

Creating Community, Fostering Leadership

The National Jewish Student Survey 2024



UJS | THE UNION
OF JEWISH
STUDENTS



The Union of Jewish Students (UJS) is the voice of 9,000 Jewish students, spanning over 75 Jewish Societies (JSocs) on campuses across the UK and Ireland.

Guided by UJS' core values, the priorities of our elected President and policy passed at UJS Conference, we create and deliver powerful campaigns; fighting prejudice, advancing inclusion, and inspiring education and action on the issues that matter to Jewish students.

For over 100 years, UJS has been leading, defending and enriching Jewish student life across the UK and Ireland, and is proud to be the voice of Jewish students.

Authors

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With Thanks to the Supporters of the National Jewish Student Survey 2024



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Forewords

The National Jewish Student Survey 2024 is a landmark study which dives into the complexity, the brilliance, and the challenges of what it means to be a Jewish student today. Similar studies have not been completed since 2011, and UJS is proud to have worked with our key supporters to deliver this vital piece of work on behalf of the Jewish community.

From this study, it is clear that Jewish campus life is not without its challenges. Antisemitism continues to plague campuses, with the vast majority of Jewish students worrying about antisemitism with many more having experienced it first-hand. It is this climate of fear that has become so pernicious, especially post October 7th, that needs tackling head on. At UJS, we recognise that this work cannot be done overnight, and that a cultural shift is needed on campus. Part of the solution is our antisemitism awareness training that we are proud to deliver to non-Jewish campus leaders and as we rapidly expand this necessary work, we are confident that more and more non-Jewish students will have the confidence to stand in allyship with Jewish students.

Turning to Israel, it isn't surprising to see that Israel plays a part in the identity of the vast majority of Jewish students. And despite the challenges evidenced in this study facing Jewish students when talking about Israel, particularly in the current climate, it is inspiring to see that most Jewish students support a solution to the conflict, namely the two-state solution.

While Israel and antisemitism are well reported on, I am proud that this study for the first time has focussed on students' mental health. Student mental health must be taken seriously, with nearly three quarters of students reporting mental health difficulties in the past year. I hope this study inspires further investment in this

Edward Isaacs
UJS Presidents, 2023/24

area, to ensure every Jewish student receives the right support in looking after their mental health.

Yet despite the challenges and complexities of Jewish campus life which stray far beyond the well documented reality of campus antisemitism, it is clear Jewish students have never been more motivated than they are now to live a meaningful Jewish life on campus.

89% of Jewish students are engaged in their JSoc, as supported by UJS. 85% of students feel represented by their JSoc, 81% feel represented by UJS, with nearly three quarters of Jewish students attending JSoc Friday night dinners. These figures speak for themselves in describing the vibrancy of Jewish campus life, and as you read this study, I hope you are inspired by the resilience of Jewish students, and the excitement of Jewish campus life.

I am incredibly grateful to Sarah, Edward, and the rest of the UJS team for making this study possible alongside our partners. And I am grateful to Jewish students for their continued belief in a better future.

This study provides a roadmap for the future of Jewish campus life. With your support, we can guarantee the future of our Jewish community by ensuring Jewish students can live meaningful Jewish lives on campus today, tomorrow, and for years to come.

In 2011, JPR published *Home and Away: Jewish Journeys Towards Independence*, an important piece of research based on the findings from more than 900 students (Graham and Boyd, 2011). That data set provided a resource to further explore issues around Jewish Identity, resulting in the JPR report *Strengthening Jewish Identity* (Graham, 2014). In 2021, *The Jewish Lives Longitudinal study* captured data from 450 young people and their families related to Jewish life at University (Miller and Pomson 2021).

Young adults today are living in a different world than when the Jewish Lives data was collected in 2020/21, and certainly in a completely different world from when JPR collected data in 2011. It is hard enough for any of us to think back to a time when the UK was still part of the European Union, when Donald Trump was "just" a television host, when no-one had heard of Covid-19, and of course when October 7th was merely the day before October 8th. Today's students have surely grown up in a turbulent and challenging world.

The National Jewish Student Survey 2024 is the first time in over a decade that a thorough, systematic and large scale study has been undertaken to try to understand the lives of Jewish students. 1,026 Jewish students were sampled across 125 UK and Irish campuses over the period of May to November 2023. What you can read in the following pages is the outcome of this collection of data. We find out how students engage with UJS, and we also find out about their wider campus experiences – how they engage with Israel, how they have been

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affected by antisemitism, who their friends are. We should be appalled to read about how many of them have experienced mental health difficulties and we should be amazed at how many of them take part in volunteering, and community leadership. Most of all, the data in this report should make us proud of our Jewish students. The data captured in this report show a cohort with strong Jewish identities, who overwhelmingly feel part of the Jewish people. This should give us a welcome degree of optimism for the future of Jewish life in the UK.

The data in itself in this report tells an absorbing story, but of course the question after any research study is "what comes next"? The challenge for the Jewish community now is how the data presented in these pages will inform strategy and policy in the coming few years.

The National Jewish Student Survey 2024 is an important piece of work. The ability of the UJS team to generate meaningful data from over a thousand students should be lauded. The report of these labours deserves to be read seriously and debated widely.

Executive Summary



Campus Life and Beyond

- Jewish Societies (supported by UJS) are the most popular Jewish student provision with 89% of students participating. This is followed by UJS (63%), Chaplaincy (56%) and Chabad (54%).
- Jewish organised social events are the most attended (81%) by students with JSoc Friday Night Dinners second most popular (73%).
- 85% of students feel represented by their JSoc, 81% feel represented by UJS.
- The top worries for Jewish students are the cost of living, events in Israel, antisemitism, and climate change.
- The least concerning issues for Jewish students are their sexual or gender identities, another wave of COVID, and living up to their parents' expectations.
- 87% of Jewish students live away from parents during term-time, but 84% rely on parents financially to varying degrees.
- One third (33%) say more than half of their friends are Jewish.



Who Are Jewish Students?

- Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Leeds, Nottingham, and Oxford are the most popular universities.
- Medicine, Psychology, Politics, and History are the most popular courses.
- Just over half (53%) of Jewish students consider themselves religious.
- Modern Orthodox is the most represented affiliation (39%) with Reform and Liberal students making up 24% of students. Masorti students make up 8% and 15% of Jewish students say they are 'Just Jewish'.

Antisemitism

- 40% say they have experienced antisemitism at university, 42% say they have witnessed antisemitism.
- 78% have experienced 'casual' antisemitism.
- 82% say they have worries about antisemitism.
- 66% are open about their Jewish identity on campus.

Jewish Experience, Knowledge, and Education

- Jewish students are overwhelmingly proud to be Jewish (92%) and agree they have opportunities for meaningful Jewish experiences (84%).
- Before university, 73% of Jewish students attended either a Jewish nursery, primary, or secondary school.
- Nearly 3 in 4 (72%) Jewish students attended a Jewish Youth Movement.
- Summer Camp was attended by 68% of Jewish students growing up.
- Jewish students feel they have high levels of knowledge around the Holocaust, Jewish practices and Jewish rituals. Their comfort with subjects of Torah, Tanach, and Hebrew language is less strong.
- Jewish students believe overwhelmingly that being Jewish is about 'feeling a part of the Jewish people' (91%). Just 36% feel it is about 'Believing in God'.
- 93% of students give to charity overall. 49% give to Jewish charities, 45% to UK charities, and 29% to Israel-based charities.



Israel

- 84% of Jewish students have neutral to positive feelings about Israel.
- Israel plays a role in the Jewish identity of around 70% of students.
- Only 33% say they are comfortable discussing Israel with non-Jewish friends. This increased to 76% when talking to Jewish friends.
- 89% have said that Israel has come up during their university experience and 80% are worried about anti-Israel sentiment on campus.
- A majority of Jewish students identify as Zionist, 14% do not.
- Students are less likely to openly identify as Zionist when talking to non-Jews compared to when talking to Jews.
- 84% of Jewish students support a two-state solution in Israel-Palestine in some way.
- 85% of Jewish students have been to Israel. Nearly half of them have been more than five times.



Who Are Jewish Students?

Mental Health

- 74% of Jewish students reported experiencing a mental health difficulty in the last 12 months. This compares to 57% of all British students as recorded by the student mental health charity Student Minds in 2023.
- 48% of Jewish students have received counselling or psychotherapy.
- When accessing support 64% said the help they received was effective.
- Over 95% said that they had confidence that they would know what to do if they or someone they know were experiencing mental health concerns.



Leadership

- 67% say they take part in activism, volunteering, or promotion of a cause they believe in.
- Over half of Jewish students (52%) say they would consider participating in a Jewish community leadership programme.



Future Plans

- 16% of Jewish students are considering employment in Healthcare, followed by Law (9%), Business (8%), and Creative Arts (7%).
- 42% of Jewish students responded that they were likely to consider spending time working professionally in the Jewish community.
- Most of those said they would want to work in 'Youth Work' (34%), or educational environments (60% combined informal and formal).

Volunteering

- 58% said they would be likely to volunteer in the Jewish community.
- 49% said they would volunteer for one off occasions, while 25% said they would consider volunteering regularly.

Jewish students are as broad and unique as every other demographic of Jewish and wider society.

UJS is a cross-communal organisation that caters for any and all Jewish students regardless of how they express that Judaism. Secular or religious, orthodox, reform, or just Jewish, all are welcome at UJS and JSoc events, and all are equally supported, defended and enriched by UJS.

Figure 1 shows the religiosity of today's Jewish students. They mostly describe themselves as religious (53%) rather than secular (42%), and a small minority (5%) were 'unsure'. These demographic proportions are near identical to the makeup of Jewish students in 2011.

The largest denominative group are Modern Orthodox (39%), Reform or Liberal (24%) and Just Jewish (15%). Fewer than 1 in 10 (7%) identify as post, multi, or with no denomination.

Taking the latest JPR survey (2024) of the Jewish community as a whole as a comparative basis, Reform and Liberal students are more represented in the student community (+6%), as are those identifying as Modern Orthodox (+17%) and Just Jewish (+2%). Those who are Haredi or Strictly Orthodox are less represented in the Jewish student body (-2%) despite having 'by far the youngest age profile' in the wider Jewish community.

Figure 1: 'How do you define yourself religiously?' (N=798)

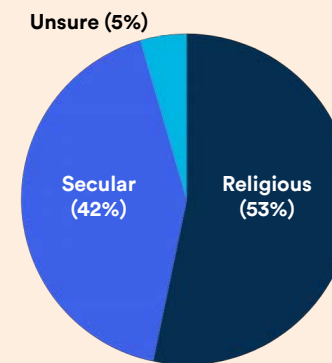
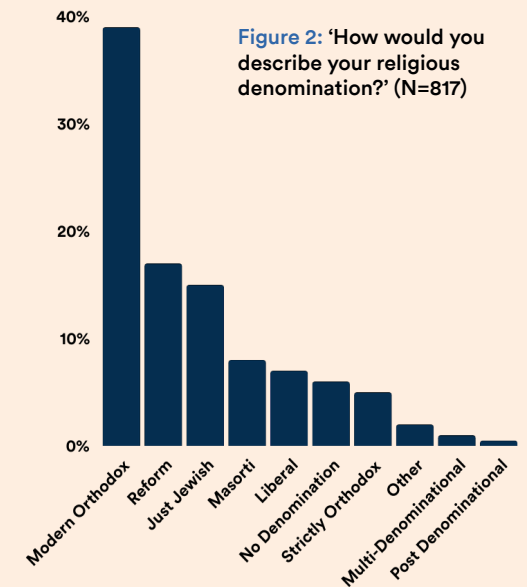


Figure 2: 'How would you describe your religious denomination?' (N=817)



What and Where Are Jewish Students Studying? Why There?

Jewish students are incredibly diverse in their studies. Roughly four out of five respondents (82%) were studying for undergraduate degrees.

Over 100 different courses and subjects are studied by Jewish students today. Figure 3 shows a snapshot of the most popular courses studied by Jewish students including the top four: Medicine (8%), Psychology (7%), Politics (6%), and History (6%).

Jewish students can be found at nearly all of the UK and Ireland's 130 universities. However, nearly half of all Jewish students (44%) study in one of six cities: Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Leeds, Nottingham, and Oxford

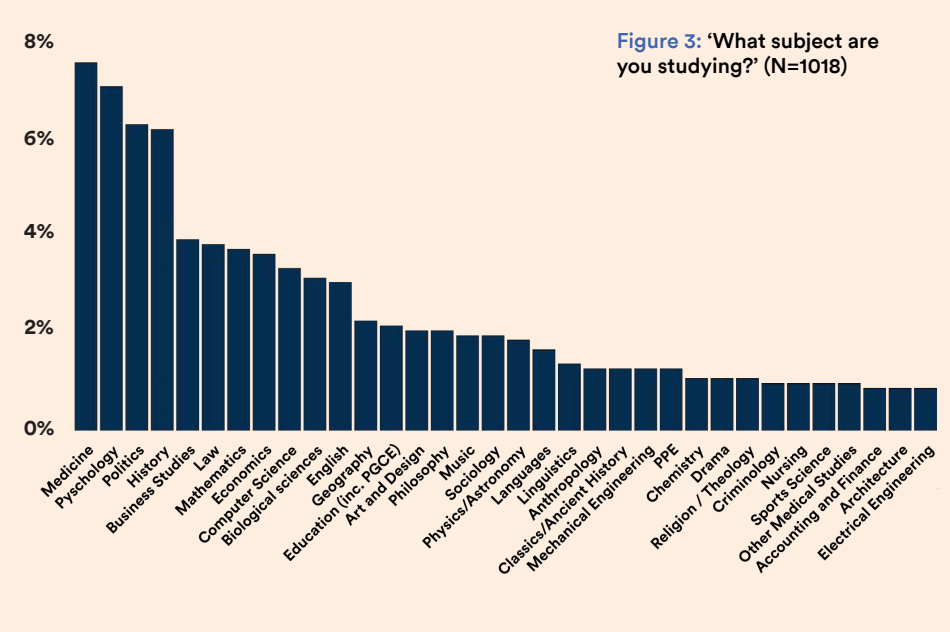


Figure 3: 'What subject are you studying?' (N=1018)

Figure 4 shows that there are many factors that affect the decision-making process for a student deciding where to go for university. The reputation of a university is a huge consideration for Jewish students, 91% of whom deemed it important in their choices.

Prospective students do consider the reputations of institutions not only academically but also with regards to the wellbeing of Jewish life on that campus. In the last ten years the numbers of Jewish students at campuses like Manchester have

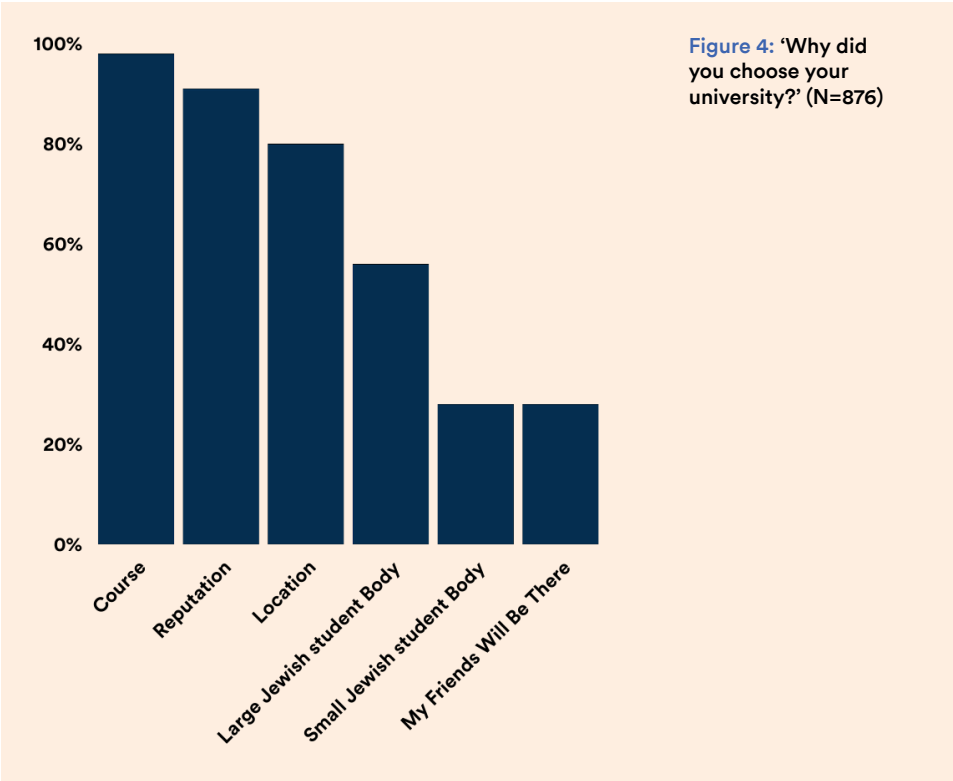


Figure 4: 'Why did you choose your university?' (N=876)

decreased (-37% since 2011) while others like Bristol have grown in the size of their Jewish populations (+200%).

