



THE WORKMEN'S CIRCLE SURVEY OF AMERICAN JEWS

Jews, Economic Justice & the Vote in 2012

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Overview

Economic justice concerns were the critical consideration dividing Jews voting for Obama from those who voted for Romney in 2012. These findings emerge from a national survey of American Jews fielded just after Election Day, in a study we conducted for the Workmen's Circle. In results not reported elsewhere, the post-election survey disclosed that beyond the two-thirds margin of Jewish voters choosing the Democratic presidential candidate, more than two-thirds voted Democratic in House and Senate races across the country. These results are consistent with findings regarding party affiliation among Jews, who continue to identify heavily as Democrats as opposed to Republicans by a 3:1 margin (59% vs. 20%, with 21% independents). Equally striking, and notwithstanding repeated predictions to the contrary, Jews continue to identify heavily as liberal rather than conservative (55% vs. 26% with 19% identifying as moderate).

In addition, the survey disclosed that Orthodox Jews were about 50 percentage points more likely to vote for the Republican candidate – be it for President, Senate, or Congress -- and men were about 11 percentage points more likely to do so than women. In sharp contrast to the powerful influence of economic justice attitudes, commitment to Israel exerted the least impact among six issues measured. Once a voter's positions were determined on economic justice and certain other domestic issues, their attachment to Israel made hardly any difference in predicting their vote for President, Senate, and the House.

The Survey

The field work for the study was carried out by YouGov, a global market research company. In our analysis, we drew upon a pre-election survey of 2,671 Jews, a subset of whom (N=2,067) participated in the post-election survey sponsored by the Workmen's Circle. The results were weighted according to a variety of known socio-demographic targets.

The Findings

▪ More Spending, More Government Services

Coming on the heels of an election campaign that focused attention on budget deficits, taxation, government regulation of business and related issues, American Jews came down consistently on the side of increased spending on social welfare and regulating big business. Asked to choose between the contrasting positions of fewer government services with reduced spending vs. many more services with increased spending, Jews in the survey opted for the latter (43% vs. 37%). In contrast, by more than a two-to-one ratio, they preferred decreasing defense spending to increasing defense spending (53% vs. 26%).

Issue: Government should provide many fewer services; Reduce spending a lot vs. Government should provide many more services; Increase spending a lot

	1 Fewer Services	2	3	4 Neutral	5	6	7 More Services
%	15.5	8.8	11.5	21.4	20.0	15.5	7.4

Issue: Greatly decrease defense spending vs. Greatly increase defense spending

	1 Less Spending	2	3	4 Neutral	5	6	7 More Spending
%	15.5	18.6	18.5	21.7	12.7	6.1	7.0

- **Help the needy**

The survey asked respondents to choose between two starkly different approaches to spending on needy Americans. One alternative was, “The government should do more to help needy Americans, even if it means going deeper into debt.” The other: “The government today can’t afford to do much more to help the needy.” Here too, the Jewish sample preferred the liberal option (40% vs. 32%). By a 43% to 31% margin, more agreed with the view that, “Poor people have hard lives because government benefits don’t go far enough to help them live decently,” than with the position that “Poor people today have it easy because they can get government benefits without doing anything in return.”

Issue: The government should do more to help needy Americans, even if it means going deeper into debt. vs. The government today can't afford to do much more to help the needy.

	1 Help	2	3 Neutral	4	5 Can't Afford
%	13.3	26.2	28.2	15.9	16.4

Issue: Poor people today have it easy because they can get government benefits without doing anything in return vs. Poor people have hard lives because government benefits don't go far enough to help them live decently.

	1 Have It Easy	2	3 Neutral	4	5 Hard Lives
%	14.8	16.5	25.3	23.6	19.8

- **Defend Medicare:**

By almost a two-to-one ratio, respondents expressed the belief that Medicare can be preserved without cutting benefits (50% vs. 28%).

Asked specifically about proposed changes in Medicare, a 53% to 37% margin favored only “minor modifications” or leaving things the way they are, as opposed to “major changes” or a “complete overhaul.”

Issue: Medicare Changes

	%
Complete Overhaul	11.3
Major Changes	26.1
Unsure	9.1
Minor Modifications	44.1
OK the way it is	9.3

- **Skeptical View of Big Business**

On all questions asked pertaining to regulating business, a majority of American Jews express views associated with the liberal or progressive camps in the United States. By a two-to-one ratio, they see government regulation of business as necessary to protect the public interest, rather than “usually doing more harm than good” (55% vs. 28%).

Issue: Government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest. vs. Government regulation of business usually does more harm than good.

	1 Necessary	2	3 Neutral	4	5 Does Harm
%	32.1	25.2	14.6	15.3	12.8

- **Too much power, too much profit**

The positive view of government regulation of business is complemented by a highly skeptical view of large corporations. By a lopsided margin of 67% to 14%, American Jews agree that “too much power is concentrated in the hands of a few large companies,” as contrasted with the opposing view. Similarly, by a two-to-one ratio, they believe that “business corporations make too much profit” as opposed to the belief that “most corporations make a fair and reasonable amount of profit.”

