

**PERCEPTIONS OF ISRAEL
AND AMERICAN JEWS**

**Findings of
the May 1990 Roper Poll**

David Singer
Renaë Cohen



David Singer, Ph.D., is Director of the Department of Research and Publications for the American Jewish Committee and editor of the *American Jewish Year Book*.

Renaë Cohen, Ph.D., is a Research Analyst in the AJC's Department of Research and Publications.

+
E
124
.JS
SS4592
1990

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY LIBRA

INTRODUCTION

As part of its ongoing research activities, the American Jewish Committee has been conducting regular probes of the attitudes of the American public toward Israel and American Jews. Since 1984 this work has been carried out in conjunction with the Roper Organization, which has fielded a battery of AJC "proprietary" questions once each year**--January 1984; April/May 1985; June 1986; February 1987; April 1988; April 1989; May 1990.

The findings reported here are from a Roper poll conducted between May 12 and May 19, 1990. The AJC sought to use the poll as a vehicle for gauging the ongoing response of the American public to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Palestinian issue in particular.

In conducting the poll, the Roper Organization interviewed 1,997 respondents in their homes. Those interviewed constituted a representative national sample of men and women, 18 years of age and older.

FINDINGS

The findings of the Roper poll indicate that between April 1989 and May 1990, Israel's standing with the American public was largely unchanged. Sympathy with Israel in the Middle East conflict increased somewhat, while sympathy with the Arab cause decreased somewhat. During the same period, the perception of Israel as a reliable ally of the United States decreased somewhat.

While the American public continued to view American Jews in a generally positive light, there was an increase in the percentage of those who saw American Jews as more loyal to Israel than to the United States.

The results of the Roper poll are reported in detail in a series of tables in the Appendix. Among the salient findings are the following:

* Sympathy with Israel in the Middle East conflict stood at 39%, while sympathy with the Arab nations was at 9%. In April 1989, the figures were, respectively, 36% and 13% (Table 1). When given a choice between Israel and the Palestinians*** -- the second time the American

**"Proprietary" questions are specially commissioned by clients. They are incorporated into the regular battery of questions that the Roper Organization poses 10 times a year as part of its syndicated subscription service, Roper Reports.

***Findings for the period 1984-87 are reported in David Singer and Renae Cohen, Probing Public Sentiment on Israel and American Jews, American Jewish Committee, 1987; findings for the period 1985-1988 appear in David Singer and Renae Cohen, In the Wake of the Palestinian Uprising, American Jewish Committee, 1988; findings for the period 1986-1989 are in David Singer and Renae Cohen, Israel and the Intifada, American Jewish Committee, 1989.

***The question about sympathies in the Middle East conflict took two forms. Half the respondents were asked to choose between Israel and the Arab nations; half between Israel and the Palestinians.

Jewish Committee has inquired about this matter -- the figures were only slightly different: 34% and 15%, respectively (Table 2). In April 1989, the comparable figures were 34% and 14%.

* A small plurality of respondents continue to view Israel as a reliable ally of the United States (Israel -- reliable: 40%; not reliable: 38%) . In April 1989, the figures were 44% and 34%, respectively. With regard to the Arab nations, pluralities of respondents see Egypt and Jordan as not reliable (Egypt -- not reliable: 40%; reliable: 29%; Jordan -- not reliable: 44%; reliable: 16%), while a majority see Syria as such (Syria -- not reliable: 60%; reliable: 7%) (Table 3).

* Respondents are almost equally divided between those who think the Israeli government's response to the Palestinian uprising has been "too harsh" (29%) and those who think it has been "about right" (27%). The comparable figures in April 1989 were 30% and 28%. A smaller percentage (8%) think the response has been "too lenient" (Table 4).