Just over half (56%) say that it was important that the university they chose had a large Jewish student body.

While reputation is a well-considered factor that has influenced the sizes of Jewish populations on campuses across the country, whether a campus has more or fewer Jewish students is still a secondary decision in choosing a university.

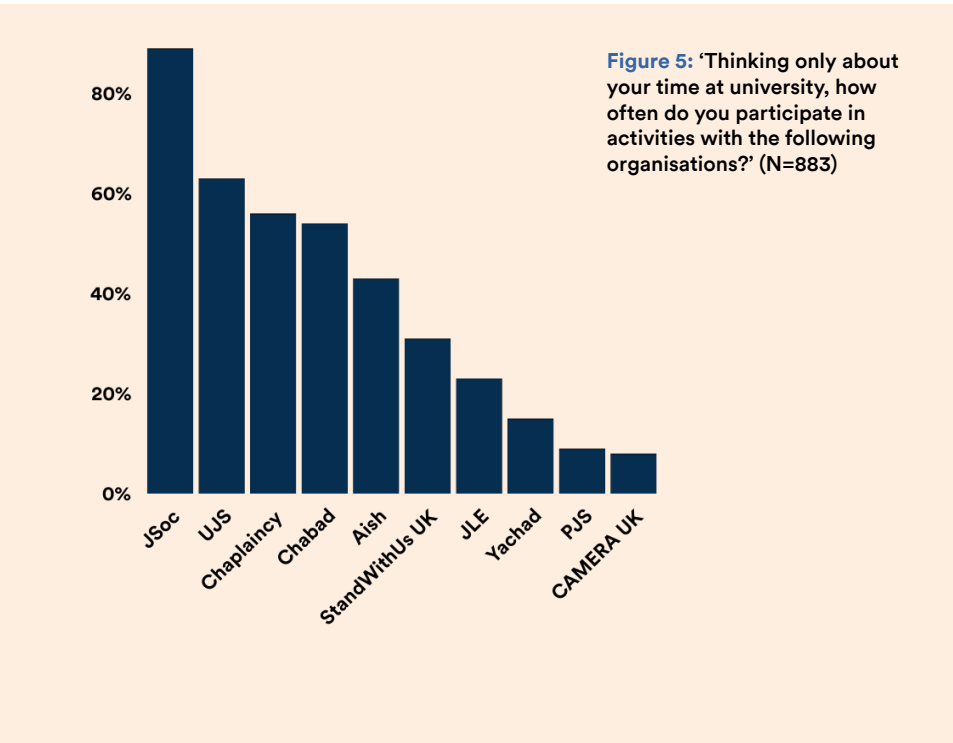
Additionally, Jewish students are less inclined to choose where they study based on friends. Almost three quarters (72%) of students say that where their friends were going was not important to their decision.

Campus Life and Beyond

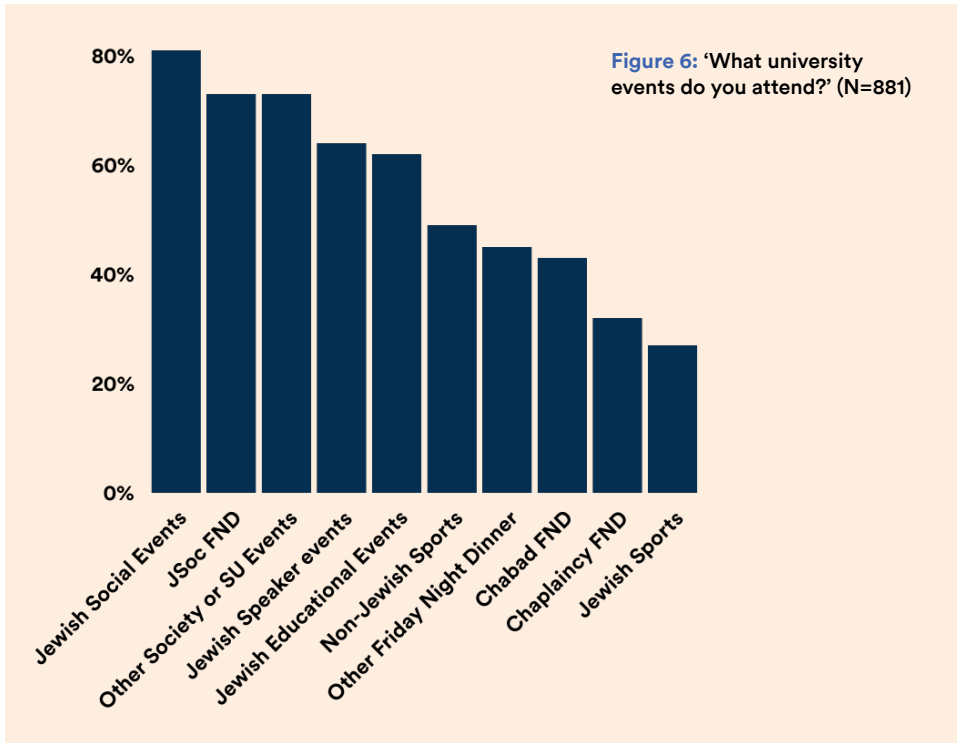
What's Jewish life like on Campus?

There are a wide range of organisations providing Jewish students with events, resources, and support to live meaningful Jewish lives on campus. Some groups like Jewish Societies (JSocs) – and their umbrella, UJS – work to represent and facilitate Jewish life on campus, while others such as Yachad or StandWithUs UK provide students with educational activities and other events. Religious organisations are also present on campus such as University Jewish Chaplaincy, Aish, and Chabad, who work to foster students' connection with Judaism.

Figure 5 shows that JSocs are the most engaged with organisation on campus, with nearly 9 in 10 (89%) Jewish students attending. Meanwhile, special interest groups are least engaged with by students irrespective of the interest itself.



The types of organisations that Jewish students engage with is reflected in their attendance of different events too. Figure 6 shows that JSoc organised socials (81%) and Friday Night Dinners (73%) are the two most popular events that students attend on campus. JSocs, supported by UJS, offer students a chance to build their own communities and gain leadership skills organising their own events tailored to their interests. It is a model that is proving to work with high levels of success.



Representation

There are many organisations working to enrich Jewish life on campus. UJS and Jewish Societies (JSocs), however, are set apart from other organisations in their democratic aspects.

UJS is the voice of Jewish students, working as an umbrella body for 9,000 Jewish students and over 75 JSocs across the UK and Ireland. Every JSoc receives support from UJS, and all Jewish students are members, free of charge, with the right to vote in all national democratic processes (presidential election, policy conference, election of National Council etc). Similarly, JSocs exist on nearly every campus with more forming each year to provide communal spaces for a thriving Jewish life on campus, from Friday Night Dinners to hosting speaker tours, Chag celebrations, parties, and lunch and learns. Jewish students on each campus elect

their JSoc committees and those elected representatives provide fresh and dynamic leadership for the ever-changing Jewish student body.

UJS also holds presidential elections each year with an average of 1,000 Jewish students voting.

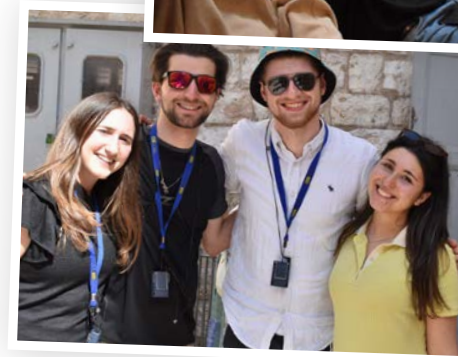
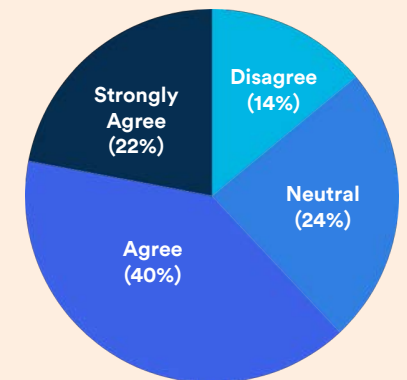


Figure 7: 'Do you feel represented by your Jewish Society?' (N=879)



As the organisation that is elected by students and for students to make representations to authorities, it is important that JSocs at a campus level, and UJS nationally, ensure that Jewish students feel represented through their actions and decisions. The findings of this study show that this is overwhelmingly the case.

While there is work to be done by UJS to strengthen the recognition and relation between UJS and JSocs on campus, [Figure 7](#) shows that more than 4 in 5 students are either neutral or agree that they feel represented by their JSoc (85%).

Worries

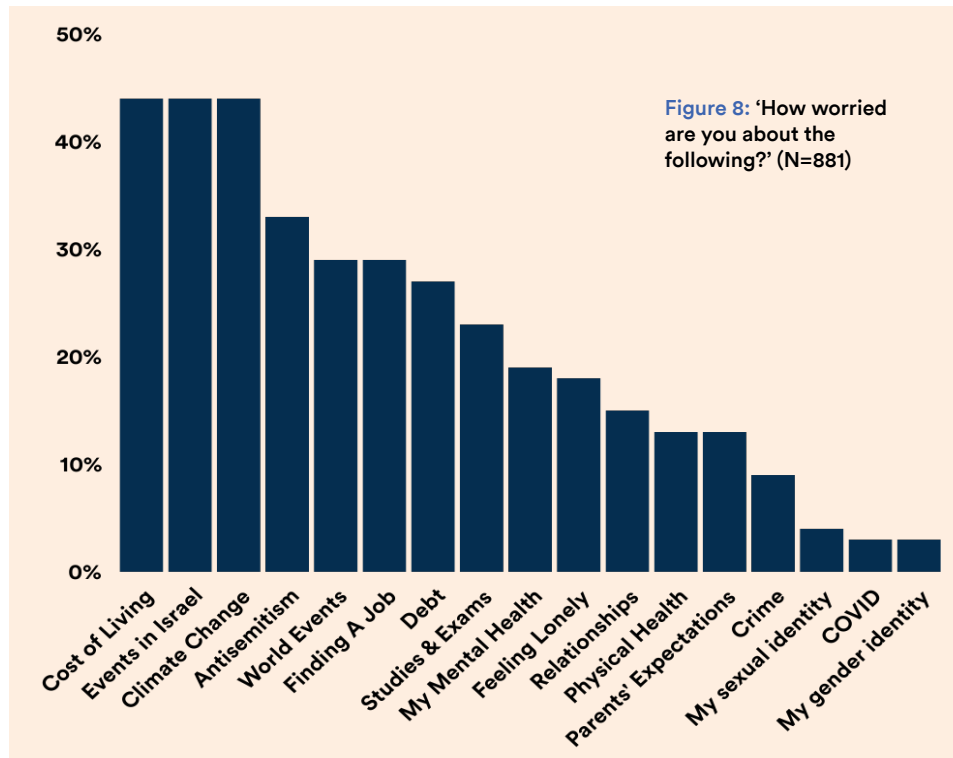
Figure 8 shows us what Jewish students are either 'very' or 'extremely' worried about.

Jewish students' biggest worries are the cost of living (44%) and events in Israel (44%). Additionally, a third of students (33%) are worried about antisemitism.

Climate change is also a key worry for today's students with 20% of Jewish students worried about the issue.

University work and exams which topped the list of worries in 2011 is now fifth on the list of worries for students, just 22.5% were 'extremely' or 'very' worried.

The least concerning issues to Jewish students were living up to their parents' expectations (13% combined were 'extremely' or 'very' worried), gender and sexual identity (6%), and another wave of COVID (3%).

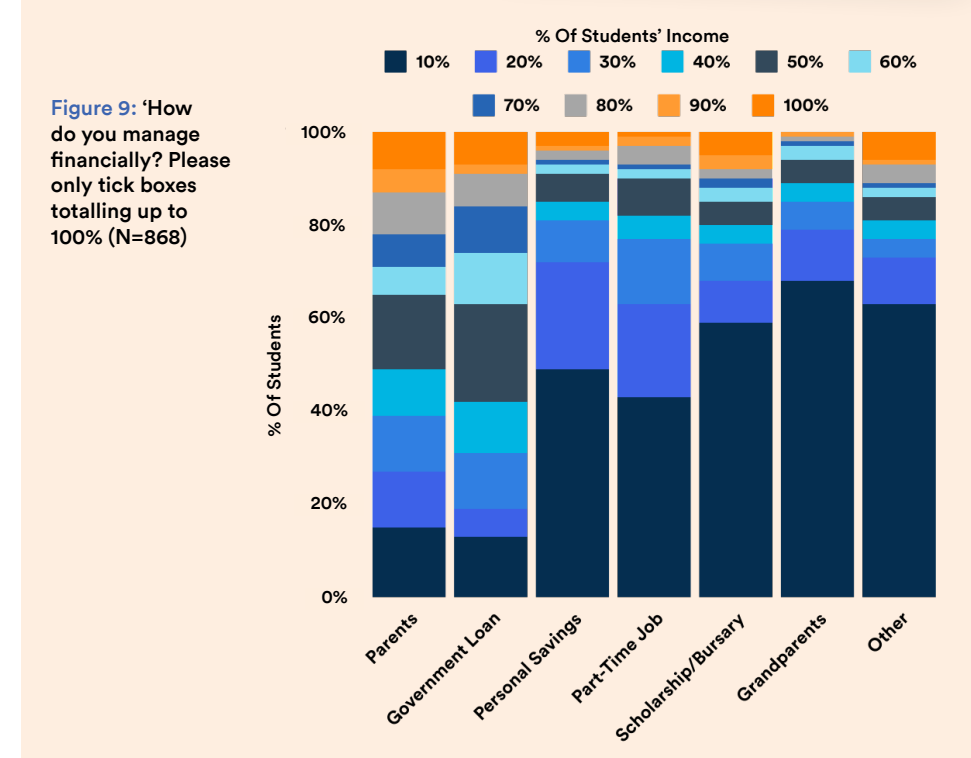


Finances

The cost of living was the top of students' worries.

Figure 9 shows that 85% of Jewish students rely on their parents for financial support at university, with two-thirds (67%) relying on government maintenance loans. 30% of students receive either a scholarship or bursary, however most recipients (59%) say this only counts towards 10% of their finances.

57% of Jewish students have a part-time job, however, this mostly contributes towards 10 or 20% of their incomes.



Friends and Living

One third (33%) of Jewish students say more than half of their closest friends are Jewish, with a further 22% saying about half of their friends are Jewish. Just 4% say that none of their friends are Jewish.

Despite high levels of Jewish friendships, only just over one third of students have Jewish housemates. Looking at **Figure 11**, 15% of Jewish students live with all-Jewish friends, while 21% have a mixed Jewish/non-Jewish household. Meanwhile, 38% live with only non-Jewish friends at university.

There is a correlation between attending a Jewish school prior to university and the number of Jewish friends a current student has. There is also a trend showing that those who spent more time in Jewish education, and closer to university have more Jewish friends.

62% of those who attended Jewish primary schools said more than half or all of their friends were Jewish, rising to 66% of those who attended a Jewish secondary school, and further still to 69% of those who attended both.

On the six campuses with the largest Jewish populations, unsurprisingly, students are more likely to have more Jewish friends (61% said at least half of their friends are Jewish), and students are more likely to live with all (26%) or some (29%) Jewish housemates.

