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# A year after October 7:
## British Jewish views on Israel, antisemitism and Jewish life

Dr Jonathan Boyd

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## / Introduction

Saturday 7 October 2023 – the Jewish holiday of *Shemini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah* – is a day that will live long in the memory of Jews in Israel and around the world. At 6.30 that morning, a devastating terrorist attack on Israel began, led by the Palestinian organisation, *Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyya* (the Islamic Resistance Movement), more commonly known by its acronym, Hamas. It involved the massacre, mutilation, rape and incineration of some 1,200 Israelis and other foreign nationals, the abduction of a further 251 into Gaza, and massive indiscriminate rocket fire on Israeli towns and villages. It was, by far and away, the worst terrorist atrocity ever committed against the country, and sent shock waves across Israel, the Middle East and the Jewish and wider worlds.

In response, the Israeli government unleashed a war in Gaza that has seen tens of thousands of Palestinians killed, including a significant proportion of Hamas terrorists and operatives as well as many Gazan civilians, and prompted major humanitarian challenges across the territory. Behind the scenes, the initial attack by Hamas and its battles with Israel's military forces have been supported and celebrated by the Iranian regime. Indeed Iran, together with its proxy forces in Lebanon, Yemen and elsewhere – most notably, Hezbollah, the Houthis and Islamist militias in Iraq and Syria – joined in the attack on Israel creating a 'ring of fire' that rendered much of the most northern part of the country uninhabitable and hampered international shipping in the Red Sea. Attempts to calm the situation and bring it to a conclusion, led by the United States and involving international players including negotiators from Qatar, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and elsewhere, have prevented the conflict from developing into a full regional war thus far, but have failed to draw the hostilities or the hostage crisis to a close.

From the very first moments, reaction to the assault began to be seen across the world, which, beyond widespread shock and horror at its sheer guile, scale and brutality, also saw celebration of the massacre and a significant spike in antisemitic attacks on Jews around the world. Media focus on the conflict has been particularly intense – the attack and subsequent war has made headline news consistently over many months – and major public demonstrations, mostly in strong opposition to Israel, have taken place in cities around the world, not least London. Condemnation of Israel's actions has been especially strong on university campuses, many of which have seen the creation of student encampments supporting the Palestinian cause but sometimes maligning Zionism, Israel – and, on occasion, Jews – in the process.

Israel has also been strongly denounced in multiple international forums for the scale and impact of its military response, including at the United Nations and in the International Court of Justice where it currently faces charges of genocide, a claim vehemently rejected by the Israeli government. Israel's political leadership has come in for particularly strong criticism both in Israel and abroad, with a heavy emphasis on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (who has been accused of putting his personal interests before those of the country as a whole), and hard-right members of his government, notably Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir and Minister of Finance Bezalel Smotrich. The State of Israel has long been accustomed to criticism and judgement from around the world, but never before has it faced such a formidable barrage of both physical attacks and legal, political and social condemnation.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the wider geopolitical context, have been extensively examined by countless academics, policy specialists and commentators over the course of decades. The question of where criticism of Israel becomes antisemitism has also been hotly debated for many years, and we have analysed and discussed this in several previous JPR papers and reports, most notably *Antisemitism in Great Britain* and *Antisemitism in the aftermath of October 7*.[1] It is not our intention to enter into such discussions here. In this paper, we focus instead on how the conflict in Israel and Gaza is affecting Jews in the UK, drawing on a major national survey of the UK Jewish population that was conducted by JPR in June and July 2024.[2] Where possible, we provide parallel data from earlier surveys that allows us to make an initial comparative assessment of how, if at all, attitudes have changed over time.[3] In particular, we explore three key questions:

1. How the original Hamas attack and the subsequent war have affected how British Jews view Israel politically;
2. How public reaction to the conflict has affected how secure Jews feel in the UK; and
3. How the conflict has impacted on the Jewish lives of British Jews – their connections to Israel and the Jewish community.

In exploring these data, it is important to stress that they deliberately focus on British Jews' perceptions, feelings, and experiences at this time; whilst they touch on major social and political issues, they do not constitute an empirical assessment of the Israeli government's conduct during the war, nor indeed of any of the British institutions discussed herein. Thus, this paper should be read as an insight into the inner mental world of British Jews in the immediate post-October 7 context in Britain – an indication of how those attacks, and the war that has followed with all of its repercussions, is impacting on their lives in the UK. This paper is very much an initial exploration of these topics that merely scratches the surface of these new data. Work involving more detailed analysis of these topics is underway, and we will publish further in-depth reports in due course.

[1] Staetsky, L. D. (2017). *Antisemitism in contemporary Great Britain. A study of attitudes towards Jews and Israel*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research; Boyd, J. (2024). *Antisemitism in the aftermath of October 7: What do the data tell us, and what more do we still need to know?* London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research (available at: www.jpr.org.uk.)

[2] Methodological details can be found at the end of this report. In brief, the survey was conducted among self-identifying Jews living in the UK aged 16 or older; data were weighted for age, sex and geography using the 2021 Census, and for denomination using administrative sources and survey data held by JPR. The total sample size for the 2024 survey was 4,641.

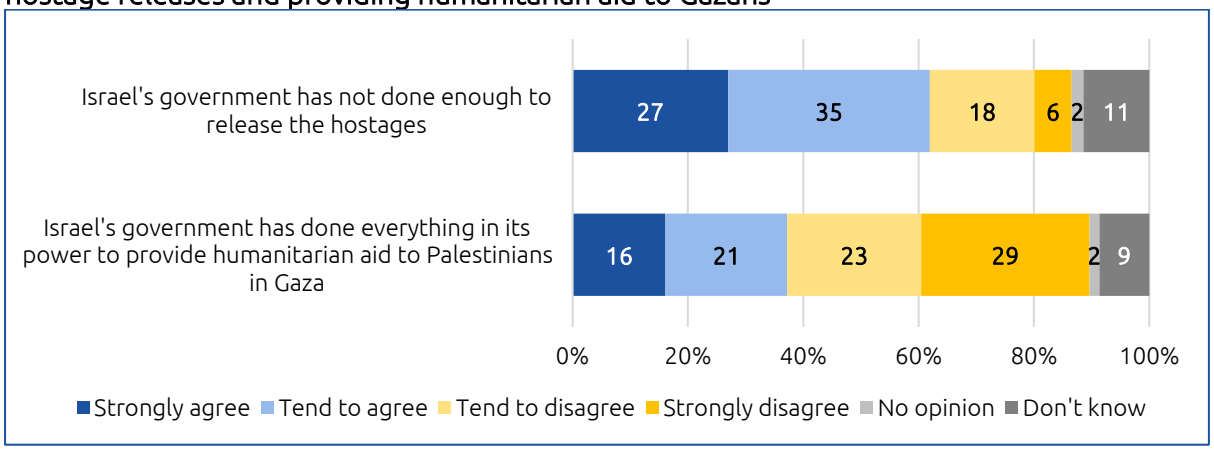
[3] Note that, in all cases, any such changes should be treated as indicative, and that more detailed assessments will be made in future studies drawing on these data. At this stage, further analytical work is required to ensure that the samples generated in different surveys are directly comparable.

## 1 / Israel's political and military conduct during the war: what do British Jews think?

In previous work investigating Jewish people's attitudes towards Israel, we have seen that British Jews are far from uniform in their views on Israeli political issues. Whilst most maintain an underlying level of emotional support and attachment to Israel, they, like Israelis, are far from being averse to expressing criticism of Israeli leaders or government policy. We see this quite clearly with respect to some of the specifics of how they feel the Israeli government has managed aspects of the war: close to two-thirds of British Jews (62%) feel it has not done enough to release the hostages, and over half (52%) feel it has not done enough to provide humanitarian aid to Gazans (Figure 1).

Of course, these are not objective assessments – few, if any, British Jews are in a position to make an accurate empirical assessment of these issues – but the results reflect a certain leaning on their part: a sense that the Israeli government can and should have done more on both counts. At the same time, it is worth noting that significant minorities – 37% in the case of humanitarian aid and 24% in the case of the hostages – hold the more supportive view of the government, and in both instances, about one in ten doesn't know or has no opinion.

**Figure 1. Attitudes of British Jews to the actions of Israel's government on seeking Israeli hostage releases and providing humanitarian aid to Gazans**

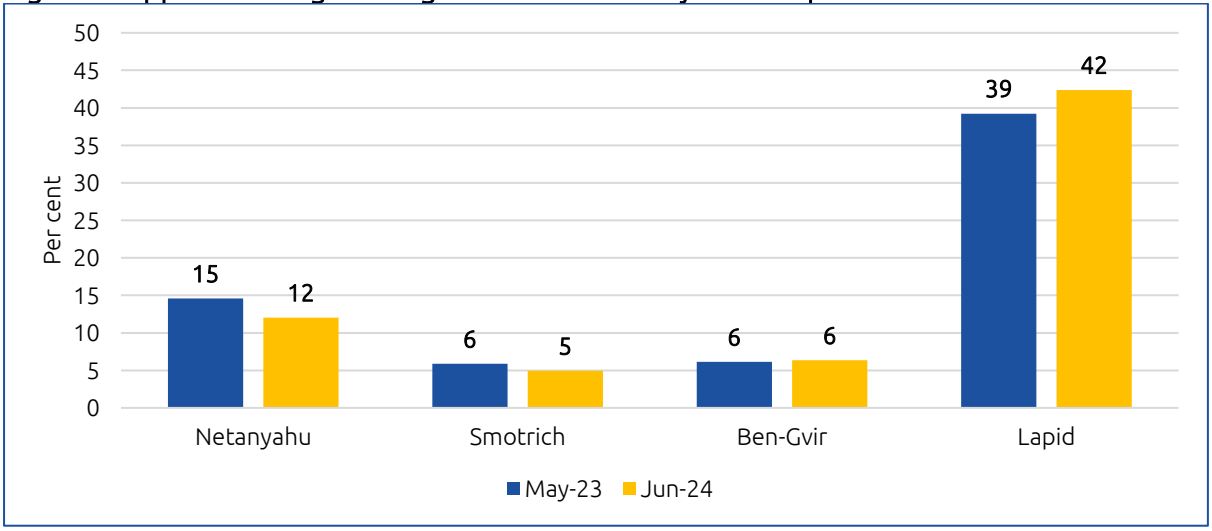



N=4,641.

When asked directly about specific Israeli leaders as opposed to the Israeli government in general, we find very low approval ratings for Prime Minister Netanyahu, and even lower ones for his most right-wing colleagues, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Minister of Security Itamar Ben Gvir. Excluding those who 'don't know' or have 'no opinion,'[4] 12% express approval of Netanyahu, and about 5% approve of Smotrich and Ben Gvir. By way of comparison, about 40% approve of opposition leader, Yair Lapid. Approval ratings for all four characters have barely changed as a result of the war – it seems that British Jews had their views about each of these characters before October 7, and little has changed since then – certainly as of the point when the data were gathered in June/July 2024. No equivalent data exist for British Jewish attitudes towards senior Israeli government leaders in past decades, but based on analysis of more narrative sources, it seems unlikely that approval ratings of senior government officials have ever previously fallen to the levels we see here.[5]

[4] See Ns under Figure 2 for details.
[5] Further details of current British Jewish attitudes towards Israeli political leaders can be found in: Lessof, C. and Shinar Cohen, R. (2024). *What do Jews in the UK think of Israel and its leadership, and how has this changed since October 7?* London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

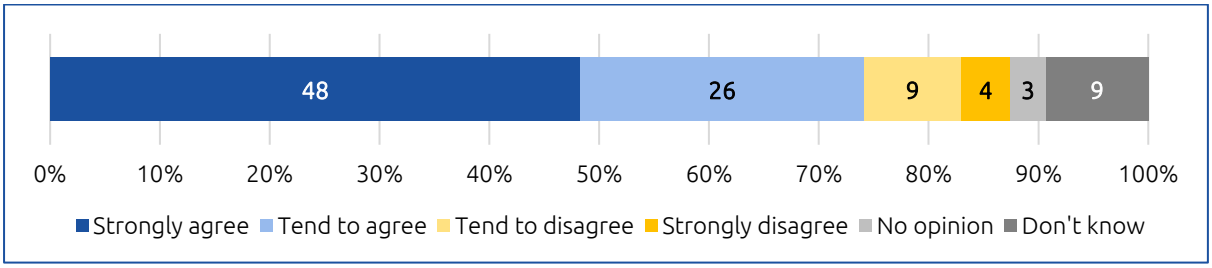
Figure 2. Approval ratings among British Jews of major Israeli political leaders




Note that those responding 'don't know' whether they approve or disapprove of each leader have been removed, so the proportions shown only reflect those who expressed an opinion. The total sample sizes for the two surveys (unweighted) were 3,767 (2023) and 4,641 (2024). The numbers responding 'don't know' in each case were: Netanyahu: 372 (2023), 285 (2024); Smotrich: 820 (2023), 1,676 (2024); Ben-Gvir: 1,242 (2023), 1,452 (2024); Lapid: 1,211 (2023), 1,671 (2024). Question: *To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the following Israeli leaders?* [Response options: Strongly approve; Somewhat approve; Neither approve nor disapprove; Somewhat disapprove; Strongly disapprove; No opinion; Don't know]. The proportions shown represent the combined totals for those who responded 'Strongly approve' and 'Somewhat approve'.

Part of the reason for this can be seen in British Jews' responses to the contention that "Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu prioritises his own personal interests over those of the State of Israel as a whole." This view has been expressed regularly in the international media, and indeed in parts of the Israeli media, since early on in the course of the war as well as prior to it. Despite holding a clear majority in the Knesset, Netanyahu requires the support of his right-wing coalition partners, including Smotrich and Ben Gvir, to hold onto power, so has consistently faced accusations of bowing to the demands of his more hawkish and uncompromising colleagues for this reason. A more generous read might counter that he is in an impossible situation: he is facing an implacable and malevolent enemy, recognised by most Western governments as a terrorist organisation; he is trying to balance the competing goals of defeating Hamas and saving the lives of the hostages; and that the critical portrayal of him has been manufactured by political opponents in Israel and beyond to undermine his position. However, it seems that most British Jews accept the critical characterisation of him – about three-quarters agree with the statement, and almost half 'strongly agree'. By contrast, just 13% disagree (Figure 3).

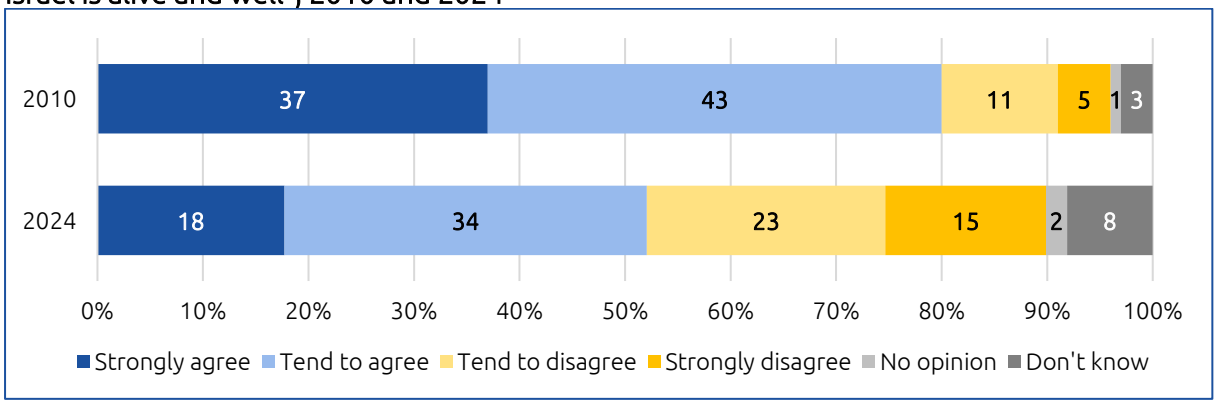
Figure 3. Extent to which British Jews agree or disagree with the contention: "Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu prioritises his own personal interests over those of the State of Israel as a whole"




N=4,641.

As shown in Figure 2, this negativity about Netanyahu dates back to before the October 7 attacks. Up to that point, 2023 in Israel was marked mainly by the judicial review controversy there – the attempt by the Netanyahu government to limit the powers of the Israeli Supreme Court over the Knesset. The proposed reforms sparked intense controversy in the country on the grounds that they would effectively grant the government unchecked power, a matter of deep concern to opposition leaders and significant parts of the Israeli population, and further exacerbated by their concerns about the hard-right components of the coalition. Yet many also supported the review, and many others, if critical of the management of the process, argued that change was required.[6] Given this backdrop, we invited British Jews to agree or disagree with the contention "Democracy in Israel is alive and well," a statement previously presented to them in a JPR survey conducted in 2010. Whilst the samples in the two surveys have not been adjusted to maximise their comparability, the fundamental shift shown in Figure 4 is certainly real – British Jews express far more concern today about the state of Israel's democracy than they did fifteen or so years ago. Nevertheless, more still believe it to be alive and well today than do not, by 52% to 38%.

