

## **JPPI's 2017 Israel-Diaspora Dialogue:**

Interim Report, as presented to the Mayor of Jerusalem, the Honorable Mr. Nir Barkat

# Jerusalem and the Jewish People: Unity and Division

**Project Heads:** Shmuel Rosner and John Ruskay

Project coordinator: Chaya Ekstein-Koppel

Contributing Writer: Noah Slepko

Editor: Barry Geltman

### **Main Findings**

- Jerusalem is a **crucially important** place to engaged Jews worldwide, and a **primary point of connection** between Diaspora Jews and Israel.
- Many non-Israeli Jews **feel “at home” in Jerusalem**
- Non-Israeli Jews feel **their views should be taken into consideration** as the political and cultural future of Jerusalem is shaped.
- A clear majority of engaged Jews the world over believe that “all countries ought to **move their embassies to Jerusalem.**”
- A small majority of engaged Jews the world over agree that Jerusalem “**should never be divided.**” A significant majority wants it to be a city “with a **clear Jewish majority,**” and that “the Temple Mount must remain under Israeli jurisdiction.”
- However, in a seemingly contradictory statement, a small majority also argues that “**Israel should be willing to compromise** on the status of Jerusalem as a united city under Israeli jurisdiction.”
- Many Jews around the world and in Israel feel that Jerusalem is not moving “in the right direction.” Mainly due to **concerns about Jewish-Arab relations and religious pluralism.**

## Introduction

2017 marks the 50th anniversary of Jerusalem's reunification, the result of the Six-Day War. It has also been a decade since JPPI's last major report on Jerusalem. Therefore, JPPI dedicated this year's annual Israel-Diaspora Dialogue to an examination of Jerusalem's status. Jerusalem is, of course, considered holy by the three monotheistic religions. However, JPPI's 2017 Dialogue dealt with Jerusalem as understood, interpreted, and analyzed by Jewish stakeholders with an interest in the city's future.

JPPI's 2007 policy paper, *A Strategic Plan for the Strengthening of Jerusalem as a Civilizational Capital of the Jewish People*, argued that there was an urgent need to close the gap between the visions, perceptions, and ideals people have with respect to Jerusalem and the actual reality of the city. Ten years later, some elements of this argument stand.

In this short interim report, submitted to the Mayor of Jerusalem prior to the 50th Yom Yerushalayim – Jerusalem Day – we highlight some of the findings from the Dialogue we conducted with 39 groups in 19 Jewish communities in 7 countries around the globe. This is the fourth year of JPPI's Israel-Diaspora Dialogue, and a comprehensive report on ***Jerusalem and the Jewish People*** will join the three previous reports: ***Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State*** (2014); ***Jewish Values and the Use of Force in Armed Conflict*** (2015); and ***Exploring the Jewish Spectrum in a Time of Fluid Identity*** (2016).

In all these Dialogues JPPI conducted discussion sessions in many dozens of Jewish communities worldwide – this year, 2017, included the many participants in the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations annual mission to Israel. All Dialogue sessions included a survey and a structured discussion. We include in this report findings from a JPPI survey of Israeli opinions on Jerusalem. The interim report was presented to the Mayor of Jerusalem, Nir Barkat, prior to the fiftieth Jerusalem Day. The full report based on the sessions and the full data is slated to be published at the end of summer 2017. It will include much more information and a lot of data not included in this short summary, as well as a chapter of policy recommendations.

Some of the questions we put to participants were specific: Is it essential that Jerusalem have a clear Jewish majority? How important is it for the city to be Jewishly diverse? Would you support a division of Jerusalem in exchange for peace with the Palestinians? What role should Diaspora Jews play in determining Jerusalem's future?

Our aim was to better understand the following:

1. How connected Jews and Jewish leaders<sup>1</sup> around the world view Jerusalem's current situation – culturally, demographically, and politically? Is it viewed as a thriving city or as one in trouble? Do they feel pride in how it is developing, or anxiety about its future?
2. How important is Jerusalem to these Jews – especially Jews who do not live in Jerusalem, and, even more so, those who live outside Israel (visitors and tourists usually see only a small part of Jerusalem, and are not always familiar with the full complexity of the city) – and how invested they feel in its future?
3. What is the vision of connected Jews and Jewish leaders for Jerusalem, and what are the policies and priorities they would support in the fulfillment of that vision?

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<sup>1</sup> The survey of Jews worldwide represents the average views of a self-selected group of mostly Jewish leaders and highly engaged Jews who chose to take part in the dialogue. More on this issue in the appendix.

## **Four Topics of Interest**

This report does not cover the full findings of the seminars – these will be presented in the full report slated for publication at the end of summer 2017. Still, it is worth stating even in this preliminary and partial report that in the context of trying to identify the gap (or lack thereof) between reality and vision, we narrowed the discourse to frame it in a way that suits discussion and analysis. We focused on four main areas of interest – all of which were on discussion seminar agendas.

1. Demographic trends pertaining to Jews and Arabs in Jerusalem and what they mean for its future.
2. Societal and cultural developments stemming from these changes, and what they could mean for Jerusalem's future.
3. Political questions that could affect Jerusalem's future.
4. The input of Jews around the world in articulating a vision for Jerusalem, and how it should be realized.