* When asked about preferred solutions to the problem of the Palestinians in the Middle East, a majority of respondents (57%) answer "Don't know," either because they have not followed the situation closely enough (40%) or because they are uncertain as to which particular solution they prefer (17%). Of those indicating a preference, 13% favor the "return of major portions of the West Bank and Gaza to Jordanian rule, with appropriate security arrangements for Israel"; 10% favor the "establishment of an independent Palestinian state in all of the West Bank and Gaza"; 9% favor "Israeli military control of all of the West Bank and Gaza, with local self-rule for the Palestinians"; 7% favor the "establishment of a Palestinian homeland in all of the West Bank and Gaza in federation with Jordan"; and 4% favor "Israeli annexation of all of the West Bank and Gaza" (Table 5).

* A plurality of respondents (39%) think Israel is right in refusing to negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) because it is a terrorist group; 30% think Israel is wrong (Table 6). In April 1989 the figures were 42% and 32%, respectively.

* While a large plurality of respondents disagree (44%) with the statement "Most American Jews are more loyal to Israel than to the United States," 28% agree with it. In April 1989 the figures were 43% and 21%, respectively (Table 7).

* Only 8% of respondents believe Jews have too much power in the United States, the same figure as in April 1989. All of the following were cited ahead of the Jews as having too much power in the United States: news media (48%); business corporations (45%); labor unions (34%); Arab interests (27%); Orientals (22%); blacks (14%); and the Catholic Church (13%) (Table 8).

While the primary aim of the Roper poll is to probe the attitudes of the American public at large, some noteworthy subgroup differences do emerge for a number of the questions (Tables 9-16):

* People who are better educated are somewhat more likely to be favorable toward Israel and American Jews than those who are less well educated.

* People with higher household incomes are somewhat more likely to be favorable toward Israel and American Jews than those with lower household incomes.

* Whites are somewhat more likely to be favorable toward Israel and American Jews than blacks.

* Republicans are somewhat more likely to be favorable toward Israel and American Jews than Democrats.

* Protestants and Catholics differ little in their attitudes toward Israel and American Jews.

CONCLUSION

The results of the Roper poll indicate that, between April 1989 and May 1990, Israel's standing with the American public was largely unchanged, while sympathy with the Arab cause decreased somewhat.

American Jews continued to be seen by the American public in a generally positive light, but there was an increase in the percentage of those who saw American Jews as more loyal to Israel than to the United States.

APPENDIX

Table 1

Turning for a minute to the situation in the Middle East, at the present time do you find yourself more in sympathy with Israel, or more in sympathy with the Arab nations?

	1990 May	1989 April	1988 April	1987 February
More with Israel	39%	36%	37%	48%
More with Arab Nations	9	13	11	8
Not sympathetic with either side*	24	23	26	23
Sympathetic equally with both sides*	8	11	11	7
Don't know/No answer	20	17	16	14

Note: Figures represent percent of total sample, except April 1989 and May 1990 results which were asked of and based on half sample.

*Answer volunteered by respondents.

Table 2

Turning for a minute to the situation in the Middle East, at the present time do you find yourself more in sympathy with Israel, or more in sympathy with the Palestinians?

	1990 May	1989 April
More with Israel	34%	34%
More with Palestinians	15	14
Not sympathetic with either side*	20	24
Sympathetic equally with both sides*	10	11
Don't know/No answer	21	18

Note: Asked of and based on half sample.

* Answer volunteered by respondents.

Table 4

Turning to the situation in the West Bank and Gaza, do you think the Israeli government's response to the Palestinian uprising has been too harsh, too lenient or about right?

	1990 May	1989 April	1988 April
Too harsh	29%	30%	28%
Too lenient	8	8	11
About right	27	28	26
Don't know/No answer	36	34	34

Note: All figures represent percent of total sample.

Table 5

(HAND RESPONDENT CARD) Which one of the following would you prefer as a solution to the problem of the Palestinians in the Middle East?

	1990 May	1989 April	1988 April
Israeli annexation of all of the West Bank and Gaza	4%	5%	5%
Israeli military control of all of the West Bank and Gaza, with local self-rule for the Palestinians	9	10	10
The return of major portions of the West Bank and Gaza to Jordanian rule, with appropriate security arrangements for Israel	13	13	12
The establishment of a Palestinian homeland in all of the West Bank and Gaza in federation with Jordan	7	8	6
The establishment of an independent Palestinian state in all of the West Bank and Gaza	10	9	8
Don't know which is preferable solution	57	56	59
Is that because you haven't followed the situation closely enough to have an opinion, or because you don't know which of the solutions you would prefer?			
Haven't followed closely enough	40	33	35
Don't know which solution would prefer	17	23	24

Note: All figures represent percent of total sample.

