

Poll: Jews back party more than Obama

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Jews are backing Barack Obama based primarily on traditional identification with the Democratic Party, a new study finds.

The support has less to do with the the presidential candidates' positions on issues or other factors, according to the report released Monday by the Berman Jewish Policy Archive at New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service.

The report attempted to determine why Jews supported Obama by 30 percentage points more than non-Jewish whites did in simultaneous polls taken in early September.


The poll of 1,596 Jews was taken by Synovate shortly after the Republican Party convention and before all four debates and the stock market decline.

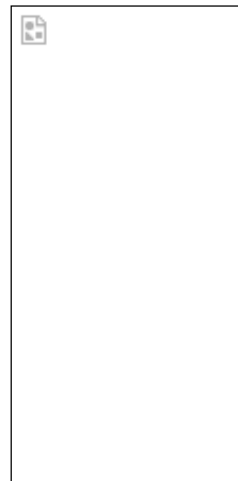
It found Jews favoring Obama over McCain by a 51-25 percent margin, with 24 percent undecided -- which the authors reconfigured to a 67-33 margin for Obama after throwing out the undecided voters and counting only those who had made a decision. A similar process found 37 percent of non-Jewish whites backing the Democrat.

The report finds that such a discrepancy could not be explained by differences in education or income, or by their stands on issues. For example, the study found that Jews are about as equally concerned with social welfare issues -- health care, education and poverty -- as non-Jewish whites and Hispanics and less concerned than blacks.

Instead, the report states support for Obama can best be explained by Jews' "historic, passionate, and high significant commitment to the Democratic Party and the liberal camp in America" -- with the numbers finding that Jews are "excessively" connected to the party and and a liberal political identity.

"I was surprised," said Hebrew Union College professor and Berman Archive director Steven M. Cohen, one of three authors of the study. "I thought Jews were voting more in line with issue orientation." But Jews, he said, "do not look like extreme liberals" when one looks at their stands on issues.

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Israel fell in the middle -- eighth out of 15 -- when Jews were asked how to rate their issues of importance. Those who rated Israel more important also were more likely to back McCain.

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