

Jews for Trump?

Shift in Democratic Support in South Florida from 2016 to 2020

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Abstract

Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties are Democratic strongholds in Florida and the 2020 General Election did not change that. Joe Biden captured the majority, but at a disappointing margin, ultimately losing the state to Republican incumbent Donald Trump. This paper seeks to understand and contextualize the loss of Democratic support within South Florida, specifically amongst Jewish voters. We investigate how Trump's 'Pro-Israel' rhetoric and actions throughout his administration potentially gained the favor of members of the Jewish community. We find that precincts with high Jewish populations, as defined by their percentage of Israel-born voters, see a statistically significant increase in support for Trump between the 2016 and 2020 General Elections.

Key words: Jewish Americans, 2020 General Election, Trump, Israel, South Florida

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1 Introduction

Florida has long been categorized as a ‘swing’ state, leaning neither strongly left nor right (Stromberg 2008). The 2020 Presidential Election marked the first time Florida did not vote with the overall election winner since 1992; President Obama carried the state in 2008 and 2012 while President Trump carried it in 2016 and 2020. An incredibly populous and diverse state, Florida serves as one of the most unpredictable, yet crucial, states in our electoral system, boasting a total of 29 electoral votes. Like most states, Florida is home to large metropolitan areas, traditionally conservative rural areas, progressive college towns, and suburban enclaves. What sets Florida apart from most from other Southern states is its large and heterogeneous racial and religious minority populations. Roughly 3.0% of Floridians identify as Jewish in some capacity, 0.8% above the national average. Florida stands as the only swing state with a Jewish population above the national average, and roughly 3.9% of the electorate—some 665,000 adults—identify as Jewish.¹

Scholarly literature and basic demographic voting data tell us that American Jews are reliable Democrats, with party registration as high or higher than any other religious or racial minority group (Wald 2019). As of 2020, roughly 70% of all voting age Jews in America are registered Democrats.² This trend of Jewish alignment with the Democratic Party has persisted for decades, despite repeated attempts at courtship from the GOP (Fisher 1979; Weisberg 2012; Cohen and Liebman 1997). Jewish voters have become a sturdy and reliable voting bloc that the Democratic Party depends on in states like Florida. One potential explanation for this connection places weight on the historical oppression of the Jewish population and the resulting sympathies for other minority groups, which we explore later.

If this group has proven itself to be a stable, left-leaning community, reliably supporting

¹See “FLORIDA REPORT - American Jewish Population Project,” Brandeis University, available <https://ajpp.brandeis.edu/documents/2020/fljewishelectorate.pdf> (last accessed March 29, 2022).

²Becka A. Alper and Alan Cooperman, “10 key findings about Jewish Americans,” Pew Research Center, May 11, 2021, available <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/05/11/10-key-findings-about-jewish-americans/> (last accessed March 15, 2021).

Democratic candidates, a puzzle emerges from the 2020 General Election. Donald Trump made significant electoral gains throughout the state of Florida in his reelection bid, but specifically in known Jewish communities. In fact, Trump’s largest gains between 2016 and 2020 occurred in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties. The *Tampa Bay Times* notes that this achievement, in part, came from the specific targeting of Jewish households. As Democratic operative Evan Ross, stated, “Trump did a really effective job of messaging to Jews. He understood he could win a lot of Jewish support, which could swing the state in his favor.”³

No question, Trump has proved himself a controversial figure, both in American politics and within the Jewish community itself. Trump has been accused of antisemitism and the number of antisemitic attacks reached a 40 year high in 2019.⁴ And quite memorably, during the 2020 presidential campaign, Trump attempted to frame himself as a ‘Pro-Israel’ candidate to appear attractive to Jewish enclaves, which included sending Pro-Israel campaign material to any Florida household with a stereo-typical Jewish last name.⁵ One of Trump’s most memorable acts in when 2018 was moving the United States Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, as well as recognizing Jerusalem as the nation’s capital, as paradoxical policy strategy, as antisemitic rhetoric has become common amongst the alt-right while following through on actions that traditional Jews want to see.

The Jewish community holds just as diverse as any other, so pinpointing interests is no simple feat. According to the Pew Research Center’s 2020 Report on American Jews, over a quarter of all American Jews identify as a ‘Jew of No Religion’, meaning that while they identify culturally or ethnically to the Jewish community, they do not identify as religiously Jewish. Alongside that, roughly 9% identify as Orthodox Jews.⁶ Orthodox Jews are overwhelmingly

³“How Donald Trump won Florida,” *Tampa Bay Times*, November 4, 2020, available <https://www.tampabay.com/news/florida-politics/elections/2020/11/04/how-donald-trump-won-florida/> (last accessed March 10, 2022).

⁴“At the Extremes: The 2020 Election and American Extremism | Part 3,” ADL, available <https://www.adl.org/blog/at-the-extremes-the-2020-election-and-american-extremism-part-3> (last accessed March 29, 2022).

⁵“Trump’s Legacy in Israel,” *The New Yorker*, January 12, 2021, available <https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/donald-trumps-legacy-in-israel> (last accessed March 5, 2022).

⁶Becka A. Alper and Alan Cooperman, “10 key findings about Jewish Americans,” Pew Research

supportive of the Republican party, with over 75% registered Republicans, and incredibly strong advocates for the Israeli state. These two groups serve as the two extremes within the Jewish community and yet share similar attitudes towards Israel and the Israeli people. Pew found that a majority of Jews from all sects (Jews of No Religion, Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox) feel at least “somewhat of a strong connection” to Israel and Israeli Jews. Moreover, 63% of American Jews stated that they feel then-President Trump was friendly towards Israel and Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. All this to say, while a large portion of American Jews are not Israeli and have never been to Israel, it is considered to be a significant factor in Jewish life no matter your political ideology.

In investigate the impact the shift in support for Donald Trump among Jewish enclaves in South Florida. We are not arguing that there was a American-Jewish realignment in the 2020 General Election; indeed, data and scholarship suggest that Jews are remain steadily Democratic. Rather, we suggest that a certain shift has taken place that has pushed a specific group of American-Jews to the right to the favor of Donald Trump. We argue that precincts with a large concentration of Jewish population, as defined by their percentage of Israel-born voters, were more likely to increase their support for Trump support from 2016 to 2020. For the purposes of this study, support for Trump is defined as the vote-share candidate Trump received from each voting precinct. Drawing on precinct-level data merged with aggregated voter file demographic, partisan, and place of birth information, we find strong evidence that the percentage of Israel-born voters within a precinct is positively correlated with the change in support from 2016 to 2020 that Donald Trump received at the precinct-level.