Table 6

Israel has agreed to meet with local Palestinian representatives, but refuses to negotiate with the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization), claiming that it is a terrorist organization. Do you think Israel is right or wrong in refusing to negotiate with the PLO?

	1990 May	1989 April	1988 April
Right	39%	42%	44%
Wrong	30	32	27
Don't Know/No answer	31	26	29

Note: All figures represent percent of total sample.

Table 7

Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Most American Jews are more loyal to Israel than to the United States.

	1990 May	1989 April	1988 April	1987 February
Agree	28%	21%	24%	24%
Disagree	44	43	48	49
Don't know/No answer	28	36	27	26

Note: All figures represent percent of total sample.

Table 8

(HAND RESPONDENT CARD) Which, if any, of the groups listed on this card do you believe have too much power in the United States? Just call off the letter in front of the groups.

	1990 May	1989 April	1988 April	1987 February
News media	48%	45%	39%	38%
Business corporations	45	47	44	42
Labor unions	34	34	30	33
Arab interests	27	23	20	20
Orientals	22	23	15	12
Blacks	14	14	14	11
The Catholic Church	13	8	9	9
Jews	8	8	8	7
Hispanics	6	6	6	5
None	8	8	11	9
Don't know/No answer	7	7	8	8

Note: All figures represent percent of total sample. Multiple responses were accepted.

Table 9

Reported sympathy with Israel and with the Arab nations, by subgroup, in percent.

Subgroup	May 1990				
	Israel	Arab nations	Not with either side*	Equally with both sides*	Don't know No answer
Total	39%	9%	24%	8%	20%
Sex					
Males	37	10	27	8	17
Females	41	8	21	7	22
Age					
18-29	36	10	24	7	22
30-44	43	6	24	8	18
45-59	35	14	23	11	17
60+	39	9	25	5	22
Race					
Whites	41	9	25	7	17
Blacks	23	7	21	10	39
Household Income					
<\$15,000	40	8	20	5	28
\$15-29,999	35	7	27	9	22
\$30-49,999	41	12	23	8	16
\$50,000+	49	11	20	10	11
Education					
College graduate	45	14	15	12	14
Some college	42	4	30	10	15
High school graduates	38	11	24	6	21
Non-high school graduates	32	7	26	5	29
Occupation					
Executives/Professionals	40	12	23	13	12
White collar workers	46	8	24	6	15
Blue collar workers	35	9	26	7	23
Homemakers	35	7	21	8	29
Political Affiliation					
Democrats	37	11	24	9	19
Republicans	46	9	20	9	16
Political Philosophy					
Conservatives	45	7	24	7	17
Liberals	33	13	23	12	20
Religion					
Protestants	37	9	23	8	22
Catholics	36	12	26	8	19

Note: Asked of and based on half sample.

* Answer volunteered by respondents

Table 10

Reported sympathy with Israel and with the Palestinians, by subgroup, in percent.

Subgroup	May 1990				
	Israel	Pales- tinians	Not with either side*	Equally with both sides*	Don't know/ No answer
Total	34%	15%	20%	10%	21%
Sex					
Males	35	17	21	11	16
Females	33	13	20	9	25
Age					
18-29	32	15	19	11	23
30-44	36	15	20	9	20
45-59	33	17	22	11	17
60+	33	11	22	9	24
Race					
Whites	35	15	21	10	20
Blacks	26	15	21	8	30
Household Income					
<\$15,000	27	17	19	5	31
\$15-29,999	31	15	18	11	25
\$30-49,999	36	13	24	9	17
\$50,000+	47	16	17	11	9
Education					
College graduate	41	19	17	12	11
Some college	35	15	24	8	17
High school graduates	32	13	21	11	22
Non-high school graduates	27	12	19	8	34
Occupation					
Executives/Professionals	42	22	17	8	11
White collar workers	41	12	19	12	16
Blue collar workers	32	14	22	9	24
Homemakers	28	11	22	10	28
Political Affiliation					
Democrats	32	16	21	10	20
Republicans	42	16	18	8	16
Political Philosophy					
Conservatives	37	13	21	9	20
Liberals	27	18	20	14	20
Religion					
Protestants	33	15	21	7	24
Catholics	35	14	19	14	17

Note: Asked of and based on half sample.