Obviously, these topics do not cover all the possible angles from which Jerusalem can be viewed. But we believe that by focusing on them specifically JPPI Dialogue participants considered most of the areas where decisions – by Israeli authorities and Jewish institutions – are likely to be made. JPPI's goal is to offer decision makers a better understanding of where Jews stand on Jerusalem today, and where they would like to take it in the future. Obviously, some of the discussion topics are highly charged, and we did not expect consensus positions would emerge from the sessions we conducted. However, previous reports taught us that by listening to the Jewish voices we could learn a great deal, and derive many useful recommendations that might lead to better policies – policies that diminish rather than exacerbate divisions.

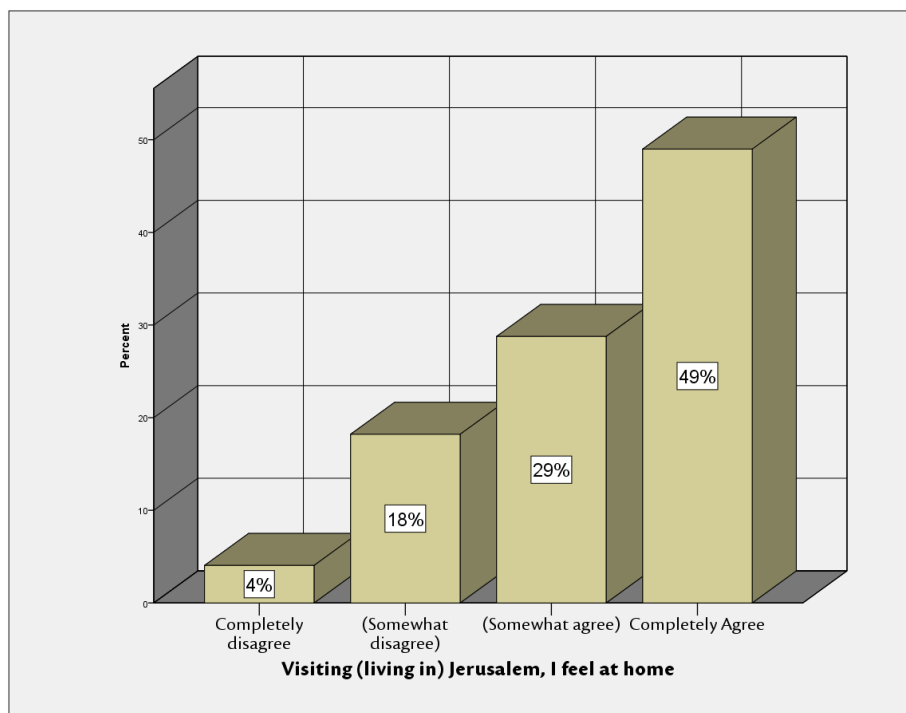
Making as many Jews feel at home in Israel underpins JPPI's William Davidson Foundation supported Pluralism and Democracy Project. It is not difficult to see how a similar ideal could apply to Jerusalem specifically.

## **Connection of Jews to Jerusalem**

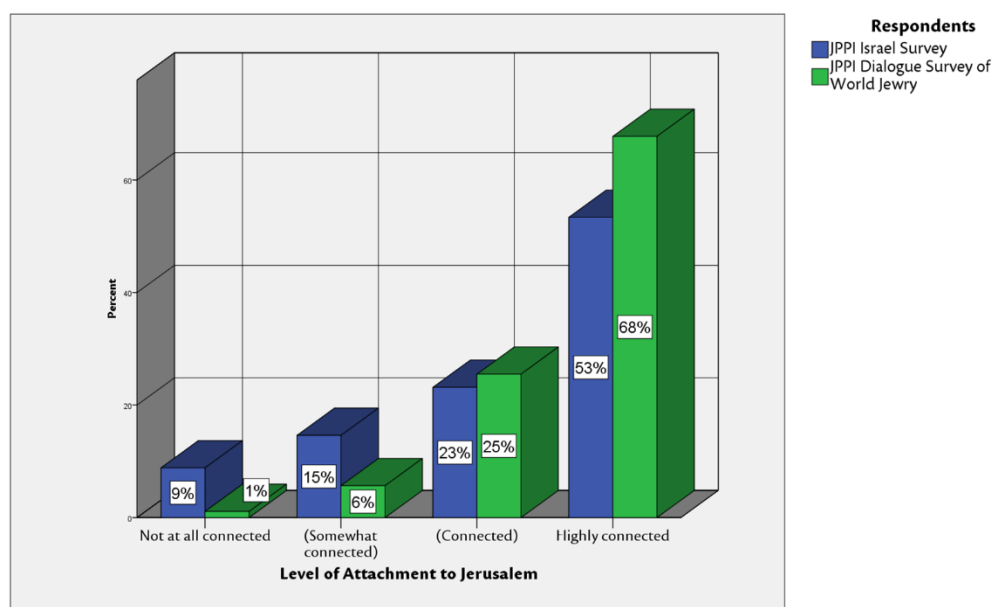
The connection of non-Israeli Jews to Jerusalem is strong. "It's the center of our history – next year in Jerusalem," a participant in the Washington seminar explained.<sup>2</sup> Many of these Jews feel a sense of ownership as they think about it ("I know I do not have the right to feel it is mine because I don't live there – yet I do!" a seminar discussant in Ann Arbor said). Many voiced their perspectives on the city in emotional terms. We asked Dialogue participants to coin slogans meant to strengthen the connection of Jerusalem to world Jewry, and many proposed taglines such as "Jerusalem – Welcome Home," and "Jerusalem – Our City." Half "completely" agreed with the statement "When visiting Jerusalem I feel at home," and 30 percent more "somewhat" agreed with this statement. A Dialogue participant in Australia described his feelings this way: "I love the culture of Jerusalem, I would love to buy an apartment around the German Colony and spend six months of the year there. I could walk the streets all day. It feels safe. It feels like home." A participant in Zurich commented: "Jerusalem is like an old spouse: she is not as beautiful as she once was, but she still means so very much to me."