Figure 4. Extent to which British Jews agree or disagree with the contention: "Democracy in Israel is alive and well", 2010 and 2024



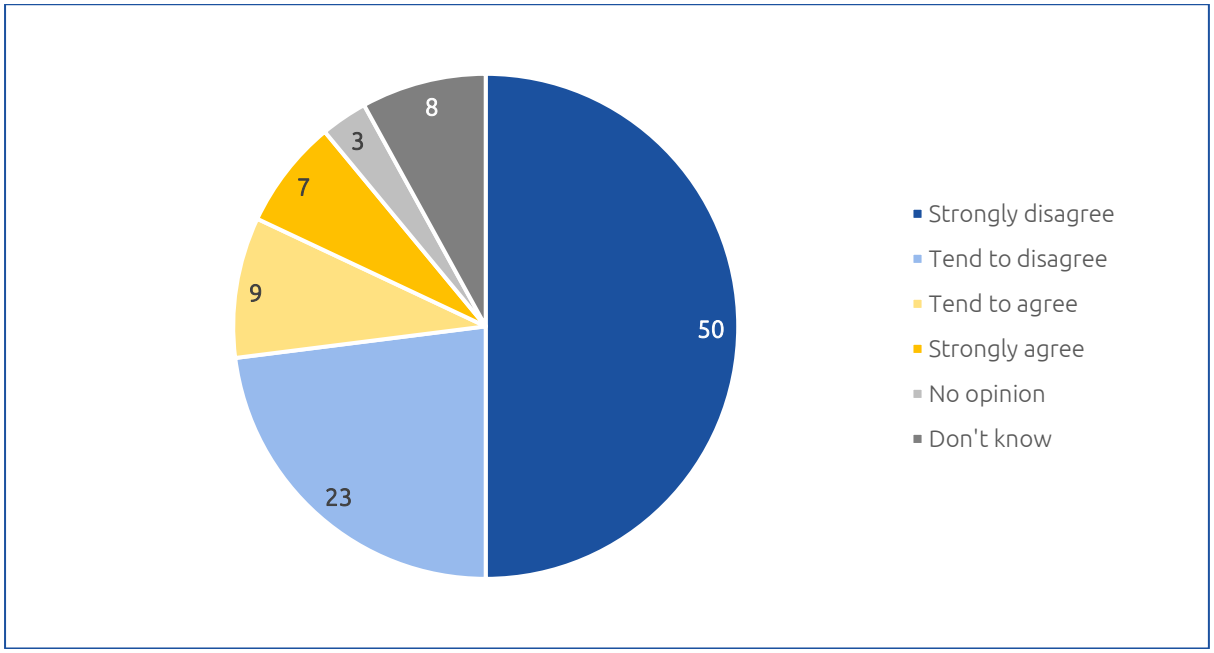

Ns=4,081 (2010); 4,641 (2024).

The scale and brutality of the October 7 attacks have raised the idea among some that Israel should take over full control of Gaza.[7] This notion is roundly rejected by the vast majority of British Jews: 73% disagree with it, 50% strongly, and just 16% agree (Figure 5).

[6] An Israel Democracy Institute survey conducted in November 2022 found that 54% of Israelis agreed with the statement "the Supreme Court should have the power to strike down laws passed in the Knesset which conflict with the basic laws of the State of Israel," and 35% disagreed. 11% didn't know. See: https://en.idi.org.il/media/18830/israeli-voice-index-november-2022-data.pdf. Follow-up reports using a similar statement in February, March and April 2023 indicated that opinion was hardening over time, with levels of agreement in the range of 64%-68%. See: https://dataisrael.idi.org.il/.

[7] Israel occupied Gaza after capturing it from Egypt in the Six-Day War in 1967 but withdrew from the territory in the 'disengagement' of 2005, unilaterally dismantling 21 Israeli settlements, relocating over 8,000 Israelis who were living there, and redeploying its military to along the border. Nonetheless, its status remains disputed today – while Israel maintains that it no longer occupies Gaza, several major international bodies dispute this on the grounds that Israel's military continues to retain effective control of Gaza's borders, airspace and coastline. Israel argues that it needs to maintain this control for security reasons, noting that since Hamas took over full authority for the territory in 2007, it has launched in excess of 30,000 rockets into Israel, in addition to perpetrating the October 7 attacks.

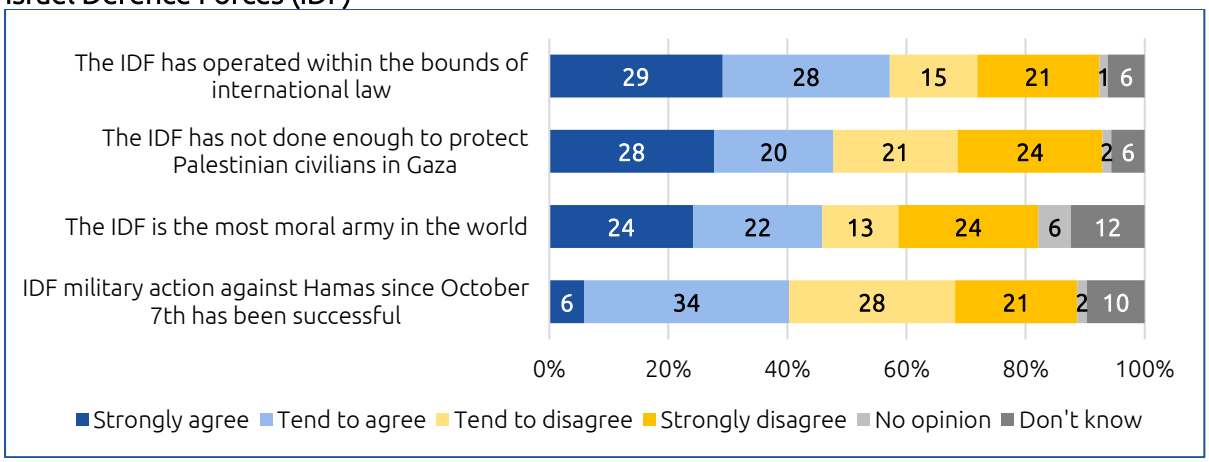
Figure 5. Extent to which British Jews agree or disagree with the contention: "Israel should take over full control of Gaza."




N=4,641.

Drawing these findings together, the British Jewish population can be characterised as rather critical of the current Israeli government – not exclusively so, but certainly more critical than sympathetic. Yet it seems to express more supportive views of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and its conduct during the war. Whilst we continue to see much division, British Jews are more likely to agree than to disagree with two contentions: "The IDF has operated within the bounds of international law" (57% agree versus 26% disagree) and "The IDF is the most moral army in the world" (46% agree versus 37% disagree, although a high proportion – 18% – has no opinion or does not know). At the same time, we see considerable concern about the effect of the war on ordinary Gazans – slightly more (48%) agree than disagree (45%) that "the IDF has not done enough to protect Palestinians in Gaza." We find further concern about the overall success of the war to date (data were gathered in June/July 2024): 40% agree that "IDF military action against Hamas since October 7th has been successful" (and most of those only 'tend to agree'), whereas almost 50% disagree (Figure 6).

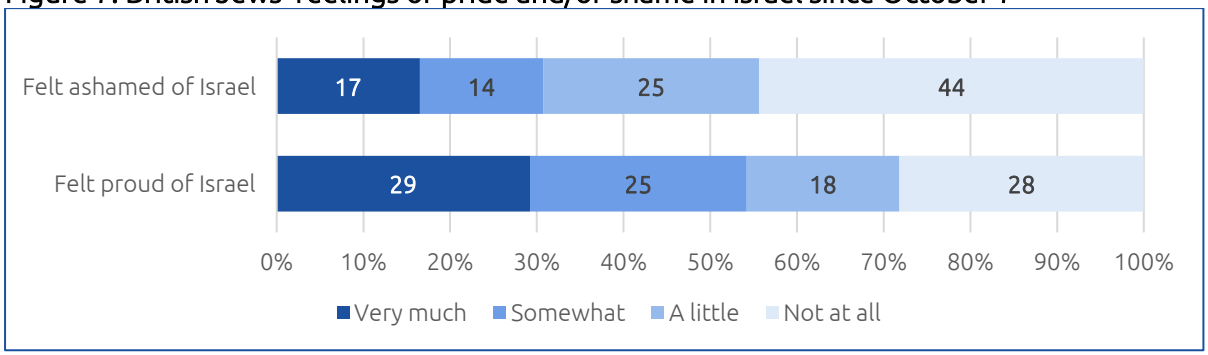
Figure 6. Extent to which British Jews agree or disagree with various contentions about the Israel Defence Forces (IDF)




N=4,641.

As always with discussions about Israel, it is very important to draw distinctions between the elected political leadership, the conscript army, and the nation-state as a whole. On the latter, British Jews remain positive. They are still more likely to have felt proud of Israel than ashamed of it since October 7. Approaching a third (29%) say that have felt very proud, whereas less than one in five (17%) say they have felt very ashamed, and close to half (44%) say they have not felt ashamed of Israel at all, compared with under a third (28%) who say they have not felt proud at all (Figure 7). However, importantly, this is not a zero-sum game. With sizeable proportions expressing all four levels of pride and shame offered in the questions (Very much; Somewhat; A little; Not at all), it seems many are somewhat equivocal about their feelings – more are likely to feel some degree of shame about Israel than none (56% vs 44%), but more are also likely to feel some degree of pride in Israel than none (72% vs 28%).

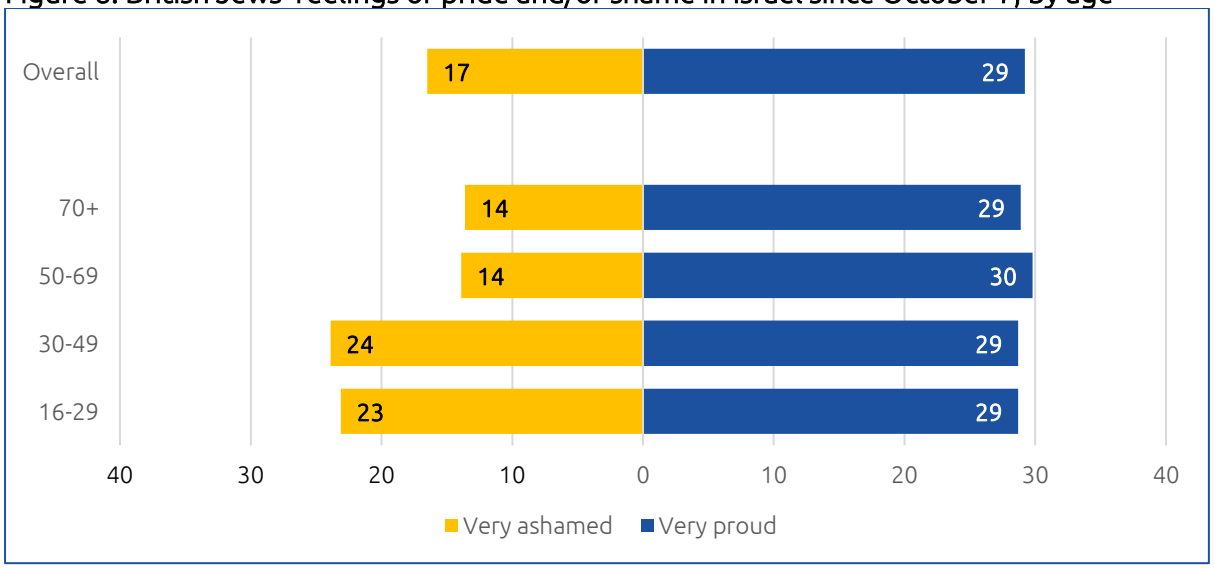
Figure 7. British Jews' feelings of pride and/or shame in Israel since October 7




Question: *Thinking further about the October 7th attacks and the war in Gaza, in the past month, to what extent have you: felt proud of Israel; felt ashamed of Israel?* N=4,641.

Future reports examining these data in more detail will be published over the coming months, but in the meantime, it is worth breaking them down by age to assess whether different age bands feel similarly to one another. Focusing on the proportions who feel very proud (in blue) and very ashamed (in orange) in Figure 8, we can see that all age groups are equally likely to adopt the 'very proud' position, but the two younger age bands are significantly more likely to feel very ashamed of Israel than their elders. So, whilst all age bands are more likely to feel pride than shame, feelings of shame about Israel's conduct are notably more common among the under 50s.

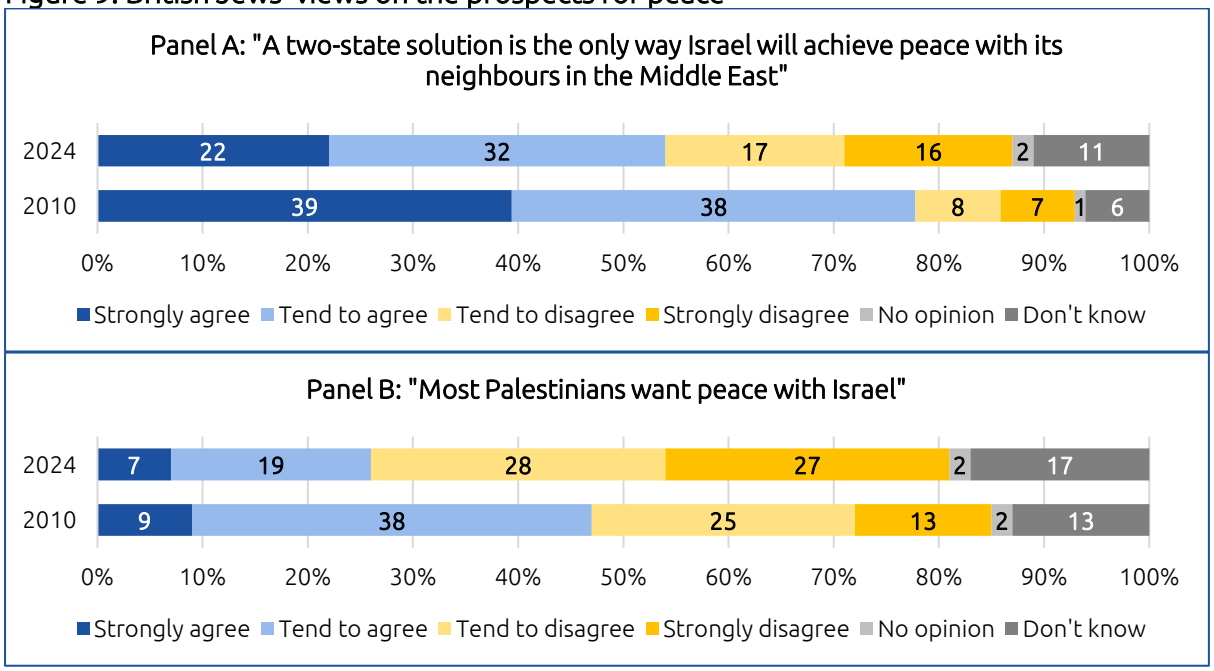
Figure 8. British Jews' feelings of pride and/or shame in Israel since October 7, by age




N=4,641.

Most Western governments continue to hold the view that the ultimate solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is clear – the situation will be resolved when Israel withdraws fully from the West Bank and Gaza, and a two-state solution can be implemented. This is the policy position of the governments of the United States, the European Union and the UK. When we asked British Jews about this in 2010, we found that the vast majority held this position too: 77% agreed that "a two-state solution is the only way Israel will achieve peace with its neighbours in the Middle East", and just 15% disagreed. However, the new data from 2024 show that opinion has shifted significantly since then. While more still agree with the statement than disagree, the proportions have shifted to 54% agree to 33% disagree, and twice as many now say they don't know or have no opinion compared to 2010 (Figure 9, Panel A). Part of the reason for this, we surmise, is that there has been a huge erosion of trust in the Palestinian side: where close to half (47%) of British Jews agreed with the statement "Most Palestinians want peace with Israel" in 2010, just 26% do today (Figure 9, Panel B). Uncertainty on this issue has also increased – from 15% to 19%. Whilst we cannot be certain when this shift happened or whether it was gradual or sudden, it is not unreasonable to assume that the October 7 attacks had a significant influence on this perspective. After such brutality, and indeed the scenes of celebration in Gaza on October 7, one should not be surprised to see this shift.

Figure 9. British Jews' views on the prospects for peace



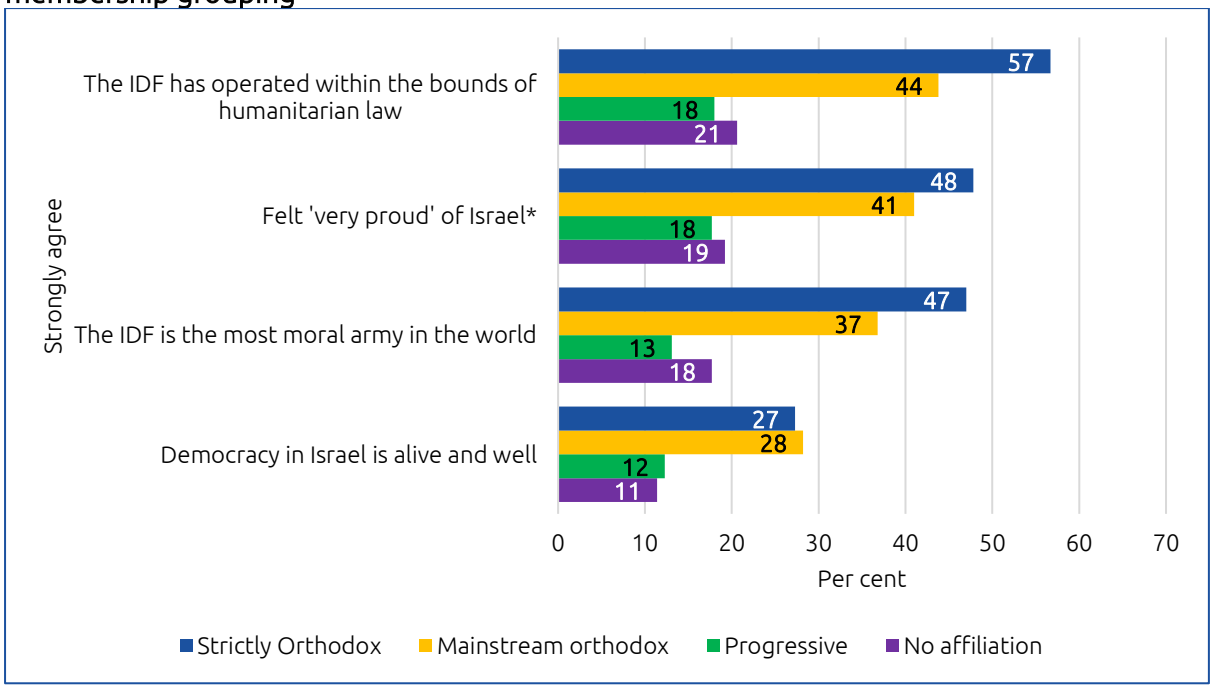

Ns=4,081 (2010); 4,641 (2024).

