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The Democratic Party Is Slowly Losing Jewish Support in New York

An ironclad alliance between Jewish New Yorkers and the Democratic Party has been shaken by the divide over Israel's war with Hamas.



Jewish voters in New York have become more open to supporting Republicans, a trend that has picked up steam since Hamas's terrorist attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. Dana Golan for The New York Times

By Benjamin Oreskes Nov. 2, 2026

Like most members of her Upper West Side congregation, Rabbi Emily Cohen is a lifelong Democrat. But in recent years, she acknowledges feeling a creeping disappointment with elected members of her preferred party.

She has felt frustrated by the unwillingness of Democratic politicians to more aggressively expand the social safety net and by what she calls their "continued advocacy for particularly offensive weaponry for Israel," when she would rather have them focus on "how antisemitism affects Jews in their districts."

Bonnie Lautenberg, the widow of Frank Lautenberg, the longtime Democratic senator from New Jersey, is another disaffected Jewish voter. Ms. Lautenberg, who splits her time between Long Island and Florida, has been a faithful Democrat since she was in her 20s. But this year, she hosted a fund-raiser for Bruce Blakeman, the Republican candidate challenging Gov. Kathy Hochul of New York.

“I was disgusted that Hochul endorsed Mamdani,” Ms. Lautenberg said, referring to Ms. Hochul’s alliance with Mayor Zohran Mamdani, whose long-held view that Israel should not be a Jewish state has caused some to accuse him of antisemitism.



Some Jewish Democrats have been alienated by the rise of Mayor Zohran Mamdani, center, who has given the pro-Palestinian movement exposure. Gov. Kathy Hochul, right, has supported him. Dave Sanders for The New York Times

For much of the last century, the Democratic Party has enjoyed ironclad support from Jewish Americans, especially in New York. As recently as 2006, exit polls from the New York governor’s race showed 87 percent of the Jewish population voting Democratic.

But more recently, the seemingly unthinkable has happened. Though still likely to support Democrats, Jewish voters in the state have become more open to supporting Republicans — a trend that has picked up steam since Hamas’s terrorist attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

“It’s a scorched earth, zero-sum game of politics that have placed two ideas that have, for me been historically compatible — liberal democracy and support of the existence of the state of Israel — and has turned them into opponents,” said Rabbi Jonathan Blake, who leads the Westchester Reform Temple in Scarsdale, N.Y. “That’s what is really hard, I think, for Jewish voters, particularly Jewish Democrats.”

Much of the drift away from Democrats has come from Zionist Jews, who fear that the party’s growing opposition to Israel is a betrayal of the Jewish community and can lead to antisemitic acts. At the same time, there are younger and more progressive Jews in New York who are frustrated with the reluctance of most Democratic leaders to take meaningful action against Israel.

Taken together, the agitation could eventually spell trouble for Democrats.

“It deeply concerns and disturbs me,” said Steve Israel, a former congressman in New York who once led the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. “I see what is happening on the left and the right, and I watch activists getting more ideological and losing sight of the core values that united the Jewish community.”

Reliably polling Jewish Americans, who are far from a monolith ideologically, can be difficult. Still, six years of surveys from Siena University offer some insight.

Asked in late October 2018 which party they wanted to control Congress, 76 percent of likely Jewish voters in New York said Democrats, while 23 percent said Republicans. When asked the same question last month, 61 percent of likely Jewish voters in the state said that Democrats should control Congress and 30 percent said Republicans.



Some Jewish New Yorkers are critical of Israel and Democratic Party policy toward the country. Vincent Alban for The New York Times

The sharp dip in support for the Democratic Party began in 2024, shortly after the Hamas-led Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel, which killed about 1,200 people, according to Israeli officials, and the ensuing war in Gaza, which has killed at least 74,000 people, according to the ministry of health in Gaza, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants.

Across seven surveys conducted by Siena since the attack, support for Democrats in Congress among registered Jewish voters dropped to an average of about 51 percent, while Republican support hovered around 39 percent.

