collection occurred between November 2024 and March 2025). This shaped both the design of the survey—we asked specific questions related to the conflict in the region and its impact on the Orange County community—and responses to it.

Across Orange County (and the U.S.), Jewish families are navigating some of the most complex and consequential issues of our time: political polarization, our relationship to Israel—especially in a time of war—and rising antisemitism in our communities and around the globe.

These topics carry deep emotional weight, touching on identity and belonging, and have become increasingly present in people’s daily lives since October 7th.

While public discourse often elevates moments of divergence, extremes, and tension, the data present a more nuanced and complicated story in our community: there is more alignment in how people think than the headlines suggest.

And where differences do exist, they often hold potential for productive engagement—if conversations begin from a place of shared values, curiosity, and a desire for connection. With this common ground, disagreement on specific issues or policies does not have to divide us.

Based on recent political registrations and voting patterns, Orange County has emerged as one of the most “purple” places in the country. Our Jewish community reflects this diversity. Jewish adults span the political spectrum and hold a wide range of views on issues affecting our community—from the economy, education, and healthcare to Israel and antisemitism. Among OC Jewish adults, 45% identify as liberal or very liberal, 30% as moderate, and 25% as conservative or very conservative. Community members hold differing views on which electoral issues are most important (and how to address them), where antisemitism is most prevalent (on the political right or left), and Israel’s current government and policies.

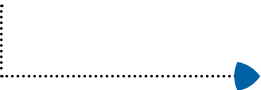
And yet, most members of the Orange County Jewish community share core commitments: to ethical and moral living, to family and tradition, and to the safety and well-being of Jewish individuals everywhere. Antisemitism is a nearly universal concern, cutting across political and

generational lines. Attachment to Israel also remains strong for most—particularly following the events of October 7th—even as political differences shape how people understand Israel’s actions and future; people are engaged, informed, and emotionally invested in Israel—even those who feel conflicted or critical. And many people expressed a desire for spaces where they can speak openly and work side by side to confront antisemitism, engage thoughtfully with Israel, and build a more resilient, connected Jewish Orange County.

Perhaps the strongest area of alignment is the feeling that the community is divided—and that one’s own views are specifically unwelcome in many spaces. Several responses identified cohesion, inclusivity, and connection as a key gap in the Orange County Jewish community. In Jewish spaces, very liberal adults are especially likely to feel that their views on Israel are not accepted; some politically conservative adults feel similarly about their

political views. In broader civic or social settings outside the Jewish community, many Jewish individuals also hesitate to share their views. These dynamics impede progress and create a subtle but significant barrier to belonging: people are withdrawing from critical conversations.

These findings paint a picture of a community individually grappling with hard issues without the space and support to explore commonalities and differences in constructive ways. This section invites readers to consider how we might address this gap, together.



Politics

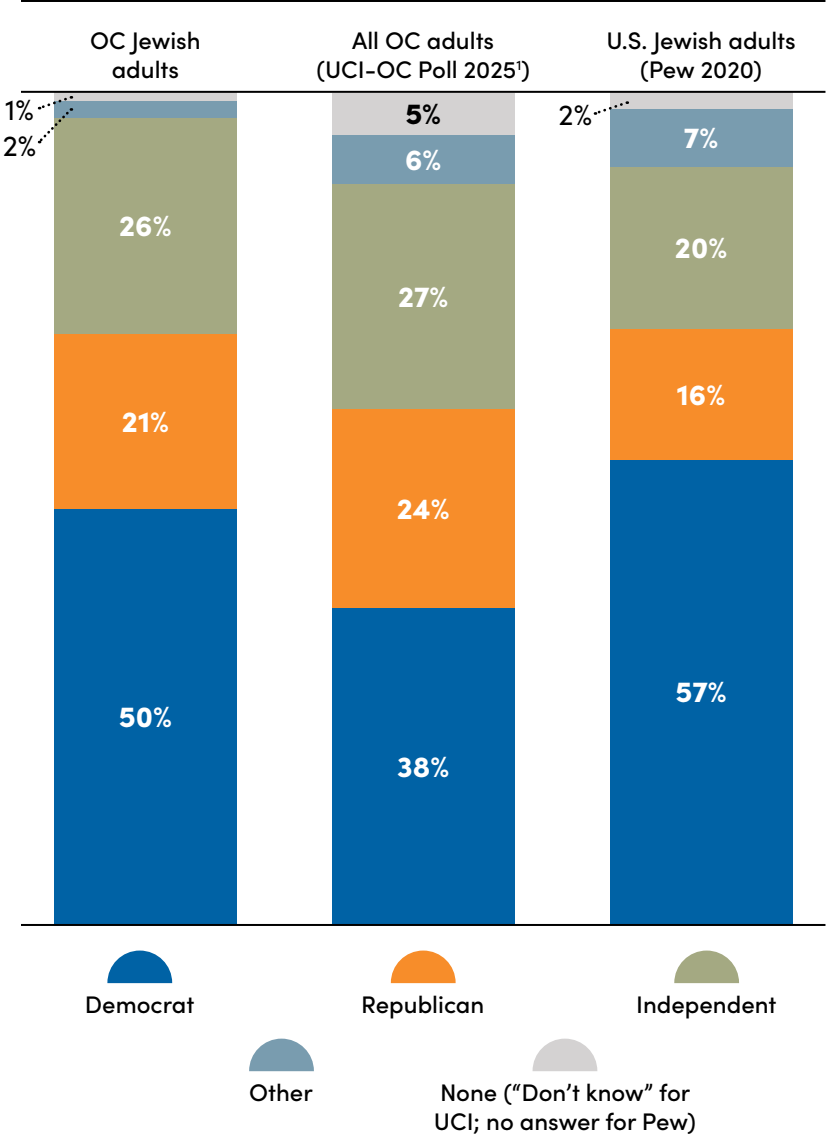
Jewish adults in Orange County span the political spectrum.

45%

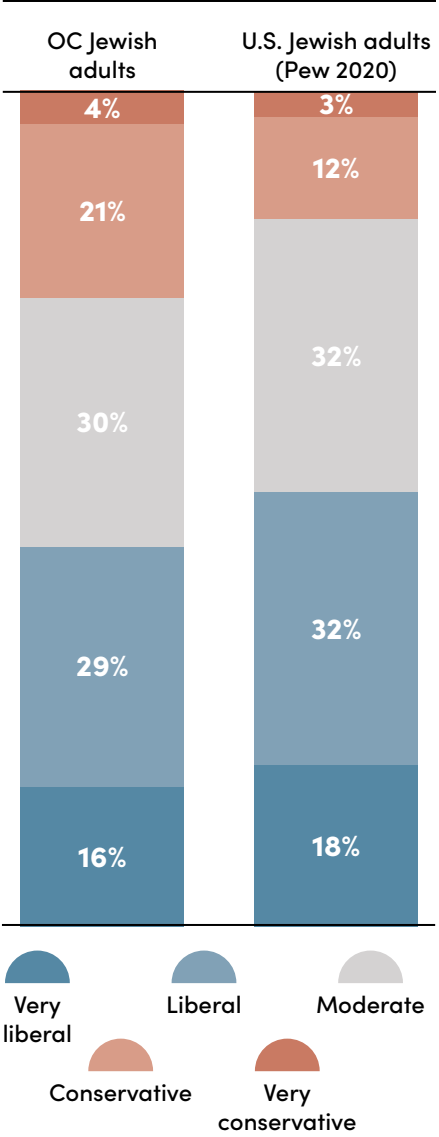
Forty-five percent of OC Jewish adults identify as liberal or very liberal, 30% as moderate, and 25% as conservative or very conservative.

Similarly, 50% are affiliated with the Democratic party, 26% Independent, 21% Republican, and 3% none/other. This balance differs somewhat from both the general Orange County population and the U.S. Jewish population. OC Jewish adults are more likely than the general OC population to identify as Democrats, but compared to U.S. Jewish adults overall, they are somewhat more conservative in their political views.

