

The Religious Seculars: How Does Yom Kippur Impact Electoral Turnout?

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ABSTRACT: Does Yom Kippur impact electoral turnout in religious and secular Jewish communities in Israel? By collecting data on electoral behavior in elections to local councils from 1983 to 2018 in Jewish-secular, Jewish-religious and non-Jewish municipalities, this research attempts to elucidate the relationship between the communal Yom Kippur experience and electoral turnout. This research finds that the Yom Kippur experience appears to decrease turnout in secular municipalities, while no statistically significant impact was observed in religious municipalities. Research on the psychological significance of novelty and religious events, as well as ethnographic analysis of Israel, suggests that the Yom Kippur experience undermines the stakes of both intra- and inter-communal disputes, decreasing the perceived significance of the elections in the heterogeneous secular municipalities. Further research is necessary to explore the politically potent religious undertones of Israeli secular identity.

Introduction

As election campaigning approaches the ballot date, politicians encourage citizens to pilgrimage to the polls and exercise their “civic” right to vote. They emphasize that electoral participation is paramount to the maintenance of accountable government, and that democracy demands the participation of the citizenry in the political process. Yet despite the rhetoric, citizens in the developed world seem increasingly less inclined to vote. Mirroring this worrying pattern, turnouts have substantially decreased in Israel over the years, in both national and municipal elections. Consistent turnout decline, however, does not fully encompass the puzzle the Israeli voter poses to researchers; electoral participation in Israel has been the most volatile out of all OECD countries between 1996 and 2015.¹ Furthermore, Israeli attitudes towards secularization defy trends in the developed world. Judaism remains inseparable from the Israeli experience, and most Israelis refuse both modern secularism and religious orthodoxy. As the Israeli identity crisis festers, questions surrounding religion’s role in the public sphere are increasingly salient on party platforms. Meanwhile, social rifts in Israel have widened due to right-wing populism and the occupation of Palestine, rendering electoral participation more important than ever.

Considering both the significance of electoral turnout to a vibrant democracy and Judaism to Israelis, this research aims to contribute to the literature on elections in Israel. Specifically, this research strives to delineate the impact of Yom Kippur on electoral turnout among religious and secular communities. Literature on the impact of religious events on electoral turnout is lacking, and existing scholarship is ambivalent about the impact of Yom Kippur on political participation. On one hand, research finds that individuals exposed to religious messages are more politically assertive and willing to participate. On the other hand, other scholars find that religious

experiences bolster political attitudes that potentially reduce the importance of elections. By analyzing elections in religious and secular municipalities in Israel from 1983 to 2018, I find that Yom Kippur diminishes electoral turnout in secular municipalities but has no statistically significant impact in religious municipalities.

Literature Review

The fact that citizens participate in elections itself is the underlying enigma of election turnout research. Drawing upon Ordenshook and Riker's observation that the power of the individual to impact election results is infinitely small, Macaluso and Wanat deduce that voting cannot be comprehensively explained from a purely "utilitarian" perspective². Scholars presented numerous explanations for why individuals vote despite their votes' insignificance to electoral outcomes. Gerber and Cutts explore the possibility that voting is driven by "habit-formation"^{3 4}. Other scholars conjectured that voting is valued as a "civic duty" in liberal democracies^{5 6}. Relatively recently, scholars began earnestly examining voting as an expressive act^{7 8}. Striving to revise the paradigm, scholars such as Franklin et al. criticized the focus on the voter in explaining turnout patterns, claiming that the elections themselves, and how they are perceived are the main driver behind turnout⁹. The focus on the elections rather than the individual buttresses numerous theories, such as the "stakes-hypothesis", which posits that individuals decide to vote based on the perceived significance of the elections.

Yet despite the miscellaneous motivations to vote, turnout changes in every election. Among the most studied explanations for changes in electoral turnout is economic performance, yet scholars disagree about the direction of the impact. Rosenstone and Park find that poor economic performance decreases political participation, while Lau finds evidence that negative perceptions of economic performance are correlated with higher turnout rates^{10 11 12}. Hofseter finds that higher levels of competition between parties enhances electoral¹³. Lending validity to the "stakes-hypothesis," Pacek finds that the perception of the importance of elections most accurately captures changes in electoral participation¹⁴. Correspondingly, Zimmer claims that social diversity within a community increases political participation as it increases competition for resources¹⁵. Geys cites research by G. Cohen indicating that homogeneity, rather than heterogeneity, increases electoral participation, yet finds evidence that provides some support for Zimmer's thesis¹⁶. Stockemer and Wittington find that election turnout also appears to be impacted by the proximity of an election to a war¹⁷.

