THE ISRAELI DEMOCRACY INDEX

2017

Tamar Hermann

Chanan Cohen / Ella Heller / Tzipy Lazar-Shoef / Fadi Omar

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Summary of Findings—Israeli Democracy Index 2017

Part I: Israeli Democracy—an International Comparison

Chapter 1: International Indicators

- Israel ranks in the top quartile of the world's nations in indicators of the democratic process:

  Political participation: 98–99th percentile

  Participatory democracy: 95th percentile

  Democratic political culture: 85–89th percentile

  Deliberative democracy: 79th percentile

  Egalitarian democracy: 75th percentile

  In measures of governance, Israel also ranks high, in the upper quartile:

  Functioning of government: 83–84th percentile

  Rule of law: 84th percentile

  Perception of corruption: 84th percentile

- In most indicators of democratic rights and freedoms, Israel is in the second or third quartiles:

  Political rights: 71–75th percentile

  Voice and accountability: 71st percentile

  Freedom of the press: 67–68th percentile

  Civil liberties (Freedom House): 59–61st percentile

  Civil liberties (The Economist Intelligence Unit): 46–49th percentile

- The comparison with the OECD states is less favorable: With the exception of political participation (in which it ranks in the 89–94th percentile), Israel is generally situated in the lower half of the scale. In the civil liberties indicators produced by Freedom House and the Economist Intelligence Unit, Israel places close to the bottom, in the 6th and 3rd percentiles, respectively, relative to OECD countries.

- Comparing Israel's scores in 2017 with its average over the previous ten years relative to

other countries, we found that in three indicators Israel scored lower than the multi-year average, in eight indicators it scored higher, and in two indicators it remained the same. Thus, the international indicators suggest that, on the whole, Israel has been a stable democracy over the past decade.

Part II: Israeli Democracy in the Eyes of its Citizens

Chapter 2: How is Israel Doing?

- Roughly one-half of the Israeli public define the country's overall situation as "good" or "very good" (49% of the total sample). Only a minority (16%) categorize it as "bad" or "very bad," while the remainder rate the situation as "so-so." Since we began our assessments in 2003, there has been a gradual but quite steady decline in the share of respondents who define the state of the nation as "bad" or "very bad."

- On all survey questions, across the entire sample, we found the greatest degree of satisfaction among national religious (i.e., religious Zionist) Jews. Among the Jewish respondents, the two groups that are the least satisfied with Israel's overall situation, the functioning of government, and related topics, are secular Jews and those who identify with the political Left. These groups also display the highest level of concern for the future, specifically with regard to being able to maintain their way of life given the strengthening of social and political forces whose worldviews and lifestyles differ from their own. In the Arab sample, the differences between subgroups are relatively small.

- The Jewish public is divided on the question of whether life in Israel is harder than it is in other Western countries. Among the Arab public, a majority (61%) feel that life here is harder, an assessment presumably derived from the unique difficulties experienced by this group.

- In spite of the above, we found a sweeping majority (81%) among both Jews and Arabs who reported that they would not wish to emigrate from Israel even if they were granted citizenship in a Western country. A similar majority was also found on the Jewish Left.

- Over two-thirds (68%) of the total sample are optimistic about the future of the state. Among Arab respondents, the share of optimists is smaller (roughly one-half) than among the Jews; the same holds true for the Jewish Left.

Chapter 3: The Character of the State

▪ The respondents' primary interpretation and most frequent response with regard to the term "democratic state" was freedom (including freedom of expression). In second place among Jewish respondents was the concept of the rule of the people, and among Arab respondents, equality.

▪ We found a vast difference between Jews and Arabs in their understanding of the term "Jewish state." Among Jewish respondents, the highest percentage cited a national connotation followed by a religious one (among Haredi and national religious respondents, the religious interpretation took first place). By contrast, a majority of Arab interviewees interpreted the term as racist and as signifying the exclusion of non-Jews.

▪ A plurality of Jews (42%), and a majority of Arabs (74%), believe that at present, there is not a good balance between the Jewish and democratic components of the state, and that the Jewish aspect is too dominant. Among Haredim and the national religious as well, the majority feel that Israel has not struck the right balance; but in their view, it is the democratic component that is too strong (Haredim—56%; national religious—44%).

Chapter 4: The State of Democracy in Israel

▪ On the Jewish Left and among Arab respondents, the majority (72% and 65%, respectively) feel that Israeli democracy is in grave danger. Only about one-quarter feel the same way on the Jewish Right, while the Center is divided on this question.

▪ Also on the question of whether Israel is less democratic today than in the past, we found a wide range of opinions across the political spectrum[1]: Only a quarter of Jews on the Right agree with this statement, as opposed to roughly one-half in the Center and two-thirds on the Left. Among Arab respondents, a majority (54%) feel that there has been an erosion of democracy in Israel.

▪ Among Jewish respondents, a majority (56.5%) disagree with the statement that Israel needs a strong leader, while a majority of Arab respondents (59%) think that a strong leader is indeed necessary.

▪ A majority of both Jews (56%) and Arabs (68%) agree that Israel is not a true democracy, since wealthy individuals have the capacity to influence the government to make decisions for their benefit rather than in the interests of the average citizen.

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1   Throughout the Index, reference is made to respondents from the Right, Center, and Left. This refers to how respondents defined themselves politically in terms of their viewpoints on foreign policy and security issues (as opposed to social or economic issues), as reported in appendix 4. In this English translation, we use the terms "political orientation" or "political camp" to denote the range of their self-definitions.

- There is also widespread agreement that Israel's large disparities in income harm the democratic character of the state.

Chapter 5: Attitudes Toward the Political System and Politicians

- Roughly two-thirds of the public—Jews and Arabs alike—believe that the government is handling the country's problems "not so well" or "not at all well."

- Roughly two-thirds of Jews and 70% of Arab respondents believe that the opposition in Israel is weak, and hence is not fulfilling its function. The level of dissatisfaction is higher among voters for the opposition parties than among voters for the parties in the ruling coalition.

- This year, once again, a majority of the public (over two-thirds) do not agree with the statement that most members of the Knesset are working hard and doing their jobs well. A slightly larger majority also feel that politicians are detached from the public's real needs and problems.

- Three-quarters of the Arab public believe that the Knesset recently enacted laws that are anti-democratic. The Jewish public is split over this question: Of those who define themselves as right-wing, only about one-third share this view, compared with half of those who identify with the Center, and a large majority (80%) of those who see themselves on the Left.

- A sizeable majority of respondents on the Right (72%) agreed with the statement: "Although the majority of Israelis voted Right, the Leftist court system, media, and academia hamper the Right's ability to govern." Among respondents in the Center, 22% share this view, and on the Left, 11%.

- Revisiting the extent of public trust in state institutions, we found that the data had remained largely unchanged since last year. The major democratic institutions earned low confidence ratings: Of the total sample, 29% expressed trust in the government; 26%, in the Knesset; and 15%, in the political parties. A total of 57% of interviewees expressed faith in the Supreme Court.

- This year too, respondents saw the country's leadership as more corrupt than honest (on a scale ranging from "very corrupt" to "not at all corrupt"). It seems that the Israeli public's assessment of the extent of government corruption is more negative than that of the international Corruption Perceptions Index, where Israel fared quite well.

Chapter 6: Government, Society, Citizens

- Contrary to popular wisdom, according to which the Israeli public thinks that majority decisions are by nature democratic, we found a majority (51.5% of the Jewish sample,

and 67% of the Arab sample) who believe that decisions that run contrary to democratic values—even if made by a majority government—are not democratic.

- Three-quarters (74%) of Arab respondents answered that they discuss politics only rarely. By contrast, a small majority (52%) of the Jewish public reported that they often talk about political matters with their friends.

- In both the Jewish and Arab samples, a considerable majority feel able to influence government policy "not so much" or "not at all" (76% and 88%, respectively). This finding has repeated itself, with only slight differences, in all our assessments over the past decade.

- A majority of Arab respondents (55%) are concerned that in the future, they will not be able to express their political views without incurring negative consequences. Among the Jewish public, a minority, though not an insubstantial one (37%), are afraid of being silenced politically. This concern is more widespread among those who define themselves as left-wing.

- We found a large majority in both the Jewish (74%) and Arab (82%) samples who disagree with the statement that "Israeli citizens should be prohibited by law from harshly criticizing the state in public." Among Haredi respondents in particular, opposition to this viewpoint was noticeably high.

- A majority of Jews (59%) agree with the claim that Israeli human rights organizations cause damage to the state. This is considerably lower than the proportion who shared this view last year, when the issue was at the center of public debate. The majority of Arabs surveyed (77%) do not agree with this statement. Breaking down the responses of the Jewish sample by political camp shows that only on the Left is there not a majority who see these organizations as a danger (Left—18%; Center—59%; Right—79%).

Chapter 7: Populism—Here Too?

- A majority of the Jewish public (59%) disagree with the claim that democratic principles are fine on paper but are not conducive to running a country effectively, as opposed to a majority of the Arab public (62.5%) who agree. As expected, the lack of agreement with this statement among Jewish respondents is particularly high on the Left.

- Two-thirds of the Jewish respondents disagreed with the statement: "It's better to vote for leaders and parties that offer quick and effective solutions to problems that worry the public, even if these solutions are not entirely in keeping with democratic principles." The Arab interviewees were split on this question.

- A majority of respondents, both Jews and Arabs, agreed with the statement: "A good leader does not do what the people want, but what he thinks the people need" (64% and 57.5%, respectively).

- A majority of Jewish respondents (69%) disagree with the claim that foreign workers are taking away jobs from Israelis, while most of the Arab interviewees (63%) agree with it

- The secular respondents were the only group on the religious spectrum among whom only a minority (32.5%) agreed with the statement: "Refugees and illegal migrants who have come to Israel in the past few years are ruining the character of Israeli society." In all the other Jewish groups (Haredim, national religious, and traditional Jews of both types), the majority voiced their agreement, as did a majority of the Arab respondents.

- As we did three years ago (when we last examined this topic), we found a majority of Jewish respondents (53%) who believe that hard work does not guarantee economic success. By contrast, a sizeable majority of Arab interviewees (72%) take the opposite view, namely, that hard work does in fact ensure financial security.

- A majority of Jews (73%) and Arabs (82%) agreed with the statement: "It's harder for young people to get along in life today than it was a generation ago."

- The vast majority of respondents in both the Arab and Jewish samples said they were certain they would be able to keep working at their present job if they wished to do so (Jews—69%; Arabs—74%).

- A majority of Jewish and Arab respondents expressed concern that they would not be able to support their children financially in the future, and that they themselves would not be able to live decently in their old age.

Chapter 8: Democracy and the Media

- Despite the digital revolution, we found that television is still the primary source of political information among both Jews and Arabs.

- Only a negligible minority of the public responded in the affirmative when asked if they followed the websites of specific politicians or political parties on a regular basis.

- A slight majority of Jewish and Arab respondents (56% and 54%, respectively) agreed with the statement: "Israeli media portray the situation here as much worse than it really is."

- Roughly three-quarters (74%) of the Jewish sample, and a similar share of the Arab sample (76%), disagreed with the assertion that "there should be a law allowing the closure of media outlets that criticize government policy too harshly."

- Some two-thirds of Jewish and Arab respondents expressed their disagreement with this statement: "If the government funds public broadcasting, it should also have an influence over the content that's broadcast."

Principal Insights

Having offered an overview of the factual findings by chapter, we will now present the main insights we have derived from these results.

In keeping with previous assessments, this year's survey findings demonstrate the consistency of Israeli public opinion on many subjects, including the country's overall situation, respondents' own personal situation, the actual versus the ideal character of the state, (mis)trust in the political system and politicians, and the allocation of resources between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority. This finding of basic stability stands in stark contrast to the prevailing impression that the public is constantly changing its mind based on whichever way the wind is blowing. This has both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, public opinion in Israel is not fickle, and, as shown in this report, is clearly associated with clear contextual factors such as respondents' political and religious self-identification. But from a negative perspective, it is difficult to shift the balance of public opinion, even in situations where such a change would benefit Israeli democracy. It is therefore safe to state that—for better or for worse—Israel's democracy is unwavering.

The multi-year comparison based on international indicators further points to the solidity of Israel's status among the "family of nations." This relative stability over time and by comparison applies to both the strengths and the weaknesses of Israeli democracy. In comparison to other countries, too, Israel is at a standstill. In an effort to examine this phenomenon from a slightly different perspective, this year we added a new comparison—to the OECD member states. When judged against the distinguished members of this democratic club, Israel's standing is much less favorable than when compared with the full list of nations assessed in the indicators, though it should be noted that the latter also includes countries that are plainly undemocratic. Nonetheless, we were somewhat surprised by the OECD comparison, since—in contrast to media reports on Israel's inferior standing compared to the other members of the organization— in the parameters that we examined we found that Israel does not always lag behind. Despite this, its relative status is not very impressive.

More specifically, the international comparison shows that Israel's standing is quite favorable in the areas of political participation and democratic political culture, and even with regard to government functioning and the rule of law. On the other hand, the indicators highlight the urgent need for improvement in the area of democratic rights and freedoms (freedom of the press, equal rights), which are certainly the Achilles' heel of Israeli democracy.

The question frequently arises of how it is that we see no massive popular protest shaking the very foundations of Israel's government, economy, and society—despite successive scandals, police investigations, difficulties finding affordable housing, and the high cost of living in

general. In our opinion, the answer is first and foremost that the public—Jews and Arabs alike—consider Israel's overall situation to be acceptable, and even good. Moreover, this view has only gained strength over the years. A majority of those surveyed are also quite optimistic about the country's future and feel that Israel is a good place to live, though they are aware that life here is harder than in most Western countries. But this positive frame of mind is not universal. On the issues we examined, those most strongly critical were the Arab respondents and the Jewish Left, who are not satisfied with the current situation and are more fearful about the future than the other groups surveyed. Nevertheless, even in these subgroups, a majority responded that they would not be interested in emigrating to Western countries even if they received citizenship there. The attitude is yet more positive at the individual level: The vast majority—even among the dissatisfied subgroups—characterize their personal situation as "good" or "very good." This positive overall feeling, at both the personal and state levels, is Israel's strong point and an outstanding sign of the robustness of Israeli society.

Also on the positive side, roughly half the respondents reported that there is a party in the Knesset today that truly represents them, with most even stating that they would vote again for the same party they chose in the last elections. In other words, on the whole, the Israeli public feels that it is reasonably well represented in the Knesset, despite its low level of trust in political parties. Furthermore, a majority think that voting in elections can bring about change, meaning that elections are still seen as an effective political tool. About one-half also feel that the Knesset ably represents the range of opinions in Israeli society. This tells us that, in spite of its disaffection and criticism, the Israeli public continues to participate in the political process and to see the existing democratic system as a suitable path to changing the political reality. This is presumably the reason why there is no clear evidence of any desire to radically transform the rules of the game. Stated otherwise, Israeli public opinion is not calling for a revolution.

According to the international indicators surveyed in this report, Israel excels in the area of political participation. Indeed, a majority of the Jewish interviewees (though only a minority of Arab respondents) report that they often discuss politics with their friends. Thus, it would not be accurate to speak of widespread political disengagement throughout the public as a whole. A majority feel that the democratic way of government is best suited to Israel despite its unique security and social problems; likewise, they are opposed to the system of a "strong leader" who governs forcefully without taking the Knesset, the media or public opinion into account. (Surprisingly, the Arab public is the exception on this point in its support for a strong leader.) A majority also hold that democratic principles are suited to running a country effectively, and do not support a leadership that offers swift and efficient but undemocratic solutions.

However, we should not be too quick to conclude from the above that everything in Israel is rosy; this is not the view of the public nor of our team, as researchers who have studied Israeli democracy for many years. In reality, the picture is complex and somewhat troubling. It appears that democracy in Israel is in an ongoing state of crisis, and there is no telling when, if, or how this will end. As in previous years, the 2017 survey findings point to fundamental differences of

opinion between key groups in Israeli society when it comes to defining the state's character and identity, and the common good. The vast majority of the public support the definition of Israel as democratic, and the leading interpretation of the term "democratic state" is freedom in general and freedom of expression. However, Israeli democracy falls short in the recognition of unconditional human and civil rights, the willingness to defend them, and the desire for full and genuine civil equality. On these subjects, the Left and Right are deeply divided. Those who identify with the Center are closer to the Left on certain issues, and closer to the Right on others, with the end result being that they are not unequivocally on one side or the other, leaving the system in an unstable position. In this context, it should be noted that the Right is the largest political camp among the Jewish majority; moreover, the Left/Right distribution on political/security issues largely overlaps with the secular/Haredi distribution on the religious spectrum, exacerbating the already-profound split between the two camps.

Furthermore, while the definition of Israel as a Jewish state is viewed favorably by a majority of the Jewish public, including most of the Left, a majority of the Arab public holds a very negative perception of the term "Jewish state," seeing it as an expression of racism and—inevitably—of continuing exclusion and discrimination. To broad swaths of the Jewish public, this view is like a red flag to a bull, to the point where many Jews are ready to deny the right to vote to citizens who are unwilling to affirm that Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people.

Deep-seated differences of opinion exist not only between Arabs and Jews, and not even solely between Right and Left on political/security issues. There is also a profound and persistent lack of agreement within the Jewish public over the existing and the ideal balance between the Jewish and democratic components of Israel's character. At present, a majority in Israel feel that the Jewish component is too strong, and that it infringes on the democratic aspect. To a large extent, the divisions in the Jewish public on this issue correspond with the gaps between the different categories of religious affiliation. The secular respondents wish to bolster the democratic element; they worry that religion is taking over the country, and are concerned that they will be unable to maintain their way of life in future due to the strengthening of religious groups who are intolerant of secularism. By contrast, the Haredim and the national religious groups do not share the fears of the secular majority, and seek to reinforce the Jewish component of the state's character.

On the issue of freedom of expression—one of the cornerstones of democracy—the data point to a basic inconsistency that jeopardizes Israel's democratic character. In theory, a majority of citizens see freedom of expression as an important principle, and are opposed, for example, to banning public criticism of the state. Likewise, a majority are against imposing restrictions and penalties on the media (even when they are harshly critical of the government) and do not support government intervention in the content of public broadcasting despite the fact that it is paid for by state funding. Nonetheless, year after year, the majority feel that Israel's human and civil rights organizations cause damage to the state by their words and actions, and that many in Israel take advantage of freedom of expression to harm the state.

In this context, we wish to clarify that freedom of expression is not experienced by everyone to the same degree: A majority of Jews report that they are not afraid to talk about political affairs in the presence of strangers, whereas most Arabs actually prefer to avoid doing so. A majority of Arabs are also concerned that they will not be able to express their political opinions in the future without suffering negative consequences.

Another weak spot in Israeli democracy is the public's deep dissatisfaction with the functioning of the political system, and its continuing frustration with what it sees as selfish motivations and lack of integrity on the part of politicians. As we noted briefly (and will discuss in greater detail below), the bulk of respondents, including many of those who voted for the parties in the current coalition, are not satisfied with the government's handling of the country's major problems. The opposition also receives a poor grade, for its perceived weakness and for not fulfilling its function of challenging the government. Interestingly enough, the most critical on this point are those who voted for the parties that are presently in the opposition. This year as well, a majority of the public feel that Knesset members are not doing a good job, that they are more concerned with their own interests than with those of the public that elected them, and that they are detached from the public's real needs and problems. This repulsion for politicians is shared by citizens across the political, religious, and national spectrum; however, widespread disgust is not a good basis for a strong democratic regime, which should be grounded in the understanding that the system works for the good of all citizens without exception.

Another worrisome—though not novel—conclusion about the quality of democracy in Israel is drawn from the low level of trust in the Knesset, government, and political parties among all sectors and population groups, and the great differences between political camps in the degree of trust in state institutions. An overall lack of trust is very bad for obvious reasons, but worse still is the fact that every political camp has its own set of institutions that it does or doesn't trust; in a democracy, most of these institutions are expected to be politically neutral, rather than favored by those with a particular political stance and reviled by those with the opposite view.

In addition, but not unrelated to the above, we found a troubling phenomenon—primarily among respondents on the Right—which the current political leadership exacerbates even further: Many in this camp believe that the justice system, media, and academia, which are identified by the public with the Left, hinder the Right's ability to govern by working together in an undemocratic manner to undercut the results of the elections that brought the Right to power. Accordingly, a majority on the Right (primarily the Haredim and national religious) favor denying the courts the power of judicial review, while those in the Center and on the Left reject this notion out of hand. Here, we have another fundamental difference of opinion, in this case a procedural one. The belief that the Left, academia, the media, and the courts are plotting together is an excellent example of the spread of conspiracy theories in recent years, which, as we see from world history, play a major role in undermining democratic regimes. This is compounded by the widespread and longstanding sense of helplessness among Israeli

citizens: Once again this year, we found that only a negligible minority in all political camps and religious groups feel that they can influence government policy. This, too, gnaws away at the foundations of democracy in that it is a system based on rule by the people; if the people feel disenfranchised, they will inevitably turn their back on the political arena.

The people's sense of helplessness leads us to our next topic. As we know, every democratic regime is grounded in the belief in the existence of a social covenant between the citizens and the state, with each side having both rights and obligations. Unfortunately, our analysis of the data indicates that many Israelis are deeply disappointed by what they view as the state's not holding up its end of the bargain, along with a sense that they are saddled with the obligations without enjoying the rights. A majority feel that they cannot rely on the state in times of trouble—a belief that is especially pronounced among left-wing, centrist, and younger respondents. This feeling creates an orientation which is more community-based, as opposed to a broader civil perspective. Exemplifying this approach is the finding that the majority of the respondents stated that when needed, help should come from family members and friends—apparently because they believe that they cannot rely on the state for assistance. Most of the public—especially those who identify themselves with the Left or Center—maintain the view that Israel has a serious problem with regard to the relationship between government and the business sector, as reflected in the excessive and dangerous influence of wealthy individuals on the government. The public also sees the country's large income disparities as extremely damaging to democracy.

Another internal rift relates to the vitality of Israeli democracy. A majority of Arab and left-wing Jewish respondents maintain that it is in grave danger, that Israel used to be much more democratic than it is today, and that the Knesset has enacted anti-democratic legislation in recent years. At the opposite end of the political spectrum, most interviewees on the Right reject these assessments, and only a small minority agree with them. In other words, the opposing political camps, which vary greatly in size (the largest being on the Right), perceive the situation in vastly different ways; this prevents the creation of a wide-ranging national consensus that could serve as a broad and stable basis for the legitimacy of the government.

Finally, a majority of the public express a deep distrust of the media, yet in practice, they continue to derive their political information mainly from the traditional media outlets. Despite what seems to be a digital revolution, television and print media are still the preferred avenues of information for the Israeli public, and only a minority follow the websites or Facebook pages of politicians and parties. Moreover, the traditional press (radio, television, newspapers) still enjoys a higher level of public trust than the various forms of social media. Nonetheless, the majority feel that the media describe Israel's situation as much worse than it really is. This distrust is also fueled by the declarations of leaders, in Israel and elsewhere (for example the United States), who claim that the media are hostile, and even "out to get them."

To conclude, a subject we explored for the first time this year is whether Israel, like other countries, is experiencing a rising tide of populism. Based on the survey findings, we would

suggest that the answer is both yes and no. Certain signs associated with populism are visible in Israel today, but we are not seeing the full range of characteristics and conditions cited in the literature as a breeding ground for this phenomenon. Thus, contrary to the argument that populism is flourishing in Israel, we can cite, among other things, the clear lack of support for the notion of a strong leader, and for leaders and parties that offer quick and efficient solutions but are not committed to democratic values. Moreover, there are no signs at this stage of across-the-board opposition in the Jewish public to foreign workers and refugees, nor is there widespread concern over job security—which is not surprising in light of the country's low unemployment rate. At the same time, the survey findings indicate that in Israel (as in other countries where populism is thriving), the majority feel that things are harder for young people today than they were a generation ago. We also observed considerable concern among interviewees for their financial future, along with fear that they would not be able to offer financial support to their children in the years to come and would not be able to live decently in their old age.

In addition, there is a noticeable reluctance to open the door to the "other" when it comes to decision making on strategic topics. Furthermore, the Jewish majority claims exclusive ownership of the state and its symbols, and wishes to distance other groups from the seats of decision making. This ideological process has parallels in the United States under President Trump and in quasi-democratic states such as Turkey and Hungary, which are opposed to taking in migrants and refugees, and Poland, whose regime is becoming more and more authoritarian and less and less democratic.

The existence of evidence both for and against tells us that we should not be too quick to apply the term "populism" to Israel today, as there is a need to further explore whether this is an apt description of the current situation. It may well be, for example, that what we are really seeing is rising nationalism accompanied by "religionization" and a growing conservative ethos. As food for thought, an argument can also be made that what is "saving" Israeli democracy from descending into true populism is its strong sense of community, which leads many to feel that they belong to the stronger groups in society rather than the weaker ones. Both Arabs and Jews feel a sense of belonging to specific communities, and rely on the help of their fellow citizens when times are hard. In other words, despite the prevailing view that the state won't come to their aid, the fear of being unable to live a decent life in old age or to financially support the next generation, and the widespread belief that hard work does not guarantee financial success, the prevailing assumption in Israel (which is apparently lacking in countries where the new populism is alive and well) is that good people will always come along and extend a hand in times of trouble. For this reason—at least for now—Israelis are not looking to a strong leader for salvation.

Introduction

At the time of writing, 2017 has emerged as an "ordinary" year by Israeli standards: no breakthrough in the peace process and no war, no severe drought and no floods, no grave economic crisis or collapse of the banking system (as some predicted in the wake of the "credit bubble"), and no major confrontation with other countries over Israel's continued control of the West Bank/Judea and Samaria. Nevertheless, to quote Naomi Shemer's well-known song, there was "never a dull moment: either a scandal or a festival." And there were plenty of those. The Israeli public was subjected on a daily basis to reports of labyrinthine investigations of corruption in high places; painful local acts of terrorism; endless debates over government decisions on housing prices and the like; the Hadassah Medical Center crisis, which attracted intense media scrutiny; controversial bills that harmed—or didn't harm, depending on who you ask—the quality of Israeli democracy, among them the proposed nation-state and settlement regulation laws, which stirred up a storm; intense clashes between branches of government, for example over the appointment of Supreme Court judges; the protracted and faltering establishment of the public broadcasting corporation; the affair of the kidnapped Yemenite children (during the 1940s and 1950s), which returned to the headlines this year; and the repeated skirmishes over culture funding. All this, without even going into the changes at the global level that had a huge impact on Israel, such as the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States and its ramifications for Israel-US relations; the accession of Emmanuel Macron and his new party in France, and its implications for the standing of traditional parties and candidates; the consolidation of power by President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, despite predictions of a resounding defeat; the military collapse of Islamic State; Russia's growing military and political involvement in the Middle East; the conflict between North Korea and the United States; and the list goes on.

Whether despite or because of this, as in recent years a hallmark of Israeli democracy in 2017 was its foreign and domestic stability, which should not be taken for granted. As shown in Part I of this report, despite the public discourse in Israel in general and in the media in particular—which is filled with declarations on the decline of democracy in Israel—the findings of international research institutes measuring various facets of Israel's democratic performance in comparison with countries around the world point to a holding pattern, and even to some improvement, in various aspects of government functioning. Nor is the Israeli public, which is constantly living "at the mouth of the volcano," experiencing emotional or ideological swings at the moment: As shown in this year's Democracy Index survey data, summarized in Part II of this report, there have been only minor shifts in public opinion on the topics examined in 2017 and in recent years. Neither in the social rifts and divisions, nor in the unifying factors and areas of consensus, have there been any major shakeups this year. Opinions and attitudes in Israel continue to present a hard-to-analyze mix of strongly democratic and highly undemocratic positions; favorable assessments of the personal and overall situation alongside harsh criticism

of the political system's performance; inclusion or exclusion of one group or another; willingness to allow freedom of expression, and opposition to government sanctions against critics, contrasted with condemnation of those who decry fundamental aspects of government policy.

In this report, as in our recently published report on Jewish-Arab relations in Israel in 2017, we make no attempt to "grade" the overall level of democracy in Israel; in our view, this is a form of academic hubris that has no place in such a complex situation. In certain areas, Israeli society demonstrates a strong grasp of democratic principles, while in others, serious shortcomings are evident. What is clear is that this year as well, relations between the government and citizens are very troubling. The public has a poor overall opinion of the political system's performance, and believes that the motives of elected representatives fall far short of the standards expected of governments whose purpose is to reflect and promote the common good.

Structure of the report

As in previous years, the Index is divided into two sections:

In **Part I**, we present a selection of indicators compiled by international research institutes that show Israel's ranking on a variety of variables.

Chapter 1 presents three types of comparisons: (a) between Israel and the states included in a given international indicator; (b) between Israel and the OECD member states, based on the assumption that this is the group of countries that Israel wishes to belong to; and (c) between Israel's ranking in the indicators in 2017 and in past years.

Part II, which deals with Israeli democracy as perceived by Israelis, consists of seven chapters:

Chapter 2 addresses the Israeli public's perception of the current situation. The main topics discussed in this chapter include: the country's overall situation, the personal situation of the interviewees, and the connections between the two assessments; respondents' opinions on whether life in Israel is harder than in other places, and whether or not it is a good place to live; readiness to remain in Israel or emigrate; and optimism or pessimism concerning Israel's future.

Chapter 3 focuses on the character of the state and its democracy. In this chapter, we address such subjects as: the public's definition of a Jewish state and a democratic state; the preferred balance between the Jewish and democratic components; and which Israelis feel that the country is being "religionized." Likewise, we discuss the concern (or lack thereof) of different subgroups that their way of life may be compromised as a result of changes in the balance of power in society and in the political system.

Chapter 4 deals with the state of democracy in Israel. Among the questions considered here are: does the public feel that Israeli democracy is in danger; is democracy in Israel improving or regressing compared with the past; is the democratic system suited to the particular challenges

confronting Israel; is a strong leader considered desirable or not; are there improper business-government ties in Israel; and what impact do economic gaps have on the quality of Israeli democracy.

Chapter 5 centers on perceptions of the political system and politicians, examining a range of topics: the functioning of the government, the opposition, and political parties; the motives and performance of politicians; whether or not there are differences between parties; the degree of representativeness of the Knesset; and the level of public trust in state institutions now and in the past.

Chapter 6 examines the triad of government-society-citizens. The topics discussed include: the extent of reliance on the state for assistance in times of trouble; citizens' interest in politics and the frequency of discussions about political matters; the legitimacy of public criticism of government policy; and attitudes toward human rights organizations today and in past years.

Chapter 7 seeks to provide the beginnings of an answer to the question of whether Israel (like so many countries around the world, including democracies) is being hit by a wave of populism. We present the characteristics that define populism based on current research, and consider whether these can be identified in Israel today. Other topics discussed in this chapter include: is the public interested in a strong leader and willing to "sacrifice" basic democratic values in exchange for efficient management and speedy handling of the problems troubling it; who is more responsible for the good of the individual—the family and community or the state; what is the public's position on the presence of migrants and refugees in Israel, and the impact of this presence on the character of Israeli society; to what extent do people feel a sense of economic and job security in Israel today; and what worries them when they think about the future.

Chapter 8 presents the interplay between Israeli democracy and the media. Among the topics addressed in this chapter are: sources of political information (traditional as opposed to new); the Israeli public's use of media to access this information; the degree of public trust in the media; willingness to limit freedom of expression; and willingness to allow the authorities to interfere in the content of public broadcasting.

Methodology

In Part I of the report, we present data from external sources in the form of scores in democracy indicators compiled by international institutes such as the World Bank, Freedom House, and the Economist Intelligence Unit. Part II is based on a public opinion survey.

The field work for the Democracy Index survey was planned by the staff of the Guttman Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research, and carried out by two polling firms: in Hebrew, Smith Consulting and Research, Inc. (Ramat Gan); and in Arabic, the StatNet Research Institute

(Daliyat al-Karmel). The Hebrew survey was conducted between May 9 and May 29, 2017, and the Arabic survey, between May 9 and May 16, 2017.

The questionnaire

The questionnaire for this year's Democracy Index survey was compiled between March and April 2017. It consists of 62 content questions, two of them with multiple subsections and two of them open-ended. There were 74 questions in the Hebrew survey, and 72 in the Arabic survey.[2] A total of 34 were recurring questions from previous surveys, and the remainder were new questions. The Hebrew questionnaire contained 14 questions related to the respondent's socioeconomic background, while the Arabic questionnaire had 12. For all questions, the response "don't know \ decline to answer" was not read to the interviewees as a possible choice.

The questionnaire was translated beforehand into Arabic, and the interviewers who administered this version were native Arabic speakers.

Data collection

The data were collected via telephone interviews.

Breakdown of interviews by telephone type (%)

Survey language	Cellphone	Landline	Total
Hebrew	60.8	39.2	100
Arabic	79.4	20.6	100
Total (full sample)	63.7	36.3	100

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2   Question 19 (which examined preferences for the Jewish or democratic component of the state's character) and question 46 (on making the right to vote contingent on affirming that Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people) were presented only to Jews due to their emotionally charged content. In addition, certain questions were posed in different versions in the Hebrew and Arabic surveys in order to adapt them to the population being sampled. For example, in question 17.9—trust in a religious authority—three alternatives were presented: the Chief Rabbinate (for Jewish respondents), shar'ia court (for Muslim and Druze respondents), and canonical court (for Christians). In question 16 (open-ended), which tested the meaning of the term "Jewish state," different concepts were cited by Jews and by Arabs; for this reason, we created two different keys for coding the responses.

The sample

In total, 1,024 respondents aged 18 and over were interviewed:

- 864 interviewees, constituting a representative sample of Jews and others[3]

- 160 interviewees, constituting a representative sample of the Arab public

The sample data conformed with Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) data with regard to the distribution of the variables of nationality, place of residence, sex, age, religiosity (among Jews), and religion (among Arabs). The maximum sampling error for a sample of this size is ±3.1% for the total sample (±3.4% for the Jewish sample, and ±7.9% for the Arab sample).

Navigating the report

To make it easier to navigate the report, two types of references have been inserted in the margins of the text. The first type, located next to every question discussed, directs the reader to the page where that question appears in appendix 2 (which contains the questionnaire and the distribution of responses for each content question in a three-part format: total sample, Jews, Arabs). The second type of reference appears only for recurring questions, and directs the reader to the page where that question appears in appendix 3 (a multi-year comparison of data). The references appear in the text as follows:

Israel's overall situation

question 1

Appendix 2
p. 183

Appendix 3
p. 220

Likewise, next to each question in appendices 2 and 3, there is a reference to the page in the text where that question is discussed.

To make for easier reading, we rounded the data in the text and figures to whole numbers. In the appendices, however, the data are presented in more precise form, to one decimal place.

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3   The category of "others" was adopted by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics during the 1990s to denote people who are not Jewish according to halakha (religious Jewish law) but are not Arab, or who are associated sociologically with the Jewish majority. This relates mainly to immigrants from the former Soviet Union who are eligible to immigrate to Israel under the Law of Return, but are not considered halakhically Jewish. In the present survey, we treat them as part of the Jewish majority, and examine differences between the sample of "Jews and others" and the sample of Arab Israelis.

As a result of this rounding, there are occasionally very slight differences between the data in the text and those in the Appendices.

Before turning to the text itself, we wish to make three clarifications. First, with regard to the wording of the questions: In principle we always try to formulate the survey questions in as careful and neutral a manner as possible. At times this caution comes at a price, namely, the difficulty of identifying groups that hold extremist views. For this reason, we decided this year to word certain questions in informal, almost "slangy," language, and to use expressions that are common in Israeli political discourse, which often take a harsh and aggressive form on both sides of the political spectrum. As expected, the responses we received did indeed allow us to better detect clusters of individuals with extremist opinions in various directions.

Second, the various sociodemographic and political variables—for example, religiosity, social location, and political orientation—are based on the interviewees' own self-definition and not on definitions awarded by the research team.[4]

And finally, in most of the previous Democracy Indexes, a major portion of the discussion was devoted to relations between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority in Israel. This year, we did not relate to this topic, since a separate full-scale report was recently published on the subject.[5] Nonetheless, as in the past, we presented the responses of the Jewish and Arab interviewees separately, since on many issues there are profound differences of opinion between the two groups, and presenting the data of the total sample without making such a distinction would have erroneously drawn the positions of the Arab public closer to those of the Jewish public, even in cases where the differences between them are vast.

It is our hope that the abundance of data presented in this report will help readers gain a better understanding of the range of opinions and viewpoints in Israeli society today on issues related, directly or indirectly, to Israel's democratic character. The raw data used in the Index will be available to the public for additional analysis and research **via the webpage of the Guttman Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research on the Israel Democracy Institute site** (https://en.idi.org.il/).

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4   The political orientation variable is explained in footnote 1 above. Throughout this report, "religiosity" refers to the participants' self-declared location on a spectrum ranging from secular to Haredi (also including traditional non-religious, traditional religious, and national religious), while "social location" refers to whether they consider themselves to belong to stronger or weaker groups in Israeli society, thus reflecting their sense of social centrality or marginality. A more detailed sociodemographic breakdown can be found in appendix 4.

5   Tamar Hermann, Chanan Cohen, Fadi Omar, Ella Heller, and Tzipy Lazar-Shoef, *A Conditional Partnership: Jews and Arabs, Israel 2017* (Jerusalem: Israel Democracy Institute, 2017).

Part One

Israeli Democracy–
An International
Comparison

This part was written by Chanan Cohen

Each year, a number of research institutes around the world publish comparative indicators that examine and compare the quality of democracy in various countries across a range of dimensions, including democratic structure, functioning, and values. These assessments are derived from a combination of official statistics, public opinion polls, in-depth academic studies, and the assessments of professional experts. Part I of this year's Democracy Index will examine Israel from a global perspective, based on the scores assigned to it by international research bodies and relative to other countries. We will examine this year's scores and the resultant rankings of Israeli democracy on the various scales.

We reviewed 13 indicators, relating to three areas: democratic rights and freedoms; the democratic process (i.e., political participation, culture, and discourse); and governance. The comparisons made in this chapter are of two kinds: the first, Israel's ranking vis-à-vis other countries (as we explain below, there are two comparison groups this year); and the second, Israel's ranking in 2017 as compared with that of past years.

For every indicator, we present three figures: (1) Israel's score for this year; (2) Israel's ranking in relation to the other countries included in the indicator; and (3) Israel's ranking relative to the OECD member states. To facilitate comparison between Israel's rankings in the various indicators, we converted the original rankings to percentiles (placing them on a scale of 0–100). A high percentile indicates a favorable democratic ranking, while a low percentile denotes the opposite. In addition to the usual comparison of Israel with countries around the world offered in our annual review, this year we have added a comparison (by percentile) between Israel and the 34 other members of the OECD (the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, which Israel joined in 2010). The table below shows Israel's ranking in 2017 based on the democracy indicators compiled by various international institutes (noted in parentheses).

Israel's ranking in international indicators (percentile)

	All countries	OECD countries
Political rights (Freedom House)	**71–75**	**14–26**
Civil liberties (Freedom House)	**59–61**	**6**
Freedom of the press (Freedom House)	**67–68**	**17**
Civil liberties (The Economist Intelligence Unit)	**46–49**	**3**
Voice and accountability (The World Bank)	**71**	**14**

(Row group label, left side, rotated: **Democratic rights and freedoms**)

▶

		All countries	**OECD countries**
Democratic process	Political participation (The Economist Intelligence Unit)	98–99	89–94
	Egalitarian democracy (V-Dem)	75	14
	Participatory democracy (V-Dem)	95	77
	Deliberative democracy (V-Dem)	79	34
	Democratic political culture (The Economist Intelligence Unit)	85–89	43–51
Governance	Functioning of government (The Economist Intelligence Unit)	83–84	43–46
	Rule of law (The World Bank)	84	37
	Perception of corruption (Transparency International)	84	37

Once again this year, Israel is ranked above the mid-point of the scale in most of the international indicators. Especially noteworthy are its high rankings in those indicators dealing with the democratic process (i.e., political participation, egalitarian democracy, democratic debate [deliberative democracy], and democratic political culture), and with governance (functioning of government, rule of law, and perception of corruption). In most indicators of democratic rights and freedoms (political rights, freedom of the press, and voice and accountability), Israel is positioned lower than it should be. Moreover, this year as well, according to two separate international indicators, Israel ranks very low in the area of civil liberties. The comparison with the OECD states shows that in most of the indicators, with the exception of political participation, Israel is ranked in the lower half of the scale, and in civil liberties, almost in last place. This finding is very worrisome since this is a political "club" whose members Israel would like to emulate; based on the data, it still has a long way to go.

A detailed description of Israel's scores, the original rankings in the indicators, and a full explanation of the sources can be found in appendix 1 at the end of this report.

Figure 1 \ Israel's ranking in international indicators (percentiles)

Democratic rights and freedoms

14–26 / 71–75	Political rights (Freedom House)
6 / 59–61	Civil liberties (Freedom House)
17 / 67–68	Freedom of the press (Freedom House)
3 / 46–49	Civil liberties (The Economist Intelligence Unit)
14 / 71	Voice and accountability (The World Bank)

Democratic process

98–99 / 89–94	Political participation (The Economist Intelligence Unit)
14 / 75	Egalitarian democracy (V-Dem Project)
77 / 95	Participatory democracy (V-Dem Project)
34 / 79	Deliberative democracy (V-Dem Project)
43–51 / 85–89	Democratic political culture (The Economist Intelligence Unit)

Governance

43–46 / 83–84	Functioning of government (The Economist Intelligence Unit)
37 / 84	Rule of law (The World Bank)
37 / 84	Perception of corruption (Transparency International)

0
Lowest
ranking

100
Highest
ranking

■ Percentile among all countries

■ Percentile among OECD countries

Chapter 1 \ International Indicators

1.1 Democratic Rights and Freedoms

Political rights

Political Rights Indicator

Institution: Freedom House

Scale: 0 (lack of political rights) – 40 (full political rights)

Israel's score: 36

No. of countries included in indicator: 195

Israel's quartile among all countries: 2

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's quartile among OECD countries: 4

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's percentile

All countries: 71–75

OECD countries: 14–26
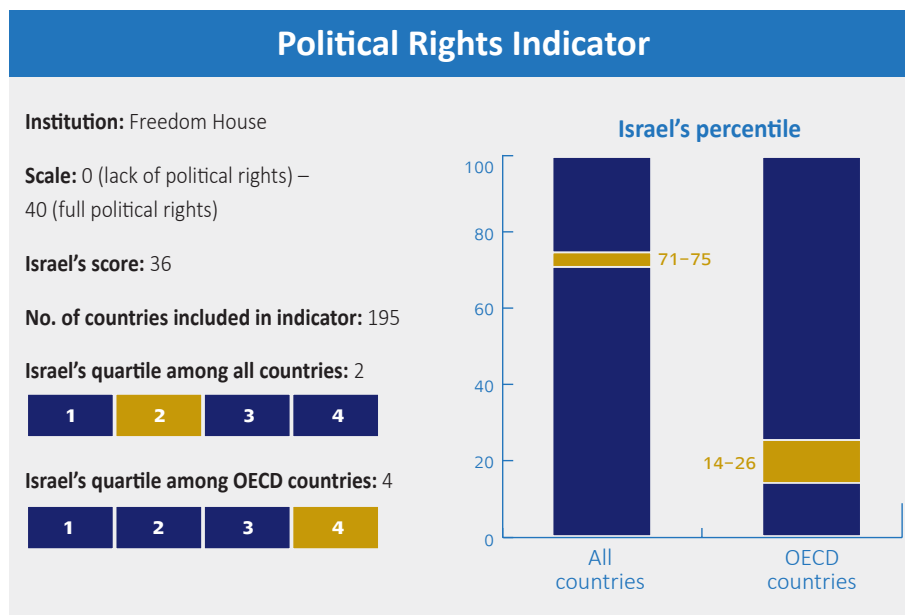
Freedom in the World, a report published annually by Freedom House, is based on assessments carried out by experts. It comprises two sensitive indicators that reflect changes in countries' performance with regard to political rights and civil liberties. According to this assessment, Israel is considered a "free country."

The political rights indicator examines whether a given country meets the following criteria: free and fair elections, open competition between political parties, real power of elected representatives, a strong and influential opposition, a low level of corruption, and the safeguarding of minority rights in politics and government. In addition, it assesses whether the country is subject to military rule and whether there is foreign intervention in its affairs. This indicator is based on a scale of 0 (lack of political rights) to 40 (full political rights).

Israel's score this year on the political rights indicator is 36, as it has been for the past 7 years. Nonetheless, a multi-year comparison shows a slow but steady decline in this area since 2003 (see Figure 1.1). Israel is located in the second quartile (in the 71–75th percentile), along with Slovakia, Italy, Mongolia, and the United States. But despite its high overall score, Israel earns a low ranking compared with the OECD states (in the fourth quartile, 14–26th percentile), leaving it trailing behind the leading countries on this issue.

Figure 1.1 \ Israel's scores in political rights indicator, 2003–2017

Civil liberties

Civil Liberties Indicator

Institution: Freedom House

Scale: 0 (lack of civil liberties) – 60 (full civil liberties)

Israel's score: 44

No. of countries included in indicator: 195

Israel's quartile among all countries: 2

1	2	3	4

Israel's quartile among OECD countries: 4

1	2	3	4

Israel's percentile

59–61

6

All countries
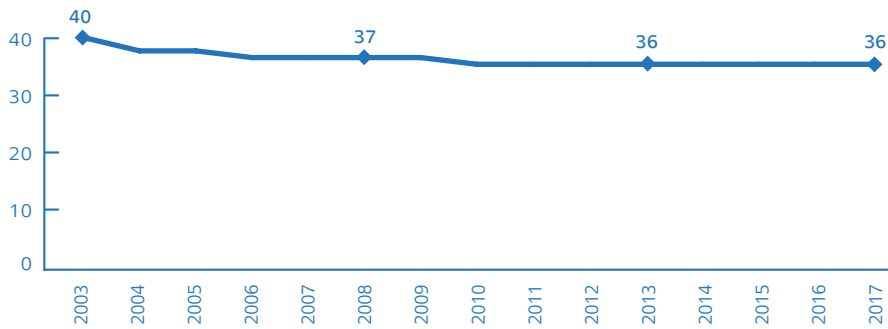
OECD countries
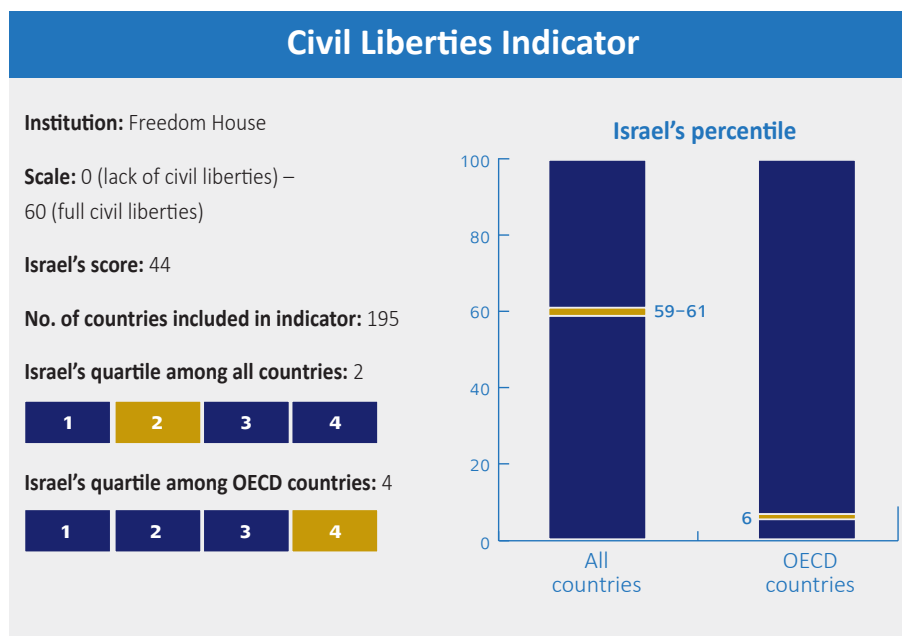
The civil liberties indicator, which is the other component of the *Freedom in the World* report issued by Freedom House, assesses whether a country enjoys freedoms of expression, the press, religion, association, and academic freedom, as well as an independent judicial system, rule of law, personal security, equality before the law, low levels of political violence, freedom of movement, intellectual property rights, gender equality, and freedom in marital and family life. The indicator is based on a scale of 0 (lack of civil liberties) to 60 (full civil liberties).