Almost all of the data conveyed thus far reflect the views of the British Jewish population as a whole. However, it is important to note that Jews with different Jewish denominational positions vary significantly on all of these issues. As a general rule, mainstream and strictly orthodox Jews tend to hold more favourable views of the Israeli government and military compared to progressive or unaffiliated Jews, and also tend to be rather more politically hawkish. We can see this in Figure 10a, which shows the proportions who 'strongly agree'[8] with each of the statements shown in four different groups based on the type of synagogue they do or do not belong to: Strictly Orthodox (i.e. Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations or similar); mainstream orthodox (i.e. United Synagogue/Federation/Sephardi); progressive (i.e. Reform/Liberal/Masorti); and no affiliation (i.e. not a synagogue member).

[8] Note that the pride in Israel question was structured differently, as per the note under Figure 10.

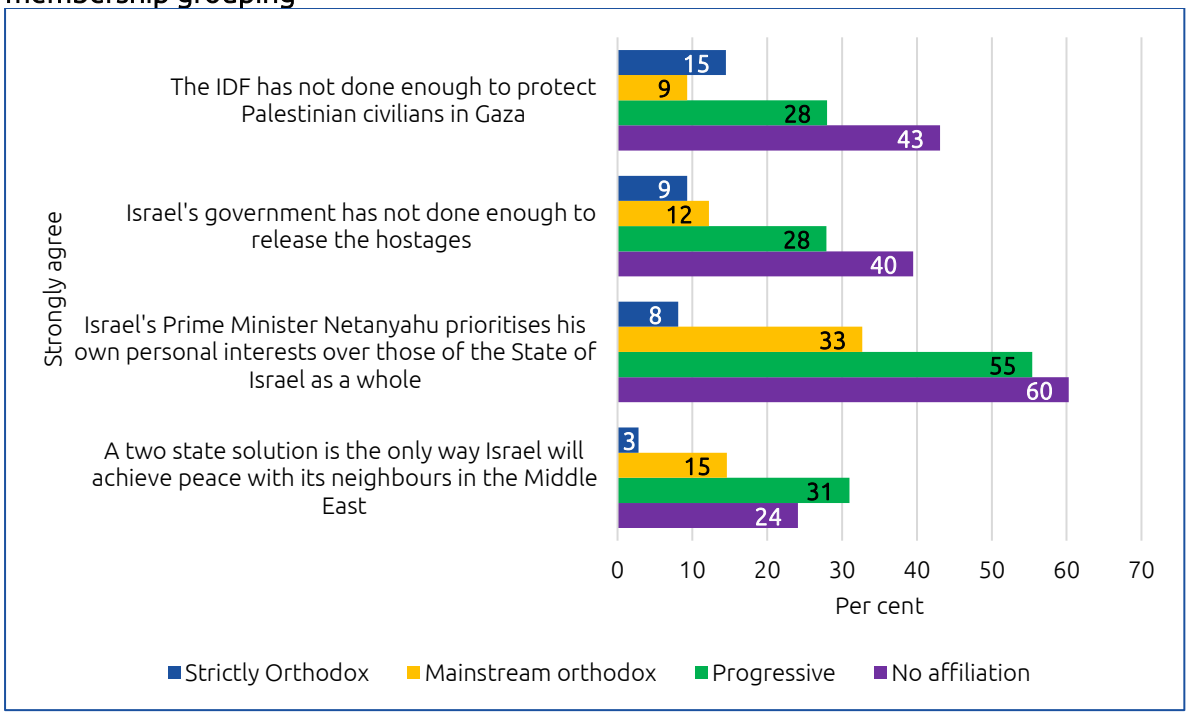
We see the same when we look at statements expressing unfavourable views of the Israeli government or military. In these cases, those on the religious left (the 'progressive' and 'no affiliation' groups) are considerably more likely to 'strongly agree' with these critical perspectives than those on the religious right (both orthodox groups) (Figure 10b).

Figure 10a. Strong agreement with favourable statements about Israel, by synagogue membership grouping




* Note that this concept was measured not on an agree to disagree scale, but rather as follows: *Thinking further about the October 7th attacks and the war in Gaza, in the past month, to what extent have you: Felt proud of Israel?* [Response options: Not at all; A little; Somewhat; Very much]. N=4,641.

Figure 10b. Strong agreement with unfavourable statements about Israel, by synagogue membership grouping

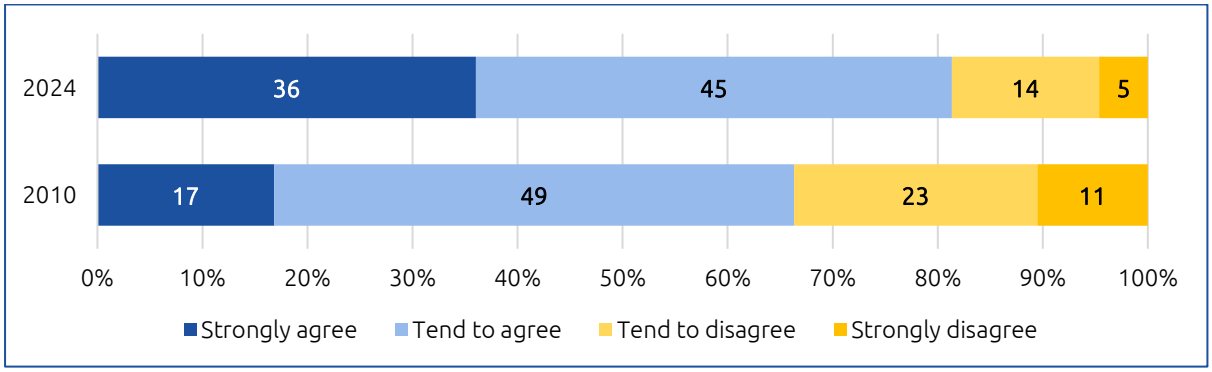



N=4,641.

These denominational distinctions are fundamental to understanding British Jewish views about Israel, and indeed many other social or political issues. While there are certainly exceptions at the individual level, the more religiously conservative tend to be more politically conservative, and the more religiously liberal tend to be more politically liberal. As much as we may be able to identify an overall leaning of the British Jewish population on each of the issues investigated thus far, subgroups within the community are likely to diverge substantially from that view.

Many of the issues investigated so far are rather cerebral – they focus on what Jews *think* about the state and nature of Israeli politics and warfare. There is, of course, a more affective dimension to all of this – how Jews are *feeling*. To give a first sense of this, it is striking to see how British Jews responded to the statement "Because I am Jewish, I often feel that I am held responsible by non-Jews for the actions of Israel's government." This is an important sentiment to assess: irrespective of their personal opinions, British Jews clearly have no control over the decisions or actions of the Israeli government. We share below two JPR readings on this – the first from 2010, and the second from our most recent survey in mid-2024, about nine months after the October 7 attacks (Figure 11). Strikingly, a significant shift appears to have occurred. Two-thirds (66%) agreed with the statement in 2010; by 2024, that proportion had climbed to over four in five (81%). Something clearly shifted over this period in terms of how Jews see themselves in the context of wider British society in the interim, and perhaps in how wider society sees them, although it is difficult to determine when the change occurred or whether it was gradual or sudden. We explore this issue in more detail in the next chapter.

**Figure 11. Levels of agreement among British Jews with the statement "Because I am Jewish, I often feel that I am held responsible by non-Jews for the actions of Israel's government," 2010 and 2024**



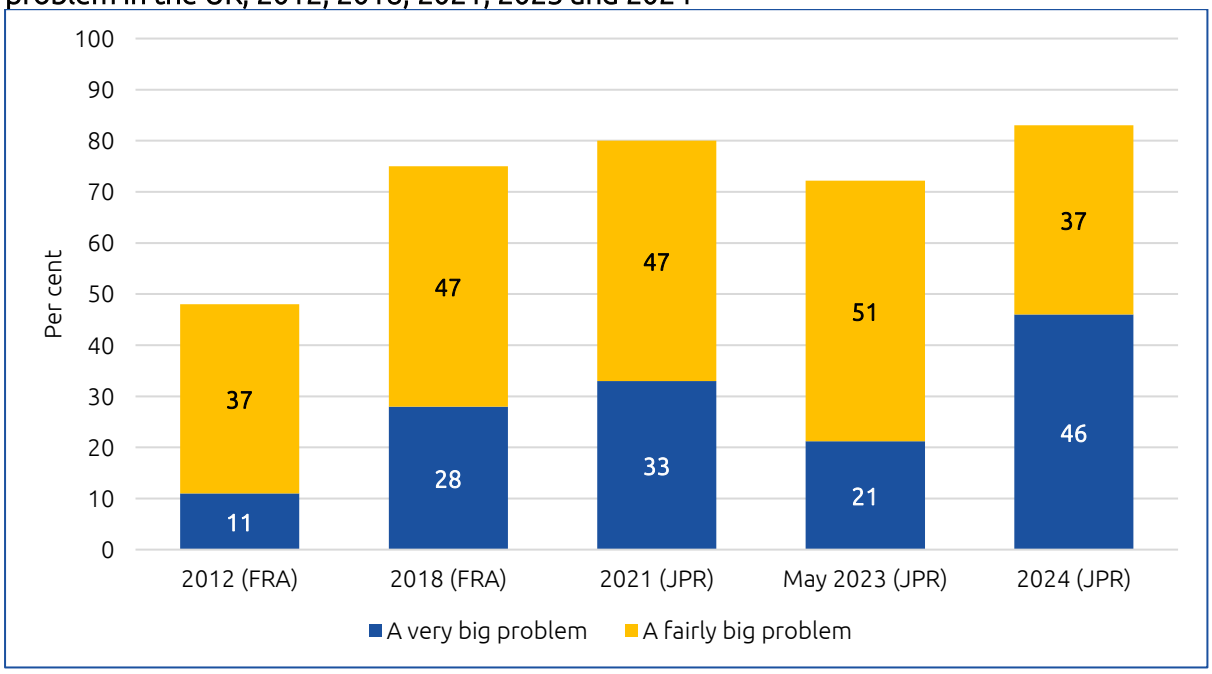

Ns=4,081 (2010), 4,641 (2024). Those expressing neutral options – e.g. don't know; no opinion – have been removed from the analysis to improve comparability between the two measures, so proportions only represent those who expressed a view.

## 2 / Britain: antisemitism, security and the place of Jews in wider society

In our survey, 30% of British Jewish adults reported that they had personally experienced at least one antisemitic incident in the nine months between 7 October 2023 and the time when they completed the survey in June/July 2024. This equates to close to 70,000 people and constitutes a much higher estimate than that recorded in Community Security Trust (CST) antisemitic incident data reports, which are based only on incidents that are reported to the CST and/or the police.[9] Yet both sources, using entirely different methodologies and drawing on wholly different samples indicate a significant increase in antisemitism since October 7.

This partly explains why British Jews' perceptions of antisemitism in the UK are changing too. We asked respondents: *In your opinion, how big a problem, if at all, is antisemitism in the UK today?*, with five response options offered: 'a very big problem'; 'a fairly big problem'; 'not a very big problem'; 'not a problem at all'; and 'don't know.' This is a question we have asked several times in the past, including in two multinational surveys conducted by joint JPR/Ipsos teams for the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in 2012 and 2018, and in JPR's own surveys, conducted variously in 2021, May 2023 just a few months before the October 7 attacks, and summer 2024. The results of all of these can be seen in Figure 12.

**Figure 12. British Jews' perceptions of the extent to which they regard antisemitism as a problem in the UK, 2012, 2018, 2021, 2023 and 2024**




Note that the time gaps between these four measures are irregular, and that data from the FRA and JPR surveys have not been weighted on a consistent basis, so comparisons are indicative. Data from all sources was collected online from self-identifying Jews living in the UK aged 16+: 2012: FRA, n=1,468; 2018: FRA, n=4,731; 2021: JPR research panel, n=4,152; May 2023: JPR research panel, n=3,767; 2024: JPR research panel,, n=4,641.

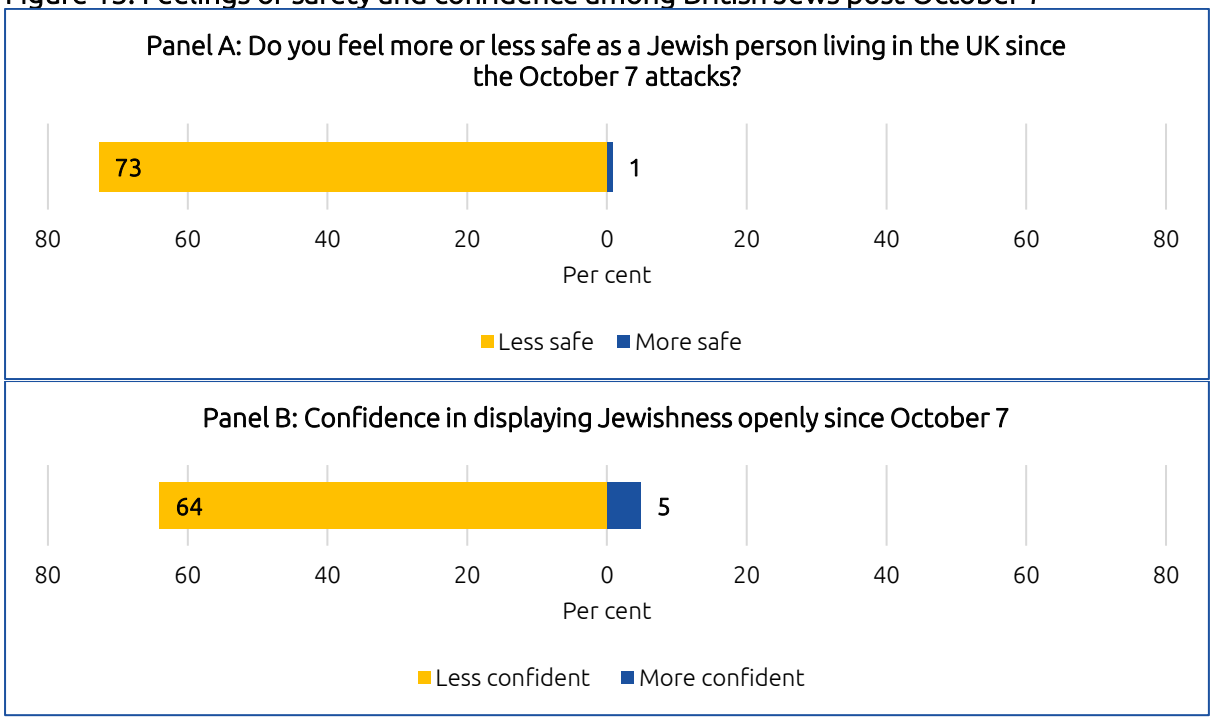
Over four in five (83%) British Jews say antisemitism is a problem in the UK today, the highest proportion we have ever recorded, and close to half (46%) say it is 'a very big problem.' Indeed, whilst the overall proportion has only climbed by about 10% since May 2023 (72%) – a smaller shift when compared to the difference between 2012 and 2018 – it is the change in those choosing the 'very big problem' option in the 2023 and 2024 surveys (from 21% to 46%)

[9] We discuss the reasons behind the discrepancies between antisemitic incident data and population survey data at length in: Boyd, J. (2024). *Antisemitism in the aftermath of October 7*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research. Available at: www.jpr.org.uk.

that is most striking, suggesting a substantial shift in the intensity of this perception since October 7. Taking a longer-term look at these findings, one can also see that a dramatic shift has occurred over the course of the past decade as a whole. In 2012, over half of the Jewish population either said antisemitism was *not* a big problem in Britain (47%) or not a problem at all (5%); today, only 17% say it is not a big problem, and just 1% says it is not a problem at all (not shown graphically). One can also see how perspectives on this question are affected by flare-ups in Gaza: the two highest readings, in 2021 and 2024, were gathered in such contexts.

This perception about antisemitism, and indeed the widespread experiences of direct antisemitic incidents, is having quite a significant psychological effect on British Jews. One means of assessing this is by asking whether people feel more or less safe as Jews living in the UK after October 7, using a five-point scale: 'I feel much less safe'; 'I feel somewhat less safe'; 'I feel about the same'; 'I feel somewhat more safe'; and 'I feel much more safe' (Figure 13, Panel A). Whilst a quarter chose 'about the same' (not shown graphically), almost all of the remainder selected one of the 'less safe' options: 29% 'much' less safe, and 43% 'somewhat' less safe. Fewer than 1% chose either of the 'more safe' possibilities. We found similar results when investigating levels of confidence in displaying one's Jewishness openly in public since October 7 (for example, by wearing distinctive Jewish clothing such as a *kippah* or a Star of David necklace) (Figure 13, Panel B). Again, a similar scale was used running from 'much more' to 'much less' confident with a no change option in the middle, and again, whilst close to 30% say there has been no change (not shown graphically), we find far higher proportions choosing a less confident option (64%) than a more confident one (5%). Conceivably, this could be different – we might have seen a greater sense of defiance among Jews manifesting itself as greater confidence, but this does not appear to be the case. As a general rule, most British Jews feel rather more insecure and wary now about revealing their Jewishness openly to others than they did prior to October 7.