Despite contradicting views on the motivation for and differences in turnout, religion appears to be a consistently accurate predictor of both turnout and political affiliation, as well as a reliable motivator for electoral participation. Research has found that individuals who frequent religious institutions exhibit higher election turnouts¹⁸. Macaluso and Wanat find that the more ritualistic a religion is the higher electoral participation among its members¹⁹. Scholars designed numerous explanations for the high turnout displayed by religious individuals. Brady et al. postulates that attendance in religious services facilitates the development of civic skills that are indispensable to political participation²⁰. Luedeman suggests that voting in elections may be perceived as a religious act²¹. Gerber et al. asserts that political participation is often socially mandated by fellow parishioners and churches are often explicitly political, increasing voting rates among church frequenters²². Nonetheless, research on the impact of religion on electoral participation has almost exclusively focused on associational religiosity. Scholars have largely disregarded the potential role of religious ideas or personal religiosity in impacting turnout. Religious "communalism" is prevalent in Israel, especially among "Traditionalists," who are less

likely to frequent the synagogue but exhibit comparable levels of religious beliefs to Orthodox Jews²³.

The focus on the “associationally religious” also overlooked singular religious experiences and their potential impact on political attitudes. The meager research on singular religious experiences indicates that they may meaningfully influence political attitudes. Clingingsmith et al. explores the impact of the Hajj on Pakistani participants, finding that Hajjis are more tolerant of other ethnic and religious groups, and endorse peace, equality and harmony²⁴. McLendon and Riedl find that religious “self-reaffirmation” messages ameliorate propensity towards political participation among participants²⁵. Their findings reaffirm previous inferences by Rosenstone that “a sense of personal efficacy” is likely to induce political participation²⁶. Most salient to this research, Cohen-Zada et al. establishes that participation in the “Selichot”, a communal prayer at the synagogue during Yom Kippur, increases risk-seeking behavior as well as trust in Muslims, and decreases support for political compromise²⁷. Psychological research elucidates that the impact of the repetition of religious activities diminishes over time. For example, Sheldon finds that individuals prefer novelty to repetition, suggesting that a motley of activities are indispensable to sustaining happiness²⁸. Likewise, theories of decreasing marginal utility were applied to religious goods by previous scholars, such as Zaleski and Zech²⁹. The literature appears to support the notion that a religious activity is more impactful the first time it is experienced, and utility to the individual moulders with repeated experience.

Yom Kippur is an annual religious experience that constitutes “one of the most prominent days in contemporary Israeli public culture”, transcending the secular-religious divide. Yom Kippur is arguably the most significant fast in Judaism, as individuals settle their “account with God” by fasting and expressing remorse for their sins³⁰. Little research is devoted to the relationship between religious fasting and politics; in their historical analysis of fasting in Scotland, Stephen concludes that collective fasting was a socially unifying experience³¹. Correspondingly, in Israel, religious and secular Jews alike frequent the synagogue annually for the fast. Despite the prominence of secular Jewish culture in Israel, Keissar-Sugarmen finds that “a sweeping majority of Jews” in Israel abide by the fast³². While Cohen-Zada et al. earnestly explores the impact of Selichot, they fail to account for the entirety of the Yom Kippur experience. Throughout the holiday all business and transportation activities stop; As television programs cease to air, bicycles fill the streets. None of these social prohibitions are enshrined by law, yet they are followed with equal vehemence by both secular and religious citizens. At the center of Yom Kippur is the individual’s relationship to God, family, and the community. Throughout Yom Kippur, Israelis “contemplate the previous year and try to be better people”³³. In the public sphere, individuals stroll the streets “meeting with people in the neighborhood” and greet passersby with the ritualistic “See you next Yom Kippur”. At home, individuals resort to spending quality time with their families; often, they fast but remain at home and do not visit the synagogue. Therefore, the Cohen-Zada account captures merely one version of Yom Kippur and fails to encompass some of the amorphous and communal aspects, as well as the personal traditions, of Yom Kippur.

Despite the absence of research directly addressing the relationship between religious experiences and turnout, the aforementioned research could be manipulated to hypothesize both an increase and a decrease in political participation following Yom Kippur. Research on electoral behavior among religious individuals seems to insinuate that after a religious experience, an individual would be more willing to participate in elections. For religious individuals, Yom Kippur might constitute a reaffirmation of their association with the synagogue and their Jewish identity, relationships that foster greater political participation. Among seculars, the rush to the synagogues

during Yom Kippur might expose individuals to the “organized-religion effect” on political attitudes, civic skills and sense of duty. Secular individuals, who intuitively are more connected with Judaism during Yom Kippur, might see value in voting as a religious act. Perhaps the Yom Kippur experience, which is associated with the community and the family, buttresses a sense of social responsibility and consequently increases the stakes of the elections. Following Yom Kippur secular individuals might frequent the synagogue more often. Therefore, there are myriad hypothetical explanations, rooted in the literature, that support the notion that Yom Kippur may enhance electoral participation.

