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2020 Election Survey Findings *National Survey of Jewish Voters*

Joe Biden resoundingly defeated Donald Trump among Jewish voters in the 2020 election, approaching historic levels of support in the Jewish electorate.¹ Our national survey of American Jews who voted in the election shows a 77 to 21 percent victory for Biden, which exceeds the 70 percent average support that Democratic Presidential candidates have received over the past 48 years. Biden's margin also follows the trend that emerged in the 2018 mid-term elections when Democrats increased their vote share to 76 percent among Jewish voters.

Jewish support for Biden is particularly striking in light of the claims by Trump, Republican Jewish groups, and media personalities who predicted a “Jexodus” of Jews who would abandon their traditional support of Democrats and support Trump because – as Trump retweeted – he is “the greatest President for Jews and for Israel in the history of the world.” Trump took things a step further when he contended that Jews who vote Democratic show “either a total lack of knowledge or great disloyalty.”

Setting aside the large majority of Jewish Biden voters who Trump believes are disloyal or ill-informed, there is in fact a solid bloc of Republican Jews, and it is hard for Democrats to expand their Jewish support beyond its very high historical norms. But Trump pushed the Jewish vote further to the Democrats due to a few factors. At the center of Trump's failure with Jews is his failure on handling the coronavirus, which was by far the most important issue cited by Jewish voters. Republicans have been viewed very unfavorably by Jews for years, and they have now hit their worst favorability level since we began asking the question 12 years ago. Jews also feel very positively about Biden and the Democratic Party, and they fondly remember Barack Obama who remains extraordinarily popular with Jewish voters.

This national survey of American Jews also demonstrates the deeply flawed contention that Jewish voters want a President who caters to every desire of the Netanyahu government, whether it is cutting aid to the Palestinians or moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem. The reality is that the opposite is true. The data show that Jews want America to serve as an even-handed broker who helps Israelis and Palestinians reach an agreement, and they overwhelmingly support the United States re-entering the Iran agreement. Perhaps, the most striking finding in this survey is that Trump's embrace of Netanyahu did not strengthen Trump's

¹ GBAO conducted a national survey of 800 Jews who voted in the 2020 election. The survey was conducted October 28 - November 3, 2020, and included voters who cast their vote on Election Day or before Election Day. The methodology for this survey is detailed at the end of this memo. The full survey results can be accessed at www.jstreet.org.



support with Jews, while Netanyahu's embrace of Trump (after years of Netanyahu opposing Obama) has led to Netanyahu's support among American Jews to crash to shocking levels for an Israeli Prime Minister.

Key Findings – Political Landscape

- **Jewish voters came to the polls demanding change and a complete repudiation of Trump.** An extraordinary number of Jews feel that the country is headed in the wrong direction (15 percent right direction/85 percent wrong track), marking the biggest call for change since we began our election night polls in 2010. Voters think Trump is doing a terrible job as President (23 percent approve/77 percent disapprove), and they do not at all like him personally (22 percent favorable/77 percent unfavorable).
- **The pandemic dominates the issue environment, and reveals the isolated views of Republican Jews.** More than half of Jewish voters (54 percent) cite the coronavirus pandemic as one of the two most important issues impacting their vote, followed by a second tier of issues that include climate change (26 percent), healthcare (25 percent), the economy (23 percent), and the Supreme Court (17 percent). Israel is in the bottom tier of issue priorities, and only 5 percent of Jews cite it as one of their top two issues. Republican Jews are a minority of the Jewish population (14 percent of Jews identify as Republican, compared to 60 percent who identify as Democratic and 26 percent as Independent), and their issue priorities differ dramatically from Democrats and Independents. The top issues for Republicans are the economy (63 percent) and Israel (28 percent), while only 18 percent cite the pandemic.
- **Voters feel very positive about Biden and the Democratic Party, while Trump and McConnell have overseen the Republican Party fall to its lowest point in our polling.** Biden receives a 72 percent favorable/25 percent unfavorable rating, which rivals Barack Obama's favorability (75 percent favorable/23 percent unfavorable) and exceeds the favorability of the Democratic Party (67 percent favorable/31 percent unfavorable). On the other side of the aisle, the Republican brand has reached new lows at the end of the Trump-McConnell era, falling to 20 percent favorable/79 percent unfavorable (*including an astonishing 71 percent very unfavorable*). While the Republican Party has become synonymous with Trump, it is also telling that McConnell is comparably well-known and unpopular as the President he defended these past four years (17 percent favorable/78 percent unfavorable).
- **Biden's massive victory spans the entire Jewish demographic landscape, except for Orthodox Jews.** Biden demonstrated broad appeal throughout the Jewish electorate, winning large margins with young and old, women and men, and college educated and non-college educated voters. Biden also achieved a landslide across different denominations, including Reform (90 to 7 percent), Conservative (70 to 29 percent), and Jews who have no particular denomination (82 to 16 percent). The only demographic group that Trump carried is Orthodox Jews who supported Trump by a 79 to 17 percent margin.