Party affiliation



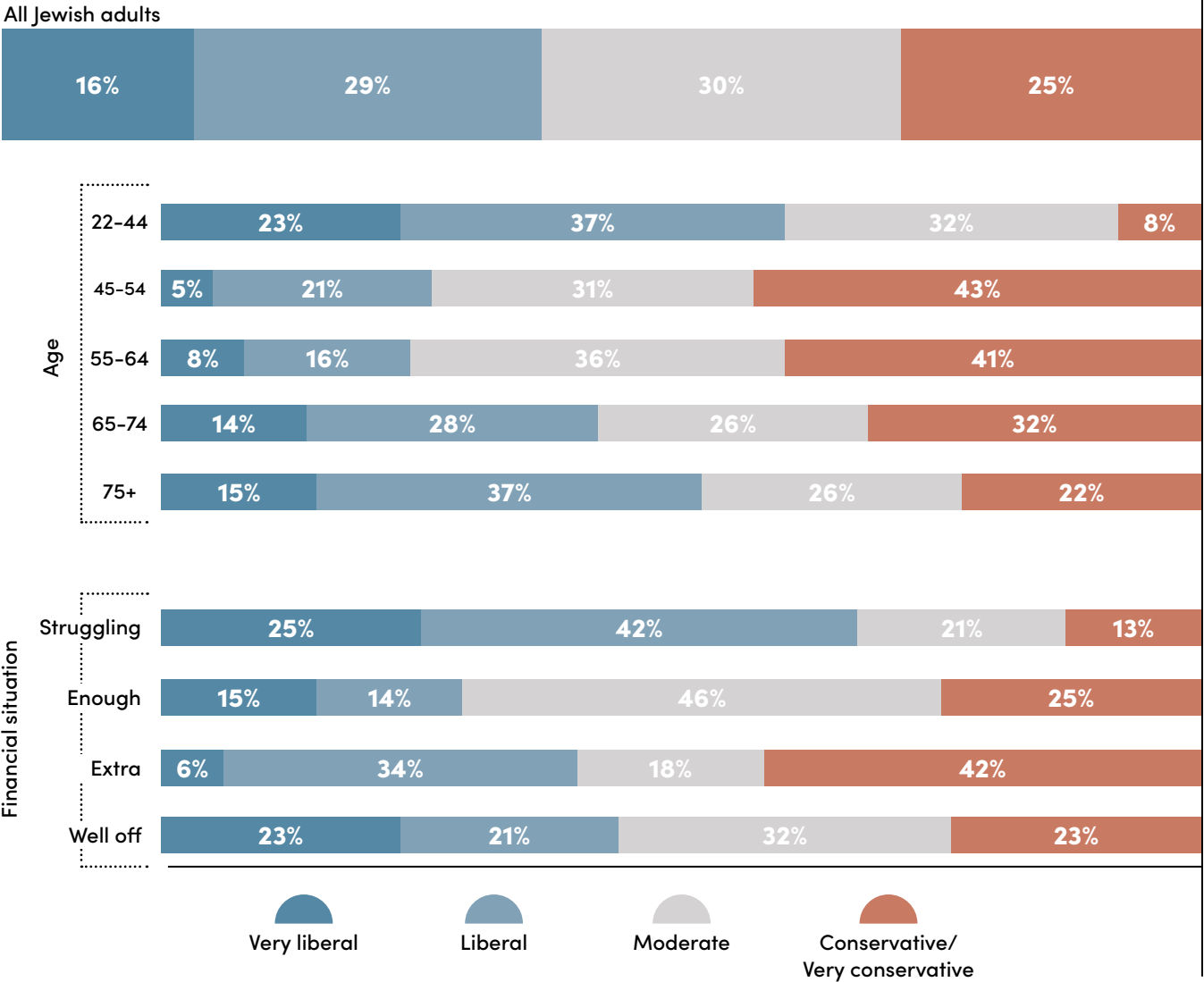
Political views



Political views in OC are correlated with age and financial situation.

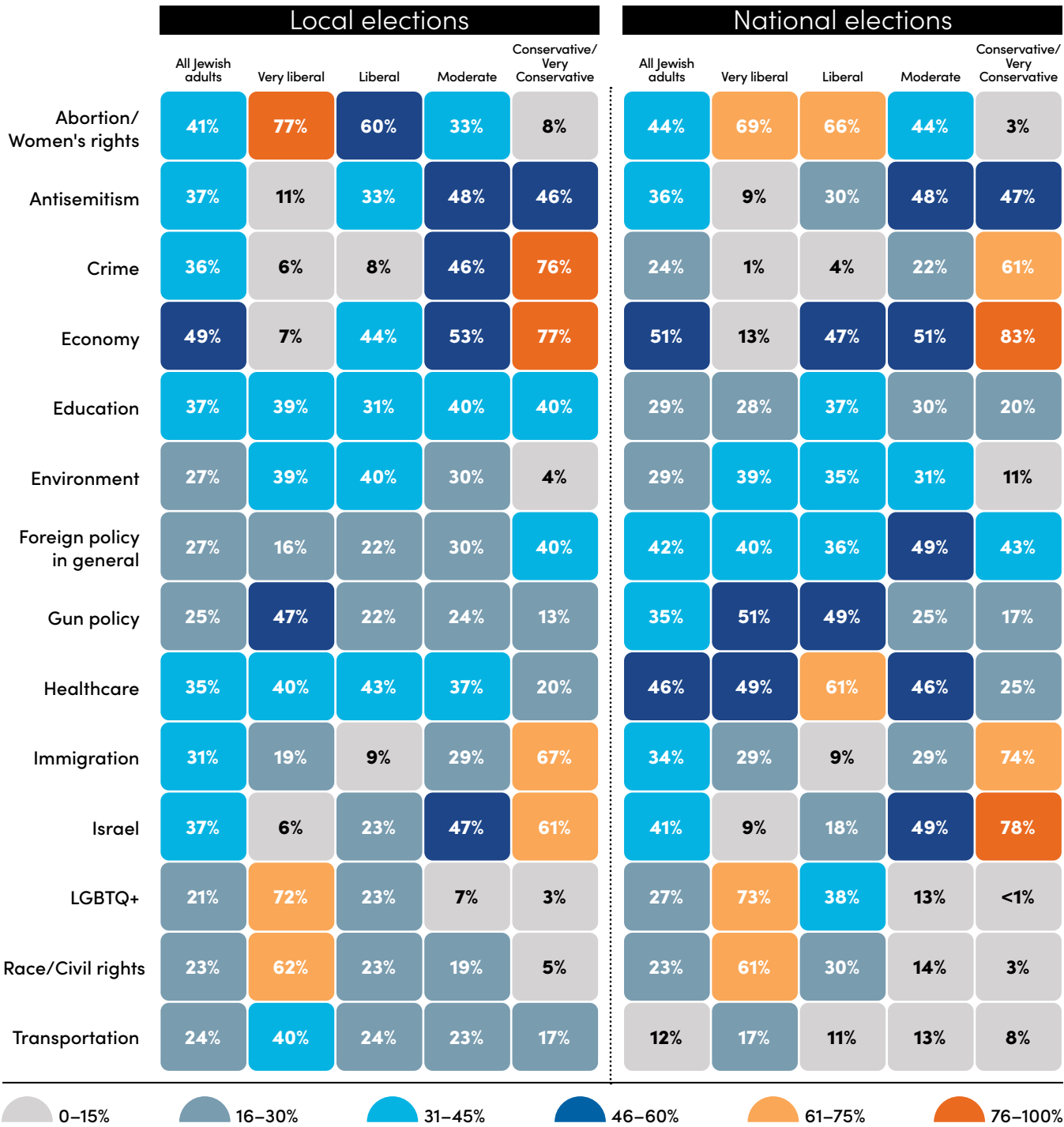
Almost one-quarter of Jewish adults ages 22-44 are very liberal (vs. 16% overall), while about 40% of those 45-64² are conservative or very conservative (vs. 25% overall); Jewish adults 65+ are more evenly distributed across policies ideologies. Financial situation follows a similar trend, with most (67%) adults who described themselves as financially struggling identifying as liberal or very liberal, and most (71%) with “enough” identifying as moderate or conservative. Well-off adults are fairly evenly distributed across political ideologies.

Political views, by age and financial situation
OC Jewish adults



Across that spectrum, Jewish adults in Orange County have some shared and some differing concerns with respect to how they vote.

Most important issues in local and national elections
OC Jewish adults



Q: "Thinking about local/national elections, which of the following issues do you consider most when deciding which candidate to support? Policies related to..." Note: Respondents were asked to choose their Top 5 issues in local/national elections, from a set of 14 possible options.

In local elections, there was broad prioritization of a handful of issues.