Conversely, the research on the impact of religious experiences on political positions lends itself to the turnout-diminishing effect hypothesis. Research on both the Haj and Yom Kippur found that attitudes towards out-group members improve following the religious experience. Considering the Israeli social hodgepodge and its political cleavages, the softening of attitudes towards out-group members could potentially diminish the stakes of the elections. Among the most salient issues in every Israeli election is Judaism’s role in the public sphere. Secular-leftist parties promise to halt the “Judaization” of the public sphere and tax-benefits to Yeshivas and Orthodox Jews, while the religious right calls to protect and expand the prevalence of Judaism in Israeli society. As the debate intensifies towards election day, the perception of the elections’ stakes purportedly increases. The enhanced tolerance among all synagogue visitors in Yom Kippur, as well as the attachment of seculars to Jewish institutions during Yom Kippur, might lead both sides to be more accepting of the other’s view. Furthermore, the focus on self-reflection and improved perception of the other might placate political assertiveness between adjacent social groups. Secular and religious Jews, for example, are fluid and ill-defined categories in Israel, in contrast to the clear demarcation between Jews and Muslims. Cohen-Zada et al. finds that Yom Kippur did not fundamentally change political positions; rather, it caused participants to gravitate towards the “strongly opposed camp” and decreased the political assertiveness of the strongly in favor. They find that all Jews were more likely to reject political compromise, and as a result they were more ideologically aligned. Lastly, the Yom Kippur experience, which is associated with increased risk-acceptance, might undercut the stakes of the elections, as individuals may be more difficult to mobilize to vote for issues they would otherwise find risky not to vote on.

Methodology

To understand the impact of Yom Kippur on electoral turnout in Israel, I examine Israeli municipal elections. Beginning in 1950, municipal elections took place concurrently with the national elections in Israel. Following the 1975 election reforms, municipal elections were separated from the elections to the Knesset. The reforms stipulated that the elections would be held every five years in all municipalities simultaneously and residents vote separately for the municipal council and the mayor³⁴. Ever since, the structure of municipal structure and voting has not meaningfully changed.

There are numerous reasons why municipal election turnout is an appropriate dependent variable for the impact of Yom Kippur. Most importantly, the elections take place in relative proximity to Yom Kippur, between October and November, and thus allow us to isolate the impact of Yom Kippur on electoral attitudes. According to the 1965 Local Authorities Election Law, the elections must be held on the first Tuesday of Cheshvan on the Hebrew calendar³⁵. Because the Hebrew Calendar varies from the Gregorian calendar, the months do not perfectly overlap, and the date of the election on the Gregorian calendar changes every year. Nevertheless, the relative distance between Yom Kippur to the municipal elections remains intact. As anticipated, both

proximity to Yom Kippur and variance within the data were salient: the furthest day from Yom Kippur was only 41 days, and the closest was 22 days. If elections were to take place months after Yom Kippur, the attitudinal impact of the Yom Kippur experience will likely diminish, and a connection between Yom Kippur and changing attitudes throughout the year will be difficult to isolate. Therefore, the relatively short distance between Yom Kippur and the elections allows us to credibly gauge the psychological impact of Yom Kippur on electoral attitudes.

Municipal elections are also particularly apt considering the literature on the importance of stakes to electoral turnout, and its potential connection to religious experiences. In a 2020 assessment of municipal elections in Israel, the Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research found that despite the *de-jure* Unitarianism of the Israeli political system, the local authorities hold “central role” in providing education, welfare, and religious services³⁶. Municipalities, for example, regulate numerous functions pertaining to religion in the public sphere, most controversially public transportation during Saturday. Issues concerning housing permits and religious services are salient cleavages along Arab-Jewish and religious-secular lines respectively. Consequently, municipal elections, in both religious and secular municipalities, constitute relatively high-stakes elections.

To evaluate the relationship between turnout in municipal elections and Yom Kippur, I calculated the turnout in all available municipal elections between 1983 and 2018 in twelve municipalities within the internationally recognized boundaries of Israel. I analyzed Jewish religious and Jewish secular municipalities to distinguish the impact of the Yom Kippur experience on turnout in religious and secular municipalities. The non-Jewish municipalities were employed as a control group, as they are not expected to be impacted by Yom Kippur. The four secular municipalities were Tel Aviv, Herzliya, Holon and Rishon Lezion; The four religious municipalities were Bnei Brak, Beit Shemesh, Dimona and Safed; The four non-Jewish municipalities were Rahat, Sakhnin, Qalansawe, and Umm al-Fahm. The results in all religious municipalities were coded together, while results in secular municipalities were coded together. The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) lacks consistent and reliable data on religiosity in Israel on a municipal basis. Consequently, this research had to rely on an alternative indicator of Jewish religiosity. While numerous municipalities publish data on the percentage of youth who study at a Yeshiva, the indicator would only apply to Orthodox Jews. In 2018, “Free Israel” published a report on the level of “religious involvement” in municipalities across the country, ranking them by separation of the synagogue and the state³⁷. Municipalities with large Jewish religious populations, of varying degrees of adherence, are presumed to score lower on religion-state separation; therefore, the metric better encompasses both the Traditionalists and Orthodox. The assumption that the level of separation between religion and state institutions reflects upon demographics complies with platforms of national religious parties, and religious calls for greater role for religious role over the private sphere. The religious municipalities were picked from the lowest strata of “religious freedom” and the secular municipalities from the highest strata. The religious or secular composition of the municipalities was also qualitatively reaffirmed. Municipalities with significant non-Jewish populations such as Haifa and Jerusalem were excluded from the analysis to isolate the Jewish religiosity, which is more indicative of participation in Yom Kippur, than religiosity in general.

