

# THE CIVIC HEALTH AND INSTITUTIONS PROJECT



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## THE CIVIC HEALTH AND INSTITUTIONS PROJECT: A 50-STATE SURVEY REPORT #103: HOW DO AMERICANS FEEL ABOUT ISRAEL, PALESTINE, JEWS, AND MUSLIMS?

USA, February 2024

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# THE CIVIC HEALTH AND INSTITUTIONS PROJECT

Report of February 15, 2024, v.1

***The Civic Health and Institutions Project***  
**and**  
***The COVID States Project***

***A joint initiative of:***

Northeastern University,  
Harvard University,  
Rutgers University,  
University of Rochester

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Northeastern University  
Network Science Institute



# COVER MEMO

***The Civic Health and Institutions Project***  
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**Partners:**

Northeastern University, Harvard University/Harvard Medical School, Rutgers University, and University of Rochester

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**Note on methods:**

Between December 21, 2023 and January 29, 2024, we surveyed 30,460 individuals age 18 and older across all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. The survey was conducted by PureSpectrum via an online, nonprobability sample, with state-level representative quotas for race/ethnicity, age, and gender (for more details, see [chip50.org](http://chip50.org) and [covidstates.org](http://covidstates.org)). In addition to balancing on these dimensions, we reweighted our data using demographic characteristics to match the U.S. population with respect to 2020 vote choice and turnout, race/ethnicity, age, gender, education, and living in urban, suburban, or rural areas. This was the latest in a series of surveys we have been conducting since April 2020, examining attitudes and behaviors in the United States.

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Or visit us at [www.chip50.org](http://www.chip50.org) or [www.covidstates.org](http://www.covidstates.org).

# How do Americans feel about Israel, Palestine, Jews, and Muslims?

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Much has been made about young Americans' reactions to the war between Israel and Hamas, as well as its implications for antisemitism and Islamophobia. [A series of polls](#) from October and December 2023, for example, reported that those between 18 and 24 were split 50/50 on whether they supported Israel or Hamas. In fact, this result gained so much traction that candidate for the GOP nomination for president, Vivek Ramaswamy [cited it](#) at a campaign event in November 2023. However, national surveys usually lack the sample size to confidently report percentages of small subgroups, like 18 to 24 year olds, raising questions about the validity of findings like these.

Between December 21, 2023 and January 29, 2024, we surveyed 30,460 individuals aged 18 and older across all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. We included feeling thermometers for Israel, Palestine, Jews, and Muslims, asking people to separately rate how they feel about each group on a 0 to 100 scale, where 0 indicates feeling very unfavorable or cold, 50 indicates not feeling particularly warm or cold toward that group, and 100 indicates feeling very favorable or warm.

Our survey's sample size allows us to zoom in on subgroups within the population. For instance, it included 3,294 Americans between ages 18 and 24. This allows us to look within this age group and break young Americans down by partisanship, as our survey includes 1101 18-24-year-old Democrats and 676 18-24-year-old Republicans. In this report, we examine how responses to these four thermometer ratings varied by age, race, education, religion, and partisanship, as well as how the different thermometer scores are correlated with one another.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Young Americans were less likely than older Americans to rate Israel favorably, but they still rated Jews highly. 18 to 24 year old Americans, for example, rated Israel at a 40/100 but Jews at 71/100. While ratings of Jews and Israel are correlated overall, the correlation is significantly weaker for younger Americans, relative to older ones.
- Across all demographics, respondents rate Jews higher than Israel and Muslims higher than Palestine, but these gaps vary.

- Democrats ages 18 to 24 rated Israel the lowest at a 36/100, but rated Jews higher than both Republicans and Democrats ages 25 to 44 and 45 to 64 at a 75/100.
- Republicans ages 18 to 24 rated both Israel (49/100) and Jews (66/100) lower than their older Republican counterparts.
- Respondents with more education rated both Jews and Muslims higher than those with less education.
- For every age group, ratings of Palestine and ratings of Muslims were positively and consistently correlated.
- Ratings of Muslims and Jews are not zero-sum; instead, they were strongly and positively correlated; the higher one rated one group, the more likely they were to rate the other one highly as well.