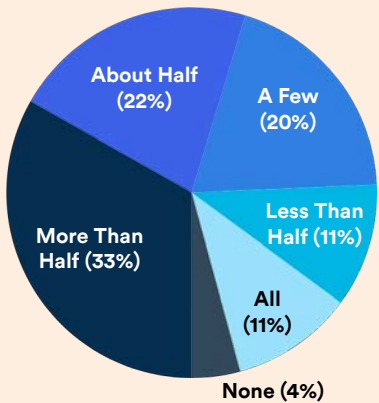


Figure 10: 'How many of your closest friends are Jewish?' (N=876)

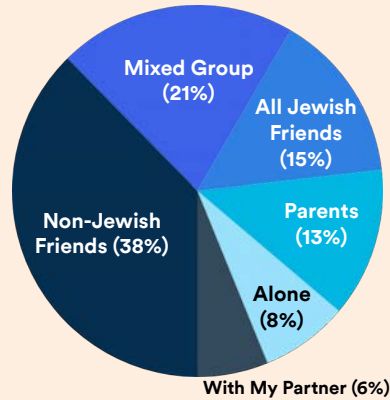


Figure 11: 'Whilst at university, who do you live with?' (N=877)

Communication

Our modes of communication have become more and more digital in the last decade, not least exacerbated by the effects of the pandemic and remote learning or working. Jewish students are no exception to this.

Figure 12 shows that more than half of Jewish students (54%) always use WhatsApp as a preferred method of communication, followed by texting (38%), Snapchat (32%) and Instagram (23%). Interestingly older social network sites like Facebook and Twitter are much less frequently used by today's students. More than three quarters (78.5%) of students never use Twitter, and nearly half (45%) never use Facebook.

While 96% of students continue to make traditional phone calls this is with varying degrees of frequency, with a majority (66%) only making phone calls 'occasionally' or 'sometimes'. Comparatively, mobile phone calls were the primary (27%) and secondary (20%) mode of communication for nearly half of all Jewish students in 2011.

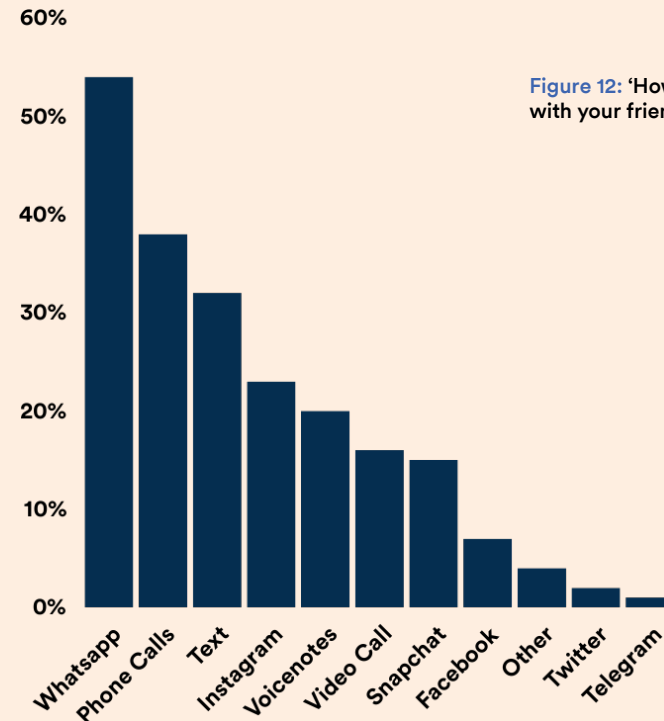


Figure 12: 'How do you communicate with your friends?' / 'Always' (N=876)

Jewish Experiences

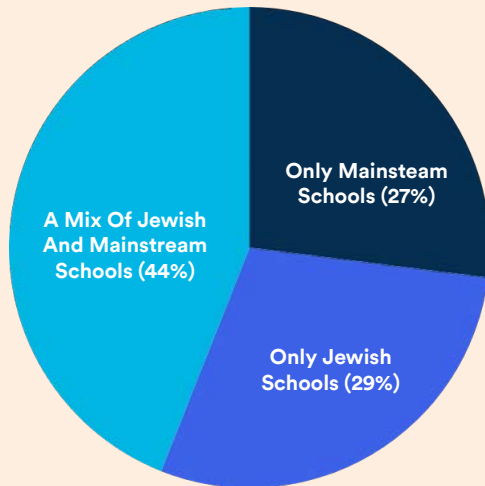
Pre-University Life: Schooling

Before university, 73% of students had attended either a Jewish nursery, primary school, or secondary school.

27% of Jewish students had not attended any formal Jewish education, and only attended mainstream schools. This is a decrease of 37% compared to 2011 when 43% of then-students had not attended any Jewish schooling.

Strictly or Modern Orthodox students constituted 71% of students who had only attended Jewish institutions and 18% of students who attended only mainstream schools.

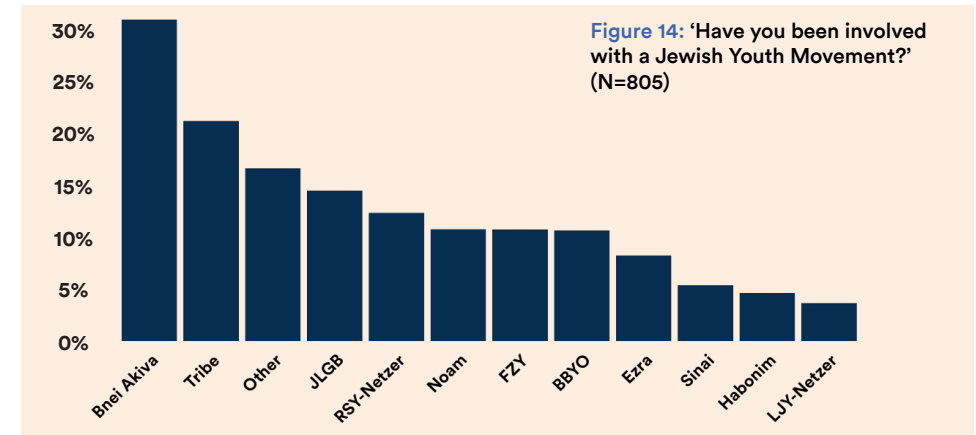
Figure 13: 'What type of school did you attend?' (N=817)



Perceptions of Jewish Identity

Most current students were involved in a Youth Movement before university to varying extents. 72% of Jewish students said they had attended a Youth Movement either occasionally, regularly, or as a Madrich prior to university.

Figure 14: 'Have you been involved with a Jewish Youth Movement?' (N=805)

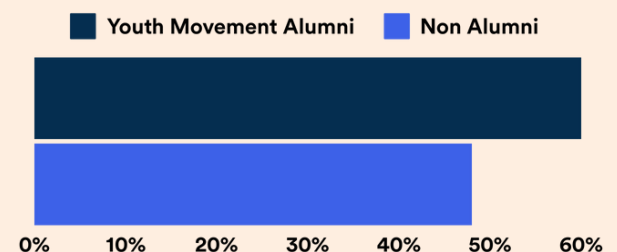


Youth Movements and Summer Camps have often been the organising point for Israel experiences such as 'Tour' at the age of 16 as well as promoting other medium and long term trips to Israel. These opportunities make an individual more likely to have favourable feelings towards Israel. This is reflected in Figure 15 by the finding that participation in a Youth Movement resulted in Jewish students being 12% more likely

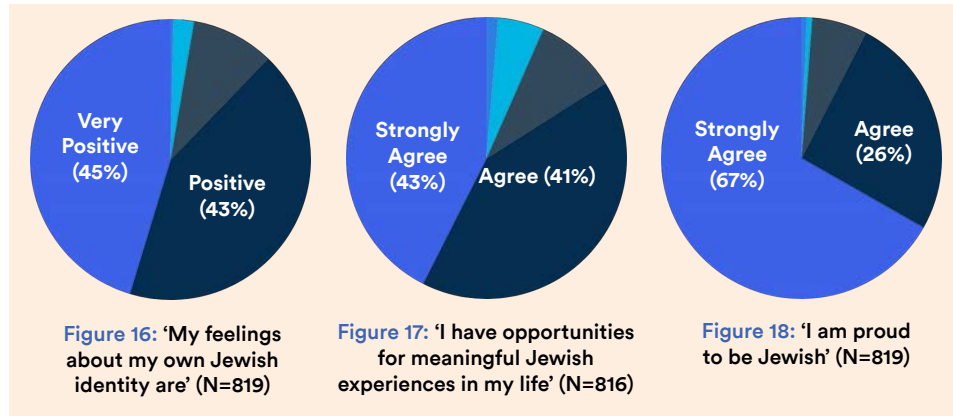
to have 'very positive' or 'positive' feelings about Israel.

88% of all Jewish students have 'Positive' or 'Very Positive' feelings about their Jewish identity, with 84% saying they 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree' that they have opportunities for meaningful Jewish experiences as a Jewish student. Additionally, 92% 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree' that they are proud to be Jewish.

Figure 15: Students with 'very positive' or 'positive' feelings about Israel based on Youth Movement Attendance (N=772)



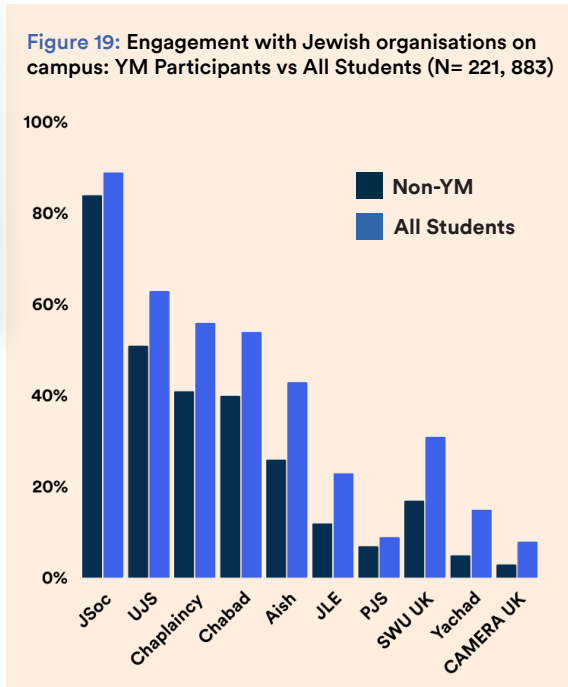
Youth Movements strengthen the Jewish identity of young adults. Across the board those who have participated in a Jewish Youth Movement have more positive feelings about being Jewish, are prouder of that identity and have more opportunities for meaningful Jewish experiences than their peers who did not attend a Movement.



The starkest gap between those who have and have not participated in a Jewish Youth Movement is in meaningful Jewish experiences whereas those who did not attend a Youth Movement were nearly 20% less likely to have meaningful Jewish experiences.



This is reflected when looking at the activities of Jewish students on campus. As seen in Figure 19, those who have not participated in a Jewish Youth Movement are 5% less likely than the average Jewish student population to engage with their JSoc, 13% less likely with UJS, 16% less likely with Chaplaincy, and 15% less likely to engage with Chabad.



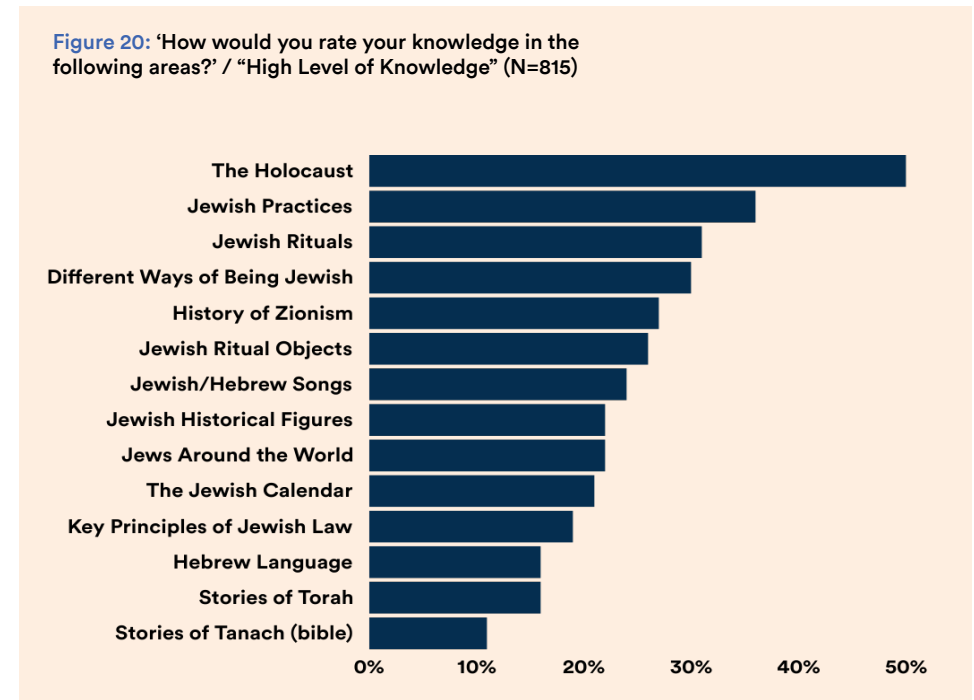
Knowledge of Judaism

This section is based on “self assessment” questions where participants were asked to place themselves on a scale of “comfort” with a variety of topics.

Jewish students have a strong foundation of Jewish knowledge. Over 90% of students said they had at least some knowledge of almost every area of Jewish life that the survey asked about.

To get a deeper perspective on Jewish students’ knowledge, this section will focus on the numbers of students who said they had a ‘high level of knowledge’ in each area. Figure 20 shows that the most well-known areas of Jewish life, culture, and history were the Holocaust (50%), Jewish practices like prayers (36%) or Jewish rituals such as *Kiddush* or *Birkat HaMazon* (31%).

Areas of Jewish life that students were less familiar with (‘no knowledge’) included Hebrew language (15%), stories of Tanach (8%), and traditional songs (7%).



The Impacts of Formal and Informal Jewish Education

The impact of formal Jewish education prior to university is clear. Students who had some form of Jewish education had more confidence in their knowledge in all areas of Jewish life compared to those who had not attended any Jewish schooling.

The largest gaps in 'high levels of knowledge' are seen in areas such as Jewish rituals such as Kiddush (31 percentage points), Jewish practices like prayers (29 pts) and knowledge of Jewish ritual objects (22 pts).

Informal Jewish education has also had an impact on the knowledge of students. Across every area of Jewish knowledge, Jewish students who had attended Youth Movements had higher levels of knowledge than those who had not. The biggest gaps in knowledge follow the same pattern as those in formal education, with those involved in a Youth Movement having higher levels of knowledge in Jewish rituals (+74 pts) and Jewish practices (+66 pts).

Figure 21: High Levels of Jewish Knowledge, Jewish vs Mainstream School Alumni (N= 595, 222)

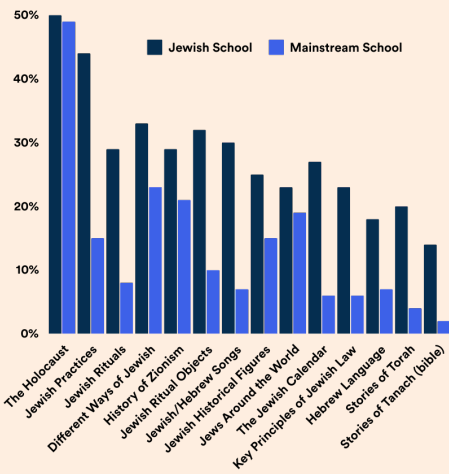
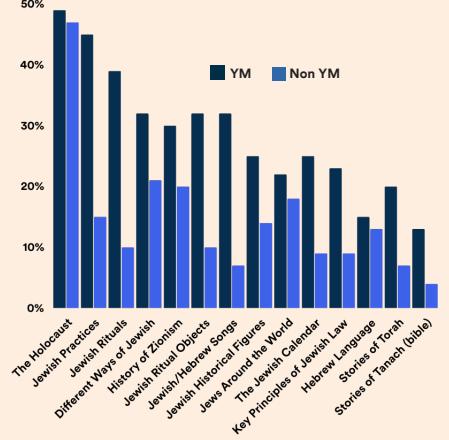


Figure 22: High Levels of Jewish Knowledge, Students Who Had Attended A Youth Movement vs Those Who Had Not (N=584, 221)



The smallest gaps in knowledge appear when asking about high levels of knowledge of the Holocaust (4 pts), Hebrew language (13 pts), and Jews around the world (18 pts).

