



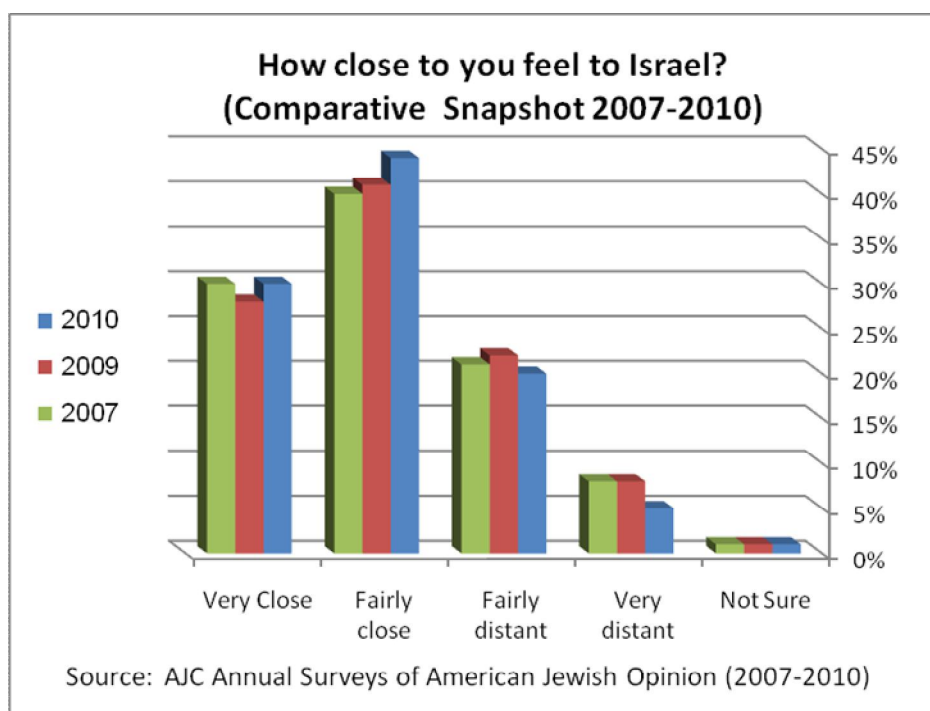
Identification level of Diaspora Jews with Israel

This past April, the American Jewish Committee released its 2010 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion. The sample consisted of 800 self-identifying Jewish respondents, and covered a variety of topics, among them: U.S.- Israeli relations, the Arab-Israel conflict, and the Iranian nuclear threat. As in previous years, this survey looked at, among other things, the level of identification of American Jews with Israel. This year, unlike previous years, there was only one question that examined affinity to Israel: "How close do you feel to Israel?" It is important to note that in previous years an additional question was asked which helped define affinity, this question inquired about the respondents' level of "caring about Israel," and was not included in the most recent survey.

The survey data indicate a slight increase in the sense of closeness to Israel compared with previous years:

How close do you feel to Israel?

	2010	2009	2007
Very close	30%	28%	30%
Fairly close	44%	41%	40%
Fairly distant	20%	22%	21%
Very distant	5%	8%	8%
Not sure	0	1%	1%



The Media coverage of this research, hardly dealt with American Jews' identification with Israel (and dealt mostly with the level of approval of the Obama administration's approach to Israel). However, we found some exceptions that did deal, among other things, with the identifications issue:

E.B. Solomont of the Jerusalem Post , in his article [US Jews satisfied with bilateral ties](#) (April 11, 2010), addressed the strong bond with Israel felt by American Jews." Solomont added new data, not published in the official survey. These data indicate that "Orthodox Jews expressed stronger levels of identification than other groups, with 77% saying they felt "very close." In addition, he presents data regarding age difference, showing that "40% of Jews under 40 feel very close to Israel, compared to 24% of Jews between (ages) 40 and 59" (this finding contradicts previous findings indicating that the younger generation feels less close to Israel. This difference may be the result of difference in the age group composition).

Another news article that deals with the survey's findings about Jewish identity is Paul Vitello's article in the New York Times- [On Israel, Jews and Leaders Often Disagree](#) (May 5, 2010). Vitello also chose to examine the strong attachment that American Jews express towards Israel, but along these data, he reminds us that the findings from Steven M. Cohen and Ari Y. Kelman's, (Hebrew Union College) research showing a sharp decline in the sense of connection to Israel among young Jews in America.

To understand the widespread phenomenon, we will point out some prominent research on the level of closeness to Israel indicated by American Jews.

Previous Research:

American Jewish Attachment to Israel: An Assessment of the "Distancing" Hypothesis ([Link](#))

On February 2008, the Steinhardt Social Research Institute, at Brandeis University, published a new study under entitled "American Jewish Attachment to Israel: An Assessment of the "Distancing Hypothesis." The study was focused on the levels of closeness and concern American Jews feel toward Israel. The findings of Theodore Sasson, Charles Kadushin and Leonard Saxe in this study are based on the AJC Annual Surveys from 1994-2006.

