

**Brandeis University**  
Steinhardt Social Research Institute

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# **All Together Separate:** Race, Ethnicity, and Religion on the Brandeis Campus

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Established in 2005 and housed at the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, the Steinhardt Social Research Institute (SSRI) uses innovative research methods to collect and analyze sociodemographic data on the Jewish community.

The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS), founded in 1980, is dedicated to providing independent, high-quality research on issues related to contemporary Jewish life.

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## Executive Summary

To an extent not seen since the 1960s, American universities have once again become the setting for protests on a wide array of issues confronting contemporary society; in particular, issues touching on the intersection of personal identity, minority status, and social injustice. One of the dynamics at work spurring student activism on campus is the increased diversity of the undergraduate student body. Increasingly, college students are encountering peers from backgrounds and political orientations different from their own, raising questions about the degree to which campus climates are accepting of minority groups and supportive of critical discourse on contentious issues.

The present study is one part of a larger program of research on the identities of Jewish students and experiences of anti-Israel hostility on campuses. Taking a comparative approach, we set out to examine these topics by exploring a wide range of issues at the intersection of undergraduates' racial, ethnic, and religious identities. The study thus surveyed both Jewish and non-Jewish students and examined perceptions of inter-group relations, experiences of prejudice and discrimination, attitudes on contentious issues, and beliefs about the campus climate for discussion of unpopular opinions.

This report focuses on Brandeis University as a case study of an American college campus. Although Brandeis University has a unique history, it also shares many similarities with other institutions of higher education. Along with more than 50 other colleges and universities during the 2015-16 academic year, Brandeis University was the site of a series of demonstrations focused on racial injustice. The protests, labeled by students,

#FordHall2015, led to a student sit-in and culminated in a negotiated initiative to increase racial diversity and improve campus life for students of color.

Two months after the protests, we launched a survey focusing on students' racial, ethnic, and religious identities as well as the campus climate. A random sample of 1,735 students were surveyed and more than 1,000 valid responses were analyzed. The study yielded a snapshot of the composition of the student body and of the experiences of various student groups on campus.

### Student Characteristics

**Racial/ethnic identity.** Fifty-one percent of Brandeis undergraduates identified as White. East Asian students make up the largest group of students of color at Brandeis (including 10 percent who are East Asian American and 15 percent who are East Asian international students).

**International students.** Twenty percent of Brandeis undergraduates are international students, of whom 73 percent identified as East Asian, with an additional 11 percent identifying as some other type of Asian.

**Religious affiliation.** Forty percent of students described themselves as atheist, agnostic, or nothing in particular. Thirty-one percent identified their religion as "Jewish" — a plurality of students who identified with a religion. The proportion of students who identified as Jewish by religion declined from 36 percent among seniors to 24 percent among freshmen. An additional three to 10 percent of each class year considered themselves Jewish "aside from religion."

**Political views.** Two-thirds of Brandeis students classified their personal political views as ranging from slightly to extremely liberal. Fewer than 10 percent identified as political conservatives.

### Experiences on Campus

**Major concerns.** Race, diversity, and inclusion are the top concerns of students, perhaps reflecting the #FordHall2015 protests on campus just two months prior to the survey's launch. Forty percent of survey respondents listed issues such as "racial diversity/inequality," "racial tensions," and "Black Lives Matter" as the most important issues on campus. Thirty-four percent listed issues related to diversity and inclusion, such as "cultural diversity" or "discrimination," which in some cases were also related to issues of race and ethnicity.

**Social ties.** Social interactions among members of different racial/ethnic groups are limited despite the increased diversity of the student body. White, Asian, and especially Black students, were more likely to form friendships with others of their same group than would be expected based on how frequently they appear in the population. Hispanic students were the exception, as they did not seem to have any special propensity to have mostly Latino/a friends, accounting for their prevalence in the population.

**Racial prejudice and discrimination.** With regards to experiences of prejudice, 60 percent of Black students at least "somewhat" agreed that there is a hostile environment toward people of color at Brandeis, a substantially higher portion than students of other racial/ethnic groups. In addition, significantly more Black students reported almost all forms of discrimination, including feeling unwelcome in campus organizations, being the object of jokes or teasing, experiencing hostile reactions

from other students to their classroom contributions, and suffering insult or harassment in personal encounters.

**Gender and sexual orientation.** Over a quarter of LGBTQ students reported being the object of jokes or teasing, or having been personally insulted because of their gender or sexual orientation. Heterosexual women were more likely than heterosexual men to report these experiences. The majority of all students agreed that sexual assault and harassment are taken seriously at Brandeis. However, LGBTQ students and heterosexual female students were less likely than heterosexual men to hold this view.

**Religion.** Among those who identified with a religion, approximately one quarter felt that religion is "very much" important in their lives. Religiously affiliated students who indicated that religion was "very much" important in their lives were more likely than those who indicated that religion was not important to report that they experienced harassment on social media, that their views and concerns were dismissed, that they were asked to share the viewpoint of their religious group in class, and that they were the object of jokes because of their religion.

**Contentious issues.** The Israeli-Palestinian conflict was described as the most controversial topic of discussion at Brandeis, with 59 percent of all students feeling "a little" or "not at all" comfortable discussing the topic. However, only a minority agreed even "somewhat" that there is a hostile environment toward Israel at Brandeis. With respect to the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, overall, only a very small proportion of Brandeis students expressed any support for the idea that universities should boycott Israeli institutions and scholars. Virtually none of the Jewish students supported BDS.

**Open discourse.** More than half of students (54 percent) disagreed with the statement that unpopular opinions can be expressed freely at Brandeis. Responses to questions about the free expression of unpopular opinions and the use of trigger warnings suggest that many groups feel that they cannot express their views on campus, including Black and Hispanic students, non-Jewish White students, and politically moderate and conservative students. All of these groups are minorities on the Brandeis campus.

**Belonging.** Three-quarters of all students reported that they feel they belong at Brandeis at least “somewhat.” Almost 60 percent of Jewish students felt that they “very much” belong at Brandeis, compared to 44 percent of non-Jewish White students, 30 percent of East Asian and Hispanic students, and only 13 percent of Black students.

Brandeis’s efforts to become more diverse reflect its long-standing commitments and its mission to promote social justice. Student protests centered on social causes are, perhaps, a natural part of Brandeis’s identity.

What this study suggests, however, is that an inclusive campus community is not accomplished only through admission policies that prioritize racial, ethnic, and economic diversity. Successful integration also depends on the campus community’s ability to promote social interconnectedness across racial, ethnic, religious, and other identity groups. One implication of the present study is that Brandeis (and other universities) needs to devote more attention to developing academic programs and co-curricular initiatives that address issues of campus climate for various identity groups. At the same time, universities need to foster openness in an environment that sometimes stifles debate on contentious issues. Student protests on campuses, particularly those that focus on discrimination and campus climate, call our attention to the problem. It is the responsibility of stakeholders within these institutions to develop comprehensive solutions.



## Introduction

College campuses have recently become the locus of social protests on a wide array of issues including divestment from fossil fuels (Nasiripour, 2016), racial inequality (Pauly & Andrews, 2015), the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Medina & Lewin, 2015), and student debt (Skinner & Vande Panne, 2015). Perhaps to an extent not seen since the 1960s, American universities—once viewed as “ivory towers” unaffected by the ills of their surrounding communities—have become inextricably connected to the social issues confronting society (Bok, 1982; Harkavy, 2006). In particular, issues touching on the intersection of personal identity, minority status, and social injustice have generated intense and sometimes divisive student activism. For example, tensions over racial inequality and police violence sparked student activism at more than 50 campuses during the 2015-16 academic year (Wong & Green, 2016). Similarly, proposed state and federal legislation and policy discourse on LGBTQ rights, immigration, and Islamophobia surfaced divisions on college campuses along lines of religion, ethnicity, and gender identity (Mendoza, 2016).

One of the dynamics spurring student activism is the increased diversity of the undergraduate student body. The last four decades saw an increase in the proportion of students of color on college campuses from less than 10 percent in 1971 to nearly a third of all students in 2015 (Eagan et al., 2015; Pryor et al. 2007). The religious make-up of the undergraduate population has also become more diverse with one of the most significant changes being the increased proportion of religiously unaffiliated students (Eck, 2001). In 2015, almost 30 percent of

American college freshman identified their religious preference as agnostic, atheist, or “none” (Eagan et al., 2015).

Now, more than ever before, college students encounter peers from backgrounds and political orientations different from their own. Compared with previous generations of undergraduates, they are also more likely to arrive on campus with overlapping ethnic and racial identities (Renn, 2012). The presence of a diverse student body does not, however, guarantee acceptance or respect for others and has sometimes led to increased social segregation among groups (Tatum, 2003). As one commentator noted, “A given college may be a heterogeneous archipelago. But most of its students spend the bulk of their time on one of many homogeneous islands” (Bruni, 2015). This raises questions about campus climates for acceptance of or hostility toward minority groups. A substantial body of research suggests that racial, ethnic, and religious minority students perceive college campuses as sites of conflict (Harper & Hurtado, 2007), and instances of explicit and implicit forms of prejudice and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or religion are common (e.g., Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Caplan & Ford, 2014; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Saxe et al., 2015; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

How campuses deal with issues of prejudice and discrimination has become a matter of intense debate. There are some who argue that increased efforts to make college campuses more accommodating to minority groups have the unintended effect of stifling free speech by discouraging the expression of diverse and unpopular views and promoting a

single political perspective (Ehrlich & Colby, 2004). This critique has been leveled mostly by conservatives (D'Souza, 1998; Horowitz, 2007), but liberals have made similar claims (Powers, 2015; The White House, 2015). Furthermore, some have argued that a climate of political correctness on campus is creating a generation of students who lack the ability to engage in critical discourse about contentious issues (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2015). Thus, colleges and universities must grapple with fostering intellectual environments that seriously engage issues of racial, ethnic, and religious pluralism while, at the same time, serving as incubators for young adults' initial explorations of their social and personal identities (Arnett, 2004).

The present study is one part of a larger program of research on the identities of Jewish students and experiences of anti-Israel hostility on campuses. Taking a comparative approach, we set out to examine these topics by exploring a wide range of issues at the intersection of undergraduates' racial, ethnic, and religious identities. The study thus surveyed both Jewish and non-Jewish students and examined perceptions of inter-group relations, experiences of prejudice and discrimination, attitudes on contentious issues, and beliefs about the campus climate for expressing divergent opinions.

The setting for the present study, Brandeis University, allows us to explore how American college students express, experience, and enact their social identities in a particular institutional context. Although Brandeis University has a unique history, its mission and student composition make it an interesting laboratory for this examination. Established in 1948, and named for the first Jewish justice of the United States Supreme Court, Brandeis University was envisioned by

its founders as a research university dedicated to social justice and committed to student admissions on the basis of merit and without regard to racial, ethnic, or religious identity (Sachar, 1995; Sarna, 2004; Whitfield, 2010).

For much of Brandeis University's history, the majority of undergraduates were Jewish. For example, almost 60 percent of the entering class of 1967 identified as Jewish and 74 percent came from Jewish backgrounds (Brandeis University Office of Admissions, 1978). A little over a decade later in 1979 (the last year for which comprehensive freshman survey data are available), 71 percent of freshmen identified as Jewish and 73 percent were from Jewish backgrounds (Brandeis University Office of Admissions, 1980). As a point of comparison, in 1978 the typical size of the Jewish population at private selective colleges was 18 percent (Astin, Kind, & Richardson, 1978). Starting in the 1980s, efforts were made to expand the diversity of the Brandeis undergraduate population, although a study specifically of the Jewish population of Brandeis in 2004 and a campus news report on a 2007 undergraduate diversity survey, both reported that the majority of Brandeis undergraduates still identified as Jewish (Fischman, 2007; Fishman, 2004).

Student activism on the Brandeis campus has often addressed issues of racial prejudice and discrimination. In 1969, 17 years after *Ebony*, the leading Black publication of its time, lauded Brandeis for its lack of racial barriers (Whitfield, 2010), members of the Brandeis Afro-American Society demanded greater minority representation on the Brandeis campus and occupied Ford Hall in protest (Whitfield & Krasner, 2015). Echoing this demonstration, Concerned Students of #FordHall2015 formed at Brandeis in November 2015 in the wake of nation-wide

student protests against racial discrimination (Capelouto, 2015). As part of this protest, the student group issued a list of demands to address injustice against people of color on campus. Prominent among the demands was that the university double the proportion of African-American students, as well as increase the number of Black faculty. The present study was launched two months after the #FordHall2015 protests.

This study presents a snapshot of the characteristics of Brandeis undergraduates in the 2015-16 academic year and explores a set of issues at the intersection of undergraduates' racial, ethnic, and religious identities. In particular, the report examines undergraduates' perceptions of inter-group relations, experiences of prejudice and discrimination, attitudes on contentious issues, and beliefs about the campus climate for freely expressing unpopular opinions.





## Methods

The present survey of Brandeis undergraduate students employed a sample frame of undergraduates who were age 18 or older as of November 1, 2015. At the beginning of November 2015, the Registrar's office provided email addresses for the 3,492 enrolled undergraduates who were 18 or older. This group did not include “mid-year” freshmen students admitted for the spring semester (approximately 10 percent of all freshmen). A simple random sample of 1,735 students was drawn from this frame (see Technical Appendix A for additional methodological details). The response rate (AAPOR RR2) was 57.6 percent with 999 eligible undergraduates responding to the survey (960 complete surveys, 39 partial surveys). Weights were calculated to adjust for differences between the characteristics of respondents and known characteristics of the population, with respect to class year and international student status. After weights were applied the sample appeared to be

broadly representative of the Brandeis undergraduate population with respect to race and ethnicity (see Technical Appendix A for more details). Details of the coding paradigms for some of the variables are included in Technical Appendix B. For each outcome measure discussed in this report, Technical Appendix C includes tables of frequencies with confidence intervals and significance tests or regression models as appropriate.

The survey was conducted online. See Technical Appendix D for the complete survey instrument. Respondents were given a \$10 Amazon.com gift card upon completion of the survey. Email invitations to participate in the survey were initially sent on January 28, 2016—approximately two months after the conclusion of the #FordHall2015 student protests. The initial survey invitation was followed by two reminders. The survey was closed on February 15, 2016.



## Campus Snapshot

We begin our discussion of findings with a description of the characteristics of the Brandeis undergraduate students who participated in the survey, including racial/ethnic and religious identities, gender, sexual orientation, and political views. Individuals, however, cannot be defined by any one of these characteristics alone, and each student overlaps multiple identity groups. Throughout the report we draw attention to the impact of the overlap of multiple identities on key issues and experiences.

### Racial/Ethnic Identity

Slightly more than half of Brandeis undergraduates responding to the survey identified only as “White” (Table 1).<sup>1</sup> The largest group among students of color at Brandeis is East Asian; including 15 percent international students from China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan; as well as an additional 10 percent American students of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese descent. In addition, eight percent of Brandeis students identified as Hispanic, seven percent as either South Asian (e.g., Indian, Pakistani, Nepalese, Sri Lankan) or Southeast Asian (e.g., Cambodian, Vietnamese, Hmong, Filipino), and six percent as Black. Three percent of students identified with some other ethnicity,

Table 1: Race/Ethnicity

<b>White</b>	51%
<b>East Asian</b>	25%
<b>Hispanic</b>	8%
<b>Other Asian</b>	7%
<b>Black</b>	6%
<b>Other ethnicity</b>	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

such as American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or Arab.