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<sup>2</sup> This interim report does not include full source citations. Full citations will appear JPPI's final report, including specific references to quotes (by community and discussion). Basic participating discussion group details can be found at the end of this report.



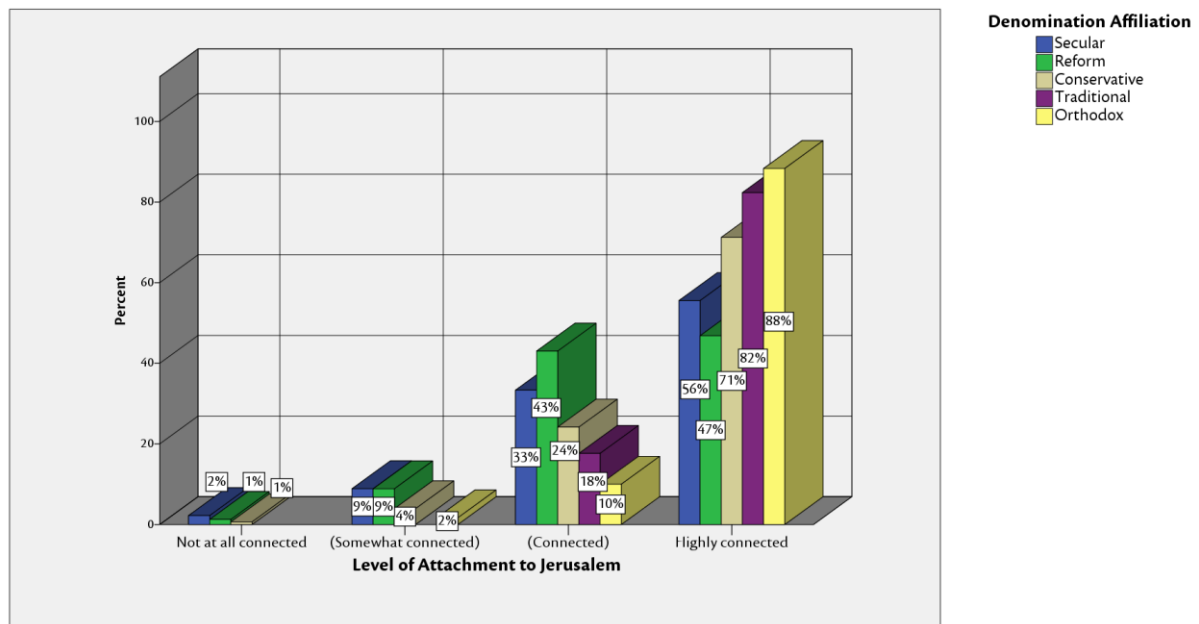
In fact, these highly-connected Jews ranked their level of attachment to Jerusalem higher than Jewish Israelis did.<sup>3</sup> Among Jews in Israel (Israeli Jews were polled separately by JPPI), 53 percent said they are “highly connected” to Jerusalem, while among JPPI Dialogue participants – Jewish leaders and highly engaged Jews – 70 percent feel “highly connected” to Jerusalem. Among Jews in Israel, almost 1 in 10 said they are “not at all connected” to Jerusalem. Among JPPI Dialogue participants only 1 percent said they were “not at all connected.”



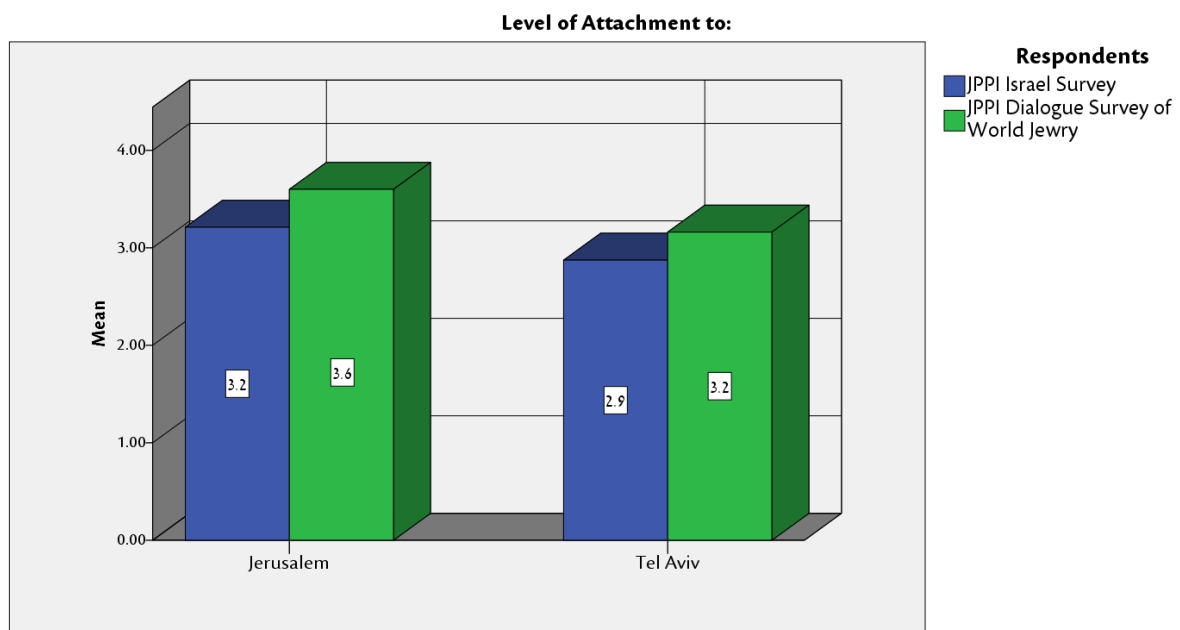
Among Diaspora Jews, as in Israel, connection to Jerusalem varies. It is stronger for religious Jews than for secular Jews, it is stronger among Orthodox Jews than Reform Jews. In Israel, based on JPPI’s survey of Israelis, it is stronger among Jews defining themselves as “right