The economy stood out as the top issue across the OC Jewish community, ranked by about half of all Jewish adults (49%) as one of their most important issues (though specific concerns within that category may vary). More than a third of all Jewish adults ranked abortion/women’s rights (41%), Israel (37%), antisemitism (37%), education (37%), crime (36%), and healthcare (35%) as top issues.

Each of the other issues also received significant focus: At least one-quarter of all OC Jewish adults ranked immigration (31%), the environment (27%), foreign policy (27%), and gun policy (25%) as top issues. More than one-fifth ranked transportation (24%), race/civil rights (23%), and LGBTQ+ (21%).

Prioritization of some causes was more strongly associated with certain political ideologies.

For many issues—education, healthcare, foreign policy, and transportation—there were no significant differences in rankings based on political ideology. However, the economy, Israel, antisemitism, and crime were ranked as top issues by far fewer (6–11%) people identifying as “very liberal” (6–11%) than by OC Jewish adults overall. Conversely, abortion/women’s rights, the environment, race/civil rights, and LGBTQ+ were ranked by far fewer conservative/very conservative people (3–8%) than by OC Jewish adults overall.

These ends of the ideological spectrum are distinct from the middle in that there was strong internal alignment, showing more consistency in their rankings. The top three issues for very liberals and conservatives/very conservatives were ranked by 62–77% and 67–77% of people who identify with those ideologies, respectively. By comparison, the top three issues for liberals and moderates were ranked by 43%–60% and 47%–53% of people in those groups, reflecting a broader range of priorities.

The economy was also a top issue for OC Jewish adults in national elections,

ranked among the most important by about half of all Jewish adults (51%). More than one-third of all OC Jewish adults prioritized healthcare (46%), abortion/women’s rights (44%), foreign policy (42%), Israel (41%), antisemitism (36%), gun policy (35%), and immigration (34%) as key issues at the national level.

Roughly one-quarter of respondents elevated education (29%), environment (29%), and LGBTQ+ (27%), crime (24%), and race/civil rights (23%) as key issues in national elections.

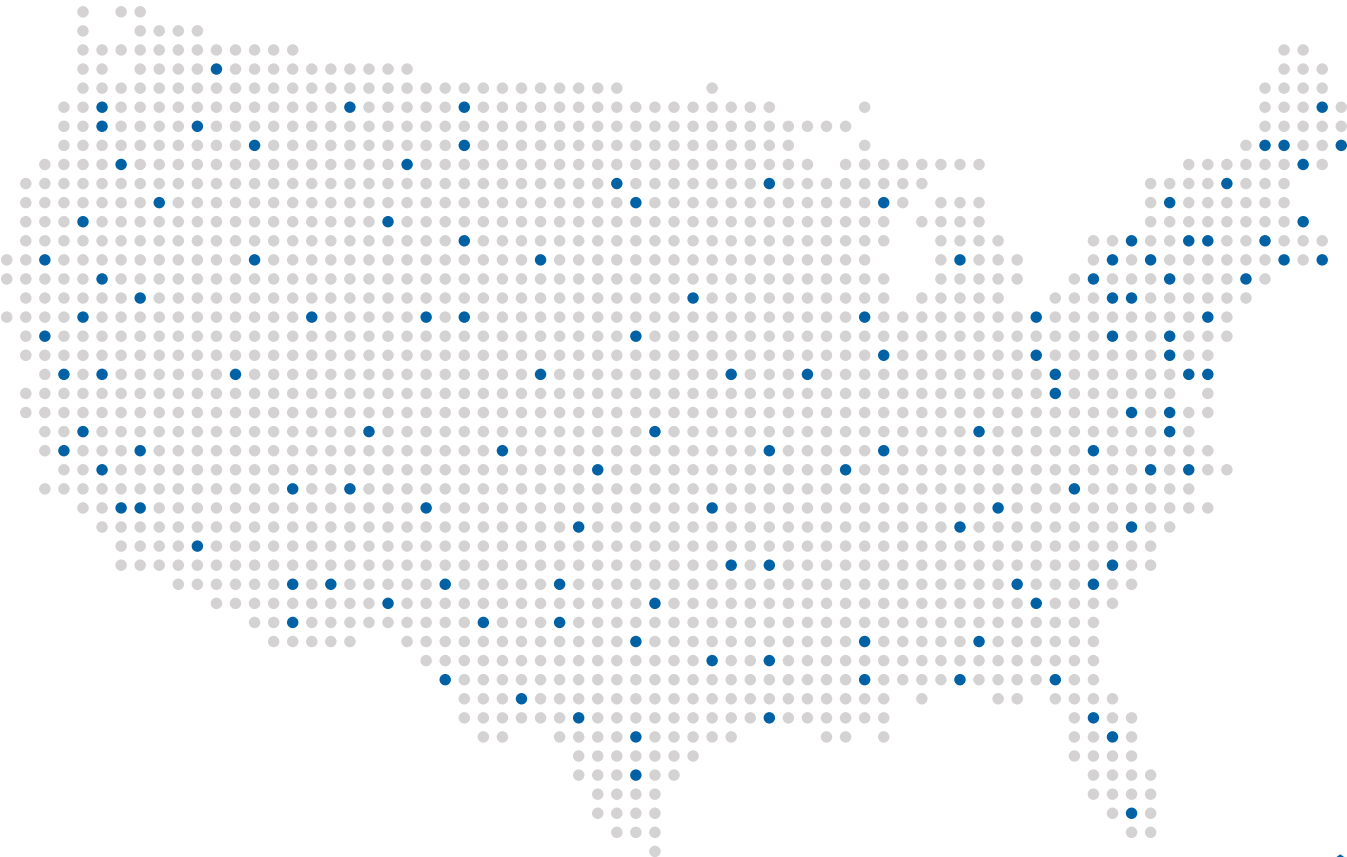
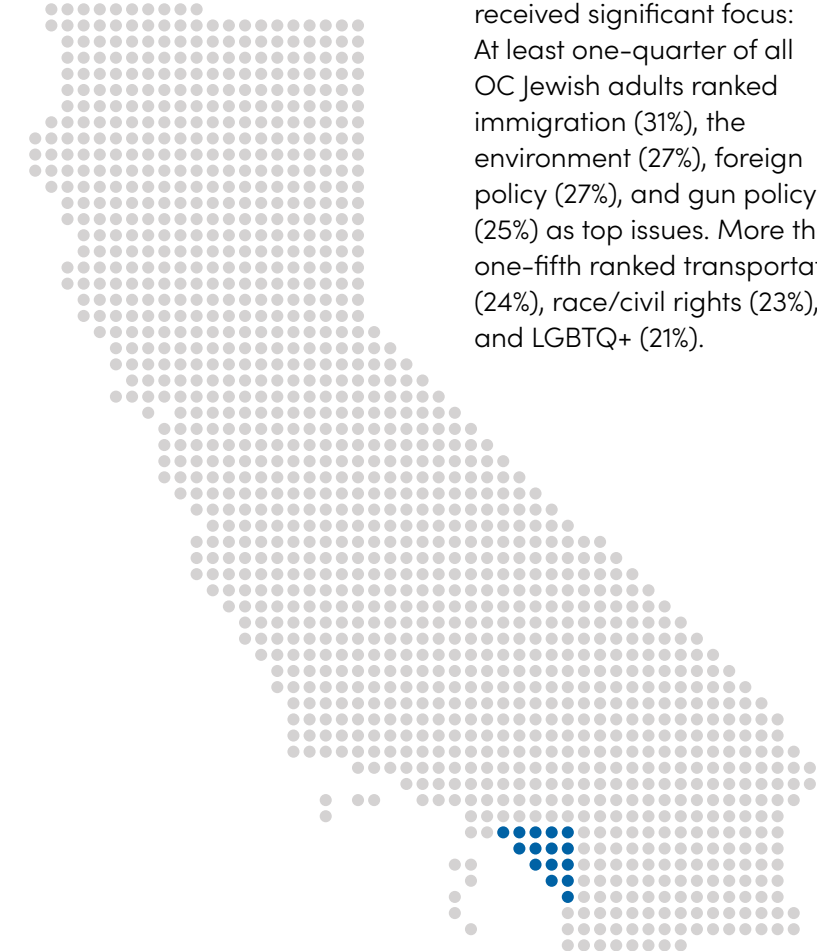
Compared with local elections, healthcare, foreign policy, and gun policy had greater emphases in national elections, while crime, education, and transportation ranked somewhat lower.

There, too, was a relationship between political ideology and prioritization of certain issues at the national level.