Israel's score in the civil liberties indicator is 44 for the third year in a row, representing a slight drop from the preceding years. Looking at the multi-year data, we found that Israel's score gradually improved toward the end of the previous decade but has been on the decline since 2011 (Figure 1.2). In other words, civil liberties in Israel have progressively been eroded for several years now. Of the 195 countries included in this indicator, Israel places in the 59–61st percentile, that is, the second quartile, together with Tonga, Botswana, South Africa, Surinam, and others. In comparison with the other 34 OECD states, Israel is in the sixth percentile, that is, the fourth and lowest quartile. Of these countries, only Turkey and Mexico earned lower scores.

Figure 1.2 \ Israel's scores in civil liberties indicator, 2003–2017

Freedom of the press

Freedom of the Press Indicator

Institution: Freedom House

Scale: 0 (lack of press freedom) – 100 (full press freedom)

Israel's score: 67

No. of countries included in indicator 199

Israel's quartile among all countries: 2

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's quartile among OECD countries: 4

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's percentile
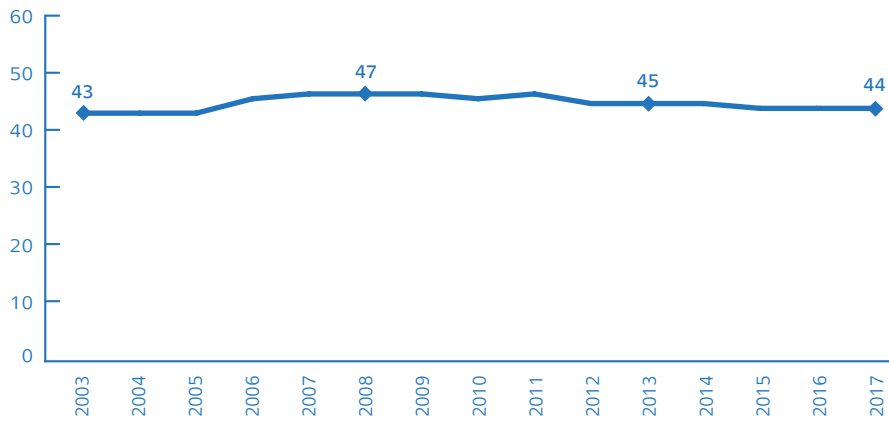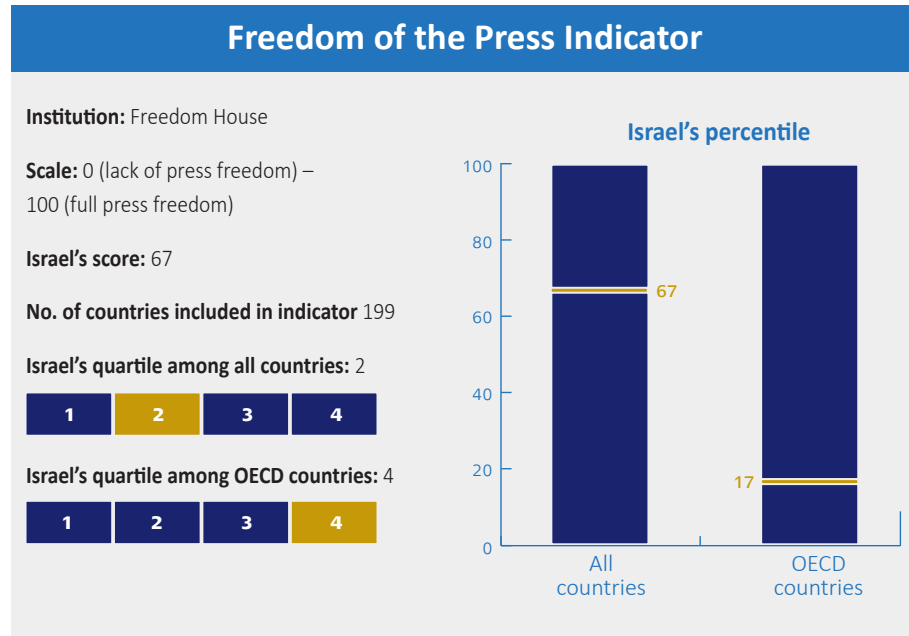
The freedom of the press indicator, published by Freedom House, is also based on the assessments of expert analysts and consultants, who assign scores in accordance with three criteria: laws and regulations that influence media activity; political pressures and controls on media content (including limitations on journalistic autonomy); and economic factors affecting media content. The indicator is presented here in the form of a scale from 0 (lack of press freedom) to 100 (full press freedom). The 0–39 range denotes a country where the press is classified as Not Free; 40–69 indicates that the press is Partly Free; and 70–100 means the press is considered Free.[6]

Israel's score of 67 is one point lower than last year's, and its lowest since this indicator was first published, in 1994 (Figure 1.3). According to the Freedom House report, the reasons for the decline are the personal attacks on the press by Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, the proliferation of libel claims against journalists (which have earned the name "silencing suits," or SLAPPs), and the increased imposition of military censorship on posts by bloggers and social media users. Due to a gradual drop in its scores, Israel is now classified as only a Partly Free

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6   In the original Freedom of the Press indicator, a lower score denoted greater freedom; however, we have deliberately inverted the scale to correspond with the other scales presented in this chapter, for greater clarity. Thus a higher score indicates a stronger democracy.

country in terms of freedom of the press. Of the 199 countries surveyed, Israel placed close to Ghana, Italy, Poland, and South Korea this year. In comparison with the OECD states, Israel falls in the 17th percentile, i.e., the lowest quartile. Stated otherwise, Israel's standing in the area of freedom of the press may be considered good in comparison with many other countries, but not when measured against the developed countries, where it ranks near the bottom of the list.

Figure 1.3 \ Israel's scores in freedom of the press indicator, 1994–2017

Civil liberties

Civil Liberties Indicator

Institution: The Economist Intelligence Unit

Scale: 0 (civil liberties not respected) – 10 (civil liberties fully respected)

Israel's score: 6.18

No. of countries included in indicator: 167

Israel's quartile among all countries: 3

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's quartile among OECD countries: 4

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's percentile
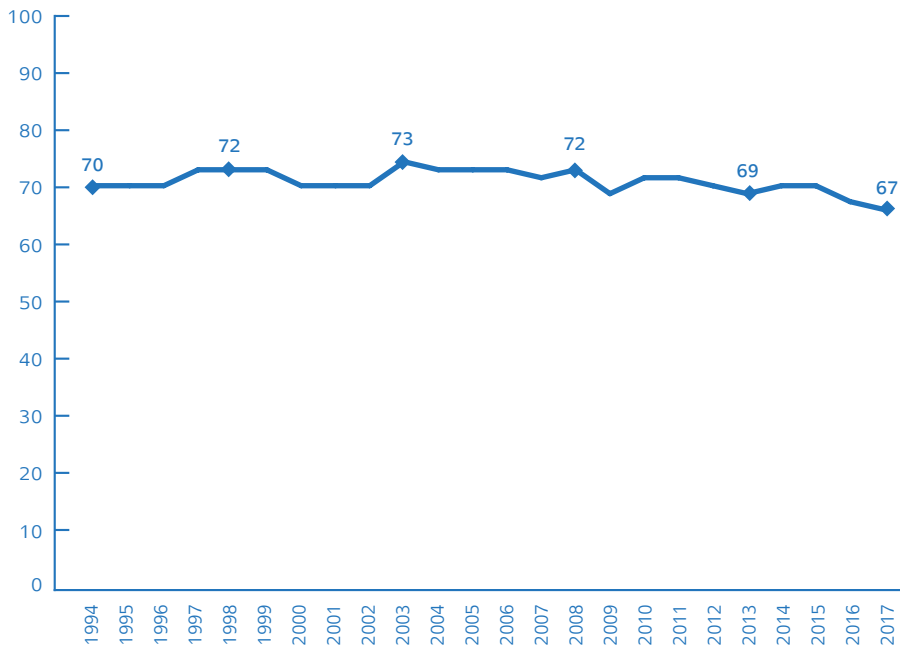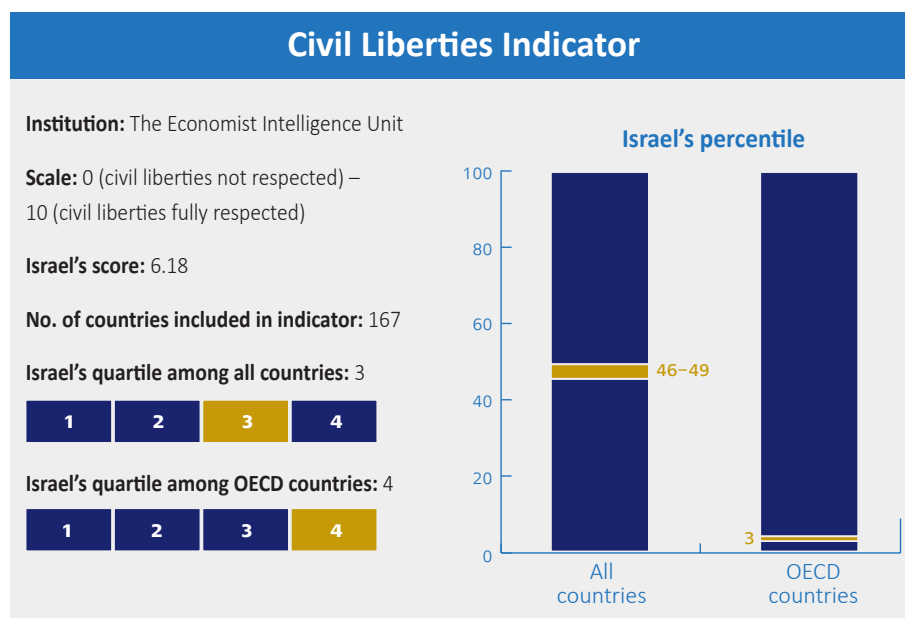
The civil liberties indicator produced by the Economist Intelligence Unit is based on a combination of expert assessments, public opinion polls, and official government statistics. It encompasses 167 countries, and measures 17 parameters, among them freedoms of the press, expression, protest, religion, and association; equality before the law; and level of personal security. The indicator is presented on a scale from 0 to 10, with 10 representing full respect for civil liberties, and 0, total lack of respect. Israel's score this year, as in 2016, was 6.18, placing it in the 46–49th percentile. Though Israel's scores in this indicator have risen over the past decade, as shown in the multi-year comparison (Figure 1.4), this does not take away from the fact that it earned a low score again this year. This places it in the third quartile of the scale, in close quarters with Venezuela and Lebanon, and far behind Central and Western Europe, North America, India, and Japan. Israel falls at the very bottom of the OECD list, in the third percentile (fourth quartile), sandwiched in between Mexico and Turkey.

Figure 1.4 \ Israel's scores in civil liberties indicator, 2007–2017

Voice and accountability

Voice and Accountability Indicator

Institution: The World Bank

Scale:-2.5 (low level of representation) – +2.5 (high level of representation)

Israel's score: 0.74

No. of countries included in indicator: 204

Israel's quartile among all countries: 2

| 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 |

Israel's quartile among OECD countries: 4

| 1 | 2 | 3 | **4** |

Israel's percentile
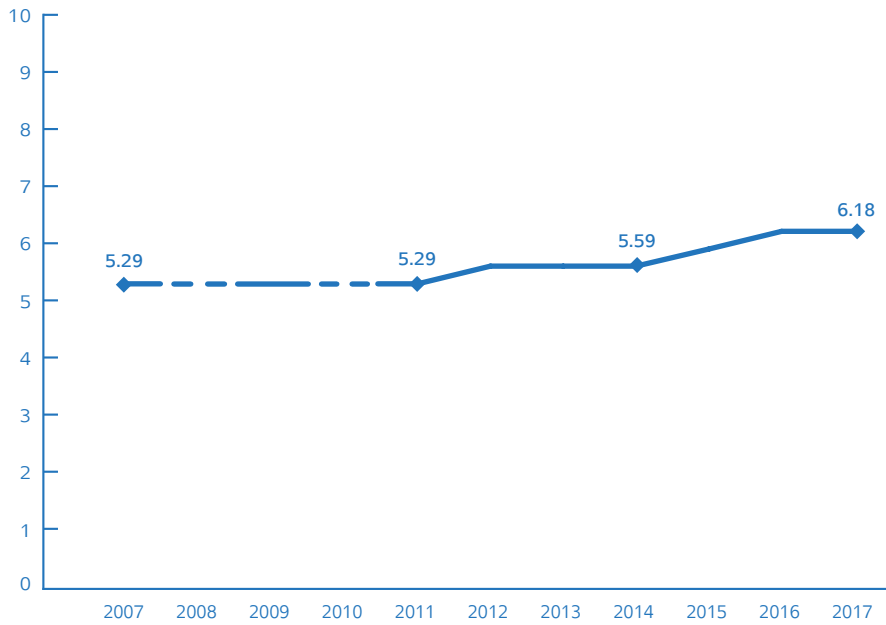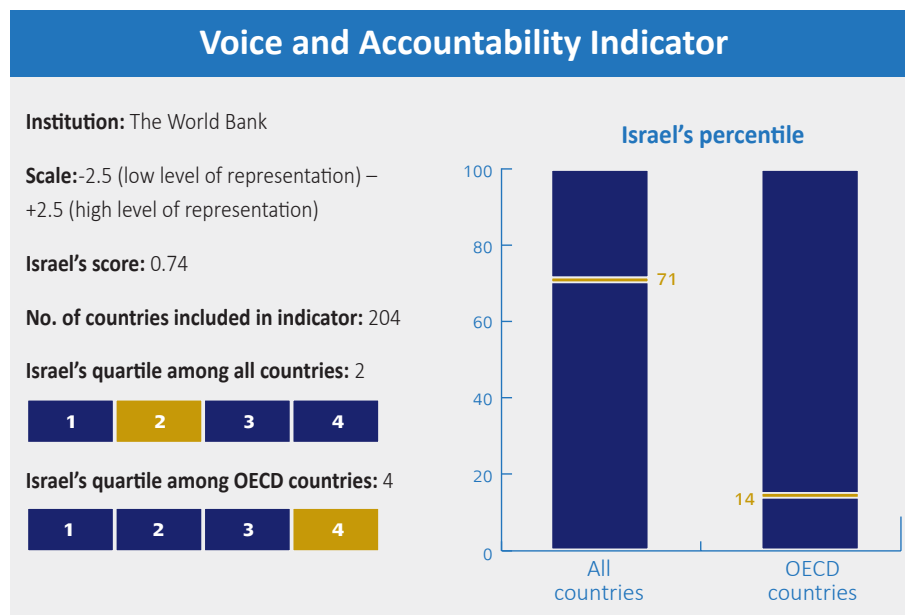
The voice and accountability indicator of the World Bank is based on expert assessments, public opinion surveys, and official statistics. It examines the extent to which citizens can participate in national elections, as well as freedoms of expression, association, and the press, which are of course basic prerequisites for the free election of a government. The scale ranges from −2.5 to 2.5.

Israel's score this year is 0.74, similar to last year's 0.73. Since 2010, Israel has shown a slight upward trend in this indicator, returning to the level it held toward the end of the previous decade (Figure 1.5). Israel also climbed somewhat in the rankings this year: Of the 204 countries included in the survey, it reached the 71st percentile, compared with the 70th last year, though this is still below the highest quartile, where the strongest democracies are located. In comparison with the OECD states, here too Israel is situated near the bottom of the rankings, in the 14th percentile (i.e., the fourth quartile).

Figure 1.5 \ Israel's scores in voice and accountability indicator, 1997–2017
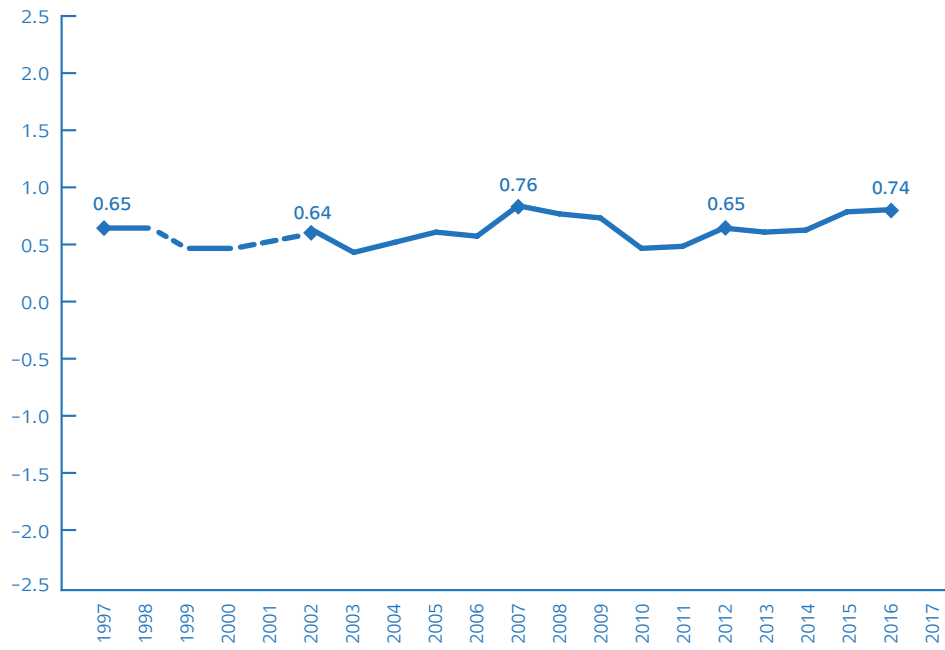
1.2 Democratic process
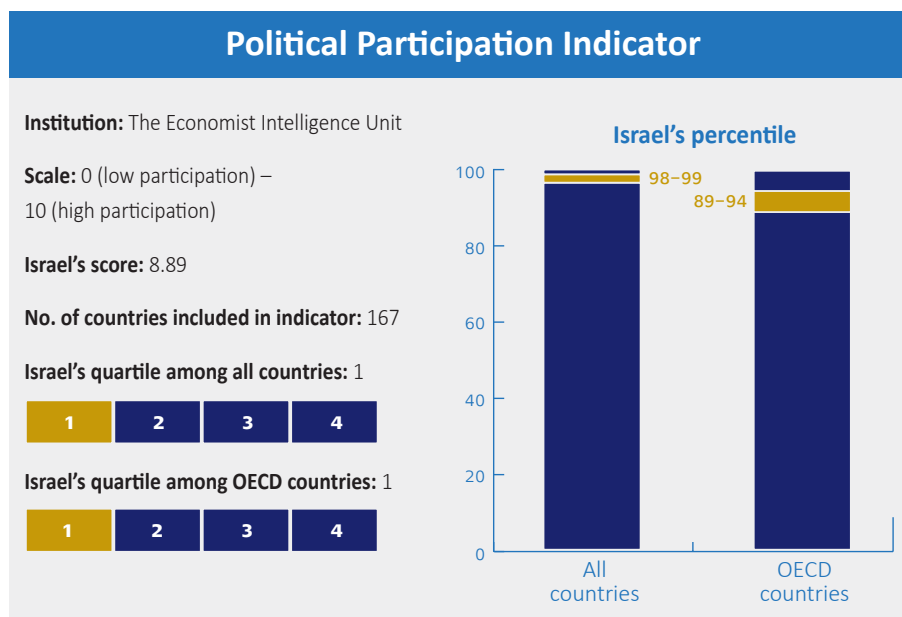
Political participation

Political Participation Indicator

Institution: The Economist Intelligence Unit

Scale: 0 (low participation) –
10 (high participation)

Israel's score: 8.89

No. of countries included in indicator: 167

Israel's quartile among all countries: 1

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's quartile among OECD countries: 1

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's percentile

98–99

89–94

All countries

OECD countries

The political participation indicator of the Economist Intelligence Unit is based on a combination of public opinion polls, official statistics, and assessments by expert analysts, focusing on the following parameters: voter turnout; minority voting rights and right of association; proportion of women in parliament; party membership rates; political engagement and interest in current affairs; readiness to participate in legal demonstrations; and government encouragement of political participation. This indicator is presented on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 representing a high level of participation, and 0, a very low participation rate.

This year as well, Israel earned a very high score in political participation (8.89), after improving in this area over the past decade (Figure 1.6). Of the 167 countries surveyed, it ranks in the 98–99th percentile, together with Iceland and New Zealand and outshining most of the established democracies. It is thus not surprising that Israel also placed well in the OECD rankings (89–94th percentile, first quartile).

Figure 1.6 \ Israel's scores in political participation indicator, 2007–2017

Egalitarian democracy

Egalitarian Democracy Indicator

Institution: V-Dem Project

Scale: 0 (low level of equal rights) –
1 (high level of equal rights)

Israel's score: 0.78

No. of countries included in indicator: 174

Israel's quartile among all countries: 2

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's quartile among OECD countries: 4

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's percentile
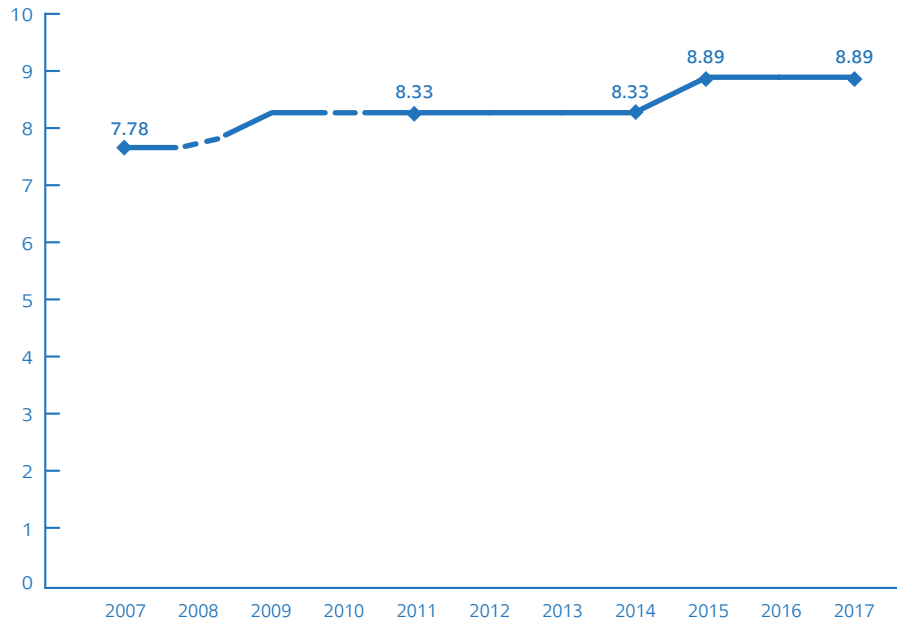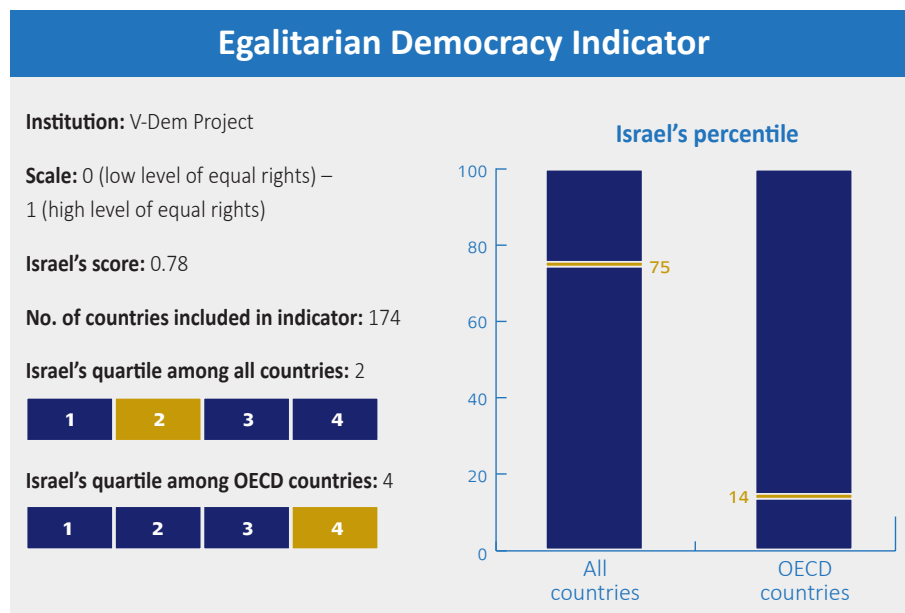
The Egalitarian Component Index is one of the new democracy indicators that we have introduced this year. It is produced by the V-Dem (Varieties of Democracy) Project, which proposes a new approach to conceptualizing and measuring democracy as a system of government. According to V-Dem, when there are material and immaterial inequalities between groups, the ability of citizens to exercise their formal democratic rights and freedoms is compromised. Thus, egalitarian democracy is achieved only when the rights and freedoms of individuals are protected, and material resources are distributed in an equal manner across all social groups, and when there is equal access to power regardless of gender, socioeconomic class or social group. Scores for this indicator are presented on a scale of 0 to 1

Israel earned a score of 0.78 this year, following a gradual rise in the country's level of equal rights over the years (Figure 1.7). Of the 174 countries included in this indicator, Israel is located in the 75th percentile, near the bottom of the first quartile, adjacent to Canada and the United States. This marks a slight rise from last year, when Israel reached the 74th percentile. In comparison with the OECD states, Israel ranks very low on the scale, in the 14th percentile. Most of the countries in this prestigious group scored higher than 0.85.

Figure 1.7 \ Israel's scores in egalitarian democracy indicator, 1948–2017

Participatory democracy

Participatory Democracy Indicator

Institution: V-Dem Project

Scale: 0 (low level of participatory democracy) – 1 (high level of participatory democracy)

Israel's score: 0.65

No. of countries included in indicator: 174

Israel's quartile among all countries: 1

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's quartile among OECD countries: 1

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's percentile

95

77

All countries

OECD countries
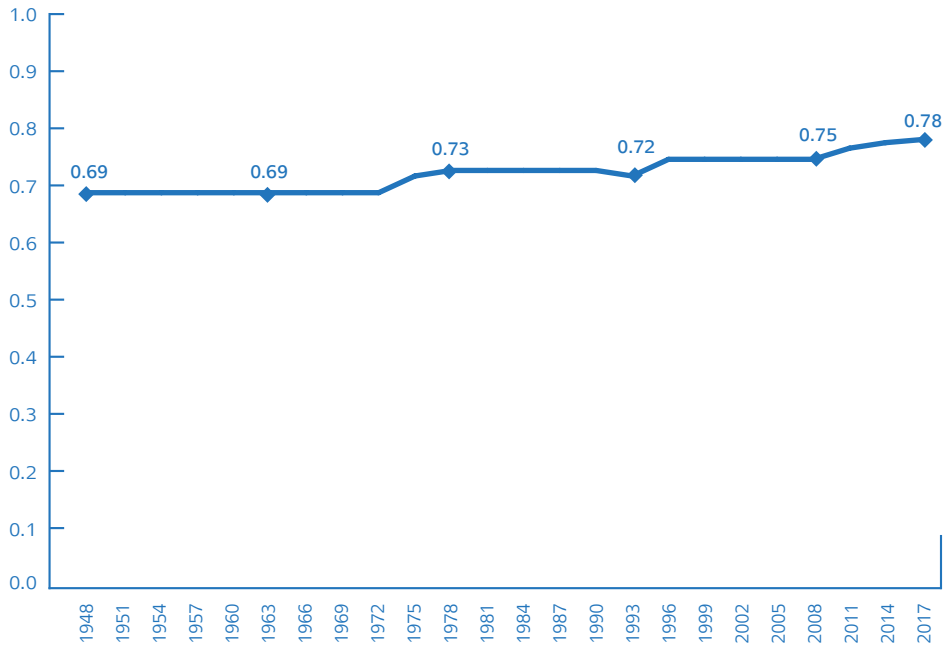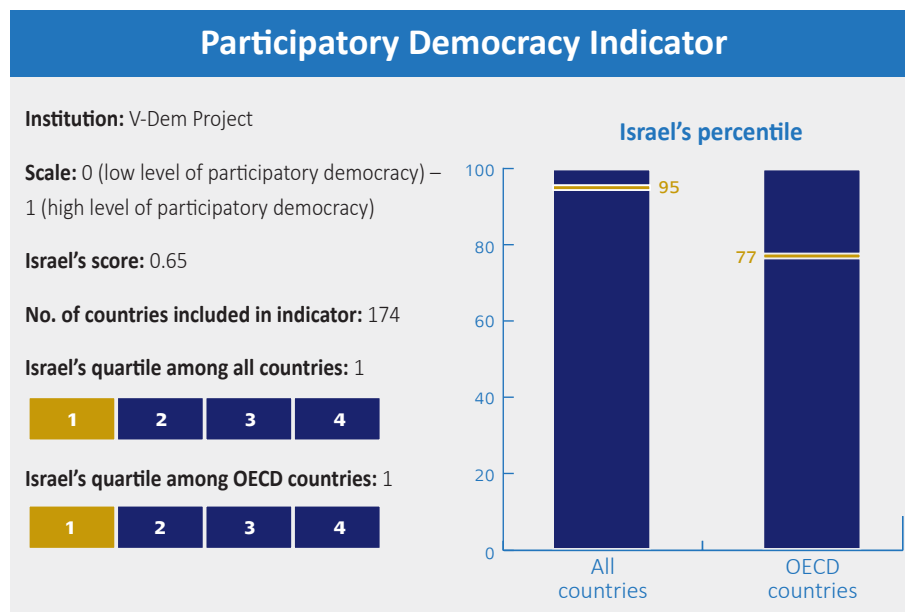
The Participatory Component Index (PCI) of the V-Dem Project is based on the premise that in a true democracy, citizens' involvement is not confined to voting in elections every few years but must also include active, ongoing participation in several spheres of activity. Thus the PCI measures participation in civil society organizations, regional and local government, and non-elected decision-making bodies. Scores on this indicator range from 0 to 1.

Israel's score this year in the participatory democracy indicator is 0.65, reflecting a gradual rise over the years (Figure 1.8). As in the political participation indicator of the Economist Intelligence Unit, Israel ranks very high here: Of the 174 countries surveyed, it is located in the 95th percentile (first quartile), rubbing shoulders with the United States, Switzerland, and Germany. This represents a slight increase over last year's score, which placed it in the 94th percentile. Compared with the OECD states, Israel also comes out near the top, in the 77th percentile (first quartile).

Figure 1.8 \ Israel's scores in participatory democracy indicator, 1948–2017

Deliberative democracy

Deliberative Democracy Indicator

Institution: V-Dem Project

Scale: 0 (low level of deliberative democracy) – 1 (high level of deliberative democracy)

Israel's score: 0.87

No. of countries included in indicator: 174

Israel's quartile among all countries: 1

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's quartile among OECD countries: 3

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's percentile
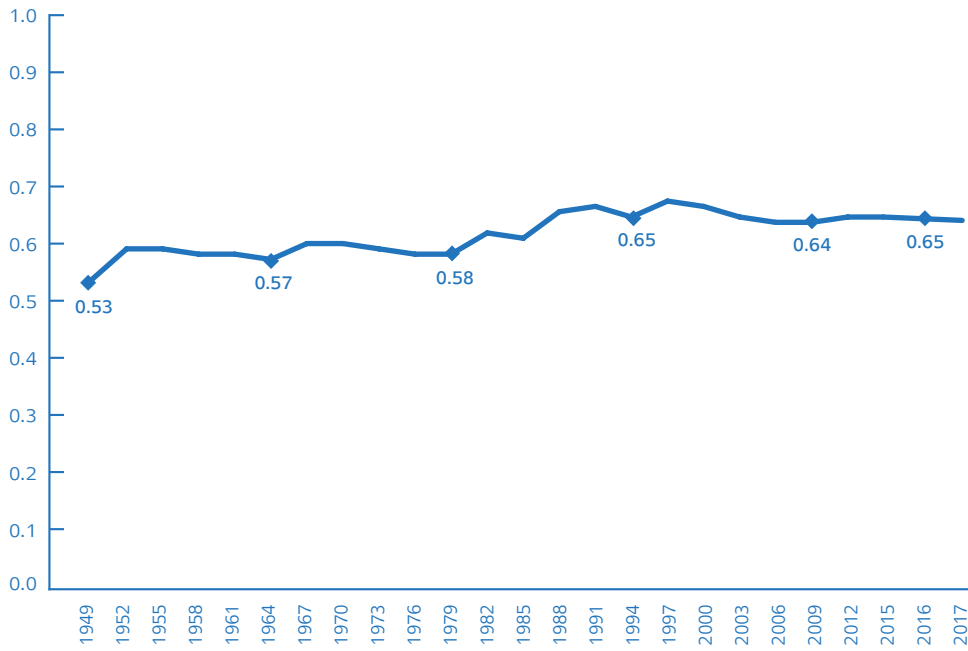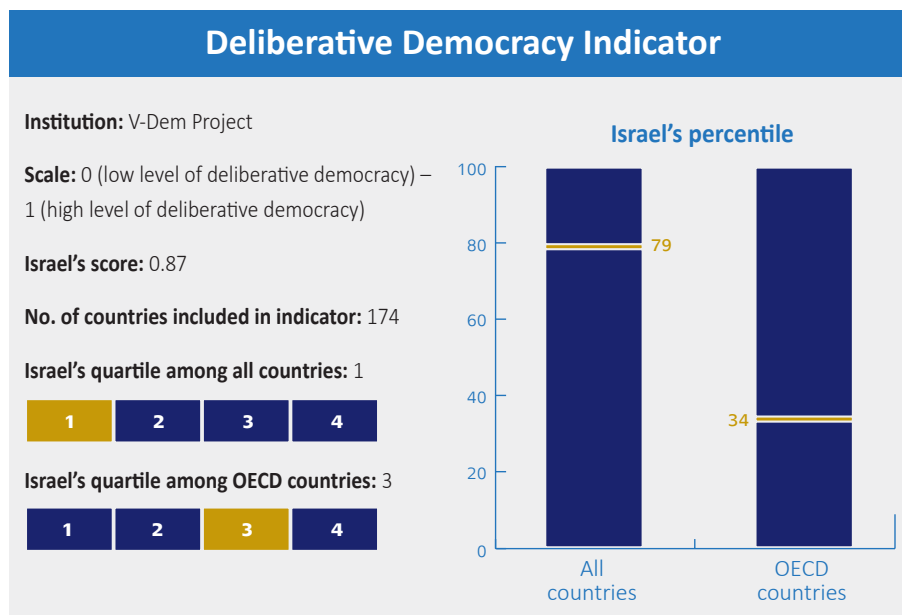
V-Dem's Deliberative Component Index (DCI) focuses on the political decision-making process. A deliberative process is one in which public decisions are reached through discussion and negotiation focused on the common good, as opposed to emotional considerations, group solidarity, narrow interests, or coercion. According to this approach, true democracy requires respectful dialogue among informed and competent participants who are open to persuasion as a result of public discourse. Democratic deliberation is measured by the extent to which political elites give public justifications for their positions on key issues under discussion, while focusing on the common good, acknowledging opposing views, and respecting those who disagree. This indicator also measures the breadth of consultation among the political elite. Scores in this indicator range from 0 to 1.

Israel's score this year in the deliberative democracy indicator is 0.87, alongside Spain, the United States, and the United Kingdom. A look at the multi-year comparison shows that Israel has enjoyed a steady climb here as well, signifying progress in the quality of democratic discourse (Figure 1.9). Israel is ranked in the top quartile for 2017, with a percentile of 79. Compared with the OECD states, however, it is below the mid-point: in the 34th percentile and the third quartile. Israel's deliberative process, according to this indicator, is not terrible, but there is certainly room for improvement.

Figure 1.9 \ Israel's scores in deliberative democracy indicator, 1948–2017

Democratic political culture

Democratic Political Culture Indicator

Institution: The Economist Intelligence Unit

Scale: 0 (less democratic) –
10 (more democratic)

Israel's score: 7.5

No. of countries included in indicator: 167

Israel's quartile among all countries: 1

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's quartile among OECD countries: 3

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's percentile
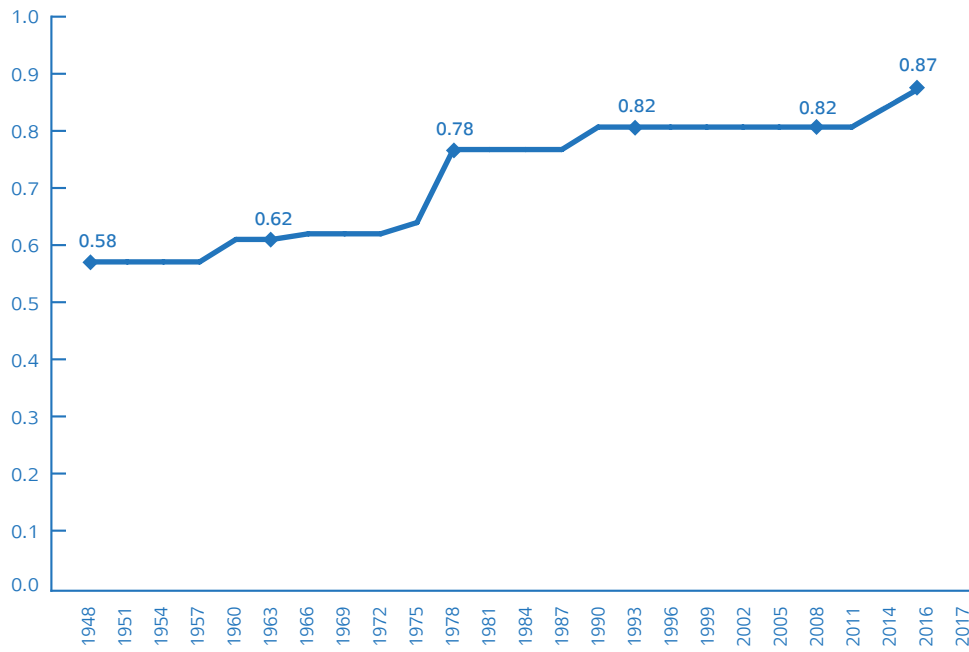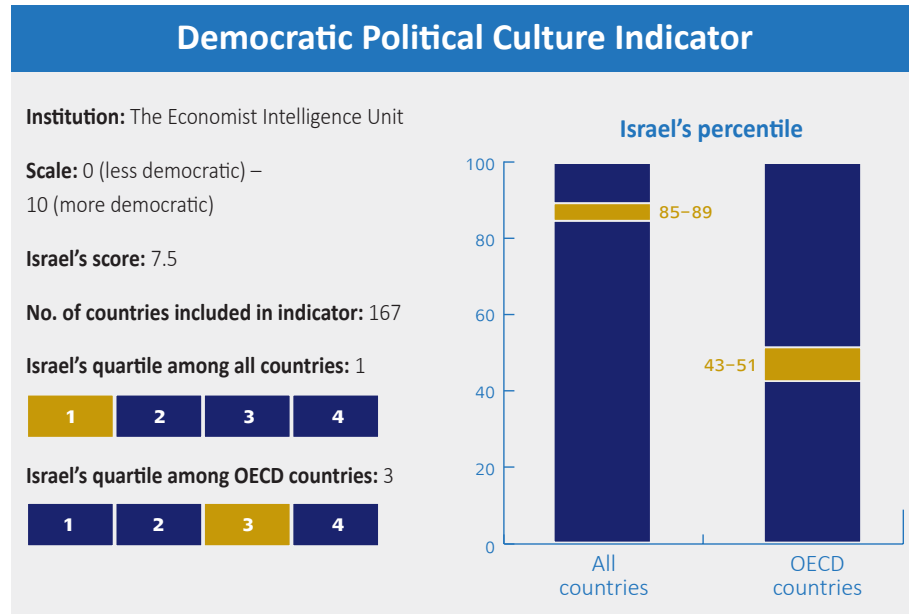
The Economist Intelligence Unit's political culture indicator, based on expert assessments and public opinion polls, measures the degree of citizens' support for a democratic system and their opposition to a "strong leader," a military regime, or technocratic leadership; the perception (or lack thereof) that democracy is beneficial to public order and economic prosperity; and whether there is a tradition of separation between religion and state. A score of 10 denotes a country with a strong democratic political culture, and 0, one lacking a democratic political culture.

Israel received a moderate-to-high score of 7.5 this year in the political culture indicator, a grade that has remained unchanged over the years it has been compiled (Figure 1.10). Of the 167 countries surveyed, Israel is located in the 85–89th percentile, that is, the first and highest quartile. Israel falls near the middle of the 35 OECD states, in the 43–51st percentile.

Figure 1.10 \ Israel's scores in democratic political culture indicator, 2007–2017

1.3 Governance

Functioning of government

Functioning of Government Indicator

Institution: The Economist Intelligence Unit

Scale: 0 (low functioning) –
10 (high functioning)

Israel's score: 7.5

No. of countries included in indicator: 167

Israel's quartile among all countries: 1

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's quartile among OECD countries: 3

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's percentile

83–84

43–46

All countries

OECD countries
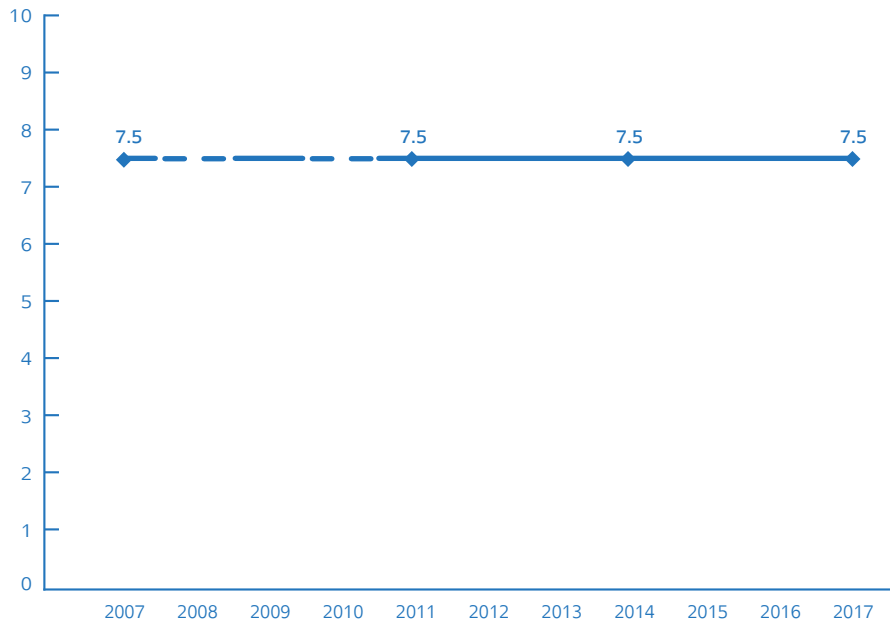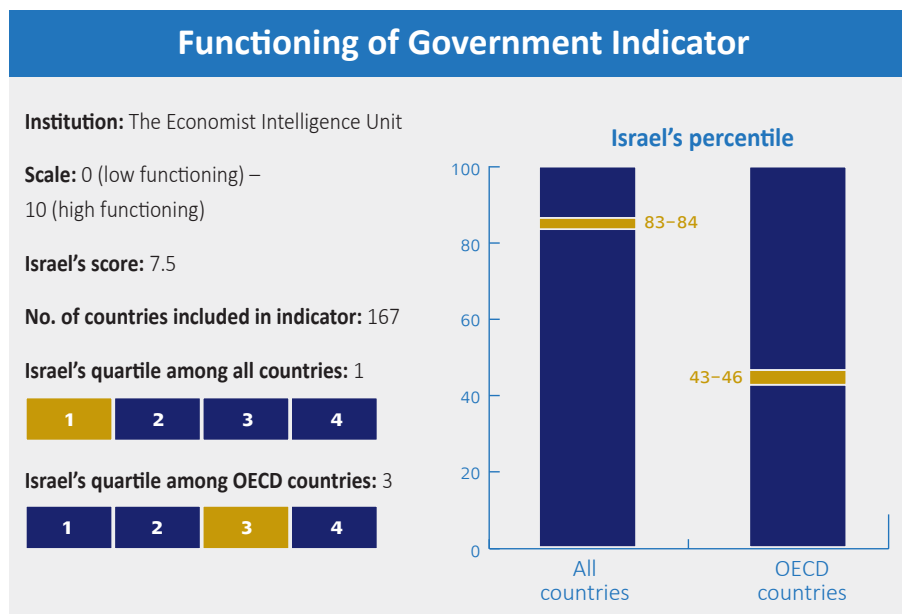
The Economist Intelligence Unit's functioning of government indicator is based on expert assessments, public opinion polls, and official government statistics that reflect the level of democratic functioning and the effectiveness of government institutions in numerous areas, among them: the government's ability to set policy; separation of powers between the three branches of government; parliamentary oversight of government; involvement of the military or other extra-political entities in politics; degree of government transparency and accountability; extent of corruption, and level of public trust in government institutions. A score of 10 on the scale denotes full democratic functioning of the state and its institutions, while 0 indicates a total lack of democratic functioning.