“It sort of highlights that there is a heterogeneity among Jewish voters that for a long time people didn’t want to recognize,” said Don Levy, the director of the Siena Research Institute**.**

“Since Oct. 7, those fault lines have been exposed,” he added. “We’ll see how the Democratic Party deals with it.”

Like Mr. Levy, Mr. Israel and others said politicians were searching for ways to present thoughtful critiques of Israeli leadership — when merited — without alienating voters who saw backing the country as a prerequisite of their support.

Many say they are closely watching the Michigan Senate contest, where the Democrat, Dr. Abdul El-Sayed, an outspoken critic of Israel's military campaign in Gaza, has spent considerable effort overcoming skepticism among Jewish voters. If he was to win, it could signal a further shift in the public debate over Israel.

"Among Democrats in my congregation, the main feeling people have right now is not quite homelessness but a feeling of being unmoored and not being sure where their place is," said Rabbi Howard J. Goldsmith of Congregation Emanu-El of Westchester.

"A lot of left-leaning Jews feel like they've been really good allies with a range of left-leaning progressive issues and groups," he added. "After Oct. 7, those left-leaning Jews felt abandoned by their erstwhile allies."

Pollsters, voters and community leaders all said that the increasing ambivalence among Jewish voters was not likely to affect Democrats in any of the statewide races on Tuesday.

Ms. Hochul, for example, is viewed positively by large swaths of the Jewish community and received endorsements from many of its most influential leaders. Her efforts to increase security around houses of worship and her unequivocal belief that, despite opposing Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, the country should be a Jewish state have won her increased support.

She has also campaigned vigorously in some of New York's most prominent Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox communities, including Kiryas Joel in Orange County and those in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

But in other races, some voters said they would consider turning their backs on Democrats under the right conditions.

David Greenfield, a former New York City councilman, said that his brother had told him that he would be supporting Ms. Hochul, but also planned to vote for Representative Mike Lawler, a Hudson Valley Republican who is a strong supporter of Israel.

"Since Oct. 7, we're in a post-party era," said Mr. Greenfield, who now leads the Met Council, which fights poverty in New York's Jewish communities.

"It's a tough place to be and I wonder, Do I really have a home anymore?" he added. "That's a little sad."

The rise of Mr. Mamdani has given the pro-Palestinian movement exposure and an outlet for those frustrated with the Democratic Party's stances on Israel.

Andrew Bard Epstein, who is Jewish and served as an aide to Mr. Mamdani during the campaign, said that "liberalism has defined American Jewish politics for generations, and for decades that meant not looking too closely at its contradiction with Israel."

The attention given to Israel and Gaza since Oct. 7 has changed that dynamic, Mr. Epstein said. Younger Jews have a more nuanced view of Israel, he said, "while a lot of their parents are still caught up in mythology."

Still, Mr. Blakeman has sought to tie Ms. Hochul to Mr. Mamdani. During a private meeting where he sought support from Hasidic leaders, Mr. Blakeman suggested that Mr. Mamdani would not protect Hasidic communities if riots struck, The New York Times reported last month.

Mr. Mamdani has funneled millions of dollars into hate crime prevention, has been quick to denounce antisemitism, and has repeatedly insisted that his views on Israel and critiques of its policies are not antisemitic. Yet some of his Jewish critics say that his comments have created a riper environment for antisemitic acts.



Ms. Hochul, a moderate Democrat, is viewed positively by large swaths of the Jewish community and received endorsements from many of its most influential leaders. Andres Kudacki for The New York Times

"Many Jewish voters would say that the Democratic Party moved away from them," said Mijal Bitton, a sociologist in Midwood, Brooklyn, who said that she was canvassing for a

local Democratic state senator, Sam Sutton, because he took her concerns about antisemitism seriously.

Rabbi Cohen, the spiritual leader of the West End Synagogue on the Upper West Side, a Reconstructionist congregation, said she supported Mr. Mamdani even though he had let her down at times.

“The Democratic Party certainly has disappointed me over these last few election cycles in a variety of ways, but that hasn’t kept me from voting my values on the whole,” she said.

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