There were no significant differences in national election rankings of education, foreign policy, transportation, and the environment among those with ideological differences.

Consistent with local elections, very liberal respondents were far less likely to prioritize the economy, Israel, antisemitism, and crime, while conservative/very conservative respondents were far less likely to prioritize abortion/women’s rights, race/civil rights, and LGBTQ+.

And again, there was strong internal alignment at the ends of the political spectrum. The top three issues for very liberal and conservatives/very conservatives in national elections were ranked by 61–73% and 74–83% of people who identify with those ideologies, respectively, whereas the top three issues for liberals and moderates were ranked by 49–66% and 49–51% of people in those groups, respectively.



In terms of Jewish identity, antisemitism, and Israel, we see considerable alignment across the political spectrum ...

(See respective subsections for additional detail)

There are no overall differences in Jewish engagement and behaviors associated with political views.

This includes participation in Jewish programs, membership in communal organizations, or observance of rituals/practices.

OC Jewish adults with varying political affiliations agree on a few elements that are essential to being Jewish:

leading an ethical and moral life (83%), connecting to family and traditions (73%), and learning and teaching about the Holocaust (68%). (Note: there are other elements ranked highly—see Jewish engagement report for additional detail; we’re focused here on the interplay with political views)

Other elements were also ranked highly, but especially by certain political groups:

- Caring about Israel (72% overall and 95% of conservative and very conservative Jewish adults)
- Taking care of people in need (68% overall and 91% of very liberal Jewish adults)
- Working for justice and equality in society (54% overall and 94% of very liberal Jewish adults)
- Jewish learning and education (52% overall and 70% of conservative and very conservative Jewish adults)

There is also agreement with respect to some concerns about antisemitism ...

Between 72% and 90% of OC Jewish adults across all ideological groups reported being very or extremely concerned about antisemitism in the United States. Similar levels of concern were reported regarding antisemitism in local settings.

... and Israel.

A majority of OC Jewish adults across the ideological spectrum agree that it's important for Israel to exist as a refuge for the Jewish people, Israel is under constant threat from hostile neighbors who seek its destruction, and that Jewish people have a fundamental right to their historic homeland in Israel.

There were no statistical differences among OC Jewish adults holding different political views in terms of attendance at rallies or events in support of Israel since October 2023.

... as well as some areas of divergence.

There are some differences in concern about antisemitism on college campuses and around the world.

Fewer very liberal Jewish people in OC were strongly concerned about antisemitism in these settings (48% and 57%, respectively) than OC Jewish adults overall (80% and 82%, respectively).

We also see variation on some topics related to Israel. Political views appear to drive differences in emotional attachment to Israel ...

Moderate, conservative, and very conservative people tend to be very attached to Israel (50-59%), liberals tend to be somewhat attached (48%), and very liberal people tend not to be attached (62%).³ This divide has been exacerbated since October 7th, with 37% of the very liberal group indicating less attachment than before the war and just over 40% of moderates and conservatives indicating much more attachment.

... as well as some perspectives on Israel and the current conflict.

Views on some topics seem to be aligned with the ideological spectrum. More liberal OC Jewish adults were more likely to agree that Israel regularly violates the human rights of the Palestinian people than more conservative ones (78% of very liberal, 52% of liberal, 17% of moderate, and 3% of conservative or very conservative OC Jewish adults) and less likely to say that they "almost always agree with Israel's policies and actions" (3% of very liberal, 39% of liberal, 50% of moderate, and 89% of conservative or very conservative OC Jewish adults).

On one topic, this pattern did not hold: liberal, moderate, and conservative/very conservative OC Jewish adults attended events and made donations in support of Palestinians at similar rates (≤1% and ≤2%, respectively), and far less frequently than very liberal OC Jewish adults (25% and 46%, respectively).

Many in the community recognize growing political divides—and see it as something we can and should work together to address.

Open survey responses: “I feel that my Jewish Community is divided politically the same way the rest of the country is. It’s hard to feel connected when people are espousing such extreme views. The situation with Israel has pushed some people to more extreme views on both sides. I feel more central on this issue, but people have lost their tolerance for differences of opinion and nuance.”

“This year, the community appeared divided politically with too much polarization. I’d like to see more things we can come together on.”

Antisemitism

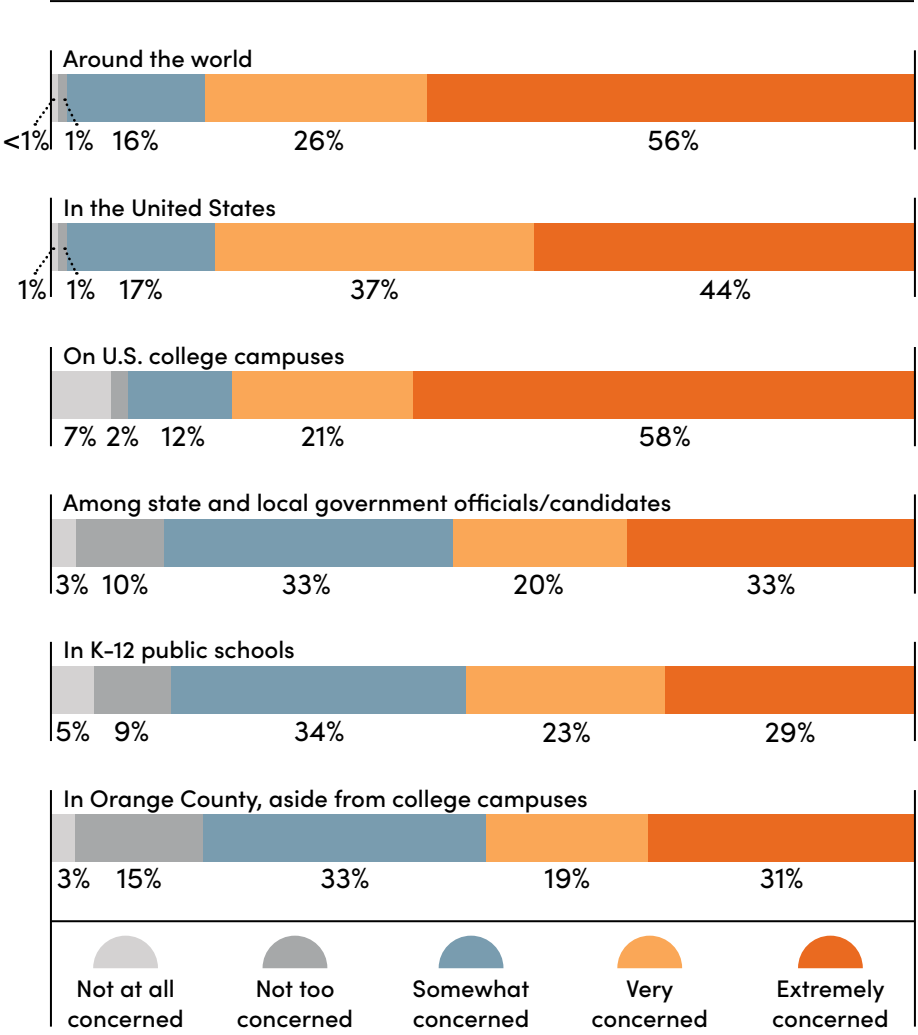
Antisemitism weighs heavily on the hearts of the Orange County Jewish community.

98%

Almost everyone—98% of Jewish adults—reported being at least somewhat concerned about antisemitism in the United States and around the world.

The vast majority are also concerned about antisemitism on college campuses and locally (e.g., among state and local governmental officials/candidates, in K-12 public schools, in OC aside from college campuses), 90% and 80% respectively.

Concern about antisemitism
OC Jewish adults



These concerns are reflected in open survey responses, which call on the community to prioritize:

“Fighting antisemitism, especially on local campuses. Support Hillel and Chabad in the work they do there and think beyond them to consider other resources we can provide to the students (i.e., mental health services and a safety service to escort them on campus).”

“Combating antisemitism in nearby cities and schools and serving as a good example.”

“Fighting antisemitism in our political communities and with our elected officials including school boards.”

Levels of concern are higher in Orange County than national data collected over the past 10 years (but this is likely a function of changes over time, not regional differences).⁴

However, qualitative responses show significant variation in community members' views on the sources of antisemitism.

As one might expect, political views were a major source of divergence: Some respondents were focused on antisemitism on the political left: "the majority of American Jews are in a political party that's filled with antisemites."