2 The Jewish Population of South Florida

While on vacation in Miami Beach in 1939, future President Harry Truman wrote in a letter to his wife that the principal production of the city was “hotels, filling stations, [and] Hebrews”

Center, May 11, 2021, available <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/05/11/10-key-findings-about-jewish-americans/> (last accessed March 15, 2021).

[Whitfield \(1994\)](#). Miami, a widely diverse and lively area, has long held a stable and thriving Jewish community dating back to the time of David Yulee, Florida's first Jewish Senator from 1845-1851. Yulee, and his father Moses Levy, encouraged more Jews to purchase land within the state, which in his time only encompassed the northern half (Hüner 1917). Florida would not elect another Jewish Senator until 1974 (Richard Stone) nor a Jewish Congressman until 1972 (William Lehman).

In the early days of growth in Miami Beach in the early 1920s, those of Jewish faith were specifically barred from restaurants and places of business. Eventually, the dire economic conditions of the Great Depression forced business and landowners to end these discriminatory practices simply for profit's sake [Whitfield \(1994\)](#). Quickly afterwards, the Jewish population increased dramatically and spread further from Miami-Dade to the counties of Broward and Palm Beach. It has been said that "Jewish identity is impossible without a community to sustain it" and today the three counties make up the second largest Jewish community in the nation at roughly 600,000 (present author included), only surpassed by New York City ([Whitfield \(1994\)](#)). 10% of all American Jews and 53% of all southern Jews can be found within the tri-county area [Sanua \(2004\)](#).

The question of Jewish identity has long been discussed amongst the South Florida community. The Jewish community is a staple of the South Florida with "nearly two hundred congregations, three large Jewish Federations, twenty Jewish day schools, and a major Holocaust memorial" [Sanua \(2004\)](#). Of course, Jews exist across all of Florida's 67 counties. In the 1980s, Miami boasted one of the highest crime rates in the country, causing many Jewish families to settle elsewhere in the state. Other major Florida cities like Tampa and Orlando have also seen high numbers of Jewish residents as well families moving to more rural parts. From an interstate perspective, elderly Jews retiring to Florida is a common stereotype, and for good reason: of older Jewish individuals who move from one state to another, roughly 60% relocate to Florida [Whitfield \(1994\)](#). All this to say, the Jewish community persists across the entirety of Florida and are active voters no matter their county placement. Since the original Jewish population boom began in Miami-Dade County (particularly Miami Beach), and has

strong ties to Broward and Palm Beach counties, we limit our focus on the voting behavior to these three counties.

Arguing that Jewish-Americans are one least likely religious groups to take part in religious behavior, [Wald and Martinez \(2001, p. 6\)](#) finds that they are more likely to partake in communalism, or “the extent to which the individual’s informal social interaction is confined mostly to members of the religious community.”⁷ This feature of American Jewish culture is potentially significant to understanding how Jews vote. They value a sense of community and interconnectedness. “Jewishness,” [Wald and Martinez \(2001, p. 1\)](#) argue, “has become a form of social identification even for those who have little or no contact with Jewish religious institutions.” we argue that the social identification of Jews is particularly strong in South Florida.

3 Donald Trump’s Relationship With Israel

Donald Trump’s controversial nature does not halt at the doorstep of the Jewish community. He has been described as both antisemitic and philosemitic by different American Jewish groups [Soomekh \(2021\)](#). As previously mentioned, Trump strives to be known as the ‘Pro-Israel’ President and has said so in his own words. He had been heavily criticized during his presidency for anti-semitic remarks, specifically his lack of condemnation towards the Neo-Nazis of the 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. Alternatively, he has been praised for expanding Title VI of the Civil Rights Act to protect from antisemitic discrimination [Soomekh \(2021\)](#). It also cannot be ignored that Trump’s own daughter, Ivanka,

⁷As previously mentioned, ‘Jews of No Religion’ make up a significant portion of all those who identify. This encapsulates the uniqueness of the Jewish people and religion. ‘Jewish,’ as opposed to Christian or Muslim identity, is both a category of religious affiliation and ethnic background. An ethno-religion indicates that a people share both an ethnic background and set of religious beliefs. Other examples of ethno-religions include the Amish within the United States and the Yazidis within the geographical region of Kurdistan. According to Jewish Law, a child born to a Jewish mother or an adult that has converted is considered Jewish. Reform Judaism also expands this definition to include children born to Jewish fathers. A lack, or outright denial, of religious participation does not take away Jewish identity. It is important to include all forms of Jewish identification within the parameters of this study.

converted to Orthodox Judaism in 2009, making her the first Jewish member of the first family in American history.

In a paper regarding contesting perspectives amongst the Jewish community, Saba Soomekh writes that Donald Trump is viewed to some as “a champion of American Jewry, punishing antisemitism on the far-left and advocating for Israel” Soomekh (2021). It is hard to deny that Trump has indeed advocated for Israel. One of his largest foreign policy decisions while in office was ending the United States’ involvement in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, well known as the Iran Nuclear Deal, in 2018. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stood as one of the strongest opponents to the deal when it had been established under the Obama administration, citing threats to Israeli national security. Trump also affirmed Israel’s claims to contested land as well as its “sovereign right to defend itself” (Klein and Berney 2021).

Israel experienced a regional change in status, at least in some part due to the Trump Administration. In September of 2020, less than two months before the election, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain were given the ‘green light’ from Saudi Arabia to normalize relations with Israel in a ceremony that took place at the White House.⁸ The administration consciously created the conditions that allowed for a such as historic change, including the United States forging a closer relationship with Saudi Arabia.

At a 2019 publicity event, Netanyahu referred to Trump as a part of a “small cadre of Israeli heroes,” showcasing their friendship and political likeness.⁹ It is no secret that Trump has emerged as an incredibly popular figure in Israeli society and that they overwhelmingly favored him in the 2020 Presidential Election. Polling data from prior to the election shows that 63% of Israeli citizens supported Trump while only 17% supported Biden Basciano A (2021). Unsurprisingly, this support is mainly concentrated within Israeli-Jews and not Israeli-

⁸“Trump Deserves Credit for Israel’s New Status in the Middle East,” *Time Magazine*, September 2020, available <https://time.com/5889674/trump-israel-new-middle-east/> (last accessed March 10, 2022).

⁹“Trump’s Legacy in Israel,” *The New Yorker*, January 12, 2021, available <https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/donald-trumps-legacy-in-israel> (last accessed March 5, 2022).

Arabs ([Eiran 2021](#)).