Israel recorded a moderate-to-high score this year of 7.5 in this indicator, representing an improvement over last year and a return to its showing between 2009 and 2014 (Figure 1.11). Of the 167 countries surveyed, Israel ranked in the highest quartile and the 83–84th percentile, slightly higher than last year. In comparison with the OECD states, Israel is situated in the lower half of the scale, near the mid-point (43–46th percentile), placing it near South Korea, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

Figure 1.11 \ Israel's scores in functioning of government indicator, 2007–2017

Rule of law

Rule of Law Indicator

Institution: The World Bank

Scale:-2.5 (low confidence) – +2.5 (high confidence)

Israel's score: 1.17

No. of countries included in indicator: 209

Israel's quartile among all countries: 1

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's quartile among OECD countries: 3

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's percentile

All countries: 84
OECD countries: 37
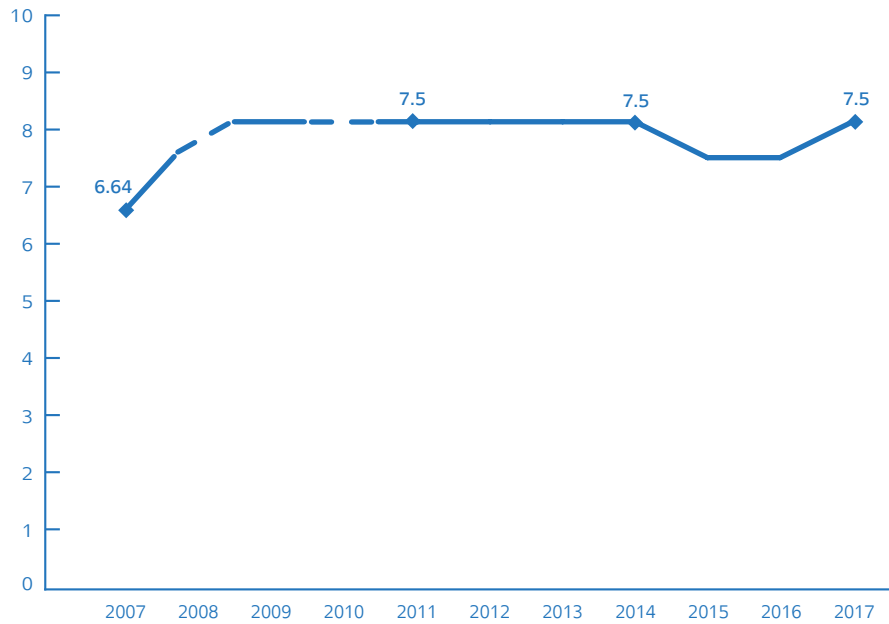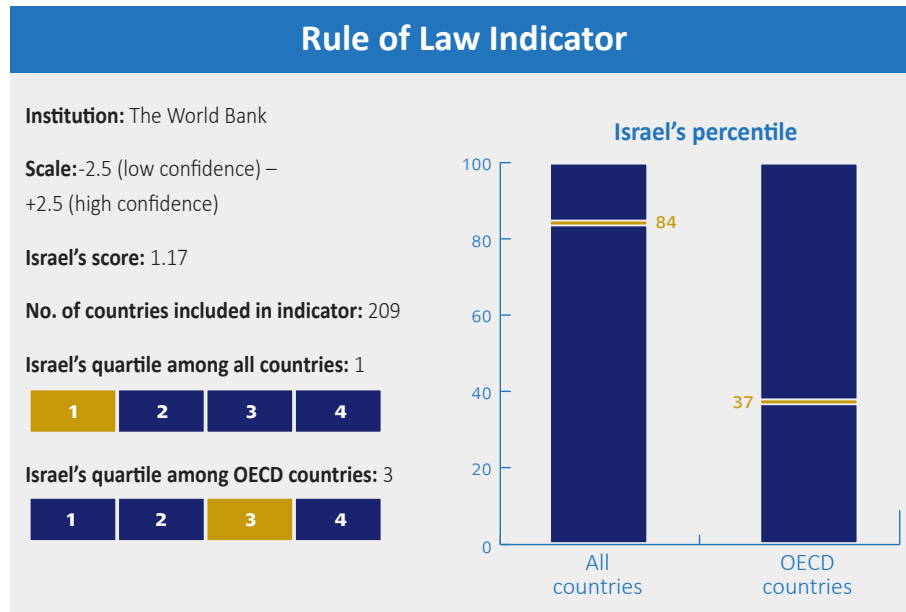
The World Bank's rule of law indicator, which is based on expert assessments, public opinion polls, and statistical data, measures the extent to which citizens and government bodies have confidence in the laws of the country and society, and how well they comply with them. Among the parameters studied are the enforcement of contracts and agreements, upholding of property rights, functioning of the police force and legal system, and prevention of crime and violence. The scores in this indicator range from –2.5 to 2.5.

Israel has shown some improvement over the past decade in this indicator (Figure 1.12), with a score this year of 1.17. Of the 209 countries surveyed in 2017, Israel ranks in the 84th percentile compared with the 83rd last year, also a high score placing it in the top quartile. Nonetheless, compared with the OECD states, Israel does not rank high, reaching the 37th percentile adjacent to the Czech Republic, Portugal, and South Korea.

Figure 1.12 \ Israel's scores in rule of law indicator, 1997–2017

Perception of corruption

Corruption Perceptions Indicator

Institution: Transparency International

Scale: 0 (high degree of corruption) –
100 (absence of corruption)

Israel's score: 64

No. of countries included in indicator: 176

Israel's quartile among all countries: 1

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's quartile among OECD countries: 3

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Israel's percentile
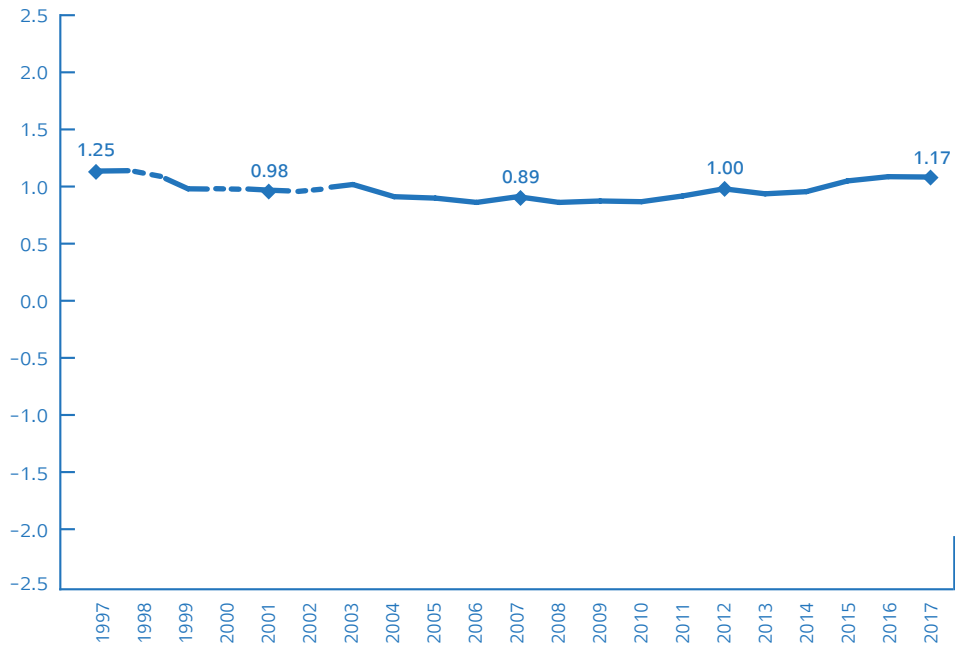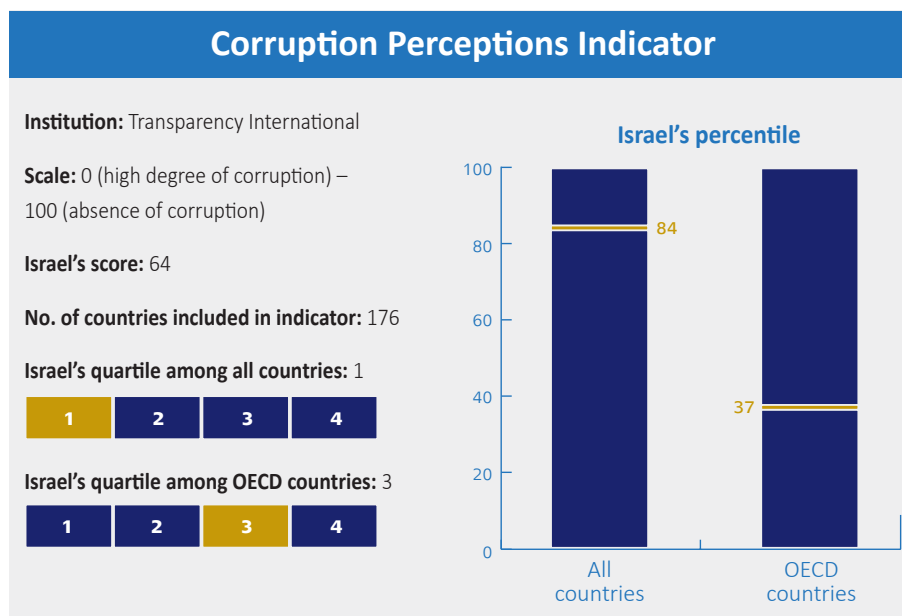
The Corruption Perceptions Index produced by Transparency International reflects the opinion of experts on the abuse of power in the public sector for personal gain in each of the countries surveyed. The score in this indicator ranges from 0 to 100; the higher the score, the less corrupt the country is deemed to be.

Israel received a score of 64 this year—somewhat higher than its scores over the past ten years, which ranged between 58 and 61, but lower than those recorded over the preceding decade (Figure 1.13). Of the 176 countries included in this indicator, Israel ranks in the 84th percentile, that is, the highest quartile of the scale, along with Chile, France, and Portugal. Compared with the OECD member states, Israel is situated below the mid-point, in the 37th percentile (third quartile). Thus, relative to most other countries, Israel is not considered corrupt. As shown below, the Israeli public's perception of corruption here, as reflected in the 2017 Democracy Survey, is worse than the assessment of experts in the international comparison.

Figure 1.13 \ Israel's scores in Corruption Perceptions Index, 1997–2017
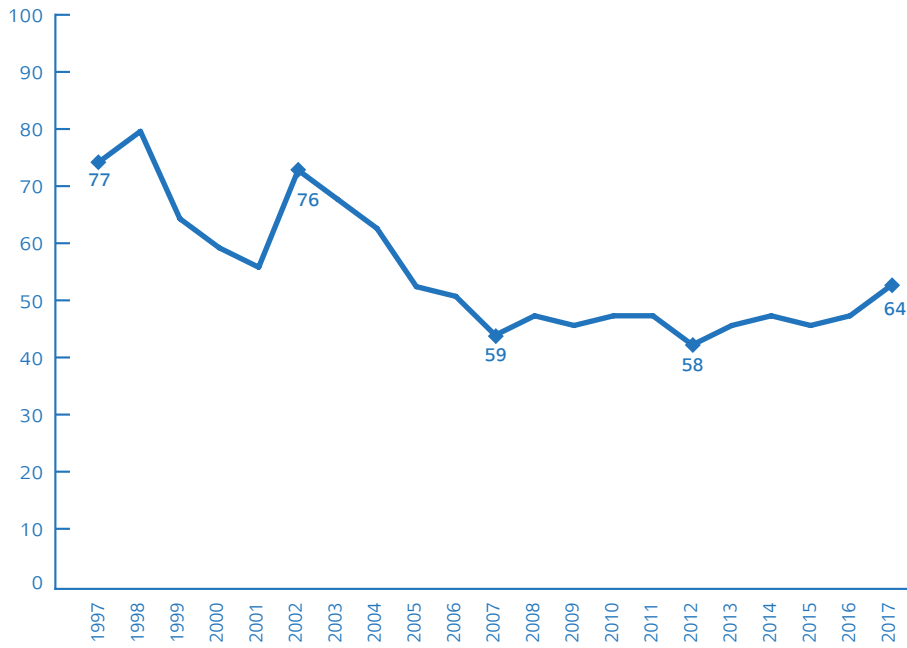
1.4 Overview of International Indicators

An overview of the state of democracy in Israel based on the international indicators yields a complex portrait. Comparing Israel's scores this year with the averages for the previous decade, we found a decline in the three indicators compiled by Freedom House (political rights, civil liberties, and freedom of the press); an improvement in eight indicators; and no change in the other two indicators.

Table 1.1 \ Israel's scores in 2017 indicators compared with previous decade

	Indicator	Range of scores	2017 score	Average score, 2007–2016	Change
Democratic rights and freedoms	Political rights (Freedom House)	0 (lack of political rights) – 40 (full political rights)	**36**	**36.3**	⌄
	Civil liberties (Freedom House)	0 (lack of civil liberties) – 60 (full civil liberties)	**44**	**45.7**	⌄
	Freedom of the press (Freedom House)	0 (lack of press freedom) – 100 (full press freedom)	**67**	**70.1**	⌄
	Civil liberties (The Economist Intelligence Unit)	0 (civil liberties not respected) – 10 (civil liberties fully respected)	**6.18**	**5.59***	⌃
	Voice and accountability (The World Bank)	−2.5 (low representation) – 2.5 (high representation)	**0.74**	**0.66**	⌃

❯

	Indicator	Range of scores	2017 score	Average score, 2007–2016	Change
Democratic process	Political participation (The Economist Intelligence Unit)	0 (low participation) – 10 (high participation)	**8.89**	**8.40***	⌃
	Egalitarian democracy (V-Dem)	0 (low level of equal rights) – 1 (high level of equal rights)	**0.78**	**0.76**	⌃
	Participatory democracy (V-Dem)	0 (low level of participatory democracy) – 1 (high level of participatory democracy)	**0.65**	**0.65**	=
	Deliberative democracy (V-Dem)	0 (low level of deliberative democracy) – 1 (high level of deliberative democracy)	**0.87**	**0.84**	⌃
	Democratic political culture (The Economist Intelligence Unit)	0 (less democratic) – 10 (more democratic)	**7.5**	**7.5***	=
Governance	Functioning of government (The Economist Intelligence Unit)	0 (low functioning) – 10 (high functioning)	**7.5**	**7.3 ***	⌃
	Rule of law (The World Bank)	–2.5 (low confidence) – 2.5 (high confidence)	**1.17**	**0.91**	⌃
	Perception of corruption (Transparency International)	0 (high degree of corruption) – 100 (absence of corruption	**64**	**60.2**	⌃

*   In the Economist Intelligence Unit indicators, the average shown is for a period of eight years, since scores were not published in 2008 and 2010.

⌃   improvement in Israel's score compared with average over previous decade

=   no change in Israel's score compared with average over previous decade

⌄   decline in Israel's score compared with average over previous decade

As shown in the following table, Israel's relative ranking in seven of the indicators remains unchanged from last year, while it rose in six of the indicators compared with the other countries surveyed.

Table 1.2 \ Israel's ranking in 2017 indicators compared with 2016

	Indicator	2017 quartile	2017 percentile	2016 percentile	Change
Democratic rights and freedoms	Political rights (Freedom House)	2	71–75	71–73	=
	Civil liberties (Freedom House)	2	59–61	59–60	=
	Freedom of the press (Freedom House)	2	67–68	67	=
	Civil liberties (The Economist Intelligence Unit)	3	46–49	46–47	=
	Voice and accountability (The World Bank)	2	71	70	⌃
Democratic process	Political participation (The Economist Intelligence Unit)	1	98–99	97–99	=
	Egalitarian democracy (V-Dem)	2	75	74	⌃
	Participatory democracy (V-Dem)	1	95	94	⌃
	Deliberative democracy (V-Dem)	1	79	79	=
	Democratic political culture (The Economist Intelligence Unit)	1	85–89	84–88	=
Governance	Functioning of government (The Economist Intelligence Unit)	1	83–84	75–81	⌃
	Rule of law (The World Bank)	1	84	83	⌃
	Perception of corruption (Transparency International)	1	84	81	⌃

⌃   improvement in Israel's ranking compared with 2016

=   no change in Israel's ranking compared with 2016

Based on the above comparisons, in general Israel currently meets the basic criteria of a democracy; however, it is also grappling with deep-seated, complex problems. In the area of democratic rights and freedoms—the heart of a democratic regime—Israel is not moving forward but stagnating: This year saw a drop in its ranking in freedom of the press, which reached its lowest point since the inception of the Freedom of the Press report—a worrisome finding in light of the vital role of a free press in providing citizens with reliable information on the political and social situation in their country. The level of civil liberties (namely, the freedoms of expression, association, and religion; equality before the law; and personal security) is very low relative to the established democracies around the world, such as the OECD member states. It is necessary for us to improve in this area so that we can meet the accepted standards of Western liberal democracies. The voice and accountability indicator, which primarily measures the ability of citizens to enjoy freedom of expression and democratic political representation, also serves as a warning that improvement is needed.

One area where Israel is seen in a more flattering light is what we have termed "the democratic process," with citizens showing a strong ethical commitment to the democratic system (democratic political culture). In the area of participatory democracy, Israel scores very high marks. It seems that Israelis are politically engaged, and make an effort to influence the political sphere. With respect to equality of democratic rights between different population groups (egalitarian democracy) and promotion of deliberative democracy, Israel's standing is not the worst, but there is still room for improvement.

Finally, Israel earns good grades in the area of governance, with an acceptable level of government functioning as reflected in policy setting and implementation, separation of powers, and public trust in government institutions. The level of corruption is not very high, though there is certainly room to do better.[7] Upholding of the rule of law, in terms of police performance, the judicial system, and the internalization of the laws of the state by citizens and government entities, is quite high.

To summarize, once again this year the international comparison shows that Israel is a stable democracy. Indeed, the dire predictions of its impending demise as a democratic state, so frequently raised in public discourse, are overstated when we examine the situation from a comparative and multi-year perspective. As evidence, the comparison added this year, showing Israel's scores over time, points to a gradual upswing in most of the indicators surveyed. Nonetheless, in comparison with its fellow OECD members, Israel ranks near the bottom of the scale in most of the indicators—in particular, the measures of democratic rights and freedoms— meaning that it can hardly afford to rest on its laurels. Thus, while Israel is a stable democracy, it is in need of significant improvement, especially regarding the protection of democratic rights and freedoms.

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7   At the time of writing, several cases of alleged corruption are under investigation; if these end in indictments, it is reasonable to assume that this will lower Israel's score on the relevant indicator in the near future.

Part Two

Israel in the Eyes of its Citizen

Chapter 2 \ How is Israel Doing?

In this chapter, we discuss the following topics:

- Israel's overall situation, and the personal situation of the interviewees
- Life in Israel as compared with other countries
- Is life in Israel good?
- Should I stay or should I go?
- Optimism or pessimism about Israel's future

As we saw in Part I, in comparison with the wide range of countries studied in the international indicators, Israel's standing is good in most cases, even excellent in some, while lagging behind in others. Nonetheless, as we have explained, compared with the OECD states its status is not great, and in certain indicators, it is even very poor. But do these outside assessments reflect the perceptions of the Israeli public? On the whole, the answer to this question is yes. It seems that Israelis are aware of the strengths of the polity in which they live, and—no less—its weaknesses, despite the fact that the points of internal and external criticism do not always fully coincide. As we will see shortly, Israel's citizens are quite satisfied with the country's overall situation, and even more so, their personal situation; however, when it comes to the performance of the establishment, and matters related to the quality of Israeli democracy—a subject that we will be exploring in greater depth in the next few chapters—their assessment is alarmingly negative.

As is our custom each year, we posed the question: "How would you characterize Israel's overall situation today?" This year again, a majority—even slightly greater than in 2016—defined the situation as "good." In fact, this is the first time since we began these assessments (in 2003) that the two most frequent responses in the total sample ("so-so" and "good") were almost equal in popularity, as opposed to the past, when "so-so" was the most common. As shown in the following figure, the share of Jewish respondents who define the situation as "good" is actually somewhat greater than the group who classify it as "so-so," though in the Arab sample "so-so" is still the most frequent response. Among both Jews and Arabs, the proportion who characterize Israel's overall situation as "bad" is low, though it is higher among the Arab respondents.

Figure 2.1 \ How would you characterize Israel's overall situation today? (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
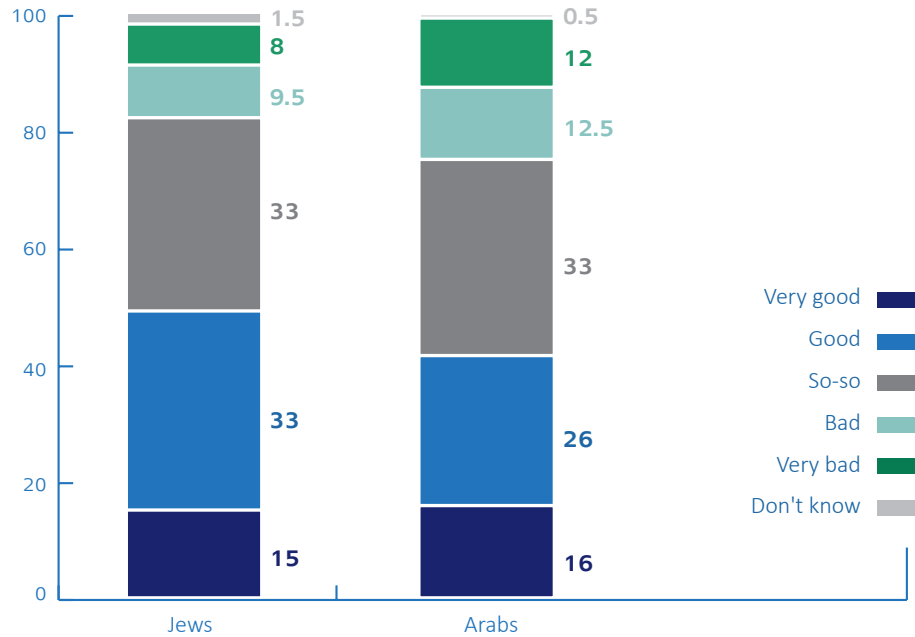
A breakdown of the responses from the Jewish sample yields considerable differences between subgroups, though there is not a majority in any group who define the situation as "bad" (as shown in the table below).

Table 2.1 (Jewish respondents; %)

	Israel's overall situation	Good	So-so	Bad	Didn't respond	Total
	Haredi	47	38	12	3	100
	National religious	75	16.5	6	2.5	100
Religiosity	Traditional religious	67	23	7	3	100
	Traditional non-religious	48	36	14	2	100
	Secular	38	37	23.5	1.5	100

	Israel's overall situation	Good	So-so	Bad	Didn't respond	Total
Age	18–34	48	35	15	2	100
	35–54	50	35	14.5	0.5	100
	55+	49	29	18	4	100
Political orientation	Right	64	26	9	1	100
	Center	41.5	39.5	17	2	100
	Left	27	41	31	1	100
Social location	Self-affiliation with stronger groups	55	32	12	1	100
	Self-affiliation with weaker groups	34	38.5	25	2.5	100

Breaking down the responses by the respondent's religiosity (self-identification on the Haredi/secular spectrum), we found that the national religious group is the most satisfied with the country's overall situation. There is no systematic pattern in the level of satisfaction by age, and in all the cohorts the most frequent response is positive. Looking at the results by political orientation (on the Right/Left political-security spectrum), we see that respondents on the Right are more satisfied than those from the Center or Left. Analysis by social location (central/peripheral, i.e., sense of belonging to the stronger or weaker groups in Israeli society) shows that the respondents who are most satisfied with the country's situation are those who feel they belong to the stronger groups in Israeli society.

A breakdown of the Arab respondents into subgroups based on assorted variables also turns up differences; however, in the Arab public as well, the share who classify the situation as "bad" in all subgroups is the same as, or lower than, the share who see it as "good" or "so-so."

Table 2.2 (Arab respondents; %)

	Israel's overall situation	Good	So-so	Bad	Didn't respond	Total
Religion	Muslim	40	34	26	--	100
	Christian	41	29	29	1	100
	Druze	55.5	28	11	5.5	100
Age	18–34	51	28	19	2	100
	35–54	37	31	32	--	100
	55+	32	52	16	--	100
Voting pattern in 2015 Knesset elections	Hareshima Hameshutefet (Joint List)	34	35	31	--	100
	Zionist parties	56	32	8	4	100

Among Arab respondents, those who were the most inclined to assess Israel's situation as "good" were the Druze, the youngest respondents, and those who voted for one of the Zionist parties.

And what is the trend over time in responses to this question? As we see from the following table, the findings for the last five years have remained relatively stable. Further, as shown in the figure below, since the inception of the Democracy Index in 2003 there has been a steep decline in the share of those who assess Israel's situation as "bad" or "very bad," and a corresponding rise in those who view it as "good" or "very good."

Table 2.3 (total sample; %)

Israel's overall situation	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Good or very good	35	44	41	36.5	48
So-so	41	37	39	40	33
Bad or very bad	22	17	18	23	17

Israel's overall situation	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Didn't respond	2	2	2	0.5	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Figure 2.2 \ How would you characterize Israel's overall situation today? (total sample; 2003–2017; %)

Good and very good   So-so   Bad and very bad
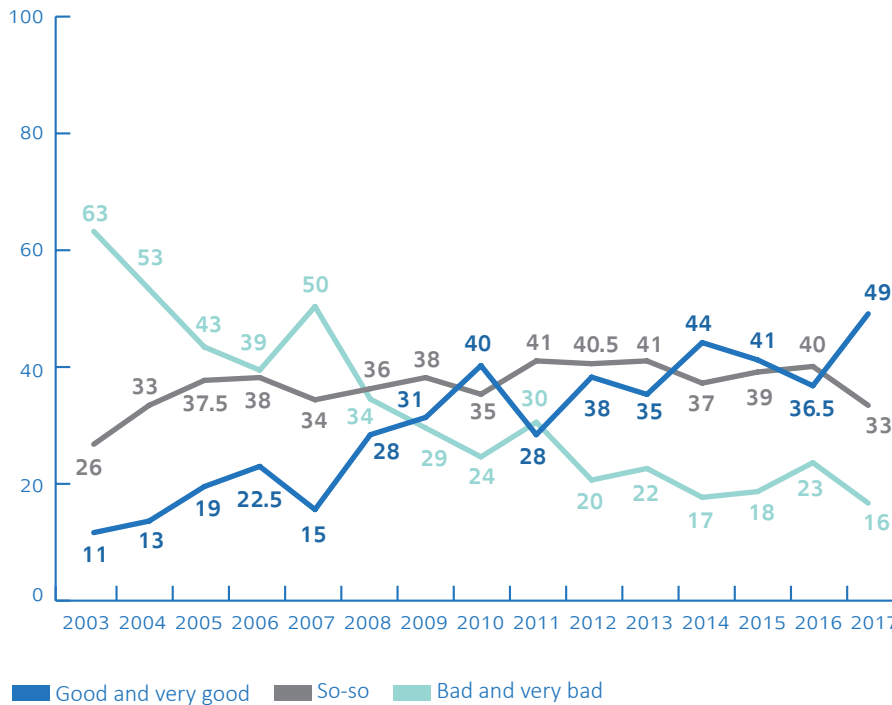
As in previous years, we also asked interviewees how they viewed their personal situation. Repeating past patterns, the personal assessments were much more favorable than the judgments of the overall situation, which already tended toward the positive. On the personal level, a clear majority of Jews and Arabs characterized their personal situation as "good" or "very good," though the share who felt this way was much greater among Jews than among Arabs (77% versus 56%, respectively).

Personal situation

Question 2

Appendix 2
p. 183

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Figure 2.3 \ How would you characterize your personal situation?
(Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
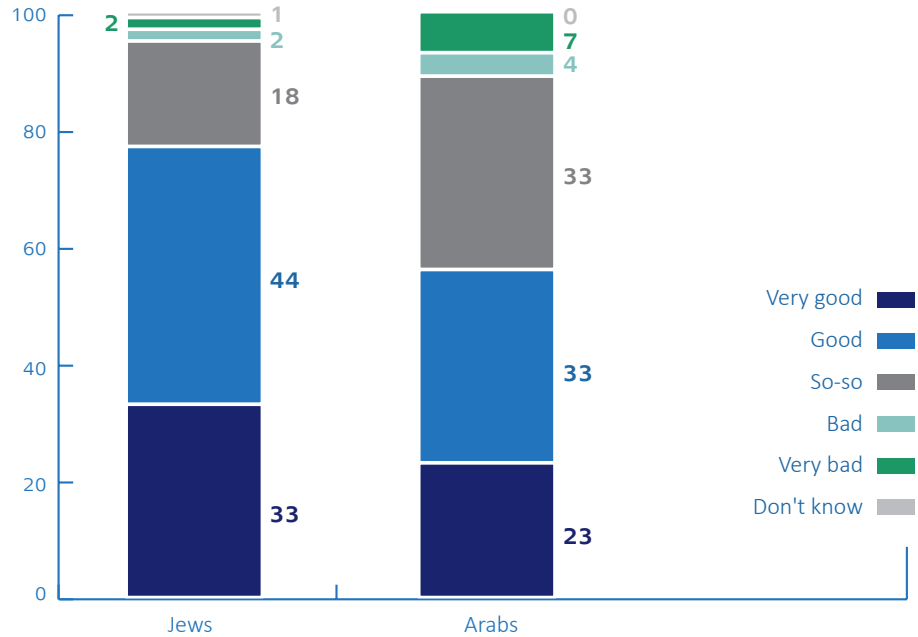
A breakdown of the findings by demographic and political variables did not yield any subgroup in either the Jewish or Arab samples in which a majority defined their personal situation as "bad" or "very bad."

We also examined whether a connection exists between the respondents' assessments of their personal situation and their assessment of the national situation. As shown in the table below, and as we have seen in previous years, those who defined their personal situation as "good" were more likely to offer a similar assessment of the country's situation, with corresponding findings for those who defined their personal situation as "so-so" or "bad."

Table 2.4 (total sample; %)

Assessment	Country's situation is good or very good	Country's situation is so-so	Country's situation is bad or very bad	Didn't respond	Total
Personal situation is good or very good	55.5	30.5	12.5	1.5	100

Assessment	Country's situation is good or very good	Country's situation is so-so	Country's situation is bad or very bad	Didn't respond	Total
Personal situation is so-so	27.5	43.5	27.5	1.5	100
Personal situation is bad or very bad	22	26	44	8	100

And what trend did we see over time in respondents' assessments of their personal situation? The last four Democracy Indexes have been very consistent, with a majority defining their personal situation as "good."

Figure 2.4 \ How would you characterize your personal situation? (total sample; 2014–2017; %)
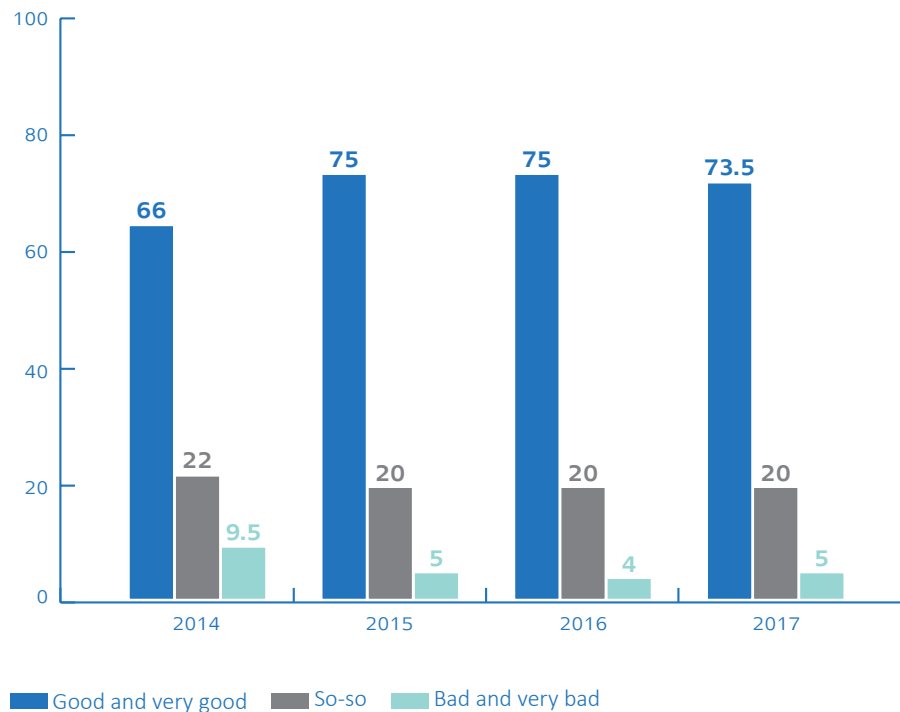
As noted, the personal assessment was more positive this year among Jews than among Arabs. We examined whether this was also the case for the last four Indexes. The following table shows that in fact it was; however, while there has been a slight upswing among Jewish respondents over time, among Arabs no clear trend is evident, and the current year was even marked by a slight decline, though the majority still reported that their personal situation was good.

Table 2.5 (%)

	Define their personal situation as good or very good: Jews	Define their personal situation as good or very good: Arabs
2014	69	50
2015	76.5	65
2016	78	61
2017	77	56

In chapter 1, we saw that international indicators show Israel trailing behind the OECD member states in certain variables. Are Israelis aware of this? It turns out that the Israeli public is quite realistic, and thus many of them agree with the assertion that life in Israel is harder than in most other Western countries. At the same time, the total sample was split more or less evenly between those who agreed and those who disagreed with this statement.

Figure 2.5 \ "Life in Israel today is harder than it is in most Western states" (total sample; %)

- Strongly agree — 23.5
- Somewhat agree — 23
- Somewhat disagree — 23
- Strongly disagree — 23
- Don't know — 7.5
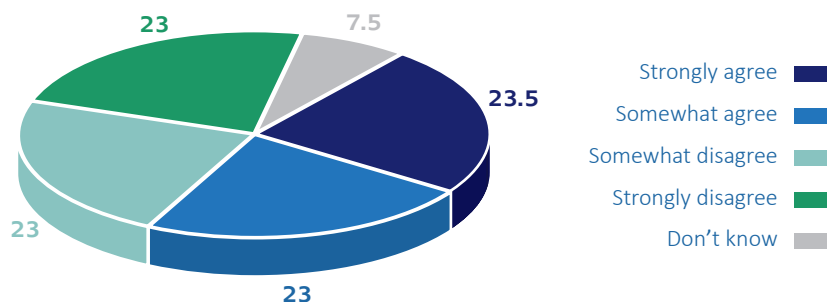
However, when we divided up the responses by Jewish and Arab respondents, a clear difference emerged: Among Jews, close to one-half (49%) **disagreed** with the statement, as opposed to a majority of Arabs (61%), who **did agree** with it, presumably because their lives in Israel are more difficult.

A breakdown of the Jewish sample by political orientation yielded a majority (57%) on the Right who **disagreed** with the assertion that life in Israel is harder than that in most Western countries. Those who identified with the Center were divided on this question (47% agreed with the statement, and 44% disagreed), while a majority on the Left (55%) agreed. Since a higher proportion of individuals on the Left enjoy an above-average income and education, and thus most likely a good (or even better) personal situation, it would appear that this assessment is based more on their political views than on the objective reality of their personal lives.

Breaking down the responses of the Arab sample by age, we found that this variable had a significant effect on attitudes regarding the difficulty of life in Israel: the younger respondents agreed with the statement to a much greater extent than did the older ones. By contrast, among the Jewish respondents, there was no significant association between opinions and age.

Table 2.6 (%)

Agree that life in Israel is harder than in most Western countries	Jews	Arabs
18–34	44	61
35–54	46	66
55+	40	44

In light of the above, we also asked the interviewees to express their opinion on the statement: "Israel is a good place to live." Despite the position of many respondents that life here is harder than in most Western countries, we found a sizeable majority of Jews and Arabs who agreed with the statement that it's good to live here.

Figure 2.6 \ "Israel is a good place to live" (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
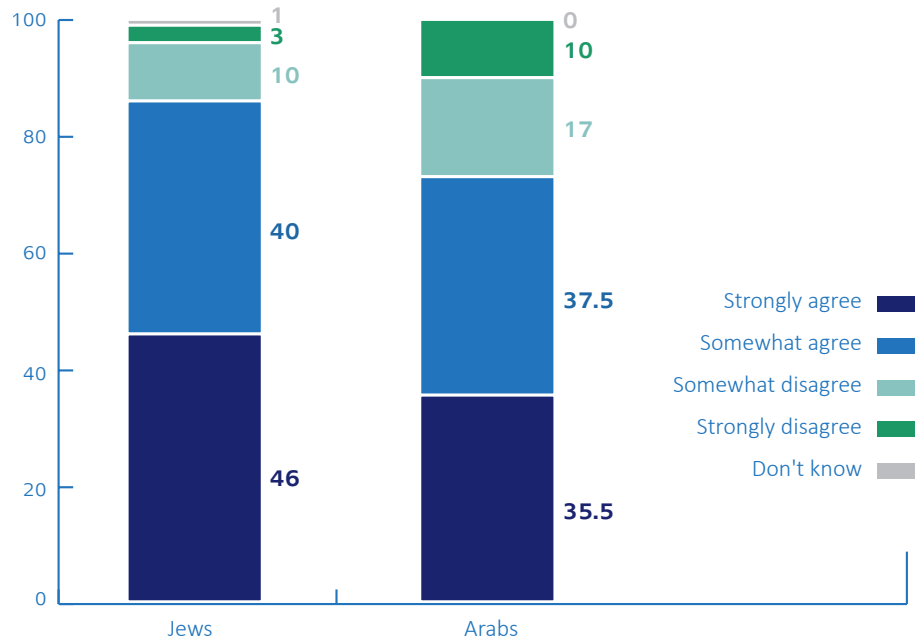
In other words, while the general mood in Israel is positive, a substantial minority of the public take issue with the statement that it is good to live in Israel—though even in the most critical subgroups, there is great appreciation for the quality of life here, and no apparent interest in mass emigration from Israel.

We repeated the following question this year: "If you could receive American citizenship, or that of any other Western country, would you prefer to live there or to remain in Israel?" As in the 2015 Index (see appendix 3), the vast majority of Jews and Arabs alike (81% in both populations) would choose to remain in Israel despite our "tempting offer."

Figure 2.7 \ Prefer to emigrate or stay in Israel (total sample; %)
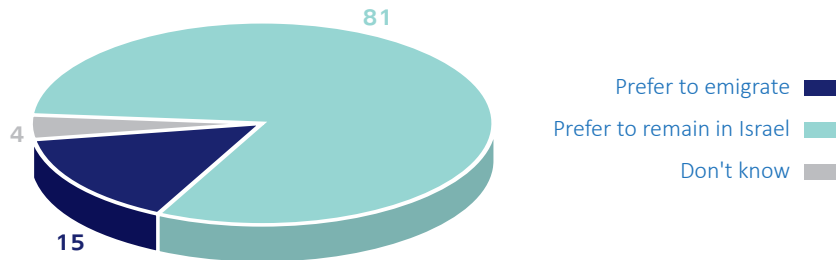
We wished to see, nonetheless, which subgroups were most interested in living elsewhere under the conditions we proposed. We found that among both Jews and Arabs, the younger respondents were more willing than the intermediate and older age groups to seek their fortune overseas, presumably because of their greater mobility (in the absence of such obstacles as children, or the desire for tenure at work or a permanent place of residence).

We also found sizeable differences based on respondents' definition of their personal situation. Among Jews, the responses to these questions were more strongly associated than among Arabs.

Table 2.7 (%)

Prefer to emigrate	Jews	Arabs
18–34	20	25
35–54	15	16
55+	9	4

Table 2.8 (%)

Prefer to emigrate	Jews	Arabs
Define personal situation as good or very good	12	12
Define personal situation as so-so	21	26
Define personal situation as bad or very bad	35	23.5

And what of the assessments of the country's situation? Here too, we found a clear link among Jewish respondents between opinions about the state of the nation and the willingness to emigrate. Among Arab respondents, we did not find such a connection.

Table 2.9 (%)

Prefer to emigrate	Jews	Arabs
Define country's situation as good or very good	6	18
Define country's situation as so-so	18	19
Define country's situation as bad or very bad	30	18

It might surprise some to learn that among Jewish respondents we did not find differences by political orientation on the question of willingness to emigrate. In fact, on this issue, the Right and the Left share nearly identical perspectives, while those in the Center are slightly more willing to leave. Among Arab interviewees as well, we found only negligible differences (verging on statistical error) between voters for Hareshima Hameshutefet (Joint List) and for the Zionist parties. In other words, the desire to remain in Israel crosses political lines.

In past years, we have found that most Israelis are optimistic about the future of the state. Revisiting the question this year, we discovered that there were virtually no changes from 2016: the share of optimists in the total sample was 67% last year, and 68% this year. However, as shown in the following figure, the Arab respondents are split almost evenly on this question, with only a slight inclination toward optimism, as opposed to the Jews, where the optimists hold sway.

Figure 2.8 \ In general, are you optimistic or pessimistic about Israel's future? (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
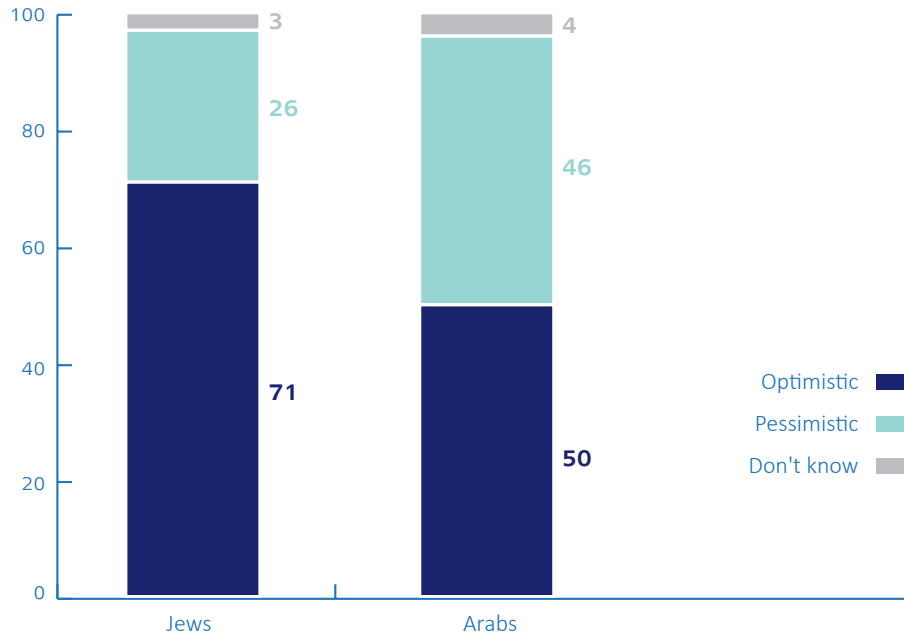
We found a very significant connection between the assessment of the country's situation and optimism—or pessimism—about the future. Not surprisingly, those who believe that Israel's situation is better are more optimistic about its future. Incidentally, the finding in both the Jewish and Arab samples that those who characterize the state of the nation as "so-so" are mostly in the optimistic camp corroborates our feeling over the years that the label "so-so" in this context leans more toward the positive end of the scale than the negative.

Table 2.10 (%)

Optimistic about Israel's future	Jews	Arabs
Define country's situation as good or very good	89	72
Define country's situation as so-so	63	58.5
Define country's situation as bad or very bad	34	0

We also found a connection between optimism or pessimism about the state's future and respondents' assessments of their personal situation: Those who characterize their own standing as better are also more optimistic about the future of Israel. Moreover, in the Jewish sample, even among those who label their personal situation as bad, there is a small majority who side with the optimists.

Table 2.11 (%)

Optimistic about Israel's future	Jews	Arabs
Define personal situation as good or very good	74	59
Define personal situation as so-so	63	41.5
Define personal situation as bad or very bad	51	29

Breaking down the responses in the Jewish sample by political orientation revealed vast differences, as summarized in the following table:

Table 2.12 (Jewish respondents; %)

Optimistic about Israel's future	
Right	83
Center	69
Left	47

This means that a substantial majority on the Right, and a not insignificant majority in the Center, are optimistic about the future of the state, while on the Left only a minority—though a sizeable one—express optimism when asked about Israel's future.

To sum up this chapter, many Israelis are aware of the fact that life in Israel is harder than it is elsewhere in the developed world. But despite this, the general feeling is one of satisfaction with life here, a desire to remain in Israel, and even relative optimism about its future, subject to respondents' assessment of the country's and their own personal situation as well as their political orientation. However, as we will see in the following chapters, this satisfaction does not extend to the political system, which earns low grades in virtually every respect, whether in the realm of values or performance.

Chapter 3 \ Character of the State

In this chapter, we discuss the following topics:

- What constitutes a Jewish state? And a democratic one?
- Public preferences regarding the balance between the Jewish and democratic components of the state
- Is Israel being "religionized"?
- Fears of future disruption to the way of life of different groups

As we know, Israel is defined officially as a "Jewish and democratic state." First, we sought to examine what meaning citizens ascribe to each of the two components of this definition. To avoid pigeonholing the interviewees into our own conceptual frameworks, these questions were posed in an open-ended format, meaning that we did not present possible responses but instead asked the interviewees to express their personal opinions freely. The responses were then grouped into categories.

The first open-ended question was: "People understand the term 'democratic state' in different ways. What does it mean to you, in one or two words?" The figure below presents the distribution of categories that we compiled from all the responses received from the Jewish and Arab samples. Perhaps the most striking finding is the notable similarity in the definitions of both populations. As we have found in the past, freedom in general, and freedom of expression in particular, are the principles cited most frequently by interviewees from both groups in their responses to this survey question (roughly 46% of the Jewish and Arab samples alike).

Nevertheless, Arab respondents—not without reason, given the fact that they are a national minority fighting for its standing in the Jewish state—attach great importance to the principle of equality, which is in fact the second most common response after freedoms of various types (as shown in the figure above). By contrast, in second place among Jewish respondents, after freedom of various types, is the principle of rule of the people. The figure also shows that human and civil rights do not earn a high "rating" in either of the two groups. Moreover, this year, as in 2011 (when we last explored the subject in this format), pluralism and justice did not feature prominently in the Jewish or Arab samples. Likewise, only a negligible minority in both populations offered negative definitions of a democratic state. In other words, the lion's share of the public in Israel today views democracy in a positive light, but only according to their own personal understanding of the concept, and some of the basic democratic values, such as human and civil rights, are not seen as a supremely necessary condition.