Others spoke about antisemitism on the other end of the political spectrum, urging the community to "[get] away from right wing talking points about antisemitism and instead focus on the growing antisemitism of the American right."

Views also differed on the relationship between Israel and antisemitism: Some see antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment as intertwined: "[One of our community's priorities should be to combat] antisemitism, including Israel's right to exist."

Others emphasized the need to separate the two: "[We need to] fight antisemitism without conflating criticism of Israel with antisemitism! I am opposed to the stifling of dissent on college campuses. What ever happened to 2 Jews, 3 opinions."

For many, these worries are not abstract—they reflect real experiences.

It is important to note that these findings reflect respondents' personal experiences and perceptions. Individuals may interpret what it means to be the "target" of an antisemitic incident differently. As a result, reported experiences may include incidents that were directly experienced, witnessed, encountered online, or otherwise perceived as personally impactful. The data do not distinguish between direct and indirect experiences of antisemitism.



38% of OC Jewish adults reported that they were personally the target of an antisemitic incident within the past year, as they defined it.

In the past year, 22% of OC Jewish adults experienced antisemitic insults or harassment in person and 20% on social media. 15% experienced social exclusion because of their Jewish identity. Nearly 3% experienced physical attacks or threats, acts of vandalism, or harassment in a public space.

Nationally over the past 10 years, 16% of Jewish adults experienced an antisemitic incident. In other southern CA communities, all of which were studied prior to October 7th, 17% experienced antisemitism. For communities with post-October 7th studies, 30% of Jewish adults experienced an antisemitic incident. (Note that the wording of this question varied across communities and may not be directly comparable. Furthermore, these comparisons go back to 2015, when there were significantly fewer reported incidents of antisemitism in the United States compared to 2024–25, the time of the present study.)⁵

At the county level, the 2024 Orange County Hate Crime Report found that anti-Jewish motivated hate crimes represented 24% of all hate crime events in the county.

For many, Israel is intertwined with these experiences.

80% of Jewish adults say they often see or hear criticism of Israel that they consider to be antisemitic, and 27% reported experiencing an antisemitic incident related to criticism of Israel. In fact, of all antisemitism incidents reported, 74% were related to criticism of Israel.



Spotlight:

Antisemitism on US college campuses since October 7th, 2023⁶

Because of methodological constraints, this Jewish community study (like others) does not capture specific information about antisemitism on college campuses in OC,⁷ but researchers at Brandeis recently conducted a national study on **how antisemitism has manifested on U.S. campuses since the October 7th attack**. At over 50 schools across the country, they surveyed 2,000 Jewish students, first in December of 2023 and again in the spring of 2024 and 4,000 non-Jewish students in the spring of 2024. In the spring of 2025, they surveyed over 2,000 faculty members at 146 research-intensive universities.

Their findings reveal that **although antisemitic views are actually not widespread, small groups with extreme views can still shape hostile campus environments**. The majority of Jewish students said there was a hostile environment towards Jewish individuals on their campus, though antisemitic hostility varies dramatically from one campus to the next.

Jewish students at campuses with higher levels of antisemitic hostility were much less likely to feel fully safe or comfortable on their campus and much less likely to feel that they “very much” belonged.

Though most faculty and students do not hold antisemitic views, a minority expresses beliefs that many consider antisemitic. Ten percent of non-Jewish faculty and 34% of non-Jewish students hold views that most Jewish students find antisemitic.

Half of those people expressed hostile views about Israel, such as denying it has the right to exist. (Note: The research shows that Jewish students see a clear distinction between criticizing the actions of Israel’s government and denying Israel’s right to exist. The vast majority found the latter to be antisemitic, but there was no similar consensus around other statements, such as accusing Israel of committing genocide.)

The other half tended to agree with explicitly anti-Jewish statements such as “Jews in America have too much power.”

Despite this relative prevalence, at all schools, more students were concerned about antisemitism related to criticism of Israel than they were about antisemitism related to traditional anti-Jewish stereotype. Even among those who had unfavorable views of the Israeli government (44% of all respondents), nearly half (45%) were very concerned about antisemitism related to criticism of Israel.

Experiences of antisemitic incidents also varied. Less than 2% of students reported experiencing an antisemitic physical attack; between 14% and 24% of students reported experiencing an antisemitic insult or harassment in-person in the past three months, depending on the campus. Between 26% and 35% of students reported personally experiencing an antisemitic insult or harassment on social media.

Some students also report feeling shunned and excluded. These experiences, including loss of friendships, were often tied to peers’ perceptions of Jewish students’ stance on Israel. Some students reported being shunned by friends who were critical of Israel, regardless of their own views on the actions of the Israeli government. Liberal Jewish students were especially likely to feel alienated and estranged from other politically liberal peers.

Jewish students are most likely to encounter anti-Israel hostility from other students on campus, as opposed to faculty or administrators. Despite headlines, most faculty reported that debates about Israel rarely entered classroom discussions.

Responses to antisemitism haven’t effectively addressed students’ concerns. Students expressed a desire for university administrators to take a more active role in addressing antisemitism.

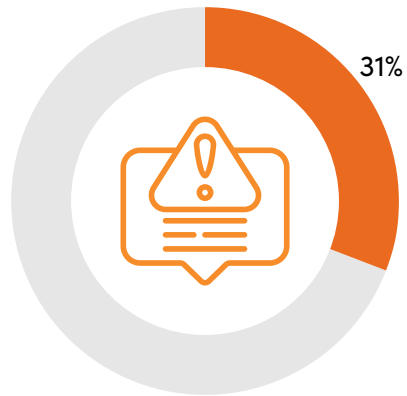
The data suggest efforts to address antisemitism on campus need to be carefully targeted (not a one-size-fits-all solution). Colleges and universities can do a better job of exposing students to diverse views and encouraging dialogue across differences. Students need help to learn how to express and act on their intense political convictions in a way that does not lead to violence or the ostracism of peers who think differently.

At the same time, many cautioned that well-intended actions can and have had negative consequences. On-campus responses—such as banning pro-Palestinian student groups—exacerbate campus tensions rather than alleviate them. Off-campus advocacy—such as criticizing university administrations, making statements about campus safety, and organizing speaker events and counter-protests—was seen by Jewish students and campus professionals as increasing the level of tension for Jewish students.

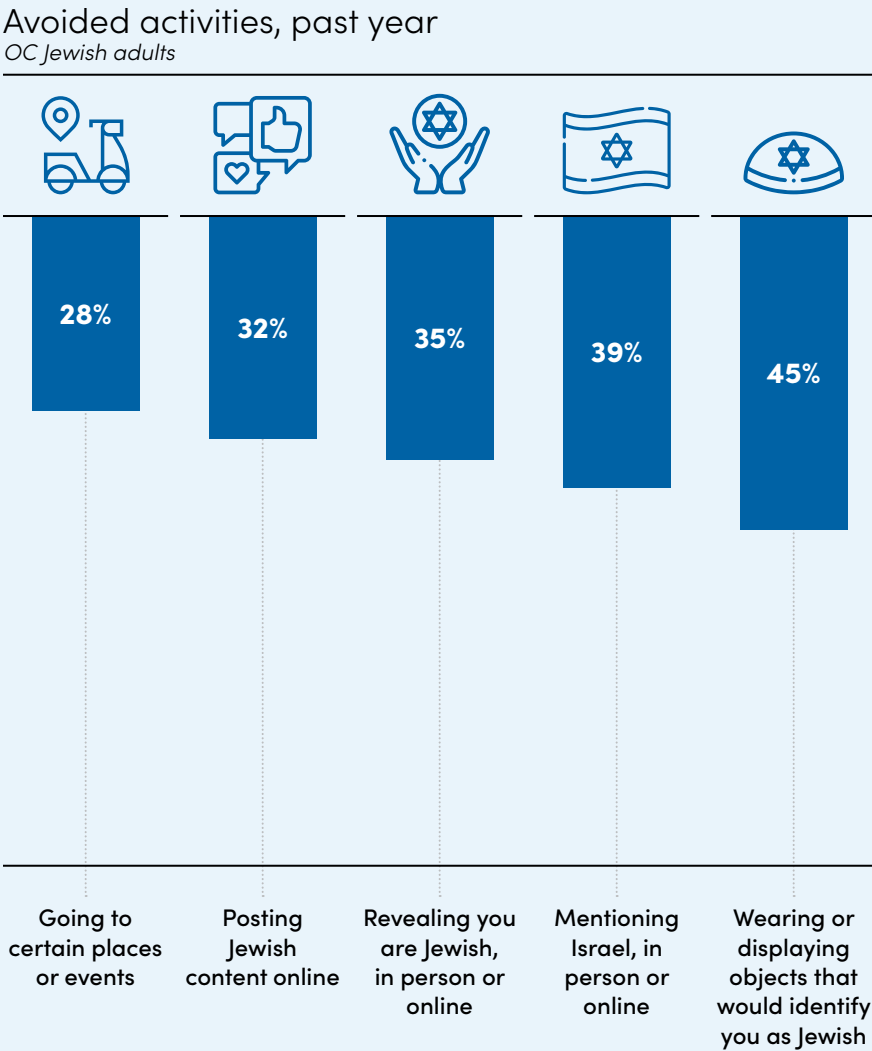
Members of our community have been struggling with how to respond...