The impact of Jewish education, both formal and informal, is clearly seen in Figures 21 and 22. Students who attended Jewish schools or Youth Movements have the opportunity to be equipped with greater knowledge about what it means to be Jewish, and therefore a part of the Jewish people. Of course, while not attending either a Jewish school or a Youth Movement is not a disqualifier to having a high level of knowledge with regards to Judaism, there is certainly greater opportunity to learn and greater levels of knowledge seen as a result.

Is Being Jewish Synonymous with Being Religious?

'Being Jewish' is a broad concept that manifests itself in many forms, not least to Jewish students. Today 56% of Jewish students consider 'having a religious identity' as part of what 'being Jewish' is.

In Figure 23, when selecting all that apply, the overwhelming response was that 'Being Jewish' meant feeling a part of the Jewish people (91%) and sharing Jewish festivals with family (81%), correlating with the high observance levels of annual holidays which often take place out of term time.

However, what this means in practice varies widely. When asked about their levels of observance, we can see there are clear divisions between what may be considered day-to-day religious practice and annual practices.

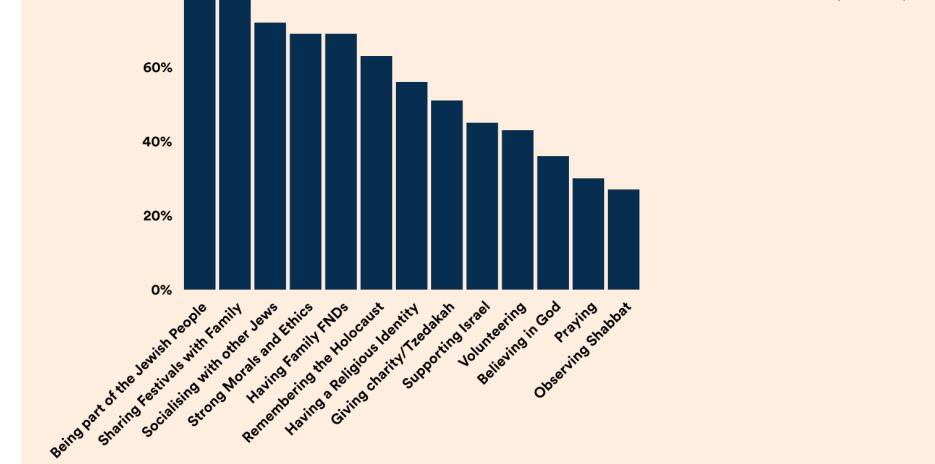
For example, Figure 24 shows that 97% of

students attend a Pesach seder each year, 95% light Chanukah candles, and 86% fast on Yom Kippur.

Meanwhile looking at more weekly practices, while 97% say they attend Friday Night Dinners (FNDs), just 43% do so every week. It is also interesting to note the difference in regular attendance of the types of FNDs attended by students. 24% regularly attend a JSoc FND, Chabad 14%, Other FNDs 6%, and Chaplaincy 5%.

These results from Figure 24 correspond with the overall themes of what Jewish students consider 'Being Jewish' to be.

Figure 23: 'Being Jewish for me is about' (N=810)



At the same time, ‘observing Shabbat’ (27%), ‘praying’ (30%) and ‘believing in God’ (36%) were the least selected options in terms of what ‘Being Jewish’ is for today’s students. These responses fall when asked about religious action. Only 15% say they always attend synagogue services each week, and 18% always consider themselves ‘Shomer Shabbat’.

It is also worth looking at the differences in considerations for those who defined themselves as Religious or Secular students. When considering what is ‘Being Jewish’ both secular and religious students match their top two factors (‘feeling part of the Jewish People’, and ‘Sharing Jewish festivals with my family’) as well as their least important factor (‘observing Shabbat’). On the whole, secular students were more likely to select other actions like ‘socialising with other Jews’, ‘remembering the Holocaust’, or ‘volunteering’. Religious students favoured actions like ‘having a religious identity’, ‘believing in God’, and ‘strong moral and ethical behaviour’ more highly in their selections.

Jewish students’ religiosity is a rich tapestry and cross-communalism is a valuable asset to ensuring that students have the opportunity to choose how they want to lead their own meaningful Jewish life on campus.

Figure 24: ‘How often do you do the following?’ (N=820)

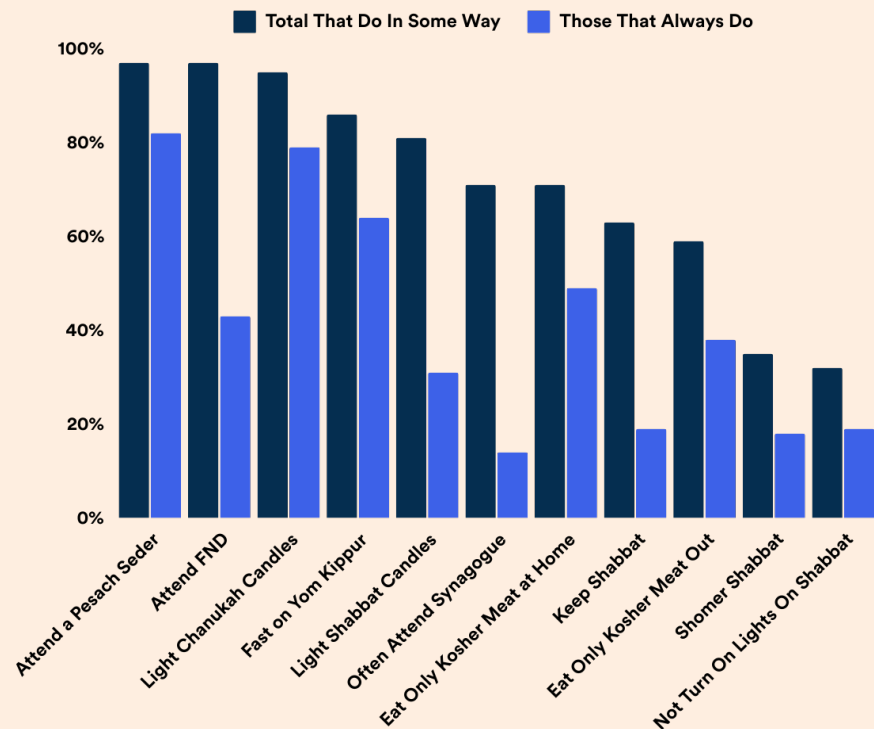
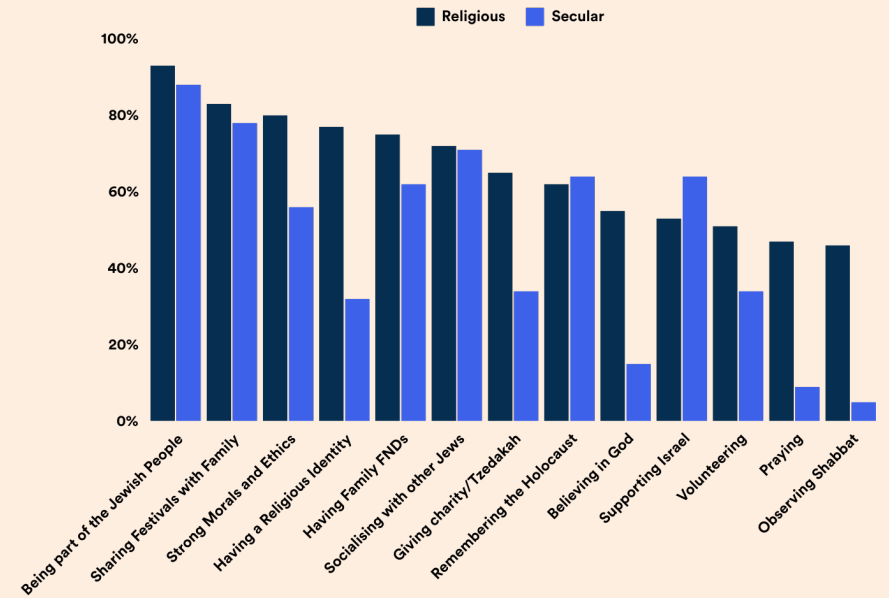


Figure 25: ‘Being Jewish for me is about’ according to Religious and Secular students (N=425, 337)



Donating to Charity

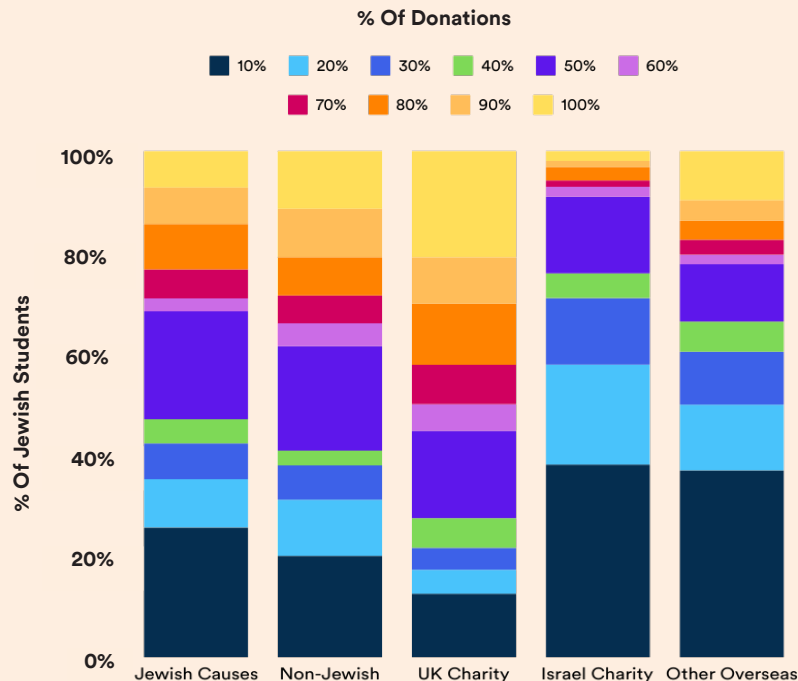
Jewish students are overwhelmingly generous both with their time in volunteering, but also through donating to charity, of whom 93% do.

Asked about whether they donate to charity, 60% said they occasionally do, 27% said they regularly do, and 5% said they donate when they are asked. Just 7% of Jewish students do not donate to charity at all. Looking at the breakdowns of donations made by Jewish students, there is a near-even split between giving to Jewish (49%) versus non-Jewish (51%) charities.

Most of the donated money is also given to UK-based charities (45%), while Israel-based charities received 29% and other overseas charities totalled 26% of donations given by students.

Figure 26 shows the breakdown of how much students give to different charities as a percentage of their donations. We can see that when donating, most students donate less than 50% of their total donations to Jewish or Israeli causes.

Figure 26: 'What percentage of money that you give to charity goes to the following' (N=707)



Activism and Leadership

There is a solid foundation of activism and volunteerism amongst the Jewish student body. More than two thirds take part in forms of activism.

Almost all students work to promote causes they believe in (91%), with 1 in 5 (21%) frequently doing so. This figure falls, however, when asked about campus activism for Jewish (52%) or non-Jewish (49%) causes, and further in terms of regularity (6% and 4% respectively).

There is also enthusiasm from Jewish students looking to gain leadership skills. While 41% had already participated in a leadership programme outside of a youth movement, 52% expressed interest in participating in a Jewish community

leadership programme.

There is a clear demand and gap in communal provisions for a high-level, professional leadership development programme targeting Jewish students with opportunities to gain the skills needed to become the future leaders of the Jewish - and wider British - community. Given the level of national engagement found in this Activism and Leadership section, it is clear that this programme should be delivered via UJS and backed by the whole community.

Figure 27: 'How often do you participate in the following?' (N=746)

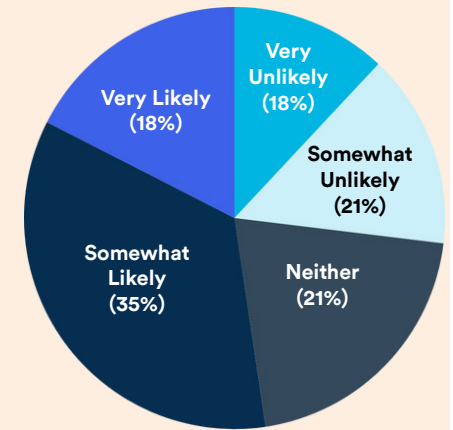
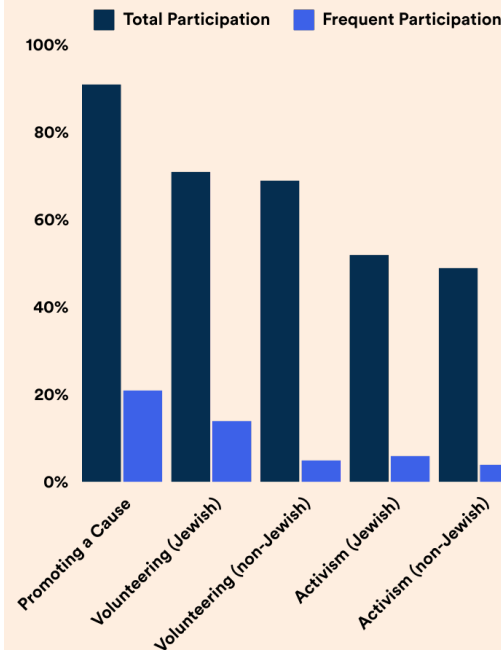


Figure 28: 'If you had the opportunity, how likely would you be to participate in a Jewish community leadership programme?' (N=743)

Volunteering

Jewish students work on and off campus to support causes close to their heart. 70% of students say that they volunteer for charities.

Furthermore, 70% say that they volunteer in some capacity for any charity, and 58% say they would be likely to spend an amount of time volunteering in the Jewish community, as seen in [Figure 29](#).

There is disparity in the types of voluntary work that Jewish students consider doing. When asked about what type of voluntary work would be preferable, 49% opted for occasional roles while 25% said they would consider regular operational support.

When searching for volunteering opportunities, 58% would use their immediate networks and connections, and 54% would make direct approaches to organisations. Central points for advertising opportunities such as the JLC, Jewish press, etc., were acknowledged by a combined 19% of students, less than one out of five.

Jewish students have an appetite for volunteering. They also are open to volunteering in a range of sectors from informal and formal education (71% combined), to arts and culture (32%) to youth work (31%) and more. Providing more opportunities would be invaluable for them, and to the charities in need of support.