<sup>3</sup> It is important to emphasize that the two surveys we show here are not comparable in a statistical sense. The Israel survey utilized a scientific sample of Israel’s Jews. It was conducted by Panels Politics and the findings were based on a relatively large sample of 1,300 respondents, with a 5.6% margin of error for Arabs and 3.1% for Jews. More details on the survey here: [http://jpji.org.il/new/en/article/english-2017-pluralism-index-survey-results/#.WRF5\\_VN97Vo](http://jpji.org.il/new/en/article/english-2017-pluralism-index-survey-results/#.WRF5_VN97Vo). The survey of Jews around the world represents the average views of a self-selected group (see previous footnote).

wing” than among Jews who self-identify as “left wing.” On a scale of 1 - 4, where 1 indicates a weak connection and 4 indicates a strong connection to Jerusalem, the average ranking by “totally secular” Israeli Jews was 2.8, while the average for religious and Haredi Jews was 3.7 and 3.8 respectively.<sup>4</sup>



Jews around the world are highly connected to Israel, as has been shown in many previous reports and surveys. But this year’s Dialogue shows that participants’ main nexus of connection to Israel is Jerusalem. When asked to rank their connection to Jerusalem compared to Tel Aviv, for example, Israeli Jews – but even more notably, non-Israeli Jews – rank their connection to Jerusalem much higher. For Israeli Jews, Jerusalem has a slight average connection advantage over Tel Aviv (3.1 vs. 3.0). But for Dialogue participants elsewhere in the world the gap is significant, as the graph below shows. Note that while 70 percent of Dialogue participants ranked their level of connection to Jerusalem as “highly connected,” a much lower 38 percent ranked their connection to Tel Aviv the same way.



<sup>4</sup> 35% of Jewish Israelis self-identify as “totally secular.” 10% are religious and 9% are Haredi. See: [http://jppi.org.il/new/en/article/english-2017-pluralism-index-survey-results/#.WRF5\\_VN97Vo](http://jppi.org.il/new/en/article/english-2017-pluralism-index-survey-results/#.WRF5_VN97Vo)

## Political Issues

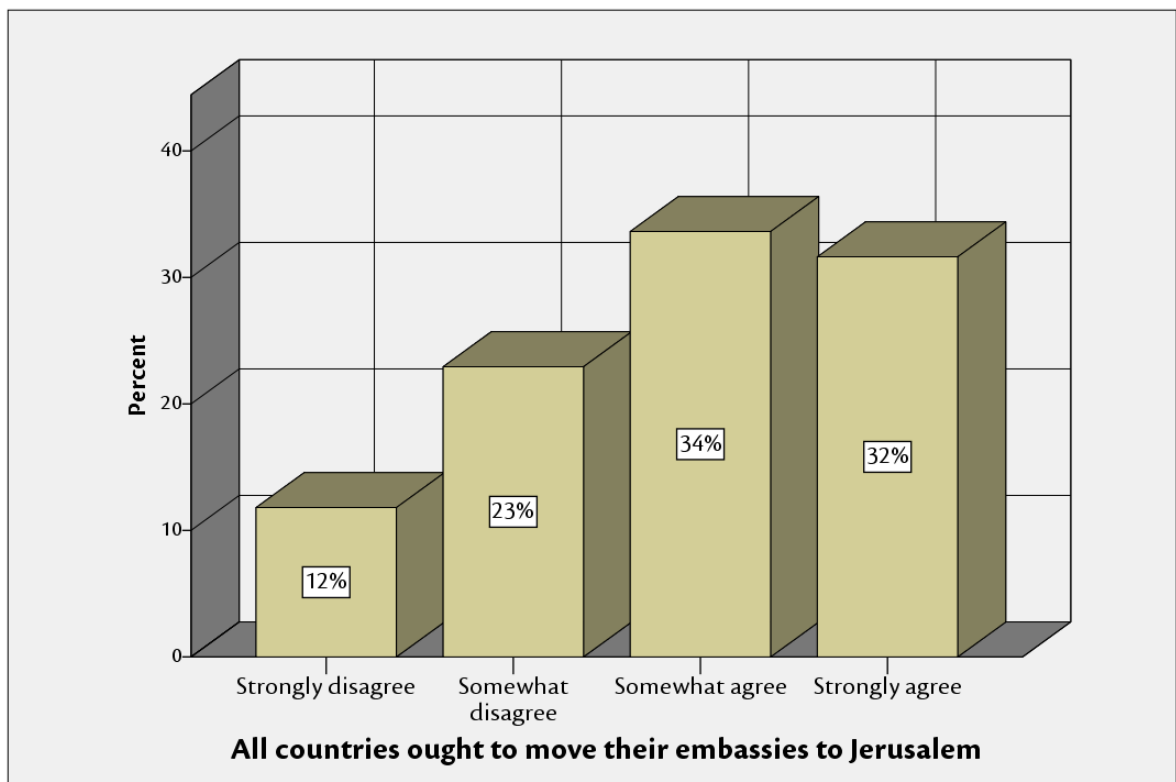
In 2016, three developments highlighted Jerusalem's centrality as a point of political friction in the Israeli-Palestinian arena.