It is important to note that feeling thermometers are a blunt measure of how one feels toward a particular group or country, but they are nonetheless widely employed in social science research because of the variation they provide in telling us how cold or warm people feel about various groups.

## **Feeling thermometer ratings by demographic and political group**

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As the two rightmost columns on Figure 1 show, every demographic group rated Jews higher than Israel and Muslims higher than Palestine, but the differences varied significantly by group.

Younger, atheist/agnostic/no religion, Muslim, and Democratic respondents reported significantly larger gaps in their feelings toward Jews and Israel relative to other respondents. In contrast, older respondents, evangelical Christians, and Republicans rated Jews and Israel much more closely.

The only age group that rated Palestine higher than Israel was 18 to 24 year old Americans, averaging a score of 53 for Palestine and 40 for Israel. Those identifying as atheist/agnostic/no religion and Muslim also reported higher thermometer scores for Palestine than Israel.

Jews also reported a low thermometer score for Palestine (31) and Muslims reported a low thermometer score for Israel (32). Both groups felt more positively towards one another, however, with Muslim respondents averaging a thermometer rating of 53 for Jews and Jewish respondents averaging a thermometer rating of 60 for Muslims. Both groups rated their own religious groups highly, with Jews rating themselves an 85 and Muslims rating themselves a 79.

Beyond Jews and Muslims, the greatest disparities in ratings toward Israel and Palestine came from Protestants and Evangelical Christians, who both rated Israel significantly higher than Palestine and Jews significantly higher than Muslims.

Ratings for each of the four feeling thermometers also varied by education. More highly educated respondents were more likely to report higher thermometer scores for each of Israel, Palestine, Jews, and Muslims.

Finally, there were large partisan differences for ratings of Israel, Palestine, and Muslims, but not for ratings of Jews. Republicans were much more likely to rate Israel favorably (61) than Democrats (47), while Democrats (47) rated Palestine higher than Republicans (30). While both groups rated Jews favorably (70 for Democrats, 68 for Republicans), Democrats (66) rated Muslims significantly higher than Republicans (48).

# Thermometer Ratings of Israel, Palestine, Jews, and Muslims by Group

## Age

	Israel	Palestine	Jews	Muslims	Jews - Israel	Muslims - Palestine
18 to 24	40	53	71	69	30	16
25 to 44	46	43	65	60	19	17
45 to 64	54	34	68	55	15	20
65 and over	62	34	73	54	10	19

## Race

	Israel	Palestine	Jews	Muslims	Jews - Israel	Muslims - Palestine
Asian American or Pacific Islander	46	45	62	56	17	12
Black	46	46	63	61	17	15
Hispanic	47	45	65	61	18	16
Other	47	42	66	60	19	18
White	54	37	70	57	17	20

## Religion

	Israel	Palestine	Jews	Muslims	Jews - Israel	Muslims - Palestine
Atheist/Agnostic/No Religion	40	47	73	68	33	20
Catholic	51	39	68	57	17	18
Evangelical Christian	62	35	67	51	5	16
Jewish	73	31	85	60	12	28
Muslim	32	67	53	79	21	12
Other	53	38	67	56	14	18
Protestant	63	35	73	55	10	19

## Education

	Israel	Palestine	Jews	Muslims	Jews - Israel	Muslims - Palestine
Some High School or Less	44	37	58	51	14	14
High School Graduate	51	38	65	55	14	17
Some College	51	41	70	60	19	19
College Degree	52	40	70	60	18	19
Graduate Degree	55	41	72	62	17	21

## Party

	Israel	Palestine	Jews	Muslims	Jews - Israel	Muslims - Palestine
Democrat	47	47	70	66	23	19
Other	41	41	65	60	24	19
Republican	61	30	68	48	7	18

National Sample, N=30,460, 12/21/2023-1/29/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (A joint project of Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 1.**

## Ratings by age and political party

Given that some of the largest differences in each of the four thermometer ratings were driven by partisanship and age, this section breaks down each of these categories more closely.

These findings reveal that young people, regardless of party, report lower favorability ratings of Israel. Although Republicans across each age group still report higher favorability of Israel than Democrats, there is a stark age divide within both parties. For example, Republicans between 18 and 24 rate Israel at a 49, relative to Republicans 65 and over, who rate Israel at a 72.