Most notably, this support has evolved greatly over the support of Trump’s Administration. In the lead up to the 2016 Presidential election, Hillary Clinton had the support of 37% of Israelis while Trump slightly lagged behind with 34% support [Eiran \(2021\)](#). This data paints a picture of how Trump won over the Israeli people, instead of inheriting support through party affiliation. American Jews care about Israelis, and Israeli Jews like Donald Trump.

4 Jewish Attitudes Towards Democrats and Israel

In his recent book, *The Foundations of American Jewish Liberalism*, [Wald \(2019\)](#) ponders the question, “Why are Jews Democrats?” Socio-economic theory tells us that as groups attain economic prosperity, they become more fiscally conservative and favor right leaning parties. [Wald \(2019\)](#) argues that Jewish Americans prove themselves an outlier when compared to other minority groups, seeing as they have remained firmly Democratic. While there is no definitive answer to such an abstract query, he offers a series of possibilities. He utilizes Judaic Theory to state a Jewish “communal responsibility to the poor” within scripture that could possibly serve as explanation. Later, he references how Ashkenazi (European) Jews have historically found allies with leftist, working class organizations. One issue Wald takes with these theories is how American Jews differ from global Jewry. Once the lens is expanded, we find that Jewish communities abroad do not share the same attachment to left-wing parties. On the contrary, many Jewish communities tend to trend towards conservatism outside the United States. He identifies key aspects of the American Republican Party that he believes turned Jews away, mainly a Jewish need for a secular United States that contradicts with the platform of the “religious right.” Republicans are more likely to support school prayer and oppose policy on religious grounds. American Jews view this as a threat to their acceptance as equal citizens, fearing religious equality could be replaced by religious tolerance.

Jewish American attitudes towards Democrats only tells half of the story. How do Jews feel about Israel? As previously referenced, the Pew Research Center found that a strong majority

do feel an emotional connection to the state of Israel. Provides a more succinct look into the American Jewish perspective on Israel, [Waxman \(2018\)](#) argues in his book, *Trouble in the Tribe: The American Jewish Conflict over Israel*, that even though Israel is thousands of miles away from the American coastline, it “sees itself as the official Jewish state and therefore speaks on behalf of all Jewish people, [making it] nearly impossible for Diaspora Jews to ignore.” Ignoring Israel as a Jew can be considered the equivalent of a social *faux pas*. American Jews are raised with the idea that Israel serves as the Jewish homeland, a safe haven for our often persecuted people; not just a piece of foreign policy. This idea helps to conceptualize why an American group would care so deeply and feel so connected to a state they are so physically disconnected from.

Trump hoped to capitalize off this connection in the 2020 Presidential Election. Research from Tavits and Potter tells us this is to be expected from candidates like Trump. Their data shows that in times of high economic inequality, right-wing parties will attempt to seek electoral advantage by politicizing non-economic, ‘values-based’ issues. In their explanation, low-income voters would be forced to choose between economic interests and values ([Tavits and Potter 2014](#)). In this case, Jewish voters would be hypothetically forced to choose between their traditional Democratic alignment and the interests of their ‘homeland.’

Analysis by both Wald and Waxman tells us that Israel is an important factor to Jewish voters, but it has never served as a deciding factor. Jews, like any other Americans, are concerned with the domestic economy, education, and quality of life. Since the 1960’s, Israel has been a largely bipartisan issue with both major parties “competing over which one is more pro-Israel” ([Waxman 2018](#)). Prior to the presidential candidacy of Donald Trump, Jewish Americans did not feel as if they had to choose between Israel and party affiliation because support was ubiquitous. Many have accused former President Trump of making Israel a polarizing and partisan topic. Through public statements in political rallies such as, “If you vote for a Democrat, you are very, very disloyal to Israel and to the Jewish People,” ¹⁰ it is clear that

¹⁰“Trump says Jewish people who vote for Democrats are ‘very disloyal to Israel,’ denies his remarks are anti-Semitic”, *The Washington Post*, August 21, 2019,

Trump sought to sow division amongst what is often understood to be a unified community in South Florida.

Research also shows the impact of the ‘clustering effect’ which outlines “the effect of homogeneity of population in a precinct or neighborhood” (Katz and Eldersveld 1961). The clustering effect tells us that voting behavior and vote choice are impacted by the demographic makeup within an individual’s sphere of activity, particularly within their neighborhoods (Brown et al. 2021). Religious affiliation, a kind of homophily or a tendency of individuals to form ties with people like themselves, is a significant source of political influence (Feld and Grofman 2009). For example, white Protestants living in mixed-religion communities in New York state “significantly reduced their tendency to affiliate with the Republican Party” Foladare (1968). Foladare’s study found the way a neighborhood votes has a large impact on the way an individual within the neighborhood votes, especially amongst those of a shared religious group. Research by Wald and Martinez (2001) finds that Jewish-Americans engage in communalism, or the creation of close-knit and confined community groups, so the clustering effect implies that those most influential in terms of voting behavior and vote choice is likely other Jewish-Americans in their communities and neighborhoods.

5 Expectations, Research Design, and Data

Notwithstanding the communalism of Jewish-Americans, political commentators and even scholars have long-awaited Jewish re-alignment to the Republican Party (Fisher 1979). Every few years someone claims that an electoral realignment will occur, leading to the opening of Jewish conservatism. Election history has long proven them incorrect. We do not claim that the 2020 Presidential election was the defining moment that Jewish Americans left the Democratic Party. Rather, our hypothesis is much narrower, namely, that there is a statistically significant

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-says-that-jewish-people-who-vote-for-democrats-are-very-disloyal-to-israel-denies-his-remarks-are-anti-semitic/2019/08/21/055e53bc-c42d-11e9-b5e4-54aa56d5b7ce_story.html (last accessed March 3, 2022)

difference in the way largely Jewish precincts in South Florida counties (Broward, Palm Beach, Miami-Dade) voted in 2020 as compared to the 2016 presidential election in favor of Trump.

6 Data and Methodology

We draw on publicly available data from the Florida Voter File, specifically the Florida Division of Election’s Election Recap files following the 2020 General Election for Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties. These files provided individual-level demographic data on registered voters who had cast ballots in the 2020 General Election. For the purposes of this study, we are interested in the population of Israel-born voters. Using the data provided from the Voter File on birthplace, a dichotomous variable was introduced specifying if a voter claims Israeli origins. Due to the possibility for human error, potential misspellings were taken into account when assigning the variable. We assign the value ‘1’ to those born in Israel and the value ‘0’ assigned to all others.

