

March
2024

CPOST SPECIAL REPORT

Understanding Campus Fears After October 7 and How to Reduce Them

A non-partisan analysis of Antisemitism and Islamophobia among College Students and American Adults based on National Surveys Fielded December 14, 2023 to January 16, 2024

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Foreword

The October 7, 2023 terrorist attack on Israel and Israel's ongoing invasion of Gaza have impacted college and university campuses throughout the United States, fueling protests and demonstrations as well as marked increases in threats against Jewish and Muslim Americans.

This report uses data to understand how these events have affected the environment on college campuses and the lives of college students.

This study and the surveys that underpin it would not have been possible without the generous support of several institutions, including Stanford University, Colby College, and the University of Chicago, as well as concerned individuals connected with Northwestern University.

I would also like to thank Keven Ruby and Kyle Larson, who helped develop the survey instruments, analyze the data, and the graphics and visualizations for the report.



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Executive Summary

Many urgent questions face college campuses in the wake of the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel and Israel's subsequent invasion of Gaza, which kicked-off numerous student-led pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian protests, intimidation, and violence. In response, the Chicago Project on Security and Threats at the University of Chicago (CPOST) conducted a study of the national campus environment. Based on two national surveys of 5,000 college students from over 600 four-year academic institutions, with an additional 5,000 American adults as a comparison set, which were fielded from mid-December 2023 to mid-January 2024, and with the benefit of a previous baseline survey of 8,000 American adults fielded in Spring of 2023, this study provides the most extensive survey evidence to day about the extent of campus fears and changes in antisemitism after October 7. This study is also among the few efforts to disentangle different meanings of antisemitism and compare antisemitism and Islamophobia among respondents.

The overarching finding is that campus fears related to the current Israel-Palestinian conflict are more intense among certain groups and widespread across the student body than previously known. As a consequence of the conflict, numerous students are fearful because of their support of one side or the other:

- **56% of Jewish college students felt in personal danger**
- **52% of Muslim college students felt in personal danger**
- **16% of other college students felt in personal danger**

This equates to 2 to 3 million college students.

The findings also show that Jewish and Muslim students report fearing for their physical safety, and other students fear being caught in the crossfire. Many are additionally concerned about academic discrimination and loss of professional opportunities.

Different perceptions of intent are likely contributing to these fears. 66% of Jewish college students understand the pro-Palestinian protest chant "From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free" to mean the expulsion and genocide of Israeli Jews, while only 14% of Muslim students understand the chant that way; of Jewish students who understand the phrase this way, 62% report feeling afraid. About 10% of college students would permit student groups to call for genocide against Jews, and 13% of college students say that when Jews are attacked, it is because they deserve it. When these same questions are asked about Muslims, we find the same percentages: 10% and 13%.

Campus fears are occurring in a national climate of increasing antisemitism: violent antisemitism has increased 13% nationally since Spring 2023, when CPOST conducted its previous probe of antisemitism.

The findings are concerning. College students of various backgrounds feel personally unsafe on college campuses, and there is a disturbing trend toward greater acceptance of violence, even calls for genocide, than befits the mission of the university to enable all students to flourish.

This study provides extensive information to help university and national leaders better understand and navigate the most intense challenges facing the higher education community and the country today.

In particular, the findings are an opportunity to re-center the national discussion around students and away from politics. The findings show strong support for calming actions, such as major public statements by university and national leaders that would condemn violence of any kind against any group of people. Every leader in a position of power, including protest organizers, should thus find ways to send the message, repeatedly and convincingly, that violence is never justified. They should also clarify policies on permissible political action on campus by students toward students and mechanisms and obligations to report and respond to incidents and inform campus communities about the different perceptions of intent associated with protest phrases that are encouraging campus fears. These steps will not solve everything, but reducing fears for some can have cascading calming effects for many.

Detailed Summary

In the wake of the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel and Israel's subsequent invasion of Gaza, the University of Chicago Project on Security and Threats (CPOST) conducted a study of current college students and American adults to better understand how the conflict is contributing to antisemitism, Islamophobia, and fears on college campuses and communities around the country. CPOST has extensive experience studying political violence, including extensive survey research on American attitudes towards political violence and, more recently, the intersection of support for political violence and antisemitism.

The findings in this report are based on national surveys fielded from December 14, 2023 to January 16, 2024 that probe personal fears, feelings of antisemitism and islamophobia, the varied impacts of different interpretations of pro-Palestinian protest chants, and generational effects. Combined, these surveys sampled approximately 5,000 four-year college students from over 600 universities and colleges matched to national benchmarks and 5,000 demographically representative American adults. In addition, a previous survey of 8,000 nationally representative American adults fielded in Spring of 2023, months prior to the events of October 7, provided a national baseline measure of feelings of antisemitism and support for political violence.

All surveys were conducted by polling agencies with the highest standards of quality and reliability -- NORC at the University of Chicago and College Pulse -- with narrow margins of error from 1.0% to 1.94%.

Thus, this study provides reliable information about changes of attitudes, particularly on antisemitism, pre- and post-October 7 as well as a host of important issues among college students and Americans today, all to better inform higher education and national leaders as they engage the current situation and prepare for the likely ebb and flow of the Israel-Palestinian conflict in years to come.

Main Findings

The principal topline results, presented in this report, are:

01. Campus fears are intense and widespread after October 7. Up to one in five (12–19%) of college students report feeling in personal danger due to their support of Israel or Palestinians. These feelings of danger are felt most intensely

by Jewish students (56%), followed closely by Muslim students, and a significant portion of students who are not Jewish or Muslim (16%). This equates to fears among 2-3 million current college students. Fears are prevalent in colleges and universities of all sizes.

02. Campus fears are a response to real danger. Fearful students report personally observing acts of violence and intimidation. Jewish and Muslim students report fearing for their physical safety, and other students fear being caught in the crossfire. Many are additionally concerned about academic discrimination and loss of professional opportunities.

03. Students more likely than the general public to engage in activism for Palestinians than for Israel. College students were almost twice as likely to have attended a march or protest on behalf of Palestinians than on behalf of Israel (11% to 6%), while the general public had attended such events at approximately the same rate (around 2%). These findings reiterate the college students remain significantly more likely to support Palestinians than Israel, and significantly more likely to take action on behalf of Palestinians in the form of discourse or protest.

04. Protest chants contribute to the fear. 66% of Jewish college students understand "From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free," to mean the expulsion and genocide of Israeli Jews, while only 14% of Muslim students understand the chant that way. Of Jewish students who understand the chant to mean genocide of the Jews, 62% report feeling afraid. Hence, different perceptions of intent are likely playing a role in campus fears.

- 05. A significant proportion of college students blame American Jews and American Muslims for the violence in the current war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.** 16% of college students say that American Jews are at least somewhat responsible for the ongoing violence in Israel and Palestine, while 13% say that American Muslims are at least somewhat responsible.
- 06. Violent antisemitism among Americans is higher after October 7, and a significant minority of college students tolerates calls for genocide and violence against Jews.** About one in ten adults (8%) – equal to 20 million Americans – are more willing to tolerate violent attacks against Jews today compared to spring 2023. About 10% of college students would permit student groups calling for genocide against Jews and find similar calls by friends and relatives acceptable. Notably, “prejudicial antisemitism” as measured by belief in traditional “anti-Jewish” tropes did not show a comparable rise.
- 07. College students are less Islamophobic than the general population, but significant minorities tolerate calls for genocide and violence against Muslims.** 13% of college students would tolerate violent attacks against Muslims, and 10% would permit student groups to call for genocide against them.
- 08. There are real, but modest double-standards among college students related to relative acceptance of violence against minority groups.** About 80% of college students abhor calls for genocide against Jews, Muslims, or Blacks. However, they would punish calls for genocide against Blacks more severely.
- 09. Students and general population support actions on calming actions on college campuses.** Both students and the public favor university action to help calm tensions on campus. 51% of students favor university administrators making a public statement to that effect, and only 13% oppose such a statement. Among students, 62% are supportive of the idea and only 4% opposed.

Conclusions

Overall, this report concludes that college students of various backgrounds feel personally unsafe on college campuses, and there is a disturbing tendency toward acceptance of violence, even calls for genocide, among a significant minority of students.

To be clear, these fears go beyond discomfort with controversial political ideas and include fears of personal danger among a significant portion of the study body. These fears are highly common among Jew and Muslim students, but 16% of non-Jewish and non-Muslim students also feel threatened. This indicates the wide scope of fears among college students for being targeted whether as Jews, symbols of Israel, Muslims, symbols of the Palestinian cause, or simply caught in the crossfire. Widespread fears should not be taken to mean “equivalent” fears. Feelings of personal danger are just that – personal – and cannot be compared across individuals or groups of people.

Widespread personal fears for physical safety, academic discrimination, and economic livelihood among students are severely at odds with the mission of the university to foster scholarship and intellectual achievement in an environment where students and all members of the university community will grow and thrive.

Recommendations

The response to fears related to political beliefs are important, both because the Israel-Palestinian conflict will ebb and flow and because other political issues could become similarly intense in the future. Although more research is certainly beneficial and specific institutions must decide on specific policies, the findings and conclusions highlight the value of basic principles as higher education and national leaders consider appropriate measures.

Accordingly, this report recommends following 6 basic principles to address campus fears in the wake of October 7:

- 01. Clear and immediate communication by college leaders condemning violence and intimidation by students and against students on their campuses.** Clear and consistent messaging is critical, and every leader in a position of power should find ways to send this message repeatedly and convincingly. National political leaders should amplify this message in their state and local communities as well. Messaging should also address protest chants. Many protesters may not think they are threatening harm and so it is important for all communities to know that certain phrases are widely understood to imply harm. The antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents on college campuses and around the country are not happening in a vacuum, but occurring in an environment where different perceptions of intent associated with protest phrases are encouraging campus fears.

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- 02. Ongoing monitoring of student perception and experience of personal danger due to Israel/Gaza conflict.** While individual colleges and universities should conduct their own campus surveys, periodic and independent national surveys (e.g., monthly, quarterly) are essential since the campus fears found in this report are a national phenomenon, not confined to isolated academic institutions, even if specific levels. Complementary surveys of American adults are also important as a baseline and for generational effect analysis.
- 03. Campus education about the Israel-Palestinian conflict as related to sources of student fears.** Given the evidence that different perceptions of intent are likely playing a role in campus fears, efforts to inform campus communities about the multiple common meanings of protest phrases can increase awareness of unintentional signals of harm.
- 04. Fostering a national conversation about the acceptability of public speech on college and university campuses that is widely understood to call for the eradication or substantial harm to a group of people.** Each academic institution should have its own policies to determine the limits of speech on campus. The central question for national discussion is whether the mission of the university can be achieved in an environment where significant segments of the student body feel in danger for even having an opinion on important political and social issues. The University of Chicago's well-known report on "University's Role in Political and Social Action," by a commission under the chairmanship of Harry Kalven in 1967, offers a potential starting point for a national conversation centered around student safety and acceptability of speech commonly understood as violent in an environment that values diversity of views.
- 05. Improved resources for students experiencing fears and anxieties related to political protests and observed acts of violence and intimidation.** Student fears in this report include, but also go beyond, concerns for immediate physical safety and consist of concerns about physical danger more broadly, academic discrimination, and loss of economic livelihood that may require new or more intense demand on resources in the wake of the current Israel-Palestinian conflict or future politically intense issues in the United States.
- 06. Deeper understanding of the relationship between antisemitism and antizionism and spiral effects of antisemitism and Islamophobia among college students and American adults.** This report is among the few efforts to disentangle the possible differences between antisemitism and antizionism and compare antisemitism and Islamophobia among respondents and cannot answer a host of questions without further research. Among these issues are the extent to which heightened prominence of violence in the Israel-Palestinian conflict in the wake of October 7 or prolonged experience with heightened violence may lead antisemitism and antizionism to merge more closely in the future. Better understanding of these relationships is crucial since the dynamics of prejudice may well impact student safety and campus climate going forward.

The national surge of antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents in the wake of October 7 caught many, if not most, university leaders, national leaders, students, and members of the public by surprise. This report shows that these events led to widespread fears among students at odds with the mission of the university. Developing appropriate responses is a national challenge that will demand significant resources and attention -- as there is no higher priority for universities than to create an environment where all members of the university will flourish.

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Supplemental Documents

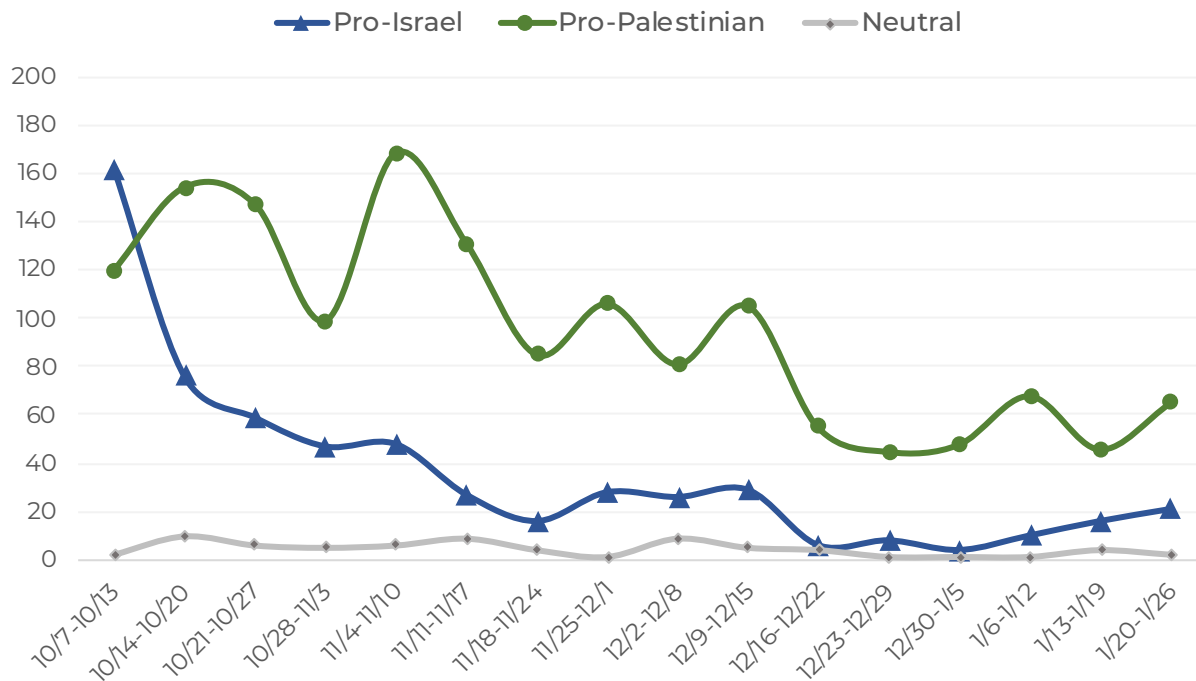
- 01.** Students Explain Why They Feel Threatened for their Support of Israel or Palestinians after 10/7, Free Response Question Results from College Pulse Survey January 2024.
- 02.** Topline: CPOST survey “Understanding Antisemitism and Islamophobia Among College Students and Americans After 10/7,” fielded by NORC, January 2024.
- 03.** Topline: CPOST/College Pulse Survey “Understanding Antisemitism and Islamophobia Among College Students and Americans After 10/7,” January 2024.

Introduction

In wake of the escalation in the Israel-Palestinian conflict after October 7, 2023, hundreds of pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel protests occurred in many American cities and on college campuses and American Jewish and Muslim organizations reported an almost immediate and significant rise in acts of antisemitism and Islamophobia in the United States.

Figure 1. Pro-Palestinian and Pro-Israel Protests in the U.S. After 10/7

Count of U.S. Protest Events: 7-day periods starting Oct. 7, 2023 and ending Jan 26, 2024.



Note: 1,900 protest events identified by ACLED as relating to the conflict between Israel and Hamas after 10/7. Events classified by the author based on actor and keyword searches of notes field. Events with both pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli protestors counted for both. Data: Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), <https://acleddata.com/>

As data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) shows (Figure 1), the protests began almost immediately after October 7, 2023, and has continued for months, with pro-Israel protests initially more numerous than pro-Palestinian marches and the balancing then reversing.