While the proportion of Black and Hispanic students is stable across class years, the proportion of East Asian students increased from 22 percent in the senior class to 27 percent in the freshman class. The relatively high proportion of Asian students at Brandeis is related, in part, to the large number of international students. Twenty percent of Brandeis undergraduates are international students, of whom 73 percent identified as East Asian, with an additional 11 percent identifying as some other type of Asian.

In subsequent analysis where appropriate, we report results separately for Hispanic, Black, East Asian, and White students. There are an insufficient number of respondents of other racial/ethnic identities to permit robust estimates of these groups. For each outcome discussed in the report, the responses of American East Asian and international East Asian students were compared to determine whether there were any significant differences between these two groups. For the vast majority of outcomes examined, the responses of these two groups did not differ. The major exception was with respect to attitudes toward the #FordHall2015 protests, and this issue is discussed on page 21.<sup>2</sup>

### Gender and Sexual Orientation

Fifty-eight percent of survey respondents identified as female, and 41 percent identified as male, with a small number who chose to identify with neither gender. Females make up 62 percent of students of color compared to 55 percent of White students.<sup>3</sup> Approximately 86 percent of Brandeis undergraduates identified as exclusively heterosexual.

Fourteen percent chose some other designation (Gay or Lesbian, Transgender, Bisexual, Queer, or other) in lieu of, or in addition to, “heterosexual.”

### Religious Affiliation

Table 2 shows the proportion of Brandeis undergraduates who identified with different religions.<sup>4</sup> The largest single group on campus is composed of those that the Pew Research Center (2012) refers to as “nones.” Students in this group described themselves as atheist, agnostic, or nothing in particular, and make up over 40 percent of Brandeis undergraduates. Although almost half of those included in the “nones” reported that their parents do affiliate with a religion, just over half reported that their parents have no religion.

Table 2: Primary religion

<b>None</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>Jewish</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Christian</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>Muslim</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Hindu</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Buddhist</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Other Religion</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Thirty-one percent of Brandeis undergraduates identified as Jewish by religion—a plurality of students who identify with a religion. An additional six percent of students who identified as “none” also considered themselves Jewish “aside from religion.” For a more detailed discussion of the Jewish students at Brandeis, see box on page 14.

Nineteen percent of students at Brandeis described themselves as Christian. The majority of these undergraduates identified as

Protestant. Thirty-eight percent identified as Catholic (Table 3).

Table 3: Christian denomination<sup>5</sup>

<b>Roman Catholic</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Mainline Protestant</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Evangelical Protestant</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Black Protestant</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Other Christian</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Political Views and Activism

When asked about the political climate on campus, over 86 percent of respondents agreed that there was “a lot of political activism.” As shown in Table 4, the vast majority of Brandeis students classified their personal political views as “liberal.” Conversely, fewer than 10 percent identified as political conservatives.

Table 4: Political views

<b>Extremely liberal</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Liberal</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>Slightly liberal</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Moderate</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Slightly conservative</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Conservative</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Extremely conservative</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Pressing Issues on Campus

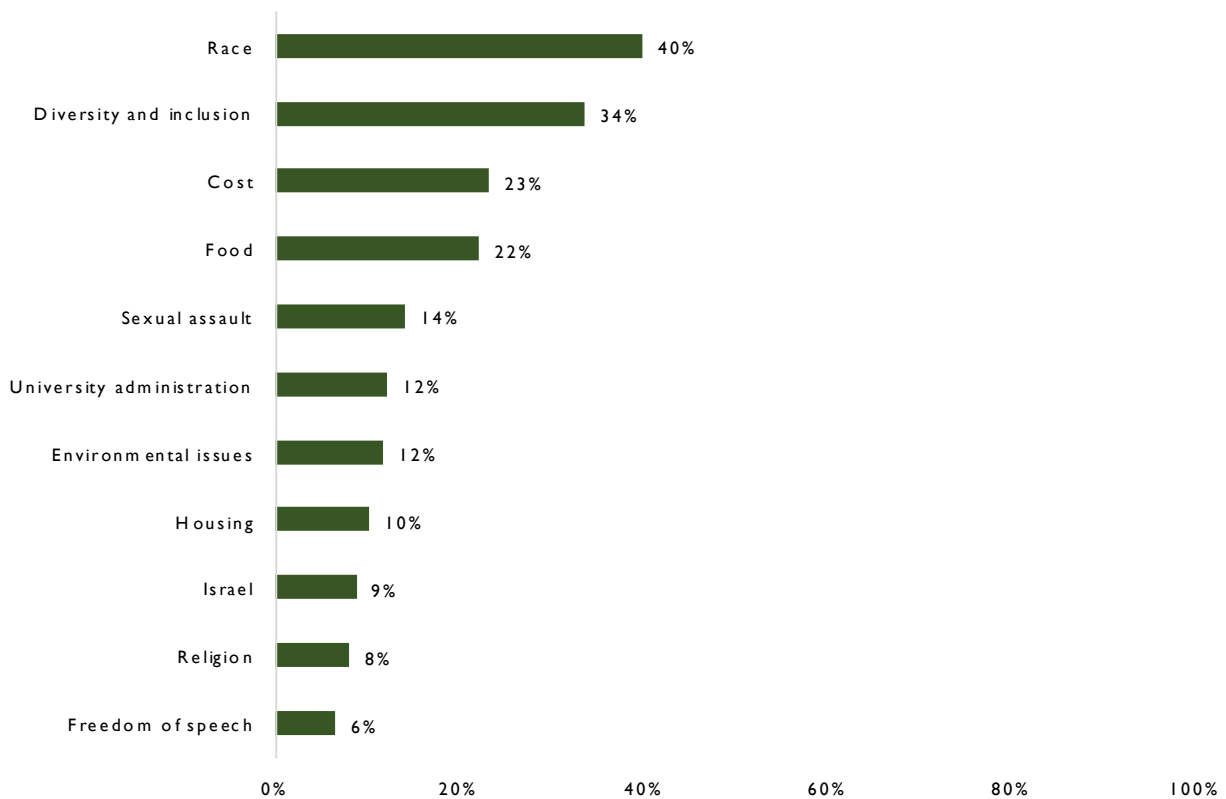
Students were asked, in an open-ended question, to list the three most pressing issues at Brandeis. Concerns about race, discrimination, or the treatment of minority groups dominated responses by a substantial proportion of Brandeis students (Figure 1). Forty percent of survey respondents listed issues such as “racial diversity/inequality,”

“racial tensions,” and “Black Lives Matter” as the most important issues on campus. Thirty-four percent listed issues related to diversity and inclusion, such as “cultural diversity” or “discrimination,” which in some cases were also related to issues of race and ethnicity.

The issues that students considered the most pressing at Brandeis differed based on their racial/ethnic backgrounds. East Asian students were significantly more likely than other students to list food and housing issues

and less likely to mention sexual assault or racial issues. White students were significantly more likely than others to mention environmental issues and freedom of speech. Hispanic and Black students were significantly more likely than others to mention issues of diversity and inclusion.<sup>6</sup> Compared to non-Jewish students, Jewish students were significantly less likely to mention food or cost and more likely to mention environmental issues and issues related to Israel (including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict).<sup>7</sup>

Figure 1: Most pressing issues at Brandeis (categories not mutually exclusive)



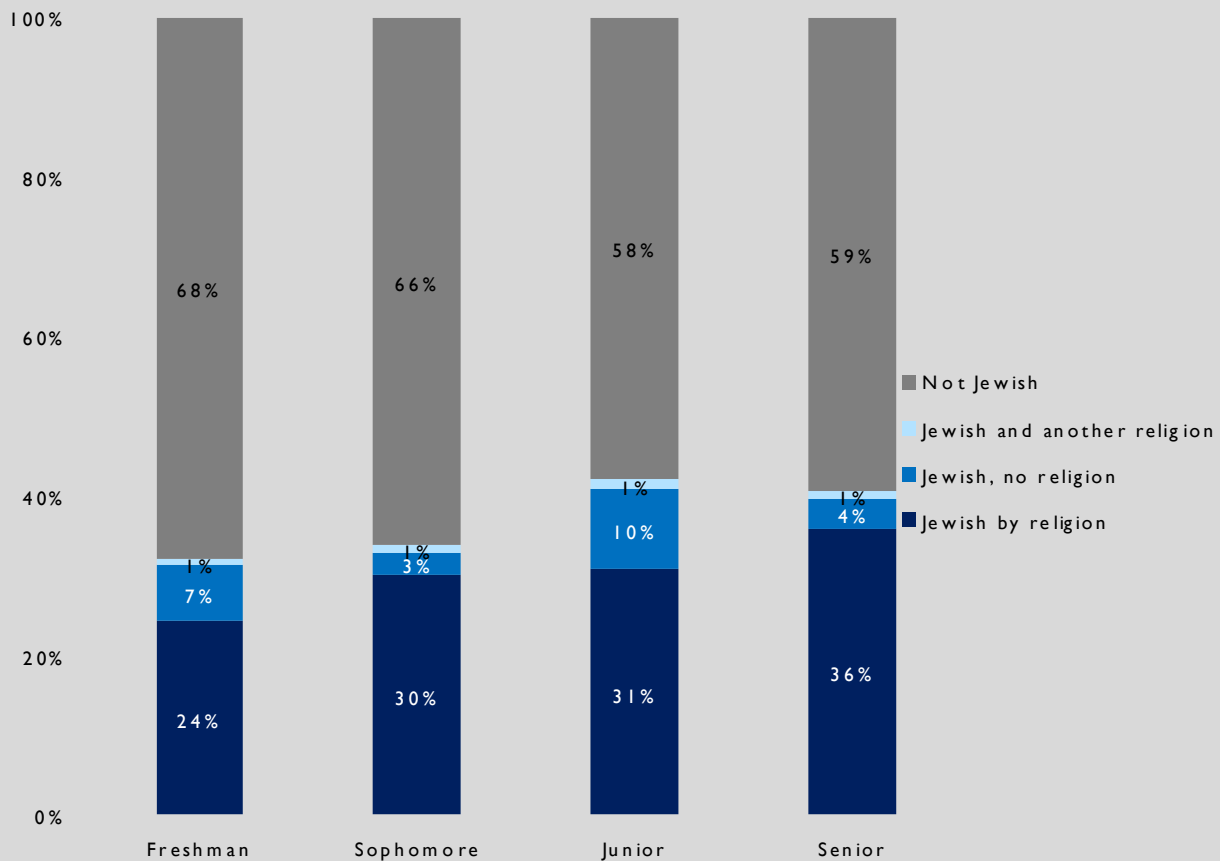
Note: One-way table of frequencies. See Table C1 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals.

### Brandeis’s Jewish Students

Just over one-third of students at Brandeis considered themselves Jewish: 31 percent identified their religion as "Jewish" (30 percent said their only religion was "Jewish" and one percent said they were Jewish and another religion). Six percent identified as Jewish “aside from religion” (also referred to as “Jews of no religion”). In addition, one percent of all students had at least one Jewish parent, but did not consider themselves Jewish in any way.<sup>8</sup>

The proportion of students who identified as Jewish (either by religion or “aside from religion”) declined across class years. The proportion of students who identified as Jewish by religion declined from 36 percent among seniors to 24 percent among freshmen (Figure 2). This decline cannot be explained by a change in the size of student body. According to enrollment information supplied by the Brandeis Registrar, there has not been a corresponding decline in the overall number of students across class years.

Figure 2: Brandeis students’ Jewish status by year



Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C4 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

Brandeis's Jewish population is more engaged with Jewish life than the national Jewish population. For example, nationally, only 11 percent of Jewish young adults ages 18-29 identify as Orthodox and 11 percent as Conservative (Pew Research Center, 2013). By contrast, these two groups together comprise 32 percent of the Jewish population at Brandeis (Table 5). In part, this difference is a function of the relatively high proportion of Brandeis Jewish students who identified as Jewish by religion.<sup>9</sup>

Table 5: Jewish denomination

<b>Orthodox</b>	14%
<b>Conservative</b>	18%
<b>Reform</b>	26%
<b>Reconstructionist</b>	4%
<b>Just Jewish</b>	14%
<b>Secular/Culturally Jewish</b>	18%
<b>Other</b>	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

In line with their more religious orientation, Jews at Brandeis were also far more likely to report celebrating Jewish holidays than young adult Jews nationally—over 86 percent of Jews at Brandeis reported observing Yom Kippur in the previous year and over 90 percent reported celebrating Passover. Nationally, 55 percent of Jewish young adults ages 18-29 fasted on Yom Kippur and 73 percent attended a seder (Pew Research Center, 2013).

The majority of Jewish students reported at least some involvement with Jewish campus organizations such as Hillel or Chabad. Thirty-five percent said they were very involved, 35 percent somewhat involved, and 14 percent a little involved. In addition, a majority of Jews at Brandeis (63 percent) had visited Israel at least once.

The relatively high levels of Jewish engagement among Brandeis's Jewish students is related to the relatively high proportion with two Jewish parents. Nearly three quarters (74 percent) of Jewish students at Brandeis have two Jewish parents, compared to 48 percent of all Jewish millennials (Sasson, 2013).





## Race and Ethnicity

### Social Ties across Racial/Ethnic Groups

The survey responses of Brandeis students suggest only limited social ties across racial/ethnic groups. Table 6 shows that close to 90 percent of Brandeis students agreed with the statement “ethnic groups stick with their own.” There was no significant variation in responses to this question across ethnic/racial groups.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 6: To what extent do you agree that ethnic groups stick with their own?**

<b>Strongly disagree</b>	1%
<b>Disagree</b>	4%
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	8%
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	33%
<b>Agree</b>	32%
<b>Strongly agree</b>	23%
<b>Total</b>	100%

The experience of racial/ethnic insularity on the Brandeis campus was described by one student in a response to an open-ended question at the end of the survey:<sup>11</sup>

*The students tend to group together with their ethnic groups and having friends in different circles can become very difficult. It almost feels like a bigger high school here.*  
(White male, sophomore class)

This reality of racial/ethnic distancing is supported by responses to questions that asked students to describe the proportion of their close friends who are members of various groups.

Table 7 shows that 70 percent of White students reported they have “all” or “mostly”

friends of their same race/ethnicity. Approximately half of Asian and Black students also indicated that a substantial portion of their friends are from their own racial or ethnic group. This raises the question of whether each group of students has a greater likelihood of having friends of the same race/ethnicity than would be predicted by chance alone. To answer this question, we adapted an analytic strategy used in the study of social networks (Coleman, 1958) which allows determination of the propensity of each group to have all or mostly friends of the same race/ethnicity, accounting for their prevalence in the population.<sup>12</sup> This analysis suggests that White, Asian, and especially Black students, were more likely to form friendships with others of their same group than would be expected based on how frequently they appear in the population. This is in contrast to Hispanic students, who did not seem to have any special propensity to have mostly Hispanic friends, accounting for their prevalence in the population.

