

ATTITUDES ON CAMPUS PROTESTS, INCLUDING ASSOCIATED JEWISH HATE, VARY BY AGE

The Foundation to Combat Antisemitism
Sept 26, 2024

The new academic year brings a resumption of protests on college campuses about the Israel-Hamas war, but the Foundation to Combat Antisemitism's (FCAS) ongoing research reveals that while many younger Americans on college campuses feel strongly about the protests, these views are not shared by all Americans. Our nationwide survey this summer explored attitudes around the largely pro-Palestinian protests in the spring. What started as peaceful demonstrations soon became illegal encampments staged on campuses across the country that in some cases turned violent when protesters began clashing with police, counterprotests, and other students. In the spring, students established encampments on over 150 campuses across the country, according to the ADL, and over 3,100 people were arrested, according to The New York Times.

Americans' beliefs about these protests are varied, with clear distinctions between younger Americans who largely supported the pro-Palestinian protesters and many older Americans who thought the protests went too far. The research found:

- Americans generally supported pro-Israel protesters more than pro-Palestinian protesters, with the exception of 18-to-29-year-olds.
- Half of Americans 18 and older believed the spring campus protests went too far, but younger Americans were less likely to think so.
- Despite many Americans' perceptions, very few people attended these and similar protests.

Most Americans didn't support the pro-Palestinian protesters in the spring

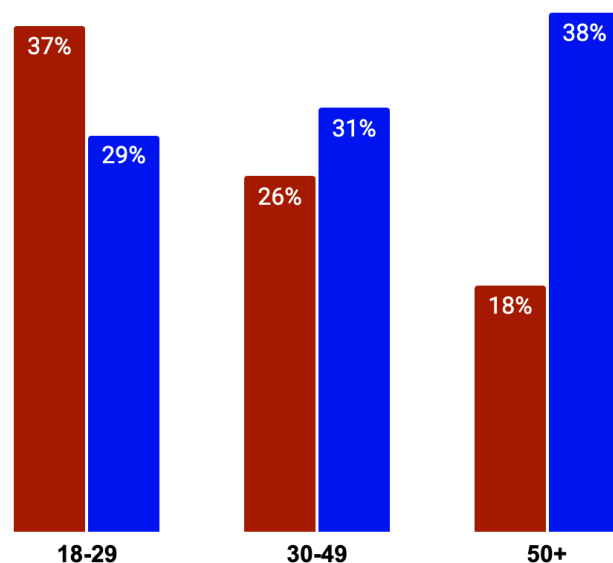
The plurality of Americans (41%) didn't have an opinion about who they supported in the college campus spring protests. However, only 25% of American adults supported the pro-Palestinian protesters; 34% instead supported the pro-Israel protesters.

These findings were notably different by age group. 37% of 18-to-29-year-olds surveyed supported the pro-Palestinian protesters. For those 50 and older, that number was only 18%.

These age differences align with broader beliefs about Israel. Younger Americans are on average far less likely to agree that Israel has the right to exist and defend itself, and they are more likely to believe that Israel is a terrorist state.

While many campus protesters hoped to move public sympathies toward the Palestinian cause, they have largely failed to do so. Only

■ Support Pro-Palestine Protesters ■ Support Pro-Israel Protesters





23% of Americans said the protests made them more sympathetic to Palestinians. 37% felt that the protests instead increased their sympathies toward Jews. Even among 18-29-year-olds, the protests increased sympathies equally between Palestinians and Jews.

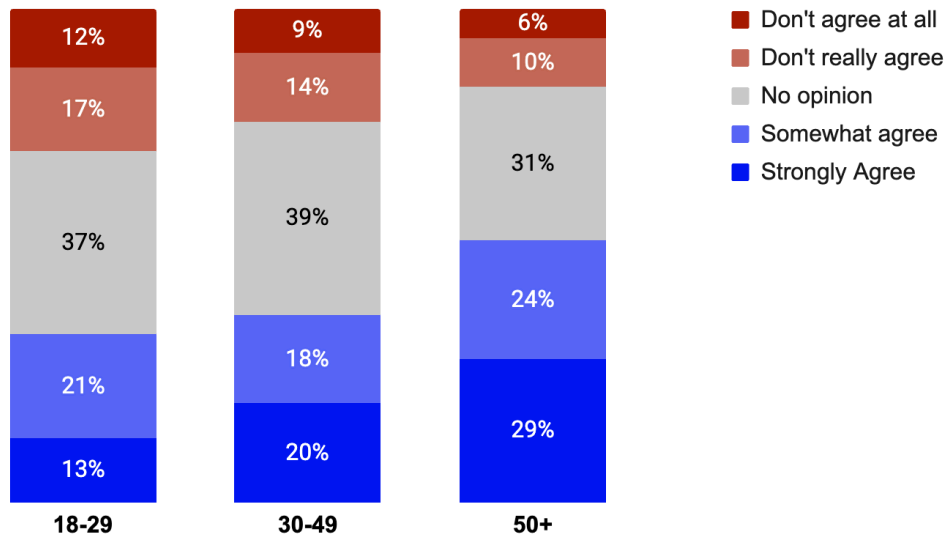
For many Americans, the campus protests went too far and were antisemitic

Given most Americans' perceptions of the protests, it's not surprising that 52% believed the protests went too far, with only 20% disagreeing. US adults 50+ were most likely to agree the protests went too far (64%), whereas only 39% of 18-to-29-year-olds believed the same.

At FCAS, our focus is on when protests like these become antisemitic, when passion about the Israel-Hamas war turns into Jewish hate. 44% of all Americans agreed at least somewhat that the college campus protesters were acting in antisemitic ways; only 21% disagreed. In other words, most but not all respondents who thought the protests went too far also thought antisemitism occurred.

Once again, younger Americans were less likely to believe these protests crossed the line into antisemitism. Only 34% of 18-to-29-year-olds recognized antisemitism at the protests compared to 53% of Americans 50 or older.

"Many pro-Palestinian protesters on college campuses have been acting in antisemitic ways"



Americans overestimated the number of people protesting

Reflecting the media coverage of the spring protests on college campuses, 32% of US adults believed that most college students were involved in the protests. The reality is very different. Only 23% of students surveyed reported ever attending any protest that was either pro-Palestine or pro-Israel. Other research suggests only [8%](#) of students actually participated in these specific spring protests.

On an issue as polarizing as the Israel-Hamas war, it's expected that Americans' attitudes about these campus protests differ, particularly by age, but it is tragic when honest debate about war descends into Jewish hate among many students, as so many Americans saw happening this spring.



Methodology

“Stand Up to Jewish Hate: The US Antisemitism Landscape Survey” is semi-annual research on Americans 18 and older conducted by the [Foundation to Combat Antisemitism](#) and [VML](#). This ongoing study tracks Americans’ attitudes and actions around antisemitism in the context of recent events. The most recent survey, fielded June–July 2024, included a nationally representative sample of 8,000 US adults plus an augment of 600 respondents for demographic analysis, weighted to match the US population.

About FCAS

The Foundation to Combat Antisemitism was founded in 2019 by Robert Kraft to stand up to Jewish hate and all hate. We uniquely reach unengaged non-Jewish Americans, moving them to become allies through empathy-building national mass media and social advertising. We partner and convene diverse leaders and groups to create awareness and understanding, and our Command Center monitors the digital landscape 24/7 to understand where and how hate is spreading and completes national research on this topic.

For more information about this research, email us at info@fcas.org