First: In October 2016, UNESCO adopted a resolution denying a Jewish connection to the Temple Mount – prompting an angry response from Israel. In 2017, a softer resolution still managed to garner a majority vote, even though a number of countries opposed it this time. Second: U.S. President-elect Trump followed previous presidential candidates and promised to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The president (as of this writing in May 2017) has yet to act on his promise, and his administration's current position is that this move is under serious consideration. Third: At the end of 2016, UN Security Council Resolution 2334 passed denouncing the construction of Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem as illegal building in Israel-controlled occupied territory. In a follow up speech, in which U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry explained the U.S. decision to withhold its veto of the resolution, he argued that Jerusalem ought to be, in the future, "the internationally recognized capital of the two states." Both the resolution and the speech drew a strong rebuke from Israeli officials, and from some U.S. Jewish leaders.

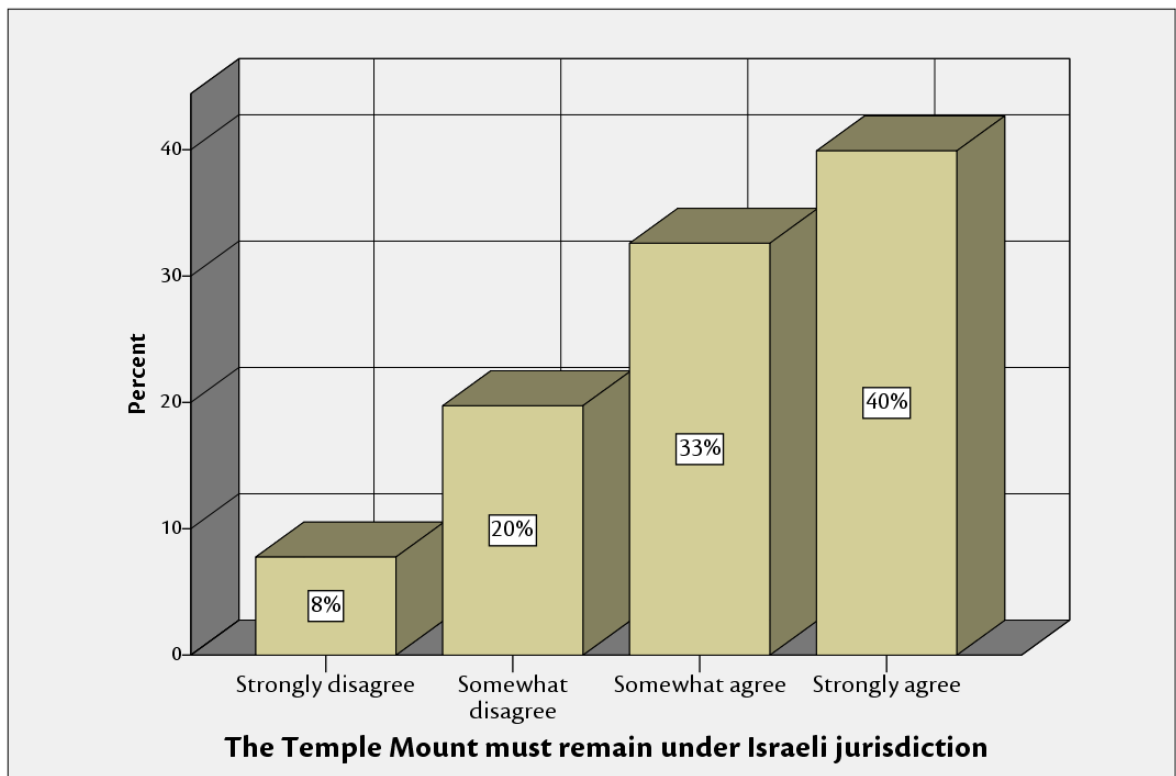
These events and many others (such as recent comments made by the president of Turkey) highlight the centrality of Jerusalem to Israelis, Arabs and Muslims, and warn of possible serious conflict in the years to come. Many are quick to point out that Jerusalem's international status as Israel's capital has not yet been resolved.