At almost the same time, anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim incidents rose. In the month from October 7 to November 4-7, 2023 alone, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) recorded an increase in antisemitic incidents of assault, vandalism, and harassment of over 300%, while the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) reported an increase in requests for help or complaints

related to anti-Muslim bias of over 200%, both compared to roughly the same period in prior years. These incidents reportedly targeted American adults, college students and members of the US Congress¹ and continued at least through December.²

Overall, the ADL reports that a total of 3,283 anti-Jewish incidents between October 7, 2023 and January 7, 2024 at least 505 (15%) of which happened on college campuses, while CAIR reports that it had received 3,578 complaints of anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian incidents between October 1 and December 31, 2023, at least 585 (16%) of which were related to K-12 and college students.³

Given that college students consist of about 6% of the US adult population (there are about 16 million college students out of a total of about 258 million American adults), this means that incidents among college students occurred at nearly three times the rate in the general adult population.

Further, numerous Jewish and Muslim college students were the targets of threats of violence closely related to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, including a Cornell student arrested for making violent threats online against Jewish students and the shooting of three Palestinian college students in Vermont, among many others.⁴ These incidents include a broad spectrum of threats and physical assault, vandalism, and verbal or written harassment.

On October 31, 2023, FBI Director Christopher Wray testified to the US Senate and said “the threat [of antisemitism] is reaching, in some way, sort of historical levels....In fact, our statistics would indicate that for a group that represents only about 2.4% of the American public, they [the American Jewish community] account for something like 60% of all religious-based hate crimes.”⁵

The national surge of antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents in the wake of October 7 caught many, if not most, university leaders, national leaders, students, and members of the public by surprise. This report shows that these events led to widespread fears among students at odds with the mission of the university. Developing appropriate responses is a national challenge that will demand significant resources and attention — as there is no higher priority for universities than to create an environment where all members of the university will flourish.

These events raise important questions about the degree of fear and support for political violence among college stu-

dents and American adults related to the current Israel-Palestinian conflict:

- 01.** How widespread are fears of personal danger?
- 02.** Has antisemitism grown in the United States since October 7?
- 03.** What is the level of antisemitism and Islamophobia today?
- 04.** How acceptable are calls for genocide and support for violence?
- 05.** How do college students and American adults differ on attitudes related to the conflict?
- 06.** How much support is there for calming actions on college campuses?

This study surveys approximately 5,000 current college students and 5,000 American adults to gather new information on these questions. The purpose is to better inform higher education and national leaders about key aspects of the reactions among college students and the public to the escalation of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. As such, the goal is to gather facts and to assess the situation. It is not to develop specific policy recommendations, but to better inform future decisions.

Specifically, the data is based on three national surveys of college students and American adults, two fielded Dec 14, 2023 to Jan 16, 2024 and one fielded April and May 2023, all conducted by polling agencies with the highest standards of quality and reliability for their respective target populations:

- 01.** A national survey of 4,143 American adults and 595 current college students on antisemitism and Islamophobia fielded NORC from December 14, 2023 to January 16, 2024, based on nationally representative probability sampling of US households with a margin of error of 1.94%.
- 02.** A national survey of 5,233 US college students currently enrolled in four-year programs in 629 colleges and universities on antisemitism and Islamophobia fielded by College Pulse from December 14, 2023 to January 16, 2024, based on nationally representative non-probability sample with post-stratification matching to known college student benchmarks with a margin of error of 1%.

03. A national survey of 8,039 American adults on antisemitism and political violence fielded by NORC at the University of Chicago from April and May 2023, based on national probability sampling of US households with a margin of error of 1.5%.

Throughout the report, we refer to the different surveys as: NORC January 2024, College Pulse January 2024, and NORC May 2023.

These surveys address personal fears, antisemitism, islamophobia, possible impact of different understandings of pro-Palestinian protest chants, and generational effects. Thus, this study provides reliable information about changes of attitudes, particularly on antisemitism, pre- and post-October 7 as well as a host of important issues among college students and Americans today, all to better inform higher education and national leaders as they engage the current situation and prepare for the likely ebb and flow of the Israel-Palestinian conflict in years to come.

The report is divided into 6 main sections, each focusing on specific questions at the heart of the study, and a conclusion.

Section 1 reports on the scope and magnitude of fears among college students related to Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Section 2 measures antisemitic beliefs among college students and the U.S. population, using measures that disentangle prej-

udice against Jews as a culture or religious group from support for violent attacks against Jews and negative views of Israel as a state.

Second 3 assesses Islamophobic beliefs among college students and the U.S. population, using measures that separate prejudice against Muslims as a culture or religious group from support for violent attacks against Muslims and supporters of Palestinians.

Section 4 gauges the absolute and relative levels of acceptance of calls for genocide and violence against different groups (Blacks, Muslims, and Jews).

Section 5 probes how college students compare to American adults on general knowledge, degree of engagement, and sympathies for different parties in the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Section 6 evaluates support among college students and the U.S. general population for various calming solutions to tensions on campus.

The Conclusion highlights the need to address campus fears given that the Israel-Palestinian conflict is likely to ebb and flow in the future, the challenges for higher education and national leaders in addressing these fears, and recommended principles for response based on the findings in this report.

Section I: Campus Fears

Given the sudden rise of incidents of antisemitism and Islamophobia, the study sought to better understand the scope and magnitude of fears among current college students and American adults related to the current Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Specifically, respondents — both the college students and American adults in our survey — were asked whether they felt “in personal danger” because of their support for Israel or Palestinians since October 7. The large sample of college students in our College Pulse survey was also asked to explain, using text boxes, why they felt in danger.

The survey also asked questions about the meaning of the protest chant “From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free,” and feeling in danger for other reasons. Importantly, our surveys contain a substantial range of demographic, political party, and socio-economic information about respondents, permitting a wide range of relevant findings about campus fears related to the current Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Widespread, Intense Feelings of “Personal Danger”

The results from our surveys are striking: As Table 1 shows, up to one in five (12-19%) of all college students in America felt in “personal danger,” because of their support for either Israel or Palestinians and college students report feeling threatened 2-3x than the general population. Extrapolating the results, this equates to 2 to 3 million of the 16 million college students in the United States in 2023.

It is important to underscore that feeling in personal danger does not mean that someone is in immediate danger. It is also important to recognize that fear of personal danger could include concern for physical safety, academic discrimination, current or future economic livelihood, and social isolation, all of which occur among our survey respondents. However, it is also important to stress that the personal impact of fears of personal danger in any environment, especially in an academic

Table 1. Students Feel More Threatened than General Public

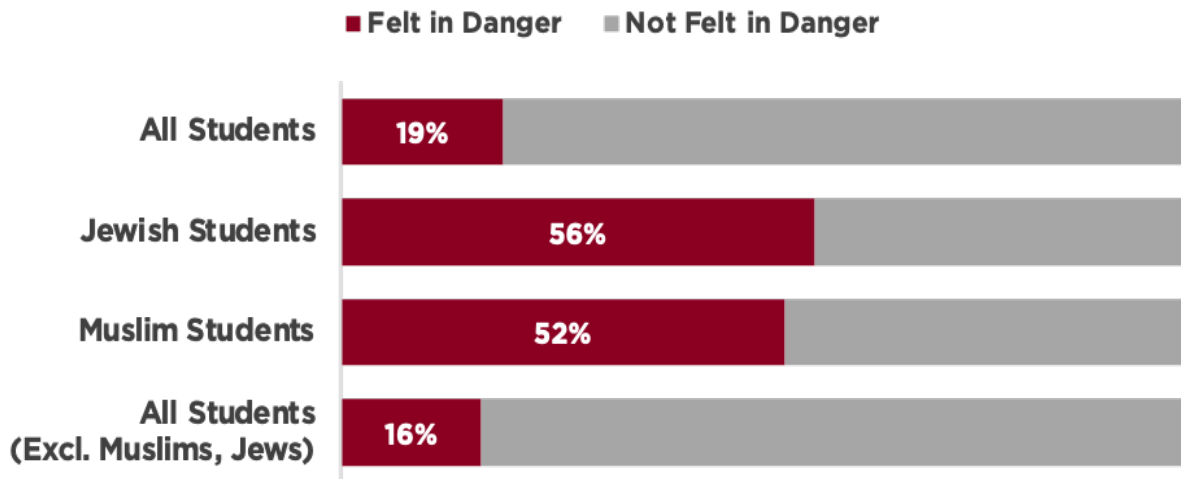
Q: In the past two months, have you felt you were in personal danger because of your support for either Israelis or Palestinians in the current war between Israel and Hamas?

	Gen Pop*	NORC Students	CP Students
For supporting Jews or Israel	3.4%	2.9%	6.6%
For supporting Muslims or Palestinians	1.4%	5.2%	8.7%
Both	1.3%	4.2%	3.7%
Total Felt in Danger	6.1%	12.3%	19.0%
Not Felt in Danger	93.9%	87.7	81.0%

Note: Showing percent agree, strongly agree. General population excludes students.
Survey(s): NORC January 2024 and College Pulse January 2024

Figure 2. Majority of Jews and Muslims Feel Threatened

Q: In the past two months, have you felt you were in personal danger because of your support for either Israelis or Palestinians in the current war between Israel and Hamas?



Survey(s): College Pulse January 2024

environment devoted to scholarship and learning, should not be underestimated.

As percentages of their respective groups, Jewish and Muslim college students were the most impacted. Using our large national sample of college students from College Pulse, we can look at demographic subsamples within the College population. Figure 2 above shows that Jewish students felt the most in personal danger (56%), closely followed by Muslim students (52%), and many other students (16%), all specifically due to their support of Israel or Palestinians since October 7.

Although they represent only 3.8% and 3.2% of the general college population respectively, the portion of Jews or Muslims who report feeling in personal danger are 11% and 9% of the total of all students who feel endangered in our sample. That 16% of others also feel threatened – a higher total number of students than Jewish and Muslim students reporting fears combined – indicates a wide scope for fears beyond the most impacted groups.

This finding is important. It is certainly the case that Jewish and Muslim students experience fears related to the events since October 7 far more intensely than the general student body. However, the extent of campus fears extends far beyond these

specific groups and includes a significant portion of the student population as a whole.

Table 2. Felt Danger by College Size

School Characteristic	% Students Feel in Danger in	# Schools in Sample
All Schools	19%	629
By Size		
<10,000	16%	319
10,000 to 19,999	17%	130
20,000 to 29,999	19%	70
>=30,000	21%	109
By Region		
Northeast	25%	183
Midwest	15%	141
South	19%	206
West	18%	97

Survey(s): College Pulse January 2024

Further, our findings on the distribution of felt danger after October 7 reflect the national student body broadly and are not skewed by either size of academic institution, respondents per institution, or geographic areas of the country. Our student samples come from a broad range of colleges and universities. Whether we look at the total number of schools with any students reporting political fears related to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, the number of schools with 20 or more respondents, or the schools with the largest pools of respondents, or different regions of the country, the picture remains the same: widespread fears among a significant portion of college students.

Table 2 above summarizes the average percentage of students feeling in danger by college size and region in our College Pulse survey sample. We see that the overall percentage of students who feel afraid does not vary significantly across institutions with different numbers of total students. Indeed, those with less than 9,999 students, 10,000 to 10,999 students, 20,000 to 29,999 students and greater than 30,000 students have almost the same percentages reporting feeling endangered. This means that the finding is not particularly related to either large or small colleges and universities. Student fears are also not confined to specific geographic areas of the country as defined by the Northeast, South, Midwest, West and West Coast, though they are highest in the Northeast and lowest in the Midwest.

Although larger sample sizes would be required to assess the relative weight of campus fears at specific academic institutions, the findings on distribution among college students, college size and geographic region indicate that campus fears are a widespread, national phenomenon.

Overall, these findings equate to approximately 2 to 3 million of the 16 million current college students feeling endangered in the months after October 7, 2023.

Why the Fear?

Both our NORC and College Pulse surveys asked a series of related questions that shed light on reasons why college students reported feeling in danger. Although the findings stop short of providing a complete causal analysis, the correlative results provide useful information about campus climate factors that are likely playing significant roles.

Protest Chants

Perhaps the most important campus climate factor is that a significant portion of students report being politically active on the

current Israel-Palestinian conflict. Specifically, 17% of students report that they have attended a protest or marched in support of Israel or Palestine since October 7. This percentage represents more than Jewish or Muslim participants. Of the 17% who protested, only 2% (about 10% of the total) are Jewish or Muslim students, while 15% (about 90%) are not. This suggests that experiences related to protest chants and the general climate on campuses due to the current Israel-Palestinian conflict impacted wide segments of college students.

To better understand the impact of common protest chants, the survey asked questions related to how students understood the phrase “From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free.” Specifically, the question offered students multiple choices on the meaning of the phrase, ranging from “Palestinians and Israelis should live in two separate countries, side by side”; “Palestinians and Israelis should live together in one state”; “Palestinians should replace Israelis in the territory, even if it means the expulsion or genocide of Israeli Jews”; to “Don’t Know What Phrase Means.”

Different understandings of intent are likely playing a role in heightening fears after October 7. Table 3 below shows that Jewish and Muslim students interpret the pro-Palestinian protest chant “From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be Free” very differently. While 26% of all students say they understand the phrase to mean “expulsion or genocide of Israeli Jews,” 66% of Jewish students view the phrase that way, compared to only 14% of Muslim students.

Interpreting “From the River to the Sea” to mean genocide of Jews corresponds strongly to feeling in personal danger due to support in the current Israel-Palestinian conflict. Of Jewish students who report feeling afraid, 74% interpret “From the River to the Sea” to mean genocide of the Jews, while 62% of Jewish students who have this interpretation reported feeling in personal danger.

This relationship between understanding the chant to mean genocide and student fears appears robust. We conducted a regression analysis and found a strong and statistically significant relationship in our College Pulse sample between interpreting “From the River to the Sea” to mean expulsion or genocide of Jews and expressed feelings of personal danger among college students overall. Importantly, this relationship extends beyond Jewish and Muslim students in the sample.

Table 3. How Jewish and Muslim Students Interpret Protest Chant Matters

Q: When you hear the statement, “From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be Free,” what do you think it means?

	All Students	Jewish Students	Muslim Students
Palestinians and Israelis should live in two separate countries, side by side.	27%	12%	42%
Palestinians and Israelis should live together in one state	16%	11%	34%
Palestinians should replace Israelis in the territory, even if it means the expulsion or genocide of Israeli Jews.	26%	66%	14%
Don't Know What Phrase Means	31%	11%	10%

Note: Showing agree, strongly agree as percent of category.
Survey(s): College Pulse January 2024

The analysis found that students in general who interpret “From the River to the Sea” to mean expulsion or genocide of the Jews are 2.4x more likely to report feeling threatened, a finding that remains highly statistically significant ($p < .001$) even when removing Jews and Muslims from the analysis and even when accounting for other significant sources of feeling threatened, such as participation in pro-Israel or pro-Palestinian marches.⁶

Overall, there is evidence that, however unintended, common protest chants are interpreted by a significant fraction of students as calls for genocide of the Jews and that those students who do understand the chants this way are significantly more likely to experience concerns for their personal safety. Jewish students are the most likely to be negatively affected, but protest chants commonly understood as calls for genocide are associated with negative consequences for a large portion of other students as well.

Assignment of Responsibility to US Jews and US Muslims for Violence in the Current Israel-Palestinian Conflict

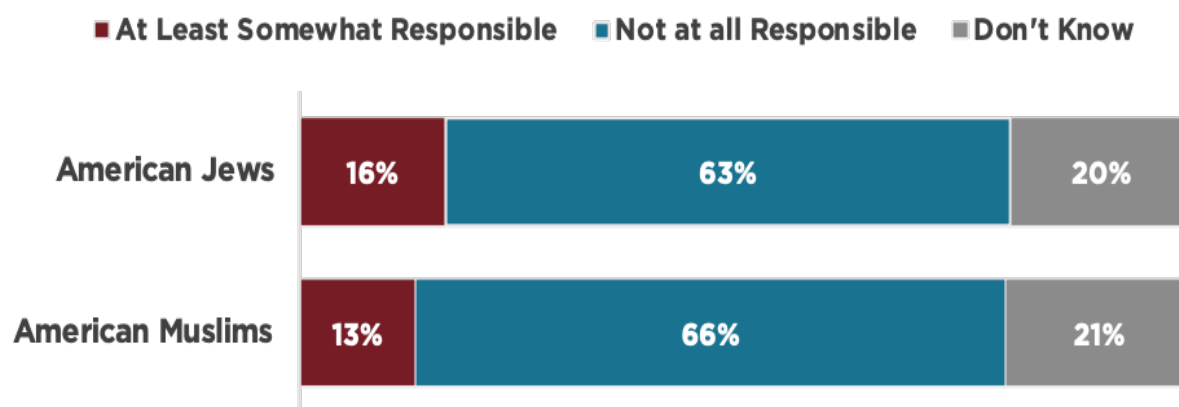
College campuses are not only experiencing a climate where students have intensely different political views on the current

Israel-Palestinian conflict. Significant portions of students we surveyed also blame American Jews and American Muslims for violence in the current Israel-Palestinian conflict. Although more research is needed to understand the exact mechanisms involved, these beliefs indicate that some students may be experiencing fears of personal danger related to how they are viewed as symbols and/or catalysts of violence in the overseas conflict.