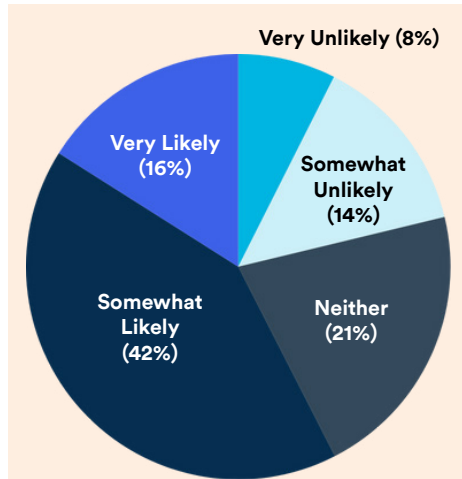


Figure 29: 'If you had the opportunity, how likely would you be to consider spending an amount of time volunteering in the Jewish community?' (N=711)

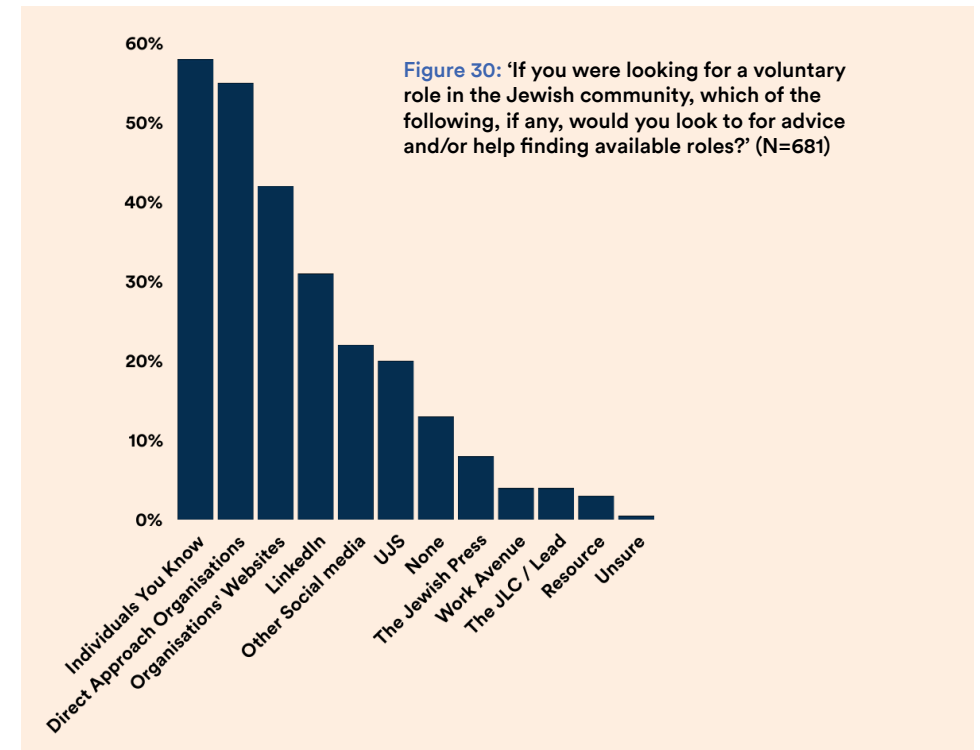


Figure 30: 'If you were looking for a voluntary role in the Jewish community, which of the following, if any, would you look to for advice and/or help finding available roles?' (N=681)

Antisemitism On Campus

A majority (85%) of responses to the National Jewish Student Survey were received prior to the 7th October massacre in Israel, and subsequent dramatic increase in campus antisemitism across the UK and Ireland, and the results in this section reflect that fact.

However, it is imperative to note that since October 2023, UJS has supported Jewish students through more than three years' worth of antisemitic incidents, with CST noting a 203% rise in the number of incidents on campus compared to 2022/23. However, many of these experiences are not included as part of this analysis.

Campus antisemitism did not begin with the 7th October 2023. This study found around 2 in 5 Jewish students have directly experienced (41%) or witnessed (43%) antisemitism whilst at university. This is similar to results recorded in 2011 which found that 42% experienced antisemitism on campus.

Taking a closer look at those reporting to have directly experienced antisemitism on campus, there is little correlation between

how open a student is about their Jewish identity, and the experience of antisemitism. Our survey found that of those more likely to be open about Jewish identity ("sometimes" or "always"), 42% had directly experienced antisemitism, while 42% of those saying they are less open about their identity ("rarely" or "never") had experienced antisemitism directly.

There is also no considerable difference for students whose feelings about Israel were "positive" or "extremely positive", of whom 41% reported directly experiencing antisemitism. Meanwhile 45% of those with "negative" or "extremely negative" feelings on Israel reported experiencing antisemitism.

Regarding Zionism, 41% of Jewish students who identify as Zionists have experienced antisemitism, compared to 35% of Jewish students who do not identify as Zionist.

Figure 31: 'Have you directly experienced antisemitism whilst at university?' (N=800)

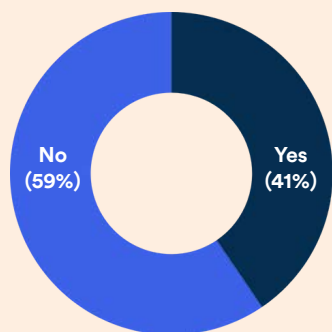


Figure 32: 'Have you witnessed antisemitism directed at someone else whilst at university?' (N=802)

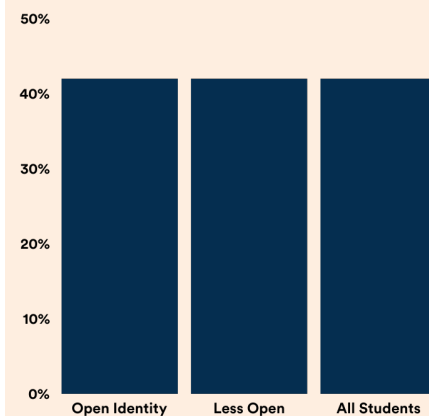
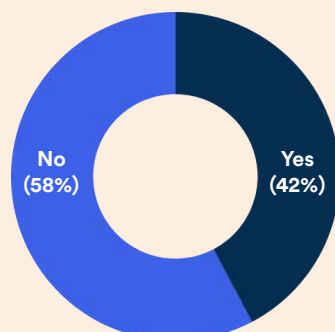


Figure 33: 'Have you directly experienced antisemitism whilst at university?' / 'How open are you about your Jewish identity on campus?' (N=800, 801)

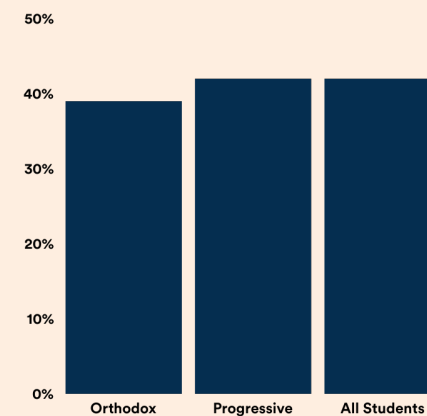


Figure 34: 'Have you directly experienced antisemitism whilst at university?' / 'How would you describe your religious denomination?' (N=800, 817)

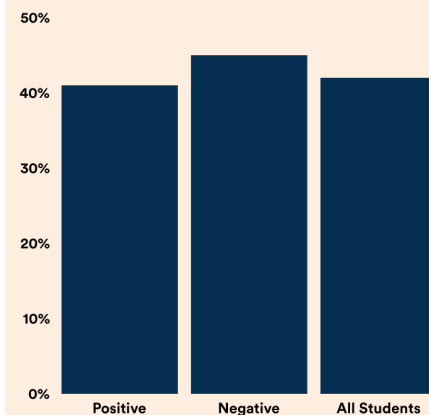


Figure 35: 'Have you directly experienced antisemitism whilst at university?' / 'What are your feelings about Israel?' (N=800, 772)

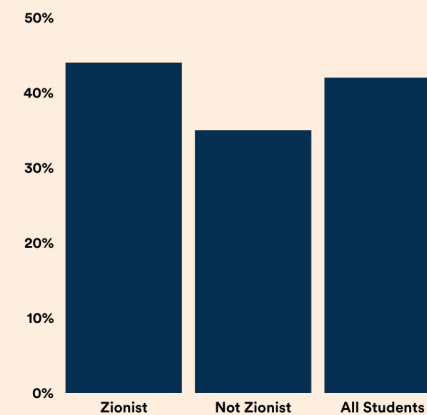


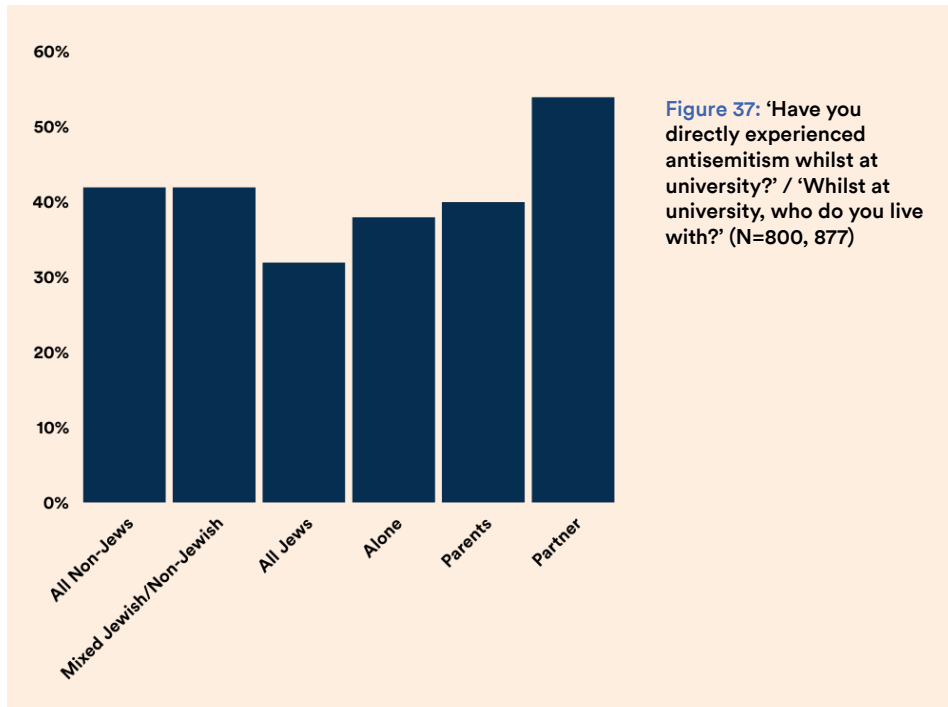
Figure 36: 'Have you directly experienced antisemitism whilst at university?' / 'Would you consider yourself a Zionist?' (N=800, 771)

“Casual” Antisemitism

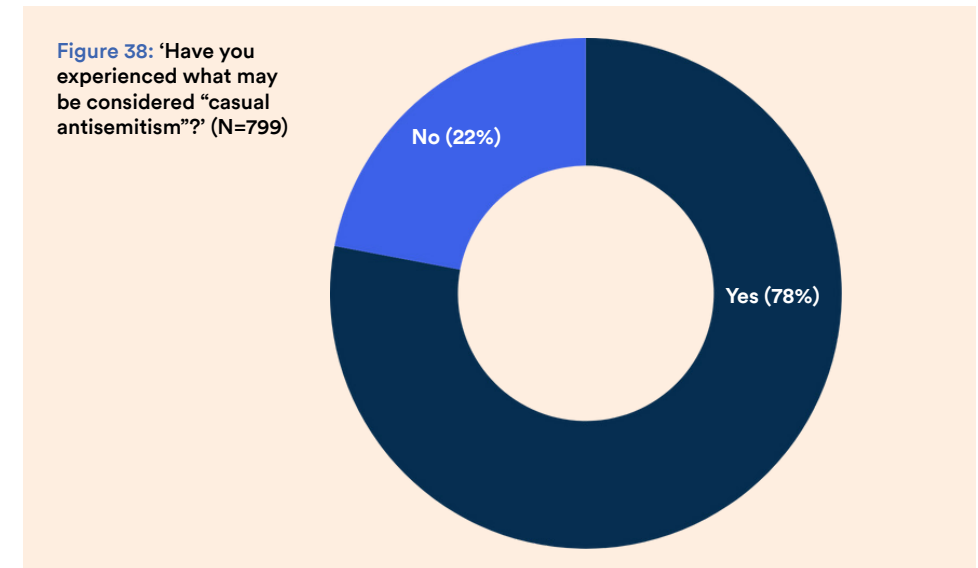
There is a suggestion of a “safety in numbers” effect when it comes to experiencing antisemitism at university. Looking at just the most popular university campuses responding to this survey (Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Leeds, Nottingham, and Oxford), the proportion of students saying they had experienced direct antisemitism was 32%.

There may be a correlation between this statistic and the fact that 48% students on those campuses live with all or some Jewish housemates – 15% more likely than Jewish students on other campuses. Just 32% of students who live with ‘all Jewish housemates’, while 42% of those who lived with ‘only non-Jews’, or in a ‘mixed household’, directly experienced antisemitism.

This survey has found that regardless of one’s stance on Israel, or how open a student is about their Jewish identity, there is minimal difference as to whether they will experience antisemitism or not.



What is particularly interesting to note around antisemitism is that the response rate of those experiencing antisemitism increased to more than 3 in 4 (78%) when students were asked if they had experienced what they considered to be “casual” antisemitism – defined as “things that are portrayed as social “banter”, or being asked without malice your opinion on Israel simply because you are Jewish”.



“Casual” antisemitism too has little regard for a student’s characteristics. From the following breakdown opposite, we can see that neither denomination, nor affiliation to Israel had significant impacts on the experience of “casual” antisemitism. The biggest deviation is found when looking at campuses with larger Jewish populations, again suggesting a ‘safety in numbers’ effect.

Experiences of “casual” antisemitism by group:

- 77% of students open about their Jewish identity
- 71% of Orthodox students
- 83% of Reform or Liberal students
- 76% of those with ‘positive’ feelings about Israel
- 84% of those with ‘negative’ feelings about Israel
- 79% of students who say they are Zionist
- 62% of students on campuses with the largest Jewish populations
- 81% are still worried to some degree about antisemitism on campus.

Relationship with Israel

Jewish students' relationships with Israel are complex and deeply personal. 61% of students surveyed said they had 'positive' or 'extremely positive' feelings about Israel and only 29% of students say that Israel does not play a large role in their Jewish identity.

Figure 39: 'Have you experienced what may be considered "casual antisemitism"?' / Identifying Characteristics (N=799)