In simple terms, most American Jews believe that big business is too powerful, takes in too much profit and merits government regulation in the public interest.

**Issue: Too much power is concentrated in the hands of a few large companies.
vs. The largest companies do NOT have too much power.**

	1 Too Much	2	3 Neutral	4	5 Not Too Much
%	44.8	22.3	18.5	8.5	5.9

**Issue: Business corporations make too much profit. vs.
Most corporations make a fair and reasonable amount of profit**

	1 Too Much	2	3 Neutral	4	5 Reasonable
%	28.2	24.0	20.4	14.5	12.8

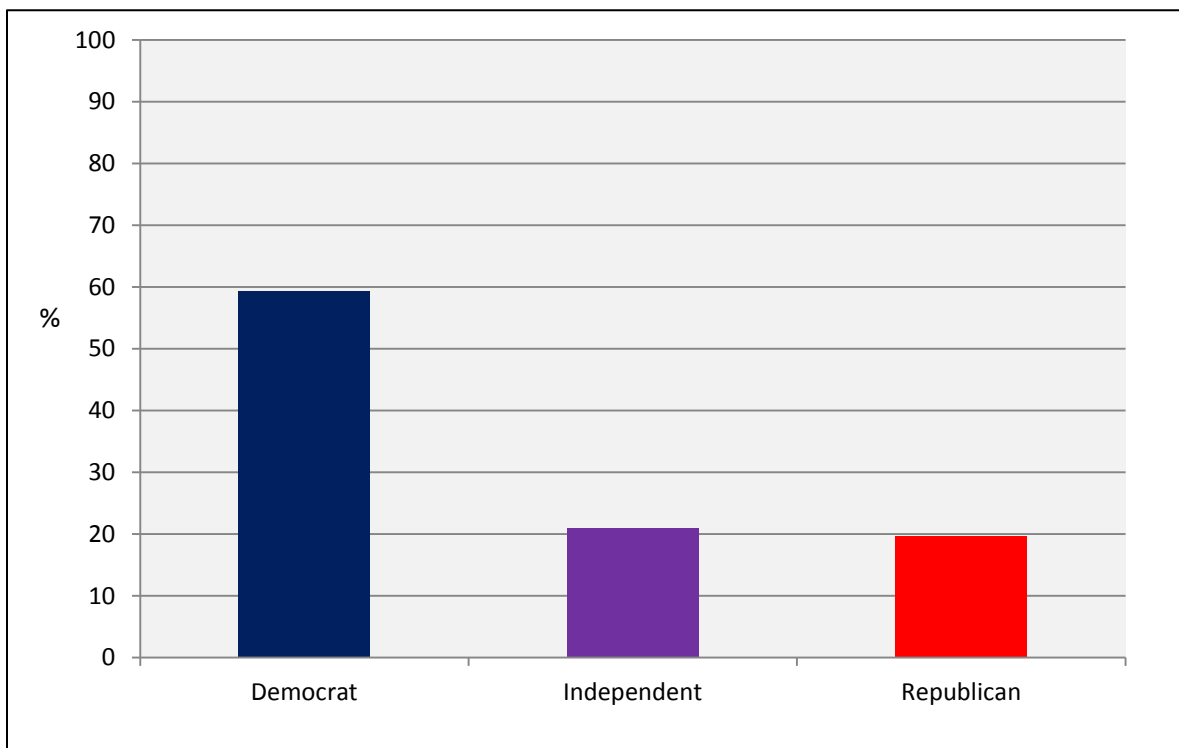
- **Economic Justice Drove the Vote**

Not only do Jews hold fairly liberal to progressive positions on economic justice issues; their views on such matters emerge as the principal decision-making fulcrum in their choice for president, as well as for senators and congressional representatives.