We then aggregated these data up from individual-level to overall precinct-level; we do the same for all other demographic data (i.e. race, gender, and party affiliation). Due to the dichotomous coding of Israel-born, one of the demographic columns that was introduced delineated the precinct population born in Israel. The Florida Division of Election’s Precinct-Level Results files for the 2020 and 2016 General Elections were then also introduced. This data allowed me to calculate total votes cast and percentage of votes received for each candidate within each precinct, with all third party candidates being designated as ‘Other.’ After merging the Precinct Results file with the Voter File by the unique precinct identifier code, we are left with 2,145 unique observations.

We created a new dichotomous variable, the size of Israel-born population within a precinct. We assigned a value of ‘1’ to any precinct that contained at least 2% Israel-born and a ‘0’ to any precinct with less than 2% Israel-born. This process identified 20 precincts that fit such requirement, as shown in Table 1.

It should be noted that following the organization and cleaning of data, some precincts

changed their support of Trump by upwards of 60%. Upon further inspection, it was noted that these precincts held small numbers of individuals which was causing this extreme increase of support. For this reason, we removed all precincts with fewer than 100 individuals from the data. We also removed precincts that did not have a matching precinct code in 2016 and 2020. Following this procedure, we are left with 1,991 unique precinct observations included in the data set.

Table 1: Precincts with $>2\%$ Israel-Born of Total Registered Voters

County	Precinct	Israel-Born
DAD	112	1.96%
DAD	109	2.09%
BRO	V024	2.12%
BRO	V001	2.18%
DAD	105	2.22%
BRO	U006	2.28%
DAD	101	2.30%
DAD	110	2.31%
BRO	VO15	2.43%
DAD	103	2.50%
BRO	S006	2.51%
DAD	116	2.61%
DAD	114	2.68%
BRO	S009	2.71%
BRO	V025	2.76%
DAD	102	2.86%
BRO	V047	3.45%
PAL	6150	3.66%
BRO	VO53	5.15%
BRO	VO55	7.66%

6.1 Precincts V053 & V055 (Broward)

How densely populated with Israel-born registered voters are some of South Florida's precincts? A quick snapshot of Broward County reveals the concentration of these communities. Precinct V053 and V055 are located next to one another in Hollywood, Florida just a short drive away from downtown Fort Lauderdale in Broward County. They are shown in Figure 2 amongst the large clump of highlighted precincts. These precincts have the two highest percentages of Israel-born at 5.15% and 7.66%, respectively. These numbers are incredibly high and far exceed the percentage of the precincts of interest that follow.

A key factor to take into consideration is the magnitude of these precincts. Each contains over 2,000 registered voters as of the 2020 election. Both precincts also saw a substantial increase in Trump support from 2016 to 2020. V055 went from 52.06% Trump support to 62.69% while V053 went from 41.96% to 48.18%. Data from the Broward County Supervisor of Election's Office shows that both precincts have primarily white, non-Hispanic populations, far above 50% which stands in contrast to Hollywood at-large which is 38% White non-Hispanic.¹¹

These precincts are important to single out due to their large percentages of Israel-born registered voters. In V055, roughly one in every 13 voters assigned to the precinct was born in Israel. In V053, one in every 20 registered voters was born in Israel. Although it is impossible to determine whether these individuals born in Israel identify as Jewish, the numbers are quite remarkable given the size of the Israeli state. As of 2021, Israel's total population was just over 9 million and a 2013 estimate by the Pew Research Center states that there are only about 140,000 total individuals born in Israel living in the United States today.¹² Those born in Israel make up less than 0.04% of the United States population, making the large populations living within two precincts all the more dramatic.

¹¹Demographic data taken from Broward County Supervisor of Elections Office, <https://www.browardvotes.gov/Voter-Information/Precinct-Finder> (last accessed March 16, 2022)

¹²The study does not delineate between citizens and non-citizens.

Figure 1: Israel-born Precincts > 2% (Miami-Dade County)

