

# AJC 2015 Survey of American Jews

September 11, 2015 – New York – The 2015 AJC Survey of American Jewish Opinion finds a community conflicted about the Iran nuclear deal, concerned about U.S.-Israel relations, and worried about rising anti-Semitism. The survey also gauged Jewish opinions on likely U.S. presidential candidates for 2016, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, global terrorism, and attitudes towards a range of individual countries, among other issues. The full survey is available at [www.ajc.org](http://www.ajc.org).

## Iran Nuclear Deal

U.S. Jews offer conflicting, and seemingly contradictory, views on the agreement reached between the P5+1 and Iran on July 14. A clear majority of American Jews lack confidence in the deal. Only 5 percent are “very confident,” 31 percent “somewhat confident,” 30 percent “not so confident,” and 33 percent “not confident at all” that the deal will prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

While 51 percent of total respondents approve of the deal and 47 percent disapprove, there is a significant split within the community on the issue: those who consider being Jewish very important, those who view caring about Israel as a key part of their Jewish identity, and those belonging to the traditional denominations of Judaism are far more likely to oppose the deal than others. It may, in fact, be appropriate, in light of the data, to speak of two diverging Jewish sub-communities.

Among those who consider their being Jewish “very” important, 61 percent disapprove of the agreement (37 percent “strongly”), while 38 percent approve it (12 percent “strongly”). In contrast, 55 percent of those for whom being Jewish is “fairly” important approve the deal (15 percent “strongly”), as do 59 percent of those for whom being Jewish is not important (22 percent “strongly”).

Similarly, a majority—54 percent—of those for whom caring about Israel is an important component of their Jewish identity disapprove of the deal, 19 percent “strongly,” while 66 percent of those for whom caring about Israel is not an important component agree with the deal, 27 percent “strongly.”

Fully 67 percent of Orthodox and Conservative Jews disapprove of the agreement, 45 percent “strongly.” Yet 54 percent of Reform and Reconstructionist Jews approve of it (19 percent “strongly”), as do 69 percent of those who identify as “just Jewish” (24 percent “strongly”).

The survey also found a fairly widespread lack of confidence in the ability of the U.S. and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN body tasked with overseeing implementation of the Iran agreement, to monitor Tehran’s compliance. Only 6 percent are “very confident,” while 38 percent are “somewhat confident,” 28 percent “not so confident,” and 26 percent “not at all confident.”

The survey data suggest that the best predictor, of all the variables, for attitudes towards the agreement is political party affiliation. Jewish self-described Democrats, who comprised 49 percent of those surveyed, are far more likely to support it, and Republicans, who comprised 19 percent of those surveyed, are far more likely to oppose it. According to the survey, 66 percent of Democrats approve of the agreement (22 percent “approve strongly” and 44 percent “approve somewhat”), while 87 percent of Republicans disapprove of the agreement (20 percent “disapprove somewhat” and 67 percent “disapprove strongly”).

Attitudes towards the deal also vary by age. Among respondents 18- to 29-years-old, 58 percent approve, and 38 percent disapprove of the deal. For the 30- to 44-years-old cohort, 53 percent approve, and 44 percent disapprove of the agreement. For those 45- to 50-years-old, 48 percent approve, and 49 percent disapprove. And among the 60-and-over group, 48 percent approve and 51 percent disapprove.

Younger Jews are more confident that the deal will block Iran from getting nuclear weapons: 45 percent of those aged 18 to 29; 41 percent of those aged 30 to 44; 30 percent of those aged 45 to 59; and 33 percent of those 60 and over are confident that the agreement will prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

The survey revealed that a minority of American Jews, 18 percent, believe Israel’s security will be “less threatened” by the deal, while 43 percent assert that it will be “more threatened,” and 38 percent say it will “stay the same.”

## **2016 Elections**

Hillary Clinton is by far the leading choice of Jewish voters for president in the 2016 election, according to the AJC survey. Clinton was the first choice of 40 percent of the respondents—47 percent of the women—and the second choice of another 20 percent. Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) was the only other Democratic candidate to register in double digits, attracting 18 percent of first-choice preferences and 21 percent as a second choice. The Republican candidate with the most first-place support was Donald Trump at 10 percent, followed by Jeb Bush at 9 percent.