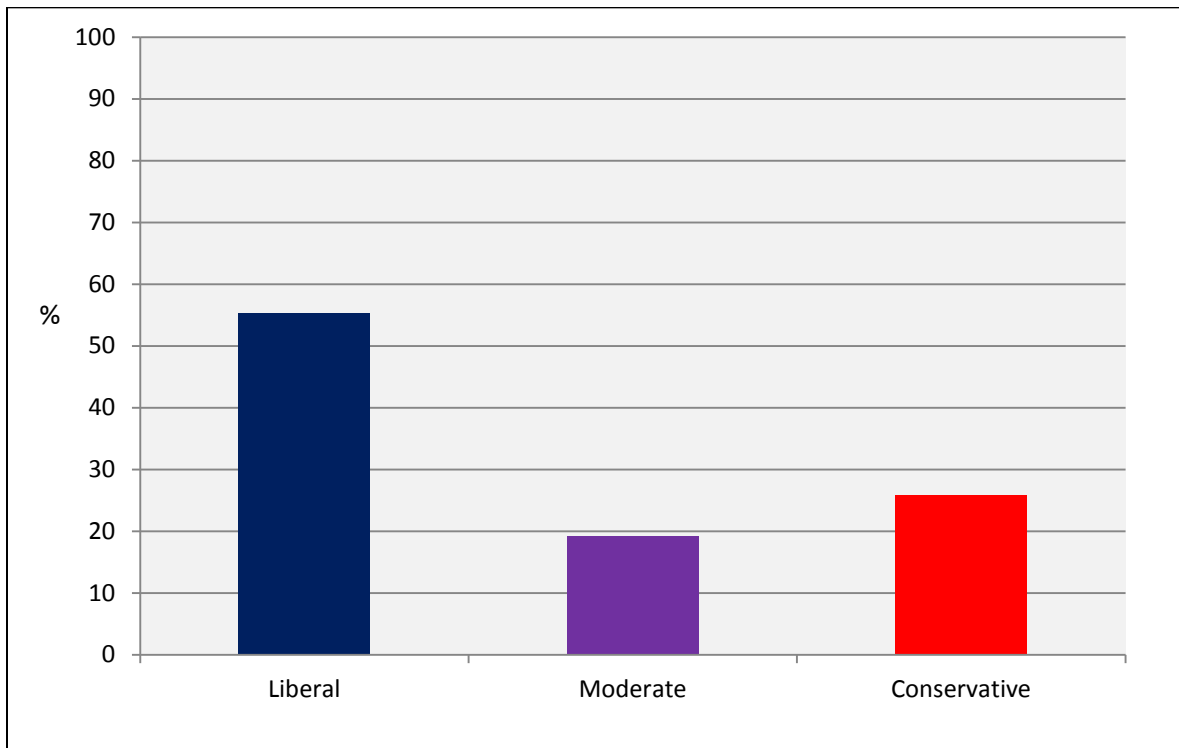
Democrats over Republicans

By way of background: In this sample, the Obama/Romney vote split 68%/32%, closely approximating the 69%/31% seen among American Jews in major exit polls released after Election Day. As mentioned above, two-thirds of Jewish voters cast their ballots for the Democratic presidential candidates; more than two-thirds voted Democratic in House and Senate races across the country. These results are consistent with findings regarding Jews' party affiliation, as they continue to identify heavily as Democrats as opposed rather than Republicans by a 3:1 margin (59% vs. 20%, with 21% independents). Equally striking, notwithstanding repeated predictions to the contrary, Jews continue to identify heavily as liberal rather than conservative (55% vs. 26% with 19% moderate).