**Table 7: Students whose close friends are mostly or all the same race/ethnicity as them**

<b>70%</b> of White students say that most or all of their close friends are White
<b>53%</b> of Asian students say that most or all of their close friends are Asian
<b>49%</b> of Black students say that most or all of their close friends are Black
<b>7%</b> of Hispanic students say that most or all of their close friends are Latino/a

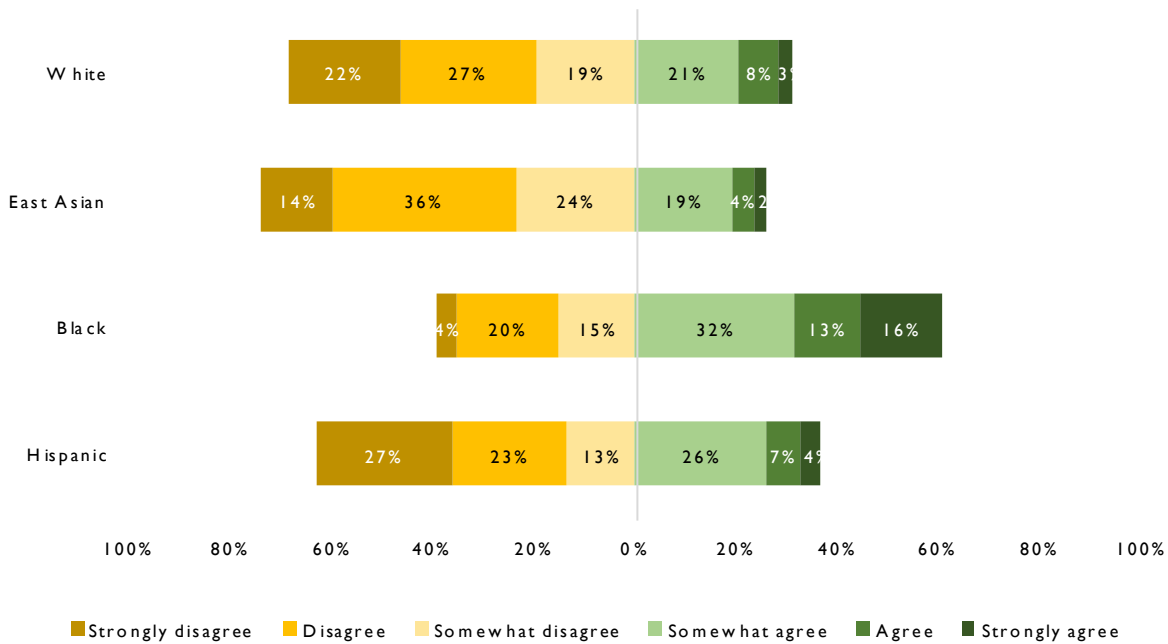
### Campus Climate for People of Color

The survey asked students to reflect on their perceptions of the campus environment for people of color. Figure 3 shows the percentage of students of different racial/ethnic identities who agreed that there is a hostile environment toward people of color at Brandeis. Over 60 percent of Black students at least “somewhat” agreed with this statement, a substantially higher portion than students of other racial/ethnic groups. While East Asian students were the least likely to strongly agree with this statement, they were

also the least likely, except for Black students, to strongly disagree.

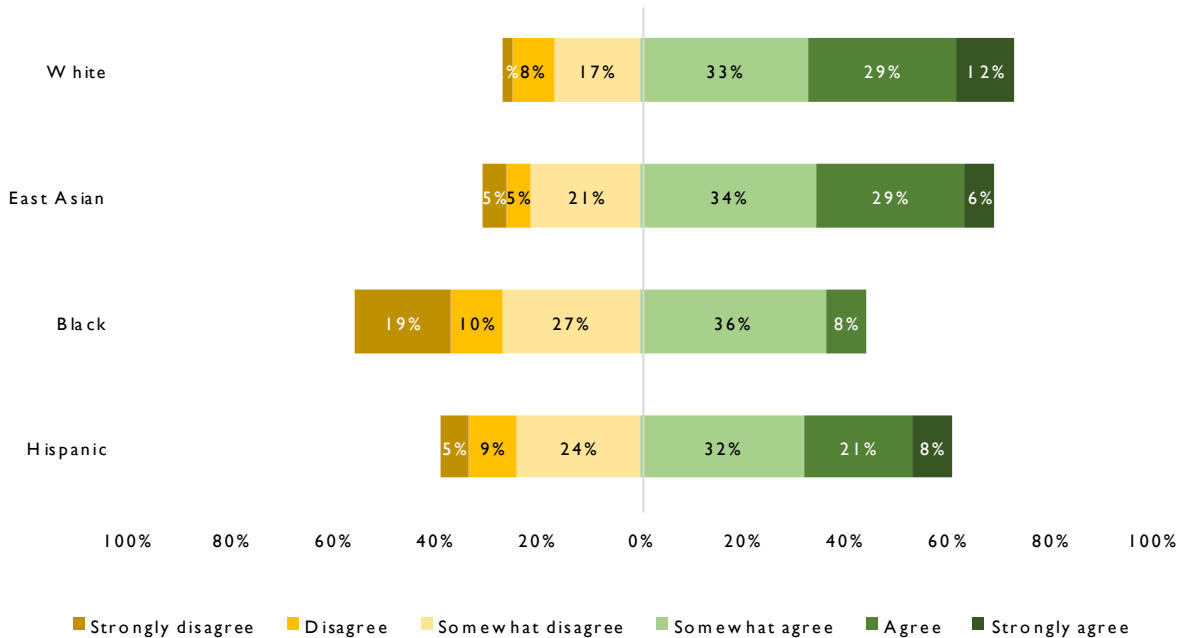
Students were also asked whether they thought that the concerns of minority students were taken seriously at Brandeis. Over 60 percent of Hispanic, East Asian, and White students at least “somewhat” agreed with this statement, but fewer than 45 percent of Black students felt the same way, and virtually no Black students “strongly agreed” that the administration was taking minority concerns seriously.

Figure 3: To what extent do you agree that there is a hostile environment toward people of color?



Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C6 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

Figure 4: To what extent do you agree that the concerns of minority students are taken seriously?



Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C7 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

### #FordHall2015

On November 12, 2015, a sit-in at the Brandeis Bernstein-Marcus administration building was initiated by the student protest movement #FordHall2015. The demands issued by the protestors included increasing the percentage of Black students, faculty, and staff; increased funding for Black student organizations; appointment of a Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion; and mandatory diversity and inclusion workshops for Brandeis faculty and staff. A negotiated agreement between the student group and the Brandeis administration ended the sit-in twelve days later. That agreement was followed by a Draft Implementation Plan for

Diversity and Inclusion at Brandeis University which, among other things, included a detailed timeline for appointing a VP for Diversity and Inclusion.

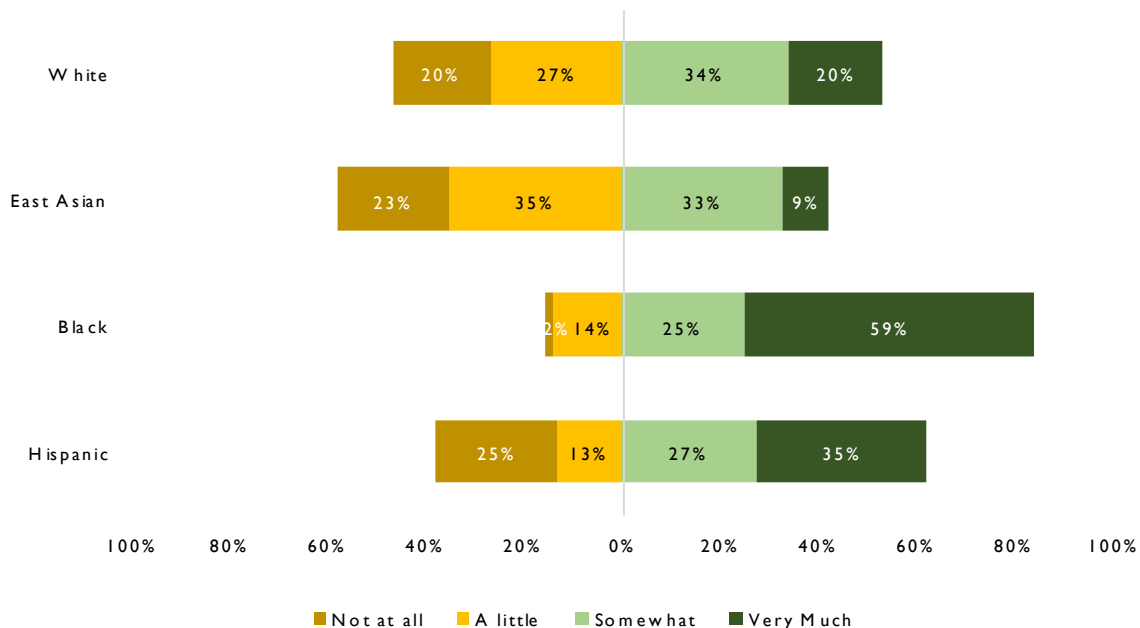
The survey included a set of questions addressing the topic of the #FordHall2015 protest. Over 90 percent of Hispanic, Black, and White students reported reading both the list of demands issued by the protestors and the response emails issued by university administration. However, only 68 percent of East Asian students reported reading the list of demands and 76 percent reported reading the administration's response, suggesting that East Asian students were less attentive to the protest.<sup>13</sup>

Students were asked to what extent they shared the views about racial injustice at Brandeis expressed by the protestors, and their responses differed sharply by race/ethnicity (Figure 5). Almost 60 percent of Black students agreed “very much” with the views of the protestors, compared to 35 percent of Hispanic students, 20 percent of White students, and less than 10 percent of East Asian students. Additionally, one quarter of Hispanic and East Asian students (and one fifth of White students) strongly disagreed with the views of protestors. A very similar pattern was observed when students were asked whether they supported the decision to occupy the administration building as part of the protest. Fifty-five percent of Black

students “very much” supported this decision, compared to 26 percent of Hispanic students, 23 percent of White students, and 10 percent of East Asian students. Conversely, 30 percent of Hispanic and White students and 35 percent of East Asian students did “not at all” support this decision, compared with only seven percent of Black students.<sup>14</sup>

Despite these substantial differences by race/ethnicity on the views and actions of the #FordHall2015 protestors, there were less dramatic differences in how students viewed the Brandeis administration’s response. Overall, around two thirds of Brandeis undergraduates felt either “very much” or “somewhat” satisfied with the administration’s

Figure 5: To what extent do you share the views about racial injustice at Brandeis that were expressed by the occupying students?



Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C10 in Technical Appendix C confidence intervals and significance tests.

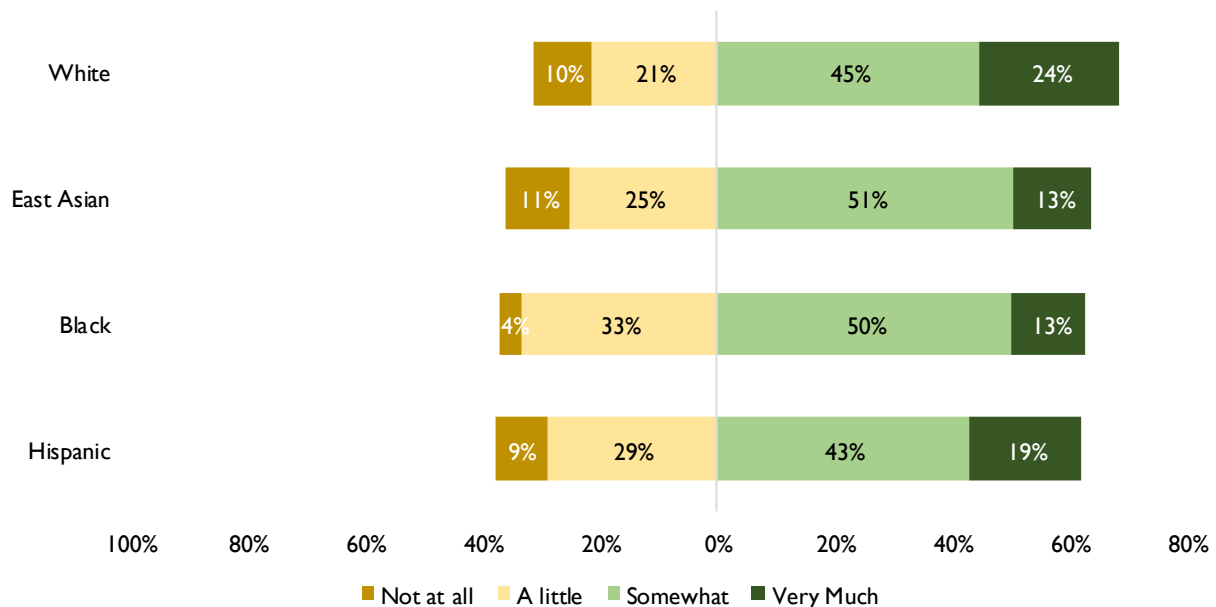
response to the protest, with only 10 percent reporting that they were “not at all” satisfied. However, while 24 percent of White students “very much” approved of the administration’s response, only 13 percent of East Asian students felt the same. Black and Hispanic students’ approval of the administration’s response appeared to be higher than that of East Asian students, but lower than that of the White students (Figure 6).

### American East Asian and International East Asian Students

The results above show that East Asian students were substantially less supportive of the #FordHall2015 protest compared to other racial/ethnic groups. Since over half of East Asian students were international students, one might speculate that these differences were related to international status rather than to ethnicity. This turns out to be largely, but not entirely, the case. There were no

significant differences between American East Asian and international East Asian students with respect to sharing the views of the protestors. However, international East Asian students were significantly less likely than American East Asian students to have read either the protestors’ list of demands or the university’s response letter.<sup>15</sup> International East Asian students were also less likely to have supported the decision of the protestors to occupy the administration building.<sup>16</sup> To explore this dynamic more carefully, race/ethnicity and international status were analyzed simultaneously in a regression model. The results show that, although American East Asian students were still less likely than Black students to support the decision to occupy the administration building, their position was not significantly different from that of American White students. It also appears that, regardless of their race/ethnicity, international students were less supportive of the occupation than students from the United States.<sup>17</sup>

Figure 6: To what extent do you feel satisfied with the response of the Brandeis administration to occupying students’ demands?