Lacking data about the turnout posed an obstacle to this research. Most challenging, the municipal results record only the total number of votes, and the turnout is not officially published. To emulate turnout, I recorded the total number of votes as a fraction of the total population of the municipality. However, data on Israeli demographics indicates that religious and secular

municipalities have significant variations in age. Considering the high birth-rates in religious communities, a larger fraction of the religious population than the secular population is likely to be ineligible to vote. Therefore, we anticipate that the results will underestimate turnout in religious communities. Likewise, this research would have benefited from more data-points, but for numerous reasons, only seven elections were apt for our analysis. Considering the significance of the electoral system in determining voter turnout, data from prior to the 1975 reforms would weaken the credibility of the analysis. Additionally, the elections 1988 were excluded from the analysis because they took place in March and were considerably further from Yom Kippur than the rest of the dataset. For each election I marked the distance between the election date and the end of Yom Kippur that year in days. Because Yom Kippur and the municipal elections have fixed Hebrew dates, the distance between the events retains its proximity, but changes slightly every year. Unexpectedly, three of the coded election years had the same distance between Yom Kippur and the election date.

To ensure we isolate the impact of Yom Kippur on turnout, this research employed numerous controlling variables. As outlined in the literature review, economic performance is believed to be of utmost significance in influencing voter turnout. Therefore, if economic performance in November is substantially different from the economic performance in September, it will be difficult to isolate the “Yom Kippur effect” from the effect of the economy. Research on the relationship between economic performance and turnout claims that economic prosperity as well as exhaustion with political incompetence influence political participation. As a result, we employed both GDP and unemployment controls. The purpose of the GDP variable is to control for the level of economic prosperity, and the unemployment controls for the effectiveness of governmental economic policies. No available data was found for unemployment rates and GDP growth by month. Therefore, for every election the annual GDP growth rate and the annual unemployment rate were coded as *GDP* and *Unemployment* respectively; the data was collected from the World Bank and the CBS. Furthermore, the possibility that another event might be impacting electoral turnout must be considered. Other Jewish holidays, such as Rosh Hashana, take place prior to Yom Kippur in September. To examine whether another event might be the underlying cause for changes in electoral participation, we added another variable, *DSSI*, coded as the distance between the elections and September 1st. If Yom Kippur is not connected with an increase or decrease in electoral participation, we would expect the coefficient of the relationship to be comparable and for the relationship to be statistically significant. However, due to resource and time limitations this research is lacking in controls. For instance, the literature appears to suggest a relationship between warfare and electoral turnout. While no election in this research took place within a year after a war or a major operation began, the geographical separation of the towns and continuous warfare was not controlled for. Safed, for example, is in the north; between 1982 and 2000 Israel and Lebanon engaged in continuous warfare which claimed the lives of many Israelis and was bound to impact political attitudes. The political and psychological impacts of the war in Safed would be unparalleled in Bnei Brak, located in the center of the country. Future research, therefore, ought to control for both geographical and temporal separation from warfare.

Despite the vast literature indicating that Yom Kippur is likely to impact electoral turnout, it is ambivalent on whether we ought to expect a decrease or an increase in turnout. We intuit that the impact of electoral participation will be more pronounced in secular municipalities. Considering Yom Kippur’s outsized weight to secular Jews, for whom Yom Kippur is the only holiday observed, this research infers, in line with research on hedonic activities, that its

psychological impact will be correspondingly larger. Therefore, this research posits two hypotheses:

1. Yom Kippur will *increase* electoral turnout in both the religious and secular municipalities, and the impact will be more salient in the secular municipalities
2. Yom Kippur will *decrease* electoral turnout in both the religious and secular municipalities, and the impact will be more salient in the secular municipalities

Figure 1 and Figure 2, as well as Table 1 and Table 2, show the result of the analysis in the religious and secular municipalities respectively. On the Y-axis appears the turnout in the municipal election as a fraction and the X-axis records days since Yom Kippur.

Figure 1 and 2: Electoral Turnout by Days Since Yom Kippur in Secular and Religious Municipalities