Figure 3.1 \ What does "democratic state" mean to you? (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
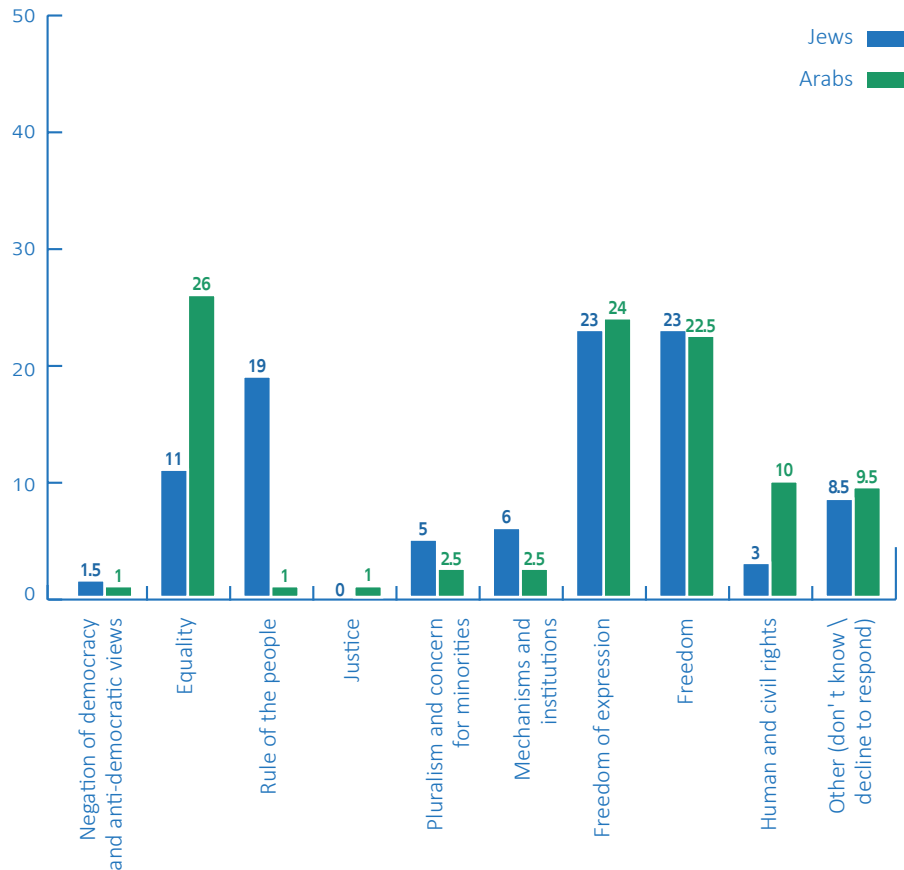
From here, we moved on to the second open-ended question, on the meaning of Israel's definition as a "Jewish" state: "People understand the term 'Jewish state' in different ways. What does it mean to you, in one or two words?" Unlike the definition of a democratic state, where we found considerable similarity between the answers of the Jewish and Arab interviewees, the question of what constitutes a "Jewish" state revealed profound differences in outlook between the two groups: The vast majority of the response categories of the Jewish interviewees were positive or neutral in nature, whereas all the response categories of the Arab interviewees, with one exception (offered by a small share of respondents), were negative. This correlates with another finding of ours—that the Jewishness of the state is the primary bone of contention today between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel.[8]

8   Hermann et al., *A Conditional Partnership* (see footnote 5 above).

Figure 3.2 \ What does "Jewish state" mean to you? (Jewish respondents; %)
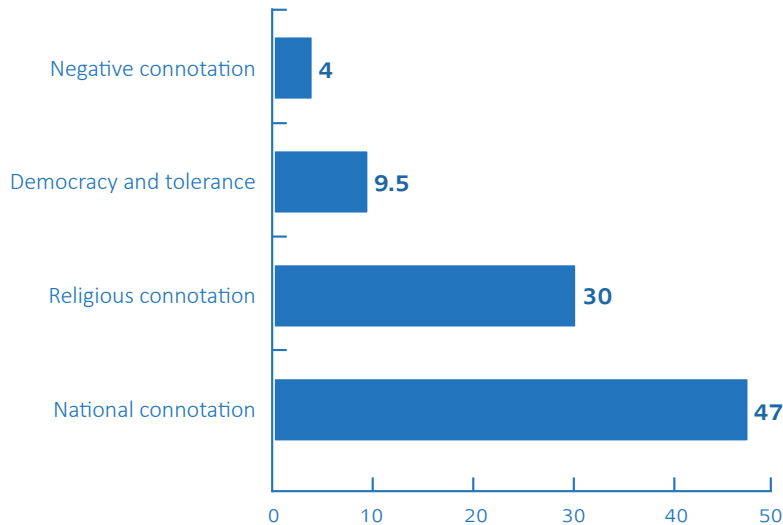
We found that the highest share of Jewish interviewees interpreted the Jewishness of the state in a national sense. In second place were those who understood it as a religious characteristic. Far behind these were the respondents who interpreted "Jewish state" as meaning a tolerant and democratic country, and in fourth place, we found a small percentage of respondents who saw Israel's Jewishness as a component with negative implications.

Among Arab interviewees, the interpretations of the term "Jewish state" were the polar opposite of those offered by the Jewish respondents: the highest proportion of Arabs saw the term as signifying racism, followed by those who felt it indicated that the state belongs exclusively to the Jews. In third place was the understanding of "Jewish state" as an anti-democratic regime. Only in fourth place was there a small share who gave the term a positive interpretation of some sort.

Figure 3.3 \ What does "Jewish state" mean to you? (Arab respondents; %)
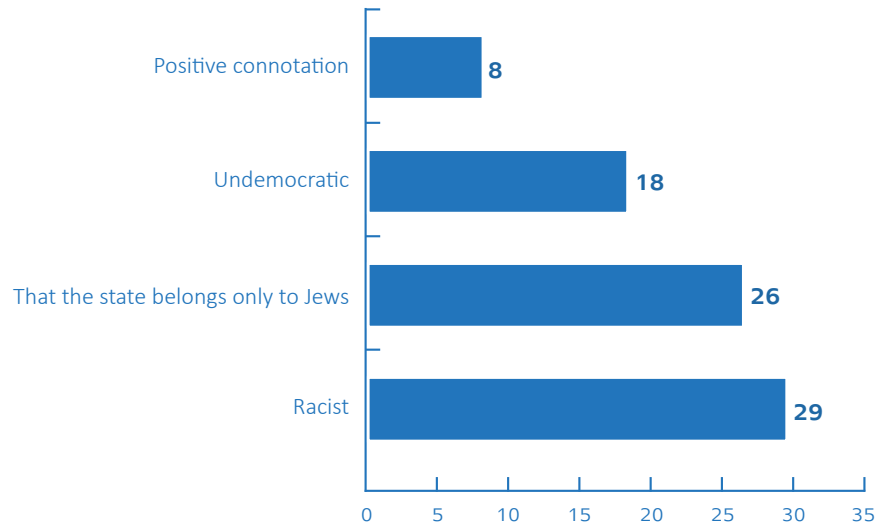
In other words, the Jewish component in the definition of Israel as a "Jewish and democratic" state is favorable in the eyes of the Jewish public, but a thorn in the side of the Arab population.

Next, we moved on to the (existing and desired) balance between the democratic and the Jewish aspects of the definition of Israel.

We revisited a question that we posed in 2016: "Israel is defined as a Jewish and democratic state. Do you feel there is a good balance today between the Jewish and the democratic components?" As can be seen in the figure below, both then and now the largest share of Jewish respondents, and a large majority of Arab respondents, hold that the Jewish component is too dominant. Among Jews, this view gained some strength (from 39% last year to 42% this year), while among Arabs, there was a weakening of this position (from 80% to 74%). In any case, this represents a very sizeable majority of the Arab public who feel this way, as opposed to a minority—though quite a substantial one—of the Jewish public.

Figure 3.4 \ Balance between Jewish and democratic components (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)

■ There is a good balance   ■ The Jewish component is too dominant
■ The democratic component is too dominant   ■ Don't know
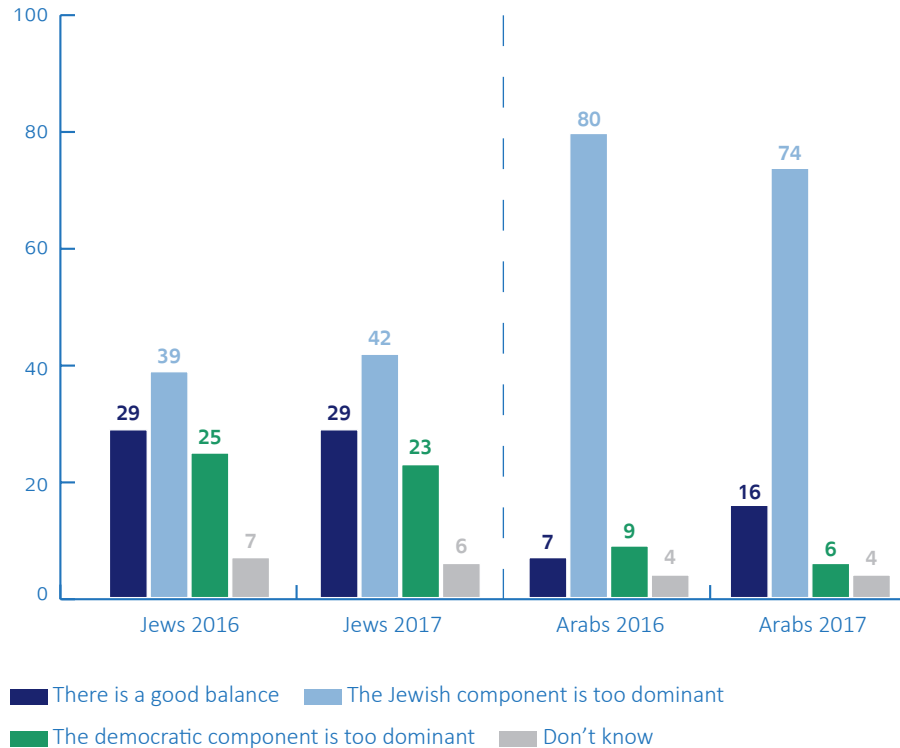
When we broke down the responses of the Jews by religiosity, the results were not surprising.

Table 3.1 (%)

	Haredim	National religious	Traditional religious	Traditional non-religious	Secular
There is a good balance between the Jewish and democratic components	16	39	42	31	25
The Jewish component is too dominant	11	12	27	39	61

	Haredim	**National religious**	**Traditional religious**	**Traditional non-religious**	**Secular**
The democratic component is too dominant	56	44	25	24	8
Don't know	17	5	6	6	6
Total	100	100	100	100	100

This table shows clearly the relationship between religiosity and perception of the current balance between the democratic and Jewish components in Israel. Only in the traditional religious group do the largest share of respondents feel that there is a proper balance between the two elements. In all the other groups, this is a minority view, with the Haredim having the lowest percentage who feel this way. The Haredim and national religious recorded the highest share who hold that the democratic component is too dominant, while among secular respondents, and, to a lesser extent, the traditional non-religious, the largest share feel that the Jewish aspect is overly strong (in the case of the secular, this is a sizeable majority). This result corresponds with a finding that we will be discussing later, namely, that the secular respondents are the group most concerned that they will be unable to maintain their way of life in future due to the growing strength of groups with a religious lifestyle.

From perceptions of the existing reality, we shifted to defining the ideal situation (in the opinion of the Jews, as the preference of the Arab interviewees has already been clarified).

Which component should be the dominant one?

Of the Jewish respondents, the greatest share would like to see the two components having equal weight (as shown in the figure below). In second place are those who favor strengthening the democratic element, and in last place, those who wish to see the Jewish aspect predominate.

Figure 3.5 \ Which component should be dominant? (Jewish respondents; %)
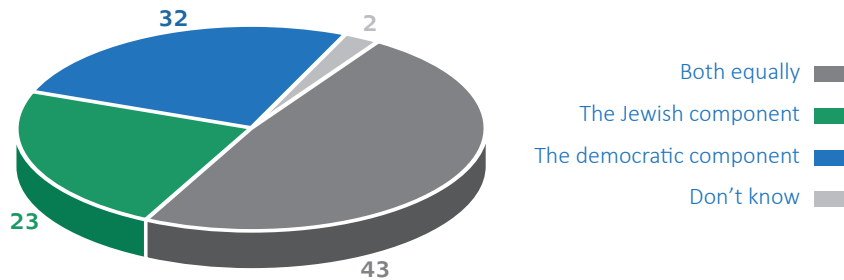
We broke down the responses to this question by religiosity. Here, as expected, there are obvious differences. The table below summarizes the preferences by subgroup:

Table 3.2 (%)

	Haredim	National religious	Traditional religious	Traditional non-religious	Secular
Want both components to be equally strong	18	48.5	56	54	39
Want the democratic component to be stronger	1	6	11	28	54
Want the Jewish component to be stronger	79	43	31	16	6
Don't know	2	2.5	2	2	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100

In the two traditional subgroups, a majority prefer that both components be equally strong. Among the national religious, there is a slight preference for this position, but it is followed closely by the desire for a stronger Jewish element. The Haredim are noticeably in favor of

strengthening the Jewish component, while the secular respondents clearly wish to see the democratic component emphasized. As expected, a breakdown of the responses of the Jewish interviewees by political orientation also reveals major differences. Although the most frequently expressed preference among respondents from the Right and Center is for both components to be equally strong, the second most common answer on the Right is that the Jewish element should predominate, while in the Center, it is that the democratic element should be stronger. On the Left, there is a definite preference for the democratic component to be dominant, followed by the option of both components being equally strong.

Table 3.3 (%)

	Right	**Center**	**Left**
Want both components to be equally strong	**46**	**46**	**31**
Want the democratic component to be stronger	**13**	**46**	**65**
Want the Jewish component to be stronger	**39**	**6**	**4**
Don't know	**2**	**2**	**--**
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

We can conclude from the above that there are two disparate—even conflicting—visions of Israel's future: on one side are the secular and the Left, and on the other, the Haredim (and to a certain extent, also the national religious) and the Right. But it should be noted that there is a large, heterogeneous group in the middle who believe that it is important to combine the Jewish and democratic aspects of the country's identity. This group is a balancing factor between the opposing forces that wish to drag the country each in their own direction.

Are religious people taking over the country?

Question 27

Appendix 2

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As noted in the Introduction, this year we strayed in some places from our usual highly cautious wording of the survey questions and used "street language," so to speak, in an effort to converse more easily with the interviewees and identify groups who are extreme in their outlook. The following question is one of those cases. In this instance, we worded the question differently for Jews and for Arabs, asking the Jewish respondents to express their agreement or disagreement with the assertion that "Religious Jews are gradually taking over the country," while the Arab interviewees were presented with the statement: "Religious Arabs are gradually taking over Arab society." As shown in the following figure, a majority of the Jewish public in fact believe that such a takeover is occurring; however, this does not hold true for the Arab public, perhaps because the attitude toward religion in this group has become more positive in recent years.

Figure 3.6 \ "Religious people are gradually taking over the country/ society" (agree; Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
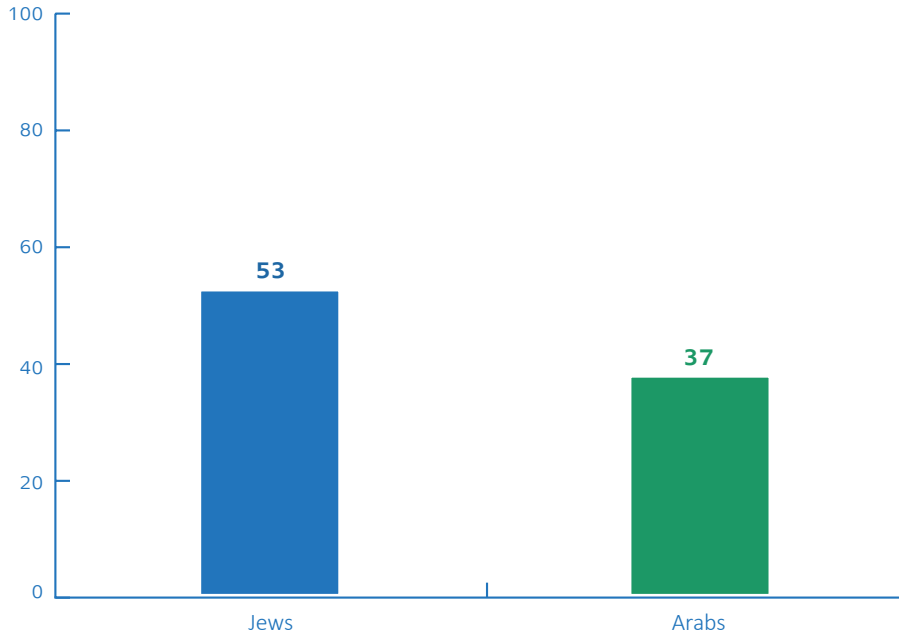
We broke down the responses by religiosity for the Jewish respondents, and by level of religious observance for the Arabs. As shown in the table below, Israel's secular Jews, along with half of the traditional non-religious, feel genuinely under siege. Among Arab respondents, the picture is unclear due to the similar share who agree with the statement at both extremes of the continuum ("very religious" and "non-religious").

Table 3.4 (%)

		Agree that religious people are taking over the country/society
Jews	Haredim	15
	National religious	16
	Traditional religious	33
	Traditional non-religious	50
	Secular	79

		Agree that religious people are taking over the country/society
Arabs	Very religious	29
	Traditional	43
	Non-religious	26

From here, we moved on to the question of how concerned the public is that they will be unable to maintain their chosen way of life in the future.

We wished to know to what extent, if at all, our respondents are concerned that they will be unable to preserve their (religious/traditional/secular) way of life due to the growing strength of groups that maintain a different lifestyle. We found that in both the Arab and Jewish samples, a majority (though not a large one) are **not** worried about this (Jews, 59%; Arabs, 53%). Who is nonetheless concerned? As the figure below demonstrates, secular Jews are the most worried about being unable to maintain their chosen way of life because of the rise of groups with a different lifestyle (presumably the national religious or Haredim), despite the fact that according to official statistics, the secular population still constitutes the largest segment of the Jewish public.[9] After secular Jews, the group most fearful of a threat to their established way of life are the Haredim.

In the Arab sample, we found sizeable differences by religion: Christians, whose numbers in the Arab public are dwindling, and whose coreligionists are under attack by Muslims throughout the Middle East, are the most concerned, and Druze, the least. A breakdown of this sample by level of religious observance found—in contrast to the Jewish respondents—that non-religious Arabs are the least concerned about a threat to their way of life (traditional, 48%; very religious, 40%; non-religious, 37%). Hence it seems that religious-secular tensions in Arab society are less pronounced than those in Jewish society.

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9   According to the *2017 Social Survey* produced by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, secular Jews make up 44% of the country's Jewish population.

Figure 3.7 \ Worried about inability to maintain religious/traditional/
secular way of life due to strengthening of groups with a different
lifestyle (worried; Jews; by religiosity; %)

	Concerned about ability to maintain their way of life
Christians	53
Muslim	44
Druze	33
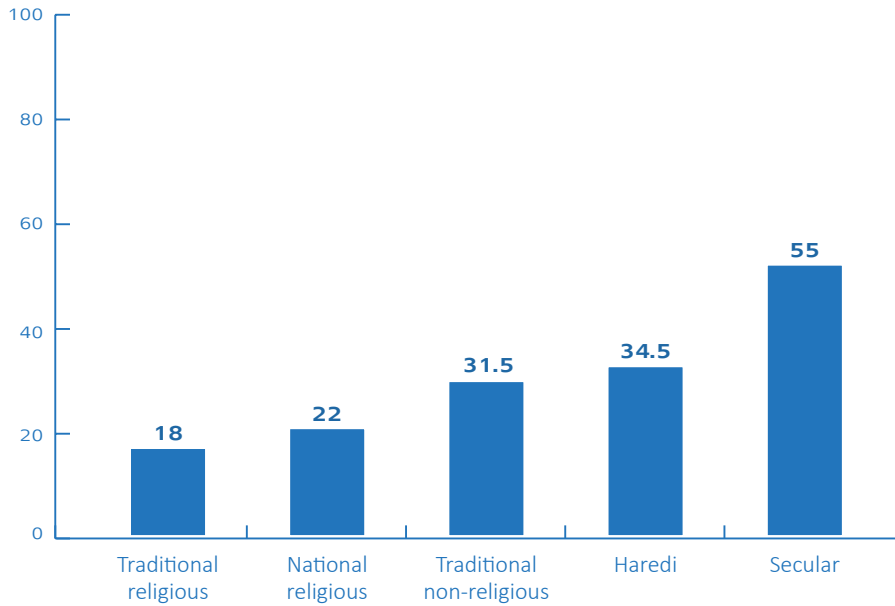
Table 3.5 (Arab respondents; %)

Despite their reservations about the dominance of the Jewish component of Israel's character, and the widespread concern in various circles that groups with a different lifestyle are taking over, the issue of recognition of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people is a highly sensitive topic for certain segments of the Jewish public.

In two other surveys (in 2016 and this year), we found a majority of Jewish interviewees in favor of denying the right to vote to those who are unwilling to affirm that Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people. [10]In the present survey as well, we asked the Jewish interviewees whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement: "People who are unwilling to affirm that Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people should lose their right to vote." Although this time we did not find a majority who agreed, as shown in the table below there is a substantial minority (44%, as opposed to 53% who disagree) who support this very problematic notion, which draws a connection between a person's viewpoint and their basic democratic right to vote. In other words, even if our survey points to slightly less support for this position, unless future assessments show that this marks the beginning of an actual downward trend, it would be safe to conclude that roughly half the Jewish public in Israel are willing to make participation in elections contingent upon viewing Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people.

Table 3.6 (%)

	2016 Israeli Democracy Index	2017 Report on Jewish-Arab relations	2017 Israeli Democracy Index
Support denying the right to vote to those who do not affirm that Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people	52.5	58	44

Breaking down the responses in the Jewish sample by political orientation, we found that on the Right, roughly two-thirds favor refusing the right to vote to those who will not declare that Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people, as contrasted with one-third in the Center and only about 10% on the Left. A breakdown by religiosity yielded a majority of Haredim, national religious, and traditional religious respondents who support this position as opposed to half of the traditional non-religious, and a minority of secular Jews (62%, 64%, 55%, 50%, and 29%, respectively).

This view, held by many Jewish respondents (particularly on the Right and among more religiously observant populations), highlights the substantial gap between these groups and Center, Left, and secular Jews in their stance on the definition of the state—not to mention the divide between them and the Israeli Arab public. This does not bode well for the future, unless

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10. Tamar Hermann, Ella Heller, Chanan Cohen, Dana Bublil, and Fadi Omar, *The Israeli Democracy Index 2016* (Jerusalem: Israel Democracy Institute, 2016); Hermann et al., *A Conditional Partnership* (see footnote 5 above).

appropriate steps are taken to explore this issue in Israeli public discourse, and attempts made to reach consensus. These and similar findings also explain the efforts of politicians from right-wing and religious parties to pass various loyalty laws, knowing that these stand to elicit strong support from the Jewish public.

Chapter 4 \ The State of Democracy in Israel

In this chapter, we discuss the following topics:

- Does the public feel that Israeli democracy is in danger?
- Democracy in Israel today as compared to the past
- Suitability of the democratic system to the challenges confronting Israel
- The public's desire for a strong leader
- Business/government connections

If in the first chapter of this section, we presented a favorable assessment (some might say surprisingly so), and in the second chapter, a semi-positive view, the portrait that emerges in this chapter is largely a bleak one. It seems that Israeli democracy as a complex system is seen by vast portions of the public as fundamentally flawed in many ways.

Is democracy in Israel in serious danger?

Question 59

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We open the discussion here with another strongly worded question, in which interviewees were asked to express their opinion on the statement: "The democratic system in Israel is in serious danger." We found a substantial difference in outlook on this issue between Arabs and Jews. As shown in the figure below, a majority of Arabs surveyed **agreed** that danger is looming for Israel's democracy, while a majority—though smaller—of Jews **disagreed** with this assertion.

Yet in the Jewish public as well, the assessments are not uniform. We broke down the responses of the Jewish sample by political orientation, and the results were predictable: A small minority on the Right (less than 25%) see a threat to Israel's democratic regime, as opposed to nearly one-half from the Center, and a large majority (almost 75%) on the Left.

Table 4.1 (Jewish respondents; %)

Agree that the democratic system in Israel is in serious danger	
Right	23
Center	48
Left	72

Figure 4.1 \ "The democratic system in Israel is in serious danger"
(Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
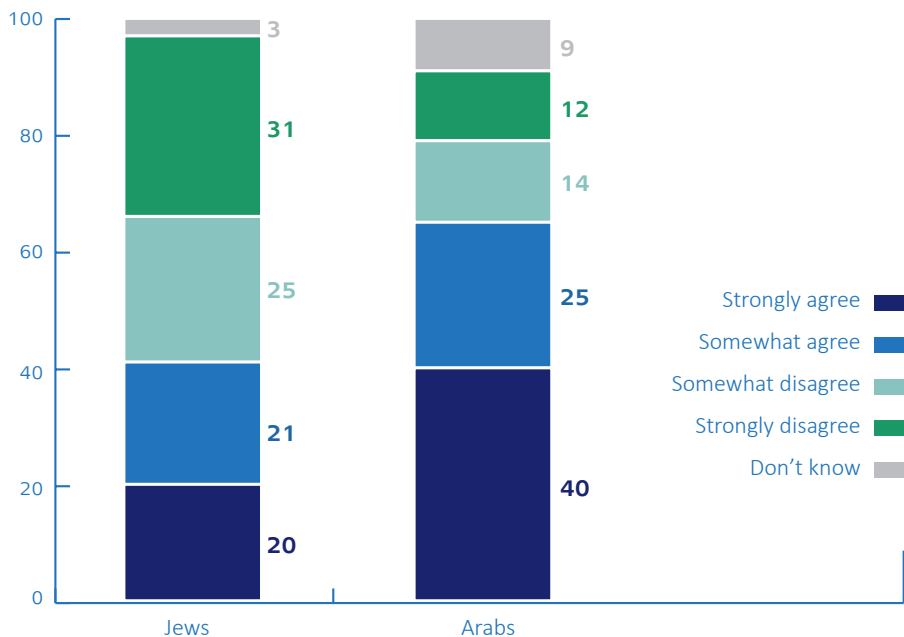
We examined the relationship between the Jewish respondents' assessments of Israel's overall situation and their perceptions of the threat to its democratic system. As the table below demonstrates, the more negative the assessment of the country's situation, the greater the share who agree with the assertion that Israel's democratic regime is in grave danger.

Table 4.2 (Jewish respondents; %)

Assessment of Israel's overall situation	Agree that Israel's democratic system is in serious danger
Very good	13
Good	22
So-so	55
Bad	78
Very bad	77

A breakdown of the Jewish sample by education yielded only minor differences between groups: The less educated showed a slightly greater tendency to see Israeli democracy as being in danger, as compared with high-school graduates or respondents with higher education (46%, 41%, and 40%, respectively). In the Arab public, meanwhile, there is a stronger relationship between level of education and perceived threat to democracy, though an inverse one: Roughly one-half (51%) of those with an elementary school education, almost two-thirds (63%) of high-school graduates, and more than three-quarters (76%) of Arab respondents with an academic education feel that Israeli democracy is in danger.

In the Arab public, we also found a considerable difference on this point between voters for the Zionist parties and those who voted for Hareshima Hameshutefet (Joint List) (56% versus 80.5%, respectively, who agreed that Israel's democratic regime is under threat).

This year, we once again asked whether Israel is less democratic than it used to be. Here too, we found an opposite pattern of responses between Jews and Arabs. A majority of Jews answered in the negative, that is, they disagreed that democracy in Israel is weaker today than in the past, while a majority of Arab respondents held the contrary view. This finding corresponds with the overall tendency we found in the Arab public to believe that the past was better than the present.[11]

The question about Israel's level of democracy is a recurring one in our surveys. As shown in the table below, a minority of this year's respondents believe that Israel used to be more democratic than it is today. The share who feel this way has not climbed or dipped consistently, meaning that there is no identifiable trend on this issue.

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11   We explored this attitude on the part of the Arab public in Hermann et al., *A Conditional Partnership* (see footnote 5 above).

Figure 4.2 \ "Israel used to be much more democratic than it is today"
(Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
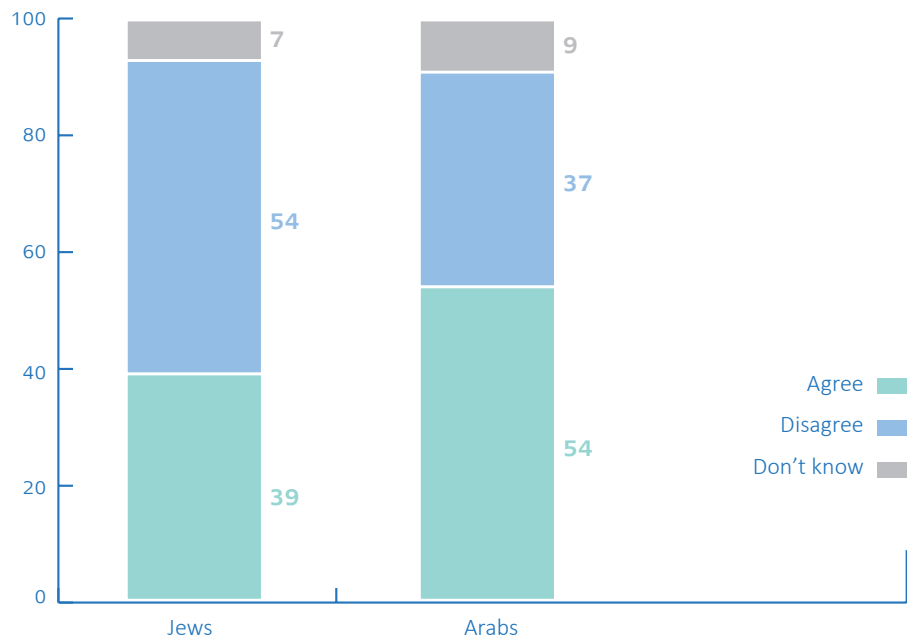
Table 4.3 (total sample; %)

	2010	2014	2017
Agree that Israel used to be more democratic	44	39.5	41.5

We broke down the responses of the Jewish sample by political orientation, age, and religiosity. As the table below illustrates, a large majority on the Right hold that the above statement is untrue, that is, they feel that Israel today is not less democratic than in the past. The position on the Left is the opposite, namely, that Israel used to be more democratic. The Center, by contrast, is split on this question. Examining the findings by age, we found that the youngest and intermediate cohorts think that Israel was not more democratic in years gone by, while the oldest age group feels that the country used to be more democratic than it is today. An analysis by religiosity yields fascinating results: Only among the secular respondents is there a majority, and a miniscule one at that, who feel that Israel used to be more democratic. The share who do not agree with this assertion is largest among the national religious, at 81%.

Table 4.4 (Jewish respondents; %)

		Agree that Israel used to be more democratic	Do not agree that Israel used to be more democratic	Don't know	Total
Political orientation	Right	23	71	6	100
	Center	47	46	7	100
	Left	65	30	5	100
Age	18–34	34.5	57.5	8	100
	35–54	35	60	5	100
	55+	50	44	6	100
Religiosity	Haredi	28	61	11	100
	National religious	15.5	81	3.5	100
	Traditional religious	39	54	7	100
	Traditional non-religious	37.5	57	5.5	100
	Secular	50	44	6	100

As noted above, on the open question about interpretations of democracy, only a negligible minority expressed negative opinions. Nonetheless, we wished to check the depth of commitment to this form of government, given the complex circumstances of Israel's existence. (We will be discussing general attitudes toward democracy and undemocratic leaders and political parties in chapter 7, which deals with populism.)

Once again this year, we asked interviewees whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement: "A democratic regime is not suited to Israel right now because of its unique security and social issues." According to our findings, the Arab public is split nearly down the middle on this issue. A slightly greater share agree with the statement, whether because they are less

committed to a democratic regime (see below, for example, the subject of support for a strong leader), or because in their opinion Israel is actually not a democracy in any case, hence their answers relate to the ideal rather than the real. Among Jews, a very large majority disagree with the above statement.

Figure 4.3 \ "A democratic regime is not suited to Israel right now because of its unique security and social issues" (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
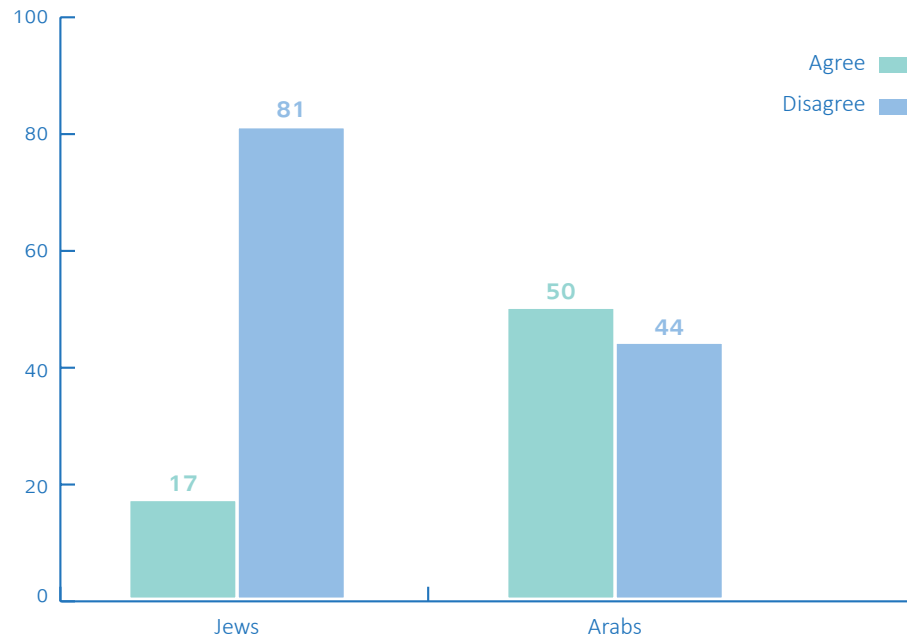
A breakdown of responses in the Jewish sample by religiosity shows that only among the Haredim is there a sizeable minority (32%) who hold that democracy is not the right system for Israel at the moment due to its unique problems. In the remaining religious subgroups, a smaller minority share this view.

Which subgroups in the Arab sample support the statement that a democratic form of government is unsuitable for Israel at present? While a majority of Muslims and Christians agree (54% and 53%, respectively), only a minority (39%) of Druze respondents feel this way. An even greater difference comes to light if we break down the results by voting patterns in the 2015 Knesset elections: Only 20% of voters for the Zionist parties agree with the above statement, compared with 57% of those who voted for Hareshima Hameshutefet (Joint List).

Has there been a change of opinion on this issue over the years? The table below shows a drop in the level of agreement among both Jews and Arabs, though half of the Arab public still maintain this stance.

Table 4.5 (agree; by year; %)

A democratic regime is not suited to Israel right now because of its unique security and social issues	Jews	Arabs
2010	37	72
2017	17	50

If there are those, then, who feel that democracy as we know it is unsuited to Israel, perhaps a strong leader would be preferable?

In the Democracy Index surveys of recent years, we posed several questions on the subject of a strong leader, including whether respondents agreed or disagreed with the statement: "To handle Israel's unique problems, there is a need for a strong leader who is not swayed by the Knesset, the media or public opinion." This year again, a considerable minority of the Jewish sample agreed with the statement, though the majority did not. In the Arab sample, by contrast, the majority agreed.

Figure 4.4 \ "To handle Israel's unique problems, there is a need for a strong leader who is not swayed by the Knesset, the media or public opinion" (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
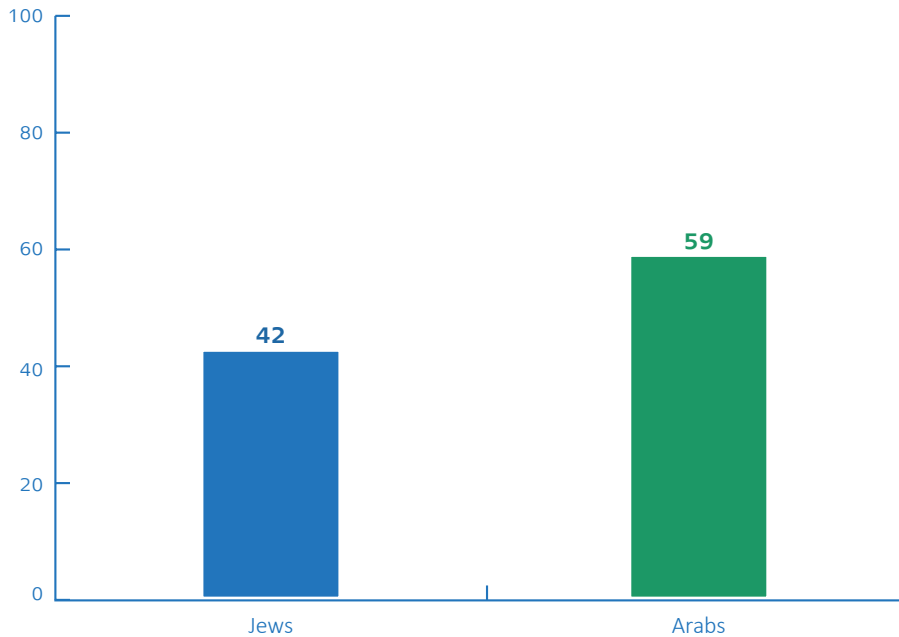
Moreover, the above finding represents a stable phenomenon, with Arab Israelis displaying a consistent willingness to move in a more authoritarian direction:

Table 4.6 (Arab respondents; %)

	2014	2016	2017
Agree that a strong leader is needed	46	63	59

We analyzed the responses of the Jewish sample to better understand which groups show greater support for the notion of a strong leader. A breakdown by religiosity revealed a majority who favor this type of system in two of the subgroups: Haredim and the traditional religious. The national religious are split on this question, while a minority—though a sizeable one—of the traditional non-religious and the secular favor the idea (45% and 32%, respectively). Education, too, appears to affect opinions on this subject: Among respondents with an elementary or

partial high-school education, 61% favored a strong leader; high-school graduates were divided, with 48% support; and those with higher education registered a relatively low—though again, not insubstantial—level of support, at 34%.

A breakdown of the Arab sample by religion produced a majority in all subgroups who favored the idea of a strong leader, with support especially high among Druze respondents (79%), compared with Christians (59%) and Muslims (57%).

One of the most frequently heard arguments in public discourse is that government in Israel is too closely linked to the country's most affluent individuals and families. We examined the public's thoughts on this issue.

We asked the interviewees to express their opinion on the statement: "Israel is not a true democracy because a few wealthy individuals influence the government to make decisions that benefit them and harm the average citizen." As the following figure demonstrates (and as we found the last time we looked at this subject, in 2014), a majority still agree that the country's affluent elite has a hold over government in Israel. In fact, this year the majority who take this view has even grown slightly (58%, up from 55%). Interestingly enough, in the present survey a greater share of Arab than of Jewish respondents indicated their agreement with this position (68% as opposed to 56%, respectively).

Breaking down the responses of the Jewish sample by political orientation, we found that 44% on the Right think that the wealthy influence the government at the expense of ordinary citizens, as compared with 65% from the Center and 68.5% on the Left.

Two other breakdowns of the total sample responses—by assessment of the country's situation, and sense of belonging to stronger or weaker population groups—also yielded strong relationships between the two: Of those who define the country's situation as good/very good, a relatively small proportion agree with the claim of improper influence of wealth on government, while of those who define it as so-so or bad/very bad, a majority support this assertion. The same holds true for the variable of social location: The share who feel that government in Israel is unduly affected by the affluent few is lower among those who identify with the stronger groups in Israeli society, and higher among those who associate themselves with the weaker groups.

Figure 4.5 \ "Israel is not a true democracy because a few wealthy individuals influence the government" (total sample; 2017 versus 2014; %)
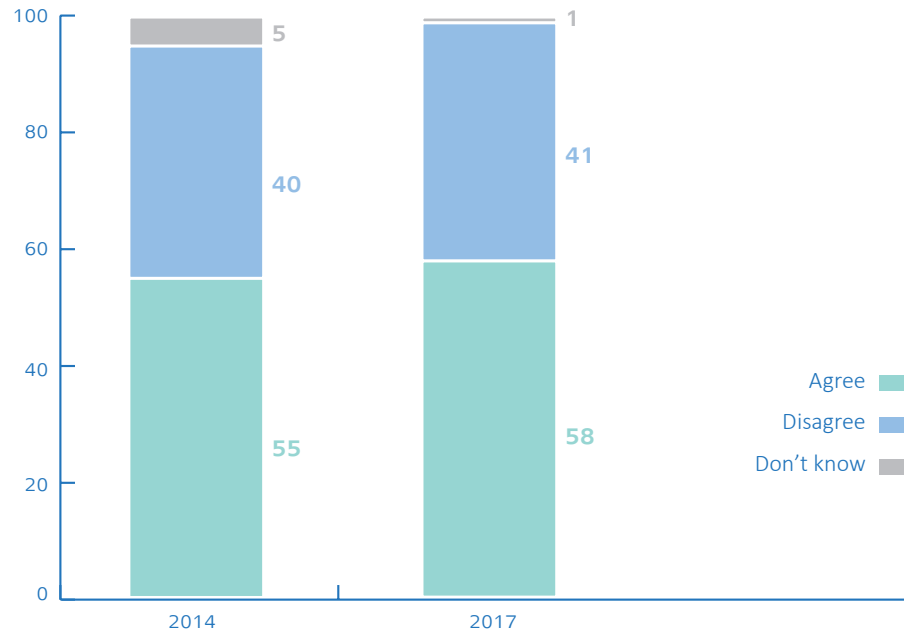
Table 4.7 (%)

		Agree that Israel is not a true democracy because a few wealthy individuals influence the government
Define country's situation as:	Good or very good	**42**
	So-so	**68**
	Bad or very bad	**81.5**
Social location	Feel they belong to stronger groups	**51**
	Feel they belong to weaker groups	**71**

Next, we examined to what extent economic disparities are seen as influencing Israeli democracy.

As shown in the following figure, the prevailing opinion is that the considerable gaps in income in Israel harm the democratic character of the state. In both the Jewish and Arab samples, we found a majority who share this view, though the feeling is more widespread among Arab respondents (73%) than among Jewish ones (57%).

Figure 4.6 \ Sizeable income gaps harm Israeli democracy (total sample; %)

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
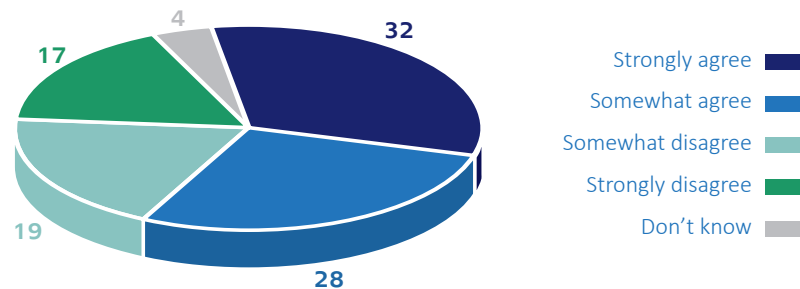
We posed a very similar question in 2014 (see appendix 3), at which time the percentage of the total sample who agreed with this claim was slightly lower (52%) than this year's 60%. This may be an indication that awareness of the issue of economic (in)equality in Israel is growing.

We examined which groups tended to show greater agreement with the statement that income gaps harm democracy, and found that the sense of belonging to the stronger or weaker populations played a hand in the responses, though in both groups a majority agreed that such disparities are damaging to Israeli democracy. It should be noted that in both categories of Jewish respondents, the proportion who agreed with the statement was smaller than that among Arab respondents, whose income is lower, likely causing them to feel more negatively affected by the gaps.

Table 4.8 (%)

Agree that sizeable income gaps harm Israeli democracy	Jews	Arabs
Feel they belong to stronger groups	55	66
Feel they belong to weaker groups	65	78

A breakdown of the responses of the Jewish sample by political orientation shows that only about half of those who identified themselves as being on the Right agree with the statement, as opposed to a clear majority in the Center and on the Left (62% and 67%, respectively).

Chapter 5 \ Attitudes Toward the Political System and Politicians

In this chapter, we discuss the following topics:

- Functioning of the government and the opposition
- Performance and motivations of politicians
- Functioning of political parties
- Representativeness of the Knesset
- Trust in state institutions

Though the data we cited in the previous chapter are not encouraging to those who hold democracy dear, the portrait that emerges in the present chapter is even bleaker. As we shall see, the public's assessment of the functioning of Israel's political system and elected representatives is shamefully poor.

The first question that we will examine here relates to assessments of government performance. Roughly two-thirds of the public (both Jews and Arabs) hold that the government is handling the country's major problems "not so well" or "not at all well." Only a negligible minority feel that the problems are being dealt with "very well."

Figure 5.1 \ Government's handling of the country's major problems (total sample; %)

Very well	
Quite well	
Not so well	
Not at all well	
Don't know	
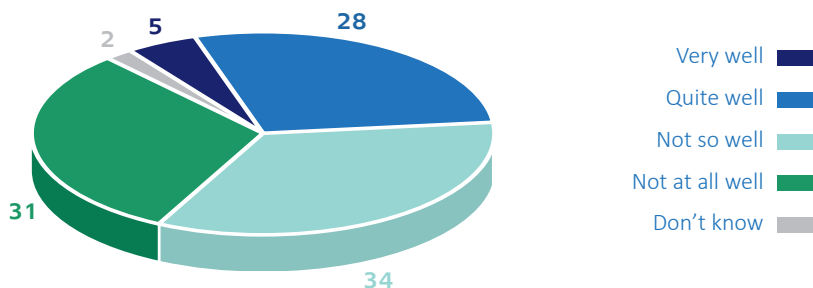
We broke down the responses by voting patterns in the 2015 Knesset elections, distinguishing between voters for the coalition and the opposition parties. As shown below, there is widespread dissatisfaction with the government's performance not only among the second group but also among those who voted for the parties that now make up the governing coalition.

Table 5.1 (%)

Vote in 2015 Knesset elections		The government is not handling the country's major problems well
Coalition parties	Shas	39
	Likud	43.5
	Habayit Hayehudi	44
	Yahadut Hatorah (United Torah Judaism)	52
	Kulanu	56
	Yisrael Beytenu	63
Opposition parties	Hareshima Hameshutefet (Joint List)	74
	Yesh Atid	85
	Meretz	88
	Hamahane Hatziyoni (Zionist Union)	90

As the table indicates, even in Shas, the party whose voters were the least critical of government performance; the Likud, the leading party in the coalition; and Habayit Hayehudi, which carries a great deal of weight in the present government (some would say it holds the reins of power), roughly 40% of respondents hold that the government's handling of the country's major problems is unsatisfactory. Among voters for the three other coalition parties—Yahadut Hatorah (United Torah Judaism), Kulanu, and Yisrael Beytenu—there is actually a majority who feel that the government is not handling the problems well. Of the voters for the opposition parties, more than three-quarters are dissatisfied with the government's performance in this area.

The figure below presents the share of respondents who have viewed the government's handling of Israel's problems as unsatisfactory over the years:

Figure 5.2 \ Government's handling of country's major problems ("not so well" and "not at all well"; total sample; 2003–2017; %)
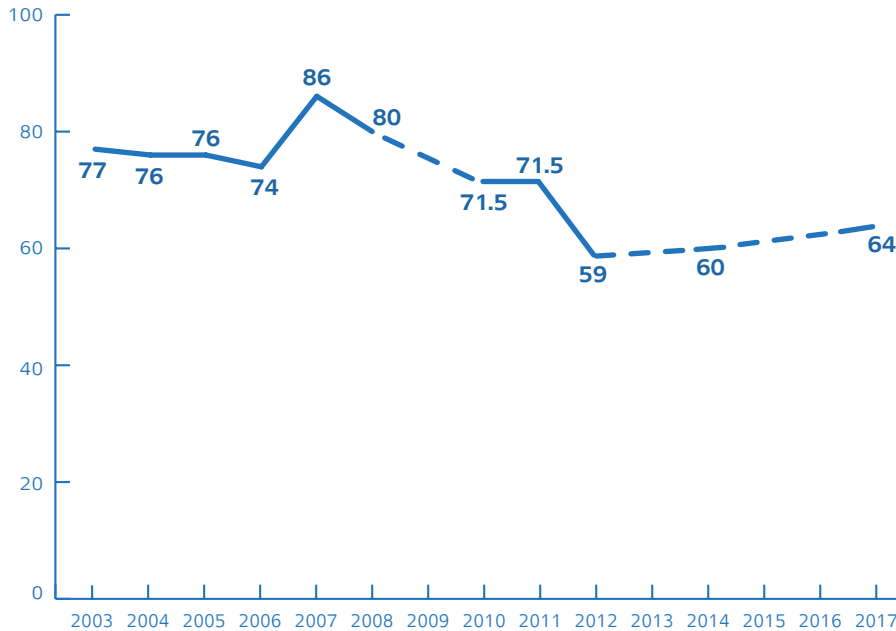
As the figure demonstrates, since we first began our assessments, there has been a clear majority who are dissatisfied with the way the government addresses the country's problems. This feeling reached its peak in 2007 (presumably in the wake of the Second Lebanon War in 2006), though overall we have seen a decline in the level of dissatisfaction over the course of the period surveyed, from around three-quarters of respondents to less than two-thirds. In recent years, unhappiness with government performance appears to be on the rise once more.