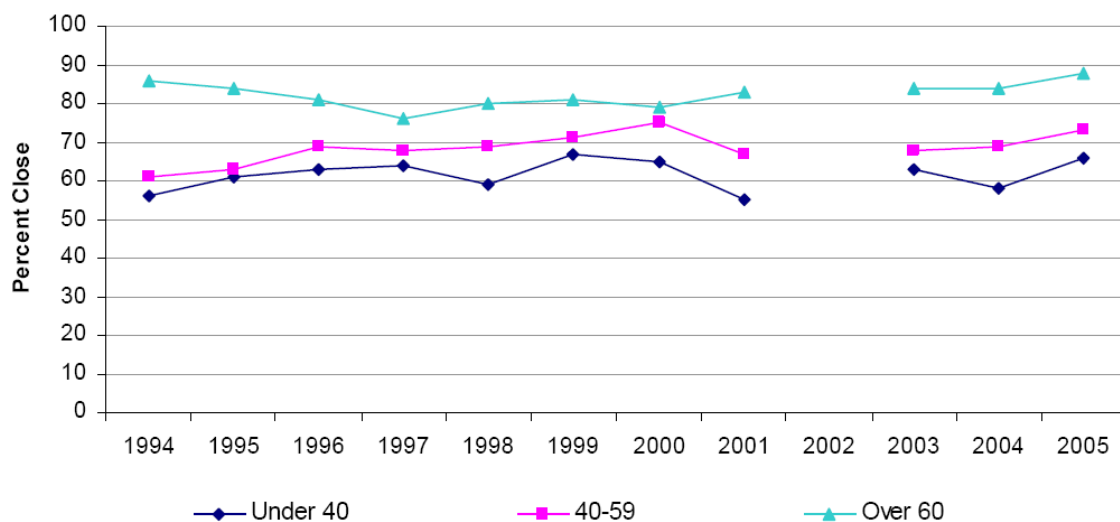
The study shows changes of feelings of closeness through the years by denomination:

How close do you feel to Israel?

	2006	1994
Orthodox	99%	95%
Reform	69%	59%
Conservative	88%	83%
Just Jewish	64%	50%

The authors' conclusion differs from that of Cohen and Kelman (2007). They argue that over several decades, there is no indication of a declining attachment to Israel over time, although the data show a relatively low level of attachment among the younger generations. Their conclusion from the data is that as the young generation ages, its attachment grows.

Close to Israel, by Age-Cohort

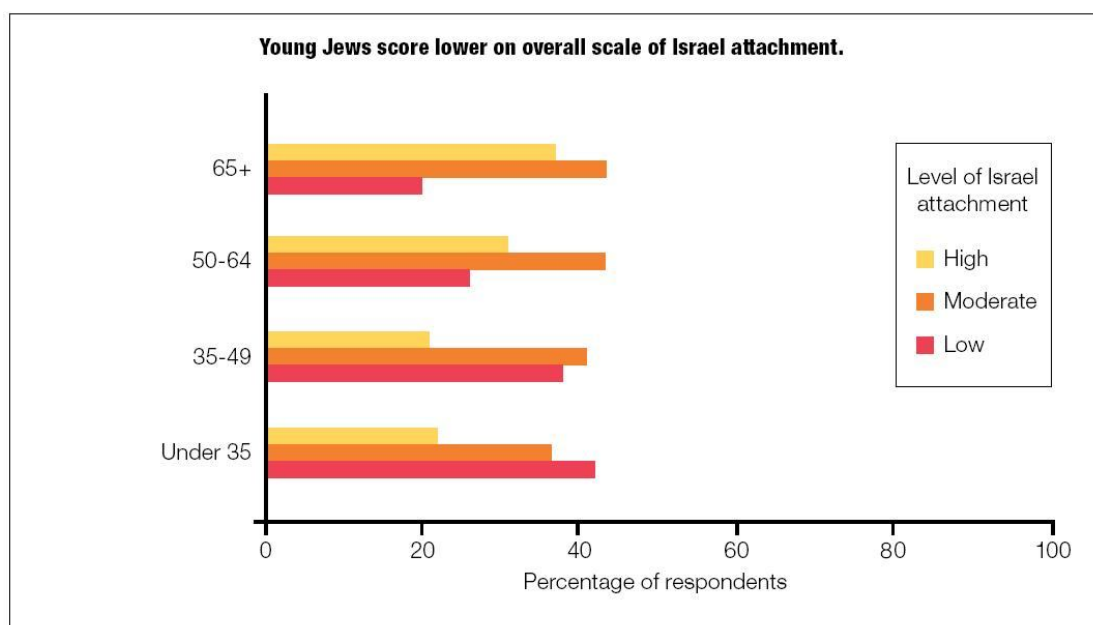


Beyond Distancing: Young Adult American Jews and Their Alienation from Israel [\(Link\)](#)