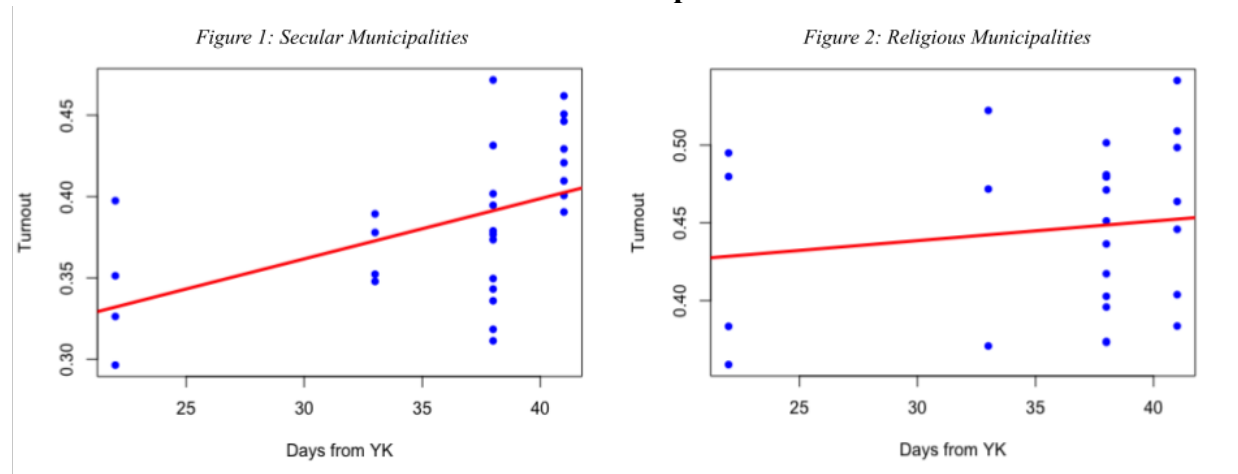


Table 1: Secular Municipalities Regression

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
<i>Intercept</i>	0.0696803	-0.0995121	-0.700	0.49113
<i>DSYK</i>	0.0133373	0.0025878	5.154	3.63E-05 (***)
<i>UNEMPL</i>	0.0042333	0.0022313	1.897	0.07100 (.)
<i>DSSI</i>	0.0020535	0.0009583	2.143	0.04345 (*)
<i>GDP</i>	-0.0569594	0.0144183	-3.951	0.00068 (***)

Table 2: Religious Municipalities Regression

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
<i>(Intercept)</i>	0.192316	0.178427	1.078	0.293
<i>DSYK</i>	0.003448	0.004427	0.779	0.445
<i>GDP</i>	-0.002174	0.023953	-0.091	0.929
<i>UNEMPL</i>	0.004571	0.003902	1.171	0.255
<i>DSSI</i>	0.001749	0.001775	0.985	0.336

Table 3: Non-Jewish Municipalities Regression

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
<i>(Intercept)</i>	0.448607	0.251164	1.786	0.0893 (.)
<i>DSYK</i>	-0.005273	0.006549	-0.805	0.4301
<i>GDP</i>	0.027323	0.036352	0.752	0.4610
<i>UNEMPL</i>	-0.003792	0.006086	-0.623	0.5403
<i>DSSI</i>	0.002608	0.002459	1.061	0.3014

(Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1)

Results

The data indicates that there is a positive correlation between the distance from Yom Kippur and electoral turnout, in both religious and secular municipalities. The coefficient of the relationship with the controls for secular municipalities stands at 0.0143383 and in religious municipalities at 0.005035. Consequently, the findings indicate that Yom Kippur decreases electoral turnout in secular municipalities 2.85 times more than in religious municipalities. The relationship between electoral turnout and Yom Kippur was found to be statistically significant in secular municipalities when controlling for annual unemployment rate, annual GDP growth and days since September 1st ($P < 0.001$). Nevertheless, the relationship was *not* found to be statistically significant in religious municipalities ($P > 0.1$). Likewise, no statistically significant impact was identified in non-Jewish municipalities, as hypothesized. The analysis finds that annual GDP growth is a statistically significant indicator of electoral turnout in secular municipalities, in line with previous research, but not in religious municipalities. Interestingly, there does not appear to be a strong statistically significant relationship between voter turnout and unemployment in either religious or secular municipalities. Likewise, the relationship between distance from September 1st and election turnout was found to be statistically significant, indicating that previous holidays or events in September are of significant to electoral turnout.

Discussion

The findings reaffirm the vast literature indicating that religious individuals are more likely to vote in municipal elections. The highest coded turnout in the secular municipalities approaches 45% while the lowest turnout stands at 30%. In religious municipalities, however, the highest turnout coded approaches 60% and the lowest turnout is 40%. Despite our inability to discern the reason for higher turnout among the Jewish religious population, the findings demonstrate that Jewish religiosity complies with trends observed among Christian denominations. Yet this research acknowledges that voting patterns in religious municipalities do not incontrovertibly reflect the voting patterns of religious individuals. While very unlikely, perhaps the secular individuals in the religious municipalities vote in significantly higher numbers because of their minority status. Future research could benefit from stronger indicators of religious demographics, such as local surveys on membership in the synagogue, frequency of prayer and belief in God, which would encompass both Orthodox and Traditionalist Jews. Furthermore, the results from secular municipalities indicate a statistically significant relationship between economic performance and electoral turnout, reaffirming existing literature. Intriguingly, religious municipalities appear unfazed by changes in economic performance. Future research could delineate the separate relationship between economic performance and electoral turnout by different levels of religiosity, exploring their respective sensitivity to economic changes. Lastly,

earlier events in September, perhaps but not certainly Rosh Hashana, were found to have a slight, yet statistically significant, impact on electoral turnout in secular municipalities. Rather than weakening our analysis, the finding might reaffirm the potency of religious events in impacting electoral turnout, particularly in secular municipalities. While impossible to ignore, the coefficient of the relationship between turnout and *DSSI* is 6.5 times smaller than the relationship with Yom Kippur, indicating that any previous event in September does not comprehensively account for the decline in turnout following Yom Kippur.