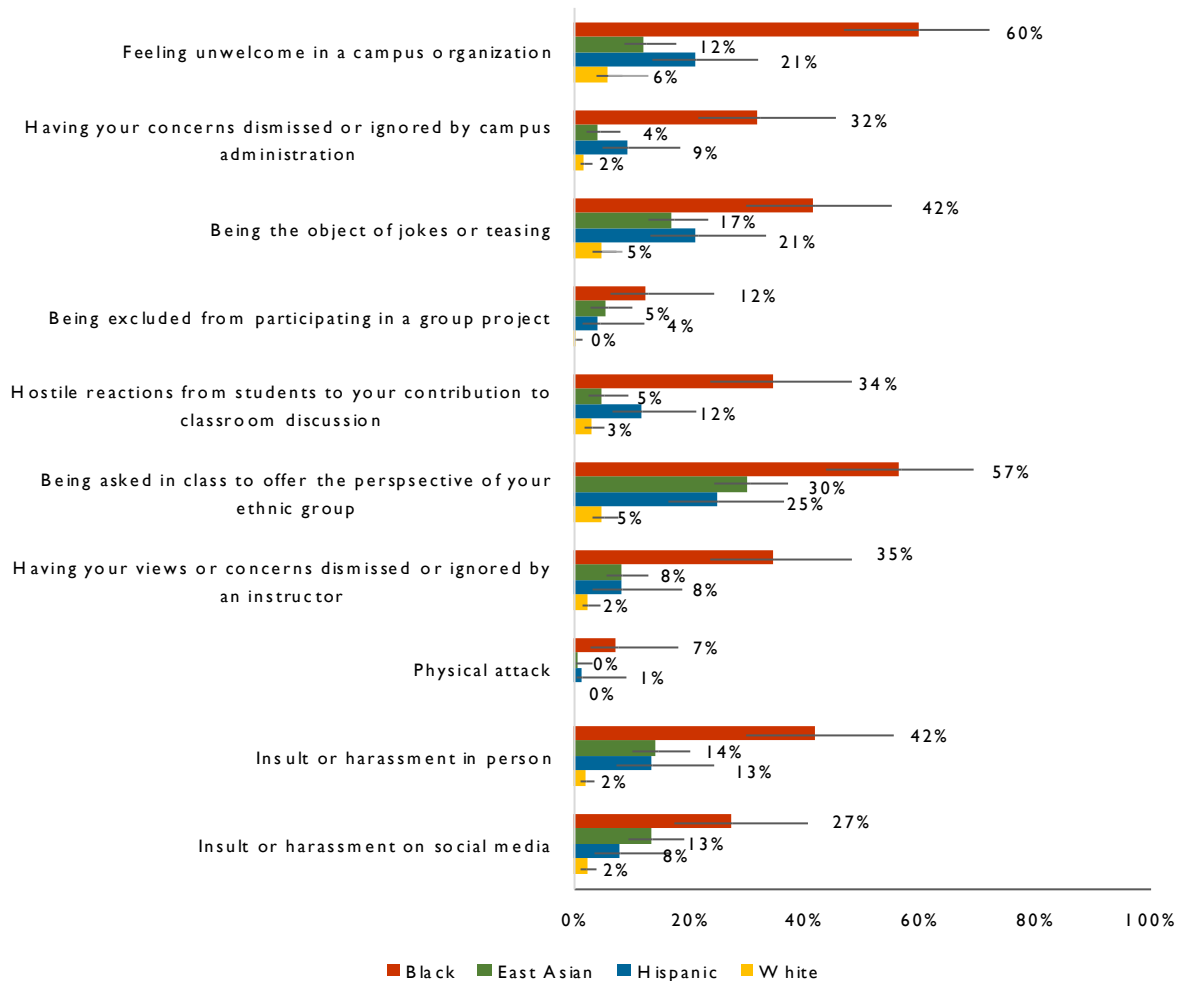
Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C12 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

### Experiences of Racial/Ethnic Discrimination

Brandeis students were asked about personal experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination ranging from physical attack and verbal harassment to “microaggressions” (Davis, 1989), such as being asked to offer an opinion on behalf of one’s racial/ethnic group. Figure 7 shows the proportion of students of different racial/ethnic groups who reported having such experiences.

As shown in Figure 7, significantly more Black students reported almost all forms of discrimination, including feeling unwelcome in campus organizations, being the object of jokes or teasing, hostile reactions from other students to classroom contributions, and insult or harassment in personal encounters. Across the board, White students were the least likely to report any of these forms of discrimination.<sup>18</sup>

Figure 7: Since coming to Brandeis have you personally experienced any of the following on campus because of your racial/ethnic identity?



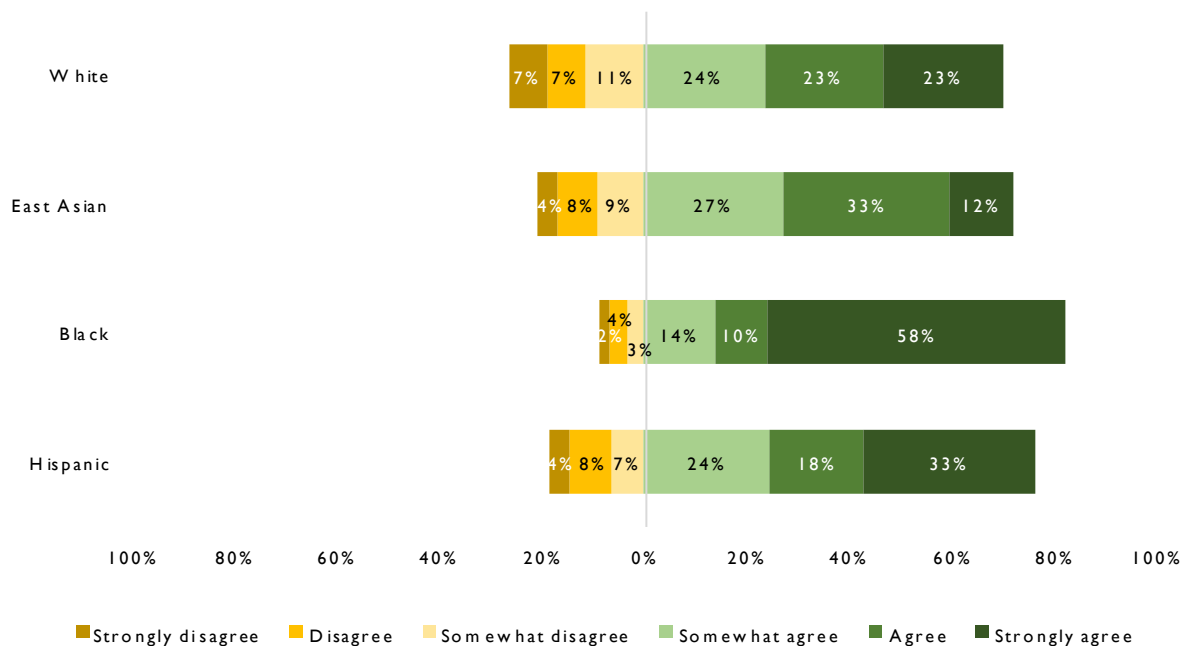
Note: Two way tables of frequencies. Error bars denote 95% confidence intervals. See Table C14 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

### Attitudes toward Affirmative Action and Cultural Sensitivity Training

Students were asked their opinions about a number of political issues related to institutions of higher education and campus life. Figure 8 shows that a majority of students of all racial/ethnic groups supported—at least

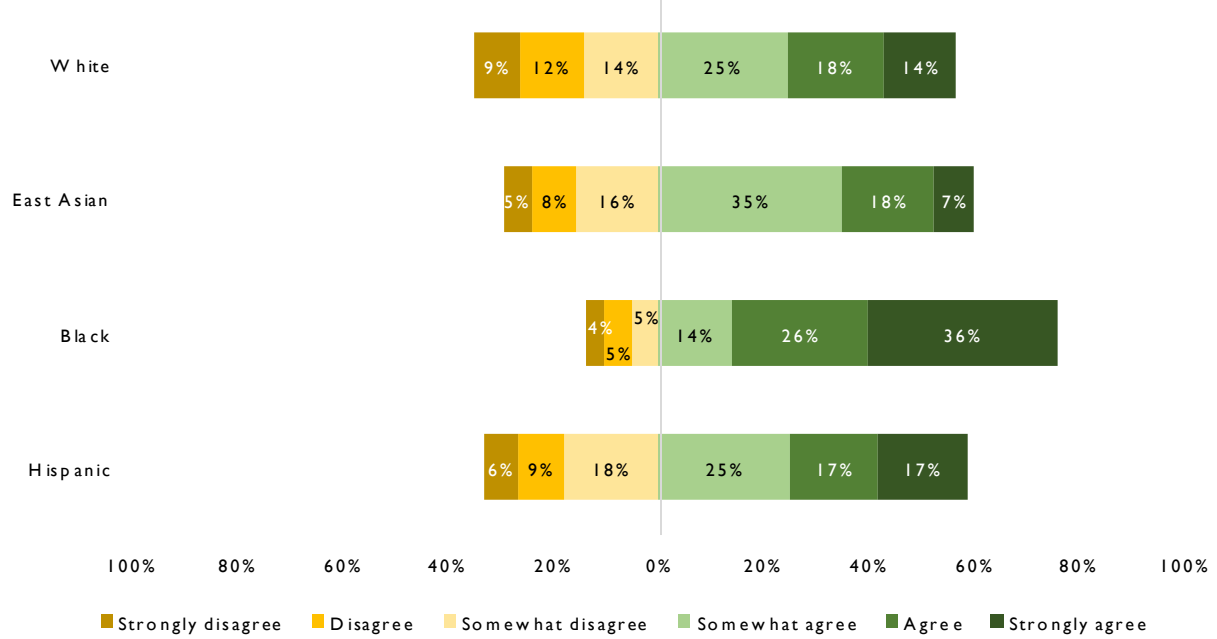
“somewhat”—mandated racial and cultural sensitivity training for students, staff, and faculty. Black students were far more likely to “strongly agree” compared to students of other groups. A similar pattern was evident on the question of whether universities should use affirmative action programs to increase the representation of minority students (Figure 9).

**Figure 8: To what extent do you agree that universities should mandate racial and cultural sensitivity training for students, staff, and faculty?**



Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C15 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests. Don't know rates – White 4%, East Asian 7%, Black 9%, Hispanic 5%.

Figure 9: To what extent do you agree that affirmative action programs are needed to increase the number of minority students on campuses?



Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C16 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests. Don't know rates – White 8%, East Asian 11%, Black 10%, Hispanic 8%.



## Gender and Sexual Orientation

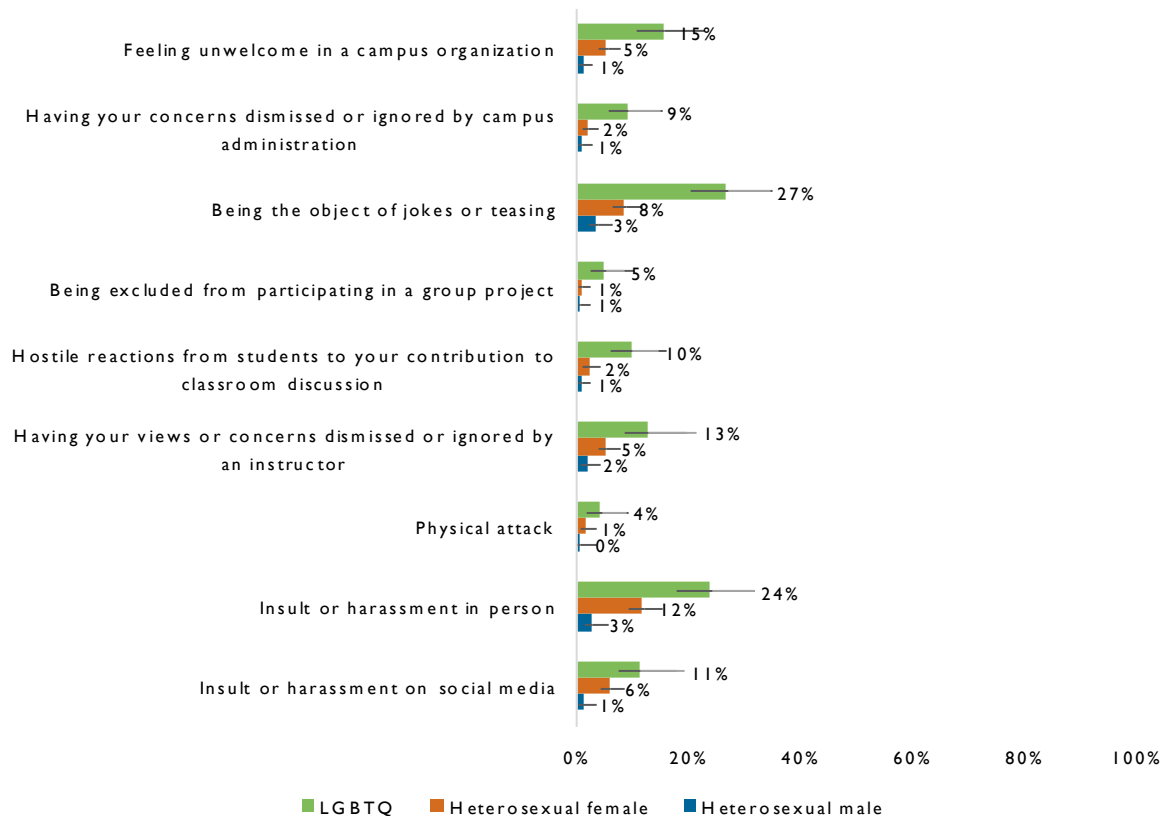
The challenging climate for women on college campuses has been well documented since the 1980s (Allan & Madden, 2006; Hall & Sandler, 1982, 1984). Recent research has also established that LGBTQ students are more likely than other students on campuses to experience harassment and discrimination, and less likely to feel comfortable with the overall campus climate (Rankin et al., 2010). The issue of sexual assault on college campuses has also garnered increased attention in recent years. This survey did not attempt to assess rates of sexual assault and harassment at Brandeis, but it did explore

perceptions of the university's response to sexual assault on campus. It also examined experiences of discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation more broadly.

### Experiences of Discrimination Based on Gender or Sexual Orientation

The survey asked students if they had experienced forms of discrimination related to gender or sexual orientation ranging from physical attack<sup>19</sup> to “microaggressions.”<sup>20</sup> Figure 10 shows the proportion of heterosexual male, heterosexual female, and

**Figure 10: Since coming to Brandeis have you personally experienced any of the following on campus because of your gender OR sexual orientation?**



Note: Two way tables of frequencies. Error bars denote 95% confidence intervals. See Table C17 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

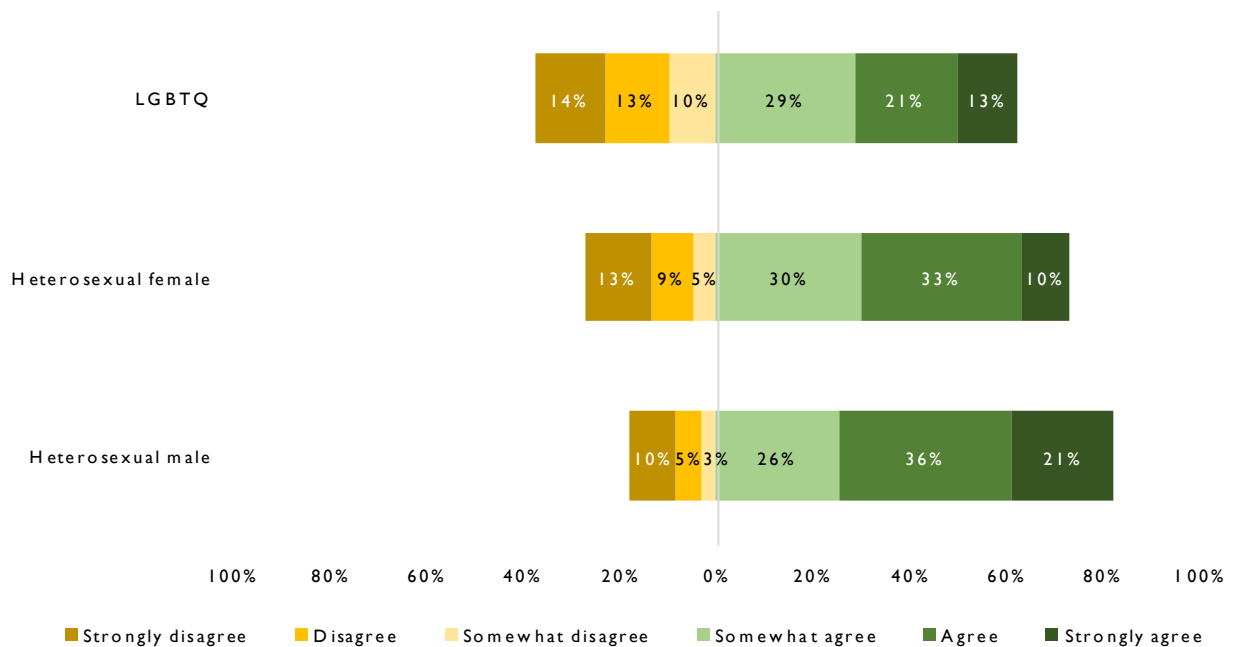
LGBTQ students (regardless of gender identity) who experienced any of these situations due to their gender or sexual orientation. While hardly any heterosexual male students reported experiencing any kind of discrimination, over a quarter of LGBTQ students reported having been the object of jokes or teasing or having been personally insulted because of their gender or sexual orientation. Heterosexual female students reported lower rates of discrimination than LGBTQ students but were significantly more likely than heterosexual male students to report having been the object of jokes or teasing, having been insulted in social media or in person, and having felt unwelcome in campus organizations.