Political issues – and especially Jerusalem as a flash point of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – were front and center in many of JPPI's Israel-Diaspora Dialogue discussions. "It's a city of paradoxes and extremes, and all the tension that exists within Israel/Palestine is doubled or tripled there," a participant in a seminar on the New York campus of Hebrew Union College said.

Support for relocating embassies to Jerusalem was widespread among Dialogue participants, with **close to 70 percent agreeing** with the statement **"All countries ought to move their embassies to Jerusalem."**

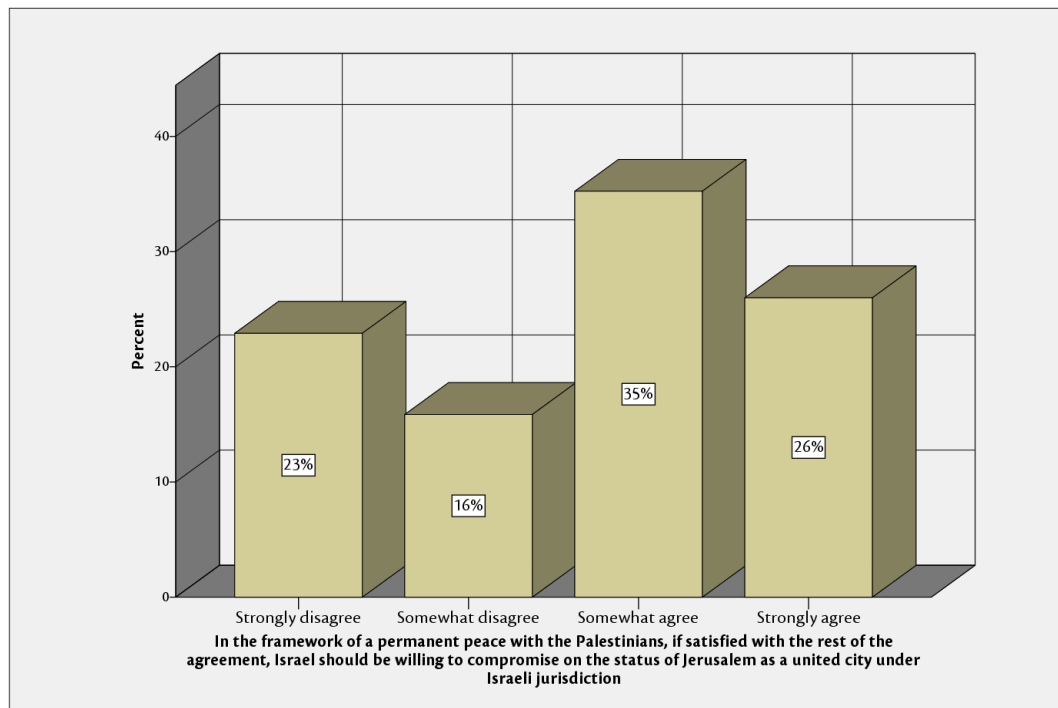


But when it comes to the nuances of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the issue of who should control the city, and whether there should be a compromise that divides the city between Israelis and Palestinians, Jews are more ambivalent, and at times even contradictory. On the one hand, a clear majority of **more than 70 percent agreed** that **“The Temple Mount must remain under Israeli jurisdiction.”** A **55 percent majority** agreed that **“Jerusalem should never be divided.”**



Yet, when presented with a more nuanced statement regarding a theoretical peace arrangement they responded differently. “I’m not opposed to some kind of capital for

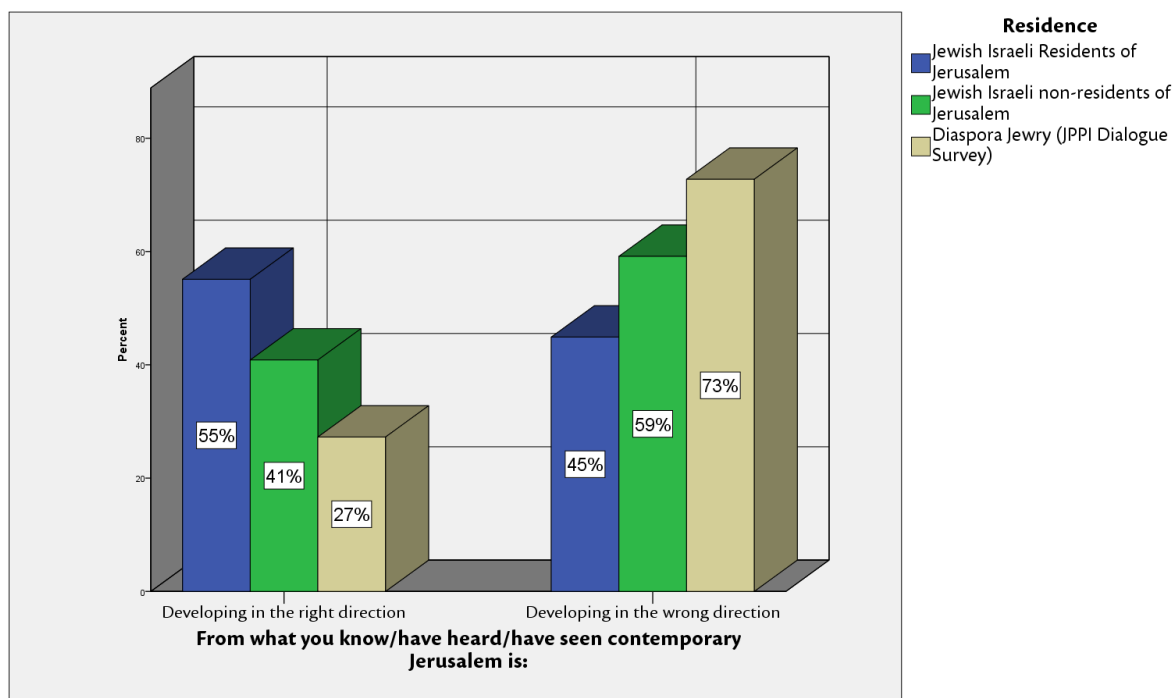
Palestinians but not the Temple Mount. Not in the Old City. Maybe the eastern suburbs of Jerusalem,” said a participant in St. Louis. His view, and that of many others, was also seen when we asked participants to agree or disagree with the statement: “In the framework of a permanent peace with the Palestinians, if satisfied with the rest of the agreement, Israel should be willing to compromise on the status of Jerusalem as a united city under Israeli jurisdiction.” It may seem contradictory – in fact, it is a contradiction, but even though a majority oppose a division of Jerusalem, and even though a majority oppose non-Israeli control over the “Holy Basin” – a **clear majority** was still willing to **“compromise on the status of Jerusalem as a united city under Israeli jurisdiction”** under the above-mentioned circumstances of a satisfactory, durable peace agreement.