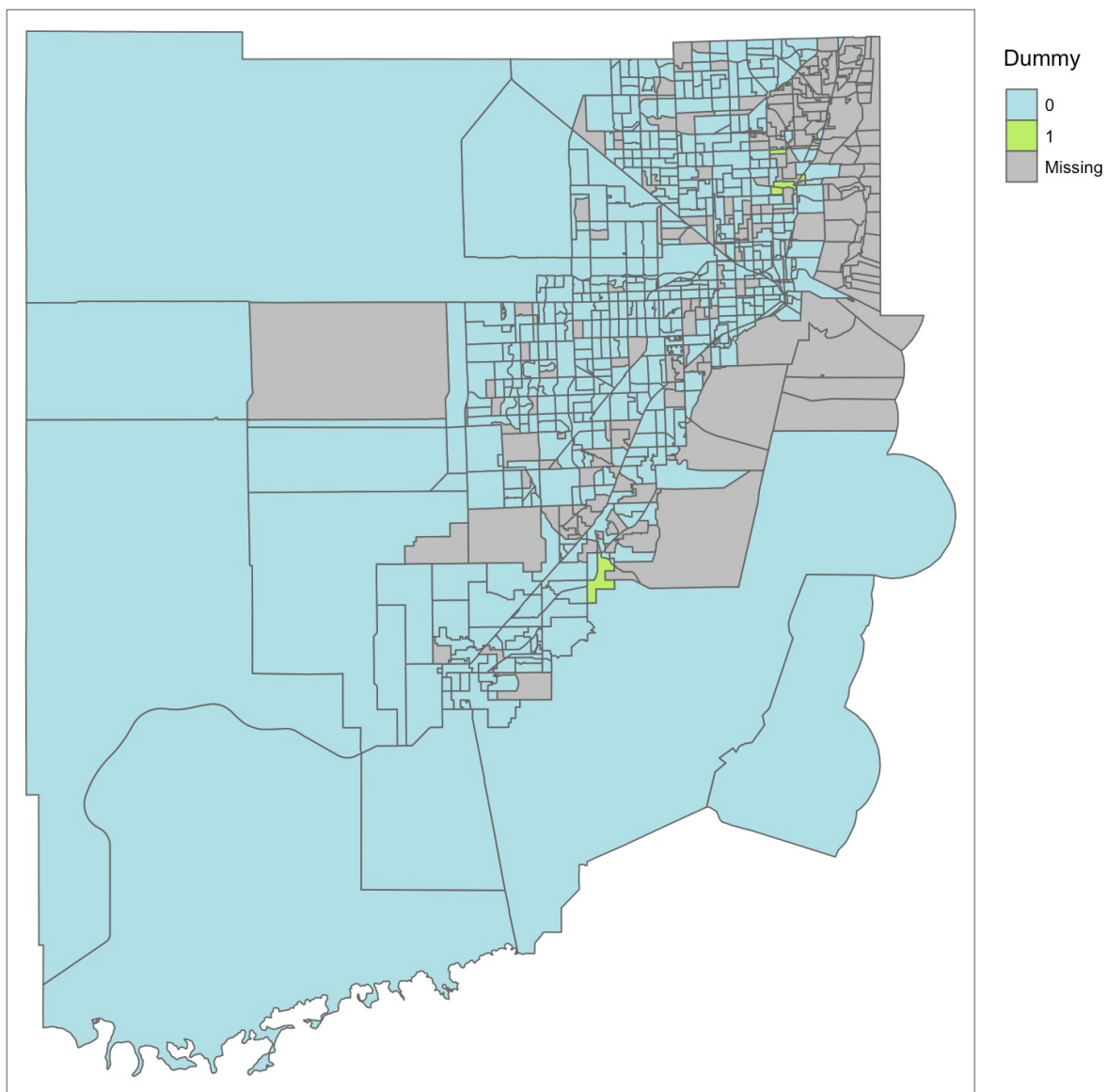


Figure 2: Israel-born Precincts > 2% (Broward County)

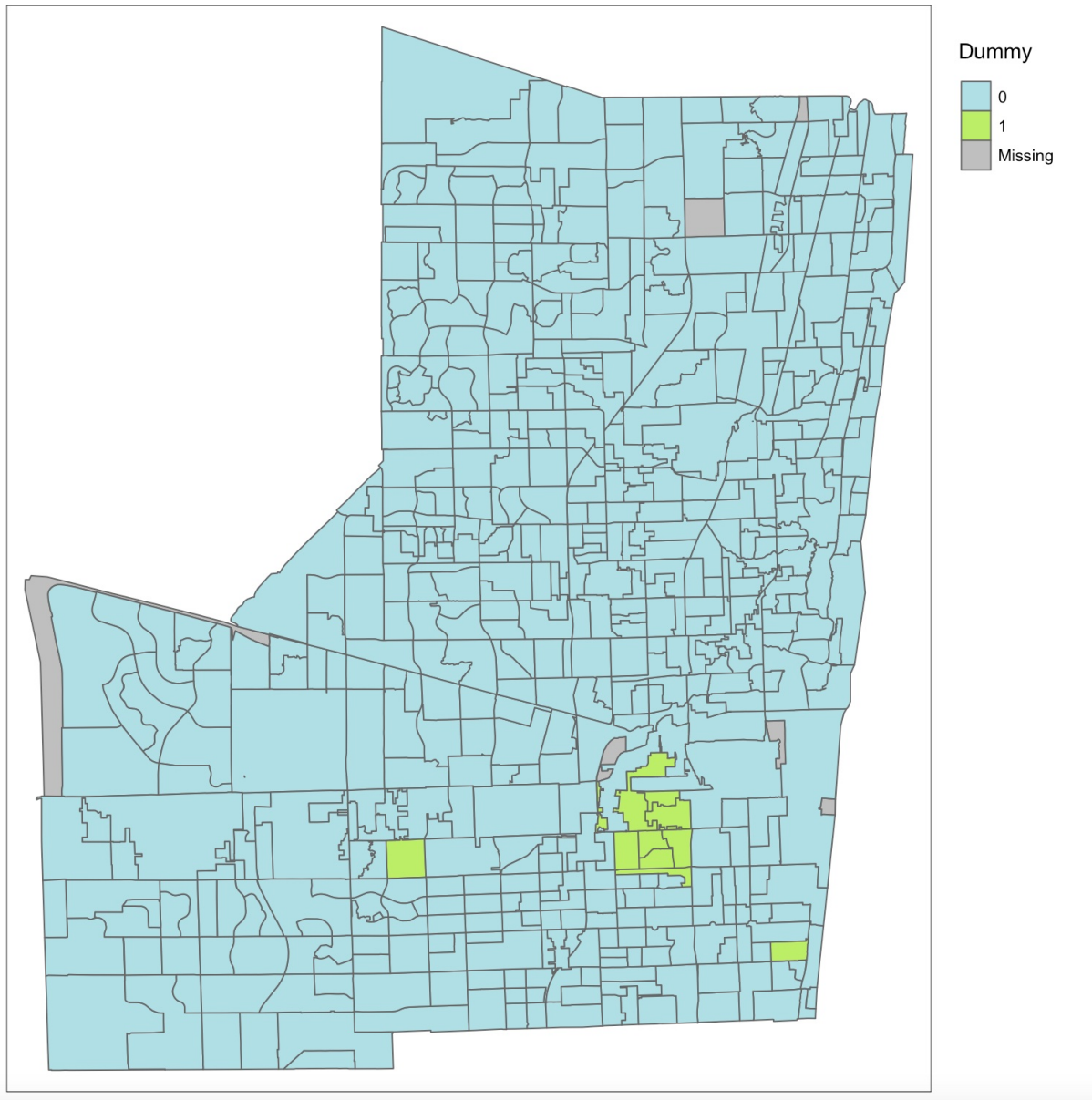
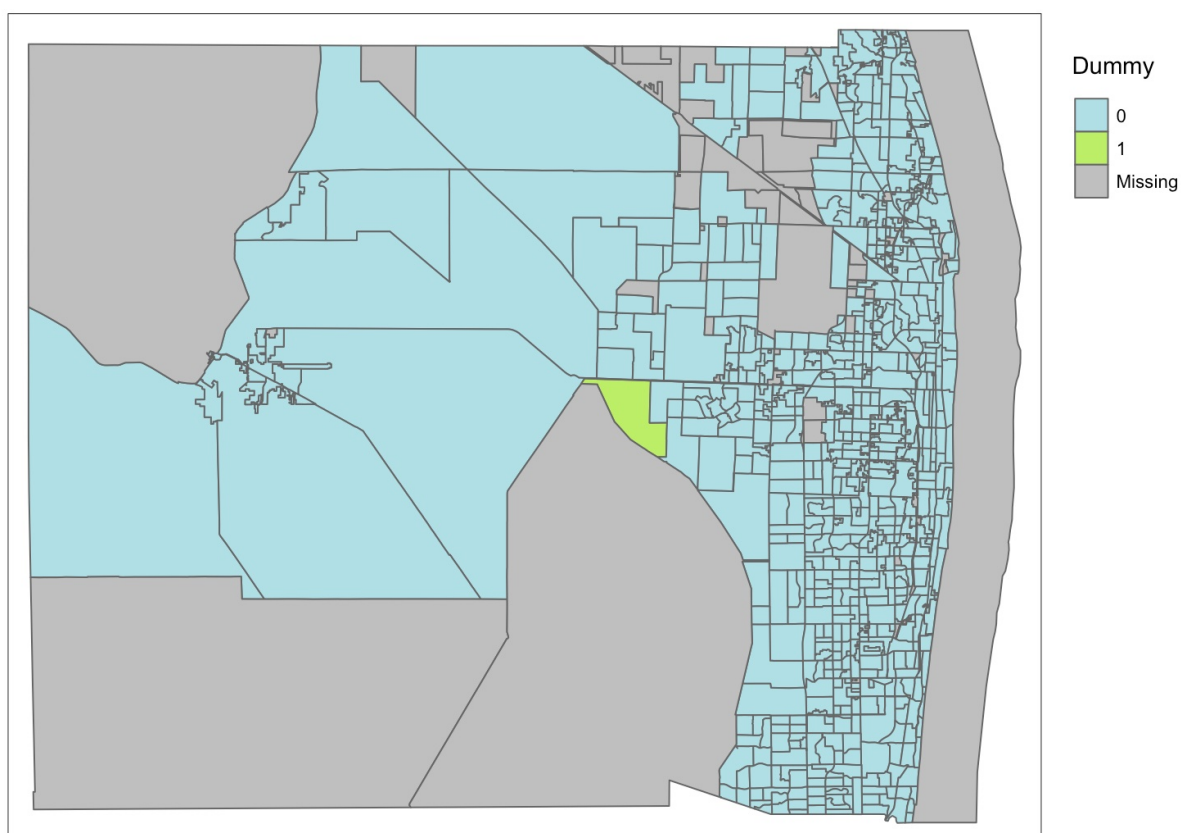