Figure 13. Feelings of safety and confidence among British Jews post October 7



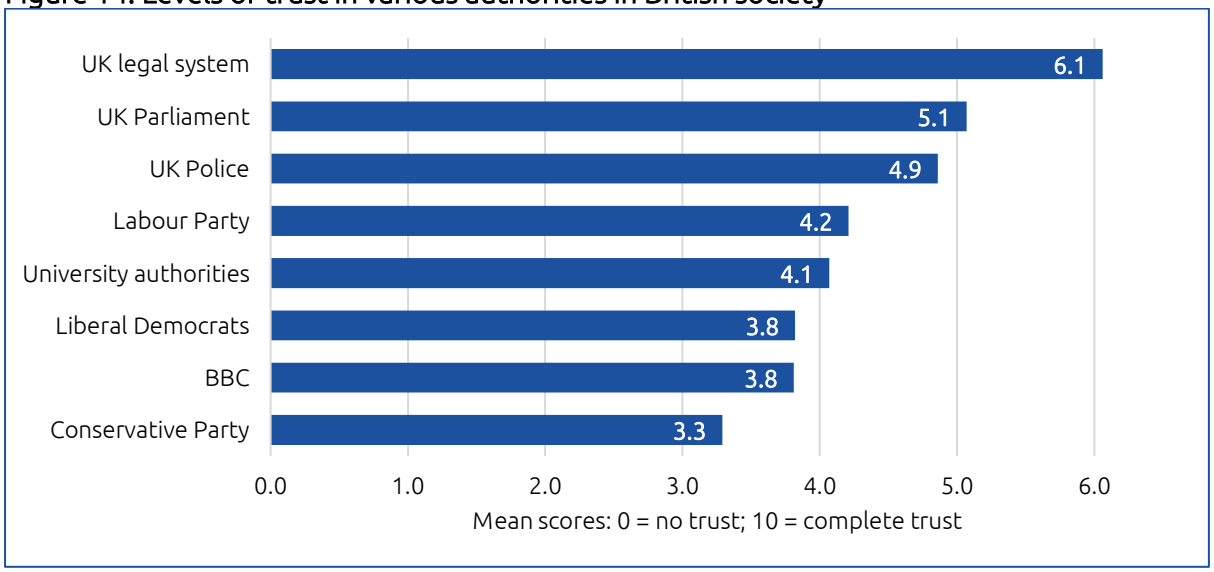

Question (Panel A): *Compared to how you felt as a Jewish person living in the UK before the October 7th attacks on Israel, do you feel more or less safe now, or about the same?* [Response options: I feel much less safe; somewhat less safe; about the same; somewhat more safe; much more safe; Don't know]. Question (Panel B): *would you say that you are more or less confident displaying your Jewish identity openly now, than you were before the October 7th attacks in Israel and the war in Gaza?* [Response options: I am: much more confident; somewhat more confident; about the same; somewhat less confident; much less confident; Don't know]. JPR research panel, June/July 2024, n=4,641.

An alternative way of assessing any change in people's feelings of safety as Jews is by measuring it on a consistent scale over time. In three of the surveys we have conducted in recent years, in 2021, May 2023 and 2024, we invited British Jews to situate themselves on a scale running from 0 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) in response to the statement "I feel safe as a Jewish person living in the UK." Using this scale, we can calculate the mean scores for the Jewish population as a whole at each of these three points in time. The result in the June 2024 survey shows the lowest (least safe) mean score of the three (6.0); figures for 2021 (6.4) and May 2023 (7.2) were both higher. Whilst these differences may not appear to be particularly large, they nonetheless demonstrate again that a notable shift has occurred since October 7.

Individual experience of an antisemitic incident may partly explain these findings, although one should also bear in mind that 70% of British Jews say they have *not* personally experienced one or more of these since October 7. So what else might be accounting for these changes in Jews' perceptions of their safety in Britain? There are several candidates one can identify in the public sphere that may be contributing to this overarching sense of insecurity, including media reporting, mainstream political discourse, issues on university campuses and in academia more generally, public demonstrations, and social interactions with friends and colleagues. We explore each of these briefly below.

To offer a comparative perspective first, we asked respondents about the extent to which they trust various authorities in British society, including the three main political parties, parliament as a whole, university authorities, the British legal system and the BBC. As Figure 14 shows, at the time of the survey, conducted on the eve of the 2024 General Election, overall levels of trust in the Labour Party were higher than in the Conservative Party, but trust in parliament as a whole scored higher than both. The highest levels of trust were in the legal system, and overall, British Jews were found to trust the police more than university authorities, and certainly more than the BBC.

Figure 14. Levels of trust in various authorities in British society

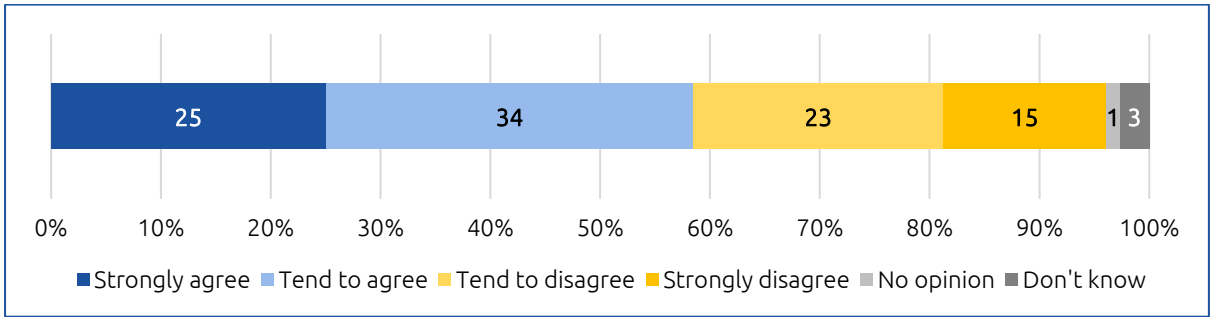



Note that the scale is truncated to make the results easier to see; the full scale runs from 0 to 10. Question: *On a scale from 0 to 10, how much do you personally trust each of the following UK institutions where 0 means you do not trust the institution at all, and 10 means you trust it completely?* N=4,641.

The results for the BBC should be interpreted as a specific comment on the institution itself, rather than on the media as a whole, although a forthcoming JPR report will look in more detail at this. The publicly funded BBC, as the country's leading public service broadcaster, has come in for particular criticism from British Jews recently, not least some Jewish staff at the

BBC, for "perceived bias and antisemitism."[10] Indeed, both prior to and since October 7, the Jewish media has regularly contained stories of community leaders, politicians, opinion formers and even former BBC staff variously accusing the BBC of "outrageous bias,"[11] "stoking global antisemitism,"[12] and "being institutionally antisemitic,"[13] and it has been particularly criticised for its reporting about the war in Gaza and its refusal to label Hamas 'terrorists.'[14] The most recent allegations come from a research study led by British/Israeli lawyer, Trevor Asserson, which claimed "multiple breaches by the BBC of its own editorial guidelines on impartiality, fairness and establishing the truth."[15] Quite how much British Jewish trust levels in the BBC are shaped by people's independent assessments of BBC reporting itself, or by articles, reports or communal discourse about its coverage, is impossible to determine at this stage, but quite clearly, a significant trust deficit exists in this regard. In its defence, the BBC maintains that it receives criticism and complaints that it is biased "both for and against Israel, and for and against the Palestinians."[16] Yet beyond the public spat itself, when we investigated how public and media criticism of Israel (from any source) is affecting Jews, we found that over half (59%) agreed with a statement saying it made them feel that "Jews are not welcome in the UK", compared with just over a third (38%) who disagreed (Figure 15). Thus, irrespective of whether Jews are assessing the BBC or other media fairly or not, it seems clear that media criticism of Israel hits hard – certainly for the quarter opting for the 'strongly agree' response option – and has a sufficiently strong psychological effect on many to affect their sense of safety and wellbeing in the country as a whole.

**Figure 15. Levels of agreement among British Jews with the statement "Public and media criticism of Israel make me feel Jews are not welcome in the UK"**



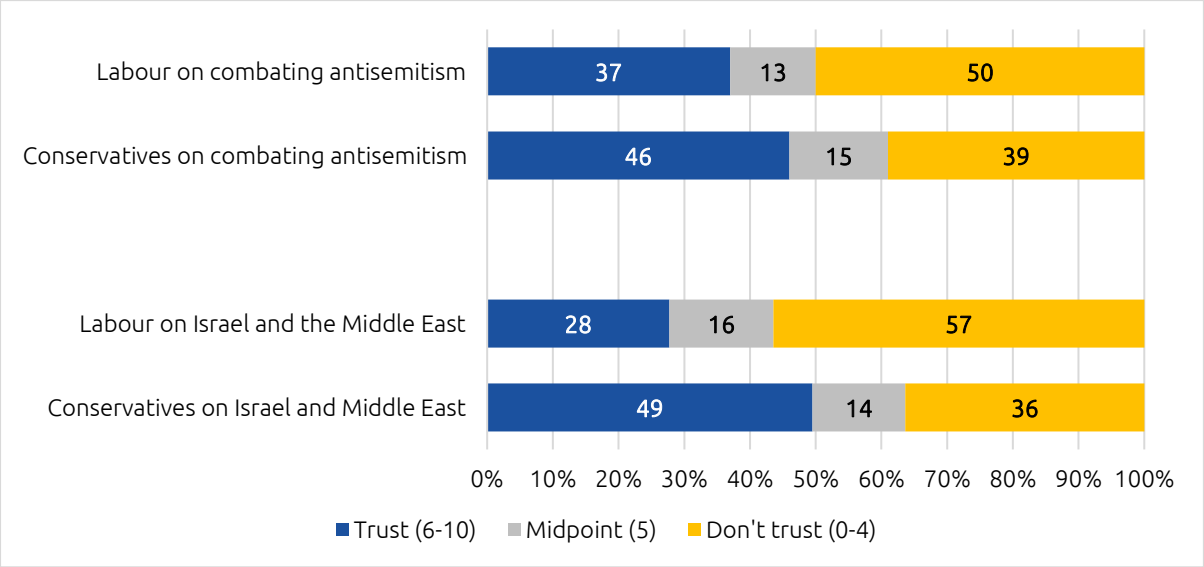

N= 4,641.

In the realm of politics, we noted above (Figure 14) that, at the time of the survey, Jews trusted the Labour Party (mean=4.2) more than the Conservatives (mean=3.3). It is worth noting, however, that this reflects their overall stance about the two parties on the eve of the 2024 General Election, at a time when the Conservative Party was on the verge of one of its

[10] See: Nicole Lampert, 'Furious Jewish staff say BBC's handling of antisemitism echoes the Huw Edwards scandal,' *The Jewish Chronicle*, 1 August 2024.
[11] Jane Prinsley, 'BBC accused of 'outrageous bias' after Nick Robinson said Israel 'murders tens of thousands of innocents,' *The Jewish Chronicle,* 15 April 2024.
[12] Jane Prinsley, 'MPs accuse BBC of stoking 'global antisemitism,'' *The Jewish Chronicle,* 28 February 2024.
[13] Felix Pope, 'BBC is 'institutionally antisemitic', says corporation's former director of television', *The Jewish Chronicle,* 20 November 2023.
[14] Elise Bray, 'How the BBC's week of Israel bias alienated the Jewish community,' *The Jewish Chronicle*, 18 October 2023.
[15] See: Camilla Turner and Patrick Sawer, 'BBC 'has breached rules 1,500 times' over Gaza war', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 8 September 20224. The report itself is available at: https://campaignformediastandards.org.uk/#Reports
[16] See: Deborah Turness, 'How the BBC is covering Israel-Gaza,' BBC Media Centre, 26 October 2023.

worst election defeats on record.[17] When we used a 0-10 scale to investigate specific questions about the extent to which British Jews trust the two parties in terms of their positions on (a) combating antisemitism, and (b) Israel and the Middle East, we found very different results: in general, British Jews have considerably more confidence in the Conservatives than Labour on these issues (see Figure 16). Unsurprisingly, Labour supporters are much more likely than Conservative supporters to trust the Labour Party on these issues and vice versa (not shown), yet the overall dissonance is striking – it seems that a not insignificant part of the Jewish population voted for Labour despite having at least some misgivings about its probable policy in these areas. It will be important to continue to monitor these attitudes over time, not least because the Labour Government has recently come in for sharp criticism from community leaders for its decision to suspend some arms sales to Israel.[18]

**Figure 16. Levels of trust in the Labour and Conservative parties' positions on 'combating antisemitism' and 'Israel and the Middle East' among British Jews**

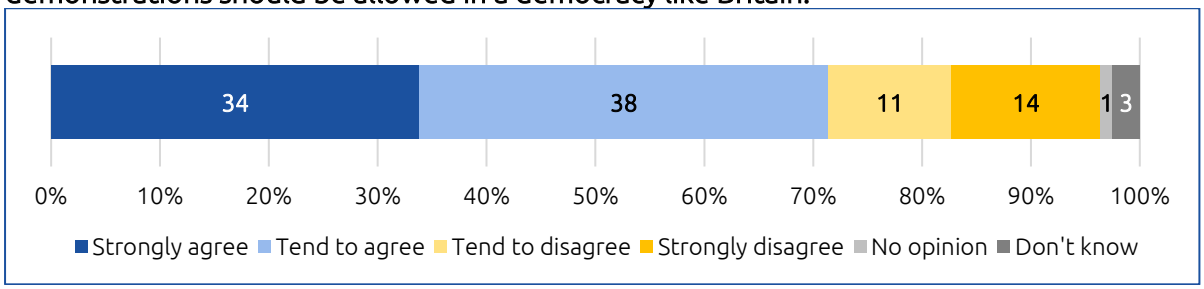



Question: *Thinking more specifically, how much do you personally trust the two main political parties on Israel and the Middle East and on combating antisemitism, where 0 means you do not trust the party at all, and 10 means you trust the party completely?* N=4,641.

British Jews' sense of their place in Britain today has also likely been affected by the large public pro-Palestinian demonstrations that have taken place regularly in city centres across the UK since October 7. Importantly, a strong majority of Jews supports the notion that such demonstrations should be permitted: 72% agree with the contention "Pro-Palestinian demonstrations should be allowed in a democracy like Britain" compared to 25% who disagree (Figure 17). Yet whilst most hold this fundamentally democratic position, they also maintain that certain limits to freedom of expression ought to be in place. We see this in their responses to the contentions "People should be allowed to wave the Palestinian flag at pro-Palestinian demonstrations" and "People should be allowed to wave the Hamas flag at pro-Palestinian demonstrations." Most (68%) accept people's right to wave the Palestinian flag, but opinion shifts dramatically concerning the flag of Hamas, which the vast majority (91%) believes should not be permitted, 80% strongly so (Figure 18). The distinction they appear to be drawing is between demonstrating for the national rights of the Palestinian people, on the one hand, and advocating for a proscribed Islamist terrorist organisation responsible for the brutal crimes of October 7, on the other.

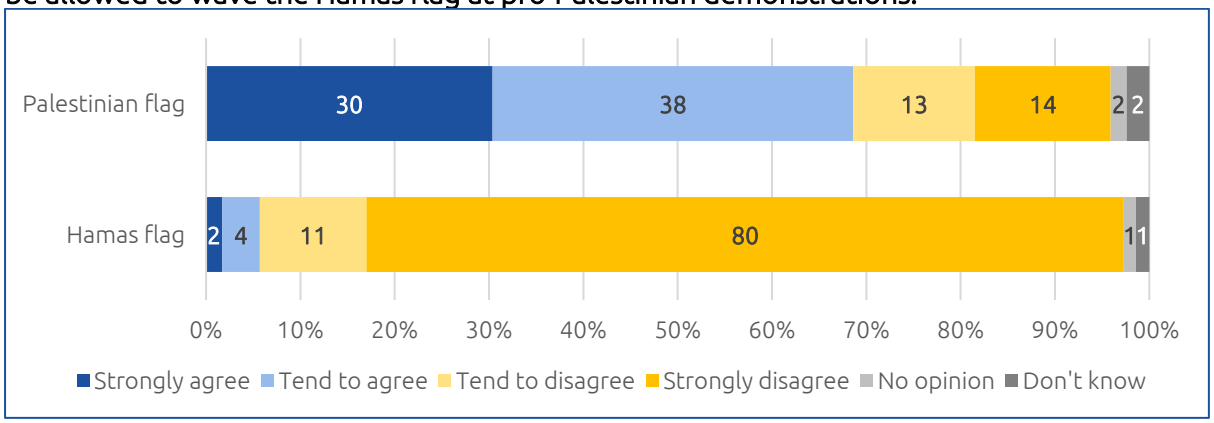
[17] The Conservative Party won 121 seats in 2024 – the lowest number the party had won at any general election since 1832. See: 'General Election 2024 Results,' House of Commons Library Research Briefing, 18 July 2024.
[18] See: UK policy on arms export licences to Israel: Foreign Secretary's statement, 2 September 2024.

Figure 17. Levels of agreement among British Jews with the statement "Pro-Palestinian demonstrations should be allowed in a democracy like Britain."




N=4,641.