### Thermometer Ratings of Israel, Palestine, Jews, and Muslims by Party and Age



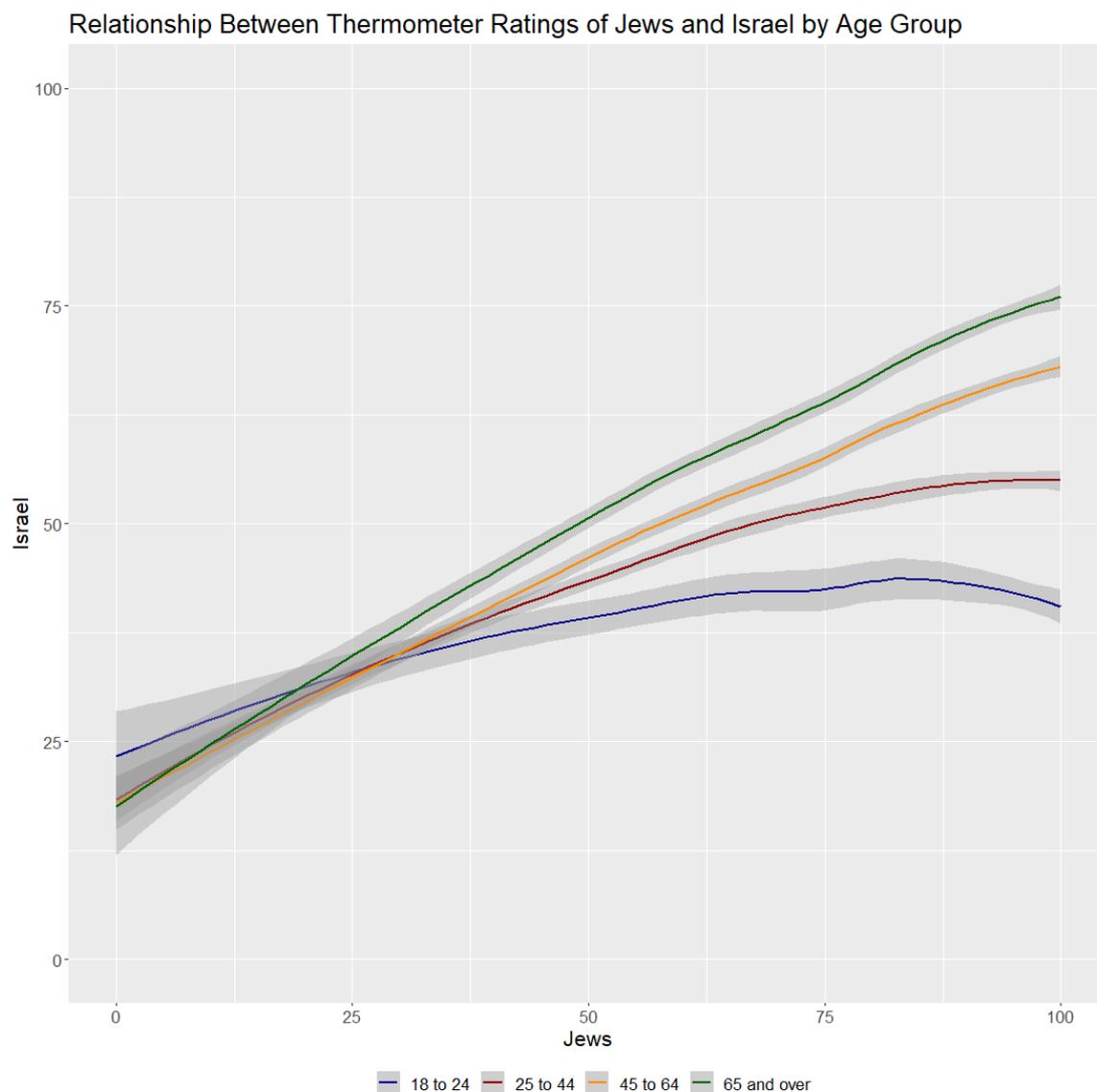
National Sample, N=30,460, 12/21/2023-1/29/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (A joint project of Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 2.**

