

# JERUSALEM LETTER

Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs

JL:91 30 Kislev 5747/ 1 January 1987

## THE GEO-DEMOGRAPHICS OF AMERICAN CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS JEWS AND ISRAEL

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Attitudes Toward Israel / The Age Factor / Attitudes Toward Jews

Jews often treat "Christian attitudes" toward them and their state as if those attitudes were of a piece, internally undifferentiated. In fact, Christian attitudes differ by religious denomination, ethnic background, socio-economic status, and, in the United States, even geographic location. Understanding these differences is vital for the development of appropriate strategies in Jewish attempts to relate to Christian groups and to mobilize Christian influence in public policy issues of concern to Israel in particular and to the Jewish people in general.

In 1984, Stuart Rothenberg and Frank Newport conducted a countrywide survey in which they attempted to identify and

define the evangelical voter and analyze his voting patterns. The survey was conducted under the auspices of the Institute for Government and Politics of the Free Congress Research and Education Foundation and the results were published in a volume entitled *The Evangelical Voter: Religion and Politics in America*. Although Rothenberg and Newport focus strictly on the evangelical vote, they collected a large body of data not used in their book which dealt more specifically with the attitudes toward Jews and Israel of non-fundamentalist Christian groups as well. These data offer us an opportunity to examine the geo-demographic patterns of Christian attitudes toward Israel.

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Upon analysis, these data point to some important convergences which can help guide the policy of the Jewish community in its external relations.

**Attitudes Toward Israel**

With regard to their attitudes towards Israel, American Christians divide into three groupings: positive attitudes are displayed in the South proper and the Mountain and Pacific West; slightly less positive attitudes are found in the West South Central region; and the least positive attitudes are grouped in the bloc of states from the Northeast through the Midwest. The West North Central states are ambivalent and share the low levels of "really dislike" characteristic of the South and West, but there are also the low levels of "really like" characteristic of the Northeast.

This is crucial for presidential politics and in fact works to Jewish advantage. Where Israel is least popular, in the New England, Mid-Atlantic and East North Central states, the Jews are also politically the strongest because of local population concentrations and involvement. Hence they are in a position to counterbalance public opinion with their votes. Where it has the strongest support, Jews are, with the exception of Florida and California, somewhat less politically influential because they do not have the numbers or presence to be influential. The real problem geographically is in the West South Central states, Texas in particular, where there is a softness towards Israel.

**GEOGRAPHIC AREAS/CENSUS AREAS**

	Really Dislike	Neutral	Really Like	Total
New Engl/Mid Atl	20.77	33.08	46.15	130
East/North Centr	19.16	35.98	44.86	214
West/North Centr	11.29	43.55	45.16	62
South Atlantic	11.71	34.63	53.66	205
East/Sth Central	10.23	35.23	54.55	88
West/Sth Central	19.08	31.58	49.34	152
Mountain/Pacific	10.74	34.23	55.03	149

This pattern is carried over in the responses of the political target groups. The Conservative Republicans are by far the most positive and among the least negative, followed by the

moderate liberal Democrats. The most negative are moderate liberal Republicans and the Catholics, who are also more likely to be fence-sitters on this issue. The moderate liberal Republicans are mostly in the northeast and help bring down that region's overall positive rating, while most of the Conservative Republicans are in the West or, increasingly, the South.

**POLITICAL GROUPS/JEWS**

	Really Dislike	Neutral	Really Like	Total
Cons GOP	14.57	29.13	56.30	254
Mod/Lib GOP	20.29	33.33	46.38	69
Ticket-Splitter	13.59	41.75	44.66	206
Cons Democrat	18.47	32.93	48.59	249
Mod/Lib Democrat	12.61	37.39	50.00	222

The pattern is further reinforced by denomination and type of church. Again, among the least positive and by far the most negative are the high status denominations, most of whose members are probably also moderate liberal Republicans living in the Northeast or Midwest. This suggests that here we have a convergence of upper strata, genteel anti-Semitism — the economic interests of big business and banking interests who do not want to alienate the Arabs with their wealth — with contemporary liberalism favoring the underdog, an attitude which is characteristic of these archetypical "WASPS" in both domestic and foreign affairs. Catholics are the second most negative group, again probably reflecting at least residual ethnic anti-Jewish feelings, also concentrated in the New England, Mid-Atlantic, and East North Central states. The Baptists turn out to be the most favorable, which correlates with the recent fundamentalist love affair for Israel and also among the least unfavorable, which in all likelihood reflects a residue of their older anti-Semitic tendencies. At the same time, the other conservative denominations are more or less in the middle.