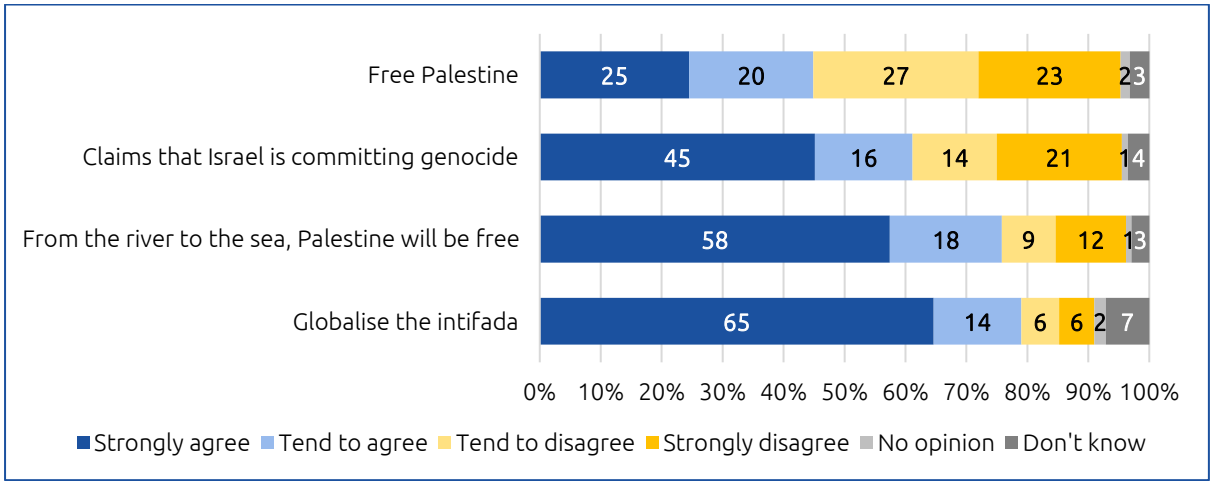
Figure 18. Levels of agreement among British Jews with the statements: "People should be allowed to wave the Palestinian flag at pro-Palestinian demonstrations" and People should be allowed to wave the Hamas flag at pro-Palestinian demonstrations."




N=4,641.

We pick up similar signals when considering some of the slogans that are commonly chanted or expressed at such demonstrations and in other pro-Palestinian contexts. Several such slogans or ideas have become popular, and we investigated British Jews' views about four of these in particular: 'Free Palestine'; 'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free'; 'Globalise the intifada'; and 'Claims that Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinians.' In each case, respondents were asked whether they felt these were or were not antisemitic. The results, shown in Figure 19, indicate that many British Jews experience each of them as antisemitic, but each one nonetheless sits on a scale. The slogan likely to cause least offence is 'Free Palestine' – almost half (45%) think it is or could be antisemitic, a slightly lower proportion than those who tend to disagree or do so strongly (50%). At the other end of the spectrum stands 'Globalise the intifada' which about four in five (79%) classify as antisemitic (65% strongly agree it is), compared to 12% who disagree. It is likely that most Jews interpret this latter statement as a call for murderous violence against Jewish and/or Israeli targets worldwide; the second Palestinian intifada (uprising), saw over 1,000 Israeli civilian deaths in well over a hundred separate suicide attacks, so the call the 'globalise' it effectively places Jews living outside Israel, including in Britain, in the direct line of fire. Interestingly, the statement 'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free' scores quite similarly to 'Globalise the intifada' although not quite as high – its contentiousness lies in what some regard as its implication that the entire territory to the west of the River Jordan should be the future State of Palestine, thereby effectively erasing any trace of the State of Israel in any part of the area. While many demonstrators expressing this sentiment would argue that this interpretation misrepresents their views, our focus here is on how it is heard by British Jews, and our data indicate that three-quarters experience it as antisemitic.

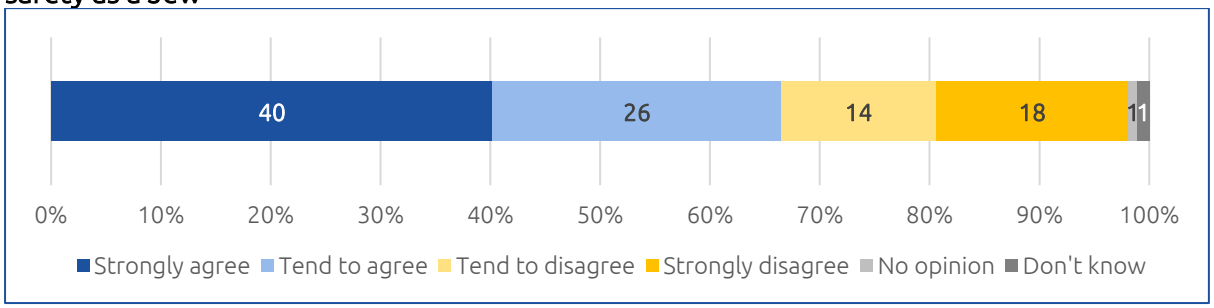
Figure 19. Extent to which British Jews consider slogans expressed at pro-Palestinian demonstrations to be antisemitic or not




Question: *Since the October 7th attacks on Israel and the war in Gaza, many slogans or symbols have been used by people to convey their feelings about the conflict at demonstrations and more widely. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.* Note that in the presentation of each statement in the chart, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed it was antisemitic – e.g. *do you agree or disagree* that ["The phrase 'Free Palestine' is antisemitic"; "Claims that Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinians are antisemitic; etc.] N=4,641.

There are important nuances here, both in terms of flags and slogans, and they strike at the heart of the issue of where freedom of expression crosses over into racism and the promotion of violence and terrorism. Yet beyond the complexities of this question, and indeed most British Jews' belief that pro-Palestinian views should be allowed to be expressed publicly on the streets of Britain, most nonetheless say they would steer clear of demonstrations in support of the cause because they feel threatening. Invited to respond to the statement "I would avoid city centres where demonstrations in support of Palestinians were taking place for fear of my safety as a Jews", two-thirds (66%) agree, compared with one-third (32%) who disagrees (Figure 20). In brief, most British Jews accept that people have a right to peacefully demonstrate against Israel, but most do not experience these protests as peaceful. On the contrary, the demonstrations feel intimidating and hostile to many, and too frequently in their opinion seem to cross over the line from legitimate protest into antisemitism.

Figure 20. Levels of agreement among British Jews with the statement "I would avoid city centres where demonstrations in support of Palestinians were taking place for fear of my safety as a Jew"

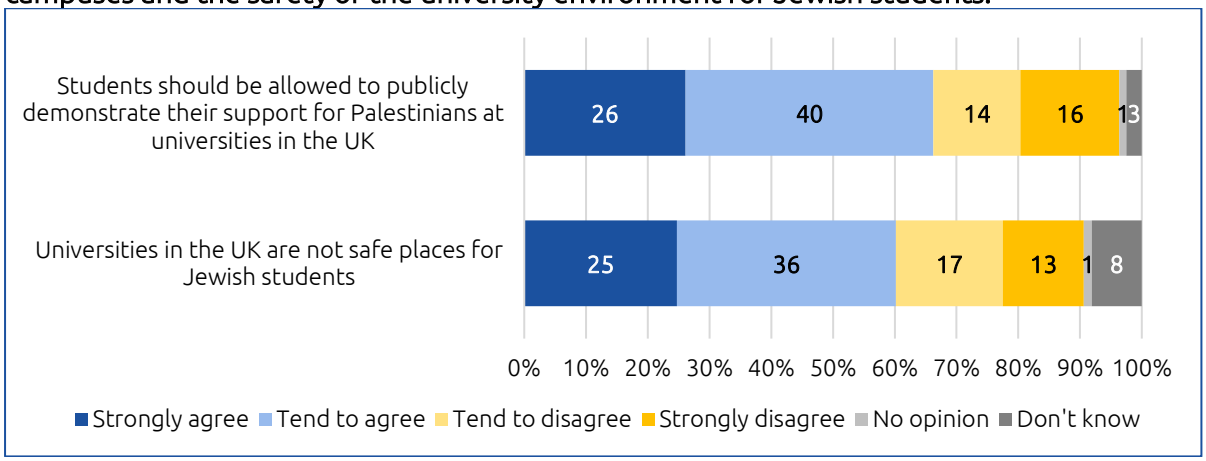



N=4,641.

We find similar views about universities (Figure 21). One of the issues that has been widely discussed among many British Jews since October 7 has been the establishment of temporary 'encampments' on several university campuses expressing solidarity with the Palestinian

cause, yet often simultaneously feeling hostile or threatening to Jews. On the one hand, our study found that a clear majority of British Jews (66%) agrees with the contention that "students should be allowed to publicly demonstrate their support for Palestinians at universities in the UK," although close to a third (30%) disagrees. Yet 61% of British Jews also feel that "universities in the UK are not safe places for Jewish students" – a finding that ought to raise eyebrows among university administrators, irrespective of whether the perception is fair or not.

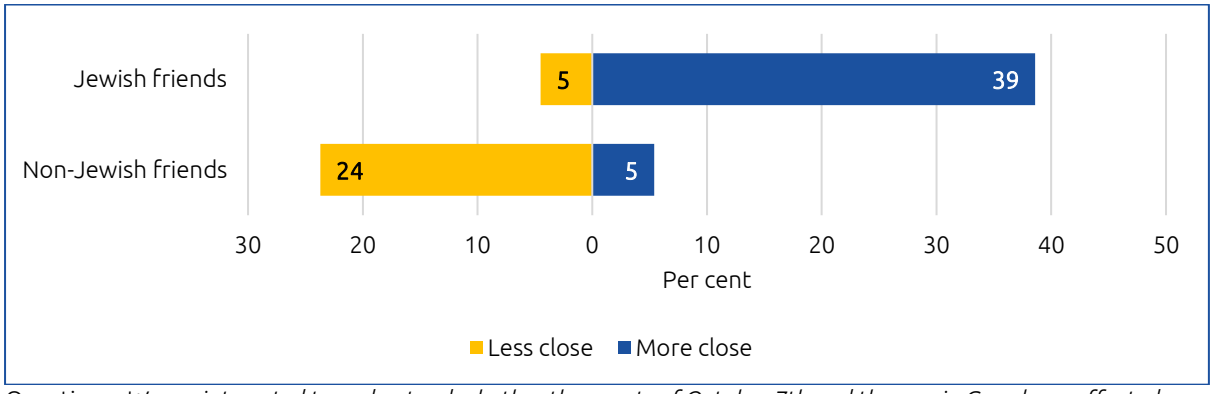
Figure 21. Attitudes of British Jews towards pro-Palestinian demonstrations on university campuses and the safety of the university environment for Jewish students.




N=4,641.

Beyond the broad environments of the media, politics, academia and the street, one also has to consider the closer, more personal social dynamics occurring in people's day-to-day lives. Jews live within British society, and to varying degress have close social contact both with other Jews and non-Jews. The extent to which they immerse themselves in Jewish and/or wider social circles is, in many respects, a reflection of how integrated they feel, or wish to be, and the positions they take in this respect help us to measure these phenomena. In general, British Jews are quite close-knit: our most recent data show that significantly more (56%) report that more than half of their closest friends are Jewish than not Jewish (31%). Measured in this way, little appears to have changed since October 7; indeed, if anything, initial analysis of these data alongside parallel data from before October 7 suggests that British Jews have become very slightly *less* close-knit over the past two years, which is likely the continuation of a longstanding assimilatory trend. Yet when we asked respondents directly about whether the events of October 7 and the war in Gaza have affected their Jewish or non-Jewish social networks in any ways, we found evidence of a distinct shift towards Jewish friends and away from non-Jewish ones. To be clear, many Jews report no significant change in this regard: 49% report no change with regard to their non-Jewish friends, as do 43% with regard to their Jewish ones (not shown graphically). Yet the remainder in each case does report change, and they are considerably more likely to say they feel more close post-October 7 to their Jewish friends (39%) than less close (5%), and more likely to say they feel less close to their non-Jewish friends (24%) than more close (5%) (Figure 21). This seems to indicate that a significant proportion of Jews are experiencing some social distancing from non-Jews who they previously felt quite close to, and finding greater solace and connection in their Jewish social circles. Whilst at an individual level the reasons for this could be many and varied, they reveal something about the inner mental world of British Jews at this time, suggesting a common drive for communal solidarity and togetherness alongside a sense of social discomfort, alienation, or simply feeling misunderstood by wider society.

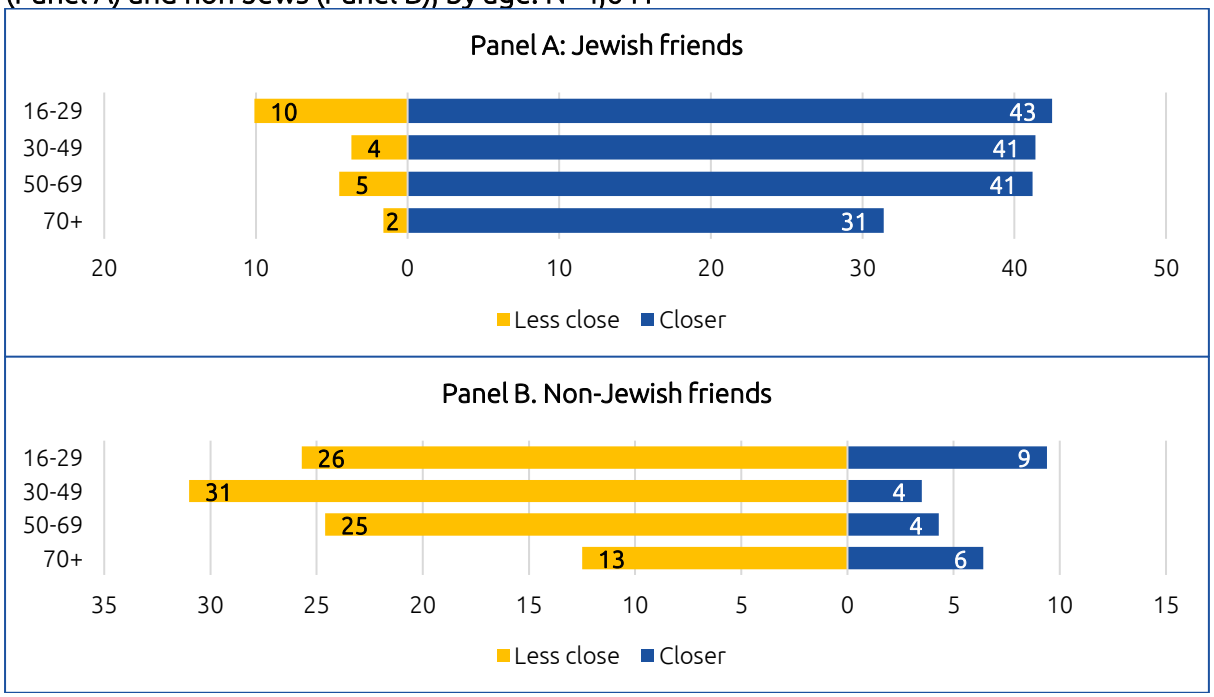
Figure 22. Effects of October 7 and the war in Gaza on British Jews' friendships with Jews and non-Jews




Questions: *We are interested to understand whether the events of October 7th and the war in Gaza have affected your social networks in any ways. Thinking about any non-Jewish friends you had before the October 7th attacks, which of the following statements best captures your overall experience since then?* [Response options: I feel: much closer to my [Jewish] [non-Jewish] friends; somewhat closer; somewhat less close; much less close; closer to some [Jewish] [non-Jewish] and less close to some others; There has been no significant change in how close I feel to my [Jewish] [non-Jewish] friends; Not applicable – I do not have any [Jewish] [non-Jewish] friends. N=4,641.

These dynamics are similar irrespective of which age band we assess (Figure 22). The main difference is that older people are more likely to report no change than younger people, probably a reflection of the strength of long-lasting friendships. Interestingly, it is the 30-49-year age band that reports the strongest likelihood of a negative impact on their non-Jewish friendships. Further analysis is required to understand this, but as we have shown elsewhere, under 50s in wider society are more likely to hold pro-Palestinian sympathies than their elders, and it is possible that Jews in this age band are hearing longstanding friends with whom they have not previously discussed the conflict expressing views they believe to be insensitive, offensive or even antisemitic. At the same time, we should not ignore the one in twenty Jews that feels alienated by other Jews and closer to non-Jews. This is a minority phenomenon, but it is evident nonetheless.

Figure 23. Effects of October 7 and the war in Gaza on British Jews' friendships with Jews (Panel A) and non-Jews (Panel B), by age. N=4,641



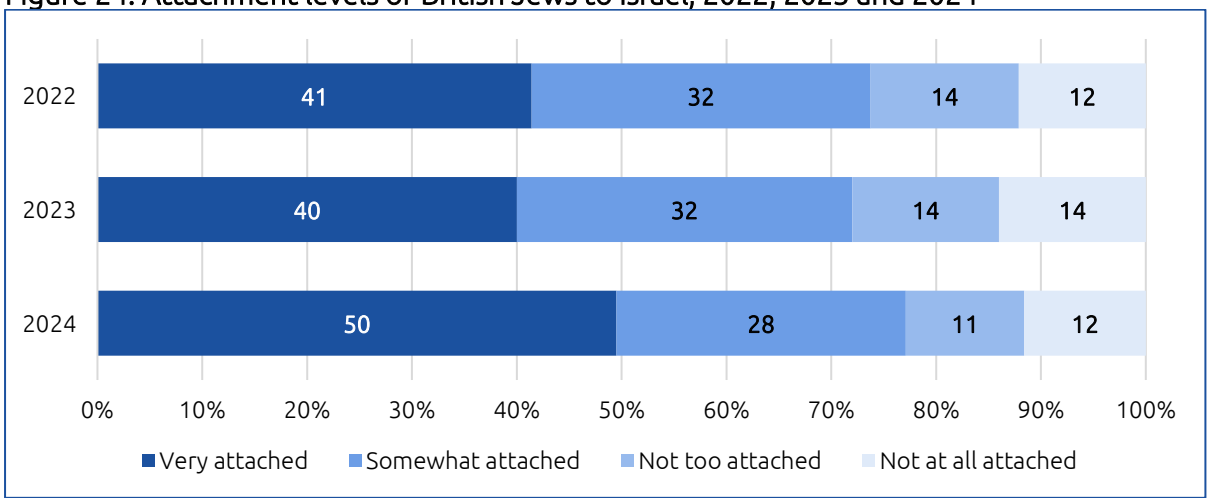

N=4,641.