As Figure 3 shows, one in six (16%) of college students hold American Jews at least somewhat responsible for the current violence between Israel and Hamas, while one in eight (13%) hold US Muslims accountable. Given that American Jews and Muslims students are common among college communities, it would thus not be surprising to find experiences beyond protest events and speech playing a role in why Jews, Muslims, and other students experiencing feelings of personal danger. The next section, indeed, finds evidence of such observed intimidating experiences beyond speech.

Figure 3. Students Hold American Jews, Muslims Responsible for the Conflict

Q: People debate who is responsible for the current violence between Israel and Hamas. For the following groups, please tell us how much you believe they are responsible ...



Note: Results may not add up to 100% due to rounding and missing data.

Survey(s): College Pulse January 2024

Beyond Speech: Observed Acts of Violence and Intimidation

Although speech is not action, scholars of political violence have long found evidence that rhetoric perceived as violent helps to normalize violence and reduce norms of restraint that encourages volatile actors to take violent action, a key reason for concern, for instance, for violent rhetoric by candidates in political campaigns.⁷

Our College Pulse survey also found evidence that fears go beyond reactions to protest chants and speech on campus. To better understand why respondents felt in personal danger, we asked them to explain their reasons in written answers in text boxes. Overall, 1,182 of the 5,233 student respondents in our College Pulse survey felt in personal danger. Of these, 1,032 (87%) explained why in text box answers, broken down as: 171 Jewish students, 200 Muslim students, and 661 other students.

Although this qualitative information does not allow for reliable quantitative scoring, the answers often identify specific episodes and recount many personal experiences, that fall roughly into two categories of events for why the students felt in personal danger:

01. reactions to protest chants and the general campus environment related to the current escalation of the Israel-Palestinian conflict; and

02. observed acts of violence and intimidation directed at specific individuals (often themselves).

Below are example answers for why students say they felt in personal danger, broken down into responses by Jewish students, Muslim students, and students that are not Jewish or Muslim. The patterns are similar, but also indicate notable differences among the three groups of students. The supplement contains the complete set of the 1,032 text box answers for why students report feeling in personal danger.

Jewish Students

Jewish students report feeling in personal danger most directly in response to protest chants that they interpret as meaning intent for physical harm to Jews or acceptance of such harm as well as a campus environment perceived as hostile toward Jews (that often came as a surprise or occurred among their teachers and friends). Examples include:

- **When I hear thousands of people on my campus cheering to 'globalize the intifada' and 'from the river to the sea', I worry.**
- **Very scary rhetoric used by pro-Palestinian protestors makes me feel unsafe on campus and in the world.**
- **As a Jew we have been told to die.**
- **Being Jewish on campus has put a target on my back.**

They also recount numerous acts of violence and intimidation, either against themselves or others, targeting Jews, institutions of Jewish culture, or symbols of Israel. For example:

- Protesters chant for the deaths of Jews and storm the Chabad and Hillel buildings.
- Both the college administrators and students have taken action against me that violates the right to free speech as well as students not being held responsible for violence in the name of supporting Gaza.
- I wore a Star of David necklace and was booed while I was just going for a walk and people have accused me of supporting “genocide.”
- While running a fundraiser for emergency services in Israel, my friends and I were threatened by a Palestinian man that he would “kill us all” Our fraternity house was vandalized and the synagogue 3 miles from campus had swastikas painted on the doors.

Muslim Students

Muslim students also report feeling in personal danger due to protest chants they interpret as meaning harm to Jews, often as a fear of backlash for being kindred supporters of Palestinians chanting such phrases which they do not feel truly represents the pro-Palestinian cause. They further report feeling endangered by a generally hostile campus environment, also responding to perceived hostility toward Muslims and/or Palestinians (and also from their teachers and other students). For example:

- Hostility from students on campus after the anti-semitic attacks that I do not feel reflect the pro-Palestinian agenda.
- Lack of college administration help
- A close friend was threatened

Further, Muslim students report numerous observed acts of violence and intimidation, either against themselves, other Muslims, or symbols of Islam:

- **SOMEONE TRIED TO RUN ME OVER AND CALLED ME A TERRORIST FOR WEARING A SCARF AROUND MY SHOULDER. [caps in original]**
- I’ve been called a terrorist sympathizer, had my keffiyeh ripped off me, and been called a terrorist multiple times
- I have seen hostility on campus towards individuals in support of Palestine such as protestors for Palestine being called terrorists and other derogatory terms, which creates an environment that feels dangerous and unwelcoming.
- Zionists openly film and doxx students at pro Palestine protests

- I have heard a student make a comment wishing rape and deportation against anyone who is anti Zionist or even just sympathizes with the Palestinian civilians.
- Someone personally texted me and threatened me

Other Affected Students

For fearful students who are not Jewish and not Muslim, they report feeling in danger less to specific protest phrases and more often to a campus environment they characterize as generally hostile and tumultuous for any student holding any opinion at all about the current Israel-Palestinian conflict. Indeed, their fears lead to them to avoid expressing or even having such opinions, much less debating and discussing them. In essence, the non-Jewish and non-Muslim students fear being caught in the cross-fire, unable to avoid the hostility, and that even silence or neutrality are punished.

- I feel that all of us are in danger whether we support a certain group or the other.
- I think having an opinion at all is dangerous.

These students too report numerous observed acts of violence and intimidation, not just against Jews and Muslims, but also against individuals expressing neutral or balanced viewpoints, by themselves or others, that politically active students consider as tantamount to support for the “other side.”

- Every where I look, I see people attacking and insulting people for just being Jewish
- I am fairly confident that if I expressed my support for Israel, I could face academic or social consequences on my campus. As a result, I keep this opinion to myself
- I was told that by condemning the actions of both sides I had chosen my side and thus was anti Palestine. I was told I am disgusting for having this viewpoint.
- People have told me they were going to kill me because I support Israel
- I have been called an antisemite for calling for a stop to killing kids.
- I have seen Pro-Palestine protestors threaten violence not only against Jews but anyone who is not vocally in support of Palestine
- I was cornered by a member of my campus’s SJP (Students for Justice in Palestine) club and asked if I was a Zionist. The person who did this implied that being a Zionist equates to being a racist bigot. She then followed me into my dorm uninvited. The whole situation was very creepy
- People are getting doxxed for being and supporting Palestinians

Magnitude of Personal Danger

The text box answers also reveal information about the degree and specific type of personal danger that the students are experiencing. References to fear of physical violence to themselves are the most common specific type of harm mentioned in the responses, while many others refer to fear of loss of job prospects, academic discrimination (e.g., bad grades from professors), social isolation and exclusion from friendship and peer groups.

Examples of statements referencing explicit physical danger include:

- **Students at UVM will threaten to kill you and throw bricks through your apartment windows for hanging an Israeli flag in your window**
- **I was chased by a mob of pro-Hamas supporters**
- **I would feel I could suddenly be killed if someone recognized me from a protest I attended or maybe for wearing a kiffyeh.**
- **When I was at a protest, I was fearful that someone could easily open fire on the crowd or something.**
- **My residence hall on campus was vandalized which felt very disconcerting and made me feel a bit unsafe. After I reported it to my university, they said they would do something about it and have facilities clearly remove it, but nothing happened, and it's been over a month.**

Examples of economic and academic consequences include:

- **The prevalence of doxxing without any protection from university officials**
- **People's jobs and postgraduate opportunities are being taken away.**
- **I am becoming scared that if I voice my support of Palestinians that I will be targeted by Israeli groups or faculty at my school and be punished.**
- **Fear of losing scholarships of being kicked out of college due to my opinions on the conflict**

Examples of social isolation and anxiety about exclusion include:

- **I was verbally degraded at the last protest I went to by Tulane students because I am a Jew in support of freeing Palestine. They told me I was a traitor.**
- **I have personally been outcasted for having an equal support of each side.**
- **To say I support Israel in today's society is social suicide.**

All of these detailed reactions are in serious tension with the idea of a liberal university seeking to foster an environment of intellectual inquiry and fulsome debate and discussion about controversial issues.

Conclusion

Our surveys find significant evidence that anti-Jewish incidents on campus are occurring in a climate where Jews feel uncomfortable, afraid, or intimidated due to unwelcome and common behaviors they observe. There is also significant evidence that anti-Muslim incidents on campus are occurring in a climate where Muslims feel uncomfortable, afraid, or intimidated due to unwelcome and common behaviors they observe. And there is significant evidence that students who are not Jewish and not Muslim also feel uncomfortable, afraid, or intimidated due to unwelcome and common behaviors they observe.

Given that (a) 26% of students understand common protest chants to imply genocide, (b) 10% of students also find calls for genocide acceptable, and (c) 16-13% of students blame American Jews or American Muslims for violence in the Israel-Palestinian conflict, it is not surprising that (d) a significant portion (12-19%) of students report feeling in danger because of their support for either Israel or Palestinians.

To be clear, these fears go beyond discomfort with controversial political ideas and include fears of personal danger among a significant portion of the study body. These fears are highly common among Jews and Muslims, but 16% of non-Jewish and non-Muslim students also feel threatened. This indicates the wide scope of fears among college students for being targeted whether as Jews, symbols of Israel, Muslims, symbols of the Palestinian cause, or simply caught in the crossfire.

Widespread fears should not be taken to mean "equivalent" fears. Feelings of personal danger are just that – personal – and cannot be compared across individuals or groups of people.

Widespread personal fears for physical safety, academic discrimination, and economic livelihood among students are severely at odds with the mission of the university to foster scholarship and intellectual achievement in an environment where students and all members of the university community will grow and thrive.

Given the significant fears of personal danger among college students, there is a critical need for university and national leaders to work together to develop and implement appropriate measures to reduce these fears, particularly since the Israel-Palestinian conflict could ebb and flow for years to come.

Section 2: Antisemitism on Campus and in the U.S. Population

In the wake of October 7, there have been major questions about the attitudes of American adults and college students that may account for the spike in reported religious based hate crimes and the tumultuous political climate related to the current escalation of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Among the key questions are:

1. Have antisemitic attitudes grown among Americans since October 7?
2. Are college students more antisemitic than the general population?
3. How Islamophobic versus antisemitic are college students and the American public today?

These questions on the degree of attitudes hostile to the relevant religious minorities in the United States associated with the Israel-Palestinian conflict are important. Scholars of social norms and political violence have long known that antagonistic, particularly violently antagonistic, attitudes toward minorities are associated with actual discrimination and violence toward them as well. Various mechanisms can exist, including greater tensions between groups, erosion of social norms of engagement and tolerance, and even normalization, rationalization, and acceptance of violence.⁸ Hence, questions about prejudicial negative attitudes and acceptance of violence as normal are of paramount importance and better understanding of the attitudes of Americans on these issues can help inform decisions by university and national leaders about appropriate measures to reduce and calm fears and tensions going forward.

Answering these questions is challenging because antisemitism and Islamophobia are amenable to different definitions and have cultural interpretations that make it impossible to draw reliable “equivalent” comparisons. Hence, our analysis does not rely on a single definition or measurement scheme for either phenomenon, but instead employ several different definitions, validated indices and measures for each of them, the report presents the findings for antisemitism and Islamophobia separately to minimize temptation to assess these as equivalent phenomena. This section focuses on antisemitism.

Defining and Measuring Antisemitism

This study identifies two types of antisemitism — prejudicial and violent attitudes toward Jews as a people — and separates them both from antizionism — negative attitudes toward the state of Israel. These sets of attitudes can be distinguished from each other, even recognizing distinctions among these concepts are blurred and not completely exclusive.

Prejudicial Antisemitism

Prejudicial Antisemitism is defined as holding negative stereotypes about Jews as a people, culture, or religious group. This type of antisemitism has long been the focus of Jewish non-governmental civil rights and advocacy organizations that seek to counter antisemitism such as the Anti-Defamation League. To measure prejudicial antisemitism, this study uses the Anti-Jewish Trope Index, which is the respondent’s average agreement (on a five-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree) across the following seven anti-Jewish tropes commonly used by the ADL⁹:

- **Jews have too much power in the United States today**
- **Jews always like to be at the head of things**
- **Jews in business are so shrewd that other people do not have a fair chance at competition**
- **Jews don’t care about anyone but themselves**

- Jewish people tend to complain a lot
- All things considered, Jewish people are untrustworthy
- Jewish people can be sneaky

The Anti-Jewish Tropes Index ranges from one to five, with 3.0 indicating ambivalence and all values above 3.0 indicating the respondent, on average, either agreed or strongly agreed with the seven tropes comprising the scale. We use this cutoff of greater than 3.0 on the index to indicate “high” prejudicial antisemitism.

Violent Antisemitism

Violent Antisemitism is defined as holding the belief that violent attacks against Jews as a people, culture or religious group are justified. This type of antisemitism goes beyond attitudes of prejudice and discrimination and directly focuses on the willingness to accept violence against Jews. Although it is not about a person’s willingness to personally carry out violence, it is important because public tolerance for violence can normalize and reduce norms against violence. Political violence has long been the focus of the University of Chicago Project on Security and Threats and is measured by agreement with the statement on a five-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree:

- When Jews are violently attacked, it is because they deserve it.

To code respondents as “high” in violent antisemitism if they scored greater than 3.0 on the five-point scale for the question, meaning they either agreed or strongly agreed that Jews, if attacked, deserved it. To identify respondents who “tolerate” violent antisemitism, we use a score of greater than or equal to 3.0, meaning that they are ambivalent, agree, or strongly agree that Jews, if attacked, deserved it. Given that we can expect social desirability bias to deflate expressed agreement that Jews deserve to be violently attacked, being ambivalent on violent antisemitism is important.

Antizionism

Antizionism is defined as holding negative views about the state of Israel, not Jews as a people, culture or religious group. As with antisemitism in general, the definition of antizionism is much contested. Hence, this study relies on a scale of antizionism measuring agreement on a five-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree with six statements related to views of Israel that was developed and validated by scholars Daniel Allington and David Hirsch.¹⁰

- I am comfortable spending time with people who openly support Israel
- Israel has a right to exist as a homeland for the Jewish people
- Israel is right to defend itself against those who want to destroy it
- Israel and its supporters are a bad influence on our democracy
- Israel can get away with anything because its supporters control the media
- Israel treats the Palestinians like the Nazis treated the Jews

As with prejudicial antisemitism, we do not use any single item to measure antizionism but rather an index that averages the scores across the six items for each respondent. Note that the first three items in the scale are reverse coded, meaning lower rather than higher scores indicate antizionist beliefs. The Antizionism Index ranges from 1 to 5, with three indicating ambivalence and all values above three indicating the respondent, on average, either agreed or strongly agreed with the six items comprising the scale. We use this cutoff of greater than 3.0 on the index to indicate high antizionism.