Partisan Identification



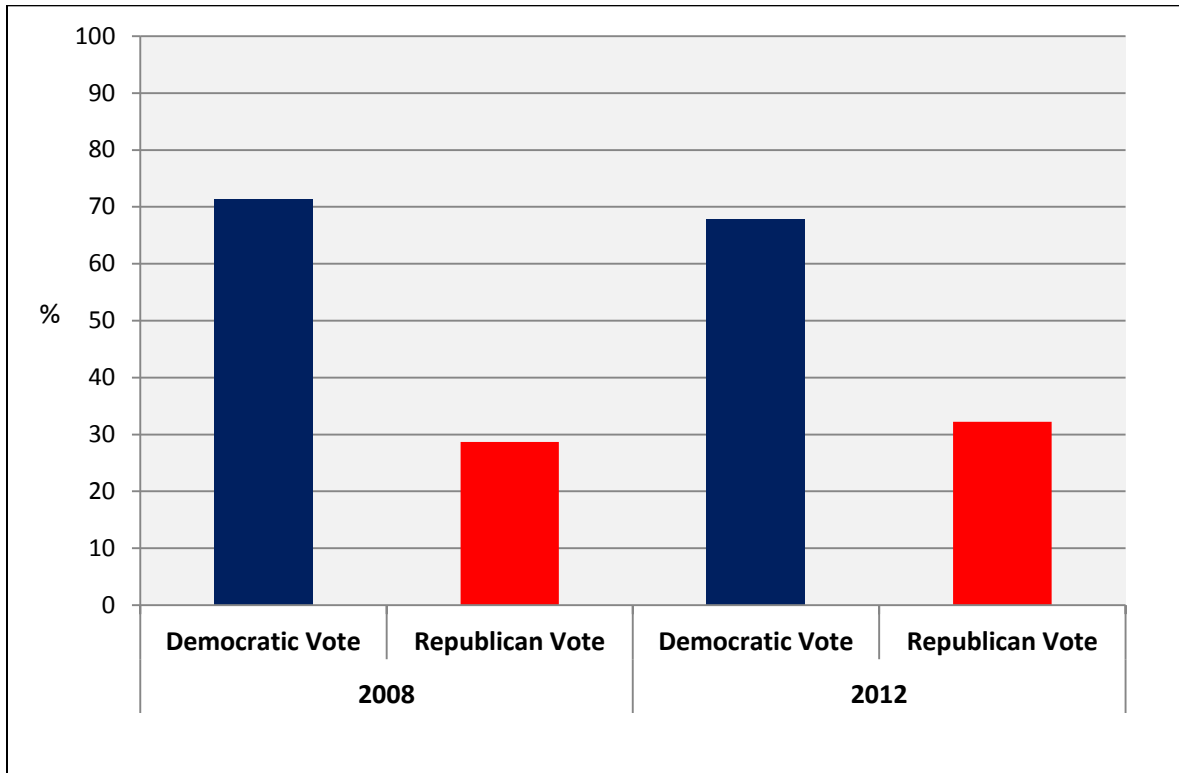
Political Ideology



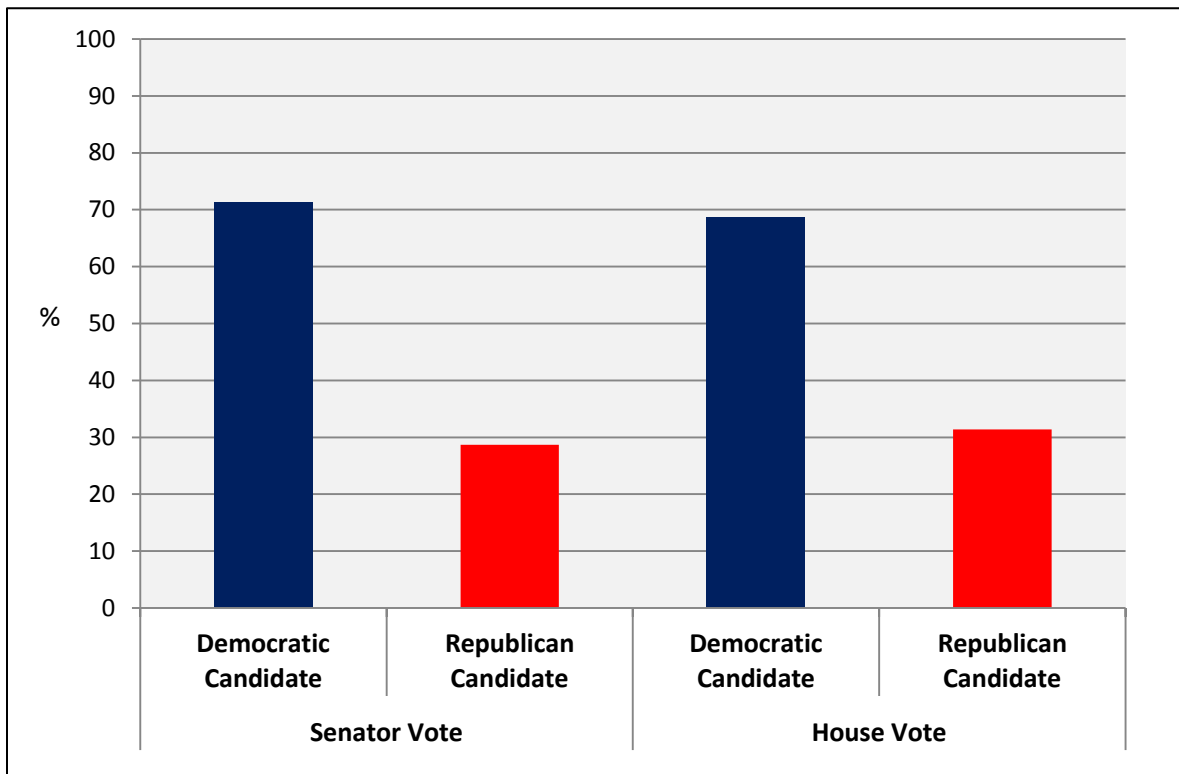
Who voted how?

Using multivariate analysis techniques, the researchers estimated the impact of both socio-demographic characteristics and political attitudes on voting for President, Senate and the House. In all three instances, similar patterns emerged. Controlling for education and gender, Orthodox Jews were about 50 percentage points more likely to vote for the Republican candidate – whether for President, Senate, or Congress -- and men were about 11 percentage points more likely to do so than women. Better educated people showed a slightly greater tendency to vote for Democrats, but the statistical impact of education upon the vote paled in comparison with Orthodox identification and was even weaker than the gender effect.