Yet overall, when one considers the extent to which each of these different realms – the media, politics, academia, the street, and simple day-to-day social interactions – have focused on the Israel-Palestinian conflict since October 7, and that so many Jews report having had at least one personal experience of antisemitism in that period, it should come as no surprise to discover that many British Jews feel rattled at this time. To varying degrees, most appear to be saying that something about their place in Britain has been shaken over the past year. For an ethno-religious minority that has so successfully managed to integrate into British society whilst also maintaining its own sense of Jewishness, this inevitably feels unsettling to many. At the same time, it also raises important questions about how the initial attacks, the war, and the reaction to it may be affecting British Jews' sense of their own Jewishness and relationship to Israel. The next section explores this theme.

## 3 / Connections with Israel and the Jewish community

The question of whether Jews are becoming more or less attached to Israel over time is one that has concerned Jewish community policymakers and researchers for years. Much of the global discussion about this question commonly focuses on American Jews – the largest and most prominent Diaspora Jewish population – and the prevailing consensus about them, and, by association, about all Diaspora Jews, is that 'distancing' is taking place – Jews feel increasingly detached from Israel. Yet this is not what we see happening in Britain. On the contrary, levels of attachment to Israel seem to have been fairly steady in the two years prior to October 7 but have risen significantly since then. Three measures taken in recent years – 2022, 2023 and 2024 – show the stability that seems to have existed in the two years prior to October 7, as well as the shift since then: where about 40% said they felt 'very attached' to Israel previously, our most recent data demonstrate that proportion has climbed to 50% (Figure 24). When we take into account those who say they feel 'somewhat attached' as well, we find levels of 72% immediately prior to October 7 (April/May 2023), rising to 78% since. Whilst these may not appear to be dramatic shifts, this type of swing in such a short amount of time is not only statistically significant, it also represents substantial change. British Jewish opinion has clearly moved since October 7, and may be evolving along a closer, more attached path. At the same time, it is worth noting that there is also evidence that attachment levels to Israel rise during periods of conflict there, so it is entirely possible that the increase seen since October 7 will be a temporary phenomenon.

Figure 24. Attachment levels of British Jews to Israel, 2022, 2023 and 2024

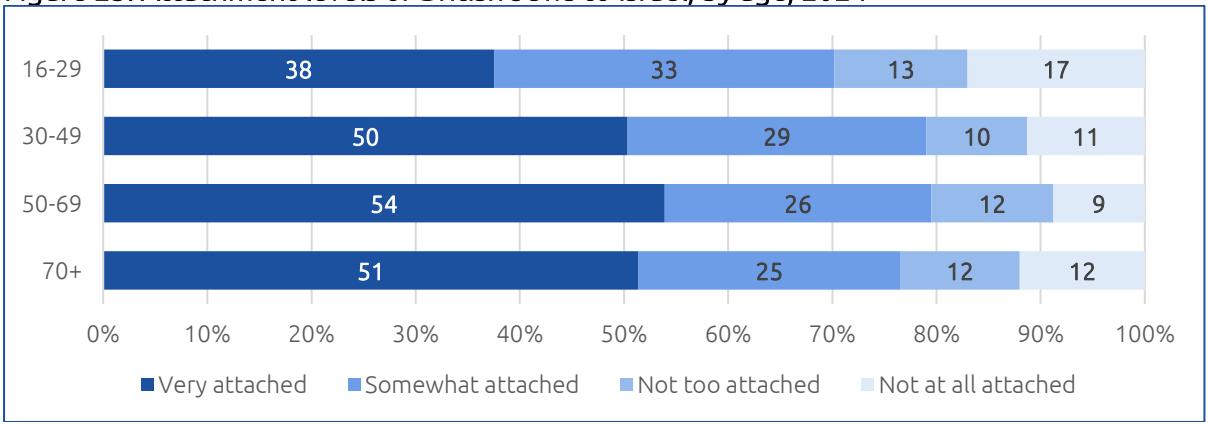



Question: *How emotionally attached are you to Israel?* Ns=4,891 (2022), 3,756 (2023), 4,641 (2024).

That stated, there are some distinctions to note in the most recent data, particularly by age, which may support the distancing hypothesis. Younger Jews are found to feel notably less attached than older Jews (Figure 25), a result which we have also found in data preceding October 7.[19] Whilst this demonstrates lower levels of attachment among young people now, it is not clear whether this is an age or a cohort effect – i.e. whether young people will become more like their elders over time, or whether there is something specific about the younger generation's experiences and attitudes in this regard that they will carry with them through life. Only time will tell, but comparing these most recent data with data from 2022,[20] we find that somewhat higher proportions in all age bands, including the youngest, appear to feel more strongly attached to Israel now than they did previously (not shown graphically).

[19] See: Graham, D. and Boyd, J. (2023). *Jews in the UK today. Key findings from the National Jewish Identity Survey*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, p.93.
[20] Ibid.

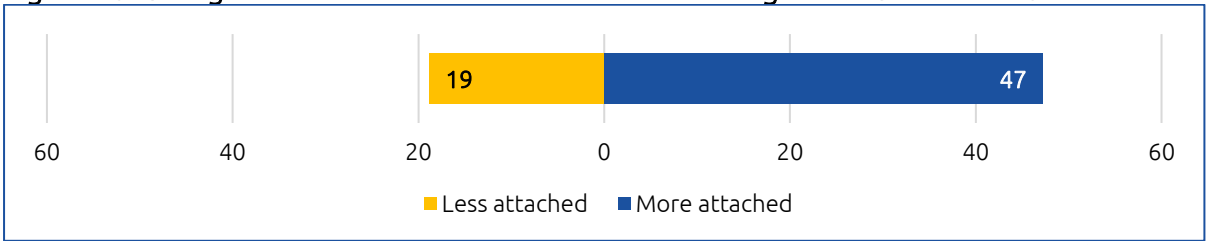
Figure 25. Attachment levels of British Jews to Israel, by age, 2024




Question: *How emotionally attached are you to Israel?* N=4,641.

Further evidence for this shift can also be seen in people's more subjective assessments of change in their attachment levels (Figure 26). Asked to say whether they feel more or less emotionally attached to Israel since October 7 on a five-point scale running from 'much more attached' to 'much less attached' with a no change option in the middle, British Jews were considerably more likely to respond to one of the 'more' attached options (47%) than 'less' attached (19%). The remainder (34%) said there has been no change.

Figure 26. Change in emotional attachment to Israel among British Jews since October 7

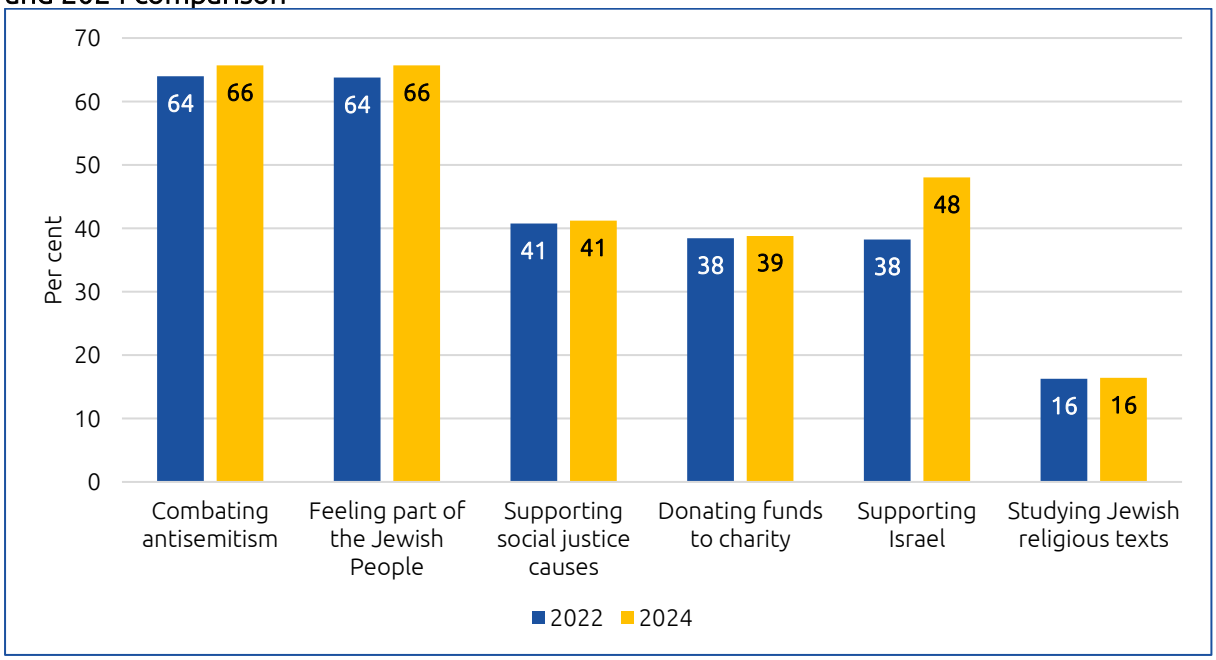



Question: *Compared to how you felt prior to the October 7th attacks on Israel and the war in Gaza, would you say you have become more or less emotionally attached to Israel since then, or has there been no change?* N=4,641.

To some observers, this may seem surprising. Given the extent to which British Jews have been critical of the Israeli government and, to a lesser extent, the military, for the way they have prosecuted the war and managed the hostage crisis (as we saw in section one), one might expect to see the reverse – i.e. that British Jews have felt alienated from Israel because of the war. This is certainly happening for some, but something deeper appears to be going on for most – a sense that the State of Israel is facing a level of threat at present that feels existential. At the time of writing, Israel faces a seven-front war – from Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Iran – with Iranian involvement to various extents in all cases. Indeed, when asked, we found that 85% of British Jews agree with the statement "Iran represents a threat to Israel's existence", and 62% 'strongly agree' (not shown graphically). Moreover, the vast majority of British Jews have close ties to the country: nine in ten have visited Israel at least once, and eight in ten have at least some close friends or family living there, so there are strong personal connections. Further still, Israel constitutes a significant component of people's Jewish identities. Many see it historically as the cradle of Jewish civilisation, the home Jews have yearned for in their prayers and supplications since they were forced to flee from there almost 2,000 years ago, and, since the establishment of the modern State in 1948, as a kind of insurance policy – the country they can always turn to in the event that persecution makes life intolerable for them elsewhere. So as much as the specific details of the present conflict may engender criticism from some Jews, the Jewish relationship with Israel is commonly far deeper and more multifaceted than that.

We see this further when we investigate the extent to which British Jews say that 'supporting Israel' is an important part of their Jewish identity. When we looked at this in 2022, before the October 7 attacks, 68% said this was 'very' (38%) or 'somewhat' (30%) important to how they saw themselves as Jews. In these post-October 7 data, the equivalent figures are 48% ('very') and 23% ('somewhat'). Whilst these combined counts have not changed much since October 7 – rising only slightly from 68% to 71% – the intensity of feeling, captured in the 'very important' results below, certainly has (Figure 27). More importantly, when we look at whether other dimensions of Jewishness have changed over the equivalent period, we find a far more stable picture.[21]

Figure 27. Importance of different dimensions of Jewish identity among British Jews, 2022 and 2024 comparison

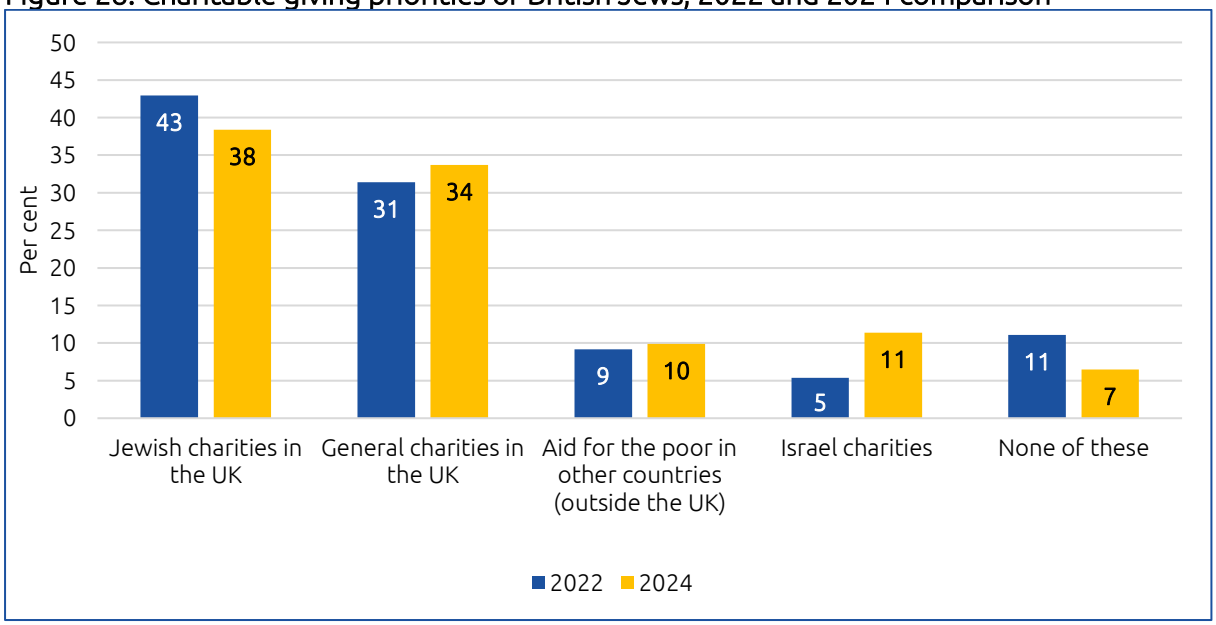



Question: *How important or unimportant are each of the following to how you see yourself as a Jewish person?* Responses: 'Very important.' Ns=4,891 (2022); 4,641 (2024).

This pattern is also seen in changes in respondents' charitable giving priorities between 2022 and 2024. Invited to choose which of four options was their highest priority, we see a clear increase in the case of 'Israel charities' (Figure 28). Whilst in general these constitute a much lower priority for Jews than both Jewish and general charities in the UK, evidence of change is clear. Interestingly, whilst further research is required to more accurately assess this, there also appears to have been a slight increase in the prioritisation of general UK charities and overseas aid, both of which may include support for charities offering care to Palestinians. This is speculative, but given the level of concern expressed by some Jews about the Israeli military's treatment of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, it would not be surprising. It is also worth noting that the prioritisation of Israel charities by British Jews may be coming at the expense of Jewish charities in the UK. A debate has long ensued in the Jewish community about the extent to which charitable funds should be invested in local versus overseas causes, and it is not uncommon for a shift towards Israel to occur during times of stress there, but it can come at the expense of other more local Jewish charitable causes. Whilst these data are not clear evidence of this, they do point to this possibility.

[21] For a more in-dpeth explanation of these measures, see: Graham and Boyd (2024), op. cit. pp.30-36.

Figure 28. Charitable giving priorities of British Jews, 2022 and 2024 comparison



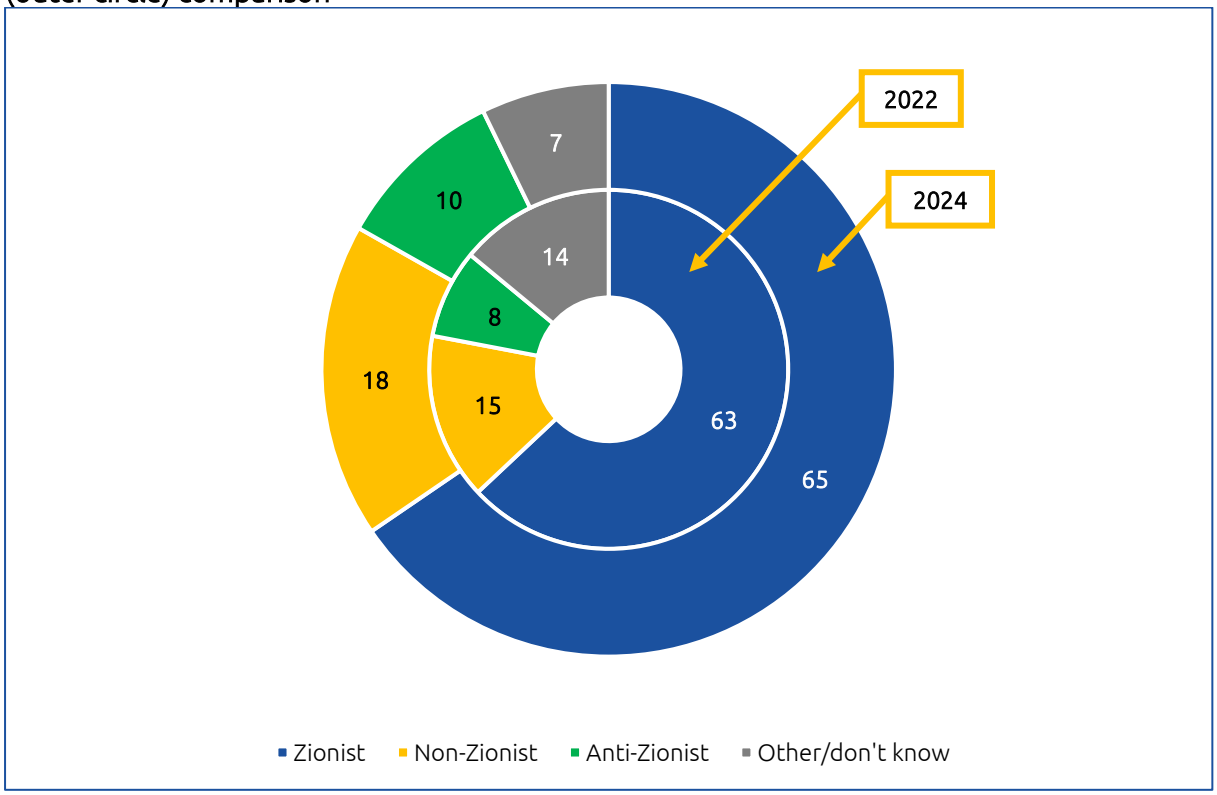

Question: *To which of the following, if any, do you give the highest priority?* Ns=4,891 (2022), 4,641 (2024).