Figure 3: Israel-born Precincts $> 2\%$ (Palm Beach County)



7 Findings

7.1 Regression Analysis

Our analysis is straight forward. We run OLS regression models that include demographic information at the precinct level in the 2016 and 2020 General Elections, including the percentage of Israel-born. Our regression models include data on race/ethnicity, gender, and party affiliation. The reference categories are listed as follows: female for gender, white for all racial/ethnic groups, and Republicans for all party affiliations. Unsurprisingly, several of the aforementioned characteristics, particularly party and race/ethnicity, demonstrate a statistically significant impact on the level of support Trump received in 2016 and 2020, as well as the change in support for Trump.

First, looking at Table 2, the coefficient for the percentage of Israel-born in a precinct is positive and statistically significant for the both the 2016 and 2020 models. As the percentage of Israel-born increases by one percentage point, Trump support within a precinct is expected, on average, to increase by 0.795% in 2016 and 2.243% in 2020. It is important to keep in mind the range of data in terms of Israel-born. As Table 1 shows, Israel-born only hits a max of 7.66%; in Broward County precinct V055. This sets our ceiling at 6.09% in 2016 and 17.18% in 2020.

For our purposes, given the decision by Trump to move the United States Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, we are most interested in gauging the change in Trump support from 2016 to 2020. Trump carried the state of Florida in the 2016 election at a higher rate than any non-incumbent Republican candidate since 1988.¹³ Table 2 helps to demonstrate exactly how Trump made those gains. Most interestingly, the models for 2016 and 2020 show that as Democratic Party registration increased, support for Trump decreased; yet the model for Change in Trump Support demonstrates a positive value. This indicates that variables that traditionally lean a precinct towards a Democratic candidate hit a saturation point in which

¹³Florida Presidential Election Voting History, <https://www.270towin.com/states/Florida> (last accessed March 10, 2022)

the change in support trends upwards. As Democratic Party registration increases, there is a slightly positive increase in the change in Trump support. This finding is bolstered by the county results in the 2020 election, as Biden carried the three South Florida Counties of interest, but at a smaller margin than expected.

Table 2 shows that the Israel-born variable is statistically significant at α level = 0.001. As the percentage of Israel-born increases in a precinct by one, support for Trump increases by 1.44 percentage points from 2016 to 2020, all else constant. Figure 4 simply helps to visualize the coefficients from the Change in Trump Support model. Percent of Israel-born, despite having the large standard error, still represents the largest statistically coefficient of any demographic categories.

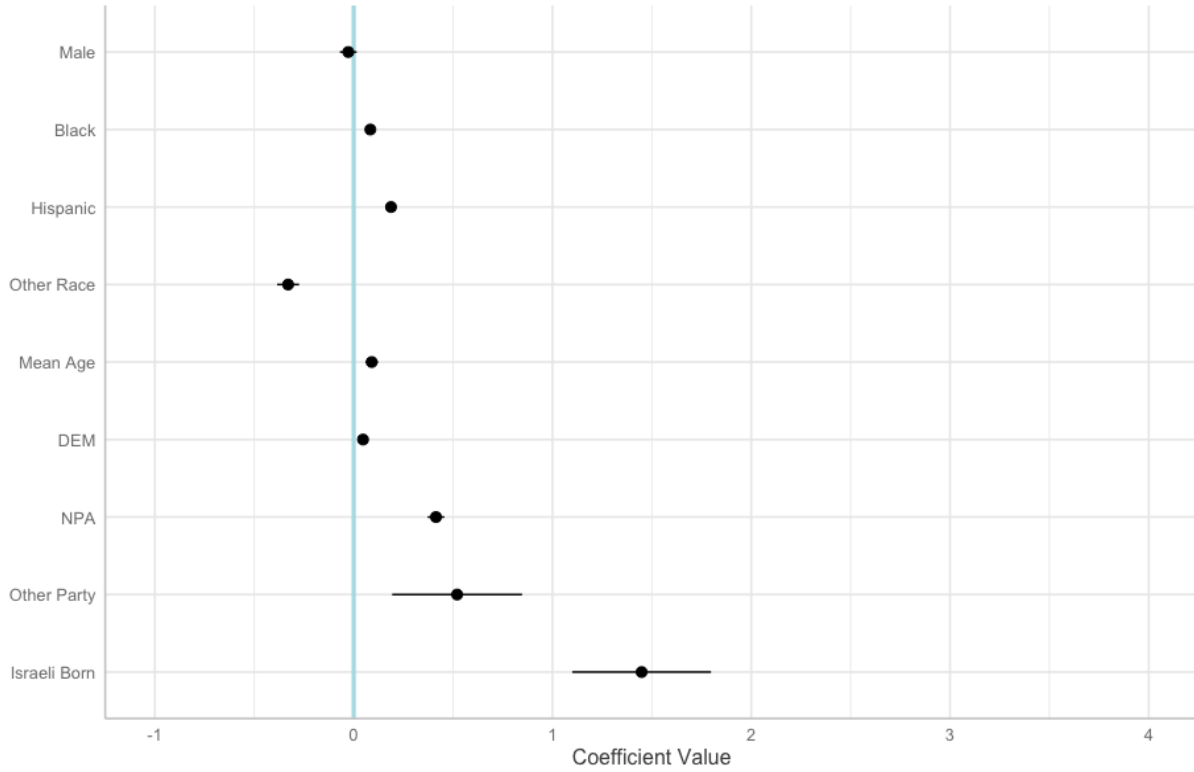
Table 2: Percent Support Trump, Precinct-Level

