

Report on Antisemitism Among Graduate Students at the University of Toronto

This report was compiled by a small group of Jewish graduate students with quantitative and qualitative analysis backgrounds. We each have differing views, and wherever possible, we were trying to develop a questionnaire and interview process that avoided leading questions, pushing respondents in specific directions with their responses while simultaneously maximizing the anonymity of the participants. Due to these reasons, not all the data will be made available out of concern for those students who would be identified from their answers, and this applies to both the qualitative and quantitative sections of the report.

Primary Concerns Among Jewish Grads at UofT:

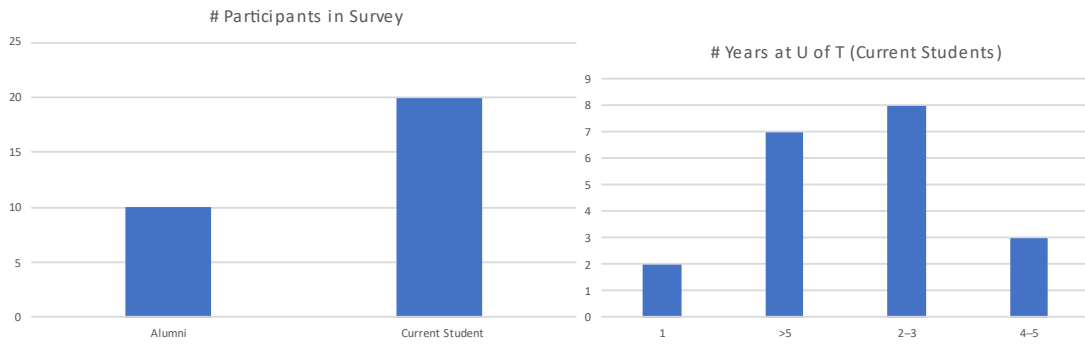
In a closed meeting of Jewish graduate students, we built a set of points that we felt should be communicated with the University of Toronto Graduate Student Union (UTGSU) Executives, with the hopes that it guides ongoing discussion and can be the foundation of a plan to reduce the UTGSU's role in exacerbating and participating in the ongoing issues of antisemitism on campus. These points are:

1. Sharing the stats on antisemitism.
2. Making it unequivocally clear that for many Jewish students (especially those with marginalized identities), sharing Jewish identity on campus and especially at the UTGSU is a scary and uncomfortable experience.
3. There needs to be a commitment to continued education on antisemitism from the UTGSU Executives.
4. There must be practical advocacy for Jewish students concerns and issues by the UTGSU moving forward.
5. Almost all participants have a deep discomfort with the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Caucus of the UTGSU.

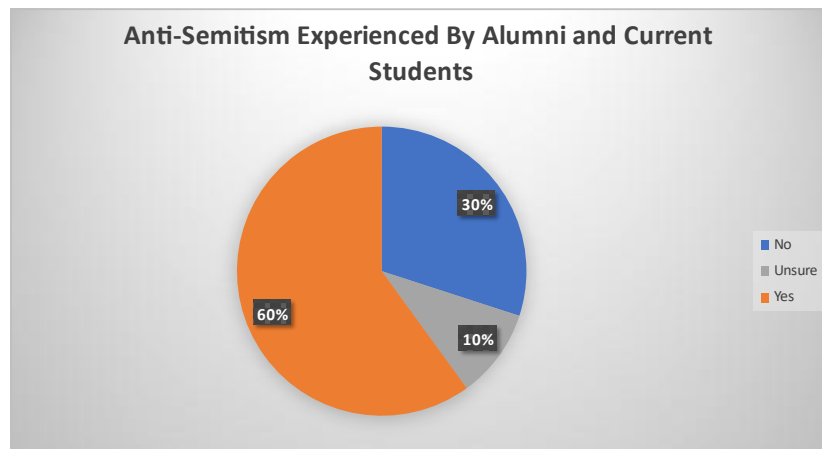
These points will each be addressed in the rest of the report below.