### Campus Response to Sexual Assault and Harassment

In 2015, the Brandeis administration conducted a survey to understand the nature and extent of the problem of sexual assault on campus. The findings noted that 22 percent of female undergraduates and five percent of male undergraduates reported having been sexually assaulted (Brandeis University, 2015). In that survey, the experience of sexual assault was more common among the small number of students who identified as transgender or other genders.

In the present survey, students were asked whether they felt that issues of sexual assault and harassment are taken seriously at Brandeis (Figure 11). While 57 percent of heterosexual

Figure 11: To what extent do you agree that sexual assault and harassment are taken seriously at Brandeis?



Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C18 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

male students said they either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that these issues are taken seriously, only 43 percent of heterosexual female students and 34 percent of LGBTQ students concurred.

### **The Intersection of Race and Gender**

Notably, some students belong to more than one group that experiences discrimination. The idea of intersectionality was developed (Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) to foster appreciation of the complex interactions between different social groupings and, in particular, to highlight the unique hardships of individuals who simultaneously identify with multiple groups that are subject to discrimination and oppression (such as Black females or Hispanic LGBTQ individuals).

To analyze more closely the intersection of race/ethnicity and gender with respect to discrimination, a scale was created counting how many of the forms of discrimination a respondent had experienced due to their race or their gender.<sup>21</sup> The results of a regression model indicated that students of color experienced significantly higher rates of discrimination than White students, while females experienced more discrimination than males. Consequently, female minority students experienced higher rates of discrimination associated with both their race/ethnicity and their gender, but their experience of discrimination was not amplified because they were simultaneously members of these two groups.<sup>22</sup>



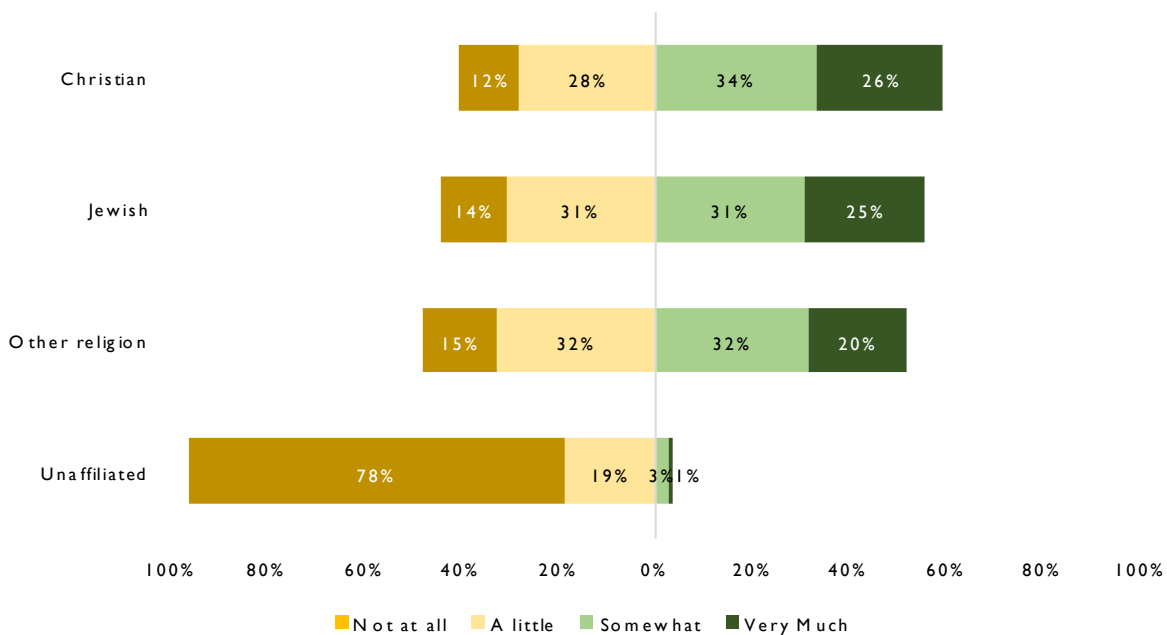
## Religion

Although a central tenet among scholars of religion in the late 20th century was that higher education was “a breeding ground of apostasy,” research on the last two decades suggests a rising interest in spirituality—if still no movement toward greater ritual practice (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Uecker et al., 2007). This section examines the role of religion in the lives of Brandeis students and the relationships between and attitudes toward different religious groups on campus. Given the make-up of the Brandeis student body, one focus is the relationship of Jewish students to other groups.

### Centrality of Religion and Spirituality

The survey asked students about the importance of religion in their current lives. Among those who identified with a religion, approximately one quarter felt that religion was “very much” important in their lives (Figure 12).<sup>23</sup> As one would expect, religion was not important for virtually all who were unaffiliated. However, when asked how important spirituality was in their lives, over half of the unaffiliated said that spirituality was at least “a little” important.

Figure 12: How important is your religion in your life today?



Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C22 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

Brandeis has Protestant, Catholic, Hindu, Muslim, and Jewish chaplains on campus. Overall, nearly half of religiously affiliated students reported that since coming to campus they have had at least one conversation with the chaplain of their faith (Figure 13). Jewish students had higher rates of having contact with their chaplain compared to Protestant students. Catholics appeared to have higher rates of contact compared to Protestants and lower rates compared to Jews, but the small number of Catholics in this sample makes the estimates for this group subject to greater uncertainty.

### Social Ties across Religious Groups

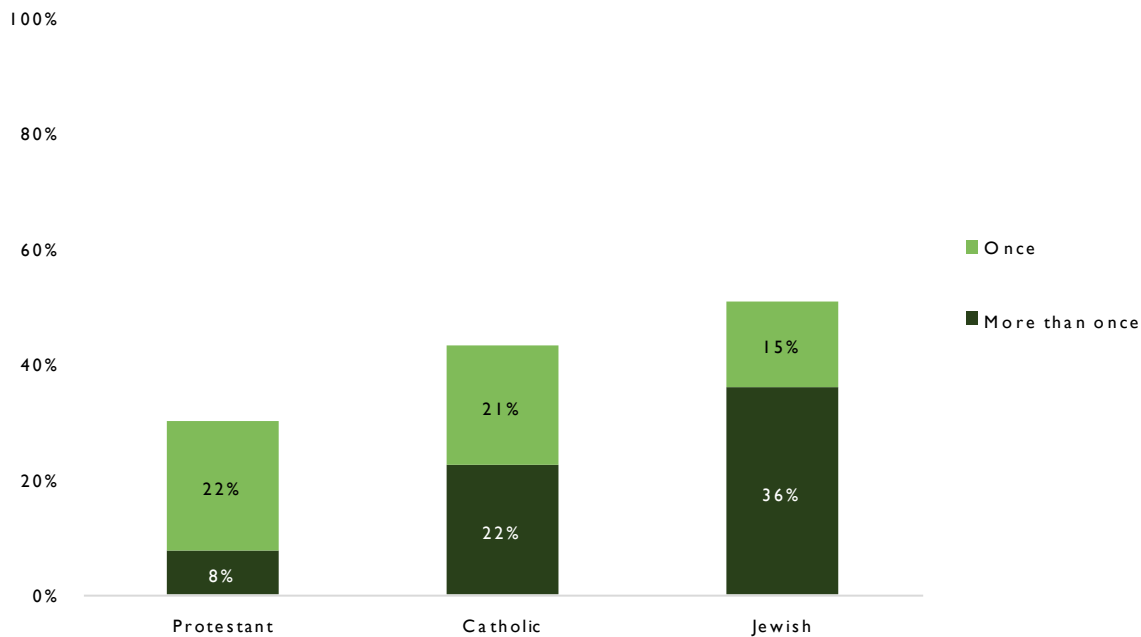
Twelve percent of Christian students reported having all or mostly Christian friends, although eight percent also said they did not know what proportion of their close friends

were Christian. In contrast, around 50 percent of Jewish students had all or mostly Jewish friends. Accounting for the proportion of Brandeis undergraduates who identified as Jewish and Christian respectively, this suggests that Jewish students had a greater propensity to be mostly friends with one another than did Christian students. However, it seems that the tendency of Jewish students to associate with one another was less pronounced than the tendency of White, Black, and Asian students to have friends primarily of their same racial/ethnic group, as discussed above.<sup>24</sup>

### Campus Climate for Religious Tolerance

Brandeis students were asked whether they agreed that there is “tolerance toward all religious groups” on campus. A substantial majority of students of all religious identities

**Figure 13: Since coming to Brandeis, have you had a conversation with a Brandeis chaplain/clergy person of your religion?**



Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C23 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

at least “somewhat” agreed with this statement, with Jewish and unaffiliated students being the most likely to agree (Figure 14). However, 16 percent of Christian students and 18 percent of students identifying with some other religion (predominantly Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists) said that they “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that at Brandeis there is tolerance toward all religious groups.

In the context of national attention to the issue of Islamophobia (Bishop, 2015; Ingraham, 2015), students were also asked more specifically if they felt there is a hostile environment toward Muslims at Brandeis. Overall, less than a quarter agreed at least “somewhat” that there is a hostile environment toward Muslims at Brandeis (Table 8). There are not enough Muslim respondents to produce reliable separate estimates for these students.

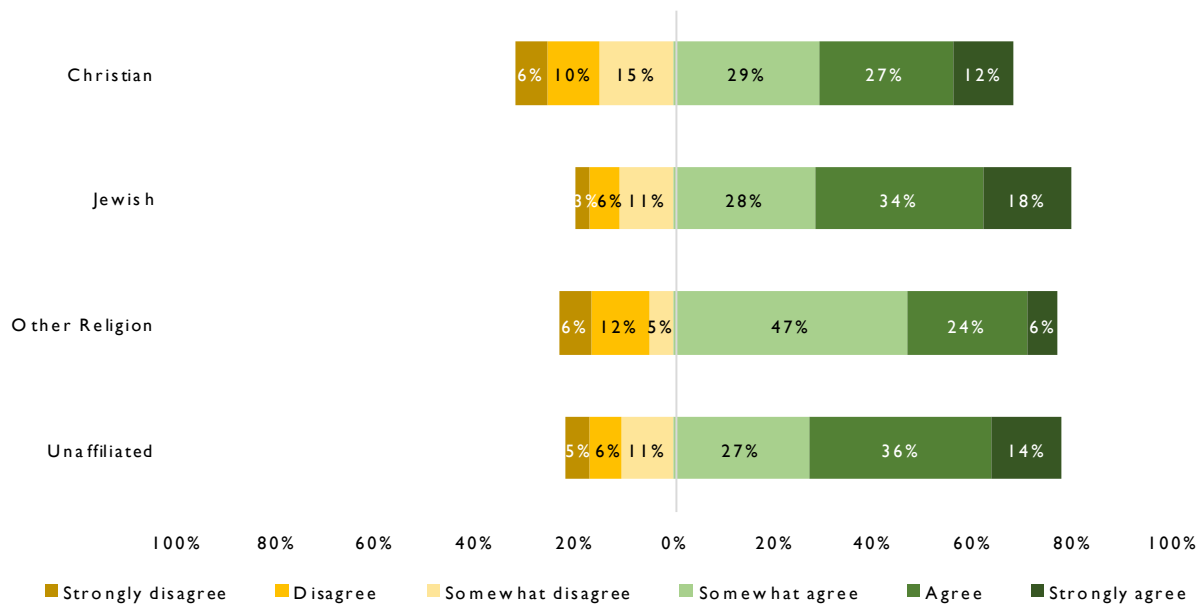
Jewish organizations that track antisemitism report a recent increase in the number of antisemitic acts and hostility toward Jews on college campuses across the United States (Amcha Initiative, 2016; Anti-Defamation League, 2014; Bard & Dawson, 2012; Israel on Campus Coalition, 2014). Very few Brandeis students, regardless of their religion, felt that

**Table 8: To what extent do you agree that there is a hostile environment toward Muslims?**

<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: See Table C25 in Technical Appendix C for two-way tables of frequencies by religion, including 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

**Figure 14: To what extent do you agree that there is tolerance toward all religious groups?**



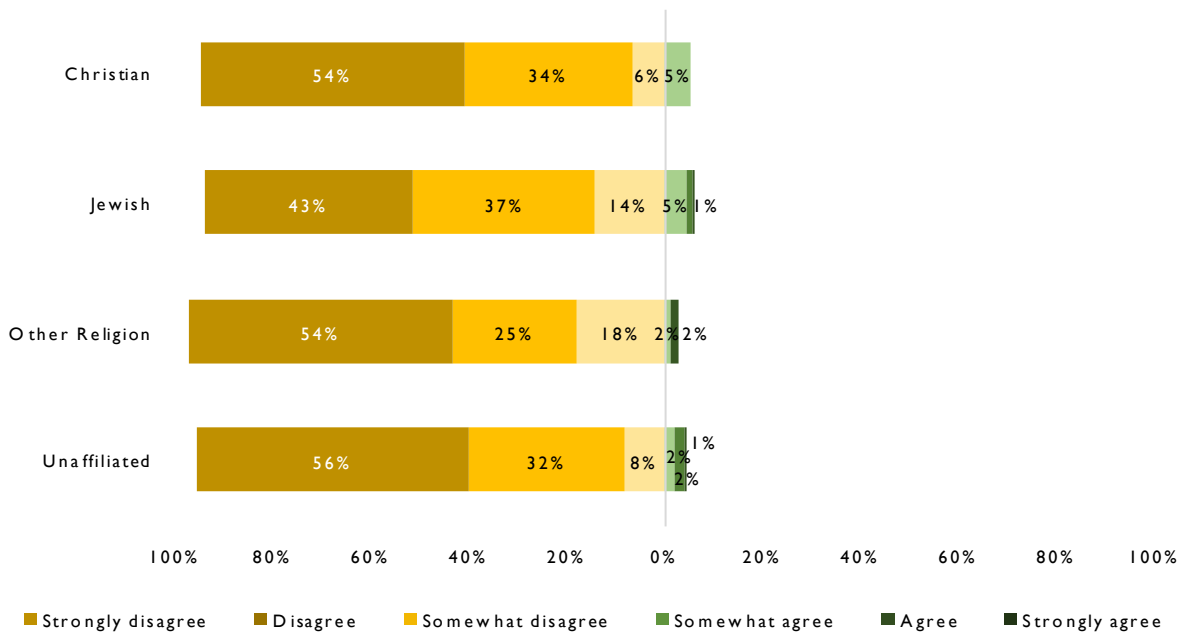
Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C24 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

there is a hostile environment toward Jews at Brandeis (Figure 15). Nonetheless, Jewish students were less likely than others to “strongly disagree” that there is a hostile environment toward Jews.