Only a fraction of those who experienced antisemitic incidents reported them.

Of Orange County adults who experienced an antisemitic incident, only 31% reported the incident to officials, rabbis or other Jewish professionals, government agencies, Jewish community organizations, friends and family, or another reporting mechanism. While 37% of those who did not report didn't consider the incident to be serious, 53% didn't think that any change would happen as a result of reporting and 47% didn't know who to report to.

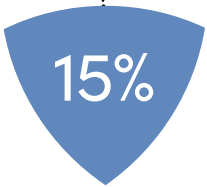


At the same time, fear of antisemitism has changed behavior across the community. 63% of Jewish adults reported avoiding Jewish activities out of a fear of antisemitism in the last year, including...



Q: In the past year, have you avoided any of the following out of fear of antisemitism?

Patterns of avoidance were higher among liberal Jewish adults and younger adults.



15% of OC Jewish adults said that safety and security was a barrier to their participation in Jewish events. Other communities across the U.S. experience similar limitations.⁸

This fear is reflected in open survey responses:

“How to connect in a safe environment. Even going to the JCC is stressful as I’m waiting for snipers on the hillsides to attack us even when we are there to workout.”

“I also have not found a good solution to the safety issue. I don’t feel safe being Jewish in the world today. I am afraid for my kids and I am not even sure where to send them to college given the state of things. I don’t feel safe even though the temples hire security.”

“A glaring gap is the lack of a community wide security initiative that includes a disaster plan. Consider a simple shooting at the JCC or incident at a school. What resources does the community have besides for local authorities? We should put our community first, and be quietly prepared.”

... and view the fight against antisemitism as a communal imperative.

Many Jewish adults called on organizations and institutions to take an active role in leading this effort. More than 1 in 3 OC Jewish adults selected antisemitism as one of their top 5 most important issues in local and national elections; 4 in 10 Jewish adults listed combatting antisemitism as a top cause of volunteering and donating; and in response to the open response question “What should be the priorities of the Orange County Jewish community,” almost 30% of respondents suggested combatting antisemitism should be a top priority.

At the same time, current perceptions of organizational response are mixed: 37% of Jewish adults rated Orange County Jewish organizations responses to antisemitism positively, 18% rated them negatively, and 45% said they didn’t know how to rate them.

Political ideology did not meaningfully shape people’s assessment of organizations’ responses to antisemitism, but age did. Perhaps counterintuitively, political views did not drive significant differences in assessment of organizational response to antisemitism. Younger adults, however, were more likely to both offer a rating and to evaluate organizational responses more negatively. A frequently cited reason for negative assessments among qualitative responses was a perceived lack of action, particularly locally.



People see multiple opportunities for the Orange County Jewish community to take collective action, both within the Jewish community...

- “I believe more training and awareness needs to be provided on antisemitism... how to respond to someone, knowing questions that a Jewish person may be asked.”
- “[We need to] bring unaffiliated Jews and mixed religious households together to better understand how we can manage the growing antisemitism all around.”
- “[Our priority should be] coming together from different synagogues and organizations to address antisemitism and educate our young people (and others) about Israel.”



... and beyond.

- “[Our priority should be] education, promoting open dialogue with the Arab and Palestinian community, and support for our local college students on campus to combat antisemitism.”
- “[We need more] training and awareness on antisemitism. [For example], being familiar with Jewish history, major holidays, and in some cases, disputing that the Jews did not kill Jesus.”
- “For democracy to prevail in this country I think the Jewish community needs to reach out to educate the non-Jewish community by exposing them to Jewish history and ethical values.”
- “[We should focus on] naming the hate (by which I mean making, and inviting public figures to make statements identifying antisemitic speech and incidents in the community). People in OC say and do and believe terribly antisemitic things, and they have no idea what they are saying, doing, and believing is antisemitic—and the people who do know what they are saying, doing, and believing is antisemitic need to be publicly named.”
- “[We need to] give praise to our elected leaders who do right by the Jewish community.”

One respondent painted a vision for a collective goal:

“Ensuring OC is a safe and vibrant place for its Jewish residents.”

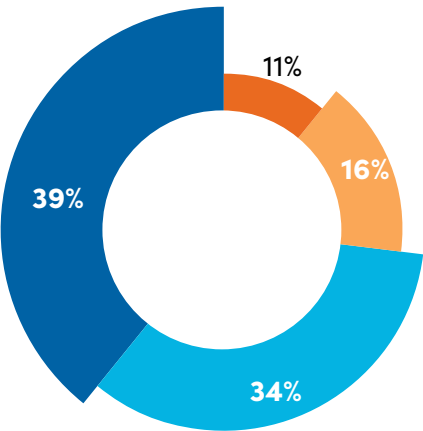
Israel

Most Jewish adults in Orange County feel personally connected to Israel.

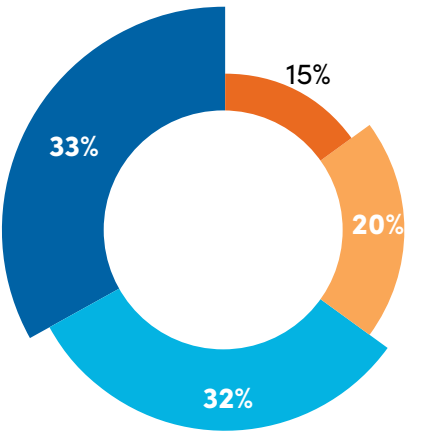
3/4

Almost three-quarters of Jewish adults in OC consider themselves somewhat or very attached to Israel and consider caring about Israel to be an essential aspect of being Jewish (73% and 72%, respectively). There are no significant differences between age groups in terms of emotional attachment to Israel.

Emotional attachment to Israel



OC Jewish adults



U.S. Jewish adults

CMJS Combined Dataset (CDS), largely pre-10/7⁹

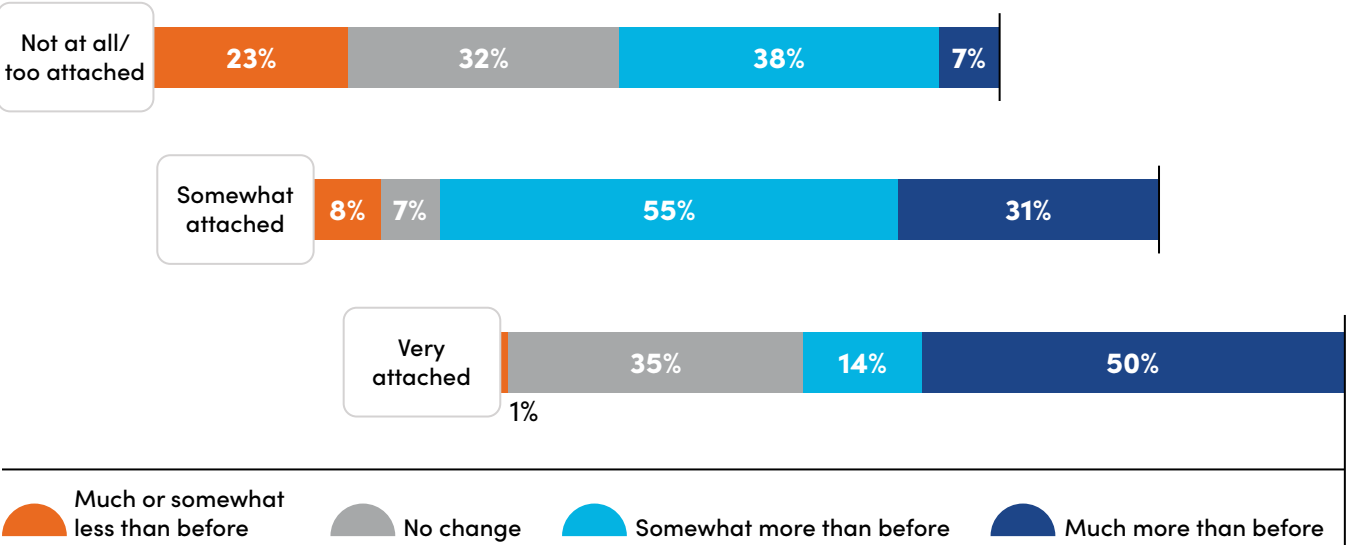


For many, October 7th and the ensuing conflict intensified their attachment to Israel.