### Issues of Concern

Most Jews in Israel and Dialogue participants around the world believe that Jerusalem’s development is moving in the “wrong direction.” In fact, when considering this question, we should acknowledge three circles of reference: Jews around the world are highly concerned about the direction in which the city is moving – and 70 percent assert that it is moving in the wrong direction. Jews in Israel also have a relatively dim view of the city’s current trajectory. 60 percent of them argue that it is moving in the wrong direction. However – and this is very significant – the Jewish residents of Jerusalem have a much more positive assessment of the direction the city is taking. That is to say, the people who are most familiar with the city, also have a more positive view of the direction in which it is moving.





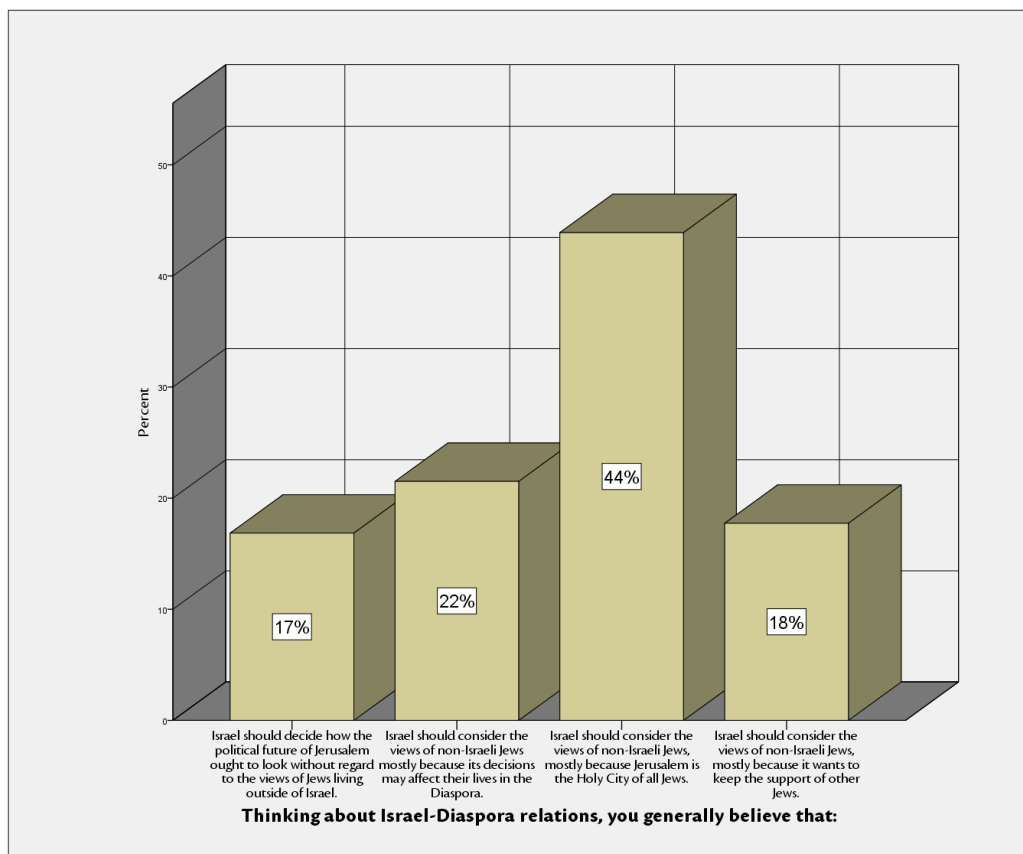
These differences in assessment might trigger a debate among Jews on two important questions:

Who knows Jerusalem best?

Who owns Jerusalem?