The results seem to support our second hypothesis, that Yom Kippur decreases electoral participation, particularly salient in secular municipalities. For every 10 days following Yom Kippur, electoral turnout appears to increase by 3.6%. The results suggest that Yom Kippur impacts electoral participation and reduces the likelihood of individuals to vote in secular municipalities. While the results are suggestive of causal connection, there are several explanations for the decrease in voter turnout that do not entail the Yom Kippur experience. The most likely alternative explanation is that the lower voter turnout following Yom Kippur might indicate the importance of voter mobilization in motivating turnout, rather than a noticeable attitudinal change. Voter turnout increases when voters are approached to vote (Bedolla and Michelson, 2003). The proximity of the elections to Yom Kippur to the municipal elections might decrease the time and resources that are spent on voter mobilization, and consequently reduce turnout. Evidently, campaigning ceases throughout Yom Kippur. However, the mobilization hypothesis is unlikely to be applicable to this research. Most importantly, besides Yom Kippur itself, there exists no legal or social limitations on campaigning before and after Yom Kippur. Subsequently, it is safe to assume that campaigning should only cease for the duration of Yom Kippur. The 25-hour period is unlikely to constitute a significant difference in levels of mobilization, when political campaigns often last for months. Even if we were to accept that the “mobilization lost” from Yom Kippur significantly decreases voter turnout, the mobilization thesis fails to explain why the further the elections are from Yom Kippur, or the 25-hour campaign halt, the more likely an individual is to turnout. Lastly, the application mobilization hypothesis to this research will rely on the assumption that secular voter turnout is more contingent on political mobilization than religious voter turnout.

The research on the impact of single religious events on political attitudes provides another explanation for the lower turnout following Yom Kippur. Clingingsmith et al. Finds that participation in the Haj fosters greater solidarity among Muslims, as well as increases peaceful attitudes towards out-group members. Following the Haj, participants are more likely to report belief in harmony between genders, ethnicities and religions. Similarly, Cohen-Zada et al., finds that while individuals who visited the synagogue during Selichot are less likely to believe in political compromise, their view of Muslims does not worsen, and Sephardic participants even exhibit a slight increase in trust towards Muslims. Therefore, it seems that religious events, and Yom Kippur in particular, could potentially enhance congruency and trust between religious groups. Increase in trust of out-group members, such as Orthodox Jews and non-Jews in secular municipalities, might decrease the perceived importance of the elections, dissuading individuals from voting.

Secular-religious and Muslim-Jewish divides manifest themselves in numerous political cleavages that are pertinent to the municipality’s mandate. Claims of “Judaizing” in the public sphere, and particularly in schools, elicit public outcry continuously. In 2018, a research outlining public school textbook contents and alleging that there is no “Judaizing” in the education system caused vociferous debate on the role of Judaism in education³⁸. In fact, almost a third of Israeli parents express worry of the role of Judaism in the public education system³⁹. Likewise, issues

concerning the institution of public transportation during Saturday, the Shabbat, are subject to intensive debate, as currently, secular municipalities largely lack public transportation. In the race for municipal elections in 2018 in Tel Aviv, at the center of the challenger's agenda, Asaf Zamir, was the establishment of public transportation during Saturday, who exclaimed that "this city is secular"⁴⁰. Demonstrating the significance of religious-secular divide all throughout Israel, Alternate Prime Minister Lapid's entrance to politics was marked by his lamentations that religious individuals are not obliged to serve in the military and calls for criminal sanctions against religious evaders⁴¹. Thus, if Yom Kippur assuages the secular-religious divides, by bringing secular individuals closer to their Judaism and rejuvenating tolerance of the other, the elections could be perceived as less important, and subsequently less worthy of turnout.

The data also supports the inference that the impact on secular individuals would be more salient than the impact on religious individuals. Although a religious individual is more likely to visit the synagogue for Selichot, fast and engage in earnest rumination, they are seemingly less influenced (or not at all) by the Yom Kippur effect on turnout. While ostensibly counterintuitive, there are numerous ways to understand the divergence between secular and religious municipalities. Most persuasively, the difference might lie in the novelty effect of the religious experience on secular individuals in comparison to religious individuals. Intuitively, religious individuals are more likely to engage with the synagogue and fast throughout the year. For secular Jews, however, Yom Kippur is often the only religious event that they observe. Unsurprisingly, Yom Kippur is known to be the "busiest day" of the year in synagogues⁴². One might intuit that recurring participation in religious events decreases the significance of each event treated separately. In other words, the psychological impact of Yom Kippur on a religious Jew, who visits the synagogue on a weekly basis and fasts six times a year, is lower than the impact on a secular Jew, whose participation in religious activities during Yom Kippur is avant-garde and unfamiliar. Another explanation might lay in the different rituals undertaken by religious and secular Jews. Throughout Yom Kippur, secular residents stroll the neighborhood and interact with their neighbors. Yom Kippur becomes not only a religious experience, but a communal one. Religious individuals, who are stricter about the prohibition on any "work", refrain from some activities that are perceived as communal, such as riding bikes with children. Perhaps, the positive impact of Yom Kippur on perceptions of out-group members does not occur exclusively within the walls of the synagogue. Political attitudes are brewing in the streets, where neighbors interact, and in the households, where parents mull over their values, actions, and relationship to God and their families. Demarcating the Yom Kippur experience to associational and communal is beyond the scope of this research. Yet the findings reaffirm the need to earnestly explore Yom Kippur as an experience of both secular and religious Jews, one that occurs in the synagogue, the street, at home and within oneself.