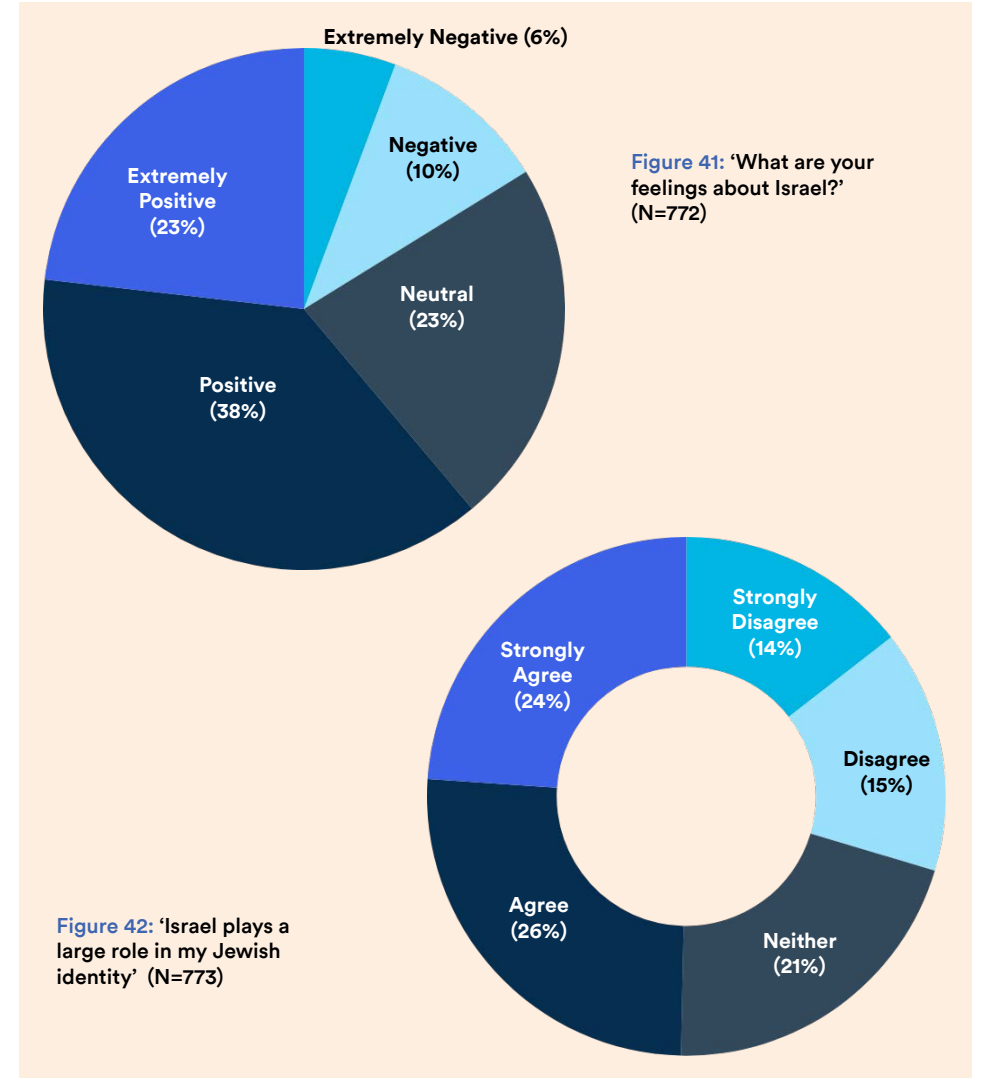
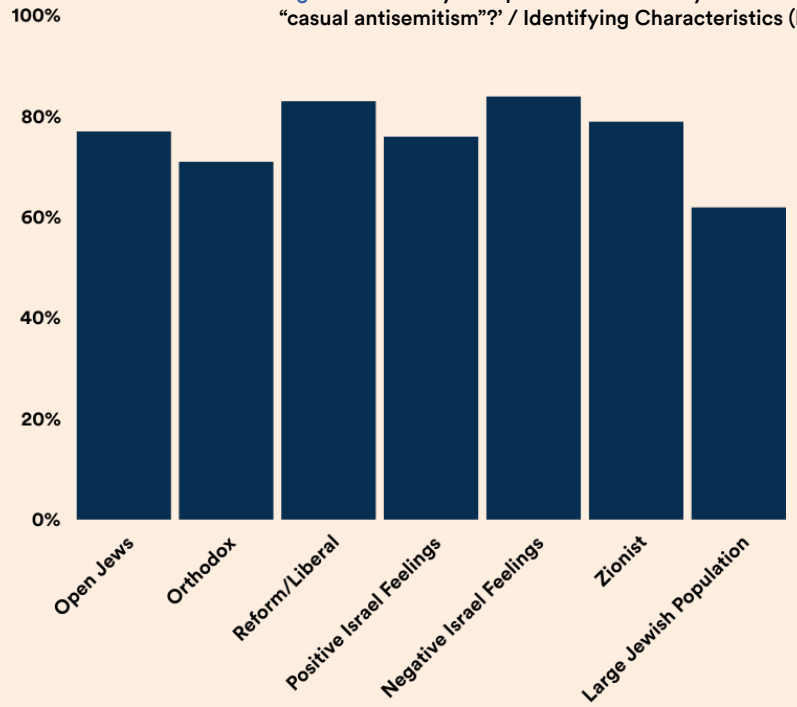
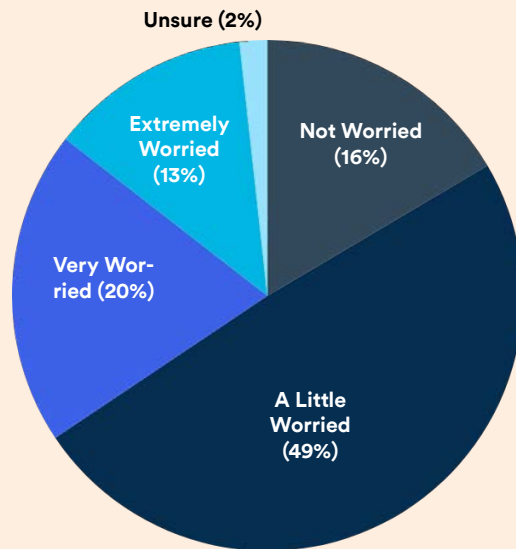


Figure 40: 'How worried are you about antisemitism on campus?' (N=800)



'Current affairs' in Israel have had noticeable impacts on the views of Jewish students. Similar to this study's findings on Jewish students' experiences of antisemitism, it is important to note that 85% of results were recorded between 16th June 2023 and 7th October 2023, and therefore the impact of 'current affairs' is cannot be correlated just to the impact of the 7th October atrocities.

More than half (53%) said that current affairs in Israel had negatively impacted their feelings.

As has been shown in many previous studies of the Jewish community (including JPR's 2014 *Strengthening Jewish Identity: What Works*), this study has found a strong correlation between exposure to Israel and an individual's subsequent feelings. The



longer the experience someone has had in Israel, the more positive their feelings are. Figure 44's data shows that the following groups had "positive" or "extremely positive" feelings about Israel.

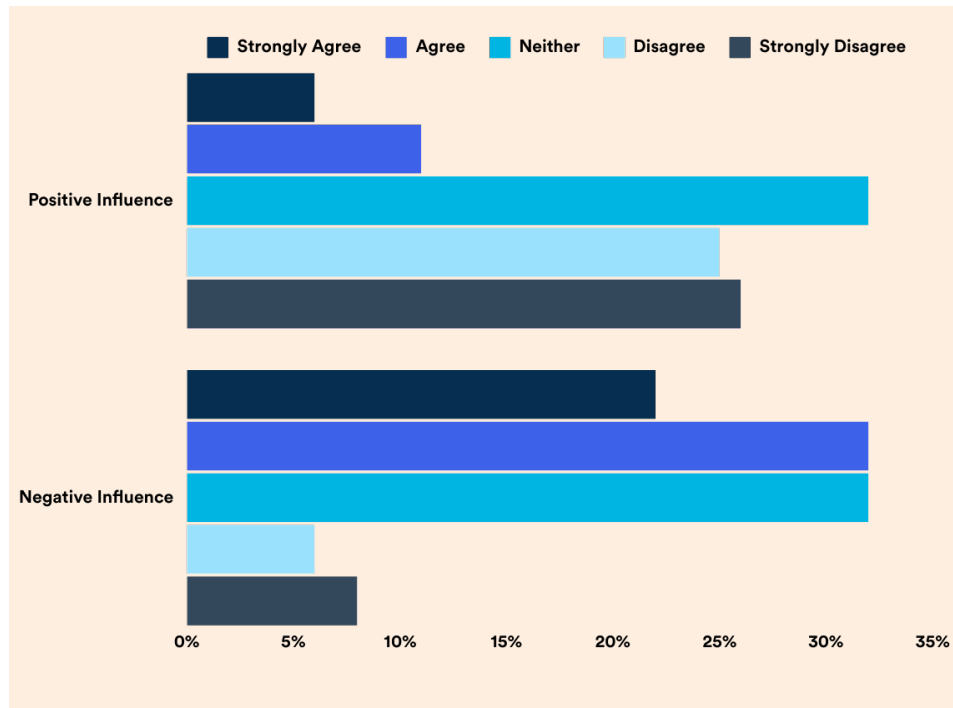


Figure 43: 'Current affairs within Israel have positively/negatively impacted my feelings about Israel' (N=773)

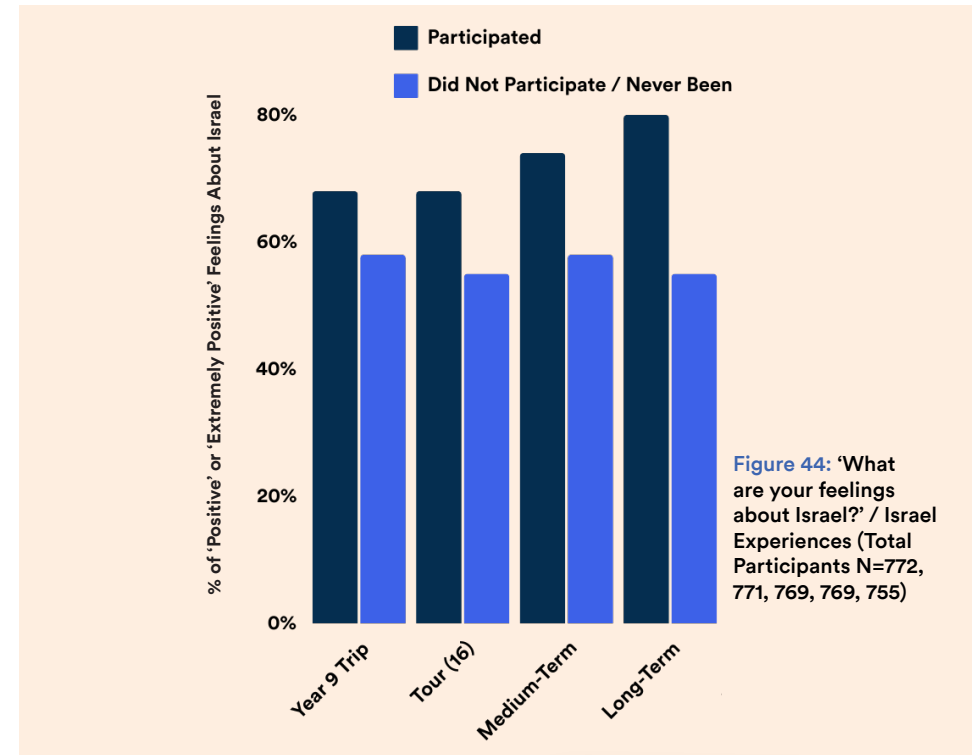


Figure 44: 'What are your feelings about Israel?' / Israel Experiences (Total Participants N=772, 771, 769, 769, 755)

- 68% of students who had been on a Year 9 Israel Trip had 'positive' or 'extremely positive' feeling about Israel.
- Just 59% of those who hadn't held the same feelings.
- 68% students who had been on Israel Tour at age 16 had 'positive' or 'extremely positive' feeling about Israel.
- Just 55% of those who hadn't held the same feelings.
- 74% students who had been on a medium-term programme had 'positive' or 'extremely positive' feeling about Israel.
- Just 58% of those who hadn't held the same feelings.
- 80% students who had been on a long-term programme had 'positive' or 'extremely positive' feeling about Israel.
- Just 55% of those who hadn't held the same feelings.



Zionism

On the question of Zionism, most Jewish students would identify as Zionists. Figure 45 shows that 14% would not.

Compared to the wider British Jewish population as recorded in the 2024 *Jews In The UK Today* survey by JPR, more Jewish students are Zionist (+4%) or unsure (+9%), however there are markedly fewer non-Zionist members in the Jewish student community (-12%).

79% of Zionist-identifying students have positive or extremely positive feelings about Israel. Just under half (46%) of Zionist students said that current affairs in Israel had negatively impacted their feelings.

A student's view on Zionism also changes when looking at their denomination. While most Jewish students in all religious denominations identify as Zionists, the



proportionality varies much more. Modern Orthodox students most likely identify as Zionist (88%), while the least likely to identify as Zionist were those with no denomination (49%).

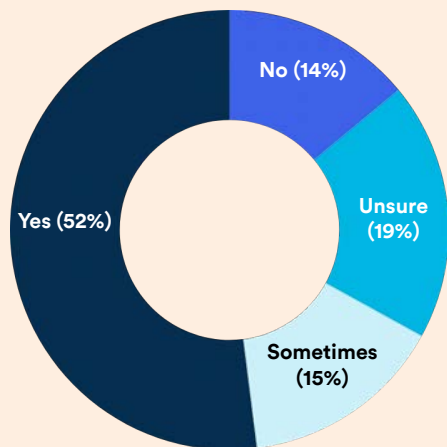


Figure 45: 'Would you consider yourself a Zionist?' (N=771)

Just under one fifth of students are unsure if they would consider themselves a Zionist. This group represents an important opportunity for further engagement both from UJS and the wider Jewish community with regards to our Israel engagement and education.

14% of all Jewish students would not consider themselves to be a Zionist. Broken down by denomination, the strongest in answering 'no' were those who identify as Strictly Orthodox (35%) and those with no denomination (30%). However, it is important to note that these groups also only constitute 12% of all Jewish students.

There is also a clear correlation between informal Jewish education, and students' Zionist identity. When looking at students who did not attend a Youth Movement, the proportion of those who would not identify with Zionism rises to 26%. The lack of informal Jewish and Israel education can in part explain this in addition to the finding that 44% of students who had not been part of a Youth Movement have also never been to Israel, nearly triple the proportion of Jewish students as a whole.

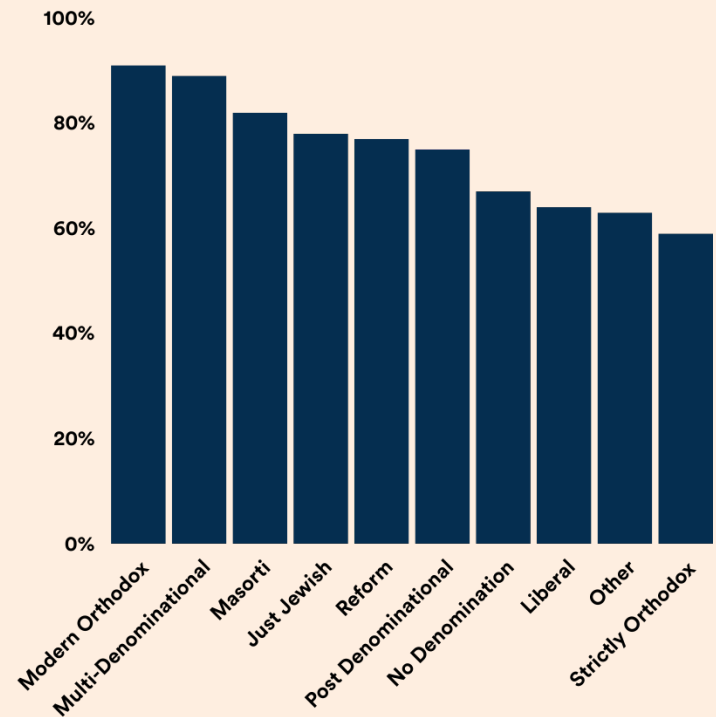


Figure 46: 'Would you consider yourself a Zionist?' / 'How would you describe your religious denomination?' (N=771, 817)

Israel on Campus

On campuses the topic of Israel is common, but infrequent.

The topic of Israel has come up during 89% of Jewish students' university experiences, however only 21% say the topic arose 'often' or 'frequently', roughly half as frequent compared to 2011.

65% of students say the topic has come up within their Students' Union (SU) specifically, with 42% saying that Israel comes up 'sometimes' or 'frequently'. Only 6% say that Israel is always treated fairly in their SU, while 24% believe that Israel is not treated fairly at all.

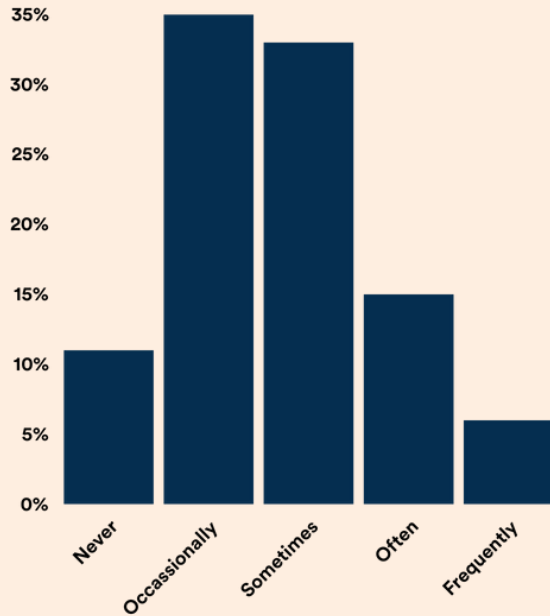


Figure 47: 'How often does the topic of Israel come up during your university experience?' (N=768)

Apprehension About Israel

There continues to be apprehension around discussing Israel and Judaism with other – particularly non-Jewish – students on campus.