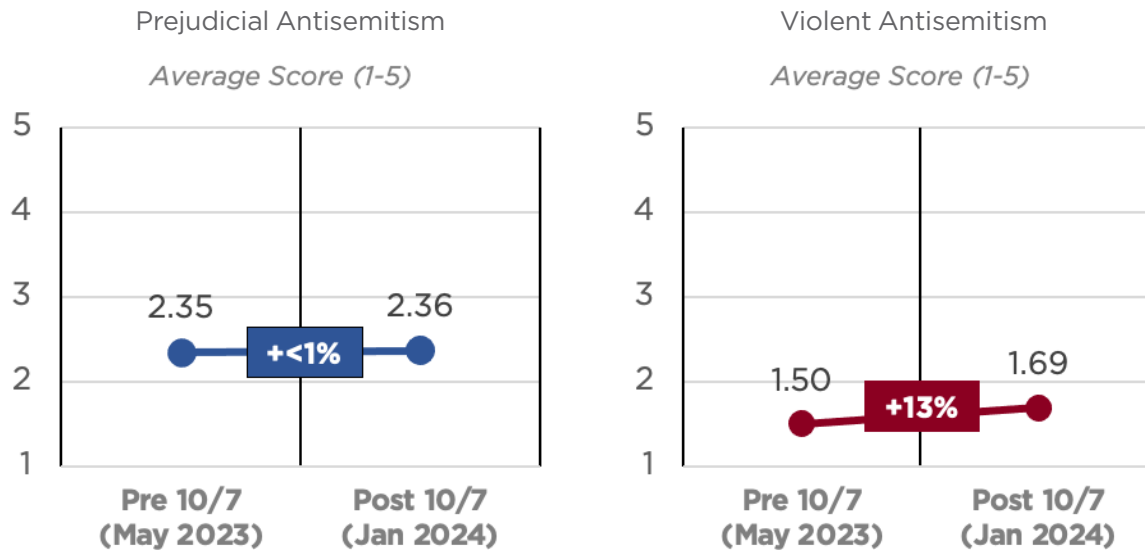
Antisemitism Before and After October 7, 2023

With this approach, our study can address core substantive questions, the first of which is whether antisemitism has grown among Americans since October 7. In a nutshell, the answer is mixed: While the average level among all American adults of prejudicial antisemitism – holding negative stereotypes of Jews as a people – has not meaningfully changed, the average level of violent antisemitism – believing that violent attacks against Jews are justified – has increased by 13%.

Figure 4 below compares the average prejudicial antisemitism and violent antisemitism between our NORC surveys fielded in May 2023 and January 2024. It shows that the average level of prejudicial antisemitism among American adults remained stable and below the midpoint on the five-point scale, indicating that on average Americans are low in prejudicial antisemitism and that prejudicial antisemitism appears unaffected by the conflict between Israel and Hamas.

By contrast, the average level of violent antisemitism rose by 13%, a highly statistically significant change, climbing from 1.5 to 1.7 on a five-point scale between May 2023 and January 2024. While average agreement that violence against Jews is deserved

Figure 4. Increase in Toleration of Violent Antisemitism Since 10/7, while Prejudicial Antisemitism Unchanged



Note: Includes both college students and non-students
Survey(s): NORC May 2023, NORC January 2024

remains well below the midpoint of the scale, any increase is a concerning finding, since it means that, even starting from a (fortunately) low base, millions of Americans are today more willing to tolerate attacks against Jews than they had been prior to October 7, 2023.

Figure 5 below presents a closer look at the distribution of agreement across the two May 2023 and January 2024 surveys for violent antisemitism for the US general population helps to clarify where the increase has occurred. Nearly all the increase takes place below the cutoff for high violent antisemitism (i.e., at or below 3.0, “neither agree nor disagree”). Overall, 13% of the population no longer “strongly disagree” that violence against Jews is deserved, and 8% more now “neither agree nor disagree,” an increase that equates to an additional 20 million American adults who do not reject (if not explicitly accept) violent attacks against Jews today compared to before October 7.

College Students are Not More Antisemitic than the General Population Today

Our May 2023 baseline survey did not survey college students and so we cannot measure pre/post October 7 change among

them. However, we can determine how the level of antisemitism among college students compares to the general population today. Knowing this is important because it helps to better understand the potential impact of the national environment on college students.

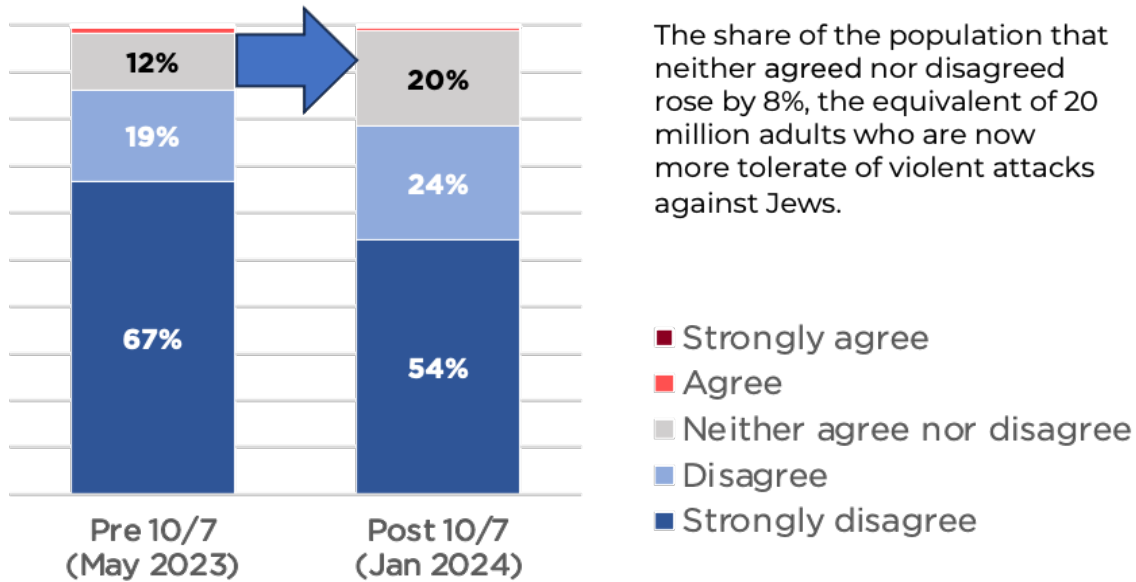
Perhaps surprisingly, on both prejudicial antisemitism and violent antisemitism, the average level among college students and American adults is almost the same today. Figure 6 below shows that, three months after October 7, for both groups in our NORC January 2024 survey, the average index score for prejudicial antisemitism is just under the mid-point of the five-point scale, while it is in the upper range of the “strongly disagree” range for violent antisemitism. This means that college students do not have more negative attitudes toward Jews as a people, culture, or religious group than American adults.

College Students are More Antizionist than the General Population

Because we measure anti-Jewish (antisemitism) and anti-Israeli (antizionism) sentiments separately, we can disentangle and

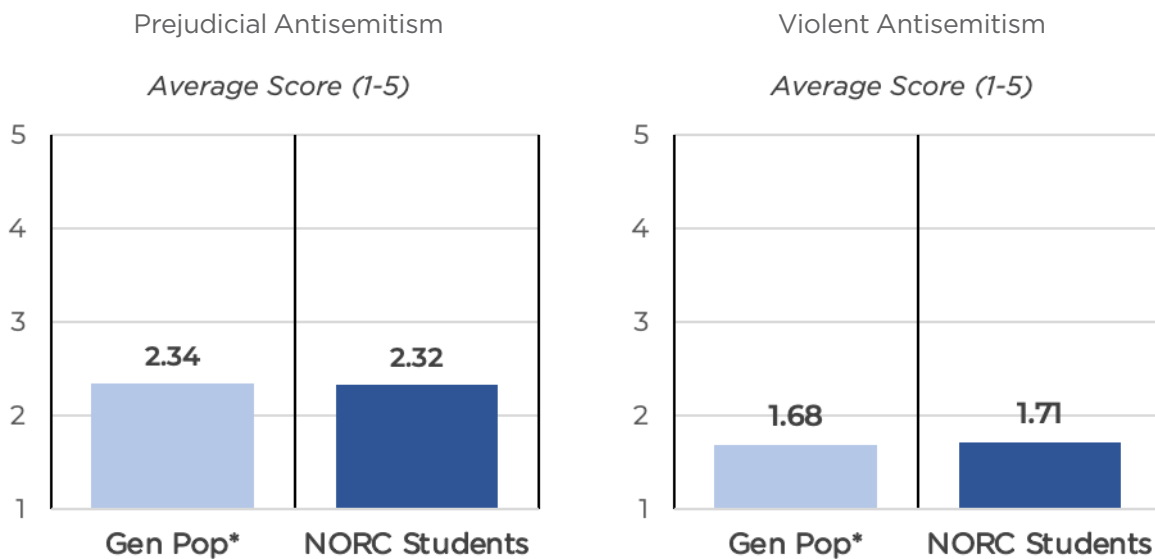
Figure 5. Violent Antisemitism Attitudes Pre and Post 10/7

Q: When Jews are attacked, they deserve it. To what degree do you agree with this statement?

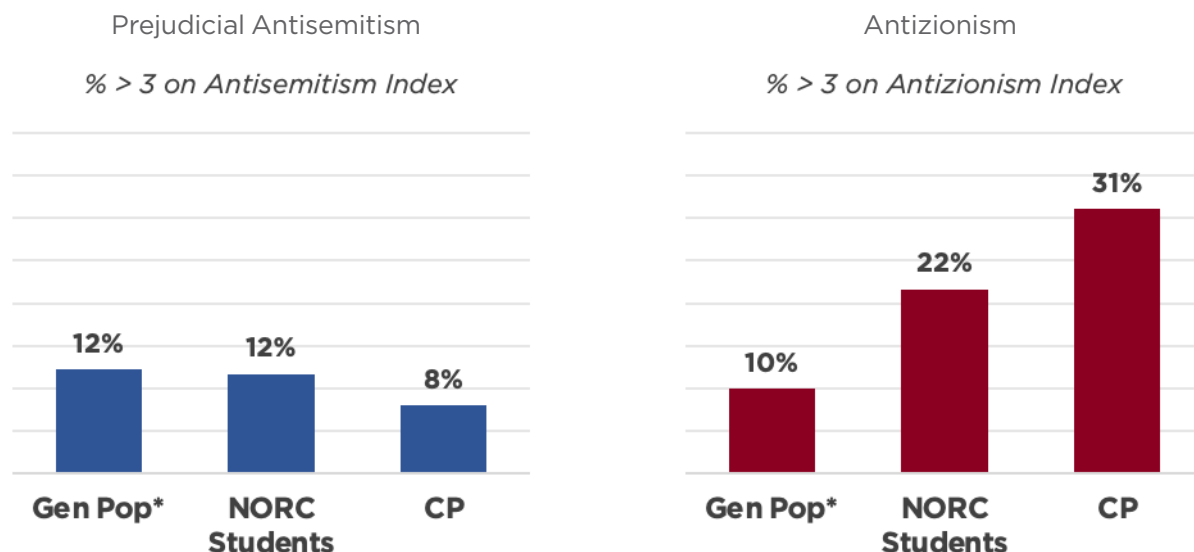


Survey(s): NORC May 2023, NORC January 2024

Figure 6. No Difference between Students and Gen Pop on Prejudicial and Violent Antisemitism



Note: Gen Pop* excludes current college students.
Source: NORC January 2024

Figure 7. Comparing Anti-Jewish and Anti-Israel Sentiments

Note: Gen Pop* excludes current college students.

Survey(s): NORC January 2024, College Pulse January 2024

compare negative attitudes towards Jews as a people from negative attitudes toward the state of Israel. Specifically, our approach allows us to better understand if the prevalence of these sets of negative attitudes are higher, lower, or the same among college students and the general population and whether these sets of attitudes overlap or not among individuals.

The findings are clarifying. Campus anger today is mainly against Israel as a state and not the Jewish people per se.

Figure 7 above shows that prejudicial antisemitism and antizionism are held to different degrees among college students and compared to the general population. Specifically, the share who score “high” (i.e., > 3.0) on the index for prejudicial antisemitism is either the same or slightly lower among our two samples of college students than for the general population (excluding college students). By contrast, the share who score “high” (i.e., > 3.0) on the index for antizionism is sharply greater by a factor of two to three times among our samples of college students than for the general population (again, excluding college students). This means that, while college students do not have more negative attitudes toward Jews as a people, they do have more negative attitudes toward the state of Israel than the general population of American adults.

Further, we can examine the degree to which individuals have similar or different views on Jews as a people and the state of Israel.

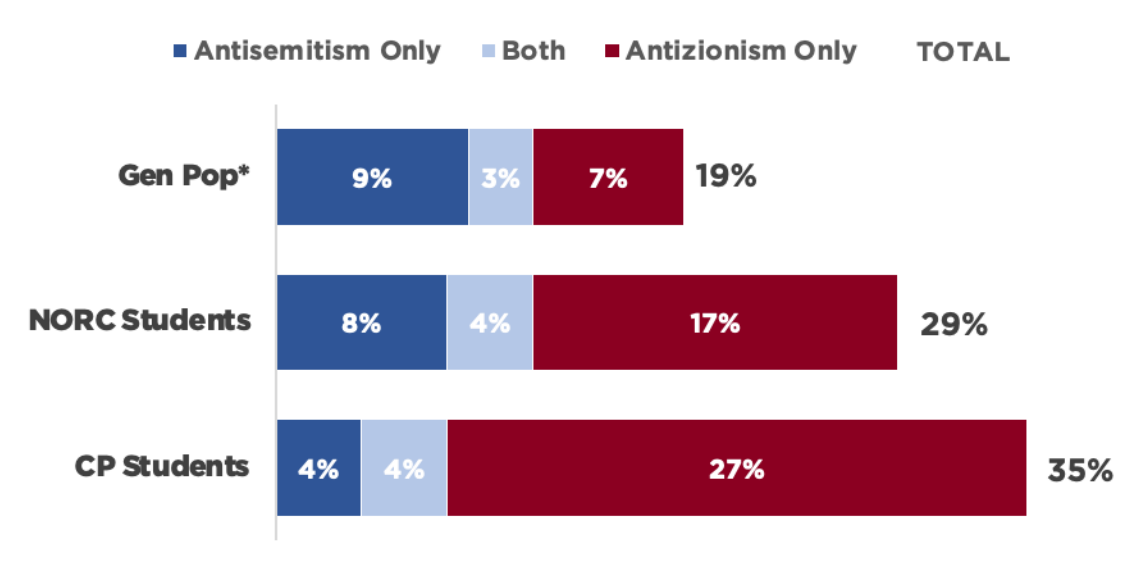
Overall, our study found that prejudicial antisemitism and antizionism are largely separate phenomena.

As Figure 8 below shows, only 3% of the general public including students (NORC survey) are high in *both* prejudicial antisemitism *and* antizionism, meaning the overwhelming majority (>85%) of both those college student and American adult respondents who hold negative views of Jews *or* negative views of Israel do not hold both of these sets of negative beliefs at the same time.

The different prevalence of antisemitism and antizionism is confirmed when we consider age and possible generational effects among our respondents. When we do, there is a clear pattern among American adults broken into age cohorts.

As shown below in Figure 9, prejudicial antisemitism is largely flat across the age ranges of American adults, while there is a general decline of antizionism from the youngest to oldest American adults. Specifically, the percentages who score above a 3.0 on the prejudicial antisemitism index is almost the same among 18- to 29-year-olds as among those 60 years and older,

Figure 8. Small Overlap in Anti-Jewish and Anti-Israel Sentiments



Note: Gen Pop* excludes current college students.
Survey(s): NORC January 2024, College Pulse January 2024

while the percentages scoring a 3.0 on the antizionism index are far higher for the youngest compared to the oldest adults, with the decline steadily occurring across the age cohorts. Although further research is needed to clarify the factors associated with these divisions, the data are in line with those who have thought that greater anti-Israel views among college students today could reflect different generational experiences, including with possible changes on college campuses, the role of Israel in American politics, or the policies of the state of Israel.

Practical Effects of Difference between Antisemitism and Antizionism on Fears of Personal Danger

As real as the differences between antisemitism and antizionism may be for those holding these negative views of Jews as a people and the state of Israel, the practical impact of these differences on fears among Americans and college students should not be misunderstood.

