

New survey of Orthodox Jews shows vast differences in attitudes toward Zionism

'Has your approach to Zionism changed since October 7?' surveyers asked



A man at a March for Israel on Nov. 14, 2023. Photo by Drew Angerer/Getty Images.



By **Jacob Kornbluh**

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Orthodox Jews in the U.S. have embraced Zionism more strongly since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel, but groups within Orthodoxy hold widely divergent views on the subject, a survey published Monday shows.

The survey, conducted via web by Nishma Research, a marketing firm that specializes in Orthodox demographics, found that 94% of Modern Orthodox respondents, compared with 51% of Haredi Jews, identify as Zionists.

And 40% of the Modern Orthodox, compared to 24% of the Haredi, report that their Zionist feelings have intensified since Oct. 7, with many noting their emotional connection to the victims of Oct. 7 and the security challenges Israel faces.

The poll also distinguished between respondents' feelings about Zionism — the idea that there should be a Jewish state in the homeland of the ancient Jews — and Israel. Though many Haredi do not identify as Zionists, 83% expressed a “very strong emotional connection” to Israel, just slightly lower than the 87% of Modern Orthodox who reported these feelings.

The authors surveyed 1,307 Orthodox Jewish adults, 95% of whom reside in the U.S. They grouped respondents into three categories: Modern Orthodox; Haredi — including both Hasidic and Yeshivish Jews, who belong to a sect or follow particular rabbi — and the New York-based Hasidic Satmar sect, whose adherents believe that no Jewish state may be established until the Messiah comes.

Only 33 Satmars participated in the survey, but about three-quarters expressed anti-Zionist sentiments, with 30% reporting an increase in anti-Zionist feelings since Oct. 7. Among the reasons they gave for feeling more opposed to Zionism: the failure of the Israeli government to protect Jews, and the provocations of right-wing Israeli minister Itamar Ben-Gvir.

The survey, conducted from Jan. 11-28, had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. About 10% of American Jews identify as Orthodox, and adhere most strictly to religious laws. Among them Modern Orthodox Jews are the most integrated into wider society.

The survey found broad support for the Israel's military campaign's goal of eliminating Hamas in Gaza, where more than 28,000 Palestinians have been killed according to Gaza's health ministry.

The survey also asked about Haredi Jews in the Israel Defense Forces. A record number volunteered after Oct. 7, though they consider Torah study most important for young men and are exempt from service.

Biden vs. Trump

The poll also revealed almost no change in attitudes towards President Joe Biden despite his strong show of support for Israel in recent months.

Biden maintained a 60%-40% lead over former President Donald Trump among Modern Orthodox voters, similar to the level of support he received in a September poll. Meanwhile, 92% of Haredim support Trump, a 3% increase since 2020.

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