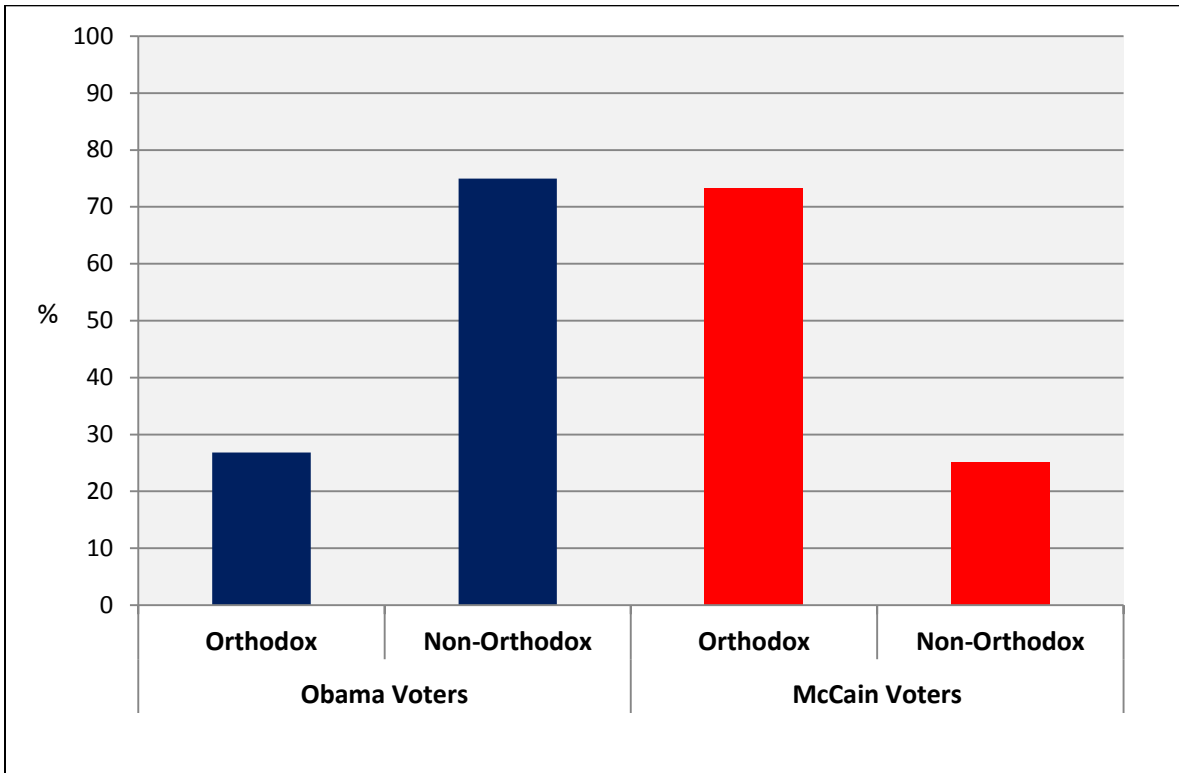
Presidential Vote 2008 and 2012 Compared