Thus overall, we are picking up evidence of a small but notable shift in British Jewish sentiment towards Israel – higher levels of emotional attachment, increased importance of it as a component of contemporary Jewishness, and greater prioritisation of it as a charitable cause. Whether this is a temporary shift or a more permanent one remains to be seen, but we may also be seeing the same phenomenon in the proportions of British Jews self-identifying as Zionists. In our recent study of British identity – the 2022 National Jewish Identity Survey – we noted that fewer British Jews (63%) identified in this way in 2022 than did so when we measured it a decade or so earlier (72%). Although very few comparable data points exist to assess this, it is reasonable to assume that this has been the direction of travel.[22] Thus, the finding in the present survey that 65% self-identify in this way may indicate a reversal of a long-term trend, in line with the shift in other evidence already presented. However, in this regard, two other changes may also have occurred. First, the proportion of those identifying as *anti*-Zionist has also increased – from 8% to 10%. Again, this is not a dramatic change, but it may indicate that the small minority of British Jews holding this perspective has increased slightly since October 7. Not dissimilarly, the proportion of *non*-Zionists has also grown, from 15% to 18%. However, second, we also observe a more notable change in those who are unsure whether they are a Zionist or not – that proportion has *fallen*, from 14% in 2022 to just 7% in 2024. The implication appears to be that views on this issue have crystalised somewhat in the year since the October 7 attacks; there is less uncertainty, and it is distinctly possible that those who were previously unsure are more likely to have moved in a non- or anti-Zionist direction than a Zionist one.[23] Based on this indicator, it may be that the October 7 attacks and war in Gaza have been something of a clarifying experience for British Jews, and we are seeing signs of greater polarisation among them as a result – movement both in a more Zionist and in a non- or anti-Zionist direction.

[22] That said, a 2015 study found that 59% of British Jews self-identified as a Zionist at that time, so levels may be fluctuating over time. See: Miller, S., Harris, M. and Shindler, C. (2015). *The attitudes of British Jews towards Israel*. City University London. Note that methodological differences between different studies make comparisons complex, and a forthcoming JPR report on British Jewish attitudes to Israel will provide a more robust assessment of change over time.

[23] Further analysis is required to fully assess this, so this remains a hypothesis at this stage.

Figure 29. Proportions of British Jews self-identifying as Zionist, 2022 (inner circle) and 2024 (outer circle) comparison

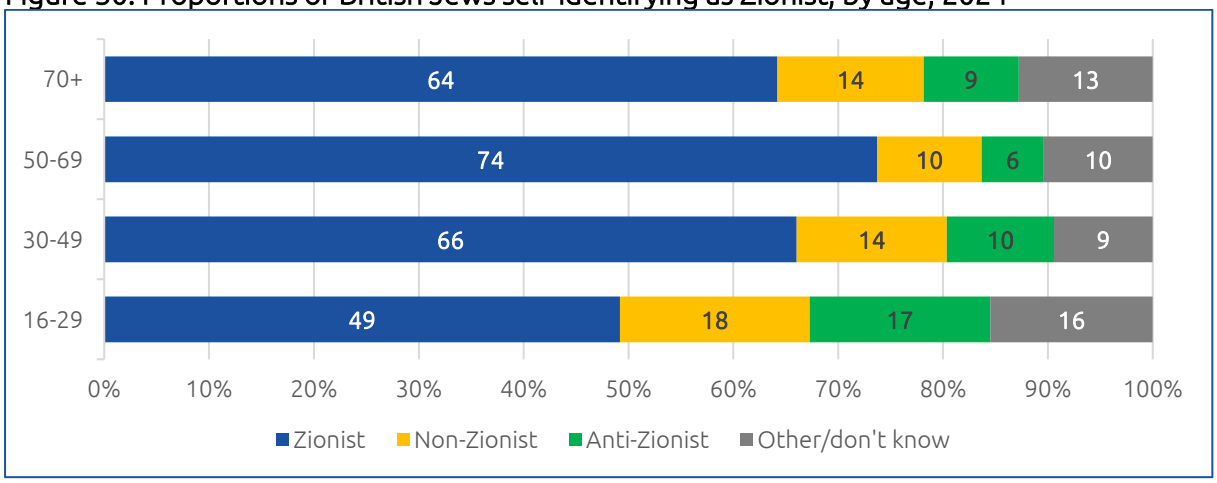



Questions: *Although there are different opinions about what the term Zionism means, in general, do you consider yourself to be a Zionist?* [Response options: Yes; No; Don't know]. If No/Don't know: *You said you do not consider yourself to be a Zionist or do not know if you are. Which of the following is closest to your position?* [Response options: I am an anti-Zionist; I am a non-Zionist; I am not sure what Zionism means; Don't know; Other (please specify)]. Ns=4,891 (2022), 4,641 (2024).

Analysing responses to this question by age, we again find evidence of younger people being less likely than their elders to hold the more overtly pro-Israel position. However, there are important sociodemographic reasons for this – *Haredi* (Strictly Orthodox) Jews have a much younger age profile than non-*Haredi* Jews and tend to be far more ambivalent about the concept of Zionism than other Jews. Yet importantly, this is largely for theological reasons rather than political ones;[24] when we measure their levels of emotional attachment to Israel, they score notably higher than most other Jewish denominational groups. Indeed, this dissonance between identifying as a Zionist and feeling attached to Israel can be seen among other Jews too – many of those opting not to identify as a Zionist are not rejecting the concept of a Jewish State *per se*, but are rather expressing strong criticism of the current Israel government. Total ideological rejection of a Jewish State in the ancestral homeland of the Jewish People – the literal meaning of anti-Zionism – is rare among British Jews, even among those who self-identify as anti-Zionist.

[24] In brief, many Hasidic groups have tended to reject Zionism on the grounds that Jews are bound by 'three oaths' discussed in the Talmud – not to ascend to the Land of Israel as a collective using force; not to rebel against the nations of the world; and not to invite persecution from non-Jews. In contrast, 'Lithuanian' (non-Hasidic) Haredi Jews are more likely to oppose Zionism on the grounds that it is a secular endeavour that encourages non-religious expressions of Jewishness. At the same time, some Haredim hold far more conciliatory views, and there are Haredi political parties serving fully in the Israeli Knesset (parliament). In our data, we find that British Haredi Jews who don't self-identify as Zionist, are much more likely to say they are 'non-Zionist' than 'anti-Zionist'.

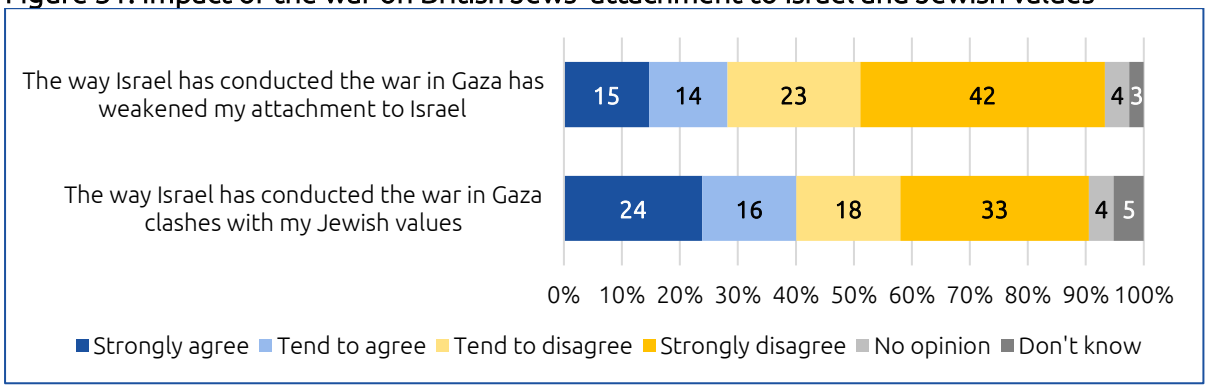
Figure 30. Proportions of British Jews self-identifying as Zionist, by age, 2024




N=4,641.

Whilst the adoption of an anti-Zionist position is uncommon among British Jews, one should not downplay the negative effect of Israel's management of the war on many British Jews' feelings of attachment to Israel. Presented with the contention "The way Israel has conducted the war has weakened my attachment to Israel," 29% agreed, 15% strongly so, compared to two-thirds (65%) who disagreed (Figure 31). Even more strikingly, 40% agreed with the statement "The way Israel has conducted the war in Gaza clashes with my Jewish values" (24% strongly so), a lower proportion than those who disagreed with it (51%), but not dramatically so. Thus, alongside the notable emotional shift towards Israel among most, there is also clear evidence that the war has raised difficult moral questions for many Jews that for some at least, is taking a toll in terms of their connections not only to Israel but to how they understand the nature of their Jewishness. Yet we can speculate that underlying all of this is a sense that the October 7 attacks, the war in Gaza and all of its repercussions in Britain have created a terribly difficult situation that no one wanted and for which there are no clear answers. Many British Jews, it seems, are genuinely torn – emotionally, intellectually, ideologically and ethically.

Figure 31. Impact of the war on British Jews' attachment to Israel and Jewish values

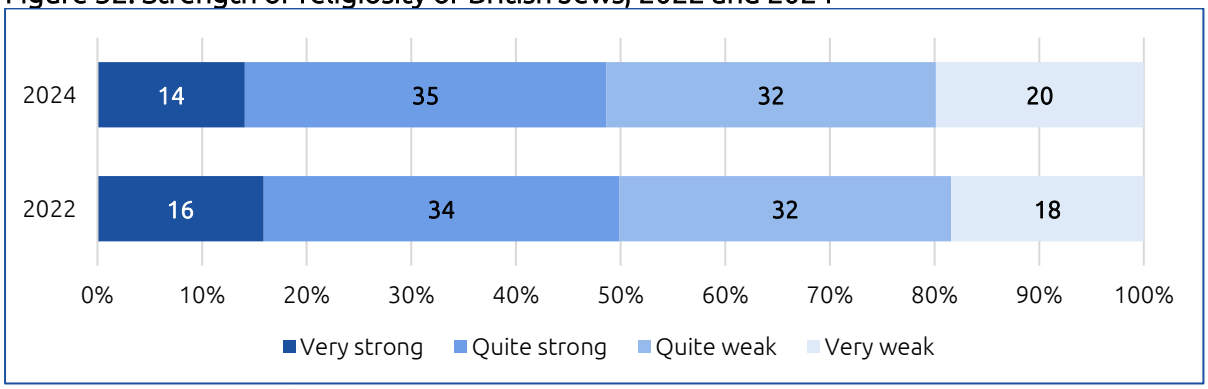



N=4,641.

Given the dissonance that some feel between their Jewish values and the ways in which the Israeli government has prosecuted the war, a question emerges about how post-October 7 realities have affected British Jews' relationship with their Jewishness and the organised Jewish community. As Figure 32 shows, we see no notable overall change in people's levels

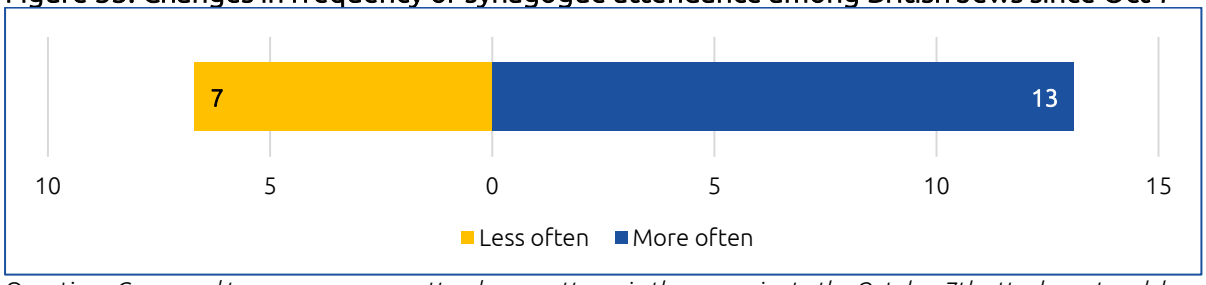
of religiosity between 2022 and 2024 – if anything, it may have declined slightly in line with an existing, long-term assimilatory trend – but in general, the war does not appear to have affected this dimension of Jewishness. The picture is not dissimilar in terms of synagogue attendance (Figure 33) – most (four in five) either report no change in how frequently they have attended a synagogue since October 7 (56%), or they did not normally attend synagogue before October 7 anyway and still don't (25%) (not shown graphically). However, of those who do report some change, about twice as many say they are attending more often (13%) than less often (7%), probably reflecting their need for solidarity and community at this time. Anecdotally, many synagogues reported higher than usual attendance levels in the weeks immediately following October 7, but if this was the case, it does not seem to have prevailed over time in a significant way.

Figure 32. Strength of religiosity of British Jews, 2022 and 2024




Question: *How would you describe your current level of religiosity?* Ns=4,891 (2022), 4,641 (2024).

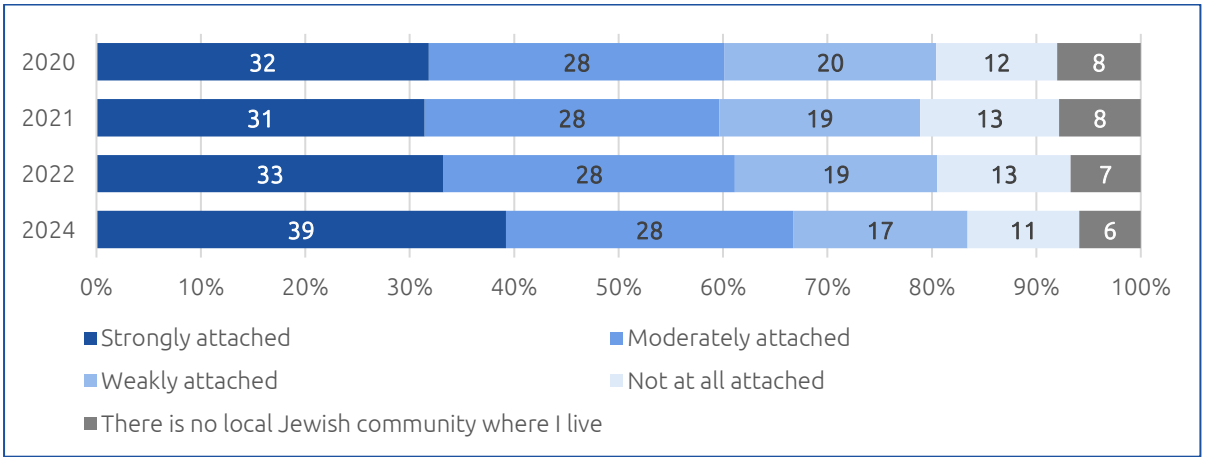
Figure 33. Changes in frequency of synagogue attendance among British Jews since Oct 7




Question: *Compared to your synagogue attendance patterns in the year prior to the October 7th attacks on Israel, how, if at all, have your attendance patterns changed in the months since then?* [Response options: I have attended synagogue much more often; somewhat more often; somewhat less often; much less often; no change to my pattern of attendance at synagogue; I do not normally attend synagogue; Not sure]. N=4,641.

Yet we do find a notable shift in general levels of attachment to the Jewish community (Figure 34). We have measured this in a consistent way in three previous surveys in 2020, 2021 and 2022, and in each of those found strikingly similar results. Yet the data from 2024 are different – given the previous stability (31%-33% said they felt 'strongly attached'), a finding of 39% represents significant change. Importantly, the question is not specific in its definition of 'local Jewish community' – respondents could interpret it to mean their attachment levels to their local synagogue, or to a Jewish organisation with which they are involved, or to the mainstream organised community as a whole, or indeed to a looser, more informal sense of the community of Jewish people with whom they feel connected. It is also a less concrete measure than synagogue attendance; it reflects more of a feeling than a behaviour. So it is probably best understood as a notable inwards turn – an increase in feeling close to, and having a need for, the sense of solidarity that comes from being connected to Jewish community, as we previously saw in the data about Jewish and non-Jewish friends (Figures 22 and 23).