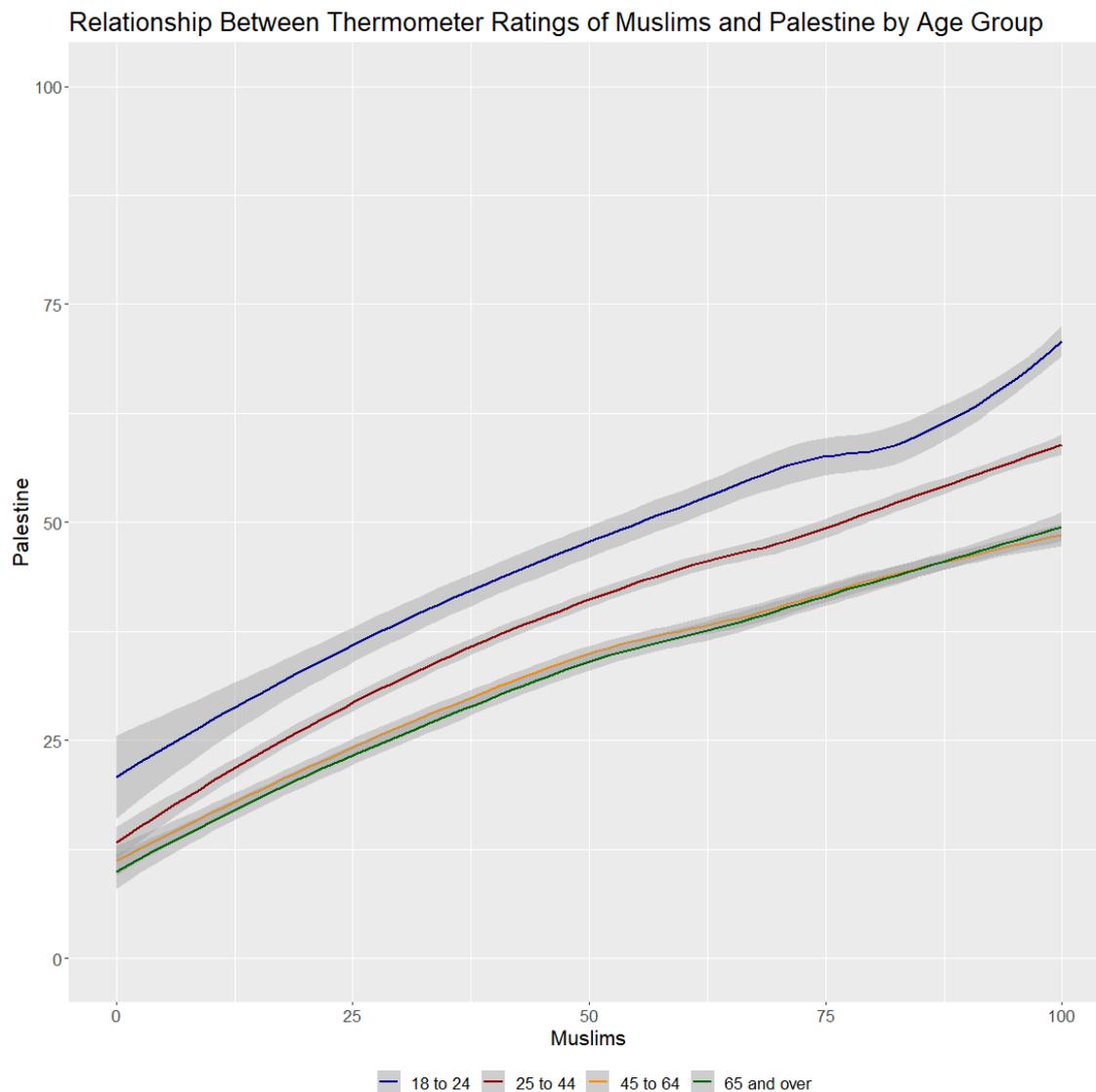
Younger Democrats and Republicans also rated Palestine higher than their older partisan counterparts, but ratings of Palestine among Republicans of all age groups remained significantly lower than among Democrats.

While Democrats between 18 and 24 rated Israel at only a 36, far lower than the overall sample average of 51, they also rated Jews at a 75, above the sample average of 68. Stemming from this finding, we calculated the correlations between the various thermometer scores broken down by age group. Here, we found that as one's thermometer rating of Jews increases, so does their rating of Israel, on average, but this relationship is much weaker for younger Americans than it is for older Americans.