*Answer volunteered by respondents

Table 11

Reported reliability of Israel as an ally, by subgroup, in percent.

Subgroup	May 1990		
	Is a reliable ally	Is not reliable ally	Don't know/ No answer
Total	40%	38%	22%
Sex			
Males	45	37	17
Females	35	38	27
Age			
18-29	36	44	20
30-44	41	38	20
45-59	42	37	22
60+	42	30	28
Race			
Whites	41	38	21
Blacks	33	37	31
Household Income			
<\$15,000	35	36	29
\$15-29,999	37	40	23
\$30-49,999	39	40	21
\$50,000+	53	36	11
Education			
College graduate	52	36	13
Some college	43	39	19
High school graduates	38	41	21
Non-high school graduates	29	33	38
Occupation			
Executives/Professionals	48	38	14
White collar workers	43	40	17
Blue collar workers	37	39	24
Homemakers	32	36	32
Political Affiliation			
Democrats	39	40	21
Republicans	46	36	17
Political Philosophy			
Conservatives	43	37	21
Liberals	41	37	22
Religion			
Protestants	36	41	23
Catholics	43	37	19

Table 12

Percentage of respondents who think the Israeli government's response to the Palestinian uprising has been too harsh, too lenient, or about right, by subgroup.

Subgroup	May 1990			
	Too Harsh	Too Lenient	About Right	Don't know/ No answer
Total	29%	8%	27%	36%
Sex				
Males	34	8	29	30
Females	25	8	25	42
Age				
18-29	27	7	26	40
30-44	28	9	29	34
45-59	35	9	26	30
60+	27	6	25	41
Race				
Whites	31	8	27	34
Blacks	16	6	26	52
Household Income				
<\$15,000	28	7	23	42
\$15-29,999	27	8	28	37
\$30-49,999	29	8	31	32
\$50,000+	39	8	30	23
Education				
College graduate	40	5	27	27
Some college	32	6	30	33
High school graduates	27	10	28	35
Non-high school graduates	18	9	21	52
Occupation				
Executives/Professionals	38	5	31	26
White collar workers	27	10	31	32
Blue collar workers	26	9	24	40
Homemakers	24	7	25	44
Political Affiliation				
Democrats	32	7	26	35
Republicans	29	9	32	31
Political Philosophy				
Conservatives	29	8	29	34
Liberals	36	7	22	35
Religion				
Protestants	28	7	27	38
Catholics	31	10	26	33

Table 13

Reported preferred solution to the problem of the Palestinians in the Middle East, by subgroup, in percent.

Subgroup	May 1990							DK:dk which solution prefer
	Israeli annexation	Isr.mil.contr/local self-rule	Return major portions/secure Israel homeland	Palestinian state	Don't know (DK)total	DK:not followed closely	DK:dk which solution prefer	
Total	4%	9%	13%	7%	10%	57%	40%	17%
Sex								
Males	5	11	14	8	12	50	31	18
Females	3	8	12	6	9	63	47	16
Age								
18-29	4	7	12	6	12	60	45	15
30-44	5	10	14	8	11	53	37	15
45-59	4	11	15	6	11	54	34	19
60+	4	9	11	8	8	60	42	18
Race								
Whites	4	10	13	7	11	54	38	16
Blacks	2	5	13	4	5	71	52	18
Household Income								
<\$15,000	2	5	12	6	10	64	49	15
\$15-29,999	3	7	14	7	10	58	41	17
\$30-49,999	4	12	13	6	13	51	34	16
\$50,000+	6	13	13	11	12	44	24	19
Education								
College graduate	5	13	14	9	13	45	28	16
Some college	4	10	14	7	11	55	35	19
High school graduates	5	8	13	6	11	57	41	16
Non-high school graduates	1	6	9	6	7	70	54	15