If the government is not performing as expected, what about the opposition?

This is the first time in the Democracy Index survey that we have examined the public's assessment of the opposition's performance. We asked the interviewees to express their opinion of the statement: "The opposition in Israel is weak, and is not doing its job." A majority of the total sample hold that this is in fact the case, i.e., that the opposition is not meeting expectations. Arabs are even more critical of the opposition than they are of the government (71% compared with 61%), perhaps because their expectations of the latter are lower. This is also the trend among Jews, though the gap between the two is smaller: 64.5% who feel that the government is not handling the country's problems well versus 66% who hold that the opposition is not fulfilling its function because it is too weak.

Functioning of the opposition

Question 45

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Figure 5.3 \ "The opposition in Israel is weak, and is not doing its job" (agree; total sample; %)
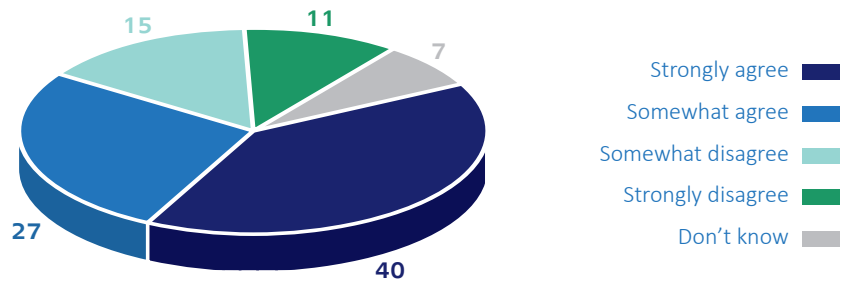
We wished to see if there is a difference on this point between those who voted for the coalition parties in the 2015 elections and those who voted for the opposition parties. The table below indicates that the feeling that the opposition is weak and is performing poorly is in fact much more striking among voters for the opposition parties (average: 81%) than among voters for the coalition parties (average: 57%). A possible reason is that the coalition is constantly looking over its shoulder at the opposition in any case, whereas the opposition feels mainly a sense of disappointment from its representation in the Knesset. Nevertheless, even among voters for several coalition parties—Shas, Likud, Yisrael Beytenu, and Kulanu—a majority hold that the opposition is weak and is not performing its duties properly.

Table 5.2 (%)

	Vote in 2015 Knesset elections	The opposition is weak and not doing its job
Coalition parties	Yahadut Hatorah (United Torah Judaism)	44
	Habayit Hayehudi	44
	Shas	52
	Likud	61
	Yisrael Beytenu	62.5
	Kulanu	67

	Vote in 2015 Knesset elections	The opposition is weak and not doing its job
Opposition parties	Yesh Atid	72
	Hareshima Hameshutefet (Joint List)	79.5
	Hamahane Hatziyoni (Zionist Union)	82
	Meretz	93

Conceivably, the public could feel that the government is not fulfilling expectations in its handling of the country's problems and the opposition is letting them down, but still think that the elected representatives are performing their job faithfully. Thus, we asked again this year for the respondents' reaction to the statement: "On the whole, most Knesset members work hard and are doing a good job." Here too, we found a resemblance between the responses of the Jewish and Arab interviewees, with over two-thirds in both samples who disagreed either strongly or somewhat with this statement. In other words, a majority of Jews and Arabs alike hold that most Knesset members are **not** working hard and are **not** doing a good job.

Figure 5.4 \ "Most Knesset members work hard and are doing a good job" (total sample; %)

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know
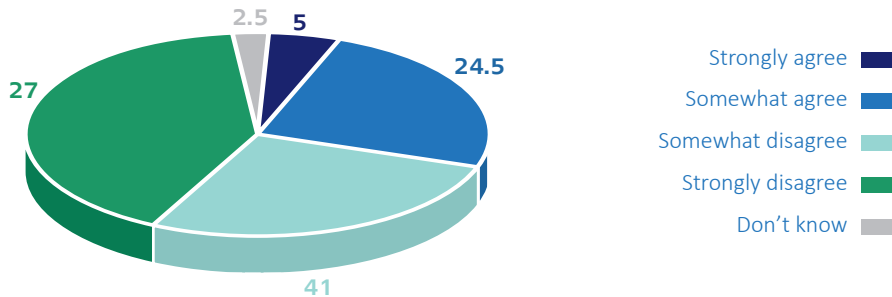
Here too, we wished to see whether there are differences in outlook between voters for the coalition parties and voters for the opposition parties. The table below demonstrates that, on average, the level of dissatisfaction with Knesset members' performance in the former group is slightly lower than in the latter (63% versus 71%), but still represents a majority. As we saw when testing the level of satisfaction with the performance of the government and opposition, once again the share of dissatisfied voters for two of the coalition parties (Yisrael Beytenu and Kulanu) was particularly high (roughly 80%); in fact, this is greater than the comparable percentage among voters for each of the opposition parties!

Table 5.3 (%)

	Vote in 2015 Knesset elections	Most Knesset members don't work hard and aren't doing a good job
Coalition parties	Habayit Hayehudi	42
	Yahadut Hatorah (United Torah Judaism)	50
	Shas	61
	Likud	65
	Kulanu	79.5
	Yisrael Beytenu	81
Opposition parties	Meretz	67
	Hamahane Hatziyoni (Zionist Union)	73
	Hareshima Hameshutefet (Joint List)	74
	Yesh Atid	79

To understand if this dissatisfaction is specific or ongoing, we looked at the distribution of responses to this question over time. The following figure indicates a pattern of continuing dissatisfaction; with the exception of 2013, we found a majority in each of the years surveyed who were not satisfied with the functioning of their elected representatives. Moreover, over the two most recent surveys, there is a clear and significant rise in the share of respondents who are not pleased with the performance of Knesset members.

Figure 5.5 \ "Most Knesset members work hard and are doing a good job" (disagree; total sample; 2011–2017; %)
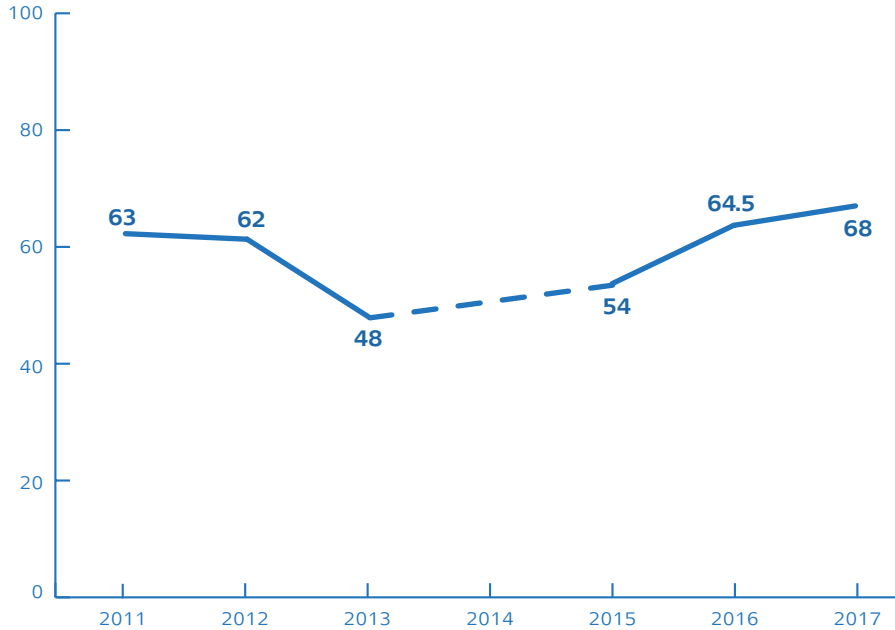
Continuing in this vein, we sought to understand in which ways Knesset members and politicians are not doing their jobs properly, as seen by the general public. Two answers emerge from our findings: one, they look out more for themselves than for their constituents; and two, they are detached from the needs and problems of the people.

Once again this year, respondents were asked to express their views on the statement that politicians look out more for their own interests than for those of the public who elected them. It turns out that there is no difference of opinion on this question between Jewish and Arab interviewees, and between the subgroups in each of the two samples: In all instances, a very substantial majority feel this way.

Do politicians look out mainly for themselves?

Question 42

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Figure 5.6 \ "Politicians look out more for their own interests than for those of the public who elected them" (total sample; %)
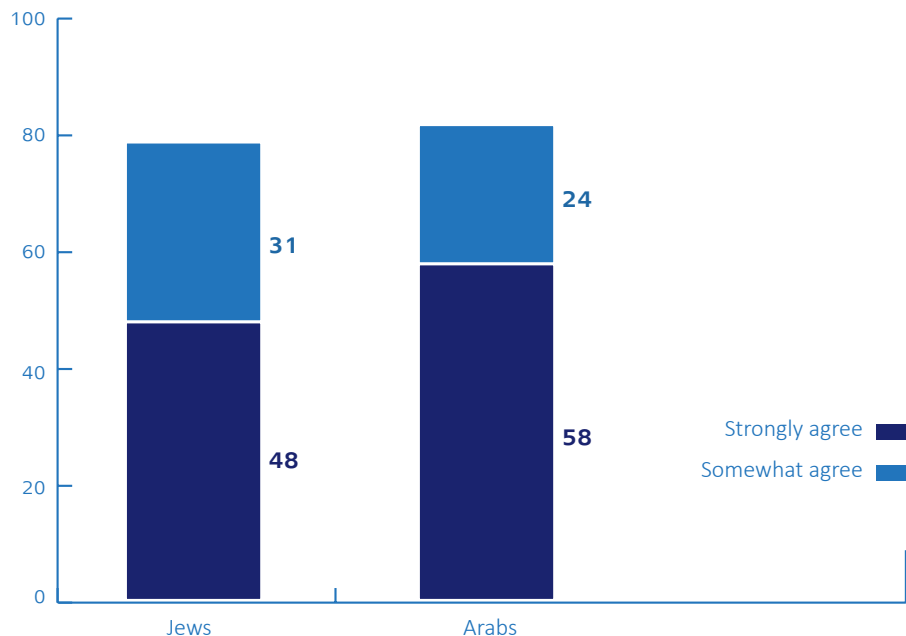
Is there a difference in this regard between voters for the various parties? Among Arab interviewees, no real difference was found between those who voted for the Zionist parties or for Hareshima Hameshutefet (Joint List) (88% versus 86%). For Jewish respondents, we found majorities who believe that politicians are motivated by self-interest among voters for all the parties, with the largest majority among those who voted for Hamahane Hatziyoni (Zionist Union) (92%), followed by Yesh Atid, Yisrael Beytenu, and Meretz (88% for all three parties), and finally, Kulanu (82%). Voters for the Haredi parties also agreed strongly that politicians are self-absorbed (Yahadut Hatorah [United Torah Judaism], 76%; Shas, 74%). Those who were the least critical of politicians were voters for the Likud and Habayit Hayehudi, of whom 72% and 56% (respectively) agreed with the statement.

This finding, namely, that a majority of the public believe that self-interest is the underlying force driving politicians, is not new. It has been repeated time and time again in each of our past surveys.

Table 5.4 (total sample; %)

Agree that politicians look out more for their own interests	2012	2013	2014	2016	2017
	80	71.5	75	74	80

But it is not only self-centeredness and self-interest that alienate Israelis from their elected representatives. This is compounded by the sense that politicians are detached from their own support base.

The findings show a considerable majority in both the Jewish and Arab samples who feel that politicians in Israel are disconnected from the real problems and needs of those who elected them. Among Arab respondents, agreement with this statement is even higher than it is among Jewish ones. Further, the degree of agreement (that is, the proportion who "strongly agree") among Arab interviewees exceeds that of the Jewish respondents.

Figure 5.7 \ "Politicians in Israel are detached from the public's real needs and problems" (agree; Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
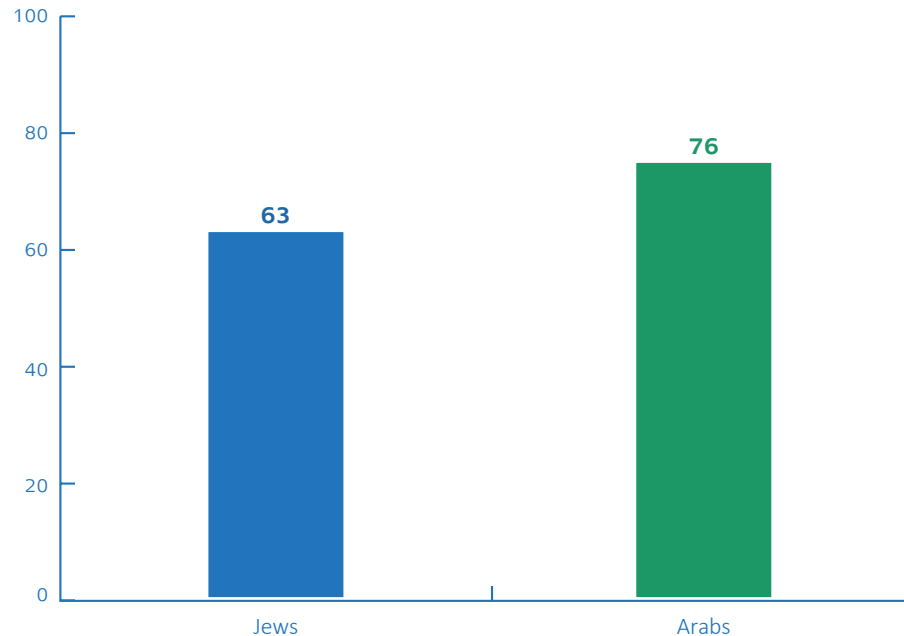
Is there a difference in outlook between the political camps (for Jewish respondents)? Indeed, in each of the three camps, we found a majority who agreed with the description of politicians as cut off from the public; however, this majority was noticeably smaller on the Right than in the Center or on the Left (56% versus 72% and 71%, respectively). In the Arab sample, no real difference was found between voters for Hareshima Hameshutefet (Joint List) and for the Zionist parties.

Has there been a change in this assessment since last year, when we first posed this question? This year, roughly two-thirds of the total sample (65%) agreed with the statement, as compared with three quarters (75%) in 2016. In other words, this may signal the start of a downward trend; but to make this claim with certainty, we will need to wait at least until the 2018 survey.

We have seen that the public is dissatisfied with the government, the opposition, and the Knesset members. How, then, do they feel about the political parties? As we will see in the next section, there is an ongoing crisis of trust between the public and the parties; but before we broach that subject, let us report the responses to two questions: How well do the parties in Israel reflect the range of public opinion, meaning, to what degree is the political map representative? And how loyal are Israelis to their parties?

We asked the interviewees, not for the first time, if there was a party in Israel today that accurately represents their views. The Jewish sample was split on this question, with a slight preference for the affirmative. By contrast, in the Arab sample a majority held that there was no party today that represented them fairly—a finding that can be explained by the fact that Hareshima Hameshutefet (Joint List), founded in response to the raising of the electoral threshold, comprises parties and subgroups with different, even contradictory, outlooks.

Figure 5.8 \ Is there a political party in Israel today that truly represents your views? (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
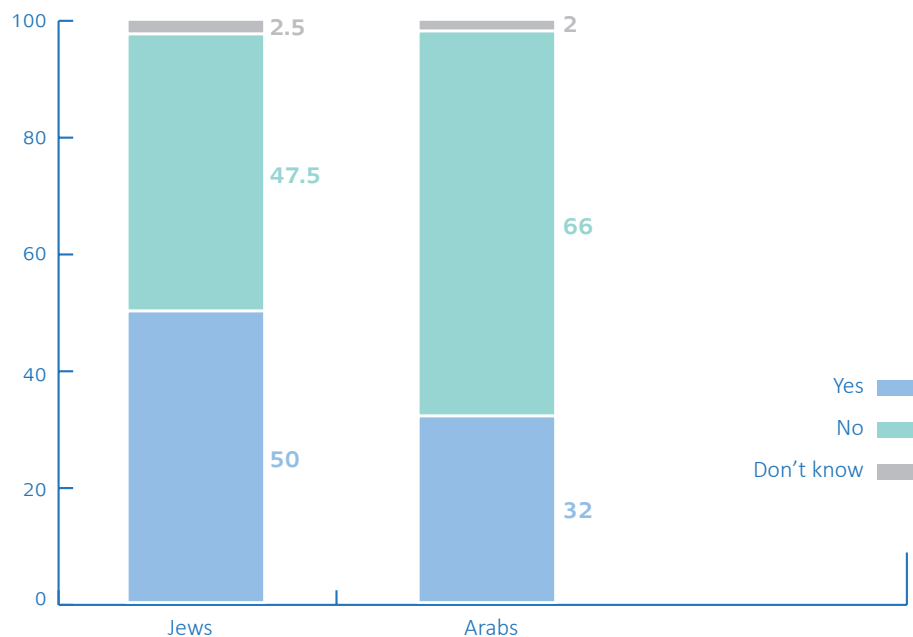
Comparing this year's results with last year's, we found a slight increase among both Jews and Arabs in the share who feel that there is not a party in the current Israeli political system that faithfully represents their views.

Table 5.5 (%)

	Jews 2016	Jews 2017	Arabs 2016	Arabs 2017
There is a party that truly represents my views	53.5	50	34	32
There is no party that truly represents my views	45	47.5	63	66

We broke down the responses of the Jewish sample by political orientation, religiosity, age, and social location. As illustrated in the table below, there is no solid majority in any group, with the exception of the Haredim, who feel well represented (among the national religious and those who identify with the stronger social groups, there was a very slight majority). The Center feels less well represented than the Left or Right. There is less of a sense of being properly represented among the secular and traditional respondents (of both types) than among the Haredim, and to some extent, also the national religious. The youngest respondents feel slightly less represented than the older age groups. With respect to social location we found that those who associate themselves with the stronger groups in Israeli society feel better represented than do those who identify with the weaker groups.

Table 5.6 (%)

Jews		There is a party today that truly represents my views
Political orientation	Right	50
	Center	43
	Left	59

Jews		There is a party today that truly represents my views
Religiosity	Haredim	66
	National religious	54
	Traditional religious	41
	Traditional non-religious	47
	Secular	49.5
Age	18–34	46
	35–54	52
	55+	51
Social location	Identify with stronger groups	54
	Identify with weaker groups	39

A breakdown of responses in the Arab sample by subgroup yielded small differences based on age and level of religiosity, but a very large difference based on voting patterns in the 2015 Knesset elections: Of those who voted for the Zionist parties, only 20% stated that there is a party that accurately represents their views, while among voters for Hareshima Hameshutefet (Joint List), 44% (or more than double, though still a minority) felt similarly.

If so many Israelis cannot find a political home, should we expect a drastic shift in the next elections from the voting patterns that we saw in 2015?

We asked: "If elections were to be held soon, would you vote again for the same party you voted for in the last elections (in 2015), or would you vote for a different party?" As the figure below indicates, a large share of respondents think or are certain that if elections were held in the near future, they would vote again for the same party. In the Arab sample, the picture is different, and there is not a majority who think, or are certain, that they would vote the same way as they did in 2015 (assuming that Hareshima Hameshutefet (Joint List) is still in existence at the next elections). At the same time, a large share of the Arab sample reported that they did not vote in the last elections (2015), and a substantial share of both samples are unsure how they would vote if elections were to take place today. Consequently, the overall level of reliability for this question is unclear.

Figure 5.9 \ Would you vote again for the same party you voted for in the 2015 elections? (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)

Certain I would vote for the same party ■
Think I would vote for the same party ■
Think I would vote for a different party ■
Certain I would vote for a different party ■
Didn't vote ■
Don't know ■
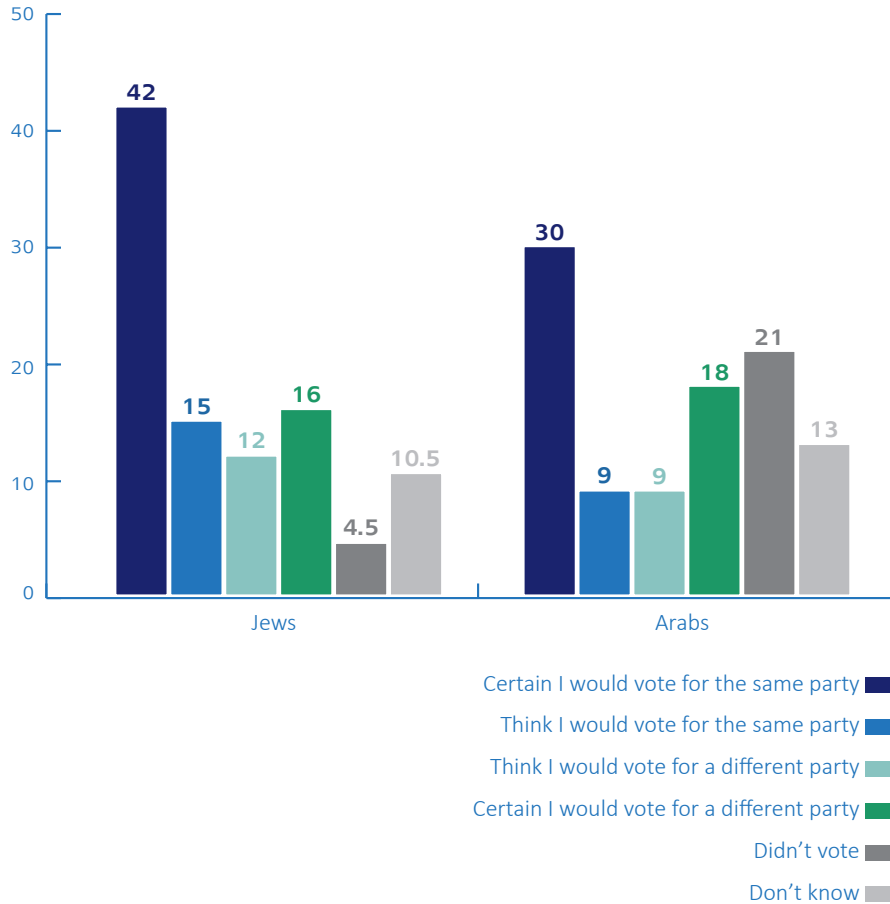
We broke down the responses to this question by voting patterns in the 2015 elections:

Table 5.7 (%)

	Vote in 2015 elections	Would vote the same way today
Jews	Yahadut Hatorah (United Torah Judaism)	98
	Meretz	80
	Yesh Atid	69
	Habayit Hayehudi	68
	Likud	65.5
	Shas	56.5
	Hareshima Hameshutefet (Joint List)	64
	Hamahane Hatziyoni (Zionist Union)	47
	Yisrael Beytenu	25
	Kulanu	22.5
Arabs	Hareshima Hameshutefet (Joint List)	64
	Zionist parties	28

The highest degree of certainty that they would vote the same way again was found among voters for Yahadut Hatorah (United Torah Judaism) and Meretz—two parties that are at opposite ends of the spectrum in Israeli Jewish party politics. The low ranking of Kulanu and Yisrael Beytenu on this table corresponds with the disappointment in the performance of the government and politicians that we cited earlier with respect to voters for these parties. Among the Arab public, those who voted for the Zionist parties seem to be the most disappointed, meaning that only a minority would vote the same way again, as opposed to a majority of voters for Hareshima Hameshutefet (Joint List), who reported that they would choose it once again if new elections were to take place in the near future.

The shaky standing of the parties is also reflected in the small share of respondents who describe themselves as being active in a political party. As shown in the following figure, the vast majority of interviewees do not belong to, or support, any party. The differences between Jews and Arabs are negligible on this point.

Figure 5.10 \ Party membership (total sample; %)

Legend:
- Do not support and not a member of any party
- Support a party but not a member
- Member of a party
- Member and a party official
- Decline to respond
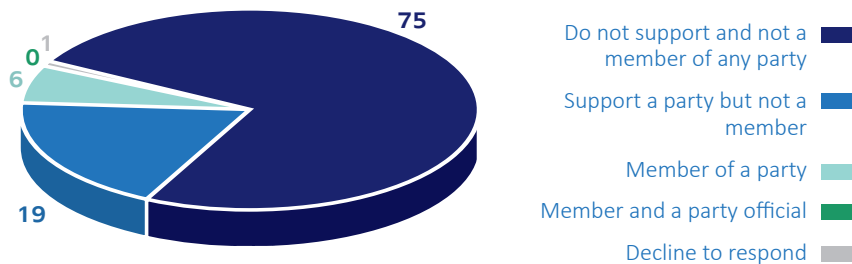
In an effort to understand whether the older respondents show a greater interest in party politics, we broke down the data by age. And indeed, we found greater party involvement among older Arab respondents (22% for ages 18–24, as opposed to 32% in the 35–54 age group and 44% among those aged 55 and over). Among Jews, however, the differences among age groups were very slight.

This year, we once again asked interviewees to respond to the statement: "It doesn't matter which party you vote for; it won't change the situation." We discovered that the Arab public is divided on this question, whereas a clear majority of the Jewish public disagree with the above statement, meaning that they see a fundamental difference between the various parties in terms of their ability to influence matters. Presumably, this difference between Arab and Jewish respondents derives from the belief that the discriminatory policies of successive Israeli governments toward the Arab population in Israel have not changed essentially under one party or another—or at least this appears to be the case from the perspective of the Arab minority.

Figure 5.11 \ "It doesn't matter which party you vote for; it won't change the situation" (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
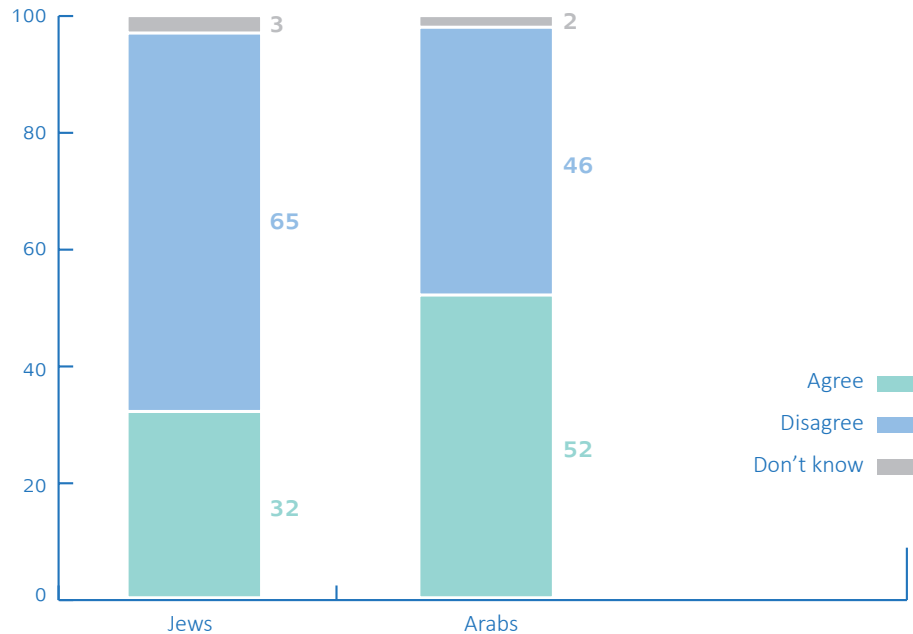
Breaking down the responses to this statement in the Jewish sample by social location we found the following: Of those who identified with the stronger groups in Israeli society, only about one-quarter (27.5%) answered that it's not important whom you vote for since things won't change, while a much larger proportion (though not a majority, at 42.5%) of those who associate themselves with the weaker groups share this view, making them closer in outlook to the Arab respondents.

The differences by political orientation (Jews) were small: in all camps, there was a sizeable majority who disagreed with the statement (Right, 66%; Center, 61%; Left, 70%).

Another topic of importance to our discussion arises from a question that we have already repeated several times, which combines the Knesset and the political parties.

We wished to know if the party composition of the current Knesset is seen as a good reflection of the range of opinions in the Israeli public. As the figure below indicates, both Jews and Arabs are divided on this question; however, a (small) majority of Jewish interviewees feel that the Knesset faithfully represents the range of views that exist in Israel today while a (small) majority of Arab respondents feel the opposite.

Figure 5.12 \ "The party composition of the Knesset is a good reflection of the range of opinions in the Israeli public" (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
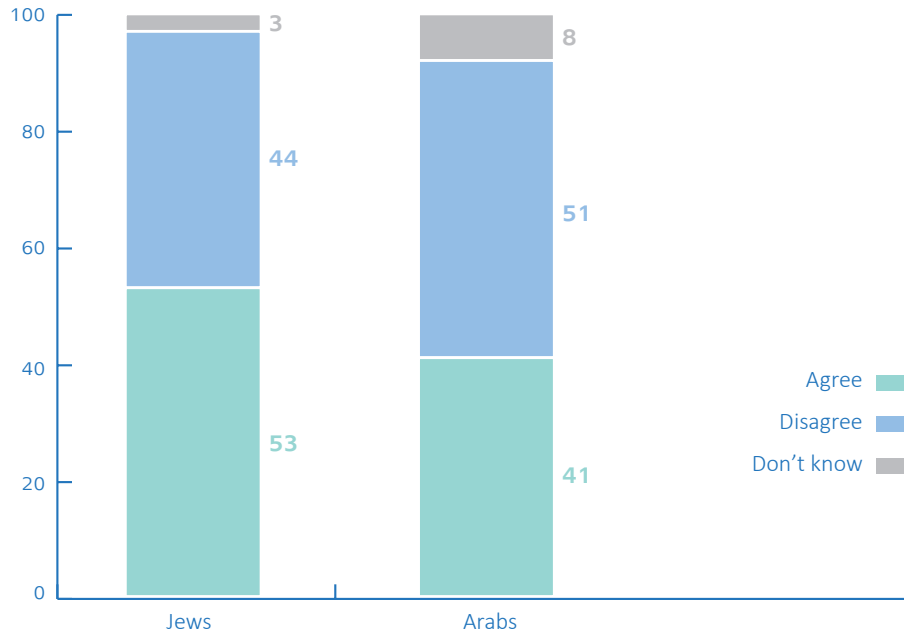
We broke down the responses of the Jewish sample by political orientation, and found a considerable difference between the Right, on one side, and the Center and Left, on the other. On the Right, a majority (62%) think that the current Knesset is representative in terms of its range of viewpoints, whereas in the Center and on the Left only a minority, albeit a sizeable one, feel this way (44% and 43.5%, respectively).

From here, we moved on to the public's position as to whether the Knesset has recently passed anti-democratic laws.

There has been much talk of late about the Knesset's legislative activities, which, in many people's eyes, are weakening the foundations of Israeli democracy. We therefore wished to know if this was indeed the stance of the respondents in our survey, asking them to express agreement or disagreement with the statement: "Some of the laws passed by the Knesset in recent years are harmful to the democratic character of the state." In the Arab sample, we found roughly three-quarters of respondents who agreed with this assertion, as opposed to the Jewish sample, which was split right down the middle.

Figure 5.13 \ "Some of the laws passed by the Knesset in recent years are harmful to the democratic character of the state" (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
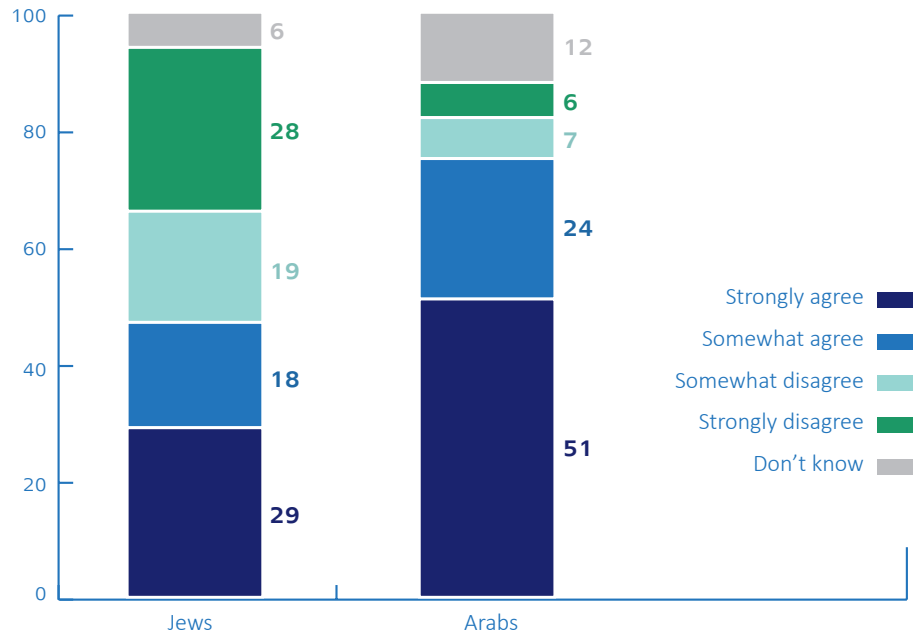
We then checked the responses of the Jewish sample by political orientation. As expected, we found vast differences between the various camps on the subject: On the Right, one-third (33%) agree that anti-democratic legislation has been enacted in recent years (even a third is not an inconsequential minority, given that this is the camp in power and with a parliamentary majority), along with roughly one-half (49%) in the Center, and a substantial majority (80%) on the Left.

In the context of the Knesset's representativeness and effectiveness, we posed another rather blunt question.

We presented the respondents with an assertion that is often voiced in Israel, asking them whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that "although the majority of Israelis voted Right, the Leftist court system, media, and academia hamper the Right's ability to govern."[12]

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١٢   See for example: Erez Tadmor, *Right Votes, Left Rules* (Ashkelon: Sela Meir, 2017) (Hebrew).

Since a large share of the Arab sample did not answer the question, we will not present the data on their responses here (this information can be found in appendix 2). The Jewish sample was split, with a slight tendency toward disagreement with the statement. So who thinks that this is indeed the situation in Israel today? On the Right, we found a large majority who feel that the Left has the upper hand despite the fact that it lost the election, as compared with only a minority from the Center and Left.

Figure 5.14 \ "Although the majority of Israelis voted Right, the Leftist court system, media, and academia hamper the Right's ability to govern" (agree somewhat and strongly; Jewish respondents; by political orientation; %)
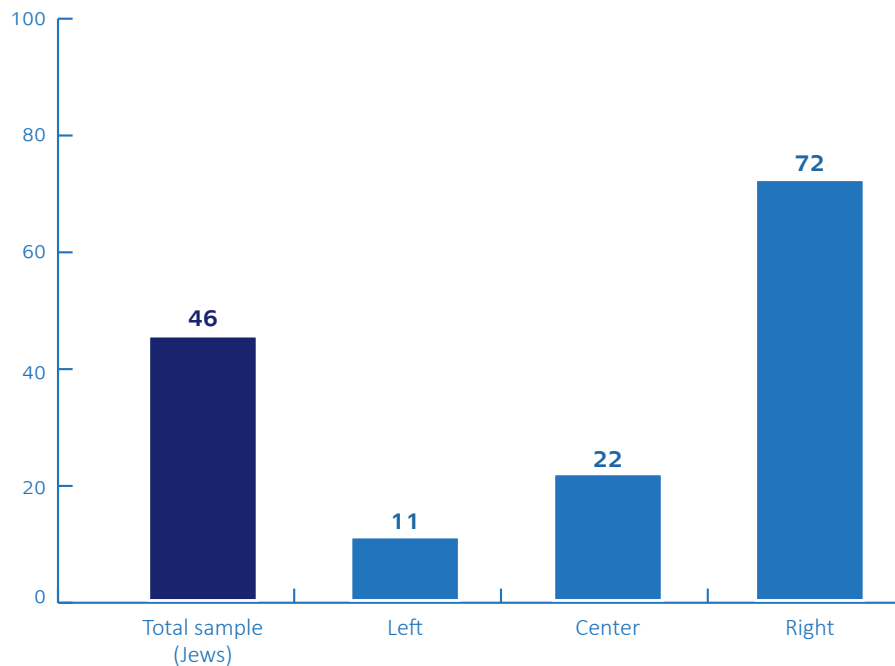
The high proportion of respondents on the Right who agree with the statement points to an entrenched perception in this camp that the true balance of power in the country is not changed by winning an election, and that the "old guard" is unwilling to step aside in favor of a new, duly elected leadership. Nonetheless, we found no association between these findings and the responses to the question on whether it matters whom one votes for since nothing ever changes, although it would be reasonable to expect a linkage of some kind between the two.

We also posed a question we have asked in previous years on the relationship between the Supreme Court and the Knesset, and their respective powers.

In light of the repeated attacks on what some allege are the overly broad powers of the Supreme Court, we sought to examine once again the extent of agreement with the statement: "The Supreme Court should be denied the authority to nullify laws passed by Knesset members who were elected to their posts by the country's citizens." In the present survey, as in the earlier one, roughly one-third of both Jews and Arabs agreed with this assertion, while two-thirds disagreed.

Figure 5.15 \ "The Supreme Court should be denied the authority to nullify laws passed by Knesset members who were elected to their posts by the country's citizens" (total sample; 2015 and 2017; %)
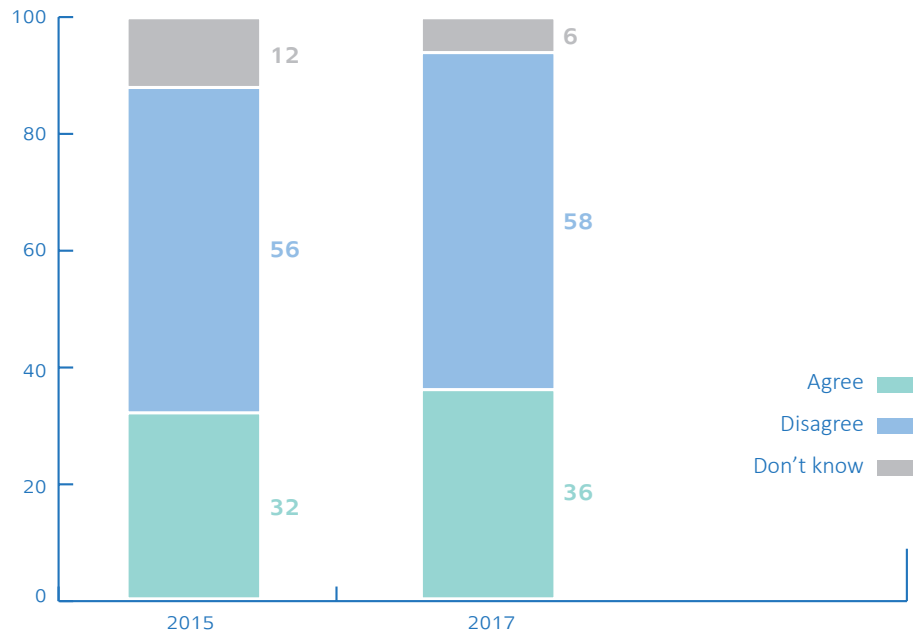
Here too, we divided the responses in the Jewish sample by political orientation. On the Right, we found a majority (53%) who would like to deprive the Supreme Court of this power, as contrasted with a minority from the Center (25%) and the Left (9%). Since we know that the Haredi and national religious are often sharply critical of the Supreme Court, we also broke down the positions on this statement by religiosity. And indeed, we found major differences between the Haredi and the national religious, on the one hand—in both groups, a majority agreed with the assertion (73% and 63%, respectively)—and the traditional religious, traditional non-religious, and secular on the other, where only a minority supported it (29%, 36%, and 21%, respectively).

5.1 Public trust in institutions

To our way of thinking, citizens' faith in government derives from a combination of three main factors: perceptions of the challenges facing the country; the way those challenges were handled by the relevant bodies in the past; and the integrity of the representatives of the major state institutions in the eyes of the public. In democratic regimes, trust is of paramount importance, as it is a deciding factor in shaping the political preferences of the citizens on a wide range of topics. A state whose citizens do not place their trust in its institutions and in other bodies that promote democratic functioning (such as the media) will find it difficult to enlist them in collective endeavors, and the government in power will gradually lose its popular legitimacy.

For this reason, each year we revisit the question of the level of public trust in eight key institutions: the IDF, the police, the President of Israel, the media, the Supreme Court, the government, the Knesset, and the political parties. On occasion, we add to this list institutions with which citizens have regular contact, or those that have captured the headlines in a given year. Two years ago, for example, we added the health fund in which the respondent was insured as well as the National Insurance Institute, whose services every citizen requires at one point or another. Last year, we added the municipality where respondents reside and the bank that they use, while this year we included government entities: the attorney general; and the Chief Rabbinate (for Jews), Shari'a court (for Muslims and Druze), and canonical law (for Christians).

The figure below presents the proportions of respondents from the Jewish and Arab samples who expressed trust this year in the various institutions; below it, we show the institutions' ranking according to this parameter.

Figure 5.16 \ To what extent do you trust each of the following individuals or institutions? ("quite a lot" or "very much"; Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
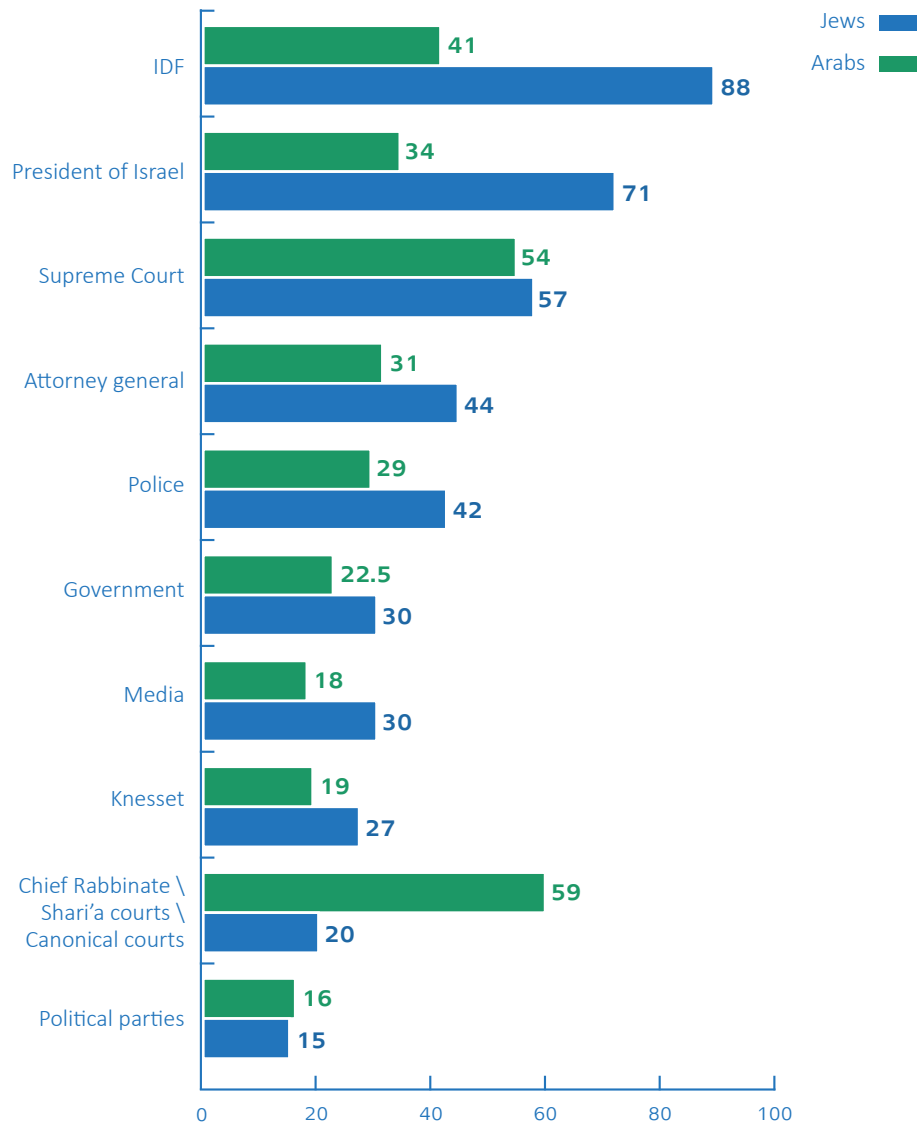
As shown in the figure, the level of trust in institutions among Jewish respondents ranks as follows (in descending order):

1. IDF
2. President of Israel
3. Supreme Court
4. Attorney general
5. Police
6. Government
7. Media
8. Knesset
9. Chief Rabbinate
10. Political parties

And this is the ranking of trust in these same institutions among the Arab public (in descending order):

1. Shari'a court
2. Supreme Court
3. IDF
4. President of Israel
5. Attorney general
6. Police
7. Knesset
8. Government
9. Media
10. Political parties

As the figure shows, the level of trust in most of the institutions among the Arab respondents is lower than that among the Jews, with the exception of the Shari'a court/canonical law (for which the level of confidence among Arab respondents far surpasses that of the Jews in the Chief Rabbinate) and the political parties, in which the (very low) level of trust is virtually identical for both groups. We calculated an average trust score of Jewish and Arab respondents for all eight main institutions surveyed in 2017, using a scale of 1 ("don't trust at all") to 4 ("trust very much"). The midpoint between trust and lack of trust is 2.5; both groups fall below that score, that is, they are closer to lack of trust than to complete trust.

Table 5.8 (average trust score, 2017)

Jews	Arabs
2.46	2.08

In addition, we divided the respondents into three categories, according to their overall level of confidence in the institutions surveyed: high, moderate or low. As shown in the following table, the most common level of trust among Jews was moderate, and among Arabs, low.

Table 5.9 (%)

Overall level of trust in institutions	Jews	Arabs
Low	19	53
Moderate	74	39
High	7	8

We wished to examine whether there is a difference in levels of trust in all the institutions between the three political camps in the Jewish sample (Right, Center, and Left). As indicated in the table below, in all three groups the majority of respondents are clustered at the moderate level of trust. Nonetheless, the proportion of respondents reporting the lowest level of trust is noticeably higher in the right-wing camp than in the Center or on the Left.

Table 5.10 (Jewish respondents; %)

Trust in institutions	Low	Moderate	High
Right	24	69	7
Center	12	78	9
Left	9	83	8

We have found in the past that each political camp has its own favored set of institutions in which it places its trust, a point that we examined again this year. The findings, summarized in the table below, show that the preferred institutions are indeed different—apart from the IDF,

which earns a high confidence rating in all three groups. These results support the conclusion from the table above, namely, that at least with regard to the institutions we surveyed, the level of trust on the Right is lower on average than that among the Center and Left. Interestingly enough, on the Left, faith in the president of the state exceeds that in the IDF, despite the fact that President Rivlin is clearly a man of the Right. It appears that his efforts to be "everyone's president" and his insistence on basic democratic principles, while maintaining his views on the Jews' right to Israel, speak primarily to individuals from the Left and Center, and much less to those on the Jewish Right and in the Arab public (for different reasons, of course).

Table 5.11 (Jewish respondents; %)*

Trust ranking	First place	Second place	Third place
Right	**IDF** (90)	**President of Israel** (49)	**Police** (47)
Center	**IDF** (91.5)	**President of Israel** (81)	**Supreme Court** (71)
Left	**President of Israel** (91)	**Supreme Court** (88.5)	**IDF** (85)

*   The percentage of those who reported the highest degree of trust ("quite a lot" and "very much") is noted in parentheses.