Statistics:

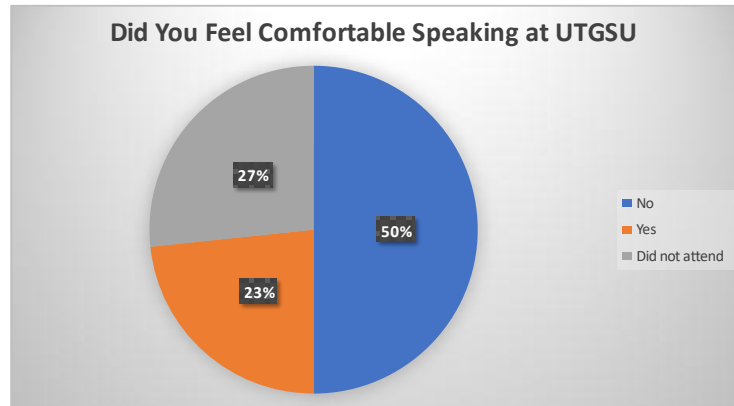
Who Filled Out The Survey



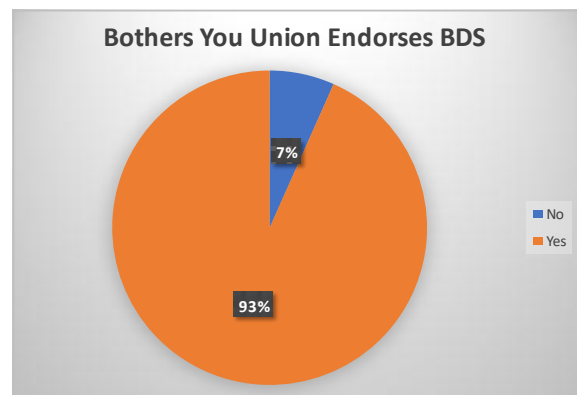
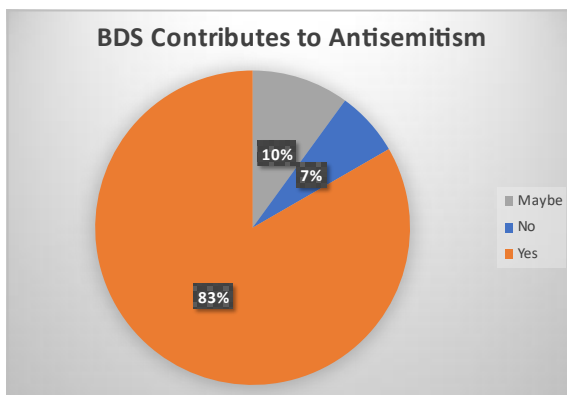
Experience Anti-Semitism



Comfortability with UTGSU and Attending Meetings



BDS Concerns



Experiences of Antisemitism:

As the above statistics demonstrate, a frightening number of Jewish graduate students have experiences antisemitism during their time at UofT. These experiences merit a bit of expansion to demonstrate what kinds of antisemitism Jewish graduate students experience. It should be clearly noted that many experiences such as these occur within UTGSU spaces.

1. Direct antisemitism: These experiences are direct and explicit antisemitism, with the individual being the target.
 - a. Jewish stereotyping and insinuations including:
 - i. Claims that all Jews are rich.
 - ii. Jews receive preferential treatment at UofT.
 - iii. Antisemitic conspiracy theories (e.g.: The Khazar theory, all Jews are Mossad agents, etc.).
 - b. Attacks on Jews for their identity including:
 - i. Shouting insults at visible Jews (e.g. calling them a terrorist for wearing a Kippah, a religious garment, calling someone a “Zionist slut”, etc.)
 - ii. Swastikas and other graffiti
 - iii. Making fun of Jewish holidays.
 - c. Attacks on religious identity itself:
 - i. Challenging the validity of Jewish holidays.
 - ii. Challenging requests for Kosher food.
 - d. Incidents that affect participation in non-Jewish spaces including:
 - i. Requesting Jews appear as “token” Jews for events held allegedly honouring Jewish holidays.
 - ii. Requesting Jews participate in events that conflate Judaism with Christianity (e.g.: events with “Judeo-Christian” speakers without consultation with Jews).
 - iii. Rejection from non-Jewish groups for being Jewish (e.g.: being denied entrance into the Middle Eastern Students Association).
 - e. Holding Jews to a double standard:
 - i. Being told Jewish students have less concern for Nazis and white supremacists than Black students because they don’t impact Jews for being white.
 - ii. Focusing international advocacy at the UTGSU exclusively on Israel.
 - iii. Jewish food needs can be addressed once there are no starving children in Gaza.
 - iv. Denying access to information if someone is identifiably Jewish.