Students were also asked if they had experienced any of a list of forms of discrimination or prejudice due to their religion. The incidence of experiencing any of these forms of prejudice was very low for Jews, Christians, or those of another religion,

and there were no significant differences between these groups on these items (Figure 16). However, religiously affiliated students who indicated that religion was “very important” in their lives were more likely than those who indicated that religion was not important to report that they experienced harassment on social media, that their views and concerns were dismissed, that they were asked to share the viewpoint of their religious group in class, and that they were the object of jokes because of their religion.<sup>25</sup>

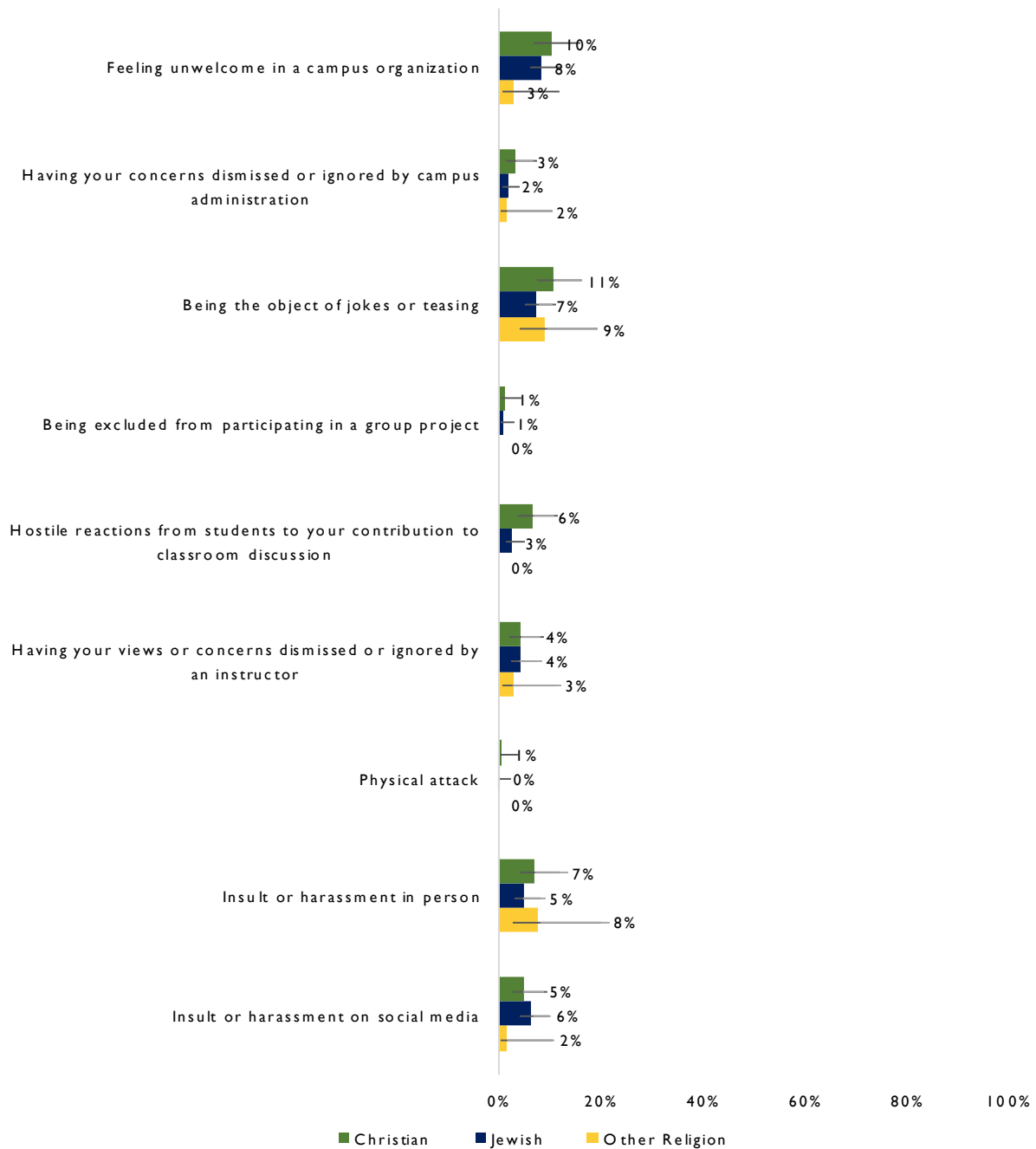
Figure 15: To what extent do you agree that there is a hostile environment toward Jews?



Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C26 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.



Figure 16: Since coming to Brandeis, have you personally experienced any of the following on campus because of your religion?



Note: Two way tables of frequencies. Error bars denote 95% confidence intervals. See Table C27 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.



## The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and BDS

The 2014 Gaza war and 2015 debate about the Iran nuclear agreement have exacerbated fears about a rise of anti-Israel sentiment and activity on campus. The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign attempts to increase economic and political pressure on Israel to comply with the stated goals of the movement, in particular, a withdrawal from the territories captured by Israel in 1967. The movement's tactics include student government resolutions proposing divestment from Israel, boycotts of Israeli academics and academic institutions, and the discontinuation of the sale or use of Israeli products on campuses. There are now estimated to be Israel divestment groups at hundreds of colleges and universities (Medina & Lewin, 2015).

To assess campus attitudes toward Israel, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the BDS movement, the analyses below examine differences across racial and religious group lines. When discussing Jewish students in this section, we include both those who consider themselves Jewish for religious and non-religious reasons.<sup>26</sup> The vast majority (86 percent) of Jewish students at Brandeis identify as White and Jews make up around half of the population of White students at Brandeis.<sup>27</sup>

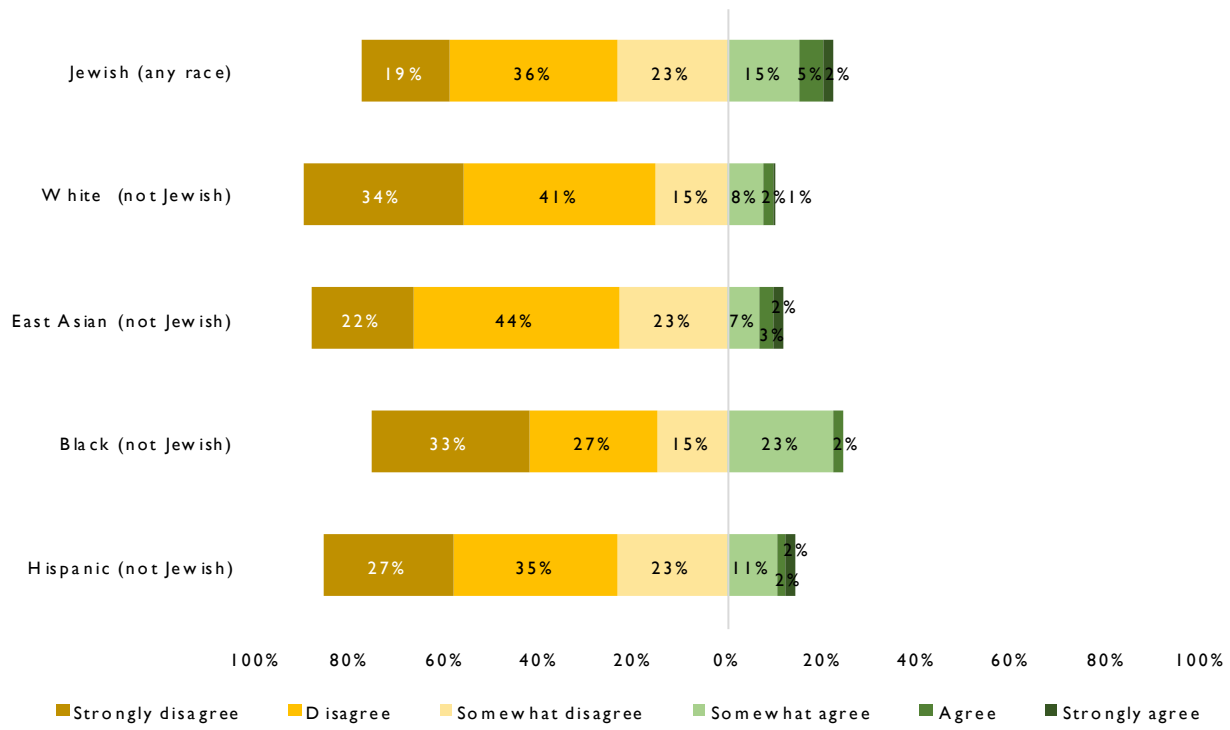
Because of this large overlap between race and religion, it is important to understand the extent to which differences by religion are instead reflecting differences by race or vice versa. In the analyses that follow, we describe the responses of Jewish students together (regardless of their race) as compared with the responses of non-Jewish students categorized by their racial/ethnic identity.

### Campus Climate toward Israel

The survey asked Jewish students to indicate the extent to which they believe that anti-Israel sentiment is tantamount to antisemitism. Only a fraction (two percent) of Jewish undergraduates at Brandeis agreed that criticism of Israel by non-Jews was “definitely” antisemitic (another 11 percent felt that such criticism was “probably” antisemitic). Responding to a separate question, however, 30 percent felt that opposition to Israel's right to exist was “definitely” antisemitic, and another 33 percent thought it was “probably” antisemitic.

Only a minority of students agreed even “somewhat” that there is a hostile environment toward Israel at Brandeis, although Jews were slightly more likely to perceive a hostile environment than other groups (Figure 17).<sup>28</sup>

Figure 17: To what extent do you agree that there is a hostile environment toward Israel?



Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C29 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

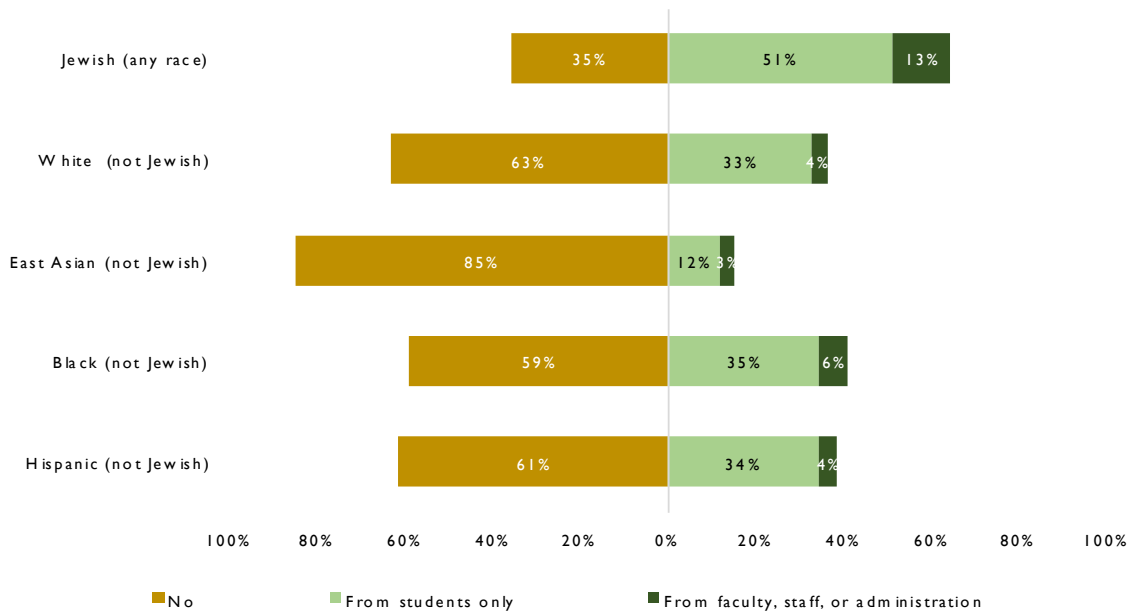
Only two percent of Jewish students reported being frequently blamed for Israel’s actions because they were Jewish, although 14 percent reported that this happened to them “occasionally” (Table 9).

Jewish students reported hearing hostile remarks toward Israel from either faculty or students at a rate much higher than other students (Figure 18). Students reported hearing hostile remarks about Arab countries at similar rates to hearing hostile remarks toward Israel (Figure 19).

Table 9: How often have you been blamed for Israel’s actions because you are Jewish? (Jewish students only)

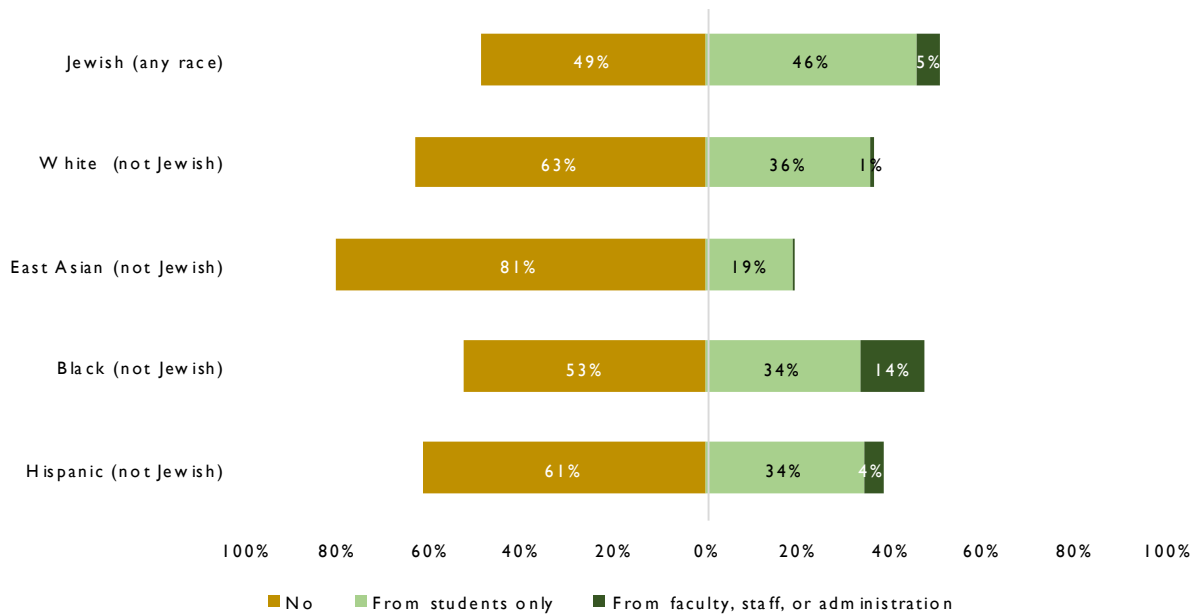
<b>Never</b>	<b>85%</b>
<b>Occasionally</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Frequently</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>All the time</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 18: Since coming to Brandeis, have you heard hostile remarks toward Israel?



Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C30 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

Figure 19: Since coming to Brandeis, have you heard hostile remarks toward Arab countries?