The explanation that positive attitudes towards out-group members diminished electoral turnout could also explain the divergence between secular and religious municipalities. Religious municipalities in Israel tend to be more homogenous than secular municipalities in Israel. For instance, according to the Israeli Bureau of Statistics, 99.9% of Bnei Brak's population is Jewish, and the vast majority of the city is Orthodox. Conversely, Rishon Lezion is 90% Jewish, and Orthodox, traditional and secular Jews reside in the. The heterogenous secular municipalities have noticeably more "out-groups" and "in-groups" than the religious municipalities. Perhaps, the findings of this research help tie the stakes-hypothesis and the contradicting findings of Geys, Zimmer and Cohen about the relationship between heterogeneity and electoral turnout. Indeed, this research finds that religious municipalities, which are less diverse, have a higher base-turnout

than secular municipalities, ostensibly rebuking the heterogeneity hypothesis. However, the significant decrease in political participation following Yom Kippur might indicate that socially homogenous communities are not equally susceptible to turnout volatility as socially heterogeneous communities, whose changing political attitudes immediately influence the stakes of elections.

Conclusion

To conclude, this research strived to enrich the literature on political participation in Israel by examining the impact of Yom Kippur on electoral turnout. Previous literature presented different ways in which religiosity and religious experiences might modulate electoral turnout. By evaluating municipal elections in Israel since 1983, this research concludes that Yom Kippur reduces turnout in secular municipalities, while no significant relationship between Yom Kippur and turnout was found in religious municipalities. Ultimately, this research aimed to induce more research on the relationship between singular religious experiences and electoral turnout, particularly in Israel. As acknowledged, the methodology of the paper is flawed, and the results are primarily suggestive rather than conclusive. Hopefully, this research sheds light on numerous shortfalls in current research on religion and politics and presents meaningful amendments to future research. Future research should earnestly examine the religiosity of secular individuals, acknowledge the holistic nature of religious experiences, which are not bound by associational institutions and occur both in the public and private spheres, and invest in understanding the impact of ideas, interactions, and messages conveyed in religious settings on political attitudes and participation.

Appendix

Table 4: Votes and Population by Municipality, Religious Municipalities

MUNICIPALITY	YEAR	VOTES	POP.	TURNOUT	DSYK	GDP	UNEMPL	DSS1
BNEI BRAK	2018	80299	198,863	0.4037905493	41	3.5	4	59
BNEI BRAK	2013	69463	172,485	0.402719077	38	4.2	6.2	51
BNEI BRAK	2003	53534	139,634	0.3833880001	22	1.1	13.5	57
BNEI BRAK	1993	46415	124,400	0.3731109325	38	3.4	12.7	51
BNEI BRAK	1983	40119	96150	0.4172542902	38	2.6	4.3	51
DIMONA	2018	18486	34,135	0.5415555881	41	3.5	4	59
DIMONA	2013	15961	33,188	0.480926841	38	4.2	6.2	51
DIMONA	2008	16922	32400	0.5222839506	33	3	7.7	71
DIMONA	2003	16777	33,896	0.494955157	22	1.1	13.5	57
DIMONA	1998	16696	32,800	0.5090243902	41	3.9	10.7	59
DIMONA	1993	14794	29,500	0.5014915254	38	3.8	12.7	51
DIMONA	1983	10698	27,026	0.395841042	38	2.6	4.3	51
BEIT SHEMESH	2018	45,524	118,676	0.3835990428	41	3.5	4	59
BEIT SHEMESH	2013	35,151	94,069	0.373672517	38	4.2	6.2	51
BEIT SHEMESH	2008	26,955	72,700	0.3707702889	33	3	7.7	71
BEIT SHEMESH	2003	20,468	57,046	0.3587981629	22	1.1	13.5	57
BEIT SHEMESH	1998	13,063	29,300	0.4458361775	41	3.9	10.7	59
BEIT SHEMESH	1993	8828	18,400	0.4797826087	38	3.8	12.7	51
BEIT SHEMESH	1983	5663	12,976	0.4364210851	38	2.6	4.3	51
SAFED	2018	16,562	35,715	0.4637267255	41	3.5	4	59
SAFED	2013	14,846	32,901	0.4512324853	38	4.2	6.2	51
SAFED	2008	13,963	29,600	0.471722973	33	3	7.7	71
SAFED	2003	12,853	26,790	0.4797685704	22	1.1	13.5	57
SAFED	1998	11,863	23,800	0.4984453782	41	3.9	10.7	59
SAFED	1993	10,023	20,900	0.479569378	38	3.8	12.7	51
SAFED	1983	7,342	15,583	0.4711544632	38	2.6	4.3	51