**Figure 3.** This figure plots the relationship between thermometer ratings of Jews (x axis) and Israel (y axis).

We did not observe these differences in slopes when examining the relationship between ratings of Muslims and Palestine by age group. Regardless of age group, as respondents' ratings of Muslims increased, so too did their ratings of Palestine.

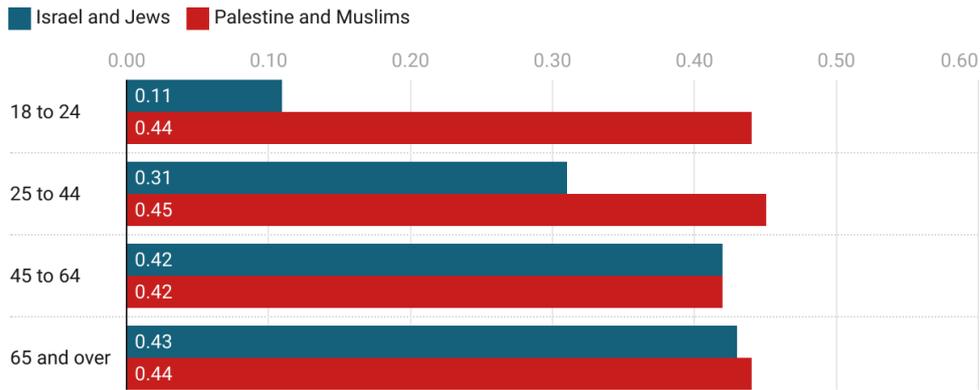


**Figure 4.** This figure plots the relationship between thermometer ratings of Muslims (x axis) and Palestine (y axis).

Displayed differently, ratings of Jews and Israel are correlated for Americans 25 and up, but this is not the case for Americans between 18 and 24, with the correlation between the two thermometer scores being just 0.11. The correlations between thermometer ratings of Muslims and Palestine, however, remain moderately correlated at nearly identical levels for each of the four age groups.

Additionally, there was not a consistent relationship between thermometer ratings of Israel and thermometer ratings of Palestine. For the full sample, there was no correlation at all between thermometer rating of Israel and thermometer rating of Palestine.