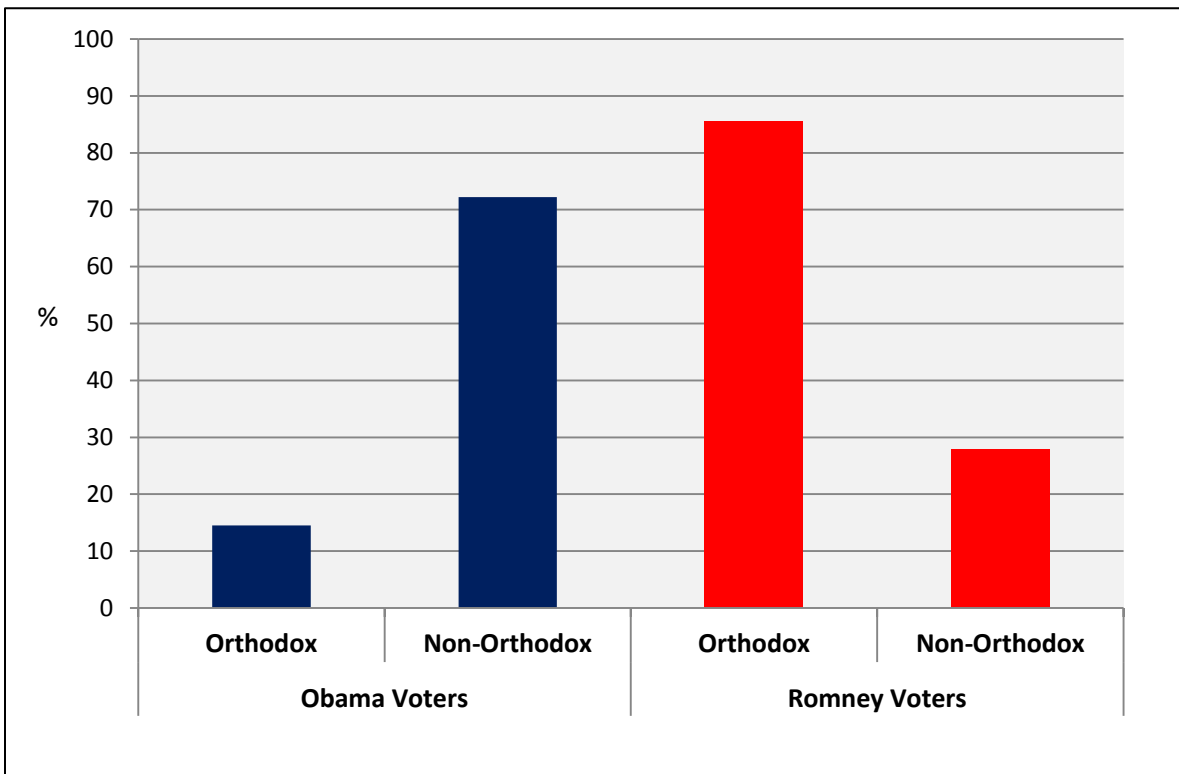
2012 Congressional Vote



2008 Presidential Vote – Orthodox compared to Non-Orthodox Voters



2012 Presidential Vote – Orthodox compared to Non-Orthodox Voters



- **All turns on economic justice**

While controlling for gender, education and Orthodox identity, the researchers next introduced several measures of political attitudes into the analysis. They included measures pertaining to economic justice, climate change, immigration, gender issues, racial discrimination, and commitment to Israel. The results demonstrated that economic justice concerns (an index of answers to questions on spending, services, poverty, and regulation of business, corporate profits and corporate power) are by far the most predictive of voting behavior for President, Senate, and the House. Climate change concerns are the only other attitude cluster to have any substantively significant bearing upon Jews' voting behavior.

In other words, where an American Jewish voter stands on economic justice offers a reliable guide to predicting how he/she will vote. Those scoring high on liberal economic justice views display a high probability of voting Democratic, while those scoring low have a high probability of voting Republican.

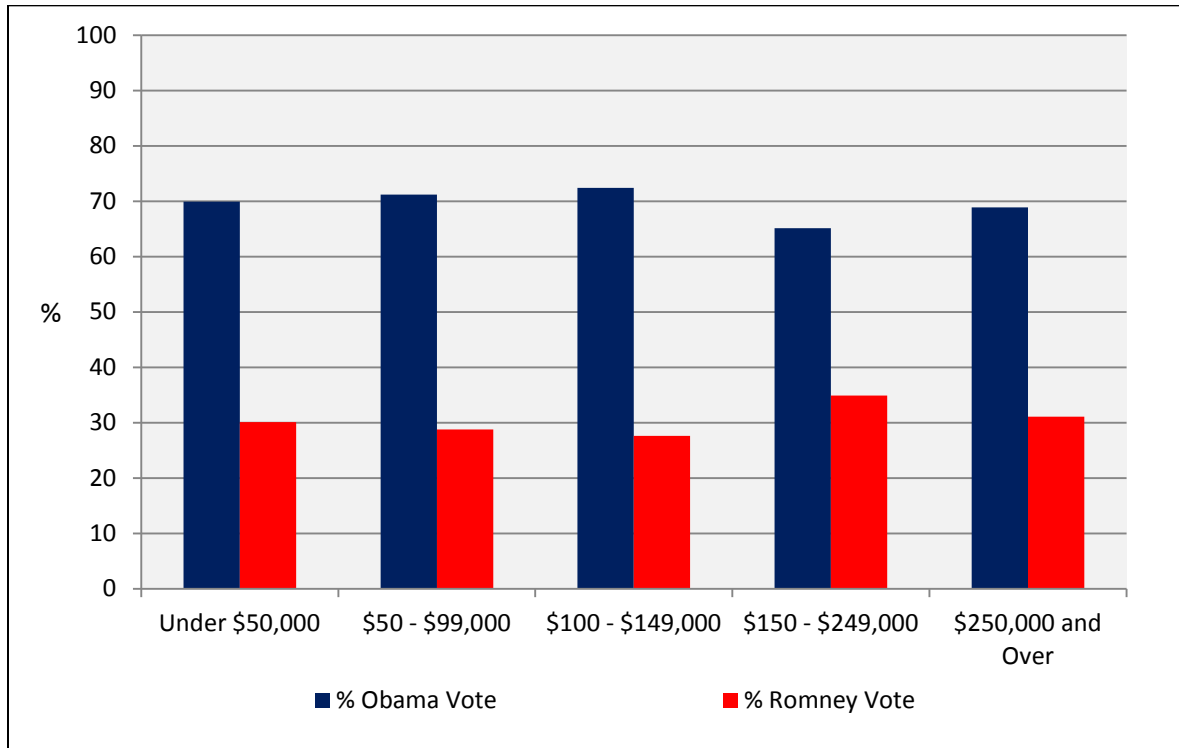
- **Israel a non-issue**

In sharp contrast to the powerful influence of economic justice attitudes, commitment to Israel exerted the least impact of all six measures of attitudes. That is, once we know someone's positions economic justice and the other attitudes, their attachment to Israel made hardly any difference in predicting their vote for President, Senate, and the House.