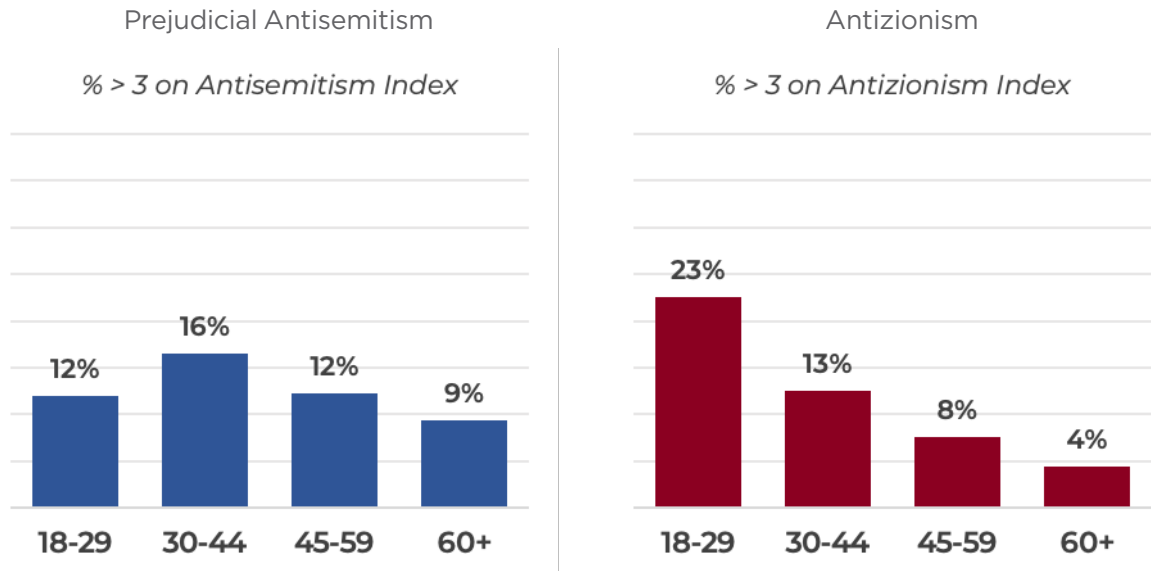
As detailed earlier in this report, a majority American Jewish students in our sample report feeling in personal danger and give numerous specific examples of how these fears relate to being targeted as either members of the Jewish people or symbols of Israel. Further, as reported on Figure 2 above, 16% of college students blame “American Jews” for

the violence in the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Hence, there is significant evidence that anti-Jewish incidents on campus are occurring in a climate where Jews feel uncomfortable, afraid, or intimidated due to unwelcome and common behaviors they observe.

As Figure 10 below shows, among college students in our College Pulse survey, both antisemitism and antizionism strongly correspond to holding American Jews responsible for the current violent in Israel-Palestine. Indeed, those high in prejudicial antisemitism are nearly 4 times more likely to blame American Jews for the violence, while those high in antizionism are over 2 times more likely. That Jews may sometimes be targeted as members of a people and at other times as symbols of Israel should not cause us to overlook that Jews are being targeted as Jews.

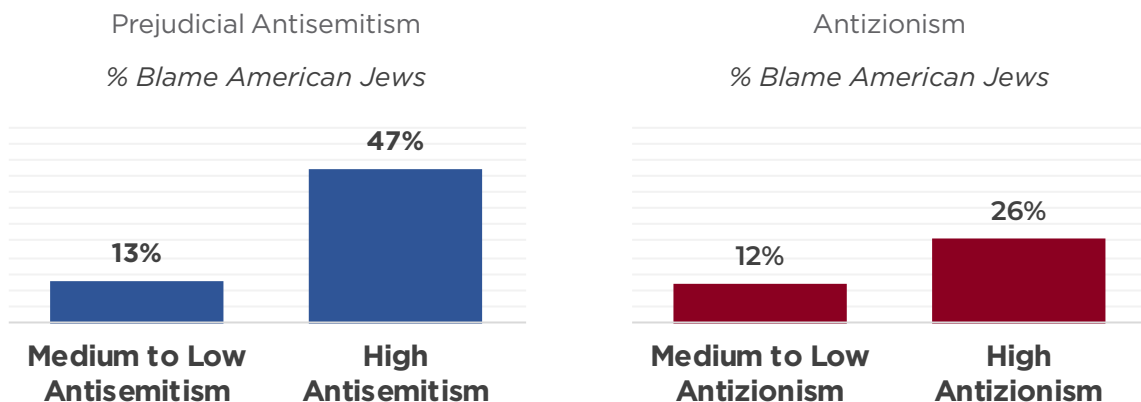
Where the practical difference between antisemitism and antizionism is most notable on fears relates to many of the non-Jewish students who report feeling endangered by their support of Israel. For these students, there may be little comfort in knowing that few people with negative views of Israel also have negative views of Jews, since the former is more numerous among college students and sufficient to generate the fear that they experience.

Figure 9. Generational Differences Stronger for Antizionism than Antisemitism Among American Adults



Note: Combined student and non-student population.
Survey(s): NORC January 2024

Figure 10. Students With Pre-Existing Anti-Jewish or Israel Prejudice More Likely to Blame American Jews for the Current Violence Between Israel and Hamas



Survey(s): Campus Pulse January 2024

Conclusion

Antisemitic incidents and associated fears among college students are not occurring in a vacuum. The Hamas terror attack against Israel on October 7 and Israel's subsequent invasion of Gaza have impacted the United States as a whole and not simply college campuses, even if college students are more intensely affected than the general population. This section thus puts the experiences of college students in a broader context. It also disentangles various meanings of antisemitism and compares them among both the college students and American adults more generally. Doing so is important and future research should do more to identify environmental effects from local campus dynamics and the complex ways that different types of antisemitism may interact. However, even now, the current findings provide significant evidence that American Jews are being blamed for the current violence in the Israel-Palestinian conflict, whether as Jews, symbols of Israel or both.

Section 3: Islamophobia on Campus and in the U.S. Population

As with antisemitism, there have been important questions about the state of Islamophobia among the US general population and college students. However, our May 2023 “baseline” study did not include questions about Islamophobia and so we confine our analysis to the following questions:

1. Are Islamophobic attitudes more, less, or about similarly common among college students than the general population?
2. What is the absolute level of violent Islamophobia among college students and how does it compare to the level of violent antisemitism today?

Defining and Measuring Islamophobia

This study defines two types of Islamophobia – prejudicial and violent attitudes toward Muslims as a people – again using scales in common use and a measure developed by CPOST.

Prejudicial Islamophobia

We define **Prejudicial Islamophobia** to mean holding negative stereotypes about Muslims as a people, culture, or religious group. This type of Islamophobia has long been the focus of Muslim non-governmental civil rights and advocacy organizations such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the Islamic Society of North America, the Muslim Public Affairs Council, and the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding. To measure prejudicial Islamophobia, this study uses the Islamophobia Index developed by the Institute for Social and Political Understanding (ISPU)¹¹ and commonly used by the Council on American and Islamic Relations (CAIR). The index is the respondent’s average agreement (on a five-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree) across the following five anti-Muslim tropes:

- **Most Muslims living in the United States are more prone to violence than other people.**
- **Most Muslims living in the United States discriminate against women.**

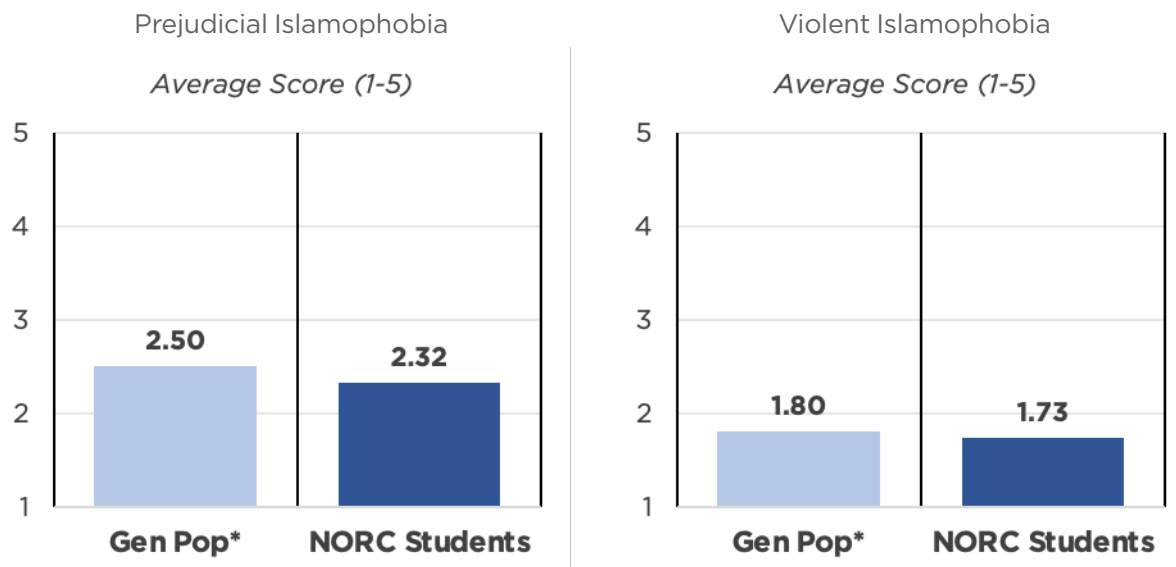
- **Most Muslims living in the United States are hostile to the United States.**
- **Most Muslims living in the United States are less civilized than other people.**
- **Most Muslims living in the United States are partially responsible for acts of violence carried out by other Muslims.**

The Islamophobia Index ranges from one to five, with 3.0 indicating ambivalence and all values above 3.0 indicating the respondent, on average, either agreed or strongly agreed with the five tropes comprising the scale. We use this cutoff of greater than 3.0 on the index to indicate “high” prejudicial Islamophobia.

Violent Islamophobia

Violent Islamophobia is defined as holding the belief that violent attacks against Muslims as a people, culture or religious group are justified. This type of Islamophobia goes beyond attitudes of prejudice and discrimination and directly focuses on the willingness to accept violence against Jews. Although it is not about a person’s willingness to personally carry out violence, it is important because public support for violence can normalize and reduce norms against violence. Political violence has long been the focus of the University of Chicago Project on Security

Figure 11. College Students Lower on Islamophobia than General Public



Note: Gen Pop* excludes current college students.
Survey(s): NORC January 2024

and Threats and is measured by agreement with the statement on a five-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree:

- **When Muslims are violently attacked, it is because they deserve it.**

We identify respondents as “high” in violent Islamophobia if they score greater than 3.0, meaning they either agreed or strongly agreed that Muslims, if attacked, deserved it. We also identify respondents who “tolerate” violent antisemitism as scoring greater than or equal to 3.0, meaning that they are ambivalent, agree, or strongly agree that Muslims, if attacked, deserved it. Given that we can expect social desirability bias to deflate expressed agreement that Muslims deserve to be violently attacked, being ambivalent on violent Islamophobia is important.

College Students are Less Islamophobic than the General Population Today

What is the level of Islamophobia among college students compared to the general population today? Knowing this is important because it helps to better understand the potential impact of the national environment on college students.

On both prejudicial Islamophobia and violent Islamophobia, the average level among college students and American adults is lower or almost the same today. As shown in Figure 11 above, for prejudicial Islamophobia, the average index score for American adults in our survey is just below the mid-point of the five-point scale, while it is 7% lower among college students in the range of the “disagree.” For violent Islamophobia, the difference between college students and American adults is not statistically significant, with the average index score for both groups in the upper range of “strongly disagree.”

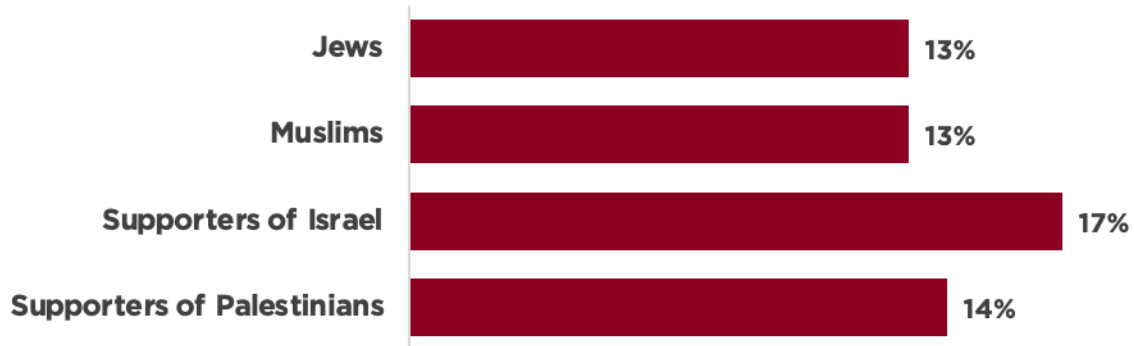
Over 10% of College Students Tolerate Violent Islamophobia and Violent Antisemitism Today

However, the data also shows that a significant minority of college students tolerate – meaning they agree or are ambivalent about – violence against Muslims as well as Jews. And the findings hardly change if when respondents are asked questions about supporters of Palestine or Israel instead.

As shown in Figure 12 below, when asked in a randomized order, college students tolerate violent attacks against Jews,

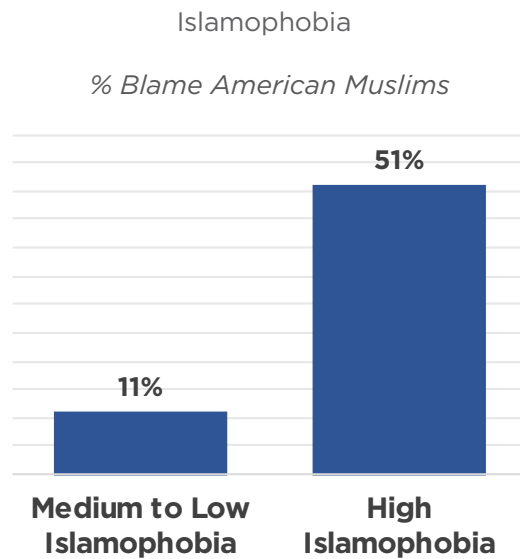
Figure 12. Violent Antisemitism and Violent Islamophobia at Same Levels Among College Students

Q: When [Jews/Muslims/Supporters of Israel/Supporters of Palestinians] are attacked, they deserve it. % Agree or Ambivalent.



Note: 4 separate questions asked of all respondents.
Survey(s): College Pulse January 2024

Figure 13. Students With Pre-Existing Anti-Muslim Prejudice More Likely to Blame American Muslims for the Current Violence Between Israel and Hamas



Survey(s): Campus Pulse January 2024

Muslims, supporters of Israel, and supporters of Palestine to roughly the same degree, all over 10%. The only difference beyond the 1% margin of error is somewhat more tolerance of violence against supporters of Israel.

Practical Effects of Islamophobia on Fears of Personal Danger

As detailed earlier in this report, a majority American Muslim students in our sample report feeling in personal danger and give numerous specific examples of how these fears relate to being targeted as either members of the Muslim religion or symbols of the Palestinian cause. Further, as reported in Figure 2 above, 13% of college students blame “American Muslims” for the violence in the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Hence, there is significant evidence that anti-Muslim incidents on campus are occurring in a climate where Muslims feel uncomfortable, afraid, or intimidated due to unwelcome and common behaviors they observe. That Muslims may sometimes be targeted as members

of a religious group and at other times as symbols of the Palestinian cause should not cause us to overlook that Muslims are being targeted as Muslims.

As Figure 13 above shows, among college students in our College Pulse survey, Islamophobia strongly corresponds to holding American Muslims responsible for the current violence in Israel-Palestine. Indeed, those high in prejudicial Islamophobia are over 4 times more likely to blame American Muslims for the violence, while those high in antizionism are over 2 times more likely.

Conclusion

Islamophobic incidents and associated fears among college students are occurring in a national context, where the Hamas terror attack against Israel on October 7 and Israel’s subsequent invasion of Gaza have impacted the United States as a whole. There are also various meanings of Islamophobia. Hence, comparing Islamophobia among college students to the U.S. general population and disentangling different measures of Islamophobia is important. Future research should do more to identify the separate impact of environmental effects and local campus dynamics and the complex ways that different types of Islamophobia may interact. However, even now, the current findings provide significant evidence that American Muslims are being blamed for the current violence in the Israel-Palestinian conflict, whether as Muslims, symbols of the Palestinian cause, or both.

Section 4: Relative Acceptance of Calls for Genocide and Violence against Different Groups

Understanding the public support for political violence is important. When there is mass community support in the public for political violence, this makes political violence much more likely and dangerous: it reduces cooperation with authorities; creates the perception that violence is legitimate by providing a popular mandate; produces a population from which violent extremists can emerge; and increases risk-taking by fostering the perception of “safety in numbers.”

However, understanding the degree of public support for political violence poses challenges. Not all calls for violence indicate an intention to carry out violence. Support for violence varies depending on the specific political cause and across levels of violence. Respondents to survey questions about support for political may be reluctant to offer genuine answers due to social desirability bias (i.e., the tendency for respondents to fit answers to imagined social norms). They may also vary in their personal experience with public calls for violence and violence itself. Indeed, knowing how acceptance of violence occurs across levels of violence is important, because the highest levels (fortunately) rarely occur and certainly not to the same degree for different possible target populations at the same points in time, creating obvious differences in background conditions that may impact answers. Hence, no one measure is perfect and even best approaches must recognize limits and resist over-reading results.