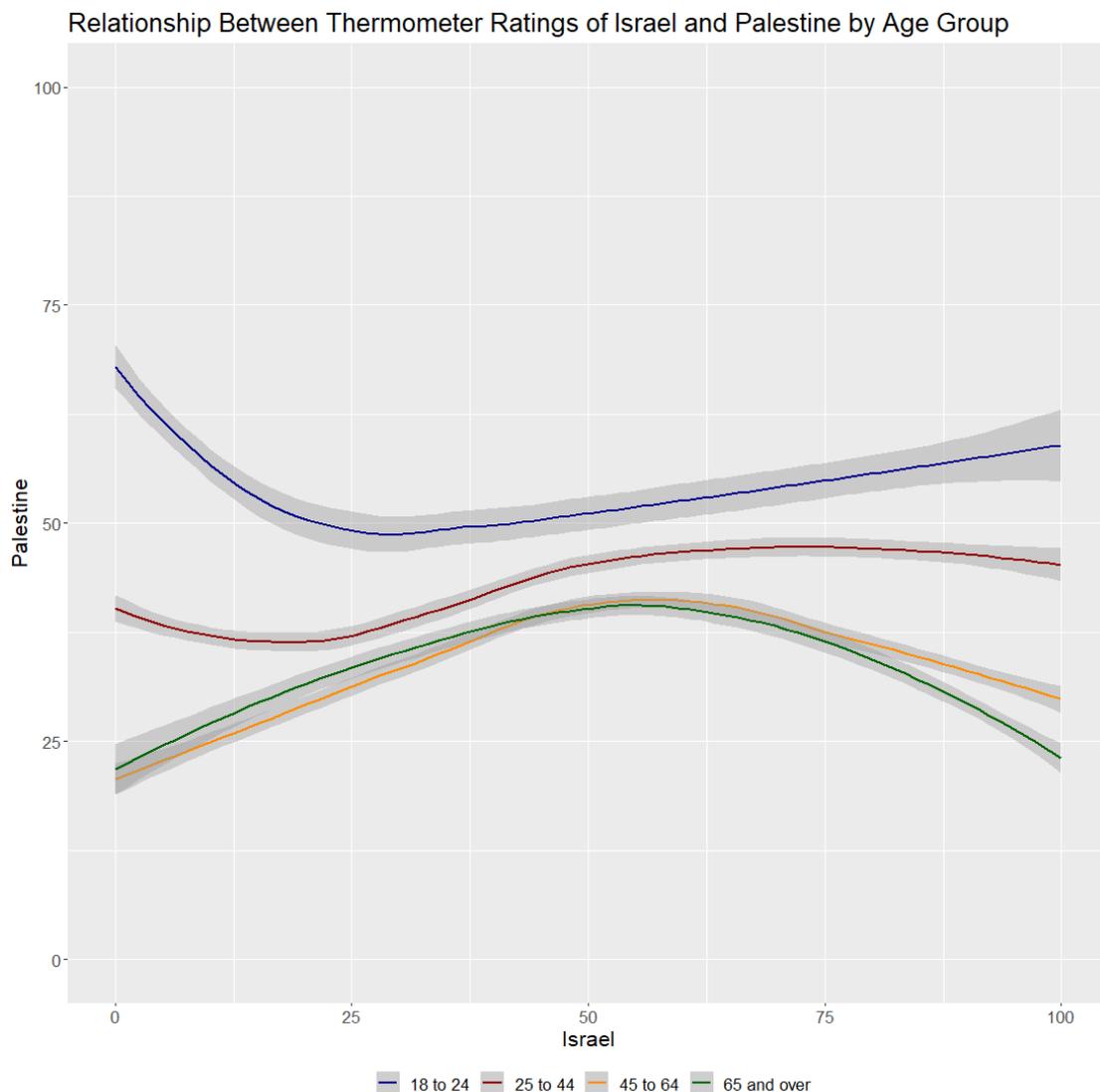
## Correlations Between Israel/Jews and Palestine/Muslims Thermometer Ratings by Age Group