Table 5: Votes and Population by Municipality, Secular Municipalities

MUNICIPALITY	YEAR	VOTES	POP.	TURNOUT	DSYK	GDP	UNEMPL	DSS1
TEL AVIV	2018	203489	451,523	0.4506725017	41	3.5	4	59
TEL AVIV	2013	143656	418,590	0.3431902339	38	4.2	6.2	51
TEL AVIV	2008	142087	403,301	0.3523100612	33	3	7.7	71
TEL AVIV	2003	107724	363,387	0.2964442867	22	1.1	13.5	57
TEL AVIV	1998	146689	354,400	0.4139080135	41	3.9	10.7	59
TEL AVIV	1993	143387	348,245	0.4117417335	38	3.8	12.7	51
HERZELIA	2018	43,944	95,142	0.4618780349	41	3.5	4	59
HERZELIA	2013	27,965	89,813	0.3113691782	38	4.2	6.2	51
HERZELIA	2008	33,602	86,300	0.3893626883	33	3	7.7	71
HERZELIA	2003	33,245	83,644	0.3974582755	22	1.1	13.5	57
HERZELIA	1998	36,820	82,759	0.4449062942	41	3.9	10.7	59
HERZELIA	1993	32,283	82,759	0.3900844621	38	3.8	12.7	51
HERZELIA	1983	27,246	63,155	0.4314147732	38	2.6	4.3	51
HOLON	2018	75,874	194,273	0.3905534995	41	3.5	4	59
HOLON	2013	59,356	186,399	0.3184351847	38	4.2	6.2	51
HOLON	2008	61,329	176,300	0.3478672717	33	3	7.7	71
HOLON	2003	54,097	165,773	0.3263317911	22	1.1	13.5	57
HOLON	1998	66,733	163,082	0.4091990532	41	3.9	10.7	59
HOLON	1993	61,345	163,082	0.3761604592	38	3.8	12.7	51
HOLON	1983	50,575	133,460	0.3789524951	38	2.6	4.3	51
RISHON LEZION	2018	108058	251,719	0.4292802689	41	3.5	4	59
RISHON LEZION	2013	83085	237,639	0.3496269552	38	4.2	6.2	51
RISHON LEZION	2008	85716	226,800	0.3779365079	33	3	7.7	71
RISHON LEZION	2003	75,400	214,616	0.3513251575	22	1.1	13.5	57
RISHON LEZION	1998	71,369	163,245	0.4371895004	41	3.9	10.7	59
RISHON LEZION	1993	50,529	163,245	0.3095286226	38	3.8	12.7	51
RISHON LEZION	1983	38,988	104,387	0.3734947838	38	2.6	4.3	51

Table 6: Votes and Population by Municipality, non-Jewish Municipalities

MUNICIPALITY	YEAR	POP.	VOTES	TURNOUT	DSYK	DSS1	GDP	UNEMPL
RAHAT	2018	69,032	28767	0.4167197821	41	59	3.5	4
RAHAT	2013	58,690	23200	0.3952973249	38	51	4.2	6.2
RAHAT	2008	43,863	18726	0.4269201833	33	71	3	7.7
RAHAT	2003	35,760	14679	0.4104865772	22	57	1.1	13.5
RAHAT	1998	27500	11090	0.4032727273	41	59	3.9	10.7
RAHAT	1993	24700	7819	0.3165587045	38	51	3.8	12.7
SAKHNIN	2018	31,057	20071	0.6462633223	41	59	3.5	4
SAKHNIN	2013	28,136	17457	0.6204506682	38	51	4.2	6.2
SAKHNIN	2008	25,582	15140	0.5918223751	33	71	3	7.7
SAKHNIN	2003	23,224	13065	0.5625645884	22	57	1.1	13.5
SAKHNIN	1993	17,800	8755	0.4918539326	41	59	3.9	10.7
SAKHNIN	1983	12,880	5205	0.4041149068	38	51	2.6	4.3
KALANSUA	2018	22,788	10577	0.4641477971	41	59	3.5	4
KALANSUA	2013	20,645	10252	0.4965851296	38	51	4.2	6.2
KALANSUA	2008	18,302	8429	0.4605507595	33	71	3	7.7
KALANSUA	2003	15,919	8066	0.5066901187	22	57	1.1	13.5
KALANSUA	1993	11,200	5330	0.4758928571	41	59	3.9	10.7
KALANSUA	1983	7,800	3213	0.4119230769	38	51	2.6	4.3
UMELFAHEM	2018	55,182	26620	0.4824036824	41	59	3.5	4
UMELFAHEM	2013	50,597	20233	0.3998853687	38	51	4.2	6.2
UMELFAHEM	2008	44,497	20892	0.4695147988	33	71	3	7.7
UMELFAHEM	2003	39,046	16796	0.4301592993	22	57	1.1	13.5
UMELFAHEM	1998	33,200	16494	0.4968072289	41	59	3.9	10.7
UMELFAHEM	1993	28,100	13419	0.477544484	38	51	3.8	12.7
UMELFAHEM	1983	20,100	7637	0.3799502488	38	51	2.6	4.3

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