The table below presents the average trust scores this year as compared with the multi-year average since the inception of our survey (2003–2016) for the eight institutions measured each year. Note that here (as opposed to the remainder of the text), we rounded off the data to the first decimal point, where applicable; for certain institutions it was important to offer a precise comparison, the IDF for example, for which this year's percentage was identical to the multi-year average.

Table 5.12 (%)

Institution	Trust score in 2017 (Jews)	Multi-year average (Jews)	Trust score in 2017 (Arabs)	Multi-year average (Arabs)
IDF	**88.4**	**88.4**	**40.7**	**35.9**
President of Israel	**71**	**67.6**	**33.7**	**39**
Supreme Court	**57**	**63**	**53.9**	**59.1**
Police	**41.9**	**50**	**29.4**	**43.2**

➤

Institution	Trust score in 2017 (Jews)	Multi-year average (Jews)	Trust score in 2017 (Arabs)	Multi-year average (Arabs)
Government	**30**	**41.3**	**22.5**	**31.2**
Knesset	**27.1**	**39.9**	**18.8**	**37.5**
Media	**29.7**	**40.2**	**18.1**	**47.3**
Political parties	**15.2**	**24.9**	**16.3**	**26.6**

We can see from the table that among Jews, the level of trust in 2017 is higher than the multi-year average only in the case of the president of the state; for the IDF, the two ratings are equal. In the remaining institutions, the level of trust among Jewish respondents this year is lower than the multi-year average. Among Arabs—with the exception of the IDF, for whom this year's trust level is higher than the multi-year average—the level of trust in 2017 for all institutions surveyed falls below the multi-year average.

As stated, the two institutions that we examined this year that are not part of our regular annual survey were the attorney general and the Chief Rabbinate/Shari'a court/canonical law. With regard to the attorney general, we have only one previous assessment, from 2011, at which time roughly two-thirds of all respondents (64%) expressed their faith in him, a much greater proportion than in the 2017 survey (42% of the total sample; 44% in the Jewish sample, and 31% in the Arab sample). As for the Chief Rabbinate, we have more past assessments to rely on. Trust in this institution has always been limited, but in the most recent survey it was especially low. We do not have prior assessments of the level of trust among the Arab public in the Shari'a court or canonical law.

Table 5.13 (Jewish respondents; %)

Trust in Chief Rabbinate	2003	2004	2005	2009	2011	2013	2014	2017
	42	**36**	**36.5**	**32**	**43**	**43**	**29**	**20**

The following figures show the variations in the share of respondents who expressed trust in each of the institutions surveyed since we began our assessments in 2003. They present the (relatively stable) **ranking** of the level of trust in the various institutions (for example, the IDF always earns the highest level of trust among Jews, and the Supreme Court is almost always the most trusted by Arabs) as well as the (substantial) **fluctuations** within each institution over the years.

Figure 5.17 \ Trust in each of the institutions—summary (trust "quite a lot" or "very much"; Jewish respondents; by year; %)
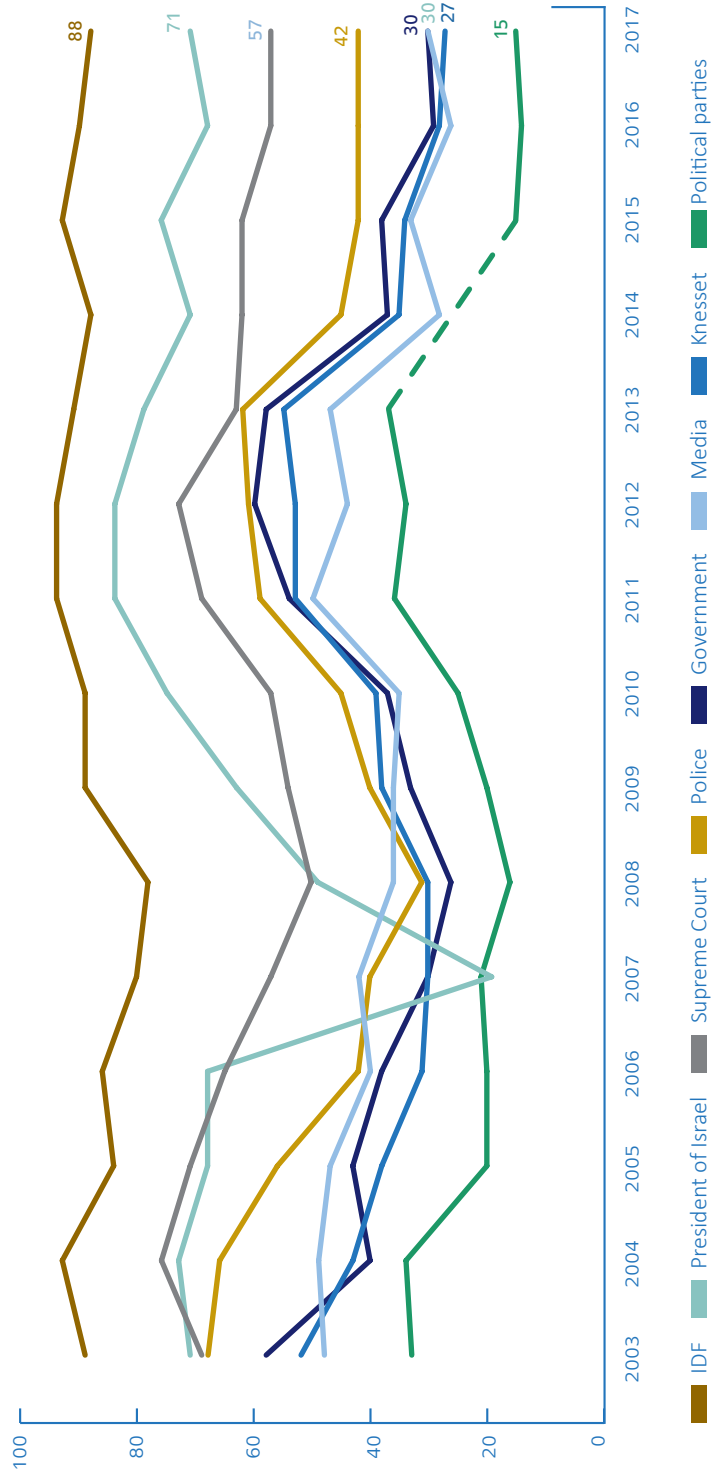
Figure 5.18 \ Trust in each of the institutions—summary (trust "quite a lot" or "very much";
Arab respondents; by year; %)
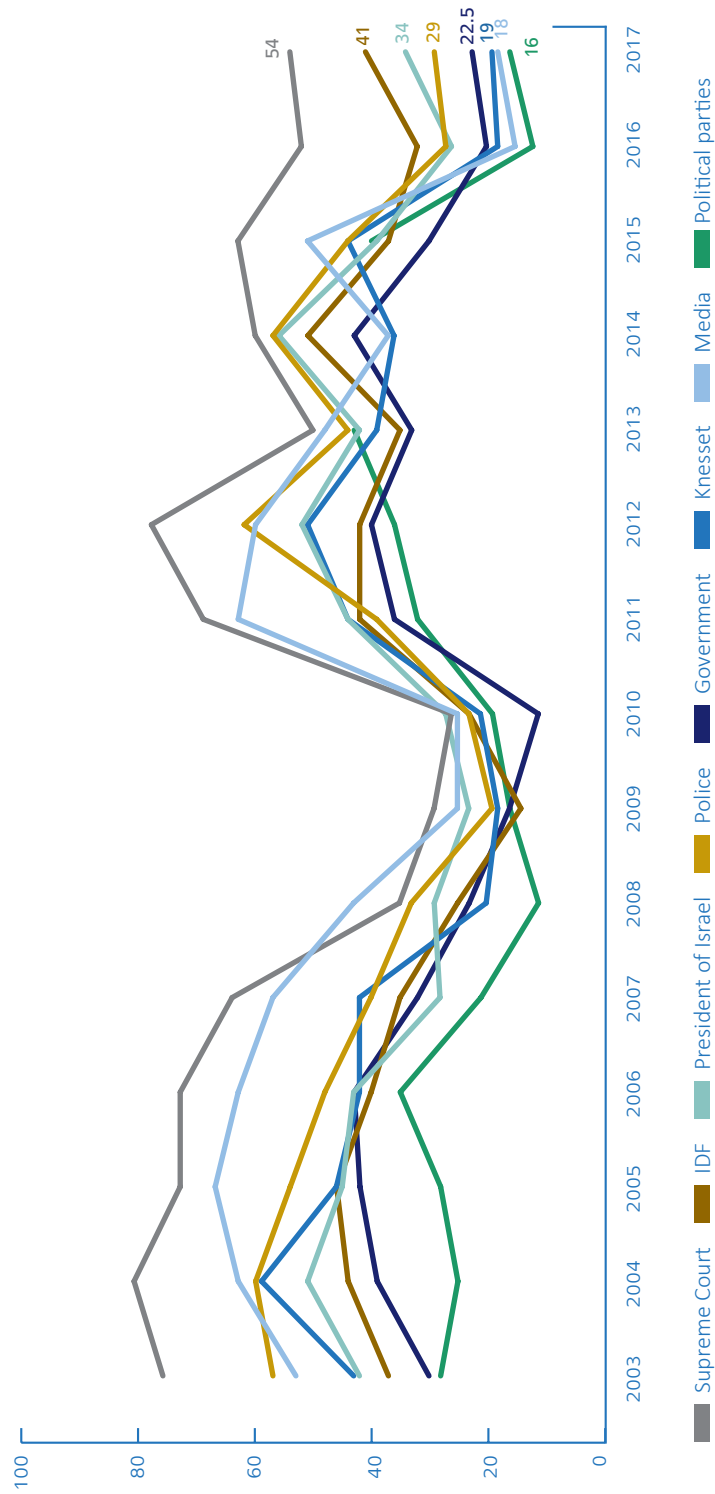
In Part I of the report, we saw that Israel's corruption score in the international indicators is in the middle range. We believe that one of the reasons for Israelis' hesitancy to trust the state's institutions is their poor assessment of the integrity of politicians. This year, as in previous years, we asked interviewees to rate the extent of corruption in the country's leadership based on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = very corrupt and 5 = not at all corrupt. The average score of the political leadership this year was 2.4—slightly higher than last year (2016), the same as the preceding year (2015), and lower than in 2014.

Table 5.14 (total sample; yearly average score)

	2014	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**
Mean corruption score	**2.5**	**2.4**	**2.3**	**2.4**

As the figure below demonstrates, a greater share of Arabs than of Jews hold that Israel's leadership is corrupt; however, in both samples this was the most common response (and the view shared by a majority of Arabs). In other words, although there is some difference between the two groups in their assessment of corruption, both Jews and Arabs feel that the country's leaders are more inclined toward corruption than toward integrity.

Figure 5.19 \ How would you rate Israel's leadership in terms of corruption? (1 = very corrupt; 5 = not at all corrupt; Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
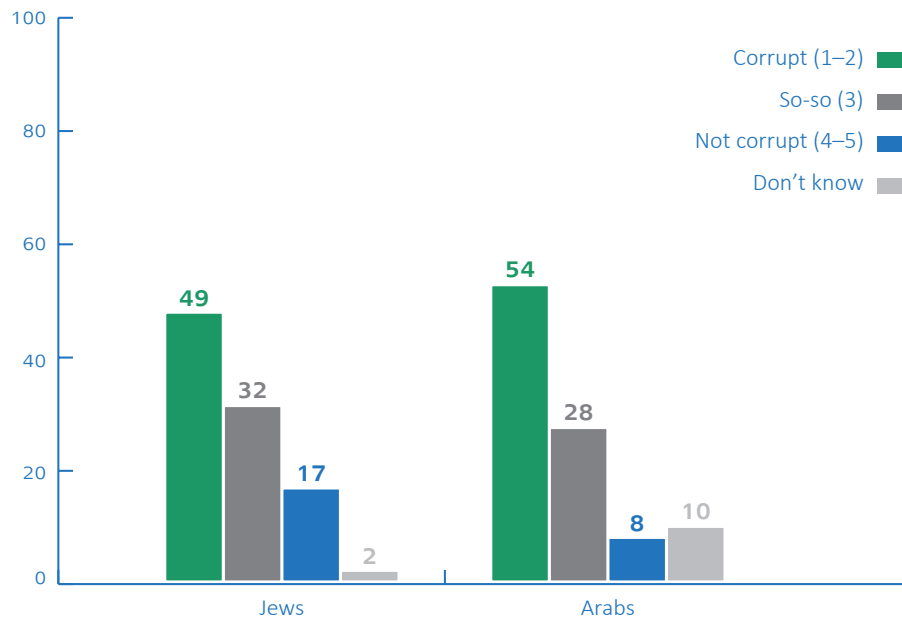
A breakdown of responses by religiosity (Jews) revealed sizeable differences.

Table 5.15 (%)

	Haredim	National religious	Traditional religious	Traditional non-religious	Secular
Leadership is corrupt (scores 1 + 2)	28	29	40	48	64

Thus, while a majority of secular Jewish respondents see the leadership as corrupt, less than half of the traditional non-religious, slightly less among the traditional religious, and less than a third of the national religious and Haredim share this view.

A breakdown by political orientation reveals that on the Right, only a third hold that the leadership is corrupt, as opposed to 61% of those who identify with the Center and 72% on the Left.

Chapter 6 \ Government, Society, Citizens

In this chapter, we discuss the following topics:

- Can the state be relied upon?
- Citizens' interest in politics
- The legitimacy of public criticism of government policy
- Human rights organizations as seen by the public

Until now, we have been discussing the political system. We will now turn our attention to the relationships between government and citizens, government and society, and citizens and society, as well as the level of political engagement of Israeli citizens.

To begin, we wished to reexamine the public's understanding of the concept of "majority rule." The subject was of particular interest to us this year since the Israeli leadership, on more than one occasion, sent signals to the public that, as it was elected by a majority it could act as it saw fit, without any constraints on its decisions.

We asked the interviewees to tell us which viewpoint they favor: "Decisions made by a government with a Knesset majority are always democratic decisions," or: "Decisions that run counter to such values as minority rights and freedom of expression are non-democratic, even if they are made by a government with a Knesset majority." Despite the oft-heard claim that Israelis think that decisions made by a majority are automatically democratic, we found a majority who feel that decisions that clash with democratic values—even if made by a majority government—are not democratic (total sample, 54%; Jewish sample, 51.5%; Arab sample, 67%). Incidentally, a particularly high share of respondents (13%) did not answer this question. It should be noted that in 2013 we asked the same question but with slightly different wording (see appendix 3): At the time, those who held that a majority decision is inherently democratic outweighed the others (44.5% versus 35%); moreover, four years ago the proportion who answered that they did not know how to respond was a remarkable 21%. In other words, the difference may lie in the change of wording; however, it is also (hopefully) possible that it is the result of public discourse on the subject, which has included warnings from many quarters against the tyranny of the majority. Perhaps this has led to a shift toward greater democratic awareness on the part of the general public, conveying the message that a majority decision can be considered democratic only insofar as the basic rights of the minority are taken into

account. A more definitive answer regarding the source of the difference between the two surveys can be offered only in the next few years, following further assessment.

From here, we moved on to examining the extent to which Israeli citizens feel that they can rely on the state to look after them.

As shown below, this year (as in the past) we found that a majority of Israelis feel they can rely on other Israelis to come to their aid in times of trouble. We wished to know whether they think **the state** will take care of them when times are hard. The picture that emerges is not encouraging: in the Jewish sample, the majority disagreed with the assertion that they can count on the state. In the Arab sample, however, a majority held the opposite view. We do not have a solid explanation for this finding, unless we assume that the Arab interviewees thought that the term "citizens of Israel" related to the Jewish majority. To determine this, more in-depth study is needed.

Figure 6.1 \ "Citizens of Israel can always count on the state to help them in times of trouble" (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
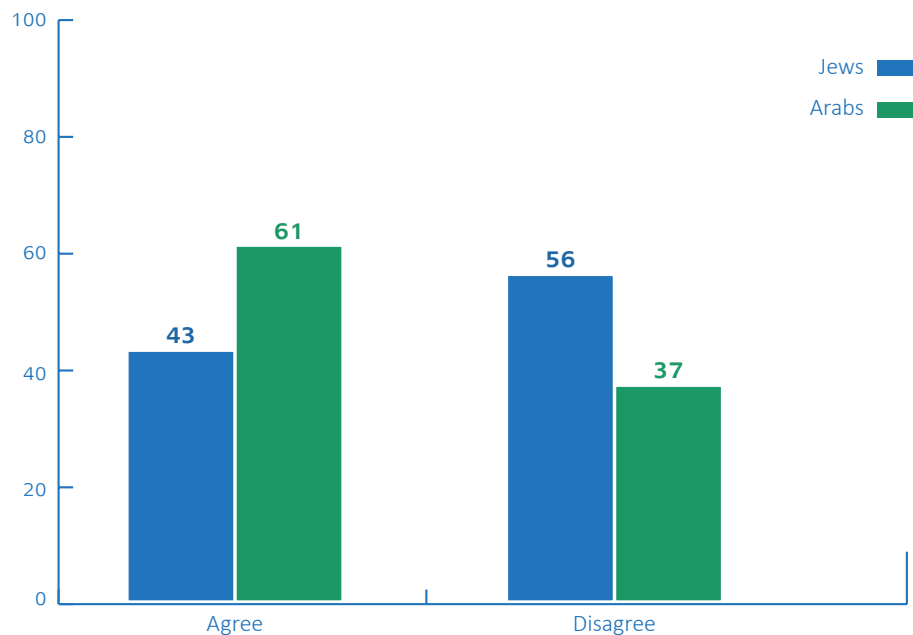
Which segments of the Jewish public were the most inclined to believe that the state **cannot** be relied upon to help its citizens in difficult times? A breakdown of the findings by political orientation (Jewish respondents) shows that in the Left and Center, the feeling that the state

cannot be depended on is much more prevalent than on the Right (66% and 63% versus 47%, respectively). Breaking down the (Jewish) sample by self-defined social location, we found that a slim majority of those who identify with the stronger groups in society feel that the state cannot be relied upon to help its citizens, as opposed to a large majority who share this view among those who associate themselves with the weaker groups (51% as contrasted with 70%). A breakdown of the results by age (Jews) also produced differences, though there is not a majority in any age group who would rely on the state: Among young people, 60% think that the state cannot be counted on, followed by 57% in the intermediate cohort and 50% in the oldest group.

We then proceeded to check to what extent Israeli citizens talk about politics with one another, and how they would assess their political influence.

As in previous years, we asked: "How often do you discuss politics with your friends?" Roughly three-quarters (74%) of the Arab public responded that they discuss the subject only rarely, as opposed to a small majority (52%) of the Jewish public who said they often talk with friends about political affairs. The possibility should not be ruled out that the Arab interviewees feel a certain reluctance to report conversations on political matters.

Figure 6.2 \ How often do you discuss politics with your friends? (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
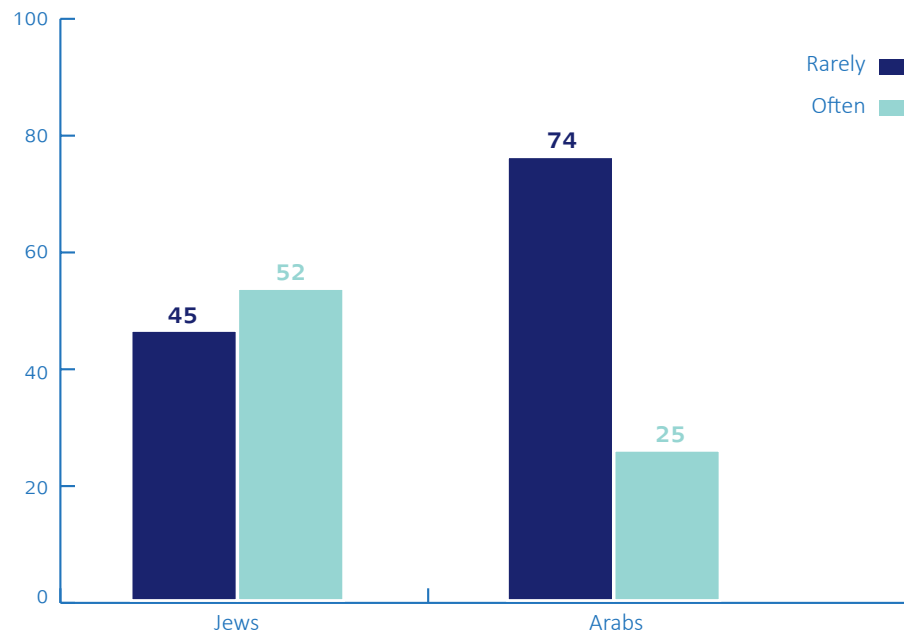
A breakdown of the results by age showed no sizeable or consistent differences between age groups in either the Jewish or Arab samples, though we did find that the oldest group among the Arab respondents, and the intermediate age group among the Jews, tend to talk more about politics than do the other groups in their respective populations. With regard to social location as well, no substantial differences were found between the categories, in contrast to political orientation, where a breakdown yielded sizeable differences: Among those who located themselves on the Right, 46.5% reported that they speak frequently with their friends about politics, as compared with 54% in the Center and 70% on the Left.

Breaking down the results by education in both the Jewish and Arab samples, we found that the share of respondents who talk about politics with friends rises in tandem with schooling; at all levels of education, however, the proportion who report that they discuss political matters is much lower in the Arab sample than in the corresponding group in the Jewish sample, possibly due to the concern that we mentioned earlier.

Table 6.1 (%)

Discuss politics with friends	Jews	Arabs
Elementary or partial high-school education	41	8
Full high-school education	48	27.5
Higher education	57	34.5

An examination of the findings over time revealed three findings: (a) the percentage who discuss political issues is always higher among the Jewish respondents than among the Arab ones; (b) the gap is widening with time; and (c) the frequency of political discussion reached its peak in both groups in 2011. We should note that the Democracy Index survey for that year was conducted in March, that is, before the wave of social protests. At that time, not only was a sense of dissatisfaction already "in the air" in Israel but the entire Middle East was caught up in the Arab Spring, presumably affecting public discourse on politics in Israel.

Figure 6.3 \ How often do you discuss politics with your friends?
(quite often and very often; Jewish and Arab respondents; by year; %)
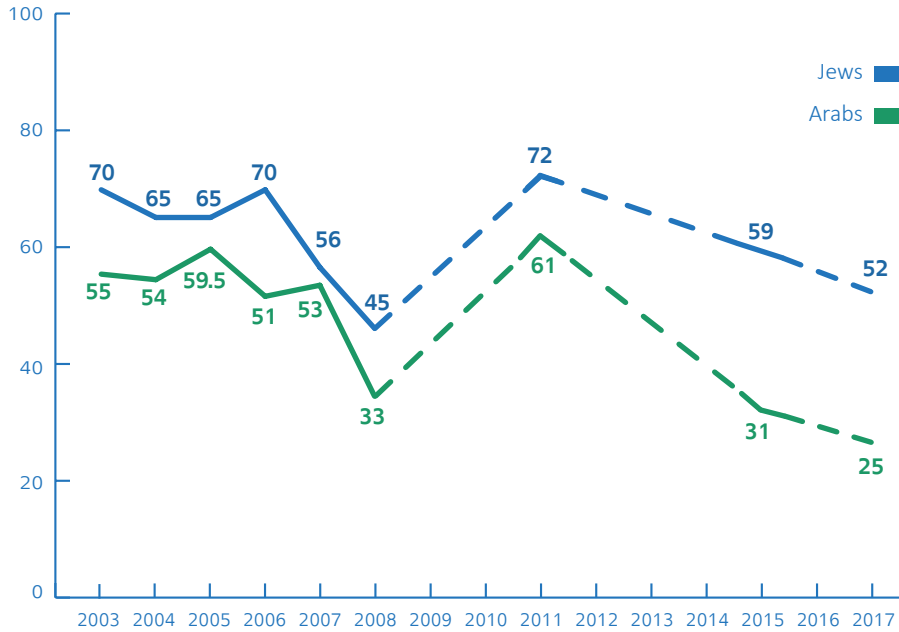
With all due respect to political discussions among friends, which do play an important role in creating awareness and "letting off steam," what impact do Israeli citizens feel they have on government policy?

Once again this year, we posed the question: "To what extent are you and your friends able to influence government policy?" As in the past, the answers were very disheartening: In both the Jewish and Arab samples, the vast majority feel that their ability to influence government policy is either limited or negligible (76% and 88%, respectively). As expected, and in keeping with past findings, the greater portion of Jewish interviewees stated that they are able to influence policy "not so much," while a majority of the Arab sample chose the response of "not at all."

Ability to influence government policy

Question 6

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Figure 6.4 \ To what extent are you and your friends able to influence government policy? (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
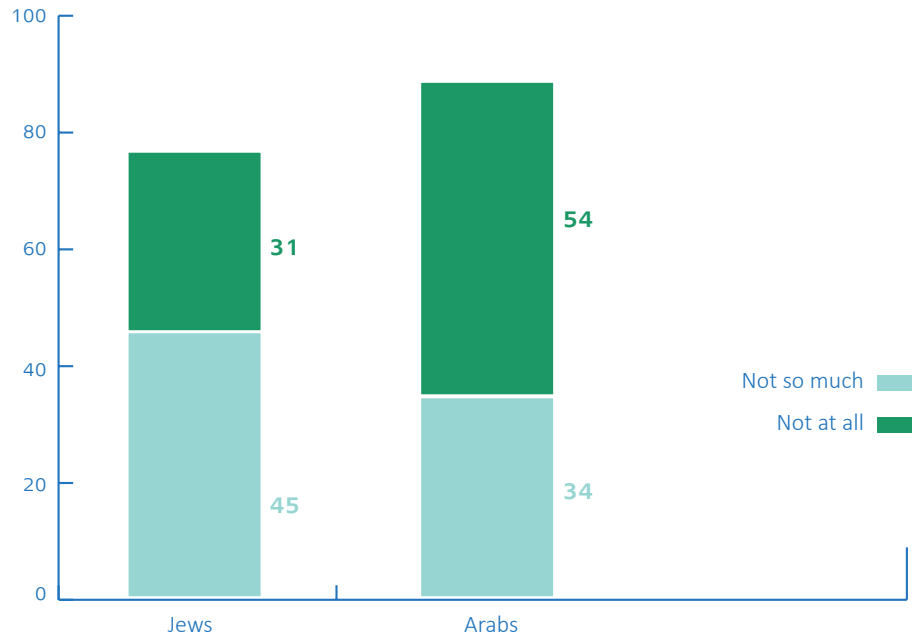
Apart from belonging to the national majority or to a minority group, what other factors are related to citizens' sense of influence (or lack thereof) on government policy? In the Jewish sample, we examined the link between perceived influence and political orientation, and found a sense of helplessness in all the camps, though this is stronger in the Center and Left than on the Right (Right, 70%; Center, 80%; Left, 84%). Somewhat surprisingly, self-identification with the stronger or weaker groups in Israeli society did not correlate strongly with a feeling of influence (or non-influence). Here too, feelings of being ineffectual predominated, though to differing degrees (stronger groups, 73%; weaker groups, 84%). In the Arab sample, education was found to be totally unrelated to the feeling of (lack of) influence, and in the Jewish sample there seems to be only a tenuous connection.

Has there been a shift in the Israeli political arena in this regard? Examining the subject over the years, we found that while there have been fluctuations, over the last fifteen years or so there has always been a solid majority of citizens who feel helpless and partially or totally lacking in influence with respect to government policy.

Table 6.2 (total sample; %)

	Feel able to influence government policy "not so much" or "not at all"
2003	80
2004	68
2005	68
2006	72
2007	74.5
2008	77
2009	82
2010	78
2011	71
2012	63
2013	61
2014	76
2015	78
2016	82
2017	78

Is this sense of helplessness coupled with a reluctance to make political statements now or in the future?

The interviewees were asked to state whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: "I prefer to keep quiet and not express my political opinions out loud in the presence of people I don't know." Last year, slightly more than one-third of the Jewish respondents and nearly one-half of Arab respondents reported that they refrain from expressing political opinions in front of strangers. This year, we found a similar result among Jews, but a steep increase among Arabs. Does this represent a trend? We cannot be certain until we have the results of additional surveys, but there is nonetheless cause for concern, since freedom of expression is one of the pillars of democracy.

Avoiding expressing political opinions in the presence of strangers

Question 44

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Figure 6.5 \ "I prefer to keep quiet and not express my political opinions in the presence of people I don't know" (agree; Jewish and Arab respondents; 2016 and 2017; %)
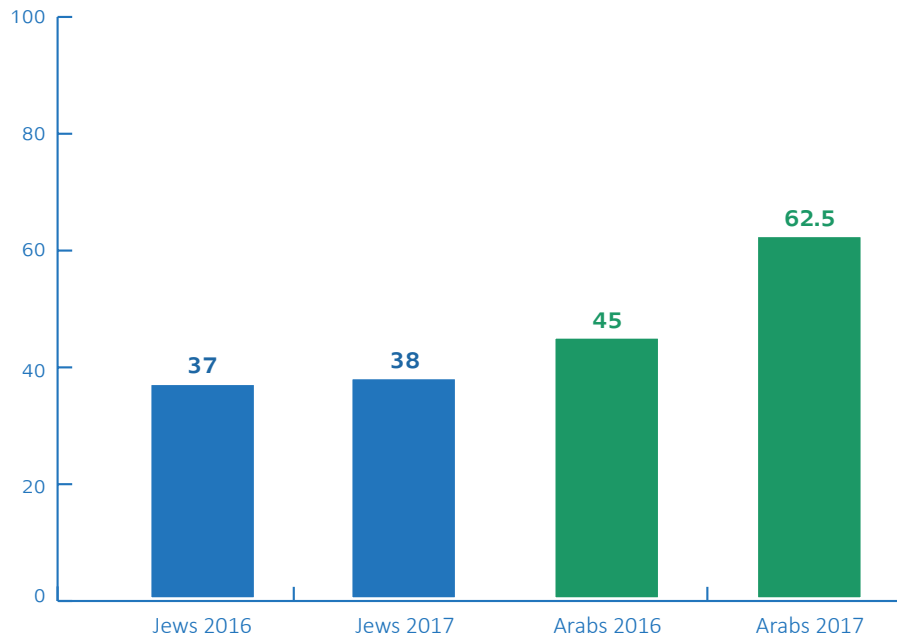
In the Arab sample, a clear majority refrain from voicing political opinions, and we did not find differences among the various subgroups in this population. But who among the Jewish respondents is concerned about expressing political opinions in the presence of people they don't know? The two variables for which we found an association were political orientation and social location (that is, the sense of belonging to the stronger or weaker groups in Israeli society). People who identify with the Center are more likely to refrain from sharing their political views in front of strangers than are those on the Right or Left. The same holds true for those who associate themselves with the weaker groups as compared with those who identify with the stronger groups.

Table 6.3 (Jewish respondents; %)

		Avoid expressing political opinions in front of strangers
Political orientation	Right	35
	Center	43
	Left	36
Social location	Identify with stronger groups in society	34
	Identify with weaker groups in society	50

Looking ahead, is there concern about freedom of expression in the future?

When it comes to freedom of expression in the future, it seems there is a sizeable difference in perspective between the two samples: A majority of Arabs (55%) are somewhat, even very, concerned that they will not be able to express their political views in the future without suffering negative consequences, while among Jews the corresponding figure is only a minority (37%).

Breaking down the responses of the Jewish sample by political orientation, we found a majority on the Left who are worried they may be silenced in future, compared with a much lower level of concern in the Center and the Right (Left, 65%; Center, 36%; Right, 25%). A breakdown of responses from this sample by identification with stronger or weaker groups shows that among the former only a minority (33%) are concerned that they will be unable to express their views freely in future, whereas in the weaker groups the figure rises to almost half (47%). We broke down the Jewish sample by religiosity as well, finding the lowest level of concern among the national religious, and the highest, among the secular respondents.

Concern about ability to express political views in future

Question 37.3

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Figure 6.6 \ Concerned about being unable to express political views in future without negative consequences (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)

Somewhat concerned
Very concerned

Jews — 17, 20
Arabs — 24, 31
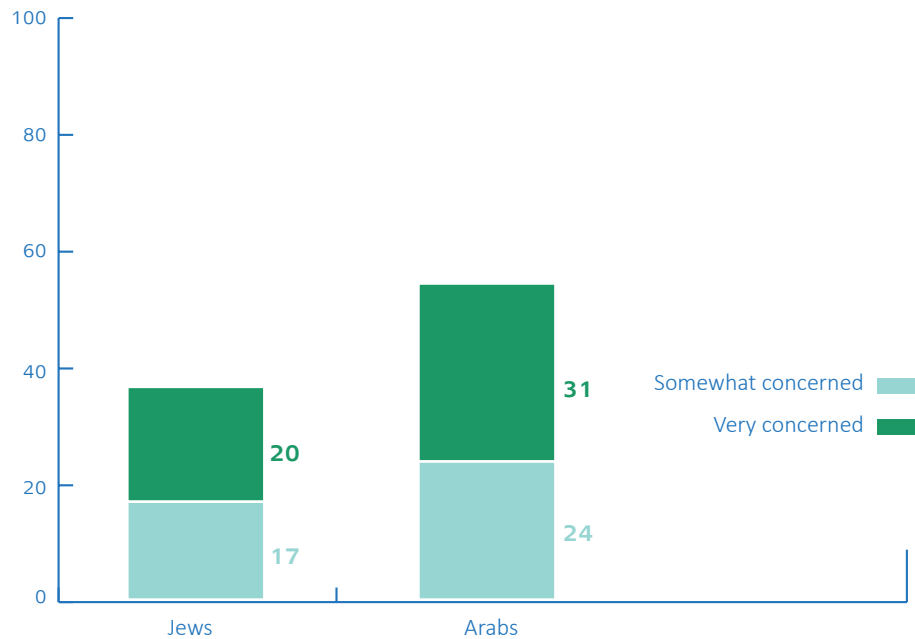
Table 6.4 (%)

	Concerned they won't be able to express political views in future without negative consequences
Haredim	27
National religious	18
Traditional religious	28
Traditional non-religious	34
Secular	47

In light of these findings, we wished to know whether Israeli citizens are interested in limiting freedom of expression in cases of severe public criticism of the state.

In both the Jewish and Arab samples, we found a large majority who disagree with the statement: "Israeli citizens should be prohibited by law from harshly criticizing the state in public."

Figure 6.7 \ "Israeli citizens should be prohibited by law from harshly criticizing the state in public" (total sample; %)
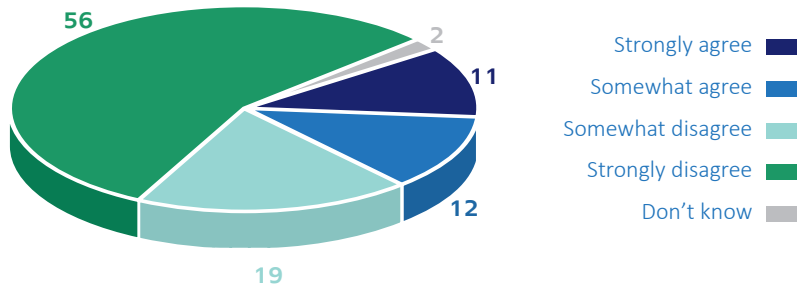
On this topic, we found substantial differences within the Jewish sample based on political orientation. While a majority in all camps are against restrictive legislation of this type, the share who are in favor on the Right is greater than one-third (37%), as opposed to 18% in the Center and only 4% on the Left.

This leads us directly to Israel's civil society organizations and their standing in the country today, since they are seen as regular critics of government policy.

For several years now, we have been examining the status of Israel's human and civil rights organizations in the eyes of the public. Last year, given the intense preoccupation with this topic, and the strongly negative attitude toward these groups at the highest levels of the national leadership, we found a sharp rise in the share of respondents in the Jewish public who agreed with the statement that these organizations are harmful to the state. For obvious reasons, there was, and is, broad support for these organizations in the Arab public. Among Jews, 59% agreed with the assertion that they are damaging to the state; by contrast, 77% of Arab respondents **disagreed** with the statement. When we broke down the responses of the Jewish sample by political orientation, we found that in both the Right and Center, a majority hold that the human rights organizations cause harm to the state (Right, 79%; Center, 59%; Left, 18%).

As shown in the figure below, there was some decline from last year in the hostility toward these organizations, though a clear majority of the Jewish public still consider them damaging to the state.

Figure 6.8 \ "Human and civil rights organizations like ACRI and B'Tselem cause damage to the state" (Jewish respondents; by year; %)
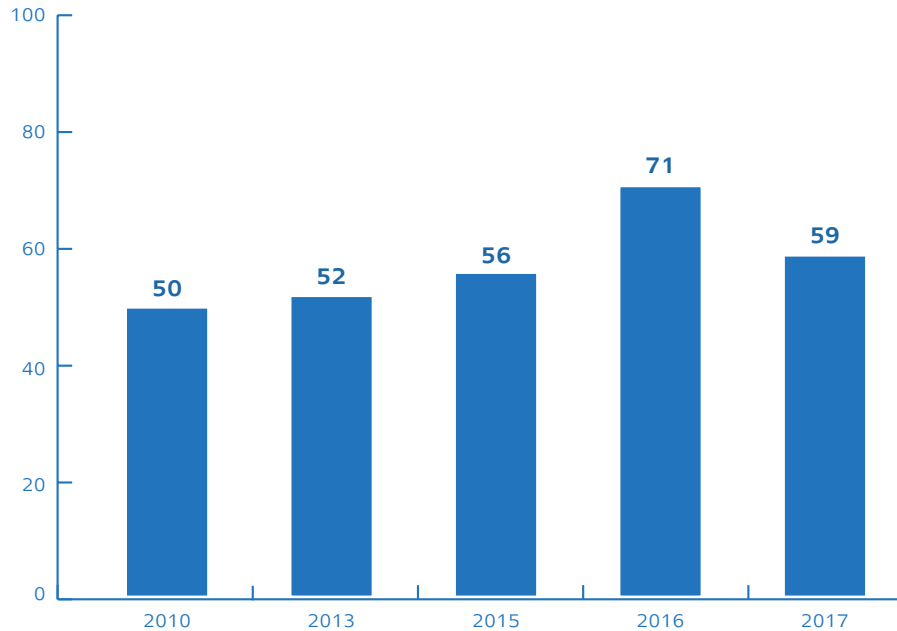
We hypothesized that the negative attitude toward human and civil rights organizations was influenced by the perception that these groups are taking advantage of the democratic principle of freedom of expression. Thus we examined whether there is a sense among the Israeli public that freedom of expression is being abused.

We asked respondents to express their opinions on this statement: "There are people in Israel who take advantage of freedom of expression to harm the state." As shown in the figure below, we found a majority, of different sizes, in both the Jewish and Arab samples who agree with this assertion (though their views of just who is abusing this freedom would likely not coincide).

**Abuse of freedom
of expression**

Question 14

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Figure 6.9 \ "There are people in Israel who take advantage of freedom of expression to harm the state" (agree; Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
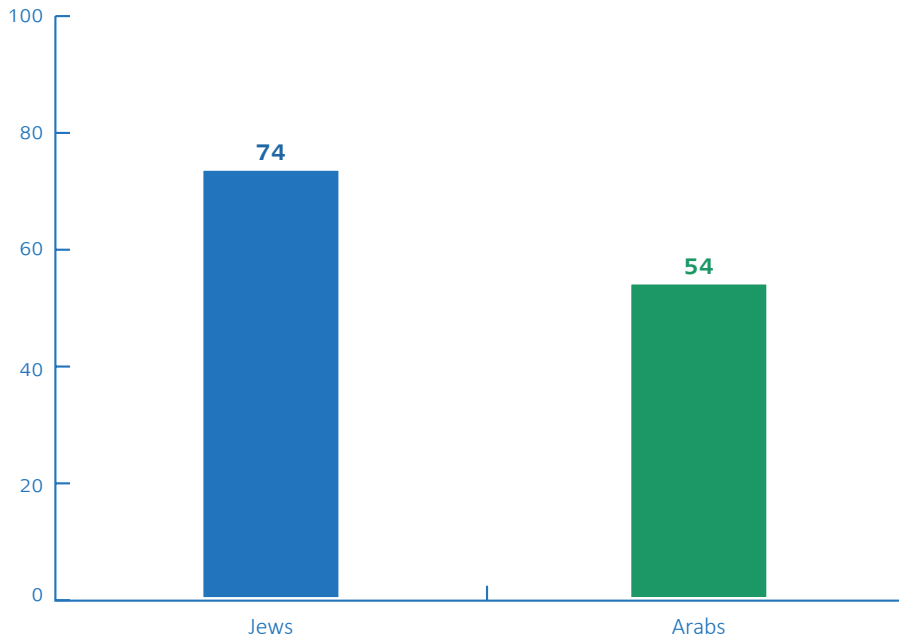
Breaking down the responses of the Jewish sample, we found that in the Right and Center a sizeable majority hold that freedom of expression is being abused in Israel (89% and 72%, respectively). On the Left, by contrast, a minority—albeit a large one—share this view (43%). Here too, we would assume that each of the camps has its own perspective on who is doing the abusing.

We cross-tabulated the results on the last two questions—the danger posed by human rights organizations, and the purported abuse of freedom of expression—and found that a very high proportion of Jews (88%) who feel that freedom of expression is being exploited to harm the state also agree with the statement that these organizations are a threat to Israel (as shown in the following table). However, among those who do not agree that people are taking advantage of freedom of expression in Israel, only 29% think that the human rights organizations are damaging to the state. In other words, there is a striking relationship between the responses to these two questions.

Table 6.5 (Jewish respondents; %)

	Agree that there are people in Israel who abuse freedom of expression	Disagree that there are people in Israel who abuse freedom of expression
Agree that human and civil rights organizations cause damage to the state	71	26
Do not agree that human and civil rights organizations cause damage to the state	23	70
Don't know	6	4
Total	100	100

Chapter 7 \ Populism—Here Too?

In this chapter, we discuss the following topics:

- Public preference for democracy versus effective government
- Responsibility of society and the community for the welfare of the individual
- Migrants, refugees, and the good of society
- Job security and financial stability

Much has been said of late in public discourse, the media, and academia about the reasons for the rise of political parties and leaders in the vein of US President Donald Trump, who convey a new type of message that some would call populist.[13] According to certain scholars and commentators, this approach and its proponents pose a threat to the foundations of liberal democracy. Others argue, meanwhile, that the message and the messengers are responding to very real and current needs, and that they enjoy public support because they are denouncing old-school, decadent elites who are oblivious to public sentiment. Among the explanations cited for the growth of this new politics are the sense of exclusion and despair shared by many voters in democratic countries, who feel that the state and decision makers have abandoned them; panic at the waves of Third World immigrants flooding the West; high long-term unemployment rates; anger over corruption at the top; and fears—primarily among young people and their parents—of an uncertain economic future due to the far-reaching impact of globalization. Another pervasive belief, which scholars see as contributing to the wave of populism and the bolstering of authoritarian tendencies,[14] is that the liberal democratic rules of the game are not suited to confronting the serious problems facing the world today.

In this year's survey, we begin to examine whether in Israel, too, certain gut feelings and positions can be identified that, at least according to accepted analyses, would allow populism to flourish and to erode the basic principles and practices of liberal democracy.

In the previous chapters, we saw that—in contrast to the alienation and despondency that have become common in the United States and a fair number of European countries in recent years, and despite displeasure with the presence of foreigners in Israel and their impact on the public

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13   Discussions on this topic can be found in, for example: Jan-Werner Müller, *What is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016). For a different approach to the question, see: Ronald F. Ingelhart and Pippa Norris, "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash" (faculty working paper, Harvard University, Kennedy School, Cambridge, MA, 2016); see also: Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2016).

14   Certain scholars, such as Pippa Norris for example, distinguish between populism and authoritarianism, but in most studies both are seen as part of the same phenomenon.

space—Israelis actually report a reasonable or higher level of satisfaction with their situation at both the personal and national levels, though this does not extend to the functioning of the political system and those holding office. Nonetheless, as shown below, concerns exist in Israel as well. These are not based on security issues, which are not examined here (though they doubtless affect the personal and national state of mind); rather, they stem from uncertainty regarding personal and family security (although not the fear of losing one's job, a very common concern in other countries), as well as from the sense that Israel's decision makers lack integrity and are not doing their job properly. At the same time, it is important to note that these worries are not shared equally by all segments of the population, a point that we discuss in greater detail below.

Are democratic principles suitable for running a country effectively?

Question 43

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One of the claims put forward in studies on the rise of populism around the world is that there is widespread disappointment with the limited ability of liberal democracies to handle the complex problems facing countries today. We sought to verify this, using the following statement: "Democratic principles are fine on paper, but they aren't suited to running a country effectively." In the Arab sample, a majority agreed with this assertion, while in the Jewish sample the majority took the opposite view, that is, they disagreed with the statement. This finding is consistent with what we reported in the previous chapters regarding the greater willingness of the Arab public, as compared with the Jewish one, to tolerate authoritarian forms of government, for example by accepting the notion of a strong leader who does not necessarily abide by the rules of the democratic game.

We wished to find out who in the Jewish public would nonetheless agree that democratic principles are ineffective when it comes to governing. A breakdown by political orientation did not find a majority in any of the camps who subscribed to this position; however, almost one-half (47%) of respondents on the Right, roughly one-third (35%) in the Center, and about one-fifth (21%) on the Left did hold this view. Breaking down the findings by religiosity revealed a majority of Haredim who agree with the statement (52%), followed by a sizeable minority in both groups of traditional Jews (traditional religious, 46%; traditional non-religious, 45%), and a smaller minority among the national religious (38%) and secular (29%). A breakdown of the Jewish sample by social location showed that, of those who associate themselves with the stronger groups in society, only about one-third agreed with the statement, while among those who identify with the weaker groups, this rose to roughly one-half. This finding is in line with the prevailing theory that populism speaks more to those who see themselves as less powerful (though not necessarily in terms of income alone). To summarize, the notion that democracy is an ineffective system of government is not predominant in the Jewish public, but it is certainly acceptable to more than a small number.

From here, we moved on to the subject of voting for leaders and parties that tout their effectiveness, even if they are not entirely committed to democratic principles.

Figure 7.1 \ "Democratic principles are fine on paper, but they aren't suited to running a country effectively" (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
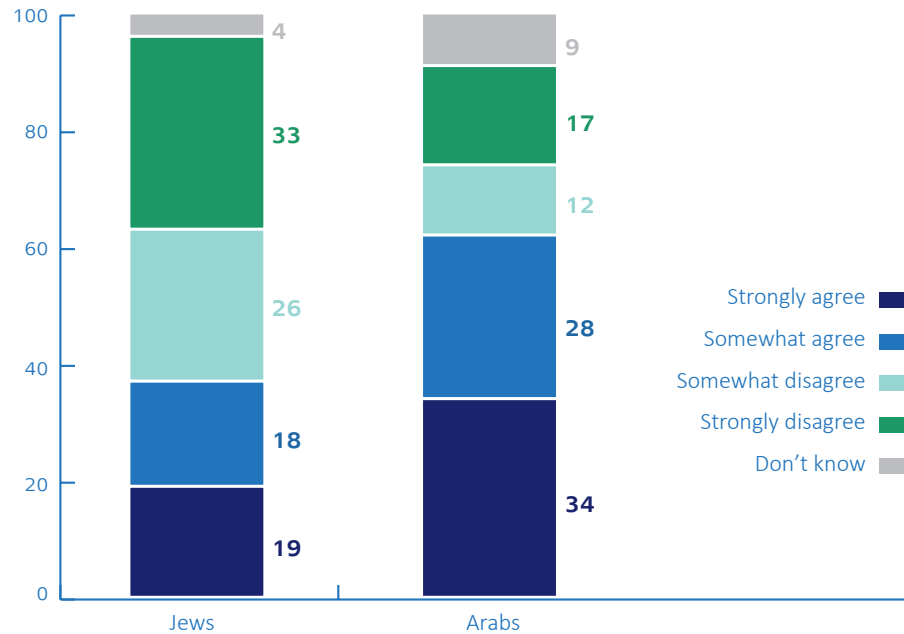
To explore this point, we presented the respondents with the following statement: "It's better to vote for leaders and parties that offer quick and effective solutions to problems that worry the public, even if these solutions are not entirely in keeping with democratic principles." The Arab respondents were split on this question, tilting slightly in favor of agreement with the statement. This corresponds with the distribution of responses in the same sample to our earlier questions about a strong leader and the suitability of democratic principles to Israel's situation. By contrast, in the Jewish sample, a majority of two-thirds disagreed with the statement.