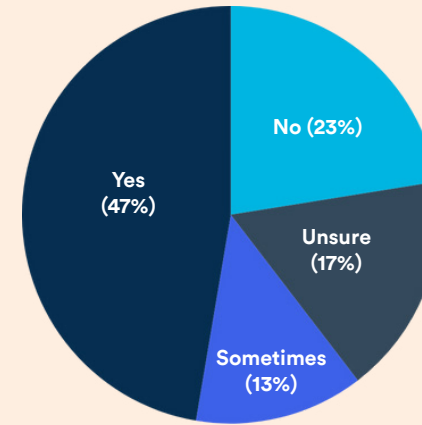


Figure 48: 'Would you refer to yourself as Zionist when talking to other Jewish students?' (N=771)

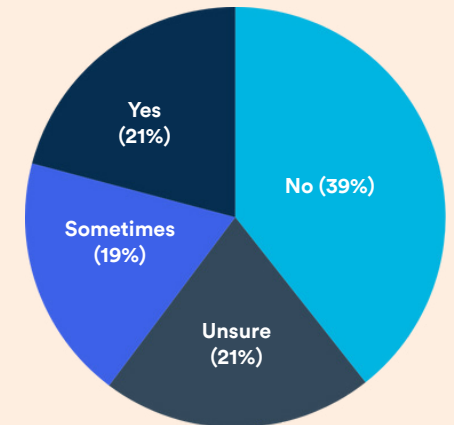


Figure 49: 'Would you refer to yourself as Zionist when talking to students who are not Jewish?' (N=771)

Only 33% of Jewish students feel comfortable discussing Israel with non-Jewish friends, and just 25% of students who refer to themselves as Zionists feel comfortable talking about Israel with non-Jewish students.



80% of Jewish students have expressed some level of worry about anti-Israel sentiment on their campus, with 20% 'very', and 22% 'extremely' worried about anti-Israel sentiment on campus. While the number of those 'very' or 'extremely' worried about anti-Israel sentiment has only risen by 4% to 42% overall since 2011, the increase in those 'very' worried has grown much more steeply with a 12% rise in the last ten years.



The Two State Solution

Jewish students were asked about their support for the two-state solution in Israel/Palestine.

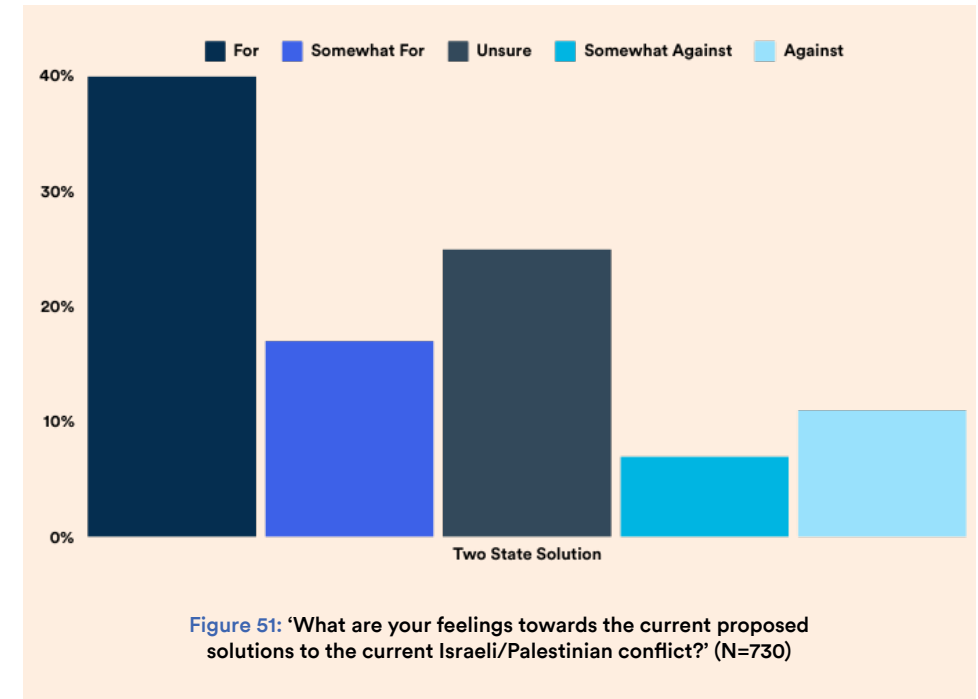


Figure 51: 'What are your feelings towards the current proposed solutions to the current Israeli/Palestinian conflict?' (N=730)

A majority of Jewish students continue to support a two-state solution, with just 18% opposed.

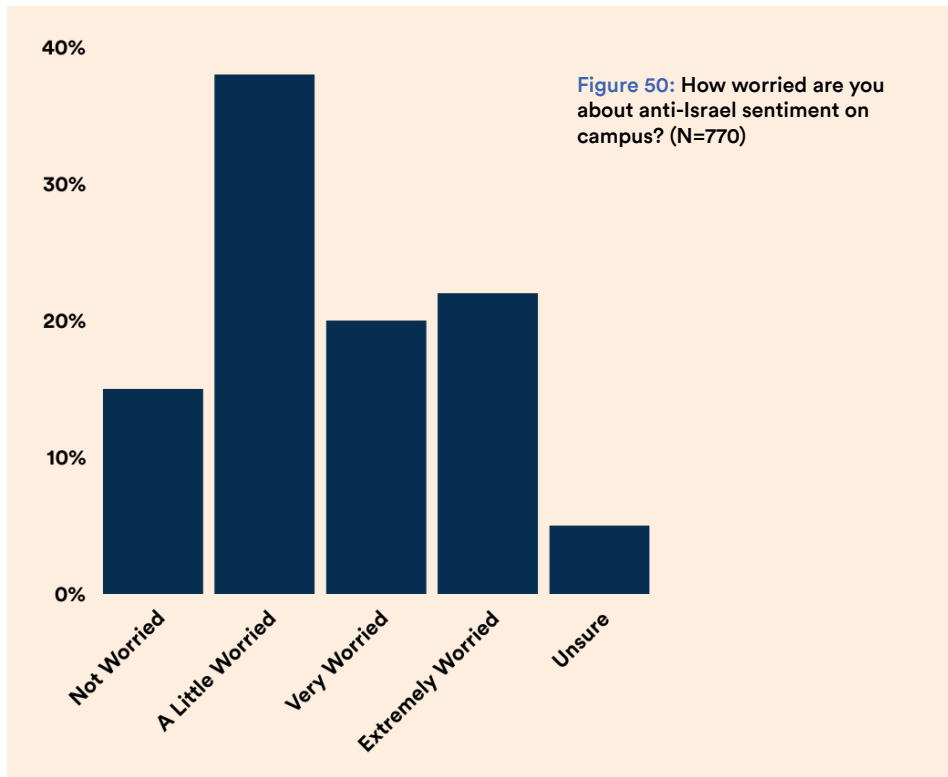
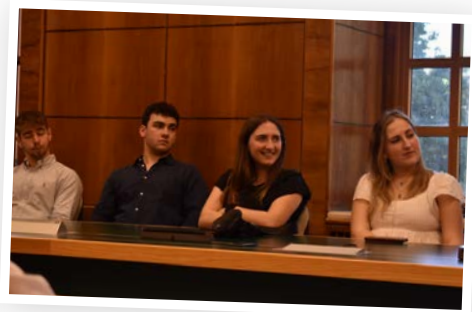
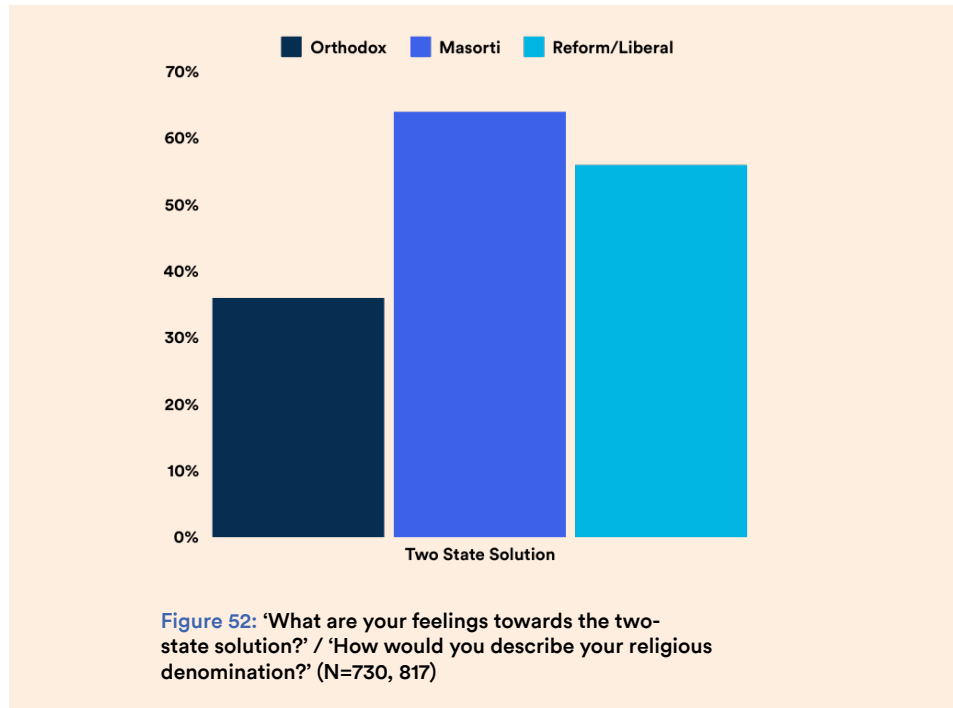


Figure 50: How worried are you about anti-Israel sentiment on campus? (N=770)

Breaking down these headlines we can see that Synagogue Movement affiliation has an impact on a student's support for each solution.

Looking at Orthodox, Masorti, Reform or Liberal students there was higher support for a two-state solution amongst Masorti students (64%) compared to Reform and Liberal (56%) or Orthodox (36%) students.

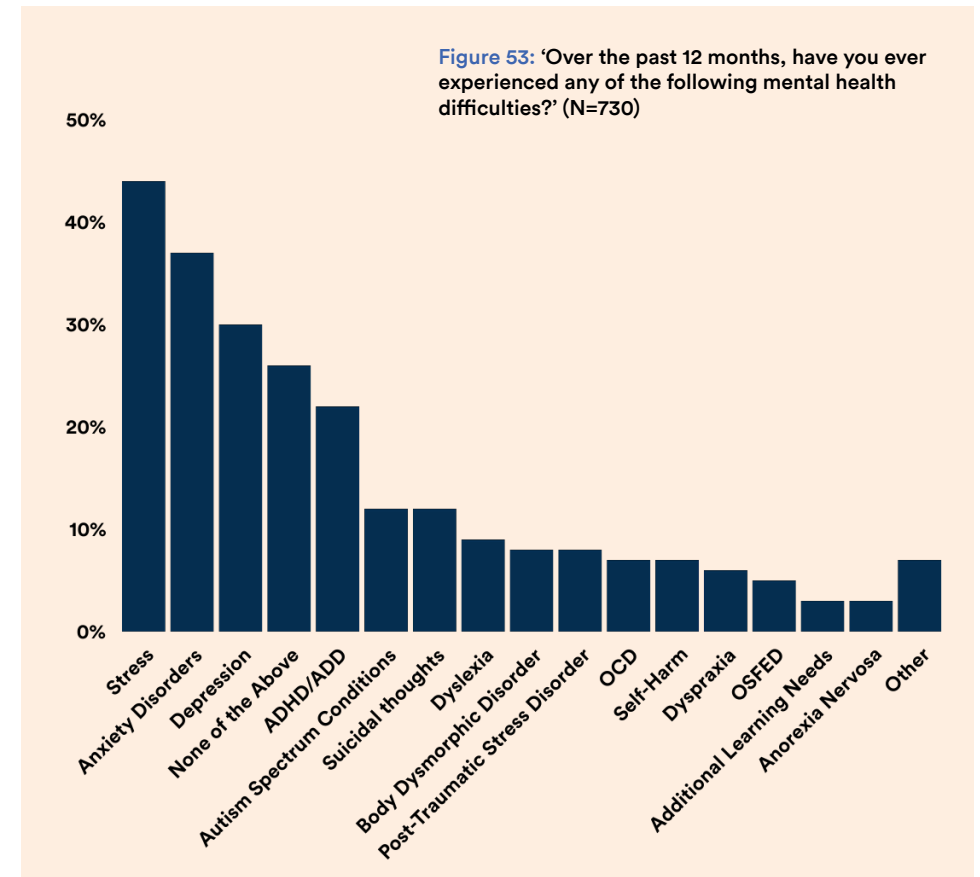


Mental Health and Neurodiversity

This is the first time Jewish students have been asked about their mental health in a survey of this nature.

Mental health has become higher on everyone's agenda in recent years, including in the Jewish community thanks to the valuable work undertaken by many dedicated Jewish and non-Jewish mental health organisations.

In the Jewish student population, 74% reported that they had experienced a mental health difficulty in the past 12 months. A total of 29 different mental health difficulties were reported by Jewish students. The majority of those difficulties reported included 'stress' (44%), 'anxiety disorders' (37%) and 'depression' (30%).



While nearly three quarters had reported a mental health difficulty, however, [Figure 54](#) shows that less than half (48%) had accessed some form of support for their mental health. This may have been in the form of counselling, psychotherapy, or any other related service.

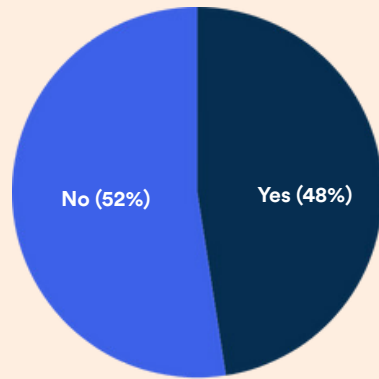


Figure 54: ‘During your time as a student have you ever received counselling or psychotherapy, or psychiatric or psychological treatment or any other related form of support?’ (N=749)

On the question of effectiveness and advice of services, nearly two-thirds (65%) said the support they had accessed was effective. Despite being some of the least accessed services, Qwell/Kooth and other Jewish charities like Noa Girls were ranked best for ease of access, with 75% and 79% respectively saying they were either easy or very easy to access. Meanwhile, NHS services (non-GP) were least favoured, with 61% saying they are either difficult or very difficult to access.

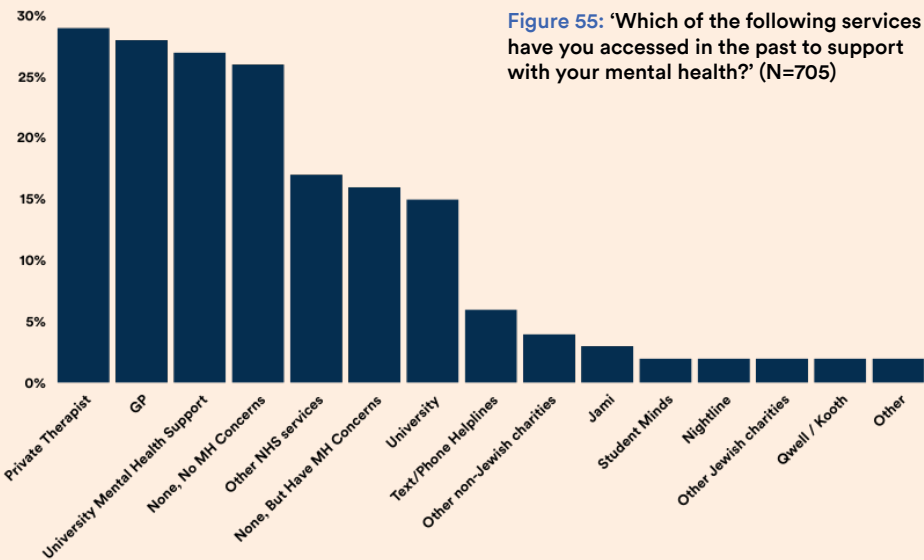


Figure 55: ‘Which of the following services have you accessed in the past to support with your mental health?’ (N=705)

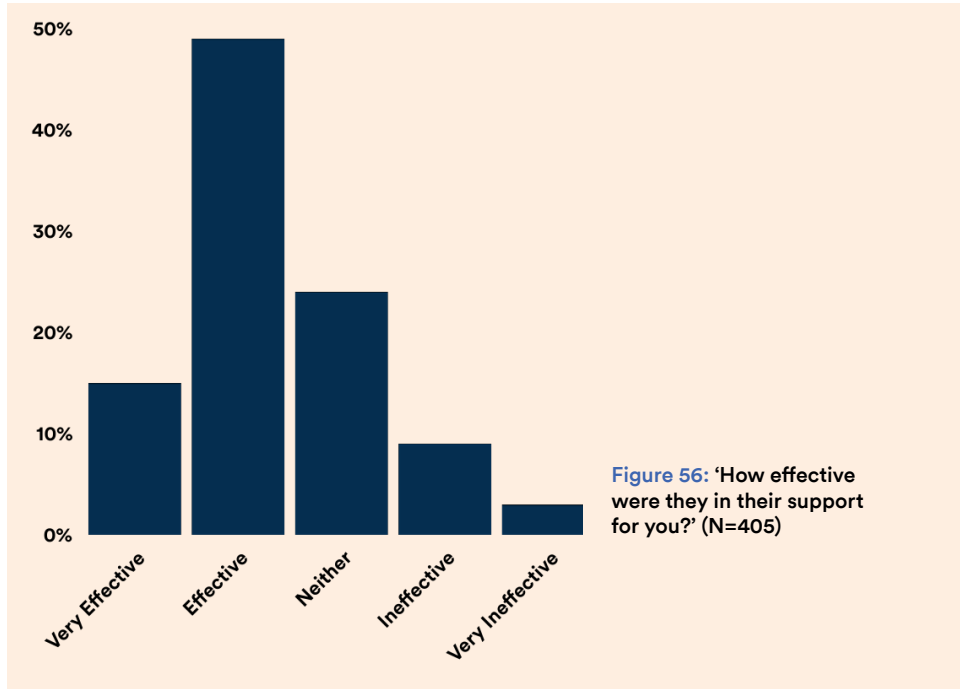


Figure 56: ‘How effective were they in their support for you?’ (N=405)

Jewish students were also asked about how they would respond to potential future difficulties with mental health. Nearly all students said they had some confidence in being able to respond to their own (97%) or a friend’s (96%) mental health concern. More so, in response to the same question around half of all students were ‘quite’ or ‘extremely’ confident in their ability to respond.