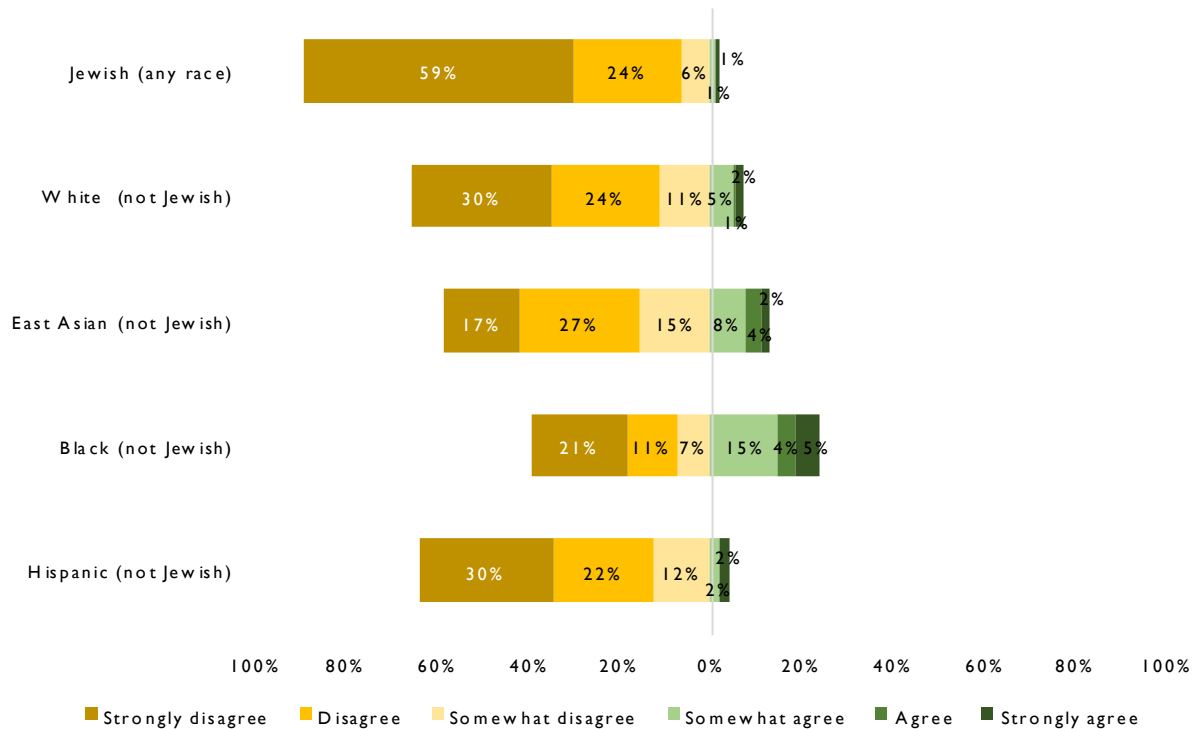
Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C31 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

### Attitudes toward BDS

Brandeis students were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that universities should boycott Israeli institutions and scholars. In general, relatively few Brandeis students expressed any support for this position, although responses varied by both race and Jewish status (Figure 20). Virtually no Jewish students expressed any agreement with this position. Hispanic students too were very unlikely to support

boycotting Israeli scholars and institutions, although over a quarter replied “don’t know.” East Asian and non-Jewish White students had low levels of support but also high levels of “don’t know” responses. Black students were the most supportive of boycotting Israeli scholars and institutions (over 20 percent expressed some agreement with this position), although these students also had the highest rate of “don’t know” responses of any group (37 percent).

Figure 20: To what extent do you agree that universities should boycott Israeli academic institutions and scholars?



Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C32 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests. Don't know rates – Jewish 9%, White (not Jewish) 27%, East Asian (not Jewish) 28%, Black (not Jewish) 37%, Hispanic (not Jewish) 32%.

## Contentious Issues and Open Discourse

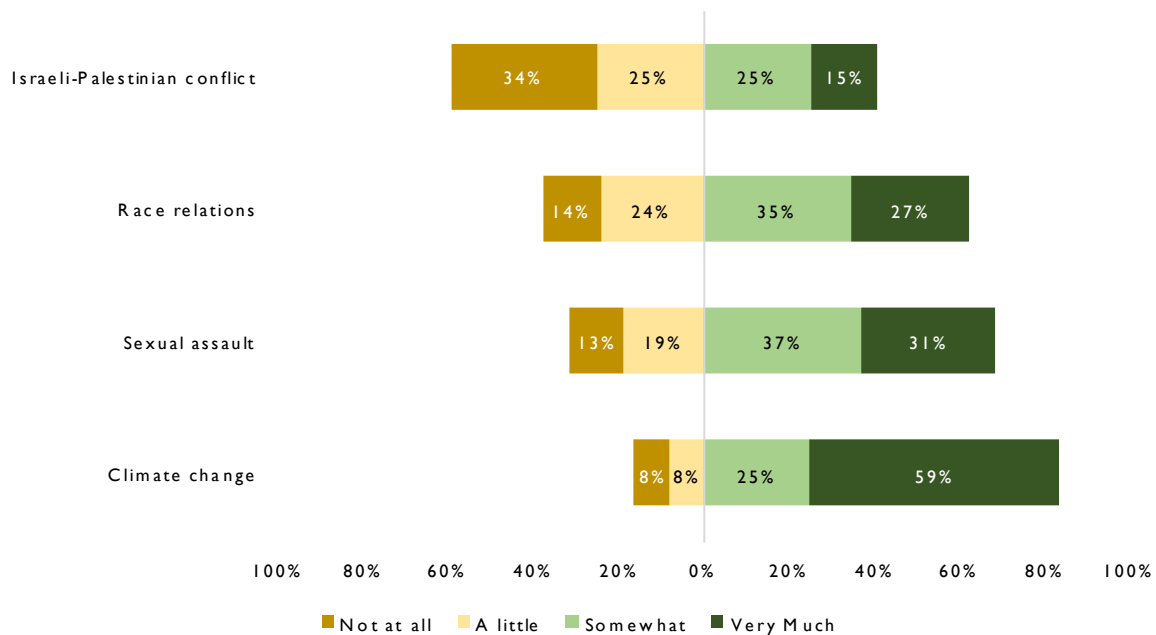
### Contentious Issues

To understand the tone of discourse at Brandeis, students were asked the degree to which they felt comfortable discussing four contentious issues: climate change, sexual assault on campus, race relations in America, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Figure 21). Most students (84 percent) felt at least “somewhat” comfortable discussing climate change, although comfort level was related to political orientation, with liberal students more likely to be comfortable than moderate or conservative students.<sup>29</sup> Sixty-nine percent of students felt at least “somewhat” comfortable discussing sexual assault on campus, although comfort levels differed by gender and sexual

orientation: LGBTQ students were the most comfortable, followed by heterosexual women and then heterosexual men.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, 62 percent of all students felt at least “somewhat” comfortable discussing race relations in America. Black and Hispanic students were more comfortable discussing race relations than either East Asian or White students.<sup>31</sup>

The most controversial topic of discussion at Brandeis was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with 59 percent of all students feeling “a little” or “not at all” comfortable discussing the topic. Jewish students were more comfortable discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict than non-Jewish students.<sup>32</sup>

Figure 21: At Brandeis, when talking with your peers, how comfortable do you feel expressing your opinion about...?



Note: Two-way tables of frequencies. See Table C33 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

Those students who reported feeling “a little” or “not at all” comfortable expressing their views on a given issue were asked which of a list of factors affected their comfort level. The most prevalent reason for feeling uncomfortable discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict among all students, was lack of knowledge. Fifty-seven percent of Jewish students and 71 percent of other students said they didn’t know much about this topic. For Jewish students, the hostile nature of discourse on the topic was also a significant reason for feeling uncomfortable. Over half of Jewish students who reported feeling uncomfortable discussing the conflict said that the hostility surrounding the discourse was a contributing factor to their discomfort.<sup>33</sup>

In an open-ended question, several students reported the discourse about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at Brandeis as particularly hostile:

*As a person who identifies as Jewish, I dislike when people tell me that I am ‘antisemitic’ for discussing my opinions on Israel/Palestine. It happens quite frequently. People have asked me to ‘stop talking’ about it because they feel my opinion (that occupation is harmful and wrong) expresses hate toward Jews. (White female student, Jewish, junior class)*

### Open Discourse

To address the broader issue of a culture of open discourse on campus, students were asked to what extent they agreed that unpopular opinions can be expressed freely at Brandeis. More than half of students (54 percent) disagreed with this statement, suggesting that they do not perceive Brandeis as fostering a culture of open debate and freedom of expression (Table 10).

**Table 10: To what extent do you agree that unpopular opinions can be expressed freely?**

<b>Strongly disagree</b>	16%
<b>Disagree</b>	17%
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	20%
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	28%
<b>Agree</b>	14%
<b>Strongly agree</b>	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

A regression model was run to better understand which groups of students did and did not feel that unpopular opinions can be expressed freely at Brandeis. This analysis revealed that East Asian, Jewish, and international students (regardless of race/ethnicity) were significantly more likely to agree that unpopular opinions could be expressed freely at Brandeis. Compared to liberals, students who described themselves as moderates or conservatives were less likely to agree. Gender and sexual orientation were unrelated to views on the free expression of unpopular opinions.<sup>34</sup>

In response to an open-ended question at the end of the survey, some students elaborated on the ways in which they perceive unpopular opinions to be unwelcome at Brandeis:<sup>35</sup>

*From what I’ve seen, students are only willing to express their opinions when they know they’re in the majority, and once they find themselves in that majority, have the potential to be dismissive of other opinions. (White female student, sophomore class)*

*Many students at Brandeis are incapable of respectfully hearing opposing viewpoints, often making those with differing opinions feel as though they cannot speak out. (South Asian female student, junior class)*



*In public settings or in acquaintance groups, certain beliefs are received with hostility, mockery, and belittlement. (Hispanic female student, senior class)*

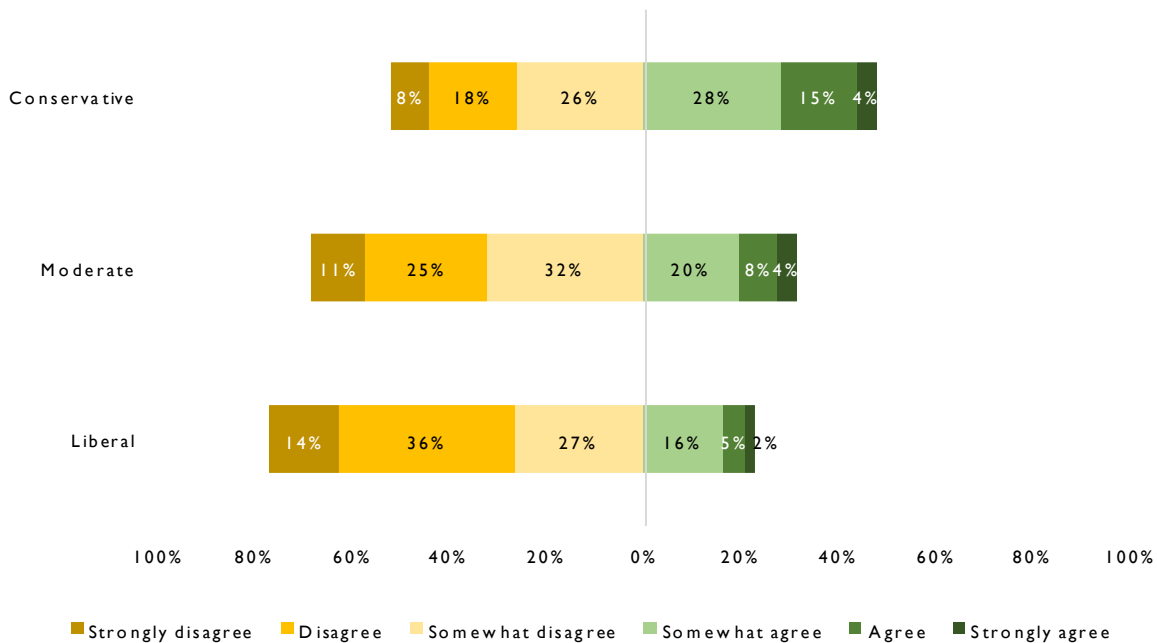
*When trying to express what my life is actually like, some people make objections even though they are not a part of the group being discussed. Because of this, I often try to avoid the topic altogether. (Black female student, senior class)*

*As an institution of higher learning (and a school whose motto is all about truth), Brandeis would do well to remember that sometimes the truth is unpleasant, but that stifling discourse helps nobody. After my freshman year, I stopped expressing any opinions that disagreed with the campus' overwhelmingly leftist views. Brandeis 'discourse' is an echo chamber that suppresses freedom of speech and academic freedom. (White male student, senior class)*

## Trigger Warnings

Trigger warnings refer to the practice of alerting individuals to upcoming content (usually written or visual material) that may cause psychological discomfort or even set off the effects of previous trauma, such as military combat, child abuse, incest, and sexual violence. The practice of trigger warnings originated in online communities to enable individuals to decide whether or not to engage with potentially difficult or upsetting content and discussion (Manne, 2015) but has become a practice employed in college classrooms. Some have suggested that the use or overuse of trigger warnings in university classrooms puts a damper on open discussion. Brandeis students were asked whether they felt that professors at Brandeis make excessive use of trigger warnings. Overall, 27 percent of students agreed and 73 percent disagreed (Figure 22). As above, a regression model was

Figure 22: To what extent do professors at Brandeis make excessive use of trigger warnings?



Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C40 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

run on this item in order to understand which groups of students felt that professors make excessive use of trigger warnings. There were no differences by international student status, race/ethnicity, or Jewish status. Heterosexual men or women were significantly more likely than LGBTQ students to agree that professors make excessive use of trigger warnings. Moderate and conservative students were significantly more likely to agree.<sup>36</sup> Taken together, responses to these two

questions—about the free expression of unpopular opinions and the use of trigger warnings—suggest that many groups feel that they cannot express their views on campus, including Black and Hispanic students, non-Jewish White students, and politically moderate and conservative students. All of these groups are minorities on the Brandeis campus.

## Belonging and Safety

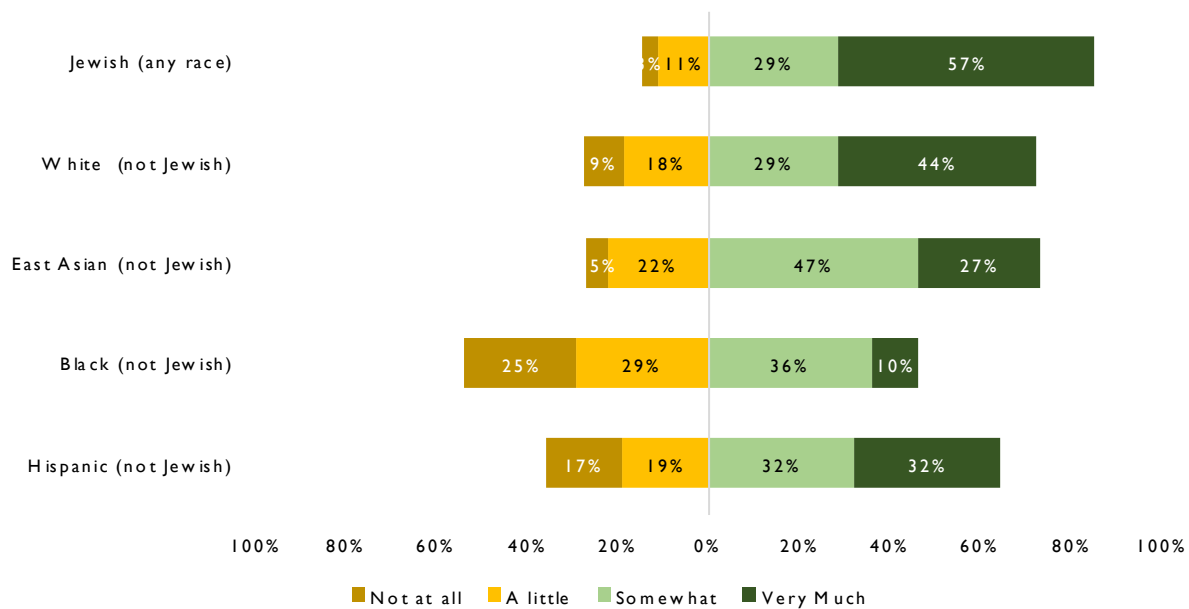
The report thus far has examined students' experiences and opinions relating to race/ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, and religion. We now turn to a focus on how these experiences influence students' general sense of belonging and safety on campus.