Once again, a breakdown by religiosity yielded a majority of Haredim (53%) who agreed with the statement, meaning that here too the Haredi community's authoritarian leanings are very pronounced. Of the traditional religious and traditional non-religious, 40% and 35% (respectively) agreed with the above statement, while the national religious (30%) and the secular (19.5%) brought up the rear. In all of the political camps, we found a majority who disagreed, but the size of the minority who agreed with the statement differed: 41% on the Right, 22.5% in the Center, and 11% on the Left. We examined the distribution of opinions on this question by level of education as well. In the Arab sample, no consistent relationship was found. By contrast, in the Jewish sample, we found that the higher the level of education, the

lower the degree of support for this statement (elementary or partial high school, 55%; full high school, 35; higher education, 22%). Thus, there is a systematic pattern across different variables with regard to the value and effectiveness of democracy.

Figure 7.2 \ "It's better to vote for leaders and parties that offer quick and effective solutions to problems, even if these solutions are not entirely in keeping with democratic principles" (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
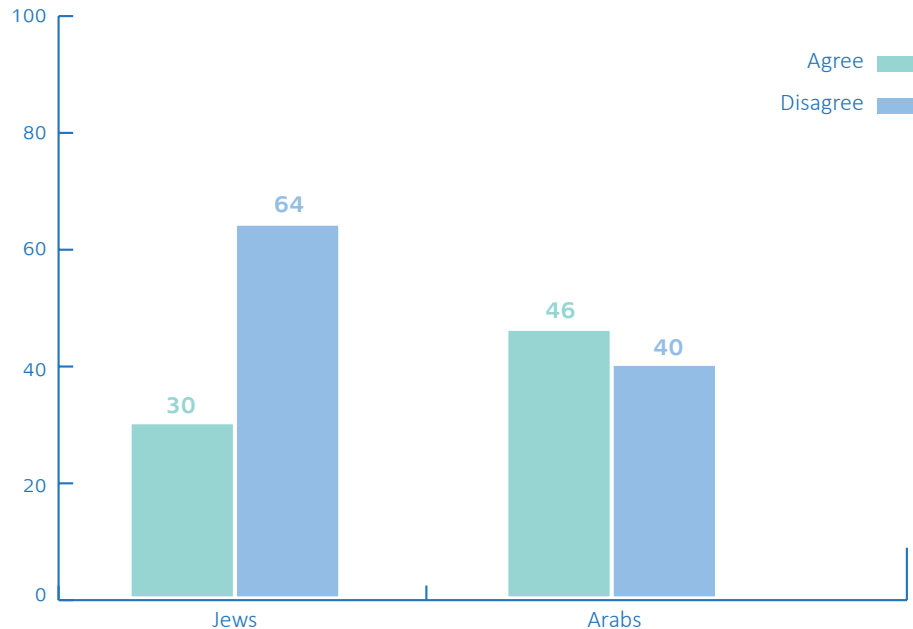
How much leeway are Israelis willing to give to their leaders?

An always-controversial issue is how much latitude should be granted to leaders in a democratic regime. To learn what Israelis think about this issue, we asked for their response to the statement: "A good leader does not do what the people want but what he thinks the people need." While the proportion who agreed was slightly higher in the Jewish sample than in the Arab sample, this was the majority opinion in both groups. In other words, the public does not seek a leader who is swayed by public opinion but rather one who has a clear plan of action and who operates according to his or her understanding of the national interest. Does this indicate undemocratic tendencies, or more precisely, latent authoritarianism? This may well be the case; but more in-depth study will be needed to reach such a conclusion, for it is also possible that it suggests a reasonable willingness to allow a worthy leader the freedom of action necessary to advance the common good.

Figure 7.3 \ "A good leader does not do what the people want but what he thinks the people need" (agree; Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
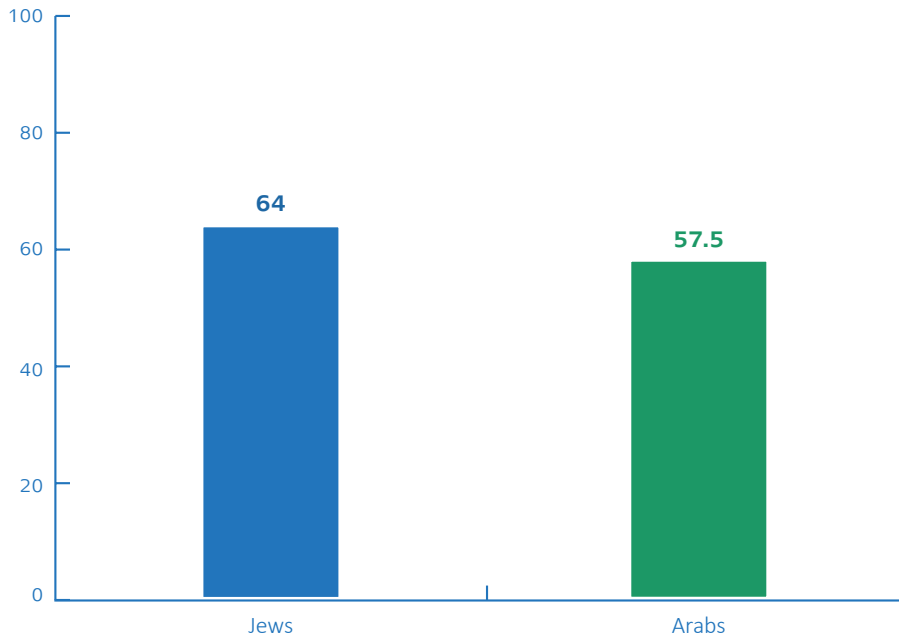
Who does **not** feel that a leader should be given such latitude? To our surprise, we did not find systematic differences on this point by political orientation, education, or religiosity—the variables that we thought would be influential here.

At the start of this chapter, we noted that in other countries the fear of an unknown future seems to play a role in adopting positions labeled as "populist." Do Israelis also feel at risk of problems in the future? In the previous chapter, we saw that most respondents were not all that certain that the state would come to their aid when adversity strikes. Can, or should, we rely on the state, or is it preferable (and possible) to depend on our own support networks?

In Israel, people are accustomed to a high degree of state involvement in the life of the individual, but in certain countries around the world, for example the United States, many advocate a lower level of involvement. We asked the interviewees if, in their opinion, Israelis should count on the state to help them out in times of trouble, or rely on their family, friends, and neighbors to lend a hand. The Jewish sample was divided on this question, whereas the Arab sample was slightly more inclined to place responsibility for the individual on the people in their social and family circles. What we were unable to determine at this stage is whether this

Relying on the state or on the people around us in times of trouble?

Question 40

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p. 208

distribution of opinions reflects disappointment with the state or, alternatively, a philosophy that places responsibility on the individual's support network, be it the community or family.

Figure 7.4 \ "People shouldn't rely on the state to help them out in times of trouble, but on their family, friends, and neighbors instead" (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
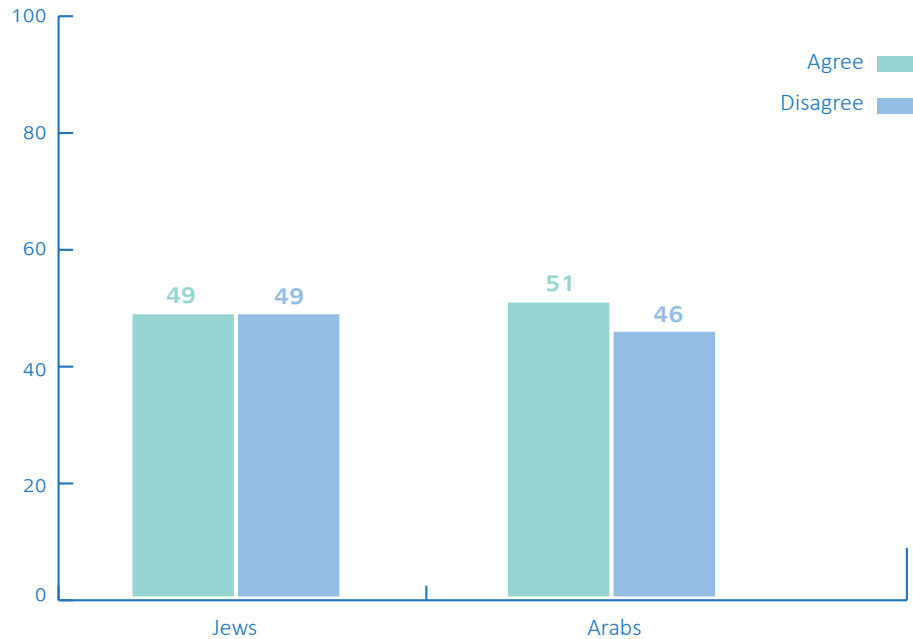
Among Haredim, some of whom are openly opposed to accepting state benefits, and most of whom rely on their communities for financial assistance, a substantial majority (62%) agreed with the statement. In the other subgroups along the spectrum of religiosity, the extent of agreement ranged from 40% to 49%. Interestingly enough, a breakdown of the Arab sample by religiosity showed that the greatest proportion of respondents who agreed with the statement was actually found among those who defined themselves as "not at all religious" (63%), compared with the traditional (52%) and very religious (46%). It is possible that the determining factor here is not religiosity but alienation from the State of Israel, which is more typical of educated, non-religious Arabs, who may not wish to accept assistance from the state due to its Jewish character or its treatment of the Arab minority. In the Jewish sample, we did not find differences when breaking down the results by political orientation or by variables other than religiosity.

So can we rely on other people to help us out in times of trouble?

This year, as in 2016, we found a small majority in the Arab sample and a large one in the Jewish sample who agree with the statement that Israelis can always rely on other Israelis to help them out in times of trouble. Among Arab respondents, the percentage was the same in both years, while among Jews it dipped slightly this year; but either way it seems that the lion's share of Israelis, both Jews and Arabs, enjoy a support network and do not feel alone in the face of life's hardships. It is safe to assume that this feeling, which is not common in many other places around the world, is the reason for Israelis' relatively high level of satisfaction with life in Israel.

Table 7.1 (%)

	Jews 2016	Jews 2017	Arabs 2016	Arabs 2017
Agree that Israelis can always rely on other Israelis in times of trouble	75	70	52	52

Nevertheless, as shown in the table below, there are differences in this assessment between those who identify with the stronger segments of society and those who locate themselves at the weaker end of the spectrum. Among Jews in both categories, a majority believe they can rely on others (though the majority in the category of stronger groups is larger). Among the Arab respondents, by contrast, we found a majority with this view only among those who align themselves with the stronger elements, apparently since those in the weaker category are doubly affected by marginalization—both because they are members of a national minority and because of their feeling of belonging to the weaker groups.

Table 7.2 (agree that Israelis can always rely on other Israelis in times of trouble; %)

	Arabs	Jews
Identify with the stronger groups in society	64.5	74
Identify with the weaker groups in society	44	59

Next, we looked at belonging to a community, whether real or virtual, to see how it affects people's sense of security.

In our efforts to gain a deeper understanding of common perceptions of belonging, we posed the question: "Do you feel part of one or more actual communities, meaning a cohesive group of people who live nearby, know each other well, share the same views about a desirable lifestyle, and help one another when needed?" Almost identical (and not especially large) majorities of both Jews and Arabs responded in the affirmative (57% and 59%, respectively). In other words, a majority of Israelis feel that they belong to a real-world community, though there are many who don't feel this way.

We broke down both samples by religiosity, and indeed found that a greater share of those who identify as more religiously observant report feeling that they belong to actual communities. We found further that the gaps between the very religious and the non-religious are quite substantial, particularly in the Jewish sample.

Table 7.3 (%)

	Religiosity	Feel part of an actual community
Total sample		57
Jews	Haredim	86
	National religious	74
	Traditional religious	55
	Traditional non-religious	49
	Secular	49
Arabs	Very religious	67
	Traditional	57
	Non-religious	47

Analyzing the responses to this question by social location showed that those in the stronger camp—Jews and Arabs alike—feel a greater sense of belonging to an actual community. But whereas in the Arab sample a majority in both categories feel that they belong to a community (stronger, 61%; weaker, 57%), in the Jewish sample slightly less than half of those in the weak camp feel that they belong to a real community (49%), as opposed to 61% in the strong group.

And what of the sense of belonging to a virtual community? After all, some believe that virtual communities will one day take the place of real ones, and in some respects, are already doing so.

We asked: "Do you feel part of one or more virtual online communities of people with common interests?" In both the Jewish and Arab samples, slightly more than a quarter answered positively.

Belonging to a virtual community

Question 56

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p. 216

Figure 7.5 \ Do you feel part of one or more virtual online communities of people with common interests? (total sample; %)

- Very much
- Somewhat
- Not so much
- Not at all
- Don't know

52
4
16
12
16
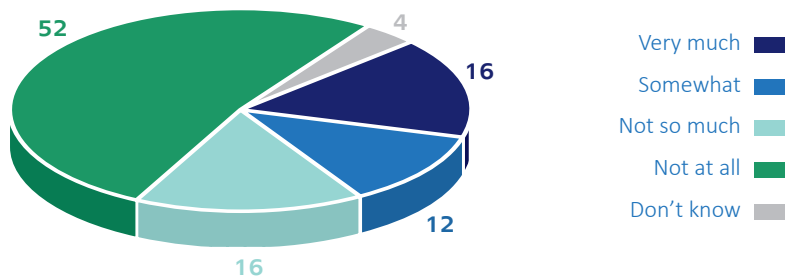
As expected, we found a difference by age among Jews and Arabs alike, with the younger age groups feeling a greater sense of belonging to virtual communities than do the older, though here too we are speaking of a minority.

Table 7.4 (%)

	Age	Feel part of a virtual community
Jews	18–34	35
	35–54	28
	55+	22
Arabs	18–34	31
	35–54	22
	55+	20

We checked if there was a connection between the sense of belonging to an actual community and to a virtual community. In all subgroups in both samples, we found an overall pattern of a lesser sense of belonging to virtual communities; yet those who were members of an actual community showed a greater tendency to belong to a virtual community as well, suggesting that they are more "community-minded" to some degree.

To summarize our findings, community membership is understood to provide people with a sense of security. It seems that the most influential factor in this regard is religiosity, and that actual communities are still more common than virtual ones. Overall, Israel (with the exception of its religious groups) is similar to other modern states, in that many citizens do not belong to community frameworks and thus are presumably more susceptible (or at least feel that they are) to the effects of structural and procedural changes in the economy and politics. We will be discussing this further below.

One of the issues at the heart of the political debate in countries where signs of populism have surfaced in recent years is that of foreign migrants from the Middle East, Africa, and other Third World locales. In many countries, there is hostility toward these migrants/refugees, based on both economic and cultural arguments. We wished to see whether such resentment exists in Israel as well.

Do foreign workers displace Israelis?

How strong is the fear/concern that foreign workers are taking away jobs from Israelis? On this question, we found a sizeable difference between Jewish and Arab respondents, most likely because the labor market for the two populations is not the same. For the most part, Jews are not in competition with foreign workers but in fact make use of their services (for example, in caring for elderly parents or in cleaning work), whereas Arabs clearly compete with foreign workers for the same jobs. It is therefore not surprising that a majority of Jews disagree with the statement that foreign workers are taking jobs away from Israelis, while in the Arab sample a considerable majority agree with this assertion.

Which of the Jewish respondents nonetheless tended to agree with the statement? We expected to find a relationship between agreement and social location and perhaps also income. But while we did find some difference between those who identified with the stronger or weaker groups, in both cases the majority **disagreed** (71% and 63%, respectively). A breakdown by income showed a majority who disagreed in all subgroups, rising in tandem with income, as follows: below-average income, 59%; average income, 69%; above-average income, 79%.

In the Arab sample, a majority in all income groups **agreed** with the statement, but the size of the majority was different: Of those with an income lower than the national average, who in all probability are more threatened by the entry of foreign workers into the labor market, more than two-thirds (68%) agreed with the statement. By contrast, only slightly more than half in the average and above-average income groups shared this view (57% and 54%, respectively).

Earlier, we mentioned that the opposition to migrants, in particular illegal ones, is also based on the perceived harm to local culture. We looked at this aspect as well.

Figure 7.6 \ "Foreign workers are taking jobs away from Israelis"
(Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
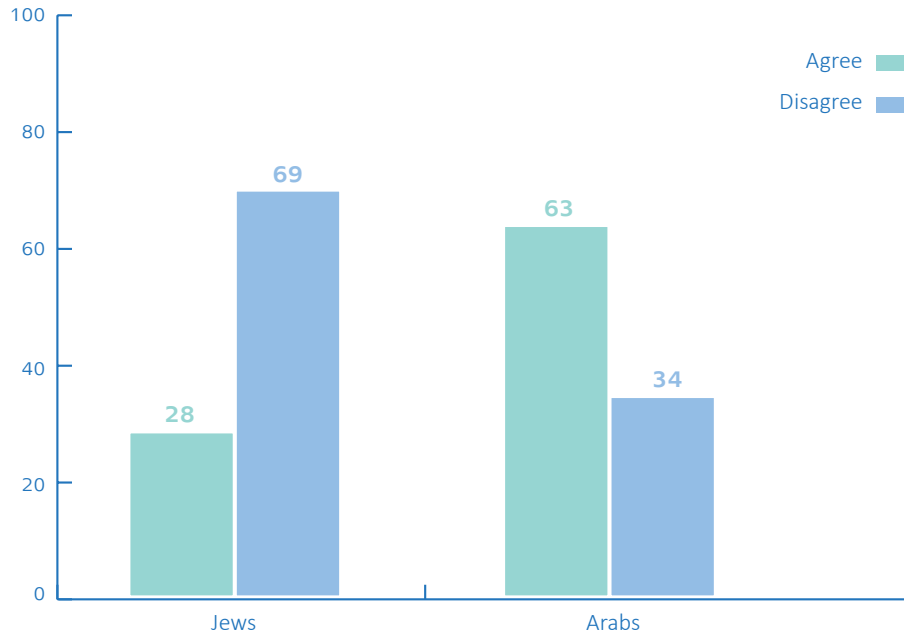
When we asked if the presence of foreigners is ruining Israeli society, a small majority in the Arab sample agreed that the refugees and illegal migrants who have come to Israel in recent years are harming the state's character. The respondents from the Jewish sample were divided on this question, but were slightly more inclined to agree.

Breaking down the responses from the Jewish sample by religiosity, we found major differences between subgroups, with the more religious groups expressing greater concern that the character of Israeli society might be harmed. The argument can of course be made that there is an overlap between religiosity, on the one hand, and income and social and economic class, on the other, and that class is the determining factor here due to different interactions with the labor market, as opposed to religious affiliation per se. However, the low level of support for the statement among secular Jews, who currently constitute the largest group in Israel and also include many who are vulnerable to food insecurity, raises the possibility of a connection between religiosity and attitudes to migrants and refugees.

Are foreigners harming the character of Israeli society?

Question 29

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Figure 7.7 \ "The refugees and illegal migrants who have come to Israel in the past few years are ruining the character of Israeli society" (agree; Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
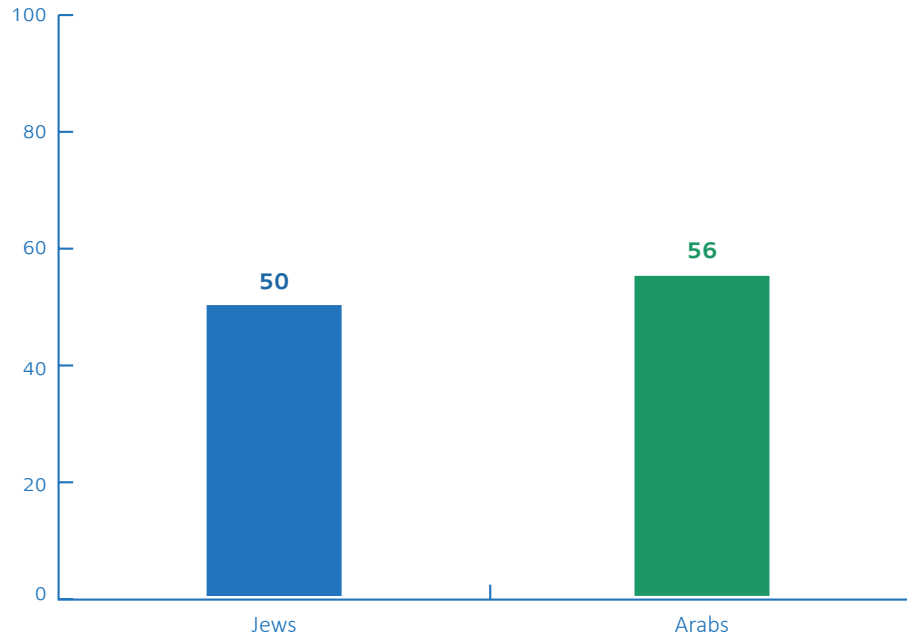
Table 7.5 (Jewish respondents; %)

	Haredim	National religious	Traditional religious	Traditional non-religious	Secular
Agree that foreigners ruin the character of Israeli society	74	71	63	58	32.5

And while we're on the subject of work, this year we revisited the question that we first posed in 2014 on the connection between hard work and financial success.

We asked: "Which of these statements do you agree with more strongly: 'In the long run, if you work hard, you'll succeed financially' or 'Hard work doesn't guarantee financial success'?" Once again this year, a majority in the Arab sample agreed with the first opinion, while a majority in the Jewish sample favored the second. In both groups, we saw a rise this year (a very steep one, in the case of the Arabs) in the share of respondents who feel that hard work ultimately leads to financial success.

Figure 7.8 \ "If you work hard, you'll succeed financially" (agree; Jewish and Arab respondents; 2014 and 2017; %)
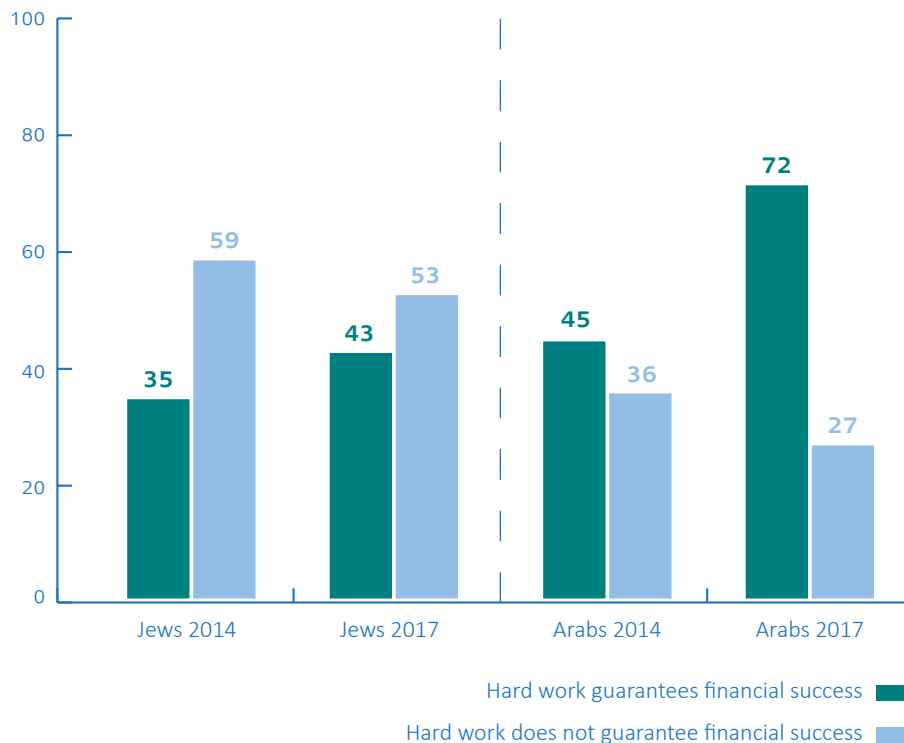
When we broke down the responses to this question by age, there were no real differences between the cohorts within each of the samples. Among the Arab respondents, a majority in all age groups see a causal relationship between hard work and success, while the opposite is true for Jews across all age levels. We did not find differences in the Arab sample by level of formal education: In all cases, a majority held that hard work brings financial success, though the majority is slightly larger among those with a full high-school education than in the two other groups. In the Jewish sample, the higher the level of education, the greater the belief that

a connection exists between hard work and financial accomplishment, although this remains a minority position (elementary and partial high school, 35%; full high school, 42%; higher education, 45%).

One of the subjects that weighs most heavily on the public in places where populism has gained momentum is fear of the future. For this reason, we explored this subject in Israel as well.

In both samples, we found a very high share of respondents who agreed with the statement: "It's harder for young people to get along in life today than it was a generation ago." Among Jews, the rate of agreement was 73%, and among Arabs, 82%.

Breaking down the responses by age, we found only negligible differences between age groups in both the Jewish and Arab samples. In other words, there is a general consensus across age groups and nationalities that young people have it harder today when it comes to managing in life. We also found that the older respondents are not more likely than the younger ones to downplay the level of difficulty facing today's younger generation in comparison with their predecessors.

Slightly larger differences came to light when analyzing the findings by respondents' assessment of their personal situation, although here too a sizeable majority in all groups agreed with the assertion. We did find that the more negatively people viewed their personal state, the more they tended to agree with the statement.

Figure 7.9 \ "It's harder for young people to get along in life today than it was a generation ago" (agree; Jewish and Arab respondents; by personal situation; %)
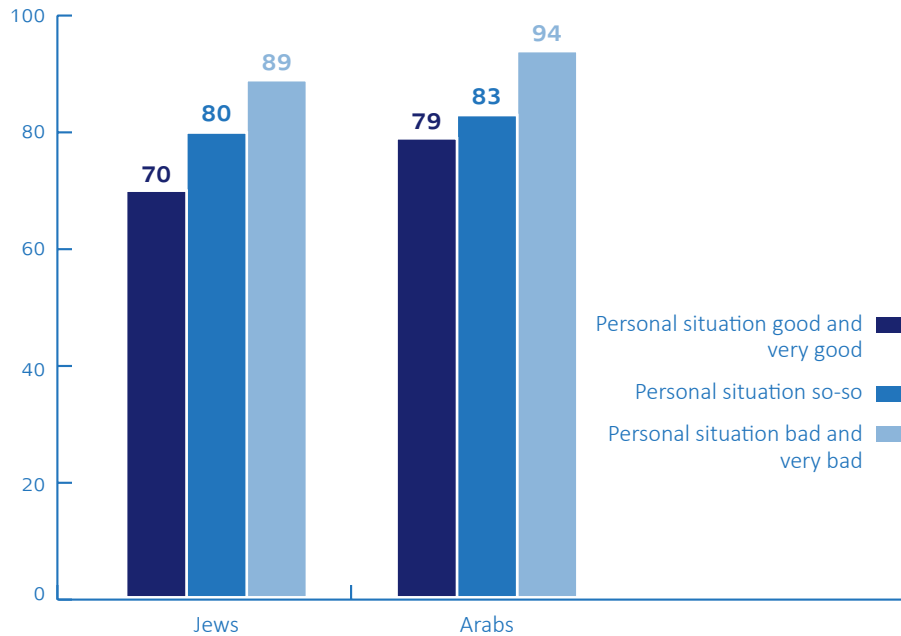
From here, we moved on to a series of questions about people's concerns, primarily in the financial realm, which have been shown to have an impact on political preferences in other countries.

In the press in general, and the financial press in particular, as well as in public discourse, the claim is often heard that incomes in Israel are not high enough to meet people's needs. For this reason, it is suggested, many people are driven into debt in the form of bank overdrafts. Accordingly, we asked: "Is your monthly income and/or that of your family sufficient to cover all your household expenses?" The responses show that a majority of the Jewish sample, and roughly half of the Arab sample, feel that their monthly income is adequate for their needs.

Does income match expenses?

Question 35

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Table 7.6 (%)

My monthly income / My family's monthly income is:	Jews	Arabs
Definitely sufficient	31.5	31
Somewhat sufficient	33	21
Not so sufficient	22	29
Not at all sufficient	12	19
Don't know	1.5	–

We broke down the responses to this question by income. As shown in the figure below, both Jewish and Arab respondents who reported below-average incomes felt that their earnings were insufficient to cover their expenses. Those with average or above-average incomes stated, for the most part, that their monthly income was enough to meet their needs.

Figure 7.10 \ Does your income cover expenses? (income suits expenses; Jewish and Arab respondents; by income level; %)
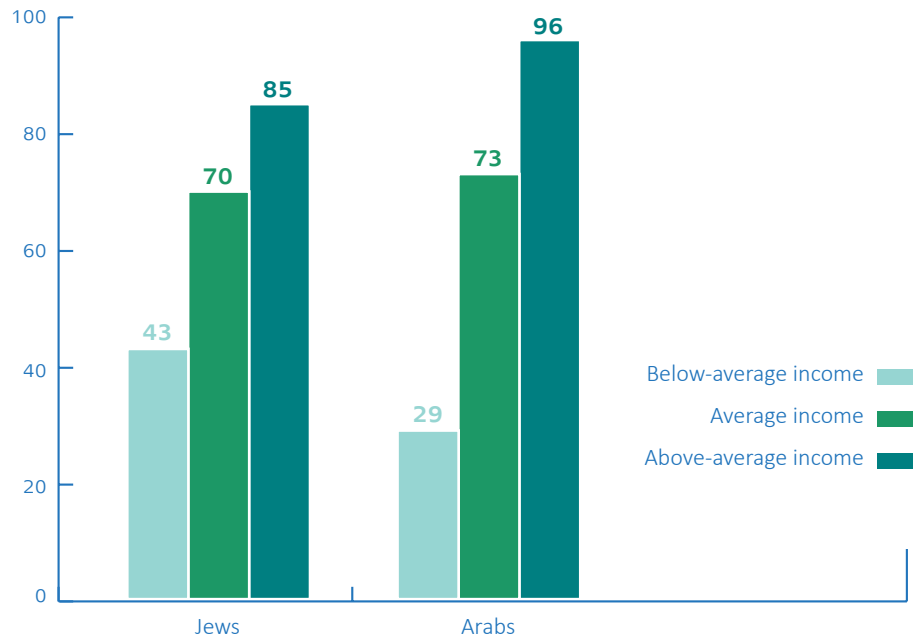
Among both Jews and Arabs, a breakdown by social location shows that those who identify with the stronger groups are in a better situation in terms of income versus expenses; however, the gap between the stronger and weaker categories is larger in the Jewish sample.

Table 7.7 (%)

Monthly income is enough to cover expenses	Jews	Arabs
Identify with stronger groups in society	**73.5**	**56**
Identify with weaker groups in society	**44**	**48**

From here we moved to financial concerns regarding the future.

We asked: "How certain do you feel that you'll be able to keep working at your present job for as long as you wish?" As in a survey we conducted for an outside body two years ago, here too we found a considerable majority in both the Jewish and Arab samples who felt certain they could continue working at their present job if they wished (Jews, 69%; Arabs, 74%). This may be a result of the tenure system at many workplaces, or the low unemployment rate, which causes many Israelis to believe that finding a new job will be easy; hence, they are not particularly worried about losing their present one.

Job security

Question 34

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We broke down the responses to this question by age, since employment patterns of young people in Israel are very different from those of the older age groups, who are more protected by tenure agreements at work. In spite of this, we did not find differences in the sense of job security between the various cohorts. By contrast, we found a substantial difference in the breakdown by social location. Those who associated themselves with the weaker groups were more concerned about whether they could continue at their present workplace in the long term.

Figure 7.11 \ Feel certain they'll be able to keep working at their present job as long as they wish (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
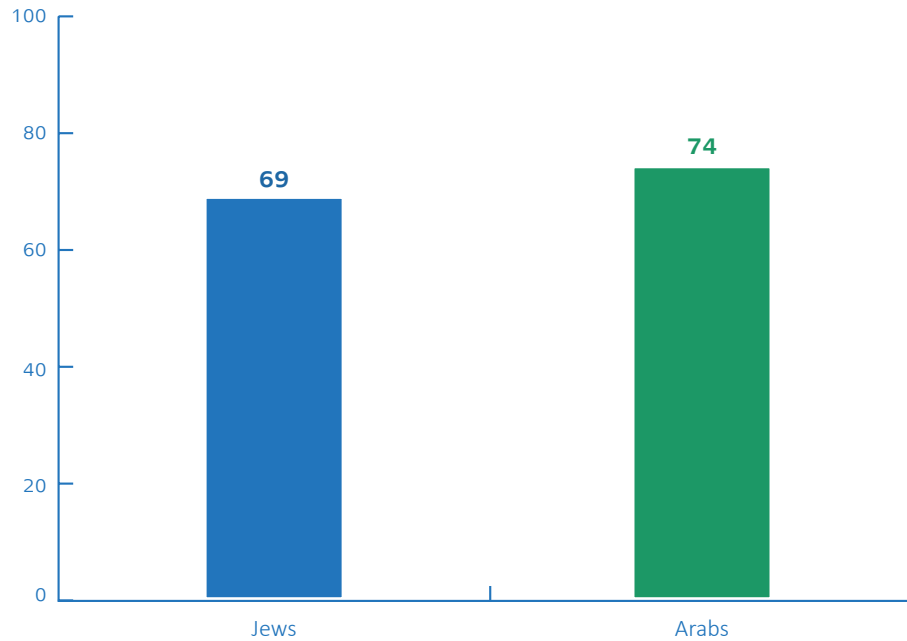
Table 7.8 (by social location; %)

	Jews: Identify with stronger groups	Jews: Identify with weaker groups	Arabs: Identify with stronger groups	Arabs: Identify with weaker groups
Not certain they'll be able to keep working at their present job for as long as they wish	25	43	16.5	30

The differences between the proportion of those concerned with losing their job in the stronger versus the weaker groups apparently stem from the fact that more respondents who associate themselves with the latter work in manual labor, family farms, or other family businesses, in which the future is less certain. In the stronger groups in both populations, the share who feel confident that they will be able to hold onto their jobs in the long term is almost double that in the weaker groups.

A breakdown by education did not yield real differences in the Jewish sample; but in the Arab sample, the share who are worried about losing their current job was much higher among those with elementary or partial high-school education (47%) than those with full high-school (24%) or higher education (19%).

We wished to know if those who feel part of a real-world community are less concerned that they will be unable to stay at their present job than those who do not feel they belong. Among Arabs, a sense of community belonging greatly lowers the level of concern: Of the respondents who stated that they belong to a real-world community, only 18% expressed concern that they would be unable to keep working at their current job, as opposed to 36% of those who do not belong to a community. Among Jews, the difference was smaller, but there was still an association: Of the respondents who feel that they belong to a community, 27.5% are concerned that they may lose their jobs, as compared with 31% of those who do not belong to any real-world community.

We attempted to see whether there is a link between job security and respondents' opinions on whether it's better to vote for leaders and parties that offer speedy and effective solutions, even if these are not consistent with democratic principles. In the Arab sample, we found such an association: Among those who are uncertain of their ability to hold onto their job, a majority (56%) favored voting for leaders and parties with quick and effective solutions, even if these are not in keeping with democratic ideals, as opposed to a minority of 45% who felt this way among those who do feel secure in their jobs. In the Jewish sample as well, the association between the two was significant.

In Israel, parents who support their children financially to quite an advanced age has become something of a norm. For this reason, the inability to offer support weighs heavily on many parents. Accordingly, we asked: "To what extent are you concerned that you won't be able to support your children financially in the future?" It emerges that this worry is very widespread, among both Jews and Arabs. In the Arab sample, whether due to their financial situation or more binding norms of support, more parents are worried about this issue (Jews, 58%; Arabs, 69%).

Supporting children financially in the future

Question 37.1

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Figure 7.12 \ Degree of concern about inability to financially support children in future (total sample; %)

- 34 Very concerned
- 26 Somewhat concerned
- 22 Not so concerned
- 16 Not at all concerned
- 2 Don't know

We broke down the responses by social location and income. As expected, those who aligned themselves with the stronger groups were less worried than those who identified with the weaker groups, and those whose income was above average showed less concern than did those who were earning average or below-average incomes. Interestingly enough, high-income earners in the Jewish sample were more worried on this score than were Arab respondents in the same income group.

Table 7.9 (concerned they won't be able to support their children financially in future; %)

	Identify with stronger groups	Identify with weaker groups	Below-average income	Average income	Above-average income
Jews	55	68	61	67	52
Arabs	63	75.5	77	67	46

How worried are Israelis that they themselves may be unable to live decently in their old age? Among both Jews and Arabs, the majority expressed concern about such a scenario (55% and 63%, respectively). Breaking down the responses by income and social location, we found a majority of Arabs in all subgroups who are concerned (as shown in the figure below). A similar pattern emerged among Jews as well, with the exception of those with an above-average income.

Figure 7.13 \ Living decently in old age (concerned; Jewish and Arab respondents; by income and social location; %)
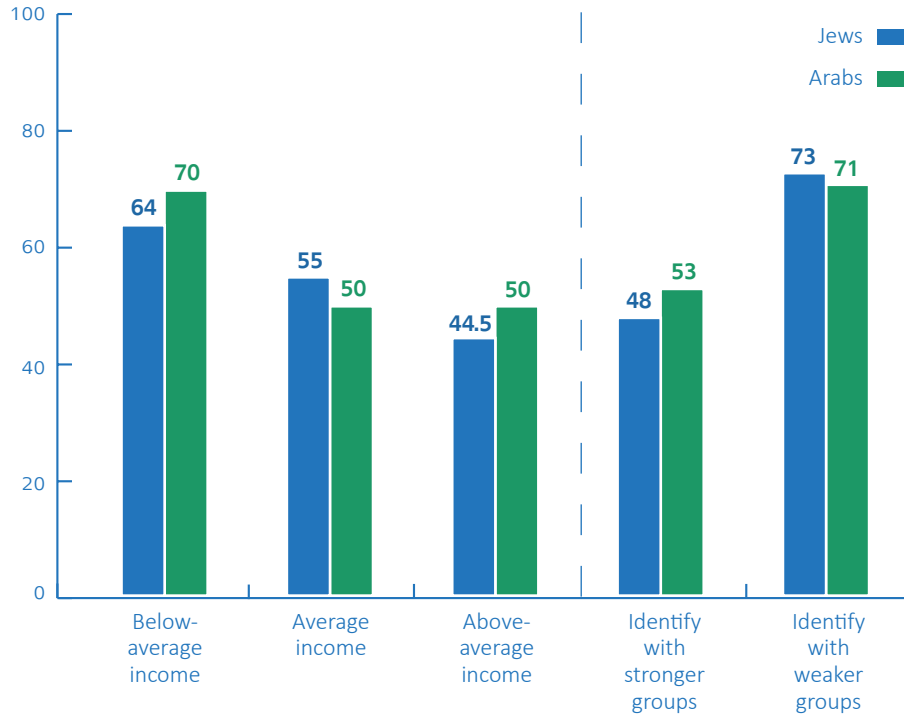
Chapter 8 \ Democracy and the Media

In this chapter, we discuss the following topics:

- Sources of political information
- Patterns of media consumption
- Media credibility
- Restrictions on freedom of expression

The press is often referred to as "the watchdog of democracy." In this role, it is expected to expose ideological and functional flaws in democratic regimes without fear of government sanctions and based on a profound commitment to the journalistic ethos and ethical principles. As a result of the growing number and variety of news outlets, including digital media, and the decline in consumption of paid content, media budgets have been cut, and individuals without the proper training have taken on the role of journalists. Matters have reached the point where the media's ability to play their traditional role as guardians has been eroded. Moreover, numerous studies have shown that extraprofessional considerations, such as journalists' sense of obligation to boost national morale, not to mention improper business-government-media ties, often damage not only the functioning of the media but its public standing. Attacks on the media by political leaders who are unhappy with their political agenda, and the introduction into public discourse of such terms as "fake news" and "alternative facts," add to the widespread confusion and suspicion surrounding media credibility even as they strengthen the resolve of many journalists to fulfill their original professional role.

In earlier surveys, we touched briefly on the subject of the media from various perspectives, in particular that of credibility. This year, we devoted slightly greater attention to media issues.

We began by examining patterns of media consumption.

Primary source of information on political matters

Question 39

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We asked: "Where do you get most of your information on political issues?" As shown in the figure below, television was the primary source cited in both the Jewish and Arab samples. The Jewish respondents reported greater reliance on print media, while the Arabs showed a slight preference for digital media.

Figure 8.1 \ Where do you get most of your information on political issues? (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
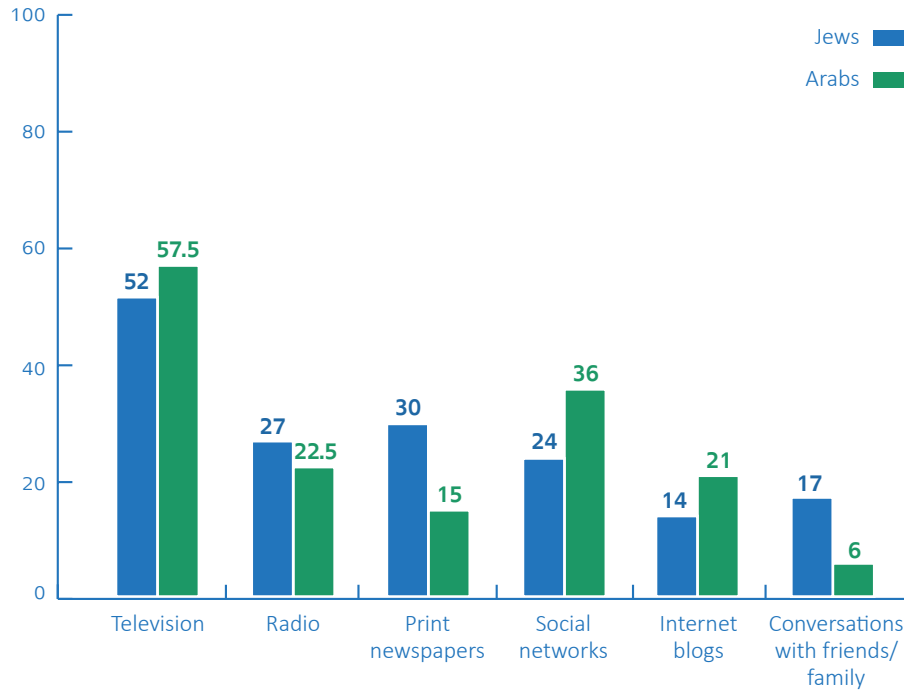
Note: Since respondents were allowed to give more than one response to this question, the percentages add up to more than 100%.

A breakdown of patterns of media consumption in the Jewish sample by political orientation shows that the heaviest consumers of political information from television are those who identify with the Center (65%), followed by those on the Right (46%). Consumers of print media were found largely on the Left (42%), with the Right in second place. Among both Jews and Arabs, the older age groups tend to rely more strongly on television. The younger respondents rely on digital media more than their elders do, but for the moment, television is still their most popular source of political information, to a greater degree than social media or blogs.

We sought to examine the extent of Internet use as a source of information about politicians, and the credibility of the web as compared with traditional forms of media.

We asked: "Do you follow the Internet sites of certain politicians or political parties on a regular basis?" As shown in the figure below, only a small percentage of our respondents regularly visit political websites of the type we referred to. This substantiates the previous finding that the Internet is still not the primary supplier of political information.

Figure 8.2 \ Do you follow the Internet sites of certain politicians or political parties on a regular basis? (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
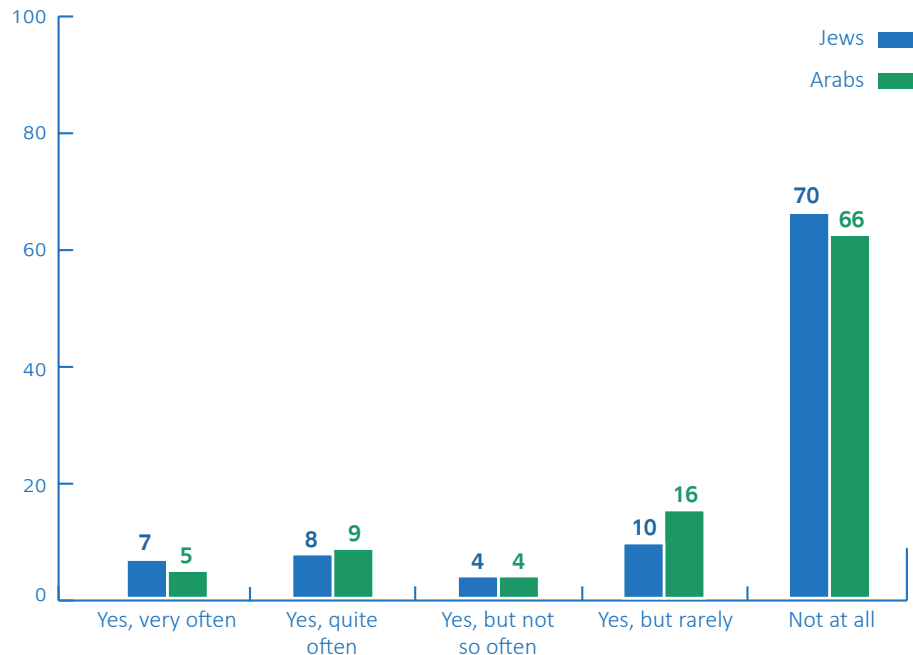
Given the negligible number of respondents who follow such websites on a regular basis, there was no reason to break down the responses by political orientation, age, or other subgroups.

In the discussion of public trust in institutions, we saw that the media ranked very low this year (as in the past). As noted earlier, this year only 18% of Arabs and 30% of Jews stated that they trust the media "quite a lot" or "very much." We wished to know which type of media they view as more credible.

We asked for people's responses to the statement: "I believe what I read on social media more than what is said on TV, radio, or in the newspapers." The answers show that most of the general public in Israel disagree with it, meaning that a majority currently place more faith in what is said in the traditional media than in social media, or consider them equally credible.