For these reasons, this study relies on multiple approaches, multiple samples of college students, multiple levels of violence, and randomization of respondents into separate sub-samples for survey questions about violence and calls for violence related to each of three target groups (Blacks, Muslims, and Jews).¹² First, respondents are asked a question about the acceptability of calls for violence among their family and close circle of friends: “If you had a close family member or friend who advocated for genocide against [Jews/Muslims/Blacks], your friends and family would find this unacceptable to acceptable

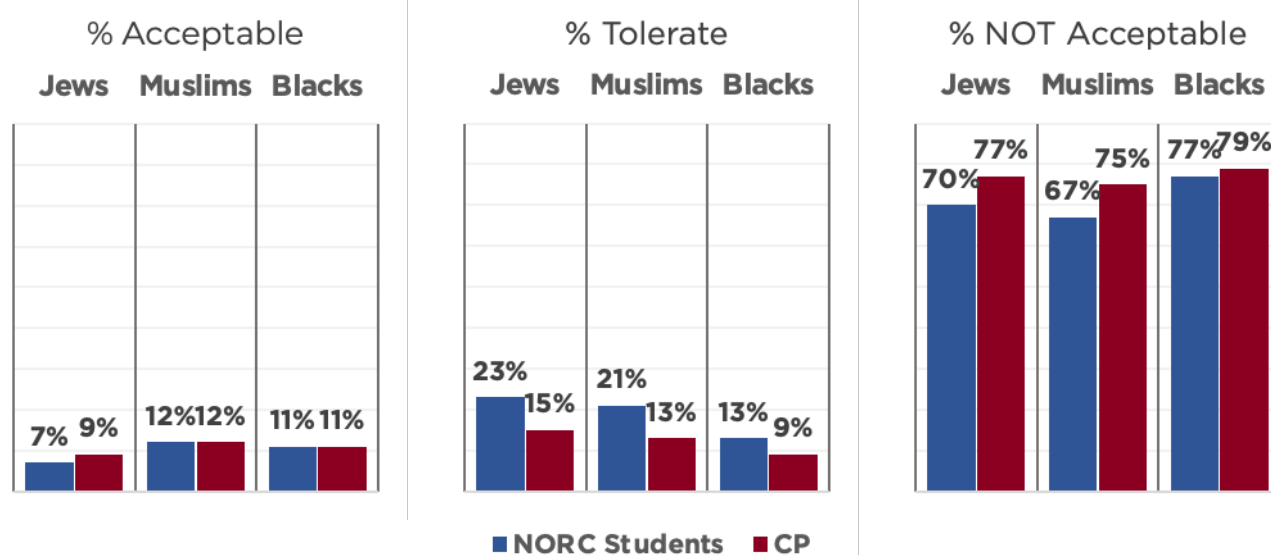
on a 5-point scale. Second, respondents were given a scenario about a group of students marching and chanting calls for genocide against [Jews/Muslims/Blacks], and then asked multiple questions about how acceptable/unacceptable they found such calls and the degree of punishment they supported for them. Third, respondents were asked questions from the Activism and Radicalizing Intentions Scale (ARIS)¹³, a validated scale of survey questions related to support for political violence in defense of a specific group, again randomizing the identity of each group [Jews/Muslims/Blacks].

Across the three approaches, multiple samples for college students, and multiple levels of violence, the results show four remarkably consistent patterns:

- 01.** Large majorities of college students abhor political violence and calls for political violence, about equally across all three target groups.
- 02.** A consistent minority of about 10% of college students support calls for extreme violence (genocide), again about equally across all three target groups. This does not mean the respondents support actual extreme violence against these groups, but it does mean they support speech acts that many will interpret as intending harm.

Figure 14. College Students Find Calls for Genocide by Family and Friends Unacceptable

Q: If you had a close family member or friend who advocated for genocide against [Jews/Muslims/Blacks], your friends and family would find it:



Survey(s): NORC January 2024, College Pulse January 2024

- 03.** College students would consistently punish calls for genocide against Blacks more severely than such calls against Muslims and Jews, and to about the same degree of difference.
- 04.** Similarly, college students find violence in defense of oppression against Blacks more acceptable than for Muslims and Jews, and again about to the same degree.

Overall, although large majorities of college students abhor political violence, there is a minority that support public calls for violence and evidence that differences in the acceptability exist, at least to a limited degree, depending on the target population at issue.

80% of College Students Find Calls for Genocide Unacceptable, but 10% Find Such Calls Acceptable

In both our College Pulse and NORC January 2024 surveys, subjects were randomly assigned to questions about calls for genocide by a close family member or friend finds consistent results across whether the target group refers to Blacks, Muslims or Jews.

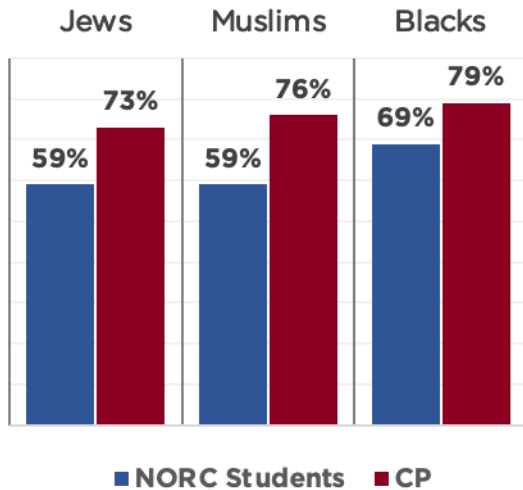
Figure 14 above the range of respondents who believe these calls would be unacceptable and acceptable both fall within narrow ranges of variation across the groups being targeted by such speech in both student samples. For students in our College Pulse survey, the range among those finding this speech acceptable varies from 9% to 12%, while the range among those finding the speech unacceptable varies from 75% to 79%. For students in our NORC survey, the results are similar, with the range among those finding the speech acceptable from 7% to 12%, and unacceptable from 67% to 77%.

This general pattern of calls for genocide being highly unacceptable for the large majority of students but acceptable for a 10% minority is replicated in a second set of questions related to a scenario about students on campus marching and chanting calls to genocide.

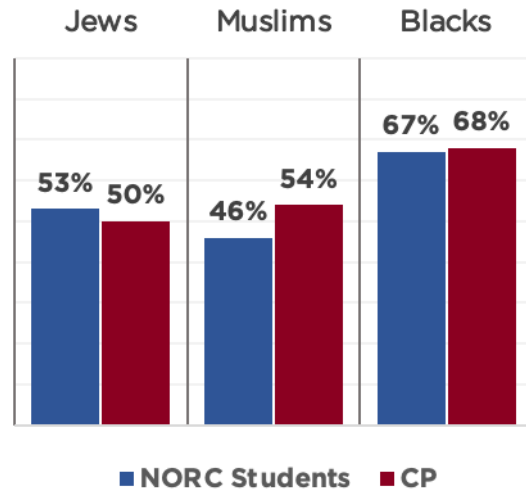
Figure 14 also shows that, college students find calls for genocide highly unacceptable, across various groups being targeted ranging narrowly from 77% to 83% in our College Pulse sample and 76% to 87% in our NORC January 2024 student sample. Of course, this still means that upwards of 20% of college students tolerate or find such calls acceptable.

Figure 15. College Students Find Calls for Genocide by Student Groups Unacceptable

Q: The University Board SHOULD NOT PERMIT campus events that call for genocide against:
% Agree



Q: The University Board SHOULD SUSPEND OR EXPEL students who call for genocide against:
% Agree



Surveys: NORC January 2024, College Pulse January 2024

College Students Would Punish Calls for Genocide against Blacks More Severely than against Muslims and Jews.

Students in both our College Pulse and NORC surveys were asked how severely, if at all, they would punish individual students for public calls for genocide on campus. They were given a range of options: no punishment, mandatory counseling, a one semester suspension, a one-year suspension, expulsion, or expulsion and “blacklisting.”

As Figure 15 above shows, college students would consistently suspend or expel students more for calls for genocide against Blacks than against Muslims and Jews. In our College Pulse sample, those supporting these severe penalties range from 68% for calls against Blacks to 54% against Muslims to 50% against Jews. The range is similar among our NORC student sample, from 67% if the calls are against Blacks to 46% against Muslims and 53% against Jews.

To test for concerns that respondents asked questions about scenario vignettes may be so disengaged that their answers to subsequent questions based on the vignettes are unreliable, we asked an attention check question (correctly identifying the state where the campus protest occurred in the

vignette from a list). The findings are almost the same even when we remove survey respondents who failed to correctly identify the state from the analysis

Similar findings for the Acceptability of Lower Levels of Violence

Of course, “genocide” is at the most extreme end of political violence and there is little empirical experience with chants on campuses involving explicit calls “for genocide” using those words. Hence, the study also surveyed college students and the general population about their intentions to support or participate in illegal or violent activism to defend specific minority communities. These questions are taken from the validated ARIS scale that captures agreement with a range of political activities that are illegal, violent, or potentially violent, all of which have empirical referents in America’s recent experience with riots associated with the George Floyd protests in the summer of 2020 and the January 6, 2021 assault on the US Capitol. They are important because they allow measurement of support for violence across degrees of legal, illegal, and violent political behavior. The supplement contains the full range of 8 questions from the ARIS scale.

As shown in Figure 16, the findings show highly similar patterns to those related to calls for genocide across numerous

different specific questions, where respondents were again randomly assigned into different sub-samples on the basis of questions identifying the same three groups (Blacks, Muslims, and Jews).

In both the College Pulse and NORC samples of college students, whether the questions are about supporting an organization that breaks the law, engages in violence, or leads a protest that turns violent, the results show that over 10% of college students would support these political behaviors, and that students are more likely to support illegal action than the general public.

Students are slightly more likely to support illegal and violent action to defend Muslims than to defend Jews – which is reflective of the pro-Palestinian bias observed among students in our surveys and discussed in Section 5 of this report. However, the differences with respect to radical action to defend Jews versus defending Muslims is relatively modest (never more than 5%). This suggests that the range of the acceptability of political violence is narrow. The practical consequence is that the significant absolute levels of support for political violence are likely to be more important than relative differences to understanding student fears and explains why Jewish and Muslim students can both feel afraid at the same time.

Finally, when considering the responses related to “Blacks” as a control group, the data shows that students

are significantly more likely to support illegal and violent in support of Blacks than either Muslims or Jews by a margin of between 10% and 20%, and this finding holds even when taking respondents who identified as “Black/African American” out of the analysis. The value of this control group is that it makes it possible to see that the potential for domestic political issues to generate at least as much fear and anger as international political issues among college students and Americans more generally.

Conclusion: A Major Question for National Discussion: Is This Acceptable?

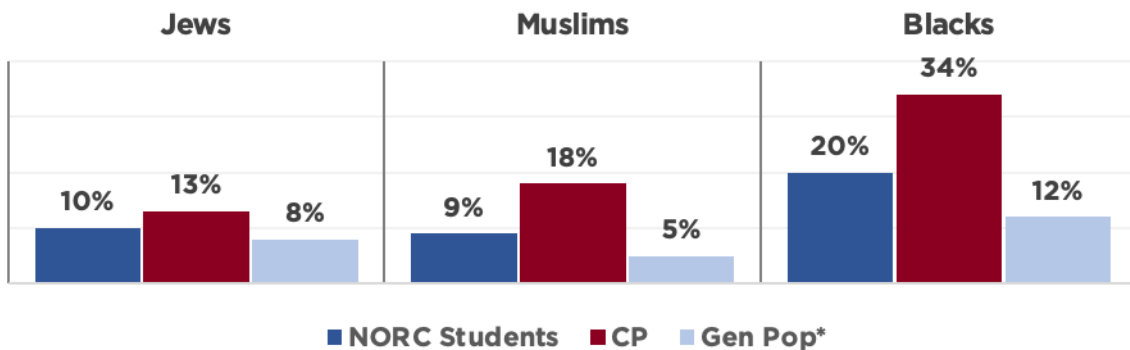
On December 6, 2023, a White House spokesperson said, “It’s unbelievable that this needs to be said: calls for genocide are monstrous and antithetical to everything we represent as a country.”¹⁴

The findings in this study, however, suggest that a significant portion of college students believe that calls for genocide are acceptable and similar portions also support political violence for causes they view as just. Further, these views are being held in a context where hundreds of incidents of bias, intimidation, and even political violence have occurred on college campuses.

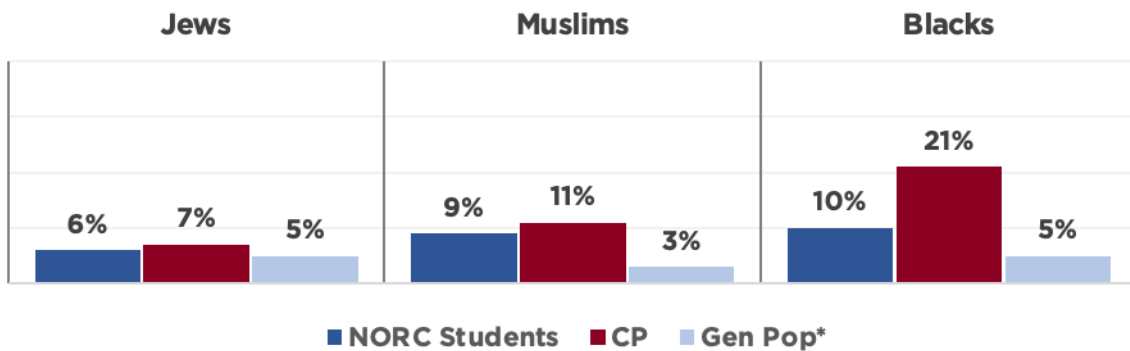
This raises the question of whether we, as a country, should find calls for genocide and support for political violence on college campuses acceptable. If not, it is no longer “unbelievable” that this needs to be said.

Figure 16. College Students Willing to Support Illegal and Violent Means to Defend Group

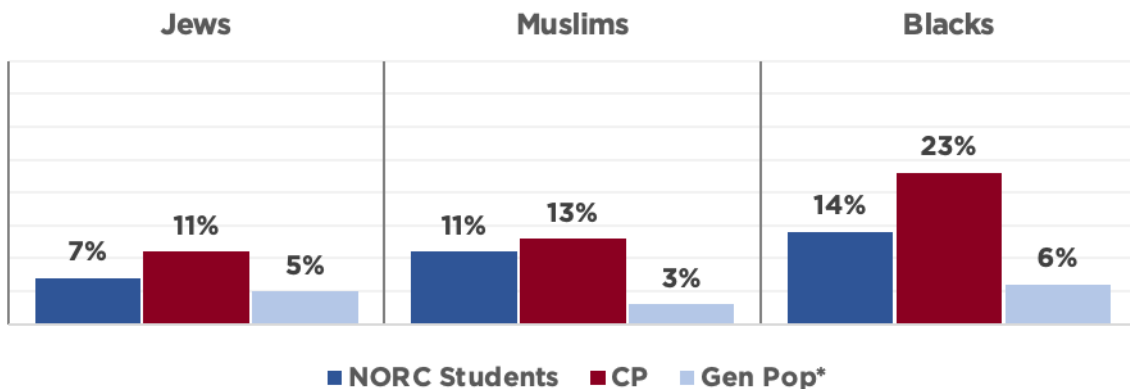
Q: I would continue to support an organization that fights for the political and legal rights of [Jews/Muslims/Blacks] even if the organization sometimes breaks the law. % Agree.



Q: I would continue to support an organization that fights for the political and legal rights of [Jews/Muslims/Blacks] even if the organization sometimes resorts to violence. % Agree.



Q: I would participate in a public protest against oppression of [Jews/Muslims/Blacks] even if I thought the protest might turn violent. % Agree.



Note: Gen Pop* excludes college students.
 Survey(s): NORC January 2024, College Pulse January 2024

Section 5: How college students compare to American adults on the Israel-Palestinian Conflict

How do college students think about the current Israel-Palestinian conflict and how do they compare to the thinking of American adults in general? Specifically:

1. Are students more, less, or about the same in terms of being familiar and informed on the Israel-Palestinian conflict?
2. Do students sympathize more, less or about the same with Palestinians or Israel compared to the general population?
3. Are differences between college students and the general public accounted for by basic political or demographic patterns, particularly identification with political party identification and age cohort effects?

These questions are important for better understanding the overall political climate on campuses and across communities in the wake of October 7 and the extent to which student attitudes are unique to being “college students” as opposed to political and demographic attributes that may be concentrated in college student populations but impact the general public as well.

To answer these questions, we asked questions in our NORC January 2024 survey to both college students and American adults about their general engagement with the current issues, broader knowledge about the issues, and political sympathies and activism associated with the current Israel-Palestinian conflict.