	2016	2020	Change 2016-2020
(Intercept)	122.269*** (2.109)	105.661*** (2.214)	-16.608*** (1.929)
Male	-0.075** (0.023)	-0.102*** (0.025)	-0.027 (0.021)
Black	-0.072*** (0.009)	0.012 (0.010)	0.084*** (0.009)
Hispanic	-0.130*** (0.004)	0.058*** (0.005)	0.188*** (0.004)
Other Race/Ethnicity	0.099** (0.031)	-0.231*** (0.032)	-0.330*** (0.028)
Mean Age	-0.012 (0.018)	0.079*** (0.019)	0.091*** (0.016)
Democrat	-1.178*** (0.012)	-1.131*** (0.013)	0.047*** (0.011)
NPA	-0.896*** (0.023)	-0.482*** (0.025)	0.414*** (0.021)
Minor Party	-1.474*** (0.182)	-0.953*** (0.191)	0.520** (0.167)
Israel-Born	0.795*** (0.195)	2.243*** (0.204)	1.449*** (0.178)
R ²	0.962	0.963	0.813
Adj. R ²	0.962	0.963	0.812
Num. obs.	1952	1952	1952

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Note: No changes when using robust standard errors.

Figure 4: Coefficients for Change in Trump Support



7.2 Regression for Neighboring Precincts

We offer a second set of tests to account for potential confounding variables in the precinct-level analysis. Rather than comparing across the entirety of the nearly 2,000 precincts in South Florida to determine if those with with larger percentages of Israel-born registered voters might have increased their support for Trump, we narrowed down our case selection, including only the 20 precincts with at least 2% Israel-born registered voters and their adjacent precincts. This resulted in total of 60 observations, including the 20 designated Israel-born precincts. Doing so limits the analysis to only precincts with higher Israel-born voters and their neighbors, with both sets of precincts likely to be heavily Jewish (though not with as concentrated Israel-born registered voters). This creates a higher threshold to determine if there might be significant effects of the impact of Israel-born on support for Trump, and lessens the likelihood of finding a significant increase in support for Trump in precincts with higher concentrations of Israel-born

registered voters. As before, we estimate least squares models on the matched sample.

Table 3: Percent Support Trump in Surrounding Precincts

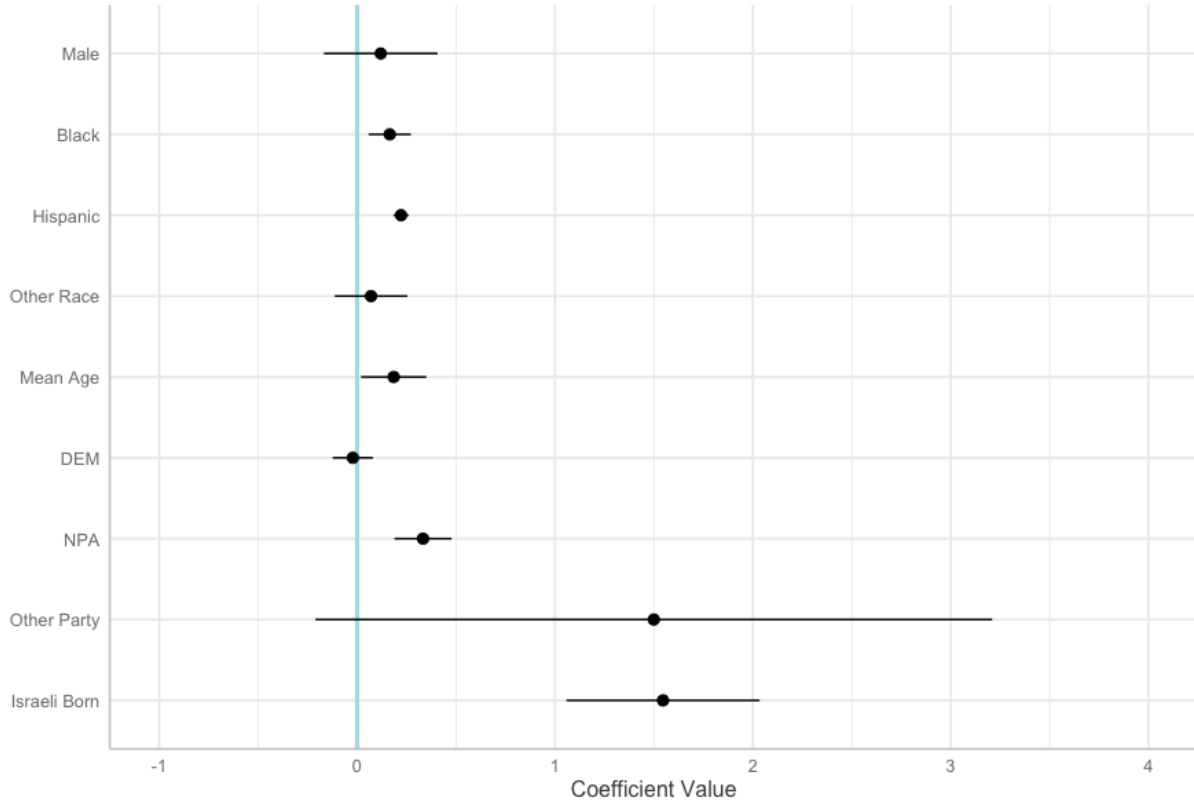
	2016	2020	Change 2016-2020
(Intercept)	107.990*** (12.676)	77.929*** (15.586)	-30.061** (10.305)
Male	0.302 (0.176)	0.421 (0.216)	0.119 (0.143)
Black	0.171* (0.065)	0.336*** (0.080)	0.165** (0.053)
Hispanic	-0.166*** (0.023)	0.056 (0.029)	0.222*** (0.019)
Other Race/Ethnicity	-0.629*** (0.112)	-0.558*** (0.138)	0.070 (0.091)
Mean Age	0.079 (0.101)	0.263* (0.124)	0.185* (0.082)
DEM	-1.242*** (0.063)	-1.264*** (0.077)	-0.022 (0.051)
NPA	-0.722*** (0.088)	-0.389*** (0.109)	0.333*** (0.072)
Minor Party	-2.948** (1.047)	-1.449 (1.287)	1.499 (0.851)
Israeli Born	0.270 (0.299)	1.816*** (0.367)	1.546*** (0.243)
R ²	0.947	0.922	0.852
Adj. R ²	0.937	0.908	0.826
Num. obs.	60	60	60