Occupation	6	13	16	9	13	42	26	16
Executives/Professionals	5	8	15	6	10	55	40	15
White collar workers	3	8	12	6	10	61	44	16
Blue collar workers	2	9	9	4	10	65	49	16
Homemakers								
Political Affiliation								
Democrats	3	9	13	8	12	56	41	15
Republicans	5	12	13	6	12	51	32	19
Political Philosophy								
Conservatives	4	11	12	7	10	56	39	17
Liberals	4	6	15	11	13	51	35	14
Religion								
Protestants	3	8	12	6	11	60	45	15
Catholics	4	11	14	8	10	52	35	17

Note: See Table 5 for full text of questions and choices.

Table 14

Percentage of respondents who think Israel is right or wrong in refusing to negotiate with the PLO, by subgroup.

Subgroup	<u>May 1990</u>		
	Right	Wrong	Don't know/ No answer
Total	39%	30%	31%
Sex			
Males	40	33	28
Females	38	27	35
Age			
18-29	33	34	33
30-44	42	29	30
45-59	41	30	29
60+	39	27	34
Race			
Whites	41	30	29
Blacks	26	27	48
Household Income			
<\$15,000	34	28	38
\$15-29,999	37	29	34
\$30-49,999	44	29	26
\$50,000+	43	38	19
Education			
College graduate	43	36	21
Some college	42	31	27
High school graduates	40	29	31
Non-high school graduates	29	24	48
Occupation			
Executives/Professionals	46	35	19
White collar workers	41	33	26
Blue collar workers	33	28	39
Homemakers	37	23	39
Political Affiliation			
Democrats	35	33	32
Republicans	46	29	25
Political Philosophy			
Conservatives	44	26	29
Liberals	32	40	28
Religion			
Protestants	38	28	33
Catholics	39	33	28

Table 15

Percentage of respondents who agree or disagree with the statement, "Most American Jews are more loyal to Israel than to the United States," by subgroup.

Subgroup	May 1990		
	Agree	Disagree	Don't know/ No answer
Total	28%	44%	28%
Sex			
Males	31	45	24
Females	25	43	32
Age			
18-29	25	47	28
30-44	28	46	26
45-59	26	45	29
60+	32	38	30
Race			
Whites	27	46	27
Blacks	35	28	38
Household Income			
<\$15,000	31	38	31
\$15-29,999	29	44	27
\$30-49,999	25	47	27
\$50,000+	23	60	17
Education			
College graduate	22	62	17
Some college	28	44	28
High school graduates	28	42	30
Non-high school graduates	34	30	36
Occupation			
Executives/Professionals	22	57	21
White collar workers	27	52	21
Blue collar workers	31	37	32
Homemakers	26	35	39
Political Affiliation			
Democrats	29	43	27
Republicans	28	49	22
Political Philosophy			
Conservatives	29	43	28
Liberals	26	51	23
Religion			
Protestants	29	40	31
Catholics	29	48	23

Table 16

Percentage of respondents reporting that they believe Jews have too much power in the United States, by subgroup.

May 1990

<u>Subgroup</u>	<u>Jews have too much power</u>
Total	8%
Sex	
Males	11
Females	5
Age	
18-29	6
30-44	8
45-59	9
60+	9
Race	
Whites	8
Blacks	6
Household Income	
<\$15,000	7
\$15-29,999	9
\$30-49,999	8
\$50,000+	9
Education	
College graduate	11
Some college	6
High school graduates	7
Non-high school graduates	7
Occupation	
Executives/Professionals	11
White collar workers	7
Blue collar workers	7
Homemakers	5
Political Affiliation	
Democrats	8
Republicans	9
Political Philosophy	
Conservatives	8
Liberals	8
Religion	
Protestants	8
Catholics	7

Single copy
Quantity prices on re

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
Institute of Human Relations
165 East 56 Street, New York, NY 10022-2746