The main findings are that, although both are generally familiar and informed on the current Israel-Palestine to similar degrees, college students sympathize more with the Palestinians, and there is evidence that party affiliation and age cohort effects are playing a role in those sympathies.

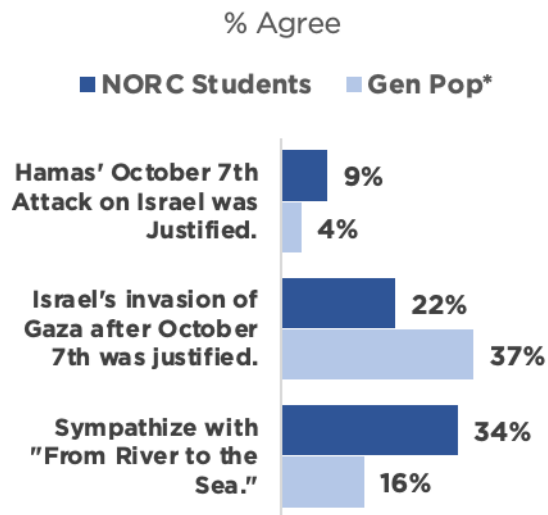
College Students and the General Population Are Comparably Familiar with the Conflict

To evaluate the general familiarity of college students and American adults on the current Israel-Palestinian conflict, we asked a variety of questions related to having lived in the region, frequency of discussions with family and friends about the conflict, and knowledge about basic facts related to the conflict. College students are about as familiar and informed as the general population on key substantive issues related to the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Specifically, our NORC January 2024 found:

01. Only tiny portions (<6%) of college students and American adults lived in the conflict region;
02. 63% of college students and 57% of American adults have engaged in conversations with family members and friends on the conflict;
03. 44% of college students and 41% of American adults can correctly identify the “river” and the “sea” in the protest chant, “From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free;” and

Figure 17. Students More Likely Than the General Public to Support Palestinians over Israel

Q: Many people have opinions about the events in Israel and Gaza. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:



Note: Gen Pop* excludes current students.

Survey(s): NORC January 2024

04. 27% of college students and 18% of American adults can correctly identify the decade when the Oslo Agreement that established Palestinian governance over Gaza and the West Bank was signed.

College Students Are More Pro-Palestinian than the General Public

To evaluate the sympathies and political support among college students and American adults in the current Israel-Palestinian conflict, we asked a variety of questions related to general attitudes on Israel and Hamas, which parties are blamed for the violence, and participation in marches and protests for either Israel or Palestinians. The basic pattern is that college students are more likely to sympathize with the Palestinians (including Hamas) than Americans in general, but many college students remain pro-Israel.

As Figure 17 below shows, a substantial 9% of students say that Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel was Justified, while only 4% of the public (excluding students) says the same. Similarly,

students are less likely to support Israel's invasion of Gaza after October 7: 22% of students say the invasion was justified, while 37% of the public says the same. It's worth noting that students are (like the general public) far more likely to express support for Israel's invasion of Gaza than for Hamas' terrorist attack, but these are not really comparable events.

Another measure that demonstrates that college students are more supportive of Palestinians than the general public is their approval of the popular chant "from the River to the Sea." While the chant has been used in the past by both Israelis and Palestinians, in the current American context it is generally used by pro-Palestinian protestors to express support for the Palestinian cause (with contesting interpretations about what exactly the chant is meant to express). We find that 34% of students express sympathy for the chant, compared to only 16% of the general public. This follows a general pattern of students being approximately twice as supportive of Palestinians than the public is.

College Students More Activist, especially for Palestine, than the General Population

We code as activists any respondent who indicated affirmatively that they either attended a march or posted online their support for Israel or Palestinians in the two months since the Hamas terror attack on October 7, 2023. Overall, as shown in Figure 18 above, roughly 16% of our Adult non-student sample participated in some form of pro-Israel or pro-Palestinian activism as defined above. As a population, students are highly mobilized: roughly one-third (34%) of all students reported marching or posting.

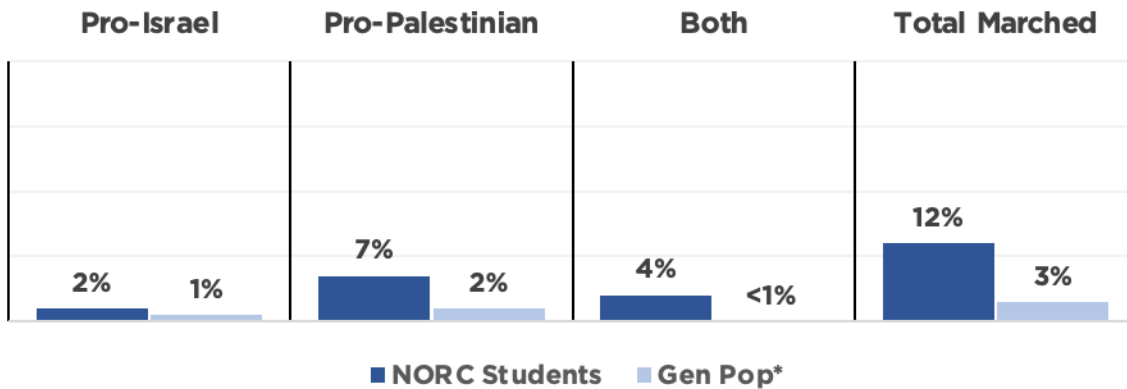
In general, students are over two times more likely to engage in pro-Palestinian than pro-Israel activism (17% versus 7%). In the non-student general population, the balance of support favors Israel over Palestinians, though the difference (8% pro-Israel, 5% pro-Palestinian) is comparatively modest.

College students were almost twice as likely to have attended a march or protest on behalf of Israel than of Palestinians (11% to 6%), while the general population attended these two kinds of events at approximately the same rate (around 2%).

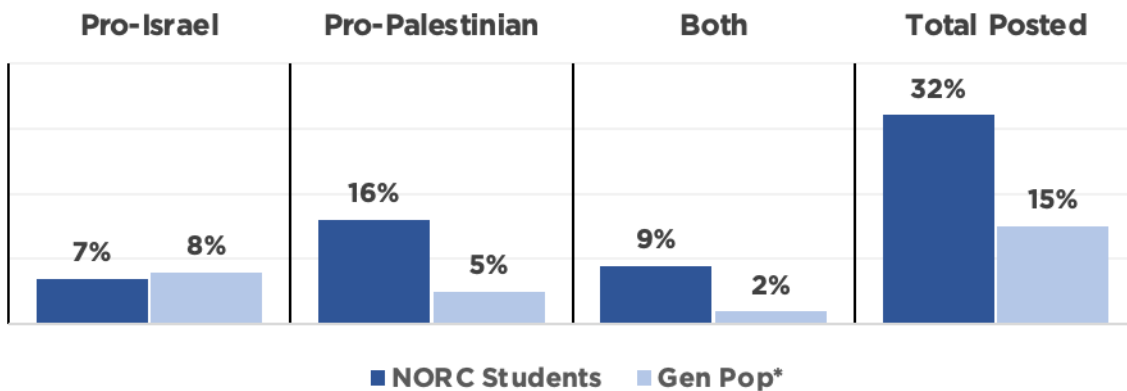
College students are also significantly more likely to report posting messages online in support of Palestinians than of Israel (25% vs. 16%), while in the general public, we see the opposite – Americans in general posted in support of Palestinians less than of Israel (7% vs. 10%).

Figure 18. Students More Likely Than the General Public to Engage in Activism for Palestinians over Israel

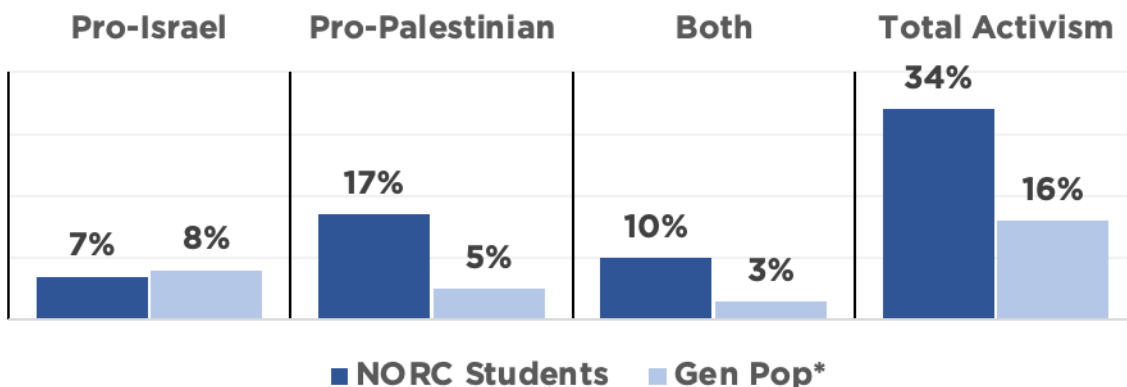
Q: In the past two months since October 7th, have you attended a march in support of [Palestinians/Israel]? % Yes



Q: In the past two months since October 7th, have you posted online in support of [Palestinians/Israel]? %Yes



Q: In the past two months since October 7th, have you attended a march OR posted online in support of [Israel/Palestinians]? %Yes

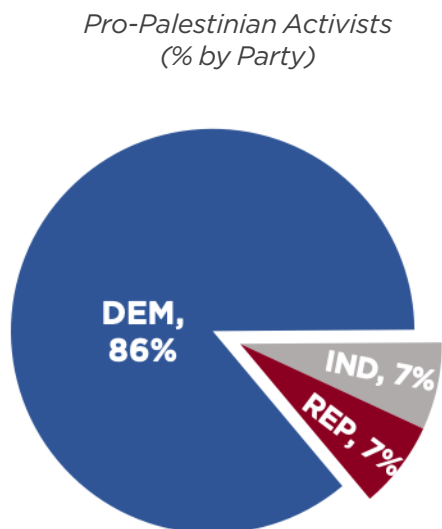
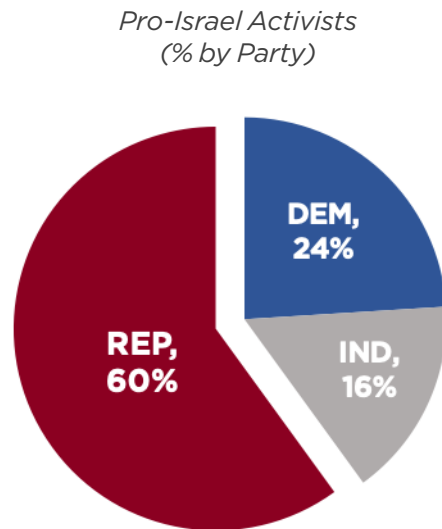


Note: Gen Pop* excludes current students.

Source: NORC January 2024

Figure 19. Party Differences between Student Activists

Q: In the past two months since October 7th, have you attended a march OR posted online in support of [Israel/Palestinians]?



Note: NORC Student sample only. Excludes students who indicated activism for both sides. Results may not add to 100% due to rounding and missing data. Survey(s): NORC January 2024

Campus Polarization Reflects Political Affiliation

How do students compare with non-students in their mobilization for the conflict, and what role might political party affiliation play?

According to our NORC January 2024 survey, Democrats as a group are twice as likely to engage in pro-Palestinian versus pro-Israel activism (4% vs 10%). And as a group, students are modestly (10%) more Democratic than non-students (52% versus 42% in our survey), the gap doubling to 20% for student activists (61% vs 41%). Hence, there is reason to believe that student activism for the Palestinians reflects the views of the Democratic party.

Indeed, there is a strong association between party identification and college student pro-Palestinian versus pro-Israel activism. Figure 19 below shows that the vast majority (86%) of students who engaged in pro-Palestinian activism are Democrats, while Democrats make up only 24% of those who engaged in pro-Israel activity. At the same time, most student activists supporting Israel identify as Republican (60%), while Republican students made up only 7% of the pro-Palestinian activists. Notably, activism for Israel is relatively more bipartisan than for Palestinians.

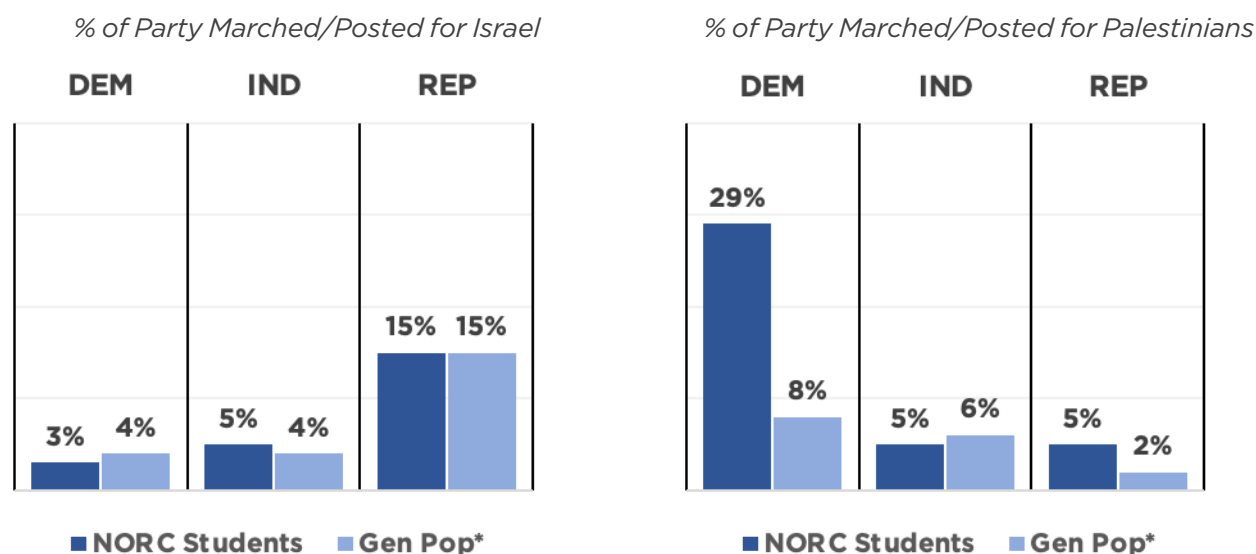
Looking at the incidence rate of pro-Palestinian vs pro-Israel activism by party shows an even more compelling picture. Figure 20 below compares the mobilization within each party – i.e., the degree to which Democrat, Independent, and Republican students engaged in activism – and how the level of mobilization among students identifying with a given party compares to that of the general, non-student population.

In general, the pattern in Figure 20 is consistent with Figure 19: Just as pro-Israel activists are more likely to identify as Republicans and pro-Palestinian activists as Democrats, a greater fraction of Republicans reported pro-Israeli activism than did Democrats and vice versa: A higher proportion of Democrats engaged in pro-Palestinian activism than Republicans.

Further, Figure 20 shows that party is affecting the difference between college student and non-student mobilization for the Palestinian cause far more than for Israel. In the case of Israel, although Republicans are more likely to mobilize for Israel than Democrats or Independents, all three parties are about equally likely to mobilize for Israel regardless of whether college students or not.

Figure 20. Party Differences between Student Activists

Q: In the past two months since October 7th, have you attended a march OR posted online in support of [Israel/Palestinians]?



Note: Gen Pop* excludes students. Showing percent of category indicating activism for each side.

Source: NORC January 2024

However, mobilization for the Palestinians is different. Here we see that Democratic college students are a clear outlier, with students mobilizing over 3x more than Democratic non-students, but both Independent and Republican students and non-students mobilizing for the Palestinians at similar levels. Hence, there is evidence that greater college student pro-Palestinian activism reflects Democratic party pro-Palestinian activism in general.

Generational Effects also Playing a Role

Perhaps student status is masking a generational effect? Students are on average younger than the general population,

and so age could play a role in greater pro-Palestinian activism among college students.

Indeed, as Figure 21 below shows, 18-29 year-olds are 3 times more likely to report pro-Palestinian than pro-Israel activism (17% vs 5%), and pro-Palestinian activism continues to dominate among those 30 to 44. The pattern reverses after that: American adults 45 and over are nearly 6 times more likely to report pro-Israel over pro-Palestinian activism (11% versus 2%).

In sum, party and generational dynamics in contemporary American society appear to be operating among college students as well.