National Sample, N=30,460, 12/21/2023-1/29/2024

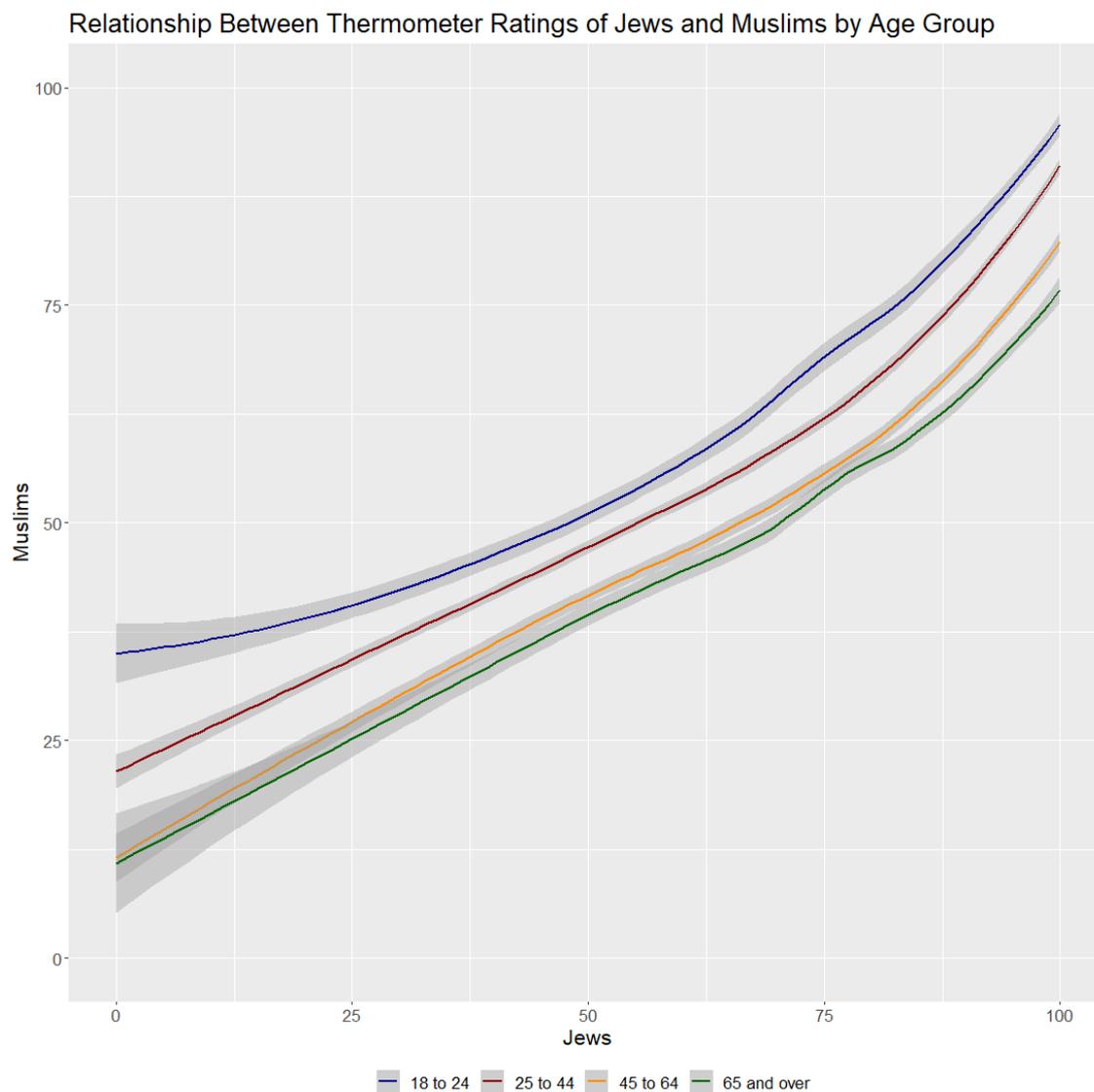
Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (A joint project of Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 5.** The correlations between Israel/Jews and Palestine/Muslims, by age group.



**Figure 6.** This figure plots the relationship between thermometer ratings of Israel (x axis) and Palestine (y axis).

However, there was a strong and positive correlation of 0.60 between Jews and Muslims for each age group. That is, as the ratings of one group went up, so did the ratings of the other. Thus, while parts of this report have focused on which group is rated higher, this figure reveals that it is often the same respondents rating both Jews and Muslims lower and the same respondents rating them both higher.



**Figure 7.** This figure plots the relationship between thermometer ratings of Jews (x axis) and Muslims (y axis).

## Conclusion

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Much has been made over young Americans' attitudes toward Israel, Palestine, Jews, and Muslims. Our findings reveal that young Americans, especially Democrats, rate Israel much less favorably than their older counterparts, but older Democrats also rate Jews higher than most other groups. Indeed, as Figure 5 shows, while there is a moderate to strong correlation between ratings of Israel and ratings of Jews for Americans 25 and older, there is virtually no correlation among younger Americans.

To reiterate an earlier point, feeling thermometers are only one method to measure attitudes toward different countries or groups. It is important to note that we did not include questions specific to the ongoing war in Gaza, but instead limited our focus to general feelings of favorability toward Israel, Palestine, Jews, and Muslims. There are other ways to measure prejudice against different groups or attitudes toward different countries, but we present just the four feeling thermometers. Nonetheless, our findings reveal clear patterns about who rates each of these four groups highest and lowest, as well as the correlations between ratings for each of the groups.

Advocacy groups [have reported](#) significant rises in the United States of both antisemitic and Islamophobic hate crimes. In the eight weeks following the October 7th Hamas attack, the Anti-Defamation League found that antisemitic incidents increased 337%. The Council on American-Islamic Relations reported a 172% increase in Islamophobic incidents between October 7th and December 2nd. Indeed, our results do show that there is a chunk of the public who strongly dislikes Jews and Muslims, with 18% of respondents rating Jews unfavorably (between 0 and 49) and 34% rating Muslims unfavorably. Our results simply show the nuance of Americans' responses to their feelings about Israel, Palestine, Jews, and Muslims, notably showing that younger Americans appear to break from the patterns of their older counterparts.