Key Findings – Israel

- **Jewish voters want the United States to serve as an even-handed broker and play an active role in helping Israelis and Palestinians resolve the conflict.** A large majority (71 percent) believe the U.S. should be a fair and even-handed broker between Israelis and Palestinians, while only 29 percent believe the U.S. should side with Israel during negotiations. Jews also want the U.S. to play an active role in helping the two sides resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, even if it means publicly stating its disagreements with both sides (80 percent) or exerting pressure on both sides to make compromises to achieve peace (77 percent).
- **Jews believe it is completely compatible to be “pro-Israel” and critical of Israeli government policy.** It is rare for Jews to be near unanimity on anything, but this survey shows one area of particularly strong agreement among nearly all Jewish voters: 92 percent say that someone can be both critical of Israeli government policy and still be considered “pro-Israel.”
- **Netanyahu has gone from being a popular Prime Minister among American Jews to a deeply unpopular figure with astonishingly high unfavorable ratings for the leader of the State of Israel.** Our data on Netanyahu’s favorability extends back 11 years. From 2009 to 2014, Netanyahu held strong favorability ratings (ranging from +7 to +31 favorable to unfavorable). But his unfavorable rating began to rise when he opposed Obama’s efforts on the Iran agreement, and even worked with Republicans in Congress to undermine Obama. During the Trump Administration, Netanyahu’s enthusiastic embrace of a President so deeply despised by Jews has resulted in a skyrocketing of Netanyahu’s unfavorable ratings. Today, Jews give Netanyahu a -29 rating (31 percent favorable/61 percent unfavorable).
- **Support for a 2-state peace agreement with difficult compromises remains very strong.** This is the third consecutive Presidential election where roughly three-quarters of Jewish voters support a peace agreement that includes a demilitarized Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders, Palestinian neighborhoods in Jerusalem becoming part of the Palestinian state while Israel retains control of Jerusalem’s Jewish neighborhoods and the Western Wall, and allowing some Palestinian refugees to return to Israel. In 2012, 72 percent supported this agreement; in 2016, 70 percent supported it; and in 2020, 75 percent support it.
- **The 2-state solution is far more preferred over annexation or a 1-state solution.** There is very little support among American Jews for annexation of the West Bank (15 percent) or a 1-state solution that places Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank under a single government elected by Israelis and Palestinians (13 percent). Instead, Jewish voters unmistakably want to see 2 states: a Jewish State of Israel alongside an Arab state of Palestine (72 percent).
- **Opposition to settlement construction has increased, and a large majority thinks Israel should partially or fully suspend construction of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, while a small minority support unrestricted settlement construction.** Only 17 percent believe Israel should build settlements anywhere it wants in the West Bank, compared to 40 percent who think construction should be confined to areas that are already developed and 42 percent who think Israel should suspend all construction

of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. These results mark a shift from previous surveys dating back to 2014, which have been fairly stable. While unrestricted settlement construction is down 6 points and construction limited to already developed areas is down 9 points, suspension of all construction is up 15 points since our 2018 survey.