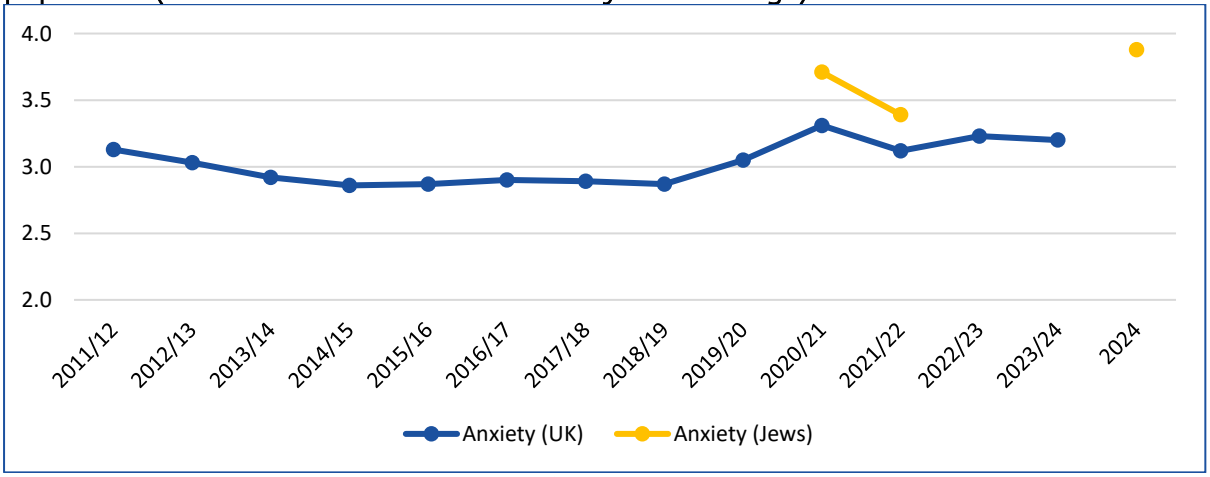
Figure 34. Levels of attachment to 'local Jewish community' among British Jews, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2024




Question: *How attached (or otherwise) do you currently feel to your local Jewish community?* Ns=6,983 (2020), 4,152 (2021), 4,891 (2022), 4,641 (2024).

It is distinctly possible that this shift reflects something about the mental state of British Jews at this time. In its work, the UK Office for National Statistics regularly uses a standard module of questions to assess the wellbeing of the British population as a whole, and where possible in recent years JPR has run the same module among British Jews. One of the four indicators used focuses on anxiety – using a scale running from 0 (not at all anxious) to 10 (completely anxious), the question asks "Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?" Figure 35 shows the 'mean' level of anxiety for the British population as a whole in each year between 2011/12 and 2023/24 (blue line) and the equivalent levels for the British Jewish population in the years for which data exist: 2020/21, 2021/22, and 2024. As can be seen, levels of anxiety among Jews were found to be somewhat higher than for the wider population in 2020/21 and 2021/22, and whilst no national comparator has yet been published for 2024/25, it seems improbable that this emerging trend will be different. Indeed, the mean score for British Jews in the most recent data (3.88) is notably higher than the two previous assessments (3.71 in 2020/21, when national levels were higher than usual during the Covid-19 pandemic; and 3.39 in 2021/22).

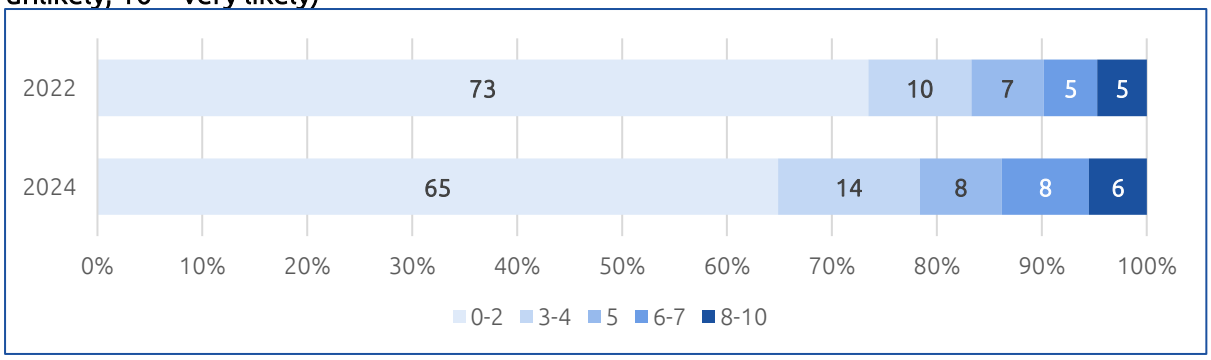
Figure 35. Levels of anxiety in the British Jewish population compared to the national British population (0 to 10 scale where 0 = low anxiety and 10 = high)




Question: *Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?* [Response scale: 0 = not at all anxious, 10 = completely anxious]. Note that the scale in the figure is truncated to make the results easier to see. National data comes from the Annual Population Survey conducted quarterly by the Office for National Statistics among a sample of 320,000 individuals and 150,000 households. Data on Jews in the UK comes from JPR surveys; ns=4,152 (2021), 4,891 (2022), 4,641 (2024).

It has not been uncommon to see sensationalist headlines in the media, both before October 7 and since, claiming that large proportions of British Jews are on the verge of leaving the country as a result of their anxieties about antisemitism in the UK.[25] There is no evidence to indicate that a migratory wave of this type is happening – on the contrary, emigration levels among British Jews are low and stable, and have been for several decades. On the one hand, the level of migration to Israel from the UK for the nine months following October 7 is up by 18% on the equivalent nine-month period in 2022/23, but it is also down by 19% on the equivalent period for 2021/22. And the numbers are small in each case – in the range of about 310 to 450. So certainly, at this stage, based on data running over many years, nothing unusual is occurring. However, our survey data suggest that something rather more subtle may be happening, very much in line with the perceptible shift in attitudes more generally. JPR surveys regularly track how likely British Jews say they are to emigrate to Israel 'in the next five years' on a scale running from 0 (extremely unlikely) to 10 (extremely likely). Readings from surveys conducted in 2022 and 2024 suggest that a small shift has occurred – the mean score was 1.74 (2022) and is now 2.18 (2024). Figure 36 shows the proportions of British Jews who situated themselves at five different points along the scale, and as can be seen, where 73% scored themselves at 0-2 (the very unlikely end of the scale) in 2022, this has fallen to 65% in the most recent data. A far less substantial change has occurred at the other 'very likely' end of the scale (5% in 2022; 6% in 2024). Looking at these findings in the context of the survey results as a whole, our best interpretation of them is that they point to a mood change rather than anything more tangible at this stage. British Jews feel rattled, and this is yet another piece of empirical data demonstrating this.

Figure 36. Likelihood of British Jews emigrating to Israel in the 'next five years' (0 = very unlikely; 10 = very likely)




2022 vs 2024. Ns=4,891 (2022), 4,641 (2024).

Bringing these various results together, we can see that something indeed appears to have changed for British Jews since October 7. Multiple indicators show a small but notable overall shift has taken place towards embracing Israel more strongly than before October 7. Despite some of the political misgivings outlined in section one of this paper, we see this in terms of emotional attachment to Israel, the place of Israel in Jewish identity, donating money to Israel, and the likelihood of making 'aliyah' (emigrating to Israel). In addition, we see an increase in feelings of attachment to the local Jewish community, which is less a reflection of increased

[25] See, for examples: 'Half of British Jews have considered leaving the UK amid a 'staggering' rise in discrimination, the organisers of a march against antisemitism in London have revealed' (*LBC*, 26 November 2023); 'Is there a future for Jews in the UK? Many consider leaving – analysis' (*Jerusalem Post*, 27 March 2024); 'Nearly 40 per cent of British Jews would 'seriously consider' emigrating if Corbyn became PM (*Jewish Chronicle*, 5 September 2018); 'Most British Jews feel they have no future in Europe' (*Reuters*, 14 January 2015); 'One in three British Jews has considered leaving the UK in the last two years (*Politics Home*, 20 August 2017).

religiosity, and more a case of a need for Jewish solidarity, support and understanding at a time when many British Jews feel somewhat under siege. None of the observed shifts are dramatic, and they may or may not revert to their pre-October 7 levels in time, but as anxiety levels appear to have increased slightly, Israel simply seems to matter more to most at this time than it did prior to the October 7 attacks. Whilst certainly there are plenty of individual exceptions to this overarching characterisation, it captures the most common mood.

## / Summary and conclusions

In this report, we have shared some of the main top line findings from the JPR Jewish Current Affairs Survey – a major study of British Jewish opinion on Israel, antisemitism and Jewish life conducted nine months after the October 7 attacks on Israel and during the subsequent war in Gaza. We stress that the findings here should not be viewed as an empirical or objective assessment of the issues discussed; they rather simply reflect the mental world of British Jews today – what they think, feel and believe. We also stress that any changes observed over time should be treated as indicative: more detailed analysis of the data will allow for more robust comparisons to be drawn.

In our exploration of British Jews' views about key Israeli politicians and how they have prosecuted the war, we find quite high levels of concern about the political choices and direction of the Israel government: six in ten feel that it has not done enough to release hostages, and over half think it could have done more in terms of providing humanitarian aid to Gazans. We also find widespread concerns about Israel's political shift rightwards: British Jews overwhelmingly disapprove of Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir, the hard-right members of the coalition, and approval ratings for Benjamin Netanyahu are only marginally better – about three in four agree with the contention that he is prioritising his own personal interests over those of the State of Israel as a whole. We also observe a striking decline in British Jews' faith in Israel's democracy – where in 2010 80% felt that democracy in Israel was alive and well, today that proportion is barely 50%.

British Jews express more forgiving views about the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) – most (57%) think it has operated within the bounds of humanitarian law, and more are likely to agree with the contention that the IDF is "the most moral army in world" (46%), than to disagree with it (37%). They are more split on whether they believe the army has done enough to protect Palestinian civilians in Gaza – 48% think it has, 45% think it has not – and as of June/July 2024 when these data were collected, they are more likely to think the IDF's military action has not been successful so far (49%) than it has been (40%).

That stated, overall, British Jews are more likely to feel proud of Israel than to feel ashamed, although there is no overwhelming sense either way across the population: 29% say they have felt 'very proud' of Israel and 44% say they have not felt ashamed at all, but at the same time 33% say they have felt at least 'somewhat' ashamed, and 28% say that not felt proud of Israel at all. Whilst younger people are more likely to feel a sense of shame than older people, all age bands are more likely to feel pride in Israel than shame.

However, perhaps the key emotion that has eroded over time is a sense of hope. British Jews are far less likely to believe in a two-state solution today than they were when we last measured opinion on this issue in 2010 (only 54% do so today, compared to 77% in 2010), and far fewer believe that the Palestinians genuinely want peace with Israel (26% today vs 47% in 2010), although one in five does not know either way. British Jews are generally more dovish on this issue than Israelis, but if the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is two states for two people, as UK Government policy states, many British Jews are less than fully convinced.

Yet it is important to consider what 'most Jews' means. The data in this report relate to the Jewish population as a whole – i.e. anyone who self-identifies as Jewish. But there are important differences between this group as a collective, and the subset of them that is communally affiliated or engaged. The latter group is more fundamentally supportive of Israel and more politically hawkish. Looking at the Jewish population as a whole, there is a clear divide along religious lines – the mainstream Orthodox to the religious right tend to be more politically conservative on all of these issues; the progressive, secular and unaffiliated tend to be much more politically liberal.

Beyond the political assessments of British Jews, the survey also investigated how secure British Jews feel in the UK since October 7, and we found a significant shift in this regard. The vast majority (83%) thinks antisemitism is a problem in the UK (the highest proportion we have recorded since we first started gathering data on this issue in 2012), and they are far more likely to feel less safe as a Jew, and less confident in displaying their Jewishness openly, since October 7. Most – about four in five – sense they are being held responsible by non-Jews for Israel's actions in some way, which likely fuels a common feeling of discomfort and alienation.

There is also a common feeling that something has changed for Jews in the ether. The ways in which the conflict has been reported in the media and discussed in public are affecting many people's sense of their place in Britain – almost six in ten (59%) agree with the contention "public and media criticism of Israel make me feel Jews are not welcome in the UK." Trust levels in the BBC are particularly low. Politically, British Jews were notably more likely to vote Labour than Conservative in the 2024 General Election, yet overall, they are more likely to trust Conservative Party policy on Israel and the Middle East and on combating antisemitism, than they are to trust Labour Party policy on these issues.

The large-scale pro-Palestinian demonstrations that have taken place across the country have also left their mark. Most Jews recognise people's right to protest on this issue, but there is widespread concern about the tendency among some demonstrators to express views that either openly support terrorism or, implicitly or explicitly dismiss Israel's right to exist. Irrespective of the underlying motives of demonstrators – and clearly these differ from individual to individual – the extent to which Israel stands condemned at these protests makes most Jews (66%) steer clear of them – they feel intimidating, alienating and hostile. Jews hold similar views about university campus demonstrations: they broadly accept students' right to protest, but six-in-ten either strongly agree or tend to agree that British universities are not safe places for Jewish students.

These developments in Britain are also having an impact on Jewish people's social lives. Whilst there are numerous exceptions at the individual level, overall British Jews have become closer to their Jewish friends and less close to their non-Jewish friends – a very real sign that the wider world feels more hostile while the Jewish world feels more safe.

How is all of this impacting British Jews' attachments to Israel and their local Jewish community? Despite quite widespread reservations about the way in which the Israeli government has prosecuted the war, on average British Jews feel closer to Israel now than they did before October 7. More feel attached to the country now, more see it as a core part of their Jewish identity, and more are likely to be supporting it in terms of their charitable giving. This points to the deep relationship between many British Jews and Israel – nine-in-ten have visited the country at least once and eight-in-ten has at least one close friend or family member living there. Perhaps, as British society feels less secure, the fundamental need for a Jewish State has become more apparent to many Jews. Yet this is not a one-way street: close to a third (29%) say that the way Israel has conducted the war has weakened their attachment to Israel, and even more (40%) say Israel's conduct clashes in some way with their Jewish values.

Notwithstanding this, we are seeing signs of Jews seeking out solidarity within the Jewish community – they are more likely to be attending synagogue than less (although the vast majority report no change in this at all), and we observe a notable uptick in their feelings of attachment to their local Jewish community. This, in part, is driven by anxiety – Jews are more likely than British people in general to feel anxious today; indeed, the anxiety levels found among Jews in mid-2024 were higher than other comparable recent counts. Jews are not choosing to migrate from the UK at abnormally high levels – there are no data to suggest that at this stage (although this needs to be monitored carefully as it takes time for people to activate such a move) – but a small mood change has occurred around this issue too.

In the final analysis, while British Jews are in no way monolithic, the events of October 7, the war in Gaza and all of its repercussions in Britain and around the world, have unquestionably left a scar on the vast majority. Whilst many express criticism of how the Israeli government has prosecuted the war and handled the hostage crisis, there is also a sense that for most, Israel matters more to them now than it did prior to October 7. Due in large part to the ways in which Israel, the war and the wider conflict have been reported, represented and discussed in public forums, many British Jews feel somewhat under siege – that they are living in a country that feels like a more hostile, less understanding and accommodating place than most have ever previously experienced. As a result, they are turning inwards – seeking out the solidarity that comes from Jewish friends and community. A mood change has occurred, and whilst few are likely to emigrate, many feel rattled – more anxious, unsettled, wary and cautious of being themselves for fear of what animosity it may bring. It's not a comfortable feeling.

## / Methodological notes

The JPR Jewish Current Affairs Survey (JCAS) was conducted using the JPR Jewish Population Research Panel, our core research mechanism for exploring the attitudes and experiences of Jews in the UK on a variety of issues. The panel contains over 12,000 individuals who are UK residents aged 16 or above who self-identify as Jewish. The 2024 data presented here are based on 4,641 individuals who participated in JCAS, which was conducted between 14 June and 14 July 2024. Respondents completed the questionnaire online, by computer, smartphone or tablet, or in a handful of cases, by telephone. The questionnaires were developed by JPR, drawing on a range of existing surveys, and were programmed in-house using Forsta software. The survey data were cleaned and weighted to adjust for the age, sex and geographical distribution of the Jewish population based on the 2021 Census, and on information about Jewish denomination based on a combination of administrative and JPR survey data. Statistical analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS.

Data from previous years come from other surveys conducted by JPR using a very similar methodology and weighting strategy, albeit drawing on earlier census data (2011 or 2001) as required. Data for 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 are all drawn from JPR panel surveys conducted in those years: Ns and fieldwork dates for each were 6,983 (July/August 2020); 4,152 (July/August 2021); 4,891 (November/December 2022); and 3,767 (April/May 2023). Data prior to 2020 comes from three surveys conducted by JPR in 2010, 2012 and 2018. Convenience samples were built in each case using the mailing lists of a range of Jewish communal organisations, carefully selected and managed to reach into different parts of the Jewish population by age, sex, geography and denomination, and snowballing methods were utilised to help access particularly hard-to-reach Jewish subpopulations. Data were subsequently cleaned and weighted to adjust for the age, sex and geographical distribution of the Jewish population based on available UK census data, and on information about Jewish denomination based on a combination of administrative and JPR survey data. Statistical analysis in each case was carried out using IBM SPSS. The 2010 survey was a study of British Jewish attitudes towards Israel conducted in January and February 2010 (n=4,081); full details of the methodology can be found in this report. The 2012 and 2018 surveys were conducted by a JPR-Ipsos team on behalf of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), and as part of multinational studies of Jewish people's perceptions and experiences of antisemitism. The UK sample sizes were 1,468 (2012) and 4,731 (2018); further methodological details can be found here (2012) and here (2018).

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## / About the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR)

The Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) is a London-based research organisation, consultancy and think-tank. It aims to advance the prospects of Jewish communities in the United Kingdom and across Europe by conducting research and informing policy development in dialogue with those best placed to influence Jewish life positively. Web: www.jpr.org.uk.

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