The high ranking among the Lutherans cannot be explained by the limited data. They are not a group noted for pro-Israel or pro-Jewish feelings in the past. Obviously there is a split in their ranks, since they also have the third highest negative rating after the high status Protestant

denominations and the Catholics.

the age of 65.

**DENOMINATION/TYPE OF CHURCH**

	Really Dislike	Neutral	Really Like	Total
Baptist	13.14	33.58	53.28	274
Methodist	12.50	41.67	45.83	120
Lutheran	16.92	30.77	52.31	65
High Status Denom	23.08	30.77	46.15	65
Conserv. Denom	15.33	35.77	48.91	137
Catholic	18.81	32.11	49.08	218
Other Denom	12.07	37.93	50.00	58
No Specfc Denom	11.11	39.68	49.21	63

**RESPONDENT'S AGE**

	Really Dislike	Neutral	Really Like	Total
18-24	16.38	26.72	56.90	116
25-34	8.56	24.32	67.12	222
35-44	11.23	25.67	63.10	187
45-54	8.51	36.17	55.32	141
55-64	12.82	34.62	52.56	156
65 and Above	15.48	35.12	49.40	168
DK/No Answer	30.00	50.00	20.00	10

Given the configuration of presidential politics in the United States, this means that Israel is likely to continue to maintain White House support because of the convergence of constituencies, especially since Israel does well in the test for turnout propensity: the higher the turnout propensity the more favorable, while the most unfavorable have a low turnout propensity. On the other hand, Texas and the high status Protestant eastern Republican establishment need particular attention. The ethnic Catholics need less, for two reasons. First, they are losing power and, second, the data on respondents' ages suggests that in any case what is likely to have caused weaknesses in their attitude may be diminishing in the younger generation.

**The Age Factor**

Overall, while there is relatively little spread with regard to positive attitudes towards Israel by age. Those below the age of 44 seem to be more positively predisposed than those above, indicating no decline in pro-Israel feeling among the great bulk of the American people. On the other hand, those under 34 are also the most anti-Israel in percentages that equal those of between 55 and 64. There is less neutrality among the younger people and more polarization. One would guess that a lot of the "anti" feeling is a result of the trendy liberalism of the young. That could pose a problem, unless the young grow out of it. Obviously, it is not enough to leave things to that hope. Negative feelings towards Israel are at their minimum between the ages of 35 and 54 and over

This analysis is reinforced by the age-education correlation. Thus under 35 and those with no college education are more likely to be neutral than those over 54, while college education seems to increase positive responses in every age group. No doubt this is a reflection of the way in which college education lessens culturally transmitted prejudice. The most favorable/least unfavorable group by far in any of the categories dealt with so far in this discussion are the 35 to 54 year olds with some college or more. These are the people who were raised in the period when prejudice was most forcefully repudiated — during and after World War II, and whose impressions of Israel were undoubtedly formed when Israel was considered positively in almost every respect. The most anti-Israel feelings were to be found among those under 35 with at least some college education: people who came of age when Israel already was considered to be an occupier and a denier of Palestinian civil rights, and anti-Zionist prejudice was becoming somewhat more acceptable. All in all, in looking at respondents' education, education is more likely to produce favorable feelings toward Israel and to reduce negative ones.

**AGE/EDUCATION**

	Really Dislike	Neutral	Really Like	Total
Undr 35/No College	17.97	32.81	49.22	128
Undr 35/Som College	19.52	28.10	52.38	210
35-54/No College	13.69	44.05	42.26	168
35-54/Som College	8.75	31.25	60.00	160
Ovr 54/No College	14.87	36.92	48.21	195
Ovr 54/Som College	16.55	36.69	46.76	139
Aggregate	15.30	34.80	49.90	1000

This pattern repeats itself when the data are analyzed according to type of work. Upper and lower white collar and upper blue collar have almost identical positive responses, substantially separated from lower blue collar. However, the lower blue collar and upper white collar are almost equally the most anti-Israel. The latter, one would assume, reflect again the upper class high status Protestant denominations and moderate to liberal Republicans.