- **Most Jewish voters have familiarity with the BDS movement, and there is overwhelming opposition to boycotting products made in Israel.** Nearly two-thirds of Jews have heard a great deal of information (31 percent) or some information (30 percent) about the BDS movement. People under 50 years old (65 percent) are more familiar with BDS than people who are 50 years or older (56 percent), and Orthodox Jews (88 percent) are more familiar with BDS than Reform (49 percent), Conservative (75 percent), and unaffiliated Jews (55 percent). When asked whether they personally support or oppose a campaign to boycott products that are made in Israel, 89 percent say they are personally opposed.

Key Findings – The Next Administration

- **As Jews seek a reversal of the damage of the Trump years, the Iran nuclear agreement is one area that receives particularly strong support.** Jews were among the biggest proponents of the Iran agreement when it was signed five years ago, and 74 percent support the U.S. re-entering this agreement. As we have seen on numerous questions throughout this survey, support is widespread across the Jewish electorate, except among the Orthodox population, which is the only demographic that opposes re-entering the agreement.
- **Jewish voters support military assistance to Israel, and want to make sure this aid does not get diverted to annexation efforts.** Israeli government talk of West Bank annexation has been placed on the backburner, but it may emerge once again as talk of early Israeli elections returns. While there is clear Jewish support for providing Israel military assistance, 57 percent say that they want Congress and the President to restrict military aid so that no U.S. aid can be spent on annexation.
- **Jews also support aid to the Palestinians.** A large majority (66 percent) want to restore the financial and humanitarian aid to Palestinians that had been cut by the Trump Administration.

Concluding Note

The 2020 election reinforces long-standing dynamics in the Jewish community, and potentially locks in these dynamics in the aftermath of a President and his Republican enablers who Jews found abhorrent. Jewish voters continue to overwhelmingly support Democratic candidates, even-handed U.S. engagement in efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a 2-state solution, and a return to Obama-era policies such as the Iran nuclear agreement.

Trump is a uniquely bad President in the eyes of Jewish voters who have heard his dog whistles to white nationalists and suffered through his failures on the coronavirus. The political question facing the Jewish community after Jewish voters' repudiation of Trump's presidency is whether Jewish groups that have steadfastly supported Trump these past four years will be stained by their fealty to a President who embraced right wing extremists and suggested

injecting disinfectant as a possible cure for COVID. If Biden becomes President after key states finish counting their votes, it would not be surprising if Republican and hawkish Jewish groups suddenly try to distance themselves from Trump and claim that they didn't *really* support him. But regardless of the outcome of the Presidential race, their record is clear, both in their discredited claims about Democrats' support for Israel and their allegiance to a President who earned the disgust of the vast majority of American Jews. At the very least, observers should be very wary of the claims from these Republican Jewish groups when they inevitably come back in 2 or 4 years to tell anyone who will listen that Jews are about to abandon Biden and Democrats because Republicans are more supportive of Israel.

This survey of Jews who voted in the 2020 election provides a comprehensive look with a large sample to assess the political beliefs and values of Jewish voters. Unlike exit polls that do not ask the range of critical Jewish demographic questions, such as denomination and synagogue membership, that are necessary to ensure a representative sample, this survey is a detailed and thorough assessment that reflects the demographic composition of the Jewish population as extensively examined by the Pew Research Center.

The survey sample was drawn from a national voter file, consisting of all registered voters in the United States. Respondents with a likelihood of being Jewish based on their name or geography were contacted by text, and then took the survey on their phone or computer. At the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked whether they consider themselves Jewish, using the same question wording as the 2013 Pew Research Center's study, "A Portrait of Jewish Americans."

GBAO designed the questionnaire for this national survey of American Jews who voted in the 2020 general election. The survey was conducted October 28 - November 3, 2020, and included interviews with 800 self-identified Jewish voters who cast their ballots on Election Day or prior to Election Day. The survey is subject to a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

The survey results, including question wording and crosstabs are available at www.jstreet.org.