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Table 3 reveals that percentage of Israel-born in a precinct was not a statistically significant factor in the 2016 General Election, but was in 2020. In 2020, as the Israel-born population increases by one percent in a precinct, support for Trump increases by 1.816%, on average. This indicates that within these precincts of interest, something changed within election years in favor of candidate Trump. While our research design does not allow me to pinpoint the exact reasoning for vote choice, it does provide indirect evidence that a number of actions taken by the Trump administration towards the state of Israel that were viewed as favorable amongst Jewish communities likely had the desired impact. In Figure 5, we plot the coefficients for the neighboring precinct analysis. Once again, the coefficient for Israel-born is undoubtedly

positive. When comparing to Figure 4, there is a slight increase in the Israel-born coefficient when the data are limited to just the neighboring precincts, from 1.45% to 1.55%.

Figure 5: Coefficients for Change in Trump Support in Surrounding Precincts



Survey data from the Pew Research Center may help to explain the persistent support for Trump, even when the data pool is constrained to just precincts of high Israel-born and their neighbors. Pew finds that Conservative and Reform Jews, who make up the majority of the Jewish population in the United States, are more likely say they share many commonalities with Jews in Israel than they do Orthodox Jews in the United States¹⁴. We can therefore infer that The Trump administration’s actions towards Israel, such as the moving of the embassy to Jerusalem, may not have resonated as strongly for registered voters in likely heavily dense Jewish precincts that were less populated with Israel-born Jewish voters.

¹⁴Becka A. Alper and Alan Cooperman, “10 key findings about Jewish Americans,” Pew Research Center, May 11, 2021, available <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/05/11/10-key-findings-about-jewish-americans/> (last accessed March 15, 2021).

8 Future Analysis: Survey of Registered Voters

To continue this research, we plan on conducting a survey to gather Jewish public opinion on Donald Trump and the Democratic and Republican parties. The survey will be sent out to every individual in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties that have provided their email within the Florida Voter File. The structure of our survey will include a filter question to gauge for Jewish identity. The work by [Wald and Martinez \(2001\)](#) outlines the failings of many surveys to properly capture the Jewish community due to their status as an ethno-religion. Our survey will use their recommended method to distinguish among Jewish registered voters, as displayed in Table 4. The purpose of this method is to account for all potential Jewish-identifying individuals. The last aspect will be a question regarding vote choice in 2016 and 2020.

Table 4: Survey Demographic Filter Question

Please select which is most applicable.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I identify as religiously Jewish.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I identify as Jewish, but not religiously.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I was raised religiously Jewish.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have at least one Jewish parent.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not identify as Jewish in any capacity.

Once the participant has identified his or her Jewish identity/affiliation, we plan to ask a series of questions regarding Donald Trump’s actions towards Israel and Jewish-Americans. These questions will test for level of support for specific actions taken by Trump during his administration, such as the moving of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Focusing on domestic policy, we intend to ask if participants believe that Trump has been good for America in general, and the American-Jewish community specifically.

A future survey of Florida registered voters will allow me to draw more direct conclusions for Jewish vote choice and the actual potential impact of Trump’s staging as the Pro-Israel candidate. Specifically, we will look for vote-switchers who turned-out for Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton in 2016 and Donald Trump in 2020. This will be cross-referenced based on how

the individual responded to the questions regarding Trump’s Israeli support. All of these unanswered questions have grave import as we head into the 2024 presidential election.

9 Discussion

Needless to say, the 2020 General Election cannot be understood as some pivotal moment of party-switching amongst American-Jews; nor is 2022 or 2024 likely to be. Literature and research continue to point towards American-Jewish alignment with the Democratic Party. Perhaps, this alignment is not as secure as it once was. We find that amongst South Florida counties, the percentage of Israel-born voters was a strong positive indicator in support for Trump. Not only did we find support for our expectation, as noted, we find that support increased 1.44 percentage points, on average, per every 1 percentage point increase in the Israel-born precinct population between the 2016 and 2020 General Elections. If anything, our findings showcase the potential for an ideological schism within the Jewish-American community due to the political polarization surrounding Israel. Our findings call into question that it is not the Jewish-American community writ large who embraced Trump following his victory in 2016, but a select sub-group who valued Trump’s rhetoric in support of Israel.

Even after limiting the data pool to just the heavily Israel-born and neighboring precincts in the three counties, the trend of increased support for Trump over the four years persists. For this model we found that for each percentage point increase of Israel-born in a precinct, the change in support between election years increases by nearly 1.6 percentage points, *ceteris paribus*. The fact that percentage of Israel-born only became significant in the model post-2016 election indicates the likely increase in the sway of Jewish voters in favor of Trump in 2020.

Our main hypothesis that more heavily Jewish neighborhoods in South Florida, as defined by Israel-born precinct population, had a positive change in support for Trump holds even with the restricted pool of data. To be sure, the question of *why* support for Trump increased in these strong Jewish precincts requires far more data collection to draw a concrete conclusions regarding Jewish-American voting behavior and vote preference. The greatest limitation to

this study is the lack of individual-level data for analysis. However, although the population of Israel-born registered voters within a precinct is indicative of the overall Jewish population in a precinct, it would be desirable to have survey data on the individual religious affiliations of registered voters (Jewish and non-Jewish, alike) in the three counties.

In conclusion, our results on the choices of heavily Jewish enclaves in South Florida precincts in the 2020 General Election show that those precincts with high concentration of Israel-born voters were more likely to support Trump in 2020 compared to 2015. We cannot determine if this is a trend that will persist past Trump's time in the national spotlight or if it is a minor, circumstantial moment in American politics. Either way, drawing on an unique data set, our study shines some light on Jewish political behavior in the 2020 General Election.

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