Forty-five percent of those surveyed called themselves “Liberal” or “Lean Liberal,” 34 percent “Moderate, Middle of the road,” and 21 percent “Conservative” or “Lean Conservative.”

Asked to choose which among ten issues are most important in deciding how to vote in the 2016 elections, 42 percent chose the economy as the top priority. National security, health care, and income inequality tied for second place at 12 percent each.

## **U.S.-Israel Relations**

A majority of respondents, 52 percent, said the U.S.-Israel relationship is “getting worse,” while 5 percent said it is “getting better,” and 42 percent said it is “staying the same.”

Asked to characterize the U.S.-Israel relationship today, 53 percent said it is good (4 percent “very good” and 49 percent “fairly good”), and 46 percent said it is poor (38 percent “fairly poor” and 8 percent “very poor”).

Fifty-five percent approve of the way Prime Minister Netanyahu is handling the U.S.-Israel relationship, and 42 percent disapprove. Forty-nine percent of respondents approve and 49 percent disapprove of President Obama’s handling of the bilateral relationship.

## **Peace Process**

The survey found that 52 percent of American Jews favor, and 46 percent oppose, the establishment of a Palestinian state. In the last AJC survey, taken in 2013, 50 percent favored and 47 percent opposed the establishment of a Palestinian state.

As part of a permanent settlement with the Palestinians, 14 percent say Israel should dismantle all of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank, 45 percent say that Israel should dismantle some settlements, and 39 percent want none dismantled.

Regarding the prospects for Israeli-Palestinian peace, 4 percent say that prospects for peace have increased over the past year, 36 percent say they have decreased, and 59 percent believe they have stayed the same.

## **Anti-Semitism**

American Jews remain highly concerned about anti-Semitism, especially in Europe, and even more so in the Arab world. In this survey, for the first time, AJC asked about anti-Semitism on campuses across the U.S.

- Twenty percent consider anti-Semitism on the American college campus “a very serious problem,” 54 percent “somewhat of a problem,” and 24 percent “not a problem.”
- Twenty-one percent consider anti-Semitism in the U.S. “a very serious problem,” 64 percent “somewhat of a problem,” and 14 percent “not a problem.”
- Forty-six percent consider anti-Semitism in Europe “a very serious problem,” 44 percent “somewhat of a problem,” and 8 percent “not a problem.”
- Fifty-nine percent believe the “Jews have a future in Europe,” 10 percent “they don’t have a future in Europe,” and 31 percent are “not sure.”
- Seventy-six percent consider anti-Semitism in the Arab world “a very serious problem,” 19 percent “somewhat of a problem,” and 4 percent “not a problem.”

## **Global Terrorism**

Fifty-four percent approve of the way President Obama is handling the threat posed by global terrorism, and 45 percent disapprove. Furthermore, American Jews consider ISIS (Islamic State) “the biggest threat” to the United States today – 51 percent chose ISIS over China (13%), Iran (10%), Russia (10%), and North Korea (6%).

## **Jewish Identity**

As in previous AJC surveys, the state of Israel is a major factor in American Jewish identity. A majority, 72 percent, agree, and 27 percent disagree, with the statement “caring about Israel is a very important part of being a Jew.” In AJC’s 2013 survey, 70 percent agreed and 30 percent disagreed.

On the role of religion in Israel, the AJC survey found that 37 percent favor separation of religion and state; 25 percent say “religion should play less of a role;” 26 percent say “the current relationship of religion and state is best;” and 9 percent say “religion should play more of a role.”

A majority of respondents indicate that being Jewish in one’s life is “very important” (32 percent) or “somewhat important” (31 percent), while 20 percent say it is “not too important” and 17 percent “not at all important.” In AJC’s 2013 survey, 33 percent said being Jewish is “very important,” 30 percent “somewhat important,” 22 percent “not too important,” and 14 percent “not at all important.”

The poll of 1,030 American Jews was conducted on KnowledgePanel®, the GfK group’s online panel, from August 7 to 22. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.7 percent.

AJC, a non-partisan organization, has commissioned surveys of American Jews for many years on a range of key questions, as a contribution to the better understanding of the American Jewish community. All AJC surveys are available at [www.ajc.org/surveys](http://www.ajc.org/surveys).

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See more at:

<http://www.ajc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=7oJILSPwFfJSG&b=8479733&ct=14761859#sthash.yNmQFFgy.dpuf>