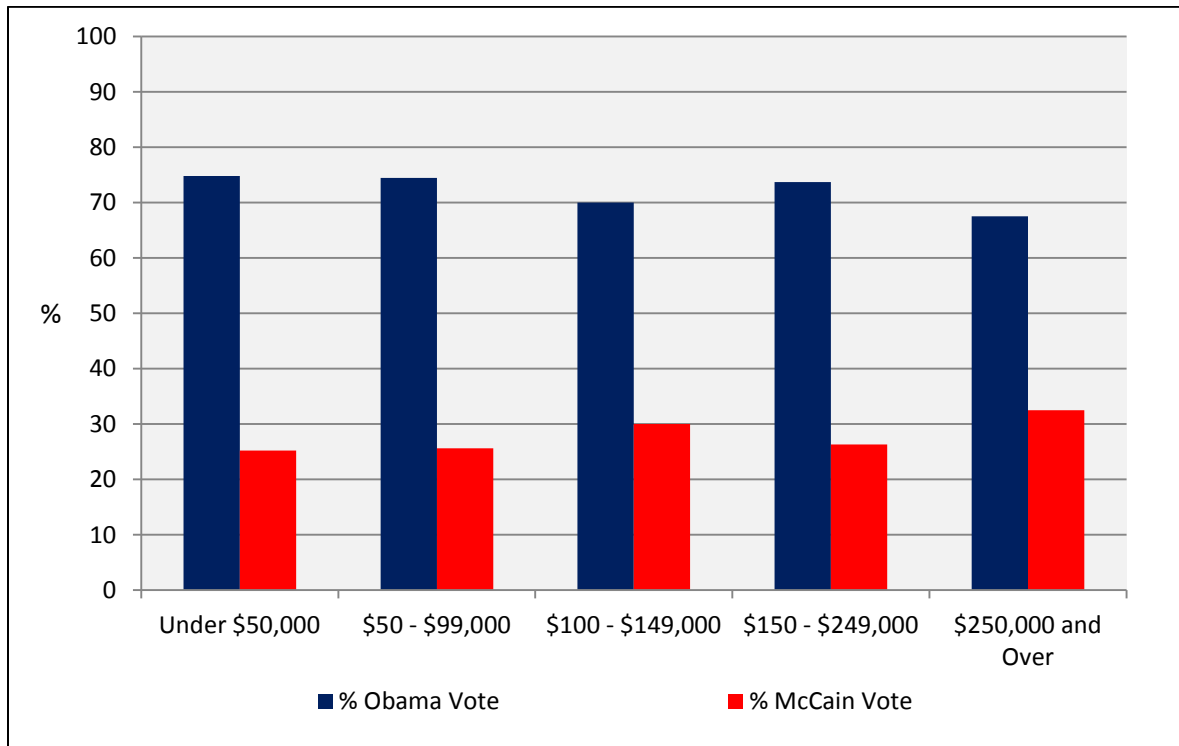
- **Even Wealthiest Jews Favor Economic Justice, Democratic Candidates**

Commitment to economic justice issues is so widespread in the American Jewish population that it extends even to the highest income Jews. Those earning over \$250,000 express liberal views on economic justice as frequently as those earning far less. Moreover, in contrast with the images of some very wealthy Jews financially supporting the candidacies of Mitt Romney and other Republicans, Jews earning \$250,000 or more were as likely as lower-earning Jews to vote for Obama and other Democrats. (With over 2,000 respondents overall, the Workmen's Circle survey contained a sufficient number of high-earning households to draw reliable inferences.)

2012 Presidential Vote by Income



2008 Presidential Vote by Income



- **Polls Apart: The “Red” Orthodox vs. “Blue” non-Orthodox**

Orthodox Jews differ dramatically from other Jews on economic justice issues, voting preferences, and, in fact, all other social and political attitudes measured in the Workmen’s Circle survey. In contrast with non-Orthodox, Orthodox Jews hold conservative positions across the board and are about as likely to vote for Republicans as non-Orthodox Jews to vote for Democrats.

For example, while non-Orthodox Jews voted heavily for Obama (72% vs. 28% for Romney), Orthodox Jews voted even more heavily for Romney (86% vs. 14% for Obama). In fact, relative to the Obama/McCain race in 2008, the gap in presidential electoral inclinations between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews grew even wider in 2012. What had been a 48 point gap between Orthodox and non-Orthodox support for Obama in 2008 grew to a 56 point gap in 2012. It remains to be seen whether this growing disparity in electoral behavior presages even larger and more broad-based political differentiation between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews.

Clearly, in terms of their voting behavior, partisan identity, and ideological leanings, American Jews situate themselves on the left-center side of the political spectrum. After isolating the conservative and Republican tendencies among the Orthodox, the non-Orthodox majority leans even further to the left on economic justice issues and other attitudes than the total Jewish population at large.

- **Economic Justice at the Heart of a Complex of Liberal and Progressive Attitudes**

Accompanying the liberal and progressive stances on economic justice issues were a variety of positions of similar political coloration on other issues.

Climate change

One example of a current issue whose answers closely tracked positions on economic justice, was that respondents widely endorsed taking action on climate change. Almost half (46%) endorsed the view that, “Global climate change has been established as a serious problem, and immediate action is necessary.” Another 26% agreed with the slightly more moderate view that, “There is enough evidence that climate change is taking place and some action should be taken.” Only a few took an agnostic view (“we don’t know enough …”) and about the same number rejected the notion that climate change is genuine or demands some action. When asked to prioritize the environment or jobs, a plurality came down on the side of the environment (44% vs. 29%).