A majority of OC Jewish adults (65%) indicated somewhat or much more attachment to Israel than before October 7th, 2023, including 38% of those who indicated feeling not at all/not too attached to Israel. 10% of all OC Jewish adults indicated less attachment than before October 7th. Again, there were no significant differences based on age.

Change in attachment since October 7th

OC Jewish adults



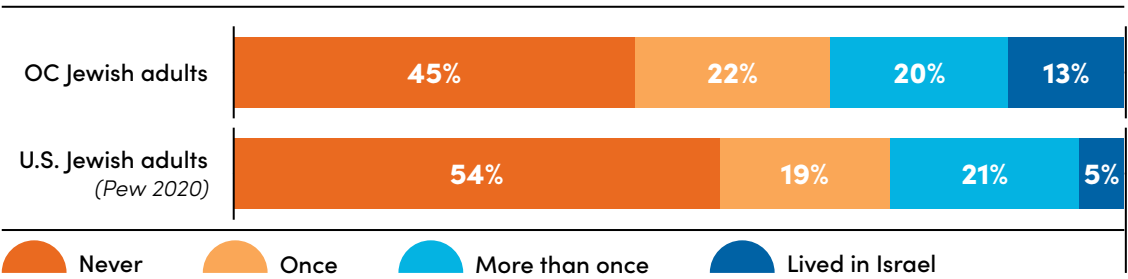
Q: Since the October 7th, 2023, attack and the Israel-Hamas war, how has your emotional attachment to Israel changed?

55%

More than half (55%) of all Jewish adults reported having traveled to and/or lived in Israel.

(Travel included short-term educational trips, longer-term programs, trips sponsored by a local Jewish organization, and Birthright Israel trips.) Not surprisingly, those who have traveled to Israel multiple times or lived in Israel are more emotionally connected to Israel than those who haven't travelled to Israel or have only travelled once.

Travel to Israel



Orange County is also home to a sizable Israeli-American community.¹⁰

5% of Jewish adults in Orange County were born in Israel, 13% lived in Israel at some point during their lives, and 15% of Jewish adults consider themselves to be part of the Israeli American Jewish community.

They also care deeply about Israel as a state.

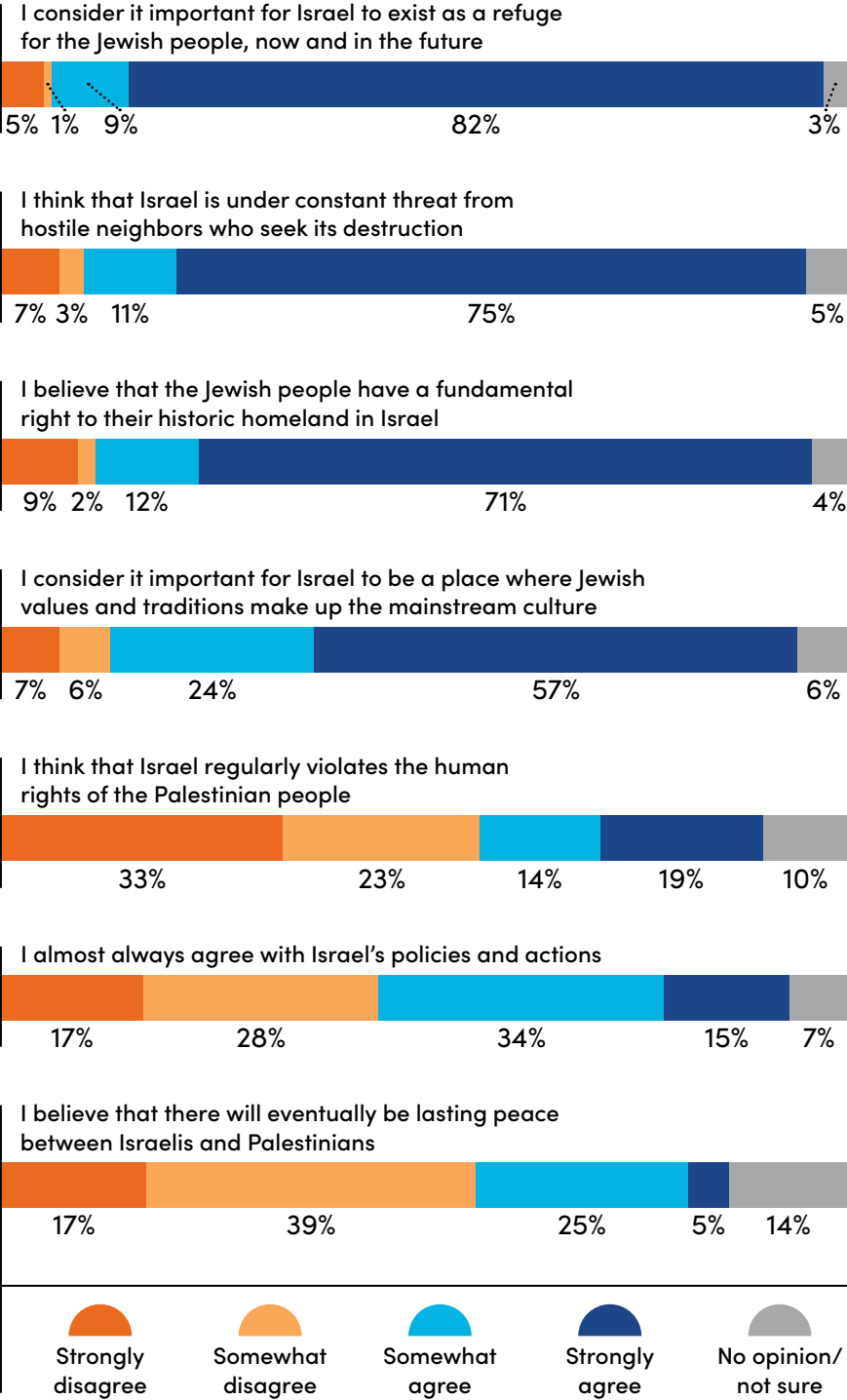
Overall, the Orange County Jewish community strongly supports Israel as a Jewish state.

The majority of Jewish adults somewhat or strongly agree that it is important for Israel to exist as a refuge for the Jewish people (91%), that Israel is under constant threat from hostile neighbors who seek its destruction (86%), and that the Jewish people have a fundamental right to their historic homeland in Israel (83%).

However, political identification, emotional attachment to Israel, and travel to Israel are associated with significant differences in these views.

Views about Israel and actions of the Israeli government

OC Jewish adults



Skepticism as to whether there will eventually be lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians is similar across all groups.

Israel is seen as an important political issue by many Jewish adults.

When deciding which candidate to support in local elections and national elections, Israel was selected by 37% and 41% of OC Jewish adults, respectively, as one of their top five issues considered. This was the third-most selected issue in local elections and the fifth-most selected issue in national elections. Those who are politically conservative or have traveled to Israel are more likely to consider Israel when selecting a political candidate.