In other words: Is it possible that Jews in Jerusalem see things other Jews do not see – or vice versa? Or maybe Jerusalem's Jews are satisfied with the city because it seems to be moving in the right direction as they understand the city, while other Jews see it moving in what they consider the wrong direction because they have a different vision for the city. Whatever the case, the clear underlying assumption of the 2017 Dialogue (and all previous JPPI Dialogues) is that Israel ought to consider the views of Jews worldwide on various subjects. Dialogue participants strongly seconded this undergirding assumption. They believe that as the political and cultural future of Jerusalem is shaped, whether by the government of Israel or by the Mayor of Jerusalem, the **concerns of Jews worldwide should be taken into consideration.**

Jews living outside of Israel see Jerusalem as a "home" not only in the sense of feeling at home in the city, but also in the sense that they regard it as their ancestral or spiritual home too, and hence ought to have a say in the shaping of its political and cultural future. A plurality (44 percent) of Dialogue participants believe that their views on political issues concerning Jerusalem are important, and a majority (53 percent) believe that their views on Jerusalem's cultural issues are important, because Jerusalem is the city "of all Jews." Only 16 percent (political) and 11 percent (cultural) of them believe that Israel should decide the future of Jerusalem without taking the views of non-Israeli Jews into consideration.



As they claim the right to take part in shaping the city’s future, non-Israeli Jews explain their take on the city’s “wrong direction” in several ways, but three main pillars of concern stand out: relations between Jews and Arabs in Jerusalem; Jewish Pluralism in Jerusalem (some Dialogue participants referred to the inability of non-Orthodox Jews to fully express their Jewishness in the city); and Jewish demographic trends, meaning the growing proportion of the ultra-Orthodox community in the city’s Jewish population.

### **Appendix: Basic information about the Dialogue**

The 2017 Dialogue process took place from January to April of 2017 in dozens of Jewish gatherings around the world. Participants were asked to read a short background paper and attend a discussion seminar of 90-120 minutes. The following were part of each seminar: a short presentation about Jerusalem’s current situation; a survey all participants were asked to complete, from which JPPI derived data on what participants believe about all of the above-mentioned questions; a moderated discussion about the future of Jerusalem. Participants were presented with certain challenges and asked to respond to them, and in so doing clarified their nuanced positions on Jerusalem’s current image, Jerusalem’s political future, Jerusalem’s cultural and Jewish character, and the role of world Jewry in crafting its future.

Naturally, conclusions drawn from the seminars, the survey, and the background materials should take into account the context in which the seminars were held, and to clarify what they can accomplish, and what they cannot.

## **JPPI 2017 Dialogue Locations:**

### **Israel:**

Jerusalem

### **United States:**

New York, Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, Palm Beach, Washington, Ann Arbor, St. Louis, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Las Vegas, Wilmington

### **Canada:**

Toronto, Montreal

**Brazil:** Rio de Janeiro, San Paulo, Curitiba.

**Australia:** Melbourne.

**France:** Paris.

**Switzerland:** Zurich

All in all, the number of discussion groups was 39. The total number of participants was 530.

## **Biases in the Dialogue Process:**

**In favor of the Jewish community's core population:** Understanding the process, its advantages and limitations, requires that we first note that the process relied heavily upon each local community (and local organizations). The communities were responsible for recruiting seminar attendees. Therefore, there are significant variations in group composition and size in various communities. But one thing is common to all of them: The established community – usually the Federation, but sometimes other organizations as well – was the organizing body that gathered the participants. It is important to recognize the fact that this report focuses on the attitudes of Jews who are connected to the “core” of the organized Jewish community, often the attitudes of Jews who hold various leadership positions in the community, and is less a reflection of Jews whose connection to established Jewish life is weak, or even non-existent.

**The voice of younger community members:** Many of the discussions included fewer young people whose Jewish identity often differs in content and intensity from the Jewish identity of older cohorts.

**Religious composition:** JPPI's process included very few ultra-Orthodox participants. Generally speaking, the percentage of Dialogue participants who self-identify as “Conservative” was higher than their actual share of the general Jewish population; in comparison with this, the percentage of participants who self-identify as neither “Reform,” “Conservative” or “Orthodox” was lower than their share of the general Jewish population. In other words, those participating in the Dialogue were more “religiously affiliated” (not in terms of observance but in terms of identity and identification) than the Jewish average.

**Geographic distribution:** The geographic distribution of the seminars was quite widespread. Communities from several continents took part in the Dialogue process. The impressive representation of the North American Jewish community corresponds to the size of the Jewish population there. Representation of European Jewry was lower in this year's process than we would have liked.

**Interest in Israel:** Groups taking part in the discussions had a self-selection bias of having an interest in Israel. Thus, the general picture we got from the seminars undoubtedly tends toward those members of the worldwide Jewish community for whom Israel is important, and who are interested in conducting a Dialogue that includes a significant Israeli

component. On the other hand, it is important to note that Israel, and the views of Israelis, were underrepresented in the Dialogue (this is somewhat mitigated by the survey of Israelis we conducted this year).

**The advantage of the Dialogue process:** A discussion among Jews with a clear and unequivocal interest in the Jewish world, and who are involved in their own Jewish communities, could be preferable to a discussion that also includes Jews who are weakly connected to the Jewish community with a low level of interest. As the purpose of the process is to discuss the implications of certain trends on the policies of communities (and the State of Israel) it would be reasonable to argue that such a discussion should take into account primarily (and perhaps exclusively) the perspectives of Jews in the world for whom the community is important.