Three-quarters of all students reported that they felt they belonged at Brandeis at least "somewhat" (Figure 23). Almost 60 percent of Jewish students felt that they "very much" belonged at Brandeis, compared to 44 percent

of non-Jewish White students, 30 percent of East Asian and Hispanic students, and only 13 percent of Black students.

Seventy percent of students indicated that they "very much" felt safe and another 25 percent "somewhat" felt safe at Brandeis. Ratings of safety and belonging were highly correlated and may therefore be measuring the same underlying experience. It also needs to be acknowledged that the term "safety" is ambiguous and may be interpreted differently

Figure 23: At Brandeis, overall, to what extent do you feel that you belong?

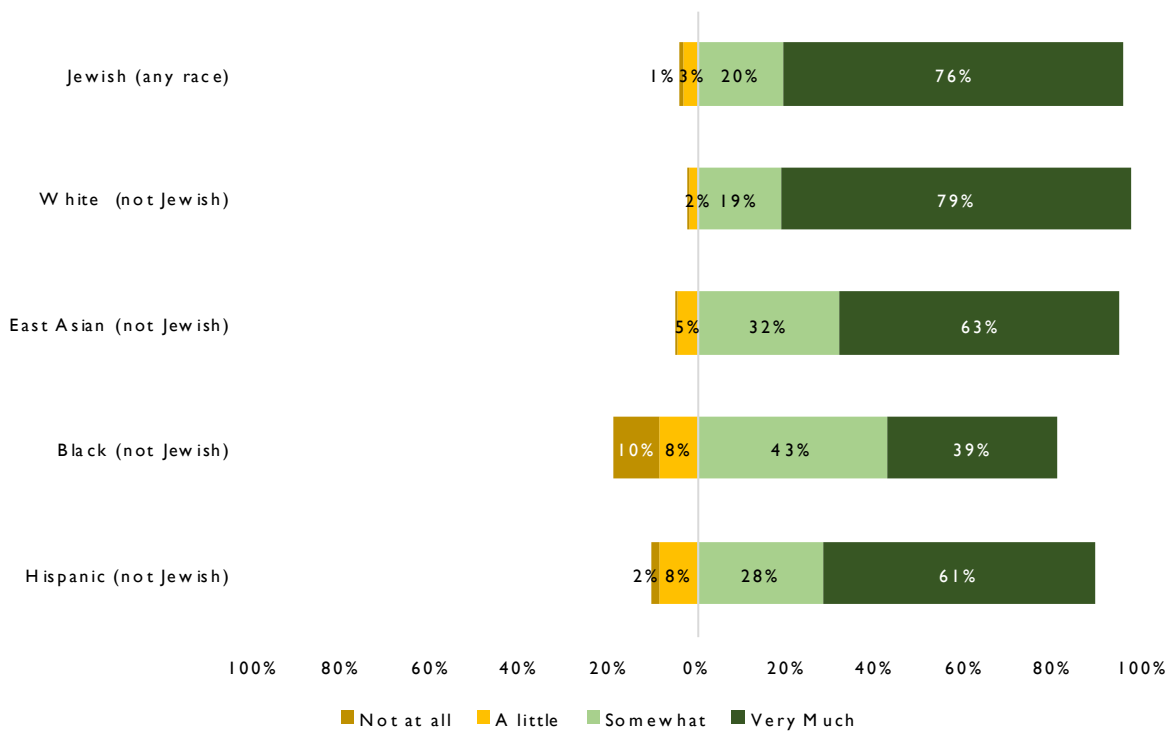


Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C42 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

by different groups. For example, for some it may refer to physical safety while for others it describes psychological safety. There are, however, differences between racial/ethnic groups in the degree to which they feel safe (Figure 24). A regression analysis found that East Asian, Black, and Hispanic students were less likely to say they felt safe, compared to

White students, regardless of whether or not they are Jewish. LGBTQ students were less likely to report feeling safe compared to exclusively heterosexual students, but there were no significant differences in the likelihood of heterosexual males and females in regards to feeling safe.<sup>37</sup>

Figure 24: At Brandeis, overall, to what extent do you feel safe?



Note: Two-way table of frequencies. See Table C43 in Technical Appendix C for 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

## Discussion

Since the 1960s, the role of universities has shifted. No longer seen as intellectual islands, separate from society's ills, universities are now tasked with improving society. At the same time, civic debates are no longer confined to the classroom but serve as the focus of public debates on the quad. College campuses have recently become the locus of protest on a wide array of issues including income inequality, LGBTQ rights, immigration, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The present study is part of a larger national investigation of religion and ethnicity on college campuses. Brandeis University, the focus of the present research, was founded as the American Jewish community's contribution to higher education and, historically, has had a high proportion of Jewish students and a concomitant mission to promote social justice (Whitfield, 2010). Although Brandeis has a unique history, it also shares many similarities and challenges with other institutions of higher learning. The authors of this study have a particular interest in Jewish life on campus (see, e.g., Koren, Saxe, & Fleisch, 2016; Saxe et al., 2015), but also have a long-standing interest in how young adults think about their identities and the ways in-group identities influence intergroup relations.

This study presents a snapshot of the characteristics of Brandeis undergraduates in the 2015-16 academic year and explores a wide range of issues at the intersection of undergraduates' racial, ethnic, and religious identities. In particular, the report examined how undergraduates perceive the relationships between different groups on campus, their experiences of prejudice and discrimination,

their attitudes on contentious issues, and their beliefs about the campus climate for free speech and critical discourse.

### Diversity and Integration

Brandeis has long been committed to increased diversity of its student body (see Lynch, 2015). The results of this study confirm that the student population has indeed become increasingly racially and ethnically diverse. Including international students (predominately from East Asia), just under half of the undergraduate student body in 2015-16 is comprised of students of color. Religious affiliation has shifted increasingly toward those of "no religion" and Jewish students, who in the late 1970s represented 70 percent of the undergraduate community, now comprise only about a third of all undergraduates.

Despite Brandeis's increasingly diverse student body, integration efforts, particularly those intended to promote positive interactions across groups, have yet to achieve their goals. This was the conclusion of the university's interim president at the time of the fall 2015 protest and it is supported by the results of our survey, conducted two months after the protest. Friendship patterns closely align with racial/ethnic identities. Not surprisingly, the campus experiences of students of different racial/ethnic identities vary. Black students, in particular, report substantial levels of discrimination and alienation, while Jewish students report low levels of discrimination and high levels of belonging.

Race and diversity were at the top of the list of the most pressing issues on campus for all students, regardless of their own racial/ethnic

identities. Although perhaps not surprising in light of the #FordHall2015 protest, student concerns were stark and concerning. Forty percent of respondents cited race as one of the most pressing issues at Brandeis, and more than one-third said that diversity was a central issue. No other social issue was indicated nearly as frequently. Race and diversity are, thus, critical issues for Brandeis students. The seriousness of these issues is buttressed by the finding that a majority of Black students at least somewhat agreed that the campus environment is hostile toward people of color. Black students also reported higher rates of discrimination. Substantial research links such experiences with a range of negative outcomes (see, e.g., Kessler, Mickelson & Williams, 1999; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Williams et al., 1997). Notably, a majority of students of all racial/ethnic groups supported—at least “somewhat”—mandatory racial and cultural sensitivity training for students, staff, and faculty.

### Controversy and Open Discourse

As part of the present effort to understand the campus climate, we asked students about the extent to which they felt comfortable discussing contentious issues. Most students felt that unpopular opinions cannot be expressed freely at Brandeis. Thus, despite the university’s motto, “Truth even unto its innermost parts,” many students felt pressure to avoid expressing non-conforming attitudes. Interestingly, international students, along with Jewish students, were most likely to report experiencing the freedom to express different points of view. At the same time,

politically moderate and conservative students felt the most constrained.

One issue that was central to the development of the present study, is the place of discourse about Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on campus. Although only a small portion of Brandeis undergraduates considered Israel and the Middle East among the most pressing issues on campus, one in two Jewish students reported that the debate on this topic felt hostile to them. More than 50 percent of Jewish students reported hearing hostile remarks about Israel from other students and more than 10 percent reported hearing such comments by faculty, staff, or administrators. At some campuses hostility toward Israel and hostility toward Jews go hand in hand (Saxe et al., 2015). At Brandeis, this does not seem to be the case. Only about one-quarter of Jewish students believed that there is a hostile environment on campus toward Israel and few viewed the campus as hostile to Jews.

One indicator of the tenor of debate about Israel at Brandeis is reflected in the very low level of support for the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement. Although BDS has received substantial attention in the media, it is perhaps striking that a significant portion of students had no opinion on this topic (including 34 percent of Black students and 28 percent of East Asian students). Virtually no Jewish students expressed support for the boycott of Israeli academic institutions and scholars. There was, however, some support for these policies among East Asian students (10 percent) and among Black students (25 percent).

## Conclusion

Many campuses, Brandeis included, are striving to become more diverse and inclusive, not just in terms of their representation of students of color and the full spectrum of economic backgrounds, but also in terms of the social interconnectedness across multiple lines of identity (Shaiko, 2013). Admission and financial aid policies designed to attract minority students may not, on their own, lead to the desired outcome of a more inclusive and better integrated campus community

(see, e.g., Sidanius et al., 2010). Greater attention needs to be devoted to students' experiences of discrimination on campus and to initiatives (academic and co-curricular) that address the campus climate with respect to issues of race/ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. Student protests on campuses, particularly those that focus on discrimination and the campus climate, call our attention to the problem. It is the responsibility of stakeholders within these institutions to develop comprehensive solutions.





## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Respondents were given the opportunity to identify with multiple racial/ethnic groups and approximately nine percent did so. Technical Appendix B describes the way in which these individuals were assigned to mutually exclusive categories in the ethnicity variable used in this report.

<sup>2</sup> The only other significant differences found between American East Asian and international East Asian students are discussed in endnotes 18 and 28.

<sup>3</sup> Chi square test with one degree of freedom significant at  $p < .05$ .

<sup>4</sup> Three percent ( $N=27$ ) of respondents also listed a secondary religion. Throughout this report, measures of religion, including Table 2, only refer to the primary religion reported by respondents. However, in analyses of Brandeis's Jewish students eight individuals who listed another religion, in addition to Judaism, were considered to be "not Jewish" following the practice established by the Pew Research Center (2013). See Technical Appendix B for a detailed discussion of the classification of Jewish students.

<sup>5</sup> Definitions of groupings of Protestants follow Steensland et al. (2000).

<sup>6</sup> See Table C2 in Technical Appendix C for two-way tables of frequencies, including 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

<sup>7</sup> See Table C3 in Technical Appendix C for two-way tables of frequencies, including 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

<sup>8</sup> See Technical Appendix B for a detailed discussion of the classification of Jewish students. This discussion also examines the relationship between Jewish identification and religion of parents.

<sup>9</sup> Eighty-three percent of Jewish students at Brandeis identified as Jewish by religion compared to 68 percent of Jews ages 18-29 nationally (Pew Research Center, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> See Table C5 in Technical Appendix C for two-way table of frequencies, including 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

<sup>11</sup> Twenty-nine percent of respondents wrote a response to an open-ended question at the end of the survey asking for additional comments about the Brandeis campus climate.

<sup>12</sup> See Technical Appendix B for the detailed discussion of this analysis.

<sup>13</sup> See Tables C8 and C9 in Technical Appendix C for two-way tables of frequencies, including 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

<sup>14</sup> See Table C11 in Technical Appendix C for two-way table of frequencies, including 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

<sup>15</sup> Chi square tests with one degree of freedom significant at  $p < .001$

<sup>16</sup> Chi square test with three degrees of freedom significant at  $p < .05$

<sup>17</sup> See Table C13 in Technical Appendix C for results of ordered logistic regression model.

<sup>18</sup> International East Asian students were significantly more likely than American East Asian students to report that they had been excluded from participating in a group project because of their racial or ethnic identity (Chi square test with 1 degree of freedom significant at  $p < .01$ ). For all other experiences of discrimination there were no significant differences between American East Asian and international East Asian students.

<sup>19</sup> The questions in the current survey about physical attack based on gender or sexual orientation do not measure rates of sexual assault. Rates of physical assault reported here should not be compared to rates of sexual assault reported in the university's (Brandeis University, 2015) campus climate survey on sexual misconduct and do not contradict the findings of that survey.

<sup>20</sup> Respondents were asked to report about experiences of discrimination that were related to either their gender or their sexual orientation.

<sup>21</sup> All ten experiences except physical attack loaded strongly on a single factor (eigenvalue 3.49). Cronbach's alpha was .833 for the remaining nine items. See Table C19 in Technical Appendix C for factor analysis results.

<sup>22</sup> Interaction terms between race/ethnicity and gender were not significant. See Table C20 in Technical Appendix C for results of negative binomial regression model. These basic results were also confirmed by a series of binary logistic regression models run on each type of discrimination experience, which can also be found in Table C21 in Technical Appendix C.

<sup>23</sup> The analyses in this section focus on differences by primary religion. Thus, all those who listed their primary religion as Jewish, are classified as Jewish for the purpose of these analyses. Jews of no religion are classified as "unaffiliated."

<sup>24</sup> See Technical Appendix B for the detailed discussion of this analysis.

<sup>25</sup> See Table C28 in Technical Appendix C for two way tables of frequencies including 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

<sup>26</sup> Following the Pew Research Center (2013) protocol, those who identify as Jewish and another religion and those who have Jewish ancestry but do not consider themselves Jewish for any reason are not considered Jewish in the remaining analyses in the report.

<sup>27</sup> Forty-two respondents who identified as Jewish also identified as students of color including Black, Hispanic, and East Asian.

<sup>28</sup> International East Asian students who are not Jewish were slightly more likely than American East Asian students who are not Jewish to agree that there is a hostile environment toward Israel on campus (Chi square with five degrees of freedom significant at  $p < .05$ ).

<sup>29</sup> See Table C34 in Technical Appendix C for two-way tables of frequencies, including 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

<sup>30</sup> See Table C35 in Technical Appendix C for two-way tables of frequencies, including 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

<sup>31</sup> See Table C36 in Technical Appendix C for two-way tables of frequencies, including 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

<sup>32</sup> See Table C37 in Technical Appendix C for two-way tables of frequencies, including 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

<sup>33</sup> See Table C38 in Technical Appendix C for two-way tables of frequencies, including 95% confidence intervals and significance tests.

<sup>34</sup> See Table C39 in Technical Appendix C for results of ordered logistic regression model.

<sup>35</sup> Comments about the climate for open debate at Brandeis were among the most common responses to the open-ended question at the end of the survey.

<sup>36</sup> See Table C41 in Technical Appendix C for results of ordered logistic regression model.

<sup>37</sup> See Table C44 in Technical Appendix C for results of ordered logistic regression model.

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