	TYPE OF WORK			Total
	Really Dislike	Neutral	Really Like	
Uppr White-Collr	18.29	28.05	53.66	246
Lowr White-Collr	12.04	35.19	52.78	108
Upper Blue-Collr	13.84	32.59	53.57	224
Lower Blue-Collr	18.80	38.46	42.74	117
Retired	12.32	41.71	45.97	211
Nt in Labr Force	17.02	37.23	45.74	94

The same patterns hold true for total family income, excluding "others" in race and ethnicity where the sample is too small to draw a proper conclusion. There is very little difference in positive or negative attitudes by either race, ethnicity, or sex, with the exception of males, which can be accounted for by any of the variables discussed above.

	TOTAL FAMILY INCOME			
	Really Dislike	Neutral	Really Like	Total
Under \$10,000	12.94	43.53	43.53	85
\$10,000-\$19,999	15.98	36.07	47.95	244
\$20,000-\$29,999	13.44	33.20	53.36	253
\$30,000-\$39,999	14.94	33.33	51.72	174
\$40,000 and over	15.58	27.27	57.14	154
Refused	21.11	43.33	35.56	90

Overall, registered Republicans are both more favorable and unfavorable to Israel, with Independents more likely to be neutral. Serious Christians are substantially more favorable and less unfavorable which, of course, is reflected in questions on the stand on religion and politics, attendance at religious services and importance of religion in daily life, and fundamentalist beliefs with regard to creation and the Bible. All of these reinforce the geo-demographic analysis presented

at the beginning of this article.

### Attitudes Toward Jews

Turning to attitudes towards Jews, we see some marked deviations from attitudes towards Israel. Overall Jews are well regarded. Jews are most highly regarded in the Mountain, Pacific, New England, Mid-Atlantic, and West North Central states, and are least disliked in the New England, Mid-Atlantic, Mountain, and Pacific states. In those regions over 60 percent really like Jews and in the last two less than 10 percent really dislike them. Jews get less positive ratings in the East North Central and West South Central regions, still over 50 percent but less than 55 percent. These are areas where latent and not so latent anti-Semitism rooting in older ethnic or religious attitudes is more likely to be found. The South, in general, has the highest "really dislike" rating with regard to Jews - still under 15 percent.

### GEOGRAPHIC AREAS/CENSUS AREAS

	Really Dislike	Neutral	Really Like	Total
	New Engl/Mid Atl	9.23	27.69	63.08
East/North Centrl	11.21	35.05	53.74	214
West/Nrth Centrl	12.90	24.19	62.90	62
South Atlantic	13.17	29.27	57.56	205
East/Sth Central	14.77	29.55	55.68	88
West/Sth Central	14.47	32.89	52.63	152
Mountain/Pacific	9.40	26.85	63.76	149

What we seem to be getting is that in those areas which represent the heartland of the North, least diluted by unassimilated ethnics, Jews fare especially well, while those areas in the South where anti-Jewish prejudice was once very strong, they still fare less well. One can hypothesize that locals are more likely to continue to harbor latent anti-Semitic feelings than cosmopolitans. Hence regions where locals are stronger are more likely to show up high on the dislike scale.

All this tends to be confirmed in the analysis of political target groups. Republicans, both conservatives, and moderate liberals, are the most favorable towards Jews: over two-thirds favorable. Conservative Democrats who are mostly in the South are the least favorable - still over 50

percent, and most unfavorable – over 15 percent.

**POLITICAL TARGET GROUPS**

	Really Dislike	Neutral	Really Like	Total
Ticket-Splitter	9.22	36.41	54.37	206
Cons Democrat	17.27	30.92	51.81	249
Mod/Lib Democrat	10.81	32.88	56.31	222

The one surprise here is that with regard to religious denomination or type of church, Catholics are the most favorable, with nearly 68 percent. The over 60 percent favorable attitudes of the high status Protestant and Methodist denominations reinforce the notion that old stock Americans have come to like Jews. The Methodists also least dislike; although Catholics are also very low. The least favorable to Jews are the conservative denominations and the Baptists, again reflecting Southern old style anti-Semitism.