- f. The litmus test of “Are you one of the good Jews?” (i.e.: Demanding Jews present their opinion on Israel-Palestine in order to determine their worth).¹
2. Indirect/Passive antisemitism: These are systemic problems that are built into the university structure itself.
 - a. Lack of access to Kosher food.
 - b. Events scheduled on Jewish holidays, including exams, convocation, meetings, etc.
 - c. Anti-Zionist spaces serving as spaces that allow antisemitism, including classrooms, student groups, and the UTGSU itself.
 - d. Poor or lack of responses to antisemitism at UofT.
3. Borderline/Antisemitism adjacency: These are problems that are not by necessity antisemitic themselves but verge on antisemitism.
 - a. Financial support of spaces that are complicit in antisemitism on campus (e.g. Graduate fees going to the BDS Caucus).
 - b. Questioning validity of antisemitic experiences (e.g.: Asking if the aforementioned swastikas are anti-Jewish or not).
 - c. Lack of accountability in spaces to call out antisemitism among other forms of discrimination (e.g.: Not responding to antisemitic remarks in the December UTGSU annual general meeting that did not reach quorum).

¹ Note: This is one of the most common experiences, and many respondents cite this as the biggest reason they feel uncomfortable in UTGSU spaces, and generally uncomfortable revealing their Jewish identity on campus.

Continued Education on Antisemitism for the UTGSU Executives:

In some capacity, the Jewish graduate students requested that training by the UTGSU Executives on antisemitism both get reported on to the Jewish graduate community and possibly include the community in some way.

This means that a contact person be assigned to the UTGSU executive to receive a report on the training. Additionally, that potential meetings occur with engaged Jewish graduate students and the UTGSU Executives to build solidarity and rapport between the two pieces of the graduate community.

Practical Advocacy Commitments:

The UTGSU has the potential to be a strong ally for the Jewish graduate community, as the UTGSU has demonstrated a genuine commitment to advocacy and allyship for many groups which are discriminated against on campus, including but not limited to the Black graduate community and the Queer graduate community.

The BDS Issues:

There is a complicated relationship between the UTGSU and the BDS caucus, as the caucus is endorsed by and receives funding from the UTGSU. Most Jewish graduate students felt deeply uncomfortable with this, and even those who did not feel that BDS as an idea was inherently antisemitic either expressed concerns that BDS as a movement is a breeding ground for antisemitism or that specifically, the BDS Caucus of the UTGSU is antisemitic. Effectively, all but a small minority of students felt that the BDS Caucus makes them uncomfortable, whether from general antisemitic remarks, verbal attacks directed at specific individuals, or contributing to an environment that makes Jewish students feel uncomfortable and afraid of revealing their Jewish identity.

Participants cited votes on BDS as the main reason for attending UTGSU meetings, with the next largest group being Student Union representatives. For Jewish graduate students, the UTGSU is almost synonymous with BDS, and the two are inextricably connected. While there is a vocal minority who feel that the BDS Caucus could be maintained if major changes are made and a small number who felt that the BDS Caucus could be maintained without any changes, the overwhelming majority feel bothered by the Union's endorsement of BDS and believe that it contributes to antisemitism. They support the dismantling of the BDS Caucus, which would alleviate the negative associations between the BDS Caucus and the UTGSU at large.