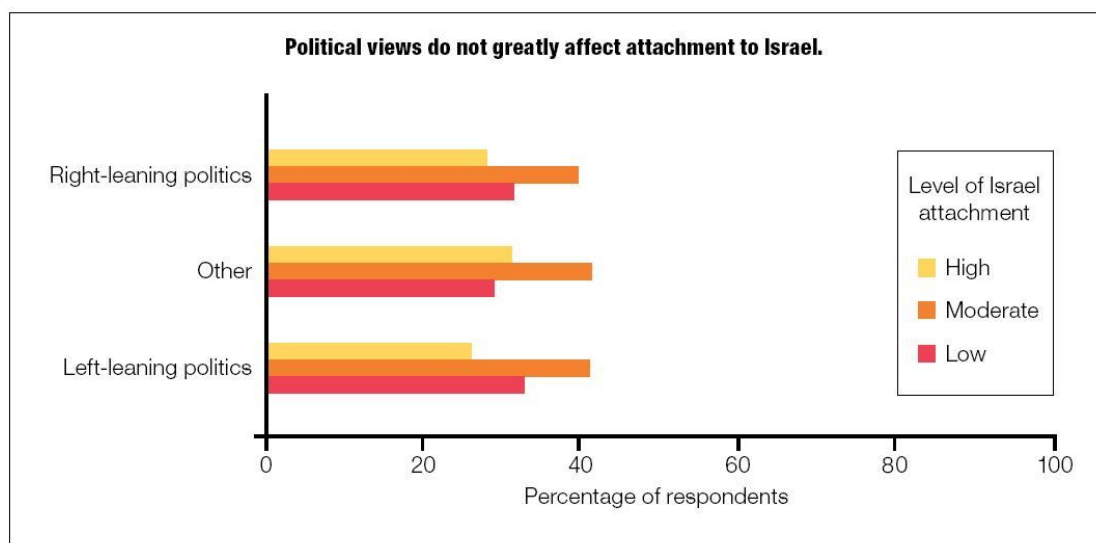
In 2007, the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies published a controversial study by Steven M. Cohen and Ari Y. Kelman (with the assistance of Lauren Blitzer). This research relied on the 2007 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion and other previous studies to claim that the evidence "pointed to a growing distancing from Israel of American Jews, and the distancing seems most pronounced among younger Jews" (Cohen and Kelman 2007, p.2). The researchers' analysis focused on non-Orthodox respondents, since Orthodox Jews maintain different relationships with Israel than their non-Orthodox counterparts.

Among the interesting findings introduced by the researchers:

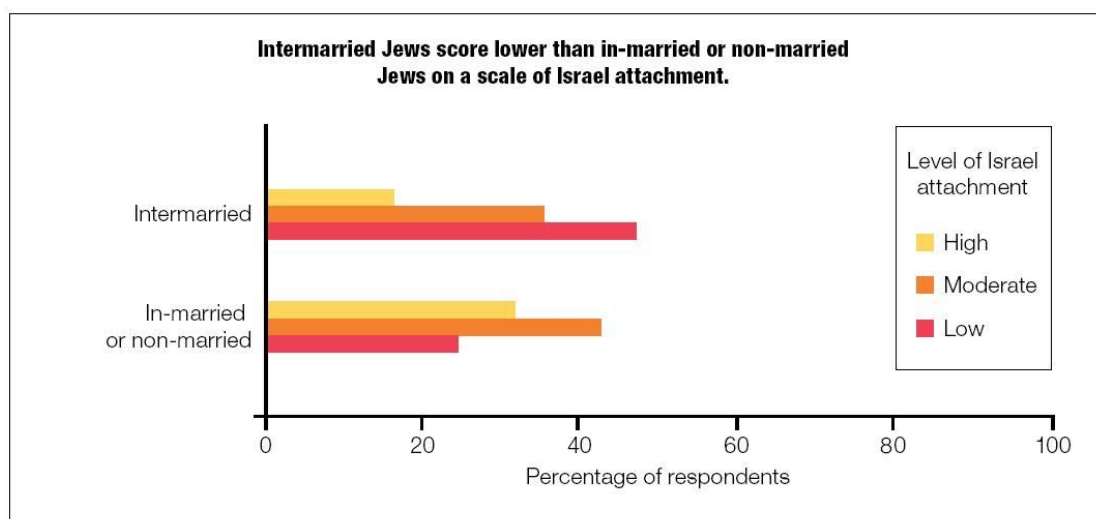
1. Young Jews are less attached to Israel:



2. Political views, contrary to popular belief, don't greatly affect attachment:



3. Intermarried Jews indicate themselves as less attached to Israel than in-married or non-married Jews:



The National Jewish Population Survey 2000-2001¹ ([Link](#))

In 2004, a new update to the 2000-2001 NJPS report was published. In this update, the researchers qualified their findings and highlight the fact that the tragic events of 2001-2003 (September 11, the second Intifada etc.) galvanized at least a portion of the American Jewish population's support of Israel. The researchers suggest assessing the degree of attachment by other available key indicators such as the cumulative number of American Jews who have traveled to Israel. According to their findings, over one-third of all American Jewish adults (35%) have been to Israel, 20% have been to Israel at least twice. Here are the results with respect to sense of attachment:

Connection with Israel by region, age and affiliation:

		Visited Israel	Family or friends in Israel	Emotionally attached to Israel	U.Ss and Israeli Jews share destiny
Total		35%	45%	63%	72%
Region	Northeast	39%	51%	66%	73%
	Midwest	29%	42%	61%	73%
	South	35%	38%	62%	73%
	West	29%	41%	59%	67%
Age	35-44	31%	42%	56%	72%
	45-54	34%	45%	64%	71%
	55-64	32%	43%	68%	75%
Affiliation	Unaffiliated	25%	34%	48%	62%
	Moderately affiliated	44%	49%	74%	76%
	Highly affiliated	58%	56%	85%	81%

¹ Data were updated on January 2004

Additional Data and Research Information:

1. The Jewish People Policy Institute presents every year in its Annual Assessment a table of selected Indicators of world Jewry. In this table there is an indicator for the proportion of Jews who ever visited Israel- The index indicates the degree of attachment to Israel. It shows that in the years 2006-2009 there was only a slight change:

Ever Visited Israel (% of Jewish Population)²

	2009	2008	2007	2006
United States	>35	>35	35	35
Canada	>65	>65	66	66
Latin America				
Argentina	>50	>50	>50	>50
Brazil	>50	>50	>50	>50
Mexico	>70	>70	>70	>70
Other Countries	>50	>50	>50	>50
Europe non-FSU				
France	>70	>70	>70	>70
UK	>75	>75	78	78
Germany	>50	>50	>50	>50
Hungary
Other EU	>50	>50	>50	>50
Other non EU
South Africa	>75	>75	79	79
Australia	>65	>65	70	70

Source: www.jppei.org.il

² This data was generated by Prof. Sergio DellaPergola and was used in JPPI's annual assessments (2006-2009)

2. In an article published in the magazine *Israel Studies*³, Summer 2010, Theodore Sasson presents data on American Jewish philanthropy to Israel. According to Sasson's findings, "American Jews are more and more looking away from Jewish federations as a means of supporting Israel and instead donating directly to specific Israel-based organizations." Between 2001 and 2006, donations by American Jews increased by 64%. In 2006 alone, Israeli arts groups received \$94.9 million; educational groups received \$294 million; health care groups received \$170.5 million; and human services groups received \$156.3 million. In 2008, the Israeli non-profit sector raised an estimated \$1.5 billion in contributions from foreign donors and foundations, most of it from American Jews (Sasson 2010, 180).

Another study dealing with contributions to Israeli organizations from foreign donors and foundations, was published by The Center for the Study of Philanthropy in Israel at the Hebrew University (2009) ([Link](#)). This study by Prof. Hillel Schmid and Ms. Avishag Rudich, also points to changes in the nature of philanthropy, and the shift from a federation-dominated practice to private-foundation giving. According to their data, in 2008 the total of foreign philanthropic transfers to Israel amounted to \$2.438 billion (Schmid and Rudich 2009, 3). In terms of Diaspora-Jewish giving, the amount of money raised decreased from 2007, yet the decrease was lower than expected in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis. In 2008 the combined campaigns of all 144 US Jewish federations raised \$912 million, a slight increase from the 2007 total of \$911 million (*Ibid.* 5).

More information regarding donations to Israel between 1948-2004, can be found [here](#).

3. In the 2009 J Street National Survey of American Jews (which can be found [here](#)), the researchers examined the most important subjective reason for supporting Israel.⁴

³ Sasson, Theodore (2010), "Mass Mobilization to Direct Engagement: American Jew's Changing Relationship to Israel", *Israel Studies*, 15, 2, pp.173-195

⁴ On the 2010 J Street National Survey there was no reference to this indicator

Below is a list of reasons that people give for supporting Israel. Please mark the SINGLE biggest reason you have for supporting Israel.

	Total
I am Jewish and Israel is the Jewish homeland.....	35%
Israel is an American ally in the Middle East and strengthens our national security interest.....	31%
Israel is a democracy which shares my values.....	19%
I have family and friends in Israel.....	6%
I don't support Israel.....	3%
Other.....	6%