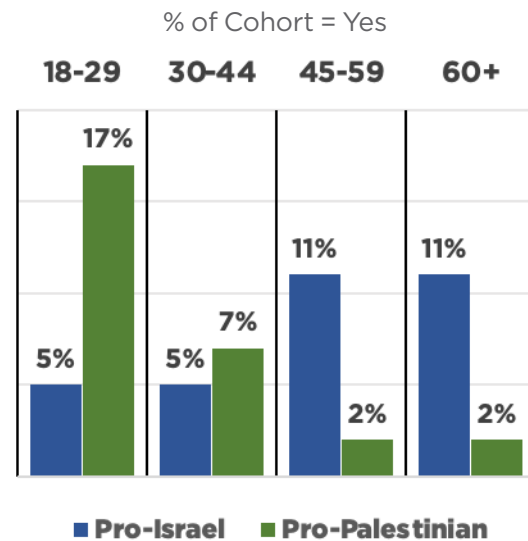
Conclusion

Understanding the general familiarity, knowledge, and political sympathies among college students compared to the U.S. population in the Israel-Palestinian conflict is important. This gives us insight into whether campus environment is acting as a catalyst for pro-Palestinian activism for the country as a whole or vice versa.

The evidence in this study indicates that college campuses are experiencing a higher level of pro-Palestinian support than the country as a whole and that political party affiliation and generational effects are playing a role, both on their own and because these two attributes are highly concentrated among college students. Efforts to better understand the broader dynamics generating campus fears in the wake of October 7 are certainly important. However, it is crucial that such efforts not replace more immediate responses to reduce the consequences and reality of fearful students on campus today.

Figure 21. Cohort Differences Among All Activists

Q: In the past two months since October 7th, have you attended a march OR posted online in support of [Israel/Palestinians]?



Note: Combined student and non-student population.
Excludes activists who indicated support for both sides.
Survey(s): NORC January 2024

Section 6: Support for Calming Solutions

To evaluate support for calming solutions and opposition to political violence on college campuses among college students and American adults, we asked questions that allow respondents to express opposition to violence by either Hamas or Israel and agree or disagree with several proposals for how universities might respond to the current climate on college campuses. Although there are differences, the basic pattern is that both college students and American adults strongly abhor political violence by whomever commits it and strongly support efforts to reduce tensions on college campuses.

As shown in Figure 22, both students and the public favor university action to help calm tensions on campus. 51% of students favor university administrators making a public statement to that effect, and only 13% oppose such a statement. Students would also support programs, such as Dartmouth's "Lifting Up Campus Dialogue" initiative,¹⁵ intended to encourage discourse

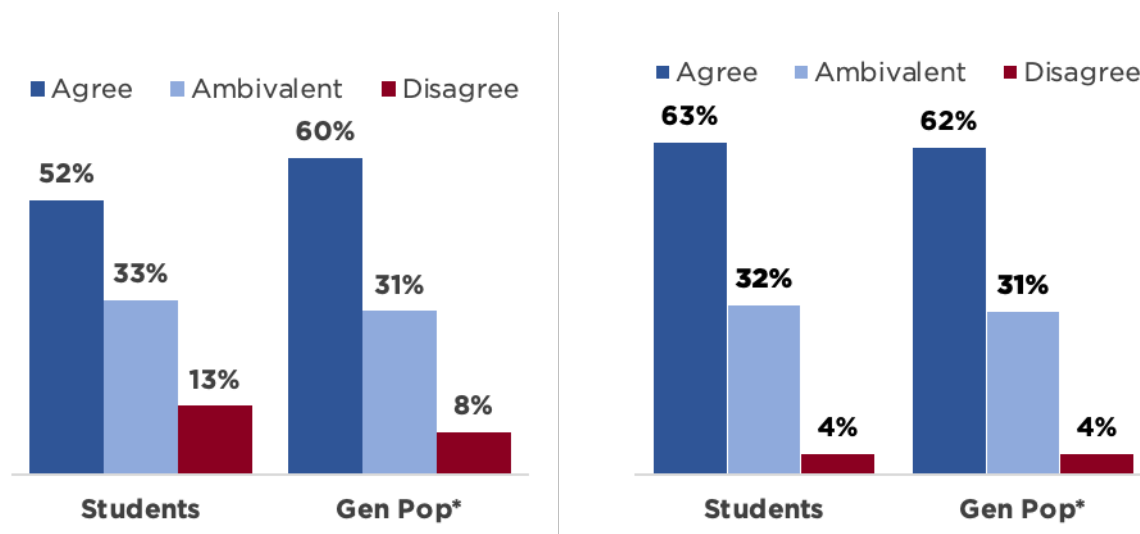
and historical awareness to create empathy and understanding, with 62% of students supportive of the idea and only 4% of students opposed.

Overall, the NORC January 2024 survey found great desire on the part of college students and the general public for action

Figure 22. Students and General Population Support Calming Actions on College Campuses

Q: The leaders of America's largest universities and colleges should make a public statement condemning violence and intimidation against students for their political views.

Q: We should encourage students to talk with one another and with their professors to learn about the history of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in an effort to create empathy and understanding)



Note: Gen Pop* excludes students. Results may not add to 100% due to rounding and missing data.
Survey(s): NORC January 2024

that would reduce campus fears, intimidation, and violence associated with the political views of students. Developing and implementing specific appropriate measures are naturally the domain of university and national leadership. Doing so is a crucial priority, has broad support, and increasingly important.

Colleges and universities are communities bound together for the distinctive purposes of teaching and research. They are not, however, insular communities, exempt from antisemitism and Islamophobia or other potentially tumultuous political tensions in our increasingly interconnected world. The broad support for calming action can empower initiatives for strengthening the social foundations of community necessary for all its members to thrive.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study is to gather important information from national surveys of college students and American adults about personal fears, antisemitism, Islamophobia and support for political violence related to the escalation of the Israel-Palestinian conflict in the wake of Hamas' attack on Israel on October 7, 2023 and Israel's invasion of Gaza in response to this attack. As such, its function is principally to better inform university and national leaders about the state of attitudes among college students and Americans in general in the wake of October 7. In other words, the study's purpose is not to identify specific courses of action, but to serve as a point of departure for discussion on appropriate responses given that the Israel-Palestinian conflict is likely to ebb and flow over the coming years.

The main issue identified in the findings is the widespread nature of fears felt among college students in the aftermath of October 7. These findings leave little doubt that the acts of antisemitism recounted by law enforcement and other agencies have occurred in parallel with broad segments of the college Jewish population feeling in danger for their personal safety and livelihood. There is also little doubt that a significant portion of the college Muslim population as well as college students who are not Jewish or Muslim have felt in danger as well.

To be clear, these findings should not be used to draw equivalences across these highly personal experiences. Nor should the multiplicity of motives identified in the findings be used to diminish real feelings and experiences of danger that go beyond discomfort with new or edgy political ideas.

For example, the fact that many chanting "From the River to the Sea..." at protests may intend this as a political statement rather than signals of harm does not change the fact that over a quarter of college students interpret the phrase to mean genocide of Jews, two-thirds of Jews understand the phrase that way, and many Jews explicitly identify the phrase as causing them to fear for their personal safety. Nor should we ignore the fact that many Muslims and others have felt in danger as well.

The challenge for university and national leaders is that the evidence of widespread fears and experiences with observed acts of violence and intimidation are at odds with the mission of the university.

In 1967, the University of Chicago issued a report on the "University's Role in Political and Social Action," by a commission under the chairmanship of Harry Kalven. The Kalven report states:

"The mission of the university is the discovery, improvement, and dissemination of knowledge..."

"To perform its mission in the society, a university must sustain an extraordinary environment of freedom of inquiry and maintain an independence from political fashions, passions, and pressures...It is not a club, it is not a trade association, it is not a lobby..."

The neutrality of the university as an institution arises then not from a lack of courage nor out of indifference and insensitivity. It arises out of respect for free inquiry and the obligation to cherish a diversity of viewpoints. And this neutrality as an institution has its complement in the fullest freedom for its faculty and students as individuals to participate in political action and social protest..."¹⁶

Put simply, the findings of this study pose new challenges for the mission of the university as outlined by the Kalven Report. Since many students feel in personal danger for being a member of a particular social group or for holding a particular political viewpoint, this diminishes a diversity of viewpoints and deters participation in political action. The central question for discussion is whether the mission of the university can be achieved in an environment where significant segments of the student body feel in danger for even having an opinion on important political and social issues.

Given the significant fears of personal danger among college students, there is a critical need for university and

national leaders to work together to develop and implement appropriate measures to reduce these fears, particularly since the Israel-Palestinian conflict could ebb and flow for years to come.

Towards meeting this need, this study recommends that university and national leaders embrace six basic principles:

- 01. Clear and immediate communication by college leaders condemning violence and intimidation by students and against students on their campuses.** Clear and consistent messaging is critical, and every leader in a position of power should find ways to send this message repeatedly and convincingly. National political leaders should amplify this message in their state and local communities as well. Messaging should also address protest chants. Many protesters may not think they are threatening harm and so it is important for all communities to know that certain phrases are widely understood to imply harm. The antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents on college campuses and around the country are not happening in a vacuum, but occurring in an environment where different perceptions of intent associated with protest phrases are encouraging campus fears.
- 02. Mount ongoing efforts to monitor student perception and experience of personal danger due to Israel/Gaza conflict.** While individual colleges and universities should conduct their own campus surveys, periodic and independent national surveys (e.g., monthly, quarterly) are essential since the campus fears found in this report are a national phenomenon, not confined to isolated academic institutions. Complementary surveys of American adults are also important as a baseline and for generational effect analysis.
- 03. Undertake new initiatives and experiments to educate students and society about the Israel-Palestinian conflict as sources of student fears and particularly increase awareness about unintentional signals that protest phrases can convey.** Given the evidence that different perceptions of intent are likely playing a role in campus fears, efforts to inform campus communities about the multiple common meanings of protest phrases can increase awareness of unintentional signals of harm.
- 04. Foster a national conversation about the acceptability of public speech on college and university campuses that is widely understood to call for the eradication or substantial harm to a group of people.** Each academic institution should have its own policies to determine the limits of speech on campus. The central question for national discussion is whether the mission of the university can be achieved in an environment where significant segments of the student body feel in danger for even having an opinion on important political and social issues. The University of Chicago's well-known Kalven Report on "University's Role in Political and Social Action," offers a potential starting point for a national conversation centered around student safety and acceptability of speech commonly understood as violent in an environment that values diversity of views.
- 05. Improve resources for students experiencing fears and anxieties related to political protests and observed acts of violence and intimidation.** Student fears in this report include, but also go beyond, concerns for immediate physical safety and consist of concerns about physical danger more broadly, academic discrimination, and loss of economic livelihood that may require new or more intense demand on resources in the wake of the current Israel-Palestinian conflict or future politically intense issues in the United States.
- 06. Support research to deepen the understanding of the complex relationships among antisemitism and antizionism and spiral dynamics between antisemitism and Islamophobia.** This report is among the few efforts to disentangle the possible differences between antisemitism and antizionism and compare antisemitism and Islamophobia among respondents and cannot answer a host of questions without further research. Among these issues are the extent to which heightened prominence of violence in the Israel-Palestinian conflict in the wake of October 7 or prolonged experience with heightened violence may lead antisemitism and antizionism to merge more closely in the future. Better understanding of these relationships is crucial since the dynamics of prejudice may well impact student safety and campus climate going forward.

Embracing these principles will require unprecedented levels of attention by senior leadership and funding, but they are justified by the magnitude and potential repetition of the problems that evoke them. There is no higher priority for national action and the mission of the university.

Methodological Appendix

For this study, all analysis was conducted using STATA 18 statistical software. Details on the two primary surveys used in the study, including sampling, fielding, and data processing, are included below. Additional details are available in the supplement following the respective survey topline.

NORC January 2024

This survey was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago as part of NORC's AmeriSpeak® Panel Omnibus survey. AmeriSpeak Omnibus is a twice-a-month, multi-client survey using a probability sample and delivers nationally representative adult interviews age 18 and older. Respondents are interviewed online and by phone from NORC's AmeriSpeak Panel – the most scientifically rigorous multi-client household panel in the United States.

Funded and operated by NORC at the University of Chicago, AmeriSpeak is a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the US household population. Randomly selected US households are randomly selected using area probability and address-based sampling, with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and the USPS Delivery Sequence File. These sampled households are then contacted and recruited by US mail, telephone, and field interviewers (face to face). The sampling frames provide coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the frames include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

While most AmeriSpeak households participate in surveys by web, non-internet households can participate in AmeriSpeak surveys by telephone. Households without conventional internet access but having web access via smartphones are allowed to participate in AmeriSpeak surveys by web. AmeriSpeak panelists participate in NORC studies or studies conducted by NORC on behalf of governmental agencies, academic researchers, and media and commercial organizations. Detailed technical information about the AmeriSpeak Panel is available at <http://amerispeak.norc.org/Pages/default.aspx>.

For this survey, 4,738 randomly sampled AmeriSpeak panelists completed the survey—4,675 via the web and 63 via

telephone. Interviews were conducted in English. The final stage survey completion rate is 18.5%. Data are weighted to the latest Current Population Survey (CPS) benchmarks developed by the U.S. Census Bureau and are balanced by gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, and region. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 1.94 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups due to smaller sample size.

College Pulse 2024

The CPOST/College Pulse study was developed by CPOST and administered by College Pulse. The survey was fielded from Dec 22, 2023, to Jan 12, 2024. These data come from a sample of 5,233 undergraduates drawn from College Pulse's American College Student Panel™ who were then enrolled full-time in four-year degree programs from 627 colleges and universities in the United States.

College Pulse's American College Student Panel includes more than 800,000 verified undergraduate students and recent alumni from more than 1,500 two- and four-year colleges and universities in all 50 states. The panel includes students attending large public universities, small private colleges, historically black colleges like Howard University and religiously affiliated schools such as Brigham Young University and Southern Methodist University. College Pulse uses a two-stage validation process to ensure that all its surveys include only students currently enrolled in four-year colleges or universities. Students are required to provide an .edu email address to join the panel and required to verify that they are currently enrolled either part-time or full-time in a four-year degree program. All invitations to complete surveys are sent using the student's .edu email address.

College Pulse uses post-stratification adjustment to rebalance the sample based on important benchmark attributes of the U.S. four-year college population. The use of weights in sta-

tistical analysis ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the target populations. Weighting is based on demographic factors such as race, gender, class year, voter registration status, state, religion, and financial aid status. Benchmarks for the U.S. four-year college population are drawn from multiple data sources, including the Current Population Survey (CPS), the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The sample weighting is accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IPF) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables. Weights were trimmed to prevent individual interviews from having undue influence on the final results.

College Pulse employs a diverse range of channels, including mobile app notifications, emails, SMS, campus ambassadors, and university partnerships, to engage college students in surveys. Their approach aims to prevent any single channel or specific student group from being overrepresented in their samples. Due to the multi-channel nature of their outreach, calculating a traditional (single) response is not possible. However, the study response rate of traditional channels (i.e., email/SMS notification) employed in this study is approximately 27%. The final stage completion rate is 71%. The survey's margin of error for the U.S. undergraduate population is estimated at +/- 1 percentage points, and the margin of error for college student sub-demographics (e.g., Jews and Muslims) ranges from 2 to 7 percentage points. While margins of error are specific to probability panels, we estimate them for our non-probability panel to provide a general assessment of error ranges that may be associated with the data.

For more information, please visit:

<https://collegepulse.com/methodology>

About CPOST

The Chicago Project on Security and Threats (CPOST) is a non-partisan research center at the University of Chicago dedicated to advancing scholarship on international politics, security, and trade that advances peace and prosperity. CPOST brings together leading scholars at the University of Chicago conducting rigorous, data-driven research on issues of national and international importance to provide critical knowledge to policymakers, scholars, and the public. CPOST's research lab model supports faculty research with dedicated teams of graduate and undergraduate research assistants, strengthening world-class education for future professionals. Learn more about CPOST at <https://cpost.uchicago.edu>.

Endnotes

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- ⁶ Results for interpreting “From River to the Sea” as genocide of Jews on reporting feeling threatened for position on current conflict between Israel and Palestinians in Gaza using survey weighted logistic regression, controlling for having attended a pro-Israel or pro-Palestinian march and excluding Jewish and Muslim students from the analysis (odds ratio 2.36, $p < 0.000$). The results change only slightly when Jewish and Muslim students are included (2.47, $p < 0.000$).
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- ¹⁶ “Report on the University’s Role in Political and Social Action” (November 1967) <https://provost.uchicago.edu/reports/report-universitys-role-political-and-social-action>