The most reported difficulties are ‘stress’, ‘anxiety disorders’, and ‘depression’.

The rate of self-reported mental health difficulties amongst the Jewish student population is higher than the national average for the UK. The Student Minds 2023 Report found that 57% of students in the UK self-reported experiencing a mental health issue, including stress, with one in four unsure where to go to get mental health support at university.

Meanwhile, the Cibyl Student Mental Health Study 2023 found that just 1 in 4 students in the UK had never had any mental health difficulty.

While nearly 3 in 4 Jewish students have experienced a mental health difficulty in the last 12 months is a striking statistic, it is clear that there is also a wider crisis of mental ill health in the British student population.

It is optimistic, however, that Jewish students feel confident in seeking support to address their mental health needs, whether that be in the form of professional assessment with a psychiatrist or therapist or informal UJS welfare check ins with sabbatical officers which are often well attended by Jewish students.

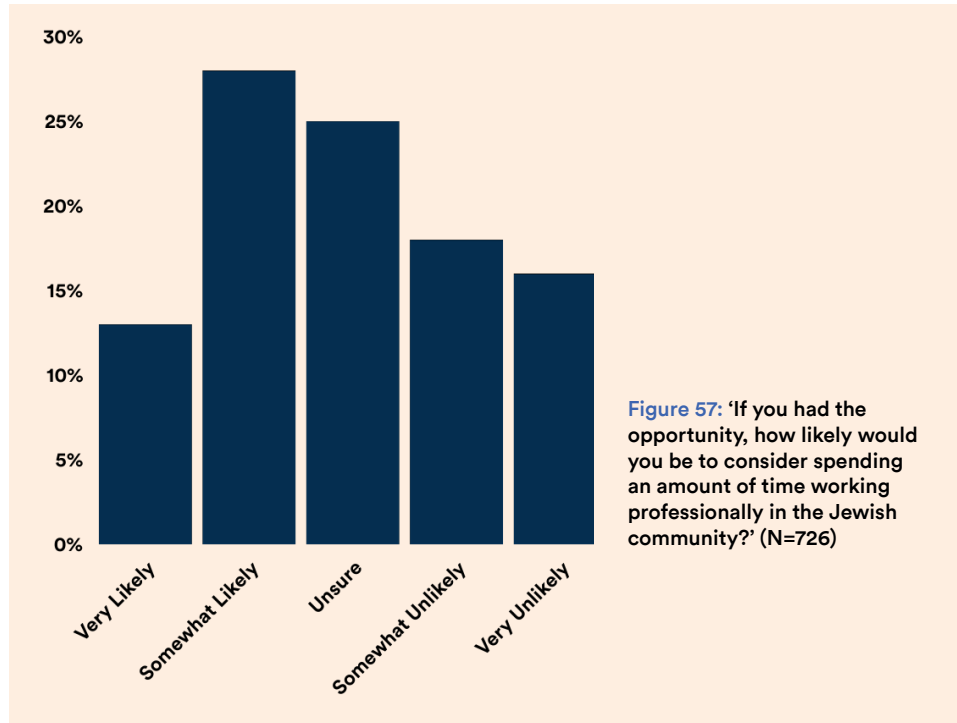
Future Plans for Jewish Students

Jewish students in this survey suggested 35 different industries or sectors of employment that they envisage themselves working in after university.

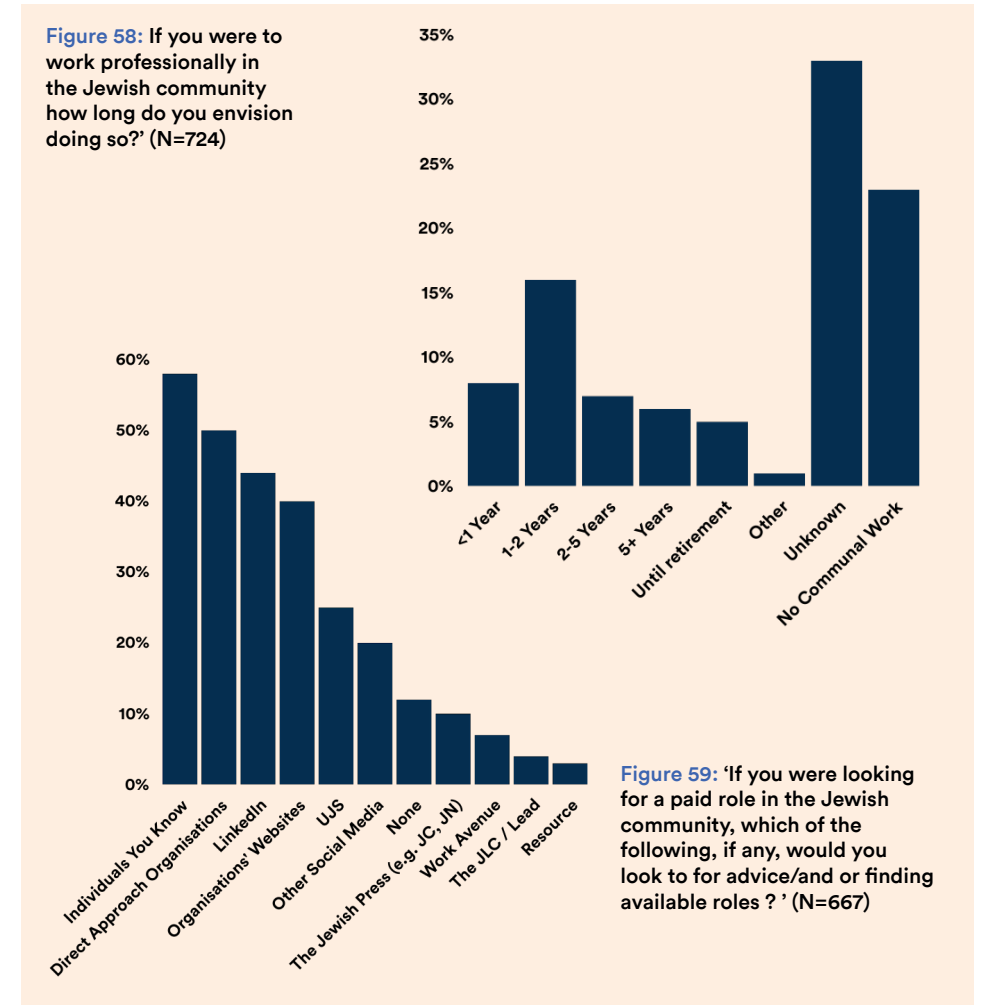
Healthcare was the most popular sector (16%) followed by Law (9%) and Business/Consulting (8%). Healthcare being a dominant answer follows suit with almost the same proportion of students currently studying medicine, or healthcare-related degrees.

Students' ambitions are wide ranging beyond this, including interests in Media and PR, Social Care, Engineering, and IT.

Around 2 in 5 students (42%) would be interested in working professionally in the Jewish community. However, roughly half (49%) of those who are considering such a career path either don't know for how long (33%) or would only envisage themselves working in the community for one to two years (16%). Approximately one third of those interested would want to work in 'youth work' (34%), 'informal' (32%) or 'formal' (29%) education within the Jewish community.



Finding work in the Jewish community, much like finding volunteering opportunities, seems to rely on personal connections (58%) or directly approaching an organisation that a student is aware of (50%). Organisations aiming to support job-seekers like Resource (4%), Work Avenue (7%), or the JLC (4%) are often unused or unknown to the majority of Jewish students looking for communal work.



Conclusions

After working on this survey since the summer of 2023, I was naturally intrigued to see how the results turned out. One of the main takeaways I was pleased to see was the strong leadership clearly visible amongst our Jewish students.

Jewish Societies (JSocs), the student-run arm of Jewish life on campus, is by far the most popular way of engaging Jewish students on campus. I have had the privilege of seeing this first-hand on campus, as Jewish students organised Friday Night Dinners for over 100 people, and fight for the safety of their fellow students with senior university staff. The hard work that these students put in is reflected in the findings around students' high levels of participation in JSoc (89%) and UJS (63%).

What this also shows is the necessity of UJS to continue what it is doing. Without UJS' financial support, JSocs would not be able to run. Without the ongoing work of our sabbatical officers, committees wouldn't have the guidance and support required to make all of these incredible events, and opportunities for a meaningful Jewish life happen. It is then unsurprising that UJS is recognised as the most engaged with organisation by university students. This year has proved that such leadership is present in campuses across the country. Since October 7th, the organisation of vigils up and down the country, and ensuring the welfare of entire JSocs has been a massive feat that many JSoc committees have achieved in the past six months.

Despite this, one sobering fact remains, that many Jewish students aren't interested in working in the Jewish community, and if they do are only interested in working there for 1-2 years. This is a situation that needs to be resolved, we are seeing masses of student leaders emerge from our JSocs, yet for most of them this is where their Jewish leadership experience ends. It is essential for the future of the Jewish community that this changes. UJS has started to solve this issue with the first year of the UJS Leadership Fellowship taking place in 2024, safeguarding the future of our Jewish community by training young student leaders. It is essential that as a community we work together to create spaces our young Jewish people want to work in, and want to preserve, to ensure our strong community remains intact.

Sarah Wilks
UJS Head of Programming and Leadership Development 2023/24

I want to start by extending my deepest appreciation to the team at the Union of Jewish Students (UJS). Their dedication, perseverance, and passion have been the driving force behind this research and publication. From the meticulous planning stages to the in depth data analysis, their tireless work has been nothing short of exemplary.

I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks to all our supporters and partners who have stood by us throughout this journey. From funding assistance to logistical support, your contributions have been invaluable in making this project a reality. I do also want to pay tribute and thanks to the Institute for Jewish Policy Research who, after conducting the original 2011 survey, allowed us to replicate some of the questions in order to produce some comparable data.

All other thanks aside, I must also take a moment to reflect on the genesis of this iteration of the National Jewish Student Survey. It was over a decade ago when the last comprehensive survey of Jewish students was conducted. It was my firm belief that repeating such an initiative was not only necessary but also long overdue. Drawing upon past experiences and recognising the evolving landscape of student life, I championed the revival of this ambitious project. It is with great satisfaction that I witness its fruition today, knowing that it will serve as a cornerstone for future advocacy and action.

The findings of the National Jewish Student Survey are not merely statistics; they are a reflection of the lived experiences, aspirations, and challenges of Jewish students across our campuses. Looking ahead, it is imperative that we do not allow these findings to gather dust on shelves but rather, we must use them as a roadmap for future action. It is incumbent upon us, as leaders and stakeholders, to harness the power of these insights to shape the future work of not only UJS but of any organisation looking to take the future of the Jewish community seriously. By integrating these findings into our strategic planning, policy development, and programming efforts, we can ensure that our actions are informed, targeted, and impactful.

לא עליך המלאכה לגמור, ולא אתה בן חורין לקטל ממנה

It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it

Pirkei Avot 2:16

As we embark on the next chapter, armed with the knowledge gleaned from this survey, we must remain steadfast in our commitment to fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and supportive environment for Jewish students. We must harness the power of collaboration, innovation, and advocacy to address the issues highlighted and create meaningful change.

In closing, I extend my deepest gratitude to everyone who has played a part in this remarkable journey. Together, we have achieved something truly impactful, and I am confident that the impact of the National Jewish Student Survey will be felt for years to come.

Arieh Miller
UJS Chief Executive

Methodology

The National Jewish Student Survey 2024 sought to explore what it means to be a Jewish student in the UK and Ireland today.

To gain an understanding of Jewish students' experiences, the survey was opened in June 2023 to all current and graduating students. The samples in this survey were voluntary and therefore random. A series of advertising strategies were used to encourage Jewish students to engage with the study including social media posts, email blasts, and direct contacts with Jewish Societies and their members via regularly used Whatsapp group chats. Additionally to incentivise entries, students who provided their email address were automatically entered into a prize draw with 30 cash prizes up to £500. UJS also worked with the Jewish News as a media partner to spread awareness of the survey into the wider community with individuals asked to encourage any eligible students to complete the survey.

The questionnaire itself was developed cooperatively between UJS and the communal supporters of the study: the Board of Deputies, CST, the Jewish Leadership Council, Jewish News, Progressive Jewish Students, University Jewish Chaplaincy, and UJIA. Many questions were taken directly from the 2011 study which provided a robust insight into the experiences of Jewish students.

Jewish students completed the questionnaire between June 2023 and November 2023. It was decided in August 2023 that the survey would remain open to incoming Jewish students - or "freshers" - in order to gain an understanding of the whole Jewish student experience from first setting foot onto campus to graduation, and post-graduate education. Following the events of 7th October 2023, advertising for students to complete the survey was halted for a two-week period following which the closing date of 5th November 2023 was announced.

Jewish students were asked for their permission to be contacted for a short interview in relation to this survey. 42% of Jewish students responded positively to this request. These



qualitative assessments are yet to be conducted but remain a possible option to deepen our understanding of what it means to be a Jewish student in 2024, and may be conducted in due course.

With regards to the representation of Jewish students within this study, similar issues and reflections arise as found in 2011. A total of 1,026 students completed the National Jewish Student Survey 2024 to some degree. UJS represent an estimated 9,000 Jewish students on campuses across the UK and Ireland meaning that this study is an extrapolation of the experiences of 11% of all Jewish students, a similar proportional reflection to the 2011 study. In addition, it is also worth noting that results of this study have not been weighted, and therefore the dataset reflects those Jewish students who are the most engaged in Jewish life, their JSoc or with their UJS Sabbatical Officer, on campus.

What this means is that this study may underrepresent those who are least engaged in Jewish life on campus. However, we cannot make a judgement on the extent to which they are underrepresented. What can be done is to draw conclusions that the cross-analysis (for example students' experiences of antisemitism cross-referenced with their identifying characteristics) found in this study are also applicable to those Jewish students, while overarching estimates (such as the proportion of students who donate to charity) are less inclusive of those underrepresented students.

Within the undertaking and analysis of this study, readers must bear these adjustments in mind. Despite this, these results are still of valuable importance to the future of UJS, the Jewish community, and of course Jewish student life across the UK and Ireland. These results will inform how Jewish students are supported, enriched, and led over the coming years.

The National Jewish Student Survey 2024

The Union of Jewish Students

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