**DENOMINATION/TYPE OF CHURCH**

	Really Dislike	Neutral	Really Like	Total
Baptist	13.87	34.67	51.46	274
Methodist	8.33	27.50	64.17	120
Lutheran	13.85	33.85	52.31	65
High Status Denom	10.77	26.15	63.08	65
Conserv. Denom	13.87	34.31	51.82	137
Catholic	9.63	22.48	67.89	218
Other Denom	17.24	31.03	51.72	58
No Specfc Denom	9.52	33.33	57.14	63

The least consistent result is the dropoff in favorable attitudes on the part of 18 to 24 year olds, when respondents' age is considered. From 25 and up the pattern is exactly as it has been over the past generation, namely, the younger the more favorable and, overall, the less unfavorable. The change for those 24 and under probably reflects the new reality that in the second postwar generation prejudice and particularly anti-Jewish prejudice has become more acceptable. The shock of the Holocaust has worn off and people who did not grow up in the shadow of the Holocaust do not feel the same need to be reserved about their anti-Jewish attitudes. If this turns out to be a trend, then it is indeed problematic.

**RESPONDENT'S AGE**

	Really Dislike	Neutral	Really Like	Total
18-24	16.38	26.72	56.90	116
25-34	8.56	24.32	67.12	222
35-44	11.23	25.67	63.10	187
45-54	8.51	36.17	55.32	141
55-64	12.82	34.62	52.56	156
65 and Above	15.48	35.12	49.40	168
DK/No Answer	30.00	50.00	20.00	10

The correlation of age and education confirms the fact that the less educated are more likely to harbor anti-Jewish feelings. This is as true of the young as of the old.

**AGE/EDUCATION**

	Really Dislike	Neutral	Really Like	Total
Undr 35/No Col.	13.28	32.03	54.69	128
Undr 35/Som Col.	10.00	20.95	69.05	210
35-54/No Col.	10.12	37.50	52.38	168
35-54/Som Col.	10.00	22.50	67.50	160
Ovr 54/No Col.	14.36	36.41	49.23	195
Ovr 54/Som Col.	15.11	33.81	51.08	139
Aggregate	12.00	30.20	57.80	1000

What we are left with here is that higher status elements, those who are less favorable toward Israel than the American average, tend to be more favorable than the American average toward Jews. This, in general, is a positive phenomenon as far as Jews are concerned, at least somewhat offsetting their lower scores on the pro-Israel measures. The one place where there is both a less pro-Israel and less pro-Jewish stance is in the West South Central states, which seem to be the country's soft underbelly in both cases. Not surprisingly, that region has recently surfaced as the center of violent rural anti-Semitism, which seems to be part of an overall xenophobia brought on by economic difficulties and cultural alienation from recent changes in American life.

Overall, it is the uneducated and especially the younger uneducated who are most anti-Jewish. Indeed, those with less than higher education who are not in the labor force or earn under \$10,000 a year are the only ones who have less than a 50 percent favorable rating toward

Jews and they fall between 41 and 45 percent. They also have negative ratings of 15 to 20 percent. A part of this group may be young unemployed blacks, since with regard to Jews there is a statistically significant difference between blacks and whites: 52.5 percent as distinct from 58 percent positive, 15.5 percent as distinct from 11.5 percent negative. This may also be showing up in the religious preference question, where nearly 18 percent of those who claim a religion other than Protestant or Catholic really dislike Jews. Again, one suspects a lot of Black Muslims are in this group. Here, too, the saving grace is that these people are least likely to turn out to vote, as the survey shows.

**RESPONDENT'S EDUCATION**

	Really Dislike	Neutral	Really Like	Total
Less/High School	16.77	39.75	43.48	161
High School Grad	10.61	33.64	55.76	330
Some College	13.36	25.34	61.30	292
College Grad	8.28	23.45	68.28	145
Graduate School	9.72	26.39	63.89	72

The political party registration data reinforce the view that old stock American northerners and westerners are most favorable/least unfavorable towards Jews, with Republicans far ahead of Democrats and Independents in both with Republicans far ahead of Democrats and independents in both categories. Moreover, unlike the situation with regard to Israel, in which born-again Christians are overall favorable, they are more likely to be unfavorable to Jews than those who are not

born-again Christians. There is relatively little difference with regard to stand on religion and politics, while the people who attend religious services more often are more prone to like Jews than those who attend less often, the highest again being reached by mainstream Protestants and Catholics, namely those who attend nearly once a week or every week and dropping down among fundamentalists who are more likely to attend several times a week. Indeed, almost all the religious measures tend to reinforce the positive attitudes of the oldest stock Americans.

This article has emphasized geo-demographic analysis because in a country whose political system is organized on a territorial basis, geo-demographics are of vital importance in shaping American political responses toward Israel and Jews. The continued monitoring of these trends is of considerable importance in designing appropriately sophisticated strategies to deal with Jewish-gentile relations and with mustering and targeting support for Israel in the political arena.

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