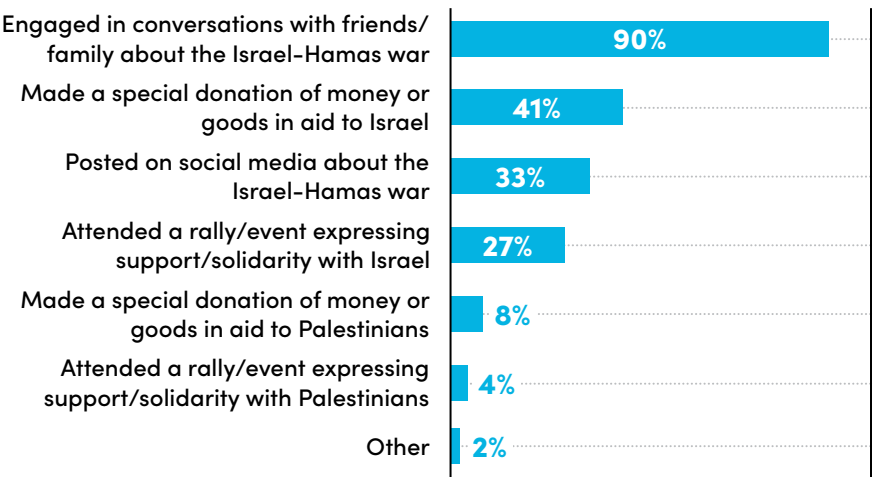
The large majority of OC Jewish adults follow news about Israel either somewhat (43%) or very (43%) closely. A majority (80%) also somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement that they feel confident in their understanding of the current situation in Israel. However, nearly 40% somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement that they often feel they don't know enough to participate in conversations about Israel.

When asked about what causes were most important for them to volunteer for or donate to, 40% of Jewish adults selected Israel, making it the third highest cause.

Almost all Jewish adults (92%) in Orange County have engaged in some Israel-related activity since October 7th, 2023.

The most common Israel-related activity was engaging in conversations with friends/family about the war (90%), followed by making a special donation of money or goods in aid of Israel (41%). Few participated in activities in support of Palestine, such as making a special donation in aid to Palestinians (8%) or attending a rally or event expressing support for Palestinians (4%).

Engagement in Israel-related activities since October 7th
OC Jewish adults



Unlike overall emotional attachment to Israel, in certain activities and attitudes, there is evidence of generational divides.

With respect to many views and behaviors, younger adults (ages 22-44) are distinct from those ages 45 and above.

They were less likely to somewhat or strongly agree with the statement "I almost always agree with Israel's policies and actions" (30% vs. 49% overall).

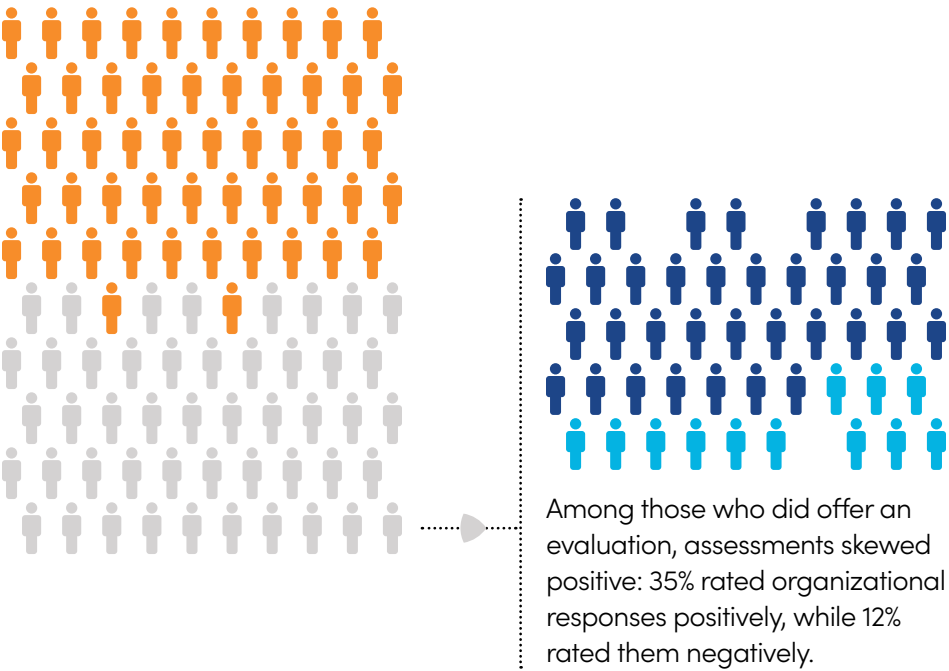
They were also more likely to have posted on social media about the Israel-Hamas war (53% vs. 33% overall), made a special donation of money or goods in aid to Palestinians (14% vs. 8%), or attended a rally/event expressing solidarity or support with Palestinians (10% vs. 4%).

But on one topic, the youngest (22-44) and oldest (75+) OC Jewish adults were aligned.

They were more likely to agree with the statement that Israel regularly violates the human rights of the Palestinian people (48% and 41%, respectively) than adults ages 45-74 (between 15% and 22% of whom agreed).

As Jewish adults engage deeply with Israel as an issue, many also look to Jewish organizations for leadership and response, but awareness of how OC Jewish organizations have responded to the Israel-Hamas war is limited.

More than half of Orange County Jewish adults (52%) said they did not know enough to evaluate how local Jewish organizations had responded to the war.



For many, beliefs about Israel are a barrier to inclusion in Orange County.

Many Jewish adults feel unwelcome in the Jewish community:

More than a quarter of all Jewish adults (27%) and two-thirds (67%) of very liberal Jewish adults feel that their views are unwelcome in Jewish spaces; approximately one-quarter of liberal (22%) and conservative or very conservative (25%) Jewish adults feel this way.

And in non-Jewish settings:

Almost two-thirds of community members at least somewhat agree that their views are unwelcome in non-Jewish settings. In the past year, 39% of Jewish adults have avoided mentioning Israel (whether in person or online) out of fear of antisemitism.

Discussion Questions

These findings invite reflection on how the community can come together and create spaces where people feel safe to listen, share, and disagree.

1

How do these findings confirm or complicate your understanding of political diversity within the Orange County Jewish community?

2

Where do you see unexpected areas of alignment—or sharper divides than anticipated?

3

How might common ground be strengthened even amid differing interpretations and emotions? What might help create space for more constructive engagement?

4

What role should Jewish organizations and community leaders have in this moment?

Endnotes

¹UC Irvine School of Social Ecology, "UCI-OC Poll: California's Next Election: Insights and Analysis" (2025). <https://bpb-us-e2.wpmucdn.com/sites.uci.edu/dist/5/5275/files/2025/07/7-2-2025-UCI-OC-Poll-4.pdf>

²This combines two age groups: 43% of those ages 45-54 and 41% of those ages 55-64 are conservative or very conservative.

³This refers to the percentage of liberal people who indicate they are not too attached and not at all attached.

⁴Nationally over the past 10 years, 67% of Jewish adults were very concerned about antisemitism in the United States, and 33% were concerned about local antisemitism at the time of their study (CDS). Note that the wording of this question varied across communities and may not be directly comparable. Previous studies did not include an "extremely concerned" category. Furthermore, these comparisons go back to 2015, when there were significantly fewer reported incidents of antisemitism in the United States compared to 2024-25, the time of the present study.

⁵Aronson, J.K., & Magidin de Kramer, R. (2026). CMJS Combined Dataset: Benchmark Report. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University. California studies include San Diego (2022), Los Angeles (2021), and Long Beach (2021). Post-October 7 studies include Miami (2024), Maine (2024), Northeast Florida (2024), and St. Louis (2024).

⁶Graham Wright, Brandeis University's Center for Modern Jewish Studies, "Antisemitism on campus is a real problem – but headlines and government-proposed solutions don't match the experience of most Jewish students" (2025); "In the Shadows of War: Hotspots of Antisemitism on US College Campuses" (2023); "Campus Voices: Jewish Students Experiences of Antisemitism at US Colleges" (2024); "Antisemitism on Campus: Understanding Hostility to Jews and Israel" (2024); "Ideology in the Classroom: How Faculty and US Universities Navigate Politics and Pedagogy Amid Federal Pressure Over Viewpoint Diversity and Antisemitism" (2025)

⁷The CMJS Jewish Community Studies collect survey responses from individuals based on their permanent residential address. As a result, the data are geographically organized around home communities rather than institutions, and they do not systematically capture experiences occurring on specific college campuses, including those in Orange County.

⁸CMJS Combined Dataset (CDS); In other communities across the United States with post-10/7 studies, 10% of Jewish adults say safety and security concerns limit their participation in their local Jewish community.

⁹CMJS Combined Dataset (CDS).

¹⁰The Israeli-American Jewish community is sometimes defined as immigrants from Israel, Israeli citizens, children or grandchildren of Israelis, or individuals who live in a Hebrew-speaking household.



Samueli
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