Issue: Views on Climate Change

	%
Climate Change - Occurring	71.9
Global climate change has been established as a serious problem, and immediate action is necessary.	45.8
There is enough evidence that climate change is taking place and some action should be taken.	26.1
Climate Change – Not Occurring	28.0
We don't know enough about global climate change, and more research is necessary before we take any actions.	13.3
Concern about global climate change is exaggerated. No action is necessary.	8.7
Global climate change is not occurring; this is not a real issue.	6.0

Abortion

In another domain, also closely correlated with economic justice issues, three-quarters (75%) of the respondents took the most expansive position on abortion by affirming that, “By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice.” Three more restrictive stances together garnered only 25%, with just 1% advocating the view that abortion should never be legal. Underlying this liberal stance on abortion is a commitment to gender equality (“Women and men should have equal roles”) that far outweighs (88% to 5%) a more traditional sex-role orientation (“A woman's place is in the home”). In contrast, a slight majority of Orthodox Jews (53%) holds highly restrictive position on abortion. Some (6%) believes that abortion should be illegal, and others (47%) would want abortion legal only in cases of incest, rape, or when the woman’s life is in danger (47%).

Issue: Abortion

	%
By law, abortion should never be permitted	1.3
The law should permit abortion only in the case of rape, incest, or when the woman’s life is in danger	11.4
The law should permit abortion for reasons other than rape, incest, or danger to the woman’s life, but only after the ne.	12.5
By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice	74.8

Issue: Women and Men Should Have Equal Roles vs. A Woman’s Place is in the Home

	1 Equal Roles	2	3	4 Neutral	5	6	7 In the Home
%	72.0	10.1	5.7	7.1	2.2	1.4	1.5

Gay marriage

In the context of their liberal economic and social leanings, it is not surprising that Jews overwhelmingly (78% vs. 22%) favor legalizing gay marriage. In contrast, by 70% to 30%, Orthodox Jews oppose gay marriage.

Issue: Gay Marriage

	%
Favor	78.0
Oppose	22.0

Immigration

In another realm – treatment of immigrants – Jews also lean towards the liberal side of the spectrum. Given a choice between two contrasting views – “Immigrants today strengthen our country because of their hard work and talents,” or “Immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing and health care” – a lopsided four-to-one majority (60% vs. 15%) opted for the more positive view of immigrants. Not surprisingly, most (60%) respondents favored granting legal status to “all illegal immigrants who have held jobs and paid taxes for at least 3 years, and not been convicted of any felony crimes,” and three quarters would grant “automatic citizenship to American-born children of illegal immigrants.” On this issue, Orthodox Jews are twice as likely as the non-Orthodox to advocate more restrictive policy stances toward illegal immigrants and their children.

Issue: Immigrants today strengthen our country because of their hard work and talents. vs. Immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing and health care.

	1 Strengthen	2	3 Neutral	4	5 A Burden
%	28.1	32.3	22.5	9.6	7.4

- **Younger Jews more Liberal than Older Jews, among the non-Orthodox**

Among the vast majority of Americans who are not Orthodox, younger adults display even greater levels of liberal views than people their parents' age. Taking those 18-34 and comparing them with those 55-64, we find more voting for Obama over Romney (81%/19% vs. 73%/27%), more identifying as Democrats rather than Republicans (72%/8% vs. 63%/15%), and more seeing themselves as liberals rather than conservative (73%/13% vs. 56%/24%). In other words, among the non-Orthodox, the proportion of those who are Republican or conservative among young adults is about half as many as among Baby Boomers.

If the Orthodox are considered together with the non-Orthodox, their growing share of the younger population counterbalances the increasing liberalism of the younger non-Orthodox. Thus, two seemingly contradictory observations may be made about younger American Jews. Overall, younger American Jews are neither more nor less liberal than their elders. Additionally, among the non-Orthodox alone, younger American Jews surpass their elders on most critical measures of liberal or progressive attitudes, while younger Orthodox Jews are equally as conservative as their Orthodox elders.

- **Economic Justice: The Key Issue**

The 2012 elections, coupled with current headline events, may well have sharpened positions and social identities related to economic justice issues. The Great Recession took hold in 2008-09, and while foreign affairs and social issues continue to animate public discourse, over the last few years, the economy and recovery from the Recession held center stage on the American political agenda. The Presidential campaign drew sharply contrasting views on such matters as the size of government, entitlements, services, taxes, budgets, and the deficit. The candidates projected very different views regarding the beneficiaries of social entitlements, engaging in a debate richly punctuated by moral considerations.

Although commitment to a liberal view of economic justice has long been a staple of American Jewish political thinking, dating back at least to the early 20th century, the 2012 election and news coverage may well have served to further mobilize Jews around economic justice concerns.

From this Workmen's Circle post-election survey, it certainly seems that economic justice issues came to the fore among American Jews in 2012, if not earlier. They strongly identify with liberal and progressive positions on economic justice, and their positions strongly drove their decisions as to whom they would support in races for the presidency, the Senate, and Congress.

Insofar as economic justice questions will remain at the center of national discourse in the coming months and years, Jews can be expected to continue to focus on this domain and, will continue to endorse more liberal approaches to the major economic questions of the day.