Figure 8.3 \ "I believe what I read on social media more than what is said on TV, radio, or in the newspapers" (total sample; %)
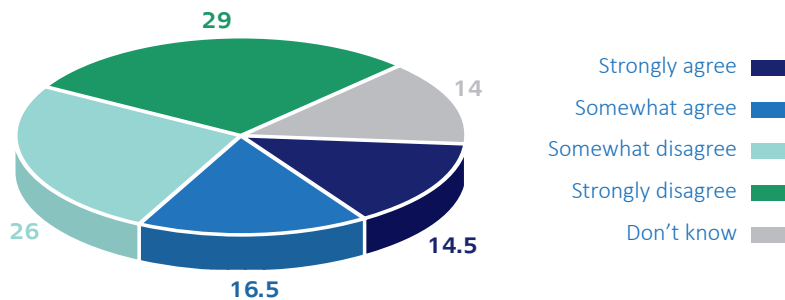
Breaking down the responses by age, we found that in the Arab sample a majority in all age groups disagree with the statement; however, the size of the majority differs between cohorts, with no consistent pattern. Among the Jewish respondents, a majority likewise disagreed with the statement in the older age groups, but not the youngest one.

Table 8.1 (%)

Don't believe social media more than traditional media	18–34	35–54	55+
Arabs	70	57	80
Jews	48	57	56

Earlier, we showed that the degree of trust in the media continues to be low. Perhaps this can be explained by their coverage of events in Israel. We therefore wished to know whether our respondents feel that the media present things as they are, or describe the country's situation as much worse than it really is (as stated, a majority of the Israeli public hold that the situation is not terrible, and is even good). Based on our findings, a majority in both the Jewish and Arab samples (56% and 54%, respectively) agree with the statement that the Israeli media portray the country as being in far more dire straits than it actually is. In other words, the media are perceived as unreliable.

Figure 8.4 \ "The Israeli media portray the situation here as much worse than it really is" (Jewish and Arab respondents; %)
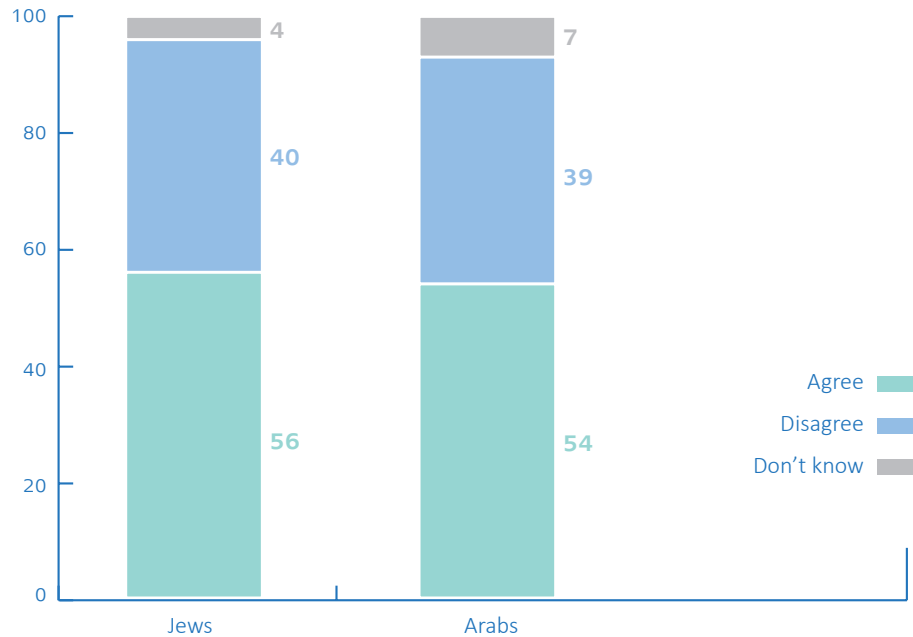
Who, then, does **not** agree that the media paint an overly gloomy picture of the state of the nation? Among Jewish respondents, 67% on the Left and 51% from the Center disagree with this statement (as opposed to only 23% of those who identify with the Right). A breakdown of the Jewish respondents by religiosity shows that only among secular Jews is there a plurality of 50% who disagree. In the other religious subgroups, the most frequent response is agreement with the statement.

We broke down the responses to this question by interviewees' assessments of Israel's overall situation. As shown in the table below, in the Arab sample there is no systematic pattern of responses for this variable. But in the Jewish sample, the share who feel that the media exaggerate Israel's problems is much greater among those who characterize the country's situation as "good" or "very good" than among those who define it as "so-so," "bad," or "very bad."

Table 8.2 (agree that media portray Israel's situation as worse than it is; Jewish and Arab respondents; %)

Define Israel's overall situation as:	Jews	Arabs
Very good	78	64
Good	66	48
So-so	46	49
Bad	42	65
Very bad	39	58

We also found a strong association between the sense that the media describe the country's situation as bleaker than it really is and lack of trust in the media in general. Thus, among those who feel that the media do not portray Israel's situation accurately, a large majority (81%) expressed a lack of trust in the media, while among those hold the opposite view, the extent of mistrust was slightly more than half (56%).

We cross-tabulated those who agree that the media present the situation as worse than it is with those who agree that there are people in Israel who take advantage of freedom of expression to harm the state. Of those who support the second statement, 63% feel that the media overstate Israel's problems, compared with 38% among those who do not agree that freedom of expression is abused in Israel. Stated otherwise, a sizeable share of the Israeli public (roughly 45%) are bothered by the country's "excessive" freedom of expression.

Based on the above, we might have expected that the public would favor imposing government sanctions on media outlets that are sharply critical of the state, but this was not the case.

Roughly three-quarters (74%) of the Jewish sample, and about the same share of the Arab sample (76%) disagreed with the statement that "there should be a law allowing the closure of media outlets that criticize government policy very harshly."

Law closing down media outlets that harshly criticize government policy?

Question 25

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Figure 8.5 \ "There should be a law allowing the closure of media outlets that criticize government policy very harshly" (total sample; %)
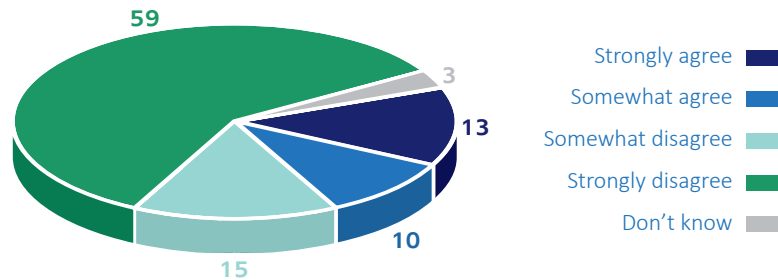
We examined which subgroups nonetheless **agreed** with the statement that there is a need for such a law. A breakdown of responses in the Jewish sample by political orientation yielded sizeable differences, though only a minority in all the camps support enacting legislation against harsh media criticism of government policy: on the Right, 38% agreed that such a law is necessary; in the Center, 12%; and on the Left, only 4%.

Among Jewish respondents, we found a negative association with education, such that the higher the level of schooling, the lesser the degree of support for such a law: Of those with elementary and partial high-school education, 41% were in favor, compared with 31.5% of those who completed high school, and 16% of those with higher education. In the Arab sample, no relationship was found between level of education and respondents' opinions on this question.

The broad-based opposition to a law that would allow the closure of media outlets severely critical of the government should be viewed in concert with the equally sweeping disagreement with the claim that if the government funds public broadcasting, it should have an influence over its content.

Funding of public broadcasting, and influence over content

Question 41

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Minister of Culture and Sport Miri Regev has stated on more than one occasion that if the government provides funding for public broadcasting, it should also have some influence over program content. It turns out that the public does not side with this position. Two-thirds of both the Jewish and Arab samples disagree that such funding should be linked to government involvement in content.

Figure 8.6 \ "If the government funds public broadcasting, it should also have an influence over the content that's broadcast" (total sample; %)
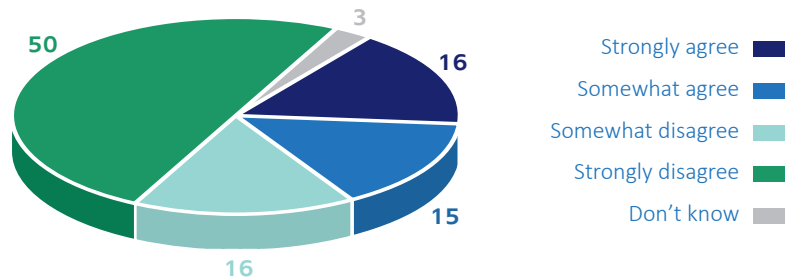
Who, then, believes that there **should** be a link between government funding of broadcasting and influence over its content? Breaking down the responses in the Jewish sample by political orientation, we found substantial differences: 47% of those on the Right, 20% from the Center, and 6% on the Left feel that public funding should open the door to government influence over the content of public broadcasting.

Our conclusion from the findings presented in this chapter is that the Israeli public does not view the media as the watchdog of democracy. Furthermore, although Israelis depend on the media (mainly in traditional formats such as print and television) as their primary source of political information, they feel that what is reported there does not necessarily reflect the absolute truth. Nonetheless, a majority of the Israeli public are unwilling to allow the government to place restrictions on the media, whether because of their deep distrust of the country's political institutions, or because—despite their criticisms—they recognize the importance of a free press in a democratic country.

Appendices

Appendix 1
Israeli Democracy: An International Comparison

This year's international comparison was based on 13 indicators, assessing Israel's performance in three areas: democratic rights and freedoms, the democratic process, and governance. As noted, the indicators were examined from two perspectives: one, Israel's ranking this year vis-à-vis other countries; and two, Israel's scores in 2017 relative to those in previous years.

Table A-1.1 \ International Indicators

	Indicator	Institution and Publication
Democratic rights and freedoms	Political rights Freedom in the World	Freedom House
	Civil liberties Freedom in the World	Freedom House
	Freedom of the press Freedom in the World	Freedom House
	Civil liberties Democracy Index	The Economist Intelligence Unit
	Voice and accountability Worldwide Governance Indicators	The World Bank
Democratic process	Political participation Democracy Index	The Economist Intelligence Unit
	Egalitarian democracy Egalitarian Component Index	V-Dem Project
	Participatory democracy Participatory Component Index	V-Dem Project
	Deliberative democracy Deliberative Component Index	V-Dem Project
	Democratic political culture Democracy Index	The Economist Intelligence Unit

➤

	Indicator	Institution and Publication
Governance	Functioning of government Democracy Index	The Economist Intelligence Unit
	Rule of law Worldwide Governance Indicators	The World Bank
	Perception of corruption Corruption Perceptions Index	Transparency International

Countries studied and method of comparison

Each institution compiled its own list of countries for assessment, with the number of countries ranging from 167 to 209. For this reason, the comparison between Israel and the other countries is presented in percentile form rather than in absolute numbers. A high percentile indicates a good ranking in terms of quality of democracy, and a low percentile, a poor one.

It is important to note that a change in a particular country's ranking in a given year does not necessarily correspond with a change in that country's score. This is because a country can receive the same score for two or more consecutive years but can rise or fall in its placement relative to other countries. In other words, if the scores of other countries improve, a given country can drop in its comparative ranking even if its score remains unchanged, and vice versa: if many other countries experience a decline in their scores, a country can rise in the rankings even if its democratic performance has not improved.

Another important comment: When we cite the indicators for a certain year, we are referring to the year in which they were published, though in most cases these are based on data from the previous year. This being the case, the "2017 indicators" generally reflect performance in 2016. Correspondingly, the 2016 indicators reflect 2015 figures, and so on.

Israel's comparative ranking in 2017

In six of the indicators, Israel's ranking improved over last year, and in seven indicators it remained the same.

Table A-1.2 \ Israel's ranking in the 2017 indicators compared with other countries

Indicator	2017 ranking	2017 percentile	2016 ranking	2016 percentile	Change
Political rights	**49–57** (out of 195)	**71–75**	**53–56** (out of 195)	**71–73**	=
Civil liberties	**77–80** (out of 195)	**59–61**	**78–79** (out of 195)	**59–60**	=
Freedom of the press	**65** (out of 199)	**67–68**	**65** (out of 199)	**67**	=
Civil liberties	**85–90** (out of 167**)**	**46–49**	**88–90** (out of 167)	**46–47**	=
Voice and accountability	**59** (out of 204)	**71**	**61** (out of 204)	**70**	︿
Political participation	**2–4** (out of 167)	**98–99**	**2–5** (out of 167)	**97–99**	=
Egalitarian democracy	**44** (out of 174)	**75**	**45** (out of 174)	**74**	︿
Participatory democracy	**8** (out of 174)	**95**	**10** (out of 174)	**94**	︿
Deliberative democracy	**37** (out of 174)	**79**	**36** (out of 174)	**79**	=
Democratic political culture	**19–22** (out of 167)	**85–89**	**20–26** (out of 167)	**84–88**	=
Functioning of government	**27–29** (out of 167)	**83–84**	**31–42** (out of 167)	**75–81**	︿
Rule of law	**33** (out of 209)	**84**	**36** (out of 209)	**83**	︿
Perception of corruption	**28** (out of 176)	**84**	**32–34** (out of 168)	**80–81**	︿

︿   improvement in Israel's ranking compared with 2016

=   no change in Israel's ranking compared with 2016

International indicators: description and sources

The *Freedom in the World* report, published annually since 1972, is produced by the longstanding US-based organization, Freedom House. It presents scores on a variety of political rights and civil liberties for most of the world's countries. The data for our comparative chapter were drawn from *Freedom in the World 2017*.

The freedom of the press indicator, which has been published since 1980, was also developed by Freedom House. It measures press freedom in most countries around the world. Here too, we rely on data from *Freedom in the World 2017* for our comparative chapter.

Each year, the Economist Intelligence Unit (a division of *The Economist*) publishes the *Democracy Index*, assessing the level of democracy in 167 countries around the world. The Index comprises five categories: electoral process, functioning of government, political participation, democratic political culture, and civil liberties. The authors state that they intentionally make use of more comprehensive and rigorous definitions of democracy than those employed by Freedom House, resulting in a greater number of countries classified as "flawed democracies." In the comparative chapter, we rely on data published in *Democracy Index 2016: Revenge of the "Deplorables"* and present Israel's scores in four categories: civil liberties, political participation, democratic political culture, and functioning of government.

The World Bank publishes annual comparative data on most of the world's countries. Its *Worldwide Governance Indicators* examine six aspects of governance: voice and accountability, political stability and lack of violence/terrorism, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption. This year, we present data on two of these parameters: voice and accountability, and rule of law. The most recent figures were published on the World Bank site in September 2016.

The organization globally acknowledged as leading the fight against corruption in all forms is Transparency International. Its Corruption Perceptions Index is a composite index drawing on 12 international surveys from a variety of independent institutions specializing in governance and business climate analysis. For our comparative chapter, we used the data reported in *Corruption Perceptions Index 2016*.

The new and detailed democracy indicators produced by the V-Dem (Varieties of Democracy) Project include assessments of the quality of democracy around the world, with a focus on respect for liberal values; electoral representation; equality; participation; and deliberation. In our report, we cite figures on the egalitarian, participatory, and deliberative aspects of democracy, based on *Democracy at Dusk? V-Dem Annual Report 2017*.

Appendix 2

Questionnaire and Distribution of Responses
(Total Sample, Jews and Arabs; %)*

1. How would you characterize Israel's overall situation today?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Very good	15.1	15.0	15.6
Good	32.7	33.9	26.3
So-so	32.9	32.9	33.1
Bad	9.5	8.9	12.5
Very bad	7.9	7.2	11.9
Don't know / decline to respond	1.9	2.1	0.6
Total	100	100	100

2. And what about your personal situation?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Very good	31.2	32.6	23.1
Good	42.3	44.0	33.1
So-so	20.2	17.8	33.1
Bad	2.6	2.4	3.8
Very bad	2.6	1.9	6.9
Don't know / decline to respond	1.1	1.3	--
Total	100	100	100

* Throughout the survey, this response was recorded if the respondent replied "I don't know," or was unwilling to select one of the options offered. In certain cases, this value was rounded up by 0.1% in order to bring the total to 100%.

3. People understand the term "democratic state" in different ways. What does it mean to you, in one or two words? (open-ended question; primary meaning)

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Freedom (in general; or freedom to choose, *laissez faire*)	23.0	23.1	22.5
Freedom of expression and opinion	22.9	22.7	24.4
Mechanisms and institutions (separation of powers; constitution)	5.6	6.1	2.5
Rule of the people and government responsiveness; majority rule	16.4	19.3	0.6
Equality	13.6	11.2	26.3
Pluralism and concern for minorities	4.6	5.0	2.5
Human and civil rights; dignity	3.8	2.7	10.0
Justice	0.4	0.2	1.3
Negation of democracy; anti-democratic views	1.4	1.5	0.6
Don't know / decline to answer / unclear response	8.3	8.2	9.3
Total	100	100	100

4. In your opinion, how well is the government handling the country's major problems?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Very well	4.9	4.9	5.0
Quite well	28.1	27.8	30.0
Not so well	33.6	33.0	36.9
Not at all well	30.7	31.5	26.3
Don't know / decline to respond	2.7	2.8	1.8
Total	100	100	100

5. In general, are you optimistic or pessimistic about Israel's future?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Very optimistic	24.5	26.5	13.8
Quite optimistic	43.3	44.6	36.3
Quite pessimistic	20.1	18.3	30.0
Very pessimistic	9.2	8.0	15.6
Don't know / decline to respond	2.9	2.6	4.3
Total	100	100	100

6. To what extent are you and your friends able to influence government policy?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Very much	4.8	5.2	2.5
Quite a lot	14.5	16.1	5.6
Not so much	43.1	44.7	34.4
Not at all	34.7	31.1	53.8
Don't know / decline to respond	2.9	2.9	3.7
Total	100	100	100

7-15. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

7. On the whole, most Knesset members work hard and are doing a good job.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly disagree	26.9	25.8	32.5
Somewhat disagree	40.8	41.4	37.5
Somewhat agree	24.5	24.9	22.5
Strongly agree	4.9	5.0	4.4
Don't know / decline to respond	2.9	2.9	3.1
Total	100	100	100

8. Human and civil rights organizations like the Association for Civil Rights (ACRI) and B'Tselem cause damage to the state.
(For Arab respondents: also Adalah)

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly disagree	24.3	18.3	56.9
Somewhat disagree	17.1	16.6	20.0
Somewhat agree	16.2	17.6	8.8
Strongly agree	35.6	41.7	3.1
Don't know / decline to respond	6.8	5.8	11.2
Total	100	100	100

9. Israel is a good place to live.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly disagree	4.4	3.4	10.0
Somewhat disagree	10.8	9.7	16.9
Somewhat agree	39.7	40.2	37.5
Strongly agree	44.4	46.1	35.6
Don't know / decline to respond	0.7	0.6	–
Total	100	100	100

10. To handle Israel's unique problems, there is a need for a strong leader who is not swayed by the Knesset, the media or public opinion.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly disagree	36.0	38.3	23.8
Somewhat disagree	17.2	18.2	11.9
Somewhat agree	21.3	20.5	25.6
Strongly agree	23.3	21.5	33.1
Don't know / decline to respond	2.2	1.5	5.6
Total	100	100	100

11. Foreign workers are taking jobs away from Israelis.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly disagree	34.7	37.8	17.5
Somewhat disagree	29.0	31.3	16.9
Somewhat agree	13.5	13.0	16.3
Strongly agree	20.1	15.3	46.3
Don't know / decline to respond	2.7	2.6	3.0
Total	100	100	100

12. Israel used to be much more democratic than it is today.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly disagree	29.6	31.1	21.3
Somewhat disagree	22.1	23.3	15.6
Somewhat agree	19.3	19.6	18.1
Strongly agree	22.2	19.7	35.6
Don't know / decline to respond	6.8	6.3	9.4
Total	100	100	100

13. I believe what I read on social media more than what is said on TV, radio, or in the newspapers.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly disagree	29.4	27.7	38.8
Somewhat disagree	26.2	25.9	27.5
Somewhat agree	16.5	16.1	18.8
Strongly agree	14.5	15.4	9.4
Don't know / decline to respond	13.4	14.9	5.5
Total	100	100	100

14. There are people in Israel who take advantage of freedom of expression to harm the state.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly disagree	12.8	11.6	19.4
Somewhat disagree	13.7	13.0	17.5
Somewhat agree	26.8	26.4	28.8
Strongly agree	44.1	47.6	25.6
Don't know / decline to respond	2.6	1.4	8.7
Total	100	100	100

15. It's harder for young people to get along in life today than it was a generation ago.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly disagree	9.2	8.7	11.9
Somewhat disagree	14.9	16.7	5.6
Somewhat agree	23.5	23.4	24.4
Strongly agree	50.6	49.3	57.5
Don't know / decline to respond	1.8	1.9	0.6
Total	100	100	100

16.1 People understand the term "Jewish state" in different ways. What does it mean to you, in one or two words? (open-ended question; primary meaning; Jewish respondents)

	Jews
National connotation	46.6
Religious connotation	30.2
Democracy and tolerance	9.5
Negative connotation	3.9
Don't know / decline to respond	9.8
Total	100

16.2 People understand the term "Jewish state" in different ways. What does it mean to you, in one or two words? (open-ended question; primary meaning; Arab respondents)

	Arabs
Positive connotation	8.1
Feeling that state belongs only to the Jews	26.3
Undemocratic	18.1
Racist	29.4
Don't know / decline to respond	18.1
Total	100

17. To what extent do you trust each of the following individuals or institutions?

Total sample

	Not at all	Not so much	Quite a lot	Very much	Don't know / decline to respond	Total
17.1 The media	24.7	45.9	23.4	4.5	1.5	100
17.2 The Supreme Court	15.6	24.6	33.0	23.4	3.4	100
17.3 The police	17.0	41.0	32.2	7.8	2.0	100
17.4 The President of Israel	13.1	15.6	34.2	31.1	6.0	100
17.5 The Knesset	21.3	50.6	22.1	3.7	2.3	100
17.6 The IDF	6.1	10.6	32.5	48.4	2.4	100
17.7 The government	28.5	41.6	22.7	6.2	1.0	100
17.8 The political parties	29.7	49.0	12.9	2.4	6.0	100
17.9 Chief Rabbinate (Jewish respondents); Shari'a court (Muslim and Druze respondents); Canonical court/church law (Christian respondents)	38.4	28.9	17.2	9.2	6.3	100
17.10 The attorney general	17.0	31.2	32.4	9.6	9.8	100

Jews

	Not at all	Not so much	Quite a lot	Very much	Don't know / decline to respond	Total
17.1 The media	24.2	44.3	25.0	4.7	1.8	100
17.2 The Supreme Court	16.8	23.7	32.3	24.7	2.5	100
17.3 The police	14.0	41.9	34.5	7.5	2.1	100
17.4 The President of Israel	9.4	14.2	36.2	34.8	5.4	100
17.5 The Knesset	18.5	52.5	23.6	3.5	1.9	100
17.6 The IDF	2.1	8.7	34.6	53.8	0.8	100
17.7 The government	26.0	43.2	24.4	5.6	0.8	100
17.8 The political parties	27.3	51.0	13.0	2.2	6.5	100
17.9 The Chief Rabbinate	44.3	30.4	14.2	6.1	5.0	100
17.10 The attorney general	16.2	31.6	34.6	9.5	8.1	100

Arabs

	Not at all	Not so much	Quite a lot	Very much	Don't know / decline to respond	Total
17.1 The media	27.5	54.4	15.0	3.1	—	100
17.2 The Supreme Court	9.4	29.4	36.9	16.9	7.4	100
17.3 The police	33.1	36.3	20.0	9.4	1.2	100
17.4 The President of Israel	33.1	23.1	23.1	10.6	10.1	100
17.5 The Knesset	36.3	40.0	13.8	5.0	4.9	100
17.6 The IDF	27.5	21.3	21.3	19.4	10.5	100
17.7 The government	41.9	33.1	13.1	9.4	2.5	100
17.8 The political parties	42.5	38.1	12.5	3.8	3.1	100
17.9 Shari'a court (Muslims and Druze respondents); Canonical court (Christian respondents)	6.3	20.6	33.1	25.6	14.4	100
17.10 The attorney general	21.3	28.8	20.6	10.0	19.3	100

18. Israel is defined as a Jewish and democratic state. Do you feel there is a good balance today between the Jewish and the democratic components?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
There is a good balance between the two components	26.7	28.6	16.3
The Jewish component is too dominant	46.6	41.6	73.8
The democratic component is too dominant	20.1	22.7	6.3
Don't know / decline to respond	6.6	7.1	3.6
Total	100	100	100

19. (Jewish respondents) **Which component should be the dominant one, in your opinion?**

	Jews
The Jewish	22.7
The democratic	32.4
Both equally	43.2
Don't know / decline to respond	1.7
Total	100

20. Is there a political party in Israel today that truly represents your views?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Yes, there is	46.9	49.7	31.9
No, there is not	50.3	47.5	65.6
Don't know / decline to respond	2.8	2.8	2.5
Total	100	100	100

21. If elections were to be held soon, would you vote again for the same party you voted for in the last elections (in 2015), or would you vote for a different party?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
I am certain I would vote for the same party	40.2	42.1	30.0
I think I would vote for the same party	14.0	14.8	9.4
I think I would vote for a different party	11.9	12.4	9.4
I am certain I would vote for a different party	16.4	16.1	18.1
I didn't vote in the last elections (in 2015)*	7.1	4.5	21.3
Don't know / decline to respond	10.4	10.1	11.8
Total	100	100	100

*   This option was not read out to interviewees, but was recorded when given in response to the question.

22. Societies throughout the world are divided into stronger and weaker groups. Which group in Israeli society do you feel you belong to?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strong group	21.4	22.1	17.5
Quite strong group	39.9	43.4	21.3
Quite weak group	18.0	15.5	31.3
Weak group	12.6	10.3	25.0
Don't know / decline to respond	8.1	8.7	4.9
Total	100	100	100

23. If you could receive American citizenship, or that of any other Western country, would you prefer to live there or to remain in Israel?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
I would prefer to live there	15.2	14.7	18.1
I would prefer to remain in Israel	80.7	80.6	81.3
Don't know / decline to respond	4.1	4.7	0.6
Total	100	100	100

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

24. Israel is not a true democracy because a few wealthy individuals influence the government to make decisions that benefit them and harm the average citizen.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	28.7	25.9	43.8
Somewhat agree	28.9	29.9	23.8
Somewhat disagree	21.8	23.5	12.5
Strongly disagree	18.8	19.2	16.9
Don't know / decline to respond	1.8	1.5	3.0
Total	100	100	100

25. There should be a law allowing the closure of media outlets that criticize government policy very harshly.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	12.8	13.2	10.6
Somewhat agree	10.4	10.6	9.4
Somewhat disagree	15.4	16.1	11.9
Strongly disagree	58.8	57.9	63.8
Don't know / decline to respond	2.6	2.2	4.3
Total	100	100	100

26. Citizens of Israel can always count on the state to help them in times of trouble.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	19.5	17.7	29.4
Somewhat agree	26.1	25.1	31.3
Somewhat disagree	27.9	30.1	16.3
Strongly disagree	25.0	25.8	20.6
Don't know / decline to respond	1.5	1.3	2.4
Total	100	100	100

27. (Jewish respondents) **Religious Jews are gradually taking over the country.** (Arab respondents) **Religious Arabs are gradually taking over Arab society.**

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	27.1	30.0	11.9
Somewhat agree	23.2	22.9	25.0
Somewhat disagree	19.9	20.7	15.6
Strongly disagree	27.5	24.3	45.0
Don't know / decline to respond	2.3	2.1	2.5
Total	100	100	100

28. The Israeli media portray the situation here as much worse than it really is.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	29.5	30.2	25.6
Somewhat agree	26.6	26.2	28.8
Somewhat disagree	22.1	23.5	14.4
Strongly disagree	18.1	16.8	25.0
Don't know / decline to respond	3.7	3.3	6.2
Total	100	100	100

29. The refugees and illegal migrants who have come to Israel in the past few years are ruining the character of Israeli society.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	29.4	28.6	33.8
Somewhat agree	21.5	21.4	21.9
Somewhat disagree	23.0	24.9	13.1
Strongly disagree	22.2	22.5	20.6
Don't know / decline to respond	3.9	2.6	10.6
Total	100	100	100

30. A good leader does not do what the people want but what he thinks the people need.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	33.2	33.0	34.4
Somewhat agree	29.9	31.1	23.1
Somewhat disagree	16.9	17.8	11.9
Strongly disagree	16.7	14.8	26.9
Don't know / decline to respond	3.3	3.3	3.7
Total	100	100	100

31. Life in Israel today is harder than it is in most Western countries.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	23.5	20.9	37.5
Somewhat agree	22.8	22.7	23.1
Somewhat disagree	23.0	25.0	12.5
Strongly disagree	23.3	23.7	21.3
Don't know / decline to respond	7.4	7.7	5.6
Total	100	100	100

32. A democratic regime is not suited to Israel right now because of its unique security and social issues.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	10.9	8.1	26.3
Somewhat agree	11.3	9.0	23.8
Somewhat disagree	19.0	20.3	12.5
Strongly disagree	56.3	61.0	31.3
Don't know / decline to respond	2.5	1.6	6.1
Total	100	100	100

33. Which of these statements do you agree with more strongly?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
In the long run, if you work hard you'll succeed financially	47.6	43.1	71.9
Hard work doesn't guarantee financial success	49.0	53.1	26.9
Don't know / decline to respond	3.4	3.8	1.2
Total	100	100	100

34. (For respondents who are employed): How certain do you feel that you'll be able to keep working at your present job for as long as you wish?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Not at all certain	7.9	8.3	5.0
Not so certain	20.5	20.6	19.8
Quite certain	34.4	34.0	36.6
Very certain	35.4	35.0	37.6
Don't know / decline to respond	1.8	2.1	1.0
Total	100	100	100

35. Is your monthly income and/or that of your family sufficient to cover all your household expenses?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Definitely sufficient	31.4	31.5	31.3
Somewhat sufficient	31.4	33.4	20.6
Not so sufficient	22.8	21.6	28.8
Not at all sufficient	13.2	12.0	19.3
Don't know / decline to respond	1.2	1.5	–
Total	100	100	100

36. Do you support, or are you active in, any political party?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
No, I do not support and am not active in any party	74.8	76.2	67.5
I support a party, but am not a member	18.6	16.4	30.0
I am a member of a party	5.7	6.4	1.9
I am a member and a party official	0.3	0.3	0.6
Don't know / decline to respond	0.6	0.7	?
Total	100	100	100

37. How concerned are you at present about each of the following issues?

Total Sample

	Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not so concerned	Not at all concerned	Don't know / decline to respond	Total
37.1 That you won't be able to support your children financially in the future	34.1	26.0	21.6	16.4	1.9	100
37.2 That you won't be able to live decently in your old age	32.4	23.6	22.9	19.7	1.4	100
37.3 That you won't be able to express your political views in the future without negative consequences	21.6	18.1	19.7	38.1	2.5	100
37.4 That you won't be able to maintain the religious/traditional/ secular way of life that you want due to the strengthening of groups with a different way of life from yours	19.0	21.5	18.3	39.8	1.4	100

Jews

	Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not so concerned	Not at all concerned	Don't know / decline to respond	Total
37.1 That you won't be able to support your children financially in the future	31.6	26.7	24.2	15.6	1.9	100
37.2 That you won't be able to live decently in your old age	31.6	23.1	25.7	18.2	1.4	100
37.3 That you won't be able to express your political views in the future without negative consequences	19.9	16.9	21.9	39.4	1.9	100
37.4 That you won't be able to maintain the religious/traditional/secular way of life that you want due to the strengthening of groups with a different way of life from yours	18.5	21.3	20.1	38.9	1.2	100

Arabs

	Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not so concerned	Not at all concerned	Don't know / decline to respond	Total
37.1 That you won't be able to support your children financially in the future	47.5	21.9	7.5	20.6	2.5	100
37.2 That you won't be able to live decently in your old age	36.9	26.3	8.1	28.1	0.6	100
37.3 That you won't be able to express your political views in the future without negative consequences	30.6	24.4	8.1	31.3	5.6	100
37.4 That you won't be able to maintain the religious/traditional/ secular way of life that you want due to the strengthening of groups with a different way of life from yours	21.9	22.5	8.1	45.0	2.5	100

38. Which of these statements do you agree with more strongly?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Decisions made by a government with a Knesset majority are always democratic decisions	33.1	35.5	20.0
Decisions that run counter to such values as minority rights and freedom of expression are non-democratic, even if they are made by a government with a Knesset majority	53.9	51.5	66.9
Don't know / decline to respond	13.0	13.0	13.1
Total	100	100	100

39. Where do you get most of your information on political issues?
(up to two answers)

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Television (broadcast or Internet)	52.8	52.0	57.5
Radio	26.1	26.7	22.5
Print newspapers	28	30.4	15.0
Social media (for example, Facebook or Twitter)	25.8	23.8	36.3
Internet blogs	14.8	13.8	20.6
Conversations with friends/family	15.3	17.1	5.6
Other	3.0	3.6	—
Not interested in politics / don't look for information on politics*	2.0	1.4	5.0
Don't know / decline to respond	0.3	0.3	—
Total	168.1	169.1	162.5

*   This option was not read out to interviewees, but was recorded when given in response to the question.

40-52. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

40. People shouldn't rely on the state to help them out in times of trouble, but on their family, friends, and neighbors instead.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	23.8	23.4	26.3
Somewhat agree	25.5	25.6	25.0
Somewhat disagree	23.2	24.0	19.4
Strongly disagree	25.3	25.0	26.9
Don't know / decline to respond	2.2	2.0	2.4
Total	100	100	100

41. If the government funds public broadcasting, it should also have an influence over the content that's broadcast.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	16.1	16.3	15.0
Somewhat agree	14.7	14.5	16.3
Somewhat disagree	16.3	17.5	10.0
Strongly disagree	50.2	49.1	56.3
Don't know / decline to respond	2.7	2.6	2.4
Total	100	100	100

42. Politicians look out more for their own interests than for those of the public who elected them.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	49.5	47.9	58.1
Somewhat agree	30.3	31.4	24.4
Somewhat disagree	12.8	13.9	6.9
Strongly disagree	5.2	5.3	4.4
Don't know / decline to respond	2.2	1.5	6.2
Total	100	100	100

43. Democratic principles are fine on paper, but they aren't suited to running a country effectively.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	21.6	19.2	34.4
Somewhat agree	19.9	18.4	28.1
Somewhat disagree	23.7	25.9	11.9
Strongly disagree	30.9	33.4	16.9
Don't know / decline to respond	3.9	3.1	8.7
Total	100	100	100

44. I prefer to keep quiet and not express my political opinions out loud in the presence of people I don't know.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	20.9	18.9	31.9
Somewhat agree	20.9	19.1	30.6
Somewhat disagree	15.5	16.6	10.0
Strongly disagree	40.8	43.8	25.0
Don't know / decline to respond	1.9	1.6	2.5
Total	100	100	100

45. The opposition in Israel is weak, and is not doing its job.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	39.6	40.6	34.4
Somewhat agree	27.1	25.5	36.3
Somewhat disagree	15.1	15.5	13.1
Strongly disagree	11.2	12.0	6.9
Don't know / decline to respond	7.0	6.4	9.3
Total	100	100	100

46. (Jewish respondents) **People who are unwilling to affirm that Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people should lose their right to vote.**

	Jews
Strongly agree	30.0
Somewhat agree	14.0
Somewhat disagree	16.1
Strongly disagree	36.9
Don't know / decline to respond	3.0
Total	100

47. Politicians in Israel are detached from the public's real needs and problems.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	35.4	34.0	43.1
Somewhat agree	29.9	29.4	32.5
Somewhat disagree	21.4	22.9	13.1
Strongly disagree	11.0	12.0	5.6
Don't know / decline to respond	2.3	1.7	5.7
Total	100	100	100

48. Israelis can always rely on other Israelis to help them out in times of trouble.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	31.9	33.6	23.1
Somewhat agree	35.4	36.7	28.8
Somewhat disagree	18.2	17.7	20.6
Strongly disagree	12.3	10.3	23.1
Don't know / decline to respond	2.2	1.7	4.4
Total	100	100	100

49. Israeli citizens should be prohibited by law from harshly criticizing the state in public.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	10.9	12.3	3.8
Somewhat agree	11.8	12.5	8.1
Somewhat disagree	19.4	20.0	16.3
Strongly disagree	55.9	54.1	65.6
Don't know / decline to respond	2.0	1.1	6.2
Total	100	100	100

50. It doesn't matter which party you vote for; it won't change the situation.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	18.4	16.2	30.0
Somewhat agree	17.0	16.1	21.9
Somewhat disagree	20.9	23.0	9.4
Strongly disagree	41.4	42.2	36.9
Don't know / decline to respond	2.3	2.5	1.8
Total	100	100	100

51. The party composition of the Knesset is a good reflection of the range of opinions in the Israeli public.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	20.5	22.3	10.6
Somewhat agree	30.4	30.4	30.0
Somewhat disagree	23.6	23.8	22.5
Strongly disagree	21.3	19.9	28.8
Don't know / decline to respond	4.2	3.6	8.1
Total	100	100	100

52. The sizeable income gaps among Israeli citizens harm the democratic character of the state.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	32.0	30.2	41.9
Somewhat agree	27.6	27.0	31.3
Somewhat disagree	19.4	21.2	10.0
Strongly disagree	17.0	17.8	12.5
Don't know / decline to respond	4.0	3.8	4.3
Total	100	100	100

53. How often do you discuss politics with your friends?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Very rarely	23.8	18.1	55.0
Quite rarely	25.8	27.1	18.8
Quite often	33.6	37.0	15.0
Very often	14.3	15.0	10.0
Don't know / decline to respond	2.5	2.8	1.2
Total	100	100	100

54. Do you agree or disagree with the statement that some of the laws passed by the Knesset in recent years are harmful to the democratic character of the state—for example, the NGO Transparency Law (which requires non-governmental organizations that receive a majority of their funding from foreign states to publish their sources of funding) and the Regulation Law (which regularizes the status of Israeli settlements in the West Bank)?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	32.5	29.2	50.6
Somewhat agree	19.0	18.1	24.4
Somewhat disagree	16.9	18.8	6.9
Strongly disagree	24.6	28.0	6.3
Don't know / decline to respond	7.0	5.9	11.8
Total	100	100	100

55. Do you feel part of one or more actual communities, meaning a cohesive group of people who live nearby, know each other well, share the same views about a desirable lifestyle, and help one another when needed?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Yes, definitely	35.8	36.7	31.3
To some extent	21.5	20.4	27.5
Not so much	19.1	20.6	11.3
Not at all	22.0	20.7	28.8
Don't know / decline to respond	1.6	1.6	1.1
Total	100	100	100

56. Do you feel part of one or more virtual online communities of people with common interests?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Yes, definitely	15.7	16.8	10.0
To some extent	12.3	11.7	15.6
Not so much	15.9	17.9	5.0
Not at all	52.1	49.3	66.9
Don't know / decline to respond	4.0	4.3	2.5
Total	100	100	100

57. Do you follow the Internet sites of certain politicians or political parties on a regular basis?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Yes, very often	6.6	6.9	5.0
Yes, quite often	8.5	8.4	8.8
Yes, but not so often	3.8	3.7	4.4
Yes, but rarely	10.6	9.7	15.6
Not at all	69.0	69.7	65.6
Don't know / decline to respond	1.5	1.6	0.6
Total	100	100	100

58-61. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

58. The Supreme Court should be denied the authority to nullify laws passed by Knesset members who were elected to their posts by the country's citizens.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	21.8	22.8	16.3
Somewhat agree	14.0	13.0	19.4
Somewhat disagree	13.8	15.0	6.9
Strongly disagree	43.9	44.3	41.9
Don't know / decline to respond	6.5	4.9	15.5
Total	100	100	100

59. The democratic system in Israel is in serious danger.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	22.9	19.7	40.0
Somewhat agree	21.9	21.3	25.0
Somewhat disagree	23.3	25.1	13.8
Strongly disagree	27.9	30.9	11.9
Don't know / decline to respond	4.0	3.0	9.3
Total	100	100	100

60. It's better to vote for leaders and parties that offer quick and effective solutions to problems that worry the public, even if these solutions are not entirely in keeping with democratic principles.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	14.6	13.2	22.5
Somewhat agree	18.0	16.9	23.8
Somewhat disagree	24.4	26.4	13.8
Strongly disagree	35.4	37.2	26.3
Don't know / decline to respond	7.6	6.3	13.6
Total	100	100	100

61. Although the majority of Israelis voted Right, the Leftist court system, media, and academia hamper the Right's ability to govern.

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
Strongly agree	24.6	25.7	18.8
Somewhat agree	19.6	19.9	18.1
Somewhat disagree	17.2	17.2	16.9
Strongly disagree	31.1	33.3	18.8
Don't know / decline to respond	7.5	3.9	27.4
Total	100	100	100

62. How would you rate Israel's leadership in terms of corruption, where 1 = very corrupt and 5 = not at all corrupt?

	Total Sample	Jews	Arabs
1 – very corrupt	27.1	26.9	28.8
2	22.7	22.1	25.6
3	31.2	31.7	28.1
4	11.1	12.3	5.0
5 – not at all corrupt	4.5	4.7	3.0
Don't know / decline to respond	3.4	2.3	9.5
Total	100	100	100
Mean of '1' to '5'	2.4	2.45	2.2

Appendix 3

Distribution of 2017 Survey Results Compared with Previous Years (%)[1]

1. How would you characterize Israel's overall situation today?

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Very good	2.5	2.3	2.8	3.1	3.2	5.3	4.3	5.8	6.4	9.5	9.5	10.7	7.3	7.6	15.1
Good*	8.6	11.1	16.5	19.4	11.4	23.1	26.9	33.9	21.4	28.6	25.7	33.6	33.9	28.9	32.7
So-so	26.1	32.9	37.5	38.2	34.3	35.7	38.4	35.2	41.0	40.5	41.1	36.6	38.7	39.9	32.9
Bad*	24.3	22.7	16.8	18.4	25.0	16.1	17.1	13.8	16.0	11.4	9.8	8.8	9.3	12.2	9.5
Very bad	38.5	30.6	25.8	20.4	25.2	18.2	12.2	9.8	13.7	8.6	11.8	8.2	8.7	10.7	7.9
Don't know / decline to respond	–	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.9	1.6	1.1	1.5	1.5	1.4	2.1	2.1	2.0	0.7	1.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

*   Until 2013, the wording was "quite good" and "quite bad."

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1   General notes:
   ■ This comparative analysis presents the distribution of responses from the total sample (with the exception of questions that were presented only to Jews or only to Arabs, and of several questions in which only the responses of Jews are presented), including "don't know" / "decline to respond."
   ■ The wording of the questions and the response categories are presented as they appear in the 2017 Democracy Index survey. Where differences exist in wording and in categories between this year's Index and previous indexes, or where there are categories that didn't appear in a particular year, this is explained in notes provided below the table.
   ■ The acronym "NA" is used to mark a question that was not asked in a particular year (if the year is cited in the table heading), or a category that was not presented to the respondents that year.
   ■ In a number of variables, this year's survey presented an even number of categories for the respondent to choose from, while in previous years the number was odd. In these cases, the median category from previous years (as shown in figures in the report that show comparisons over time) is divided into two. For example, the category "to some extent" was divided relative to the overall ratio of those who agreed with the statement to those who disagreed with it, for that year.

2. And what about your personal situation?

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Very good	19.5	22.6	26.0	31.2
Good	46.4	52.1	49.4	42.3
So-so	22.3	19.8	19.8	20.2
Bad	6.4	3.3	2.5	2.6
Very bad	3.1	1.5	1.7	2.6
Don't know / decline to respond	2.3	0.7	0.6	1.1
Total	100	100	100	100

3. People understand the term "democratic state" in different ways. What does it mean to you, in one or two words?* (open-ended question; primary meaning)

	2011	2017
Freedom (in general; or freedom of choice, laissez faire)	42.4	23.0
Freedom of expression and opinion**		22.9
Mechanisms and institutions (separation of powers, constitution)	14.5	5.6
Rule of the people and government responsiveness; majority rule	9.2	16.4
Equality	9.0	13.6
Pluralism and concern for minorities	5.4	4.6
Human and civil rights; dignity	1.3	3.8
Justice	0.5	0.4
Negation of democracy; anti-democratic views	2.9	1.4
Other (don't know / decline to respond)	14.8	8.3
Total	100	100

*   In the 2011 Index, this question was worded slightly differently.

** In the 2011 Index, the responses "freedom of expression/freedom of opinion" were coded under a single category: "freedom."

4. In your opinion, how well is the government handling the country's major problems?

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2010	2011	2012	2014	2017
Very well	2.0	1.6	1.8	2.7	1.6	2.2	2.0	2.3	5.6	5.5	4.9
Quite well	20.0	19.7	20.2	22.3	11.1	15.6	23.0	22.3	32.8	30.0	28.1
Not so well	42.1	42.6	43.9	42.9	39.5	43.0	49.3	44.3	38.4	38.1	33.6
Not at all well	35.1	33.3	32.5	31.3	46.3	37.1	22.2	27.2	20.6	22.1	30.7
Don't know / decline to respond	0.8	2.8	1.6	0.8	1.5	2.1	3.5	3.9	2.6	4.3	2.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

5. In general, are you optimistic or pessimistic about Israel's future?

	2014	2016	2017
Very optimistic	38.4	19.3	24.5
Quite optimistic	37.2	47.8	43.3
Quite pessimistic	16.0	22.8	20.1
Very pessimistic	5.8	7.6	9.2
Don't know / decline to respond	2.6	2.6	2.9
Total	100	100	100

6. To what extent are you and your friends able to influence government policy?*

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Very much	4.6	3.8	7.4	6.1	5.7	3.1	3.9	2.9	7.3	9.5	11.3	6.6	4.9	4.1	4.8
Quite a lot	15.2	13.8	23.4	21.3	17.1	15.4	12.4	16.1	21.1	25.4	23.7	13.5	14.6	12.6	14.5
Not so much	40.1	32.4	32.3	36.5	30.6	31.2	31.6	31.5	35.3	34.9	28.0	42.2	45.3	45.3	43.1
Not at all	39.7	35.6	35.6	35.8	43.9	45.6	50.0	46.5	35.3	27.8	33.2	33.5	32.4	36.5	34.7
Don't know / decline to respond	0.4	14.4	1.3	0.3	2.7	4.7	2.1	3.0	1.0	2.4	3.8	4.2	2.8	1.5	2.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

*   Until 2013, the categories were: To a large extent, to a certain extent, to a small extent, not at all.

7–15: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

7. On the whole, most Knesset members work hard and are doing a good job.

	2011	2012	2013	2015	2016	2017
Strongly disagree	27.8	31.6	25.4	27.9	28.8	26.9
Somewhat disagree	35.3	30.2	22.7	26.5	35.5	40.8
Somewhat agree	28.7	26.3	26.7	27.1	29.6	24.5
Strongly agree	4.4	7.6	19.1	9.6	3.9	4.9
Don't know / decline to respond	3.8	4.3	6.1	8.9	2.0	3.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

8. Human and civil rights organizations like the Association for Civil Rights and B'Tselem cause damage to the state.

	2010	2013	2015	2016	2017
Strongly disagree	18.7	23.0	26.2	17.0	24.3
Somewhat disagree	20.8	14.7	14.1	14.3	17.1
Somewhat agree	24.8	18.4	19.1	20.8	16.2
Strongly agree	25.5	31.8	31.1	43.3	35.6
Don't know / decline to respond	10.2	12.1	9.5	4.6	6.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100

10. To handle Israel's unique problems, there is a need for a strong leader who is not swayed by the Knesset, the media or public opinion.*

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2014	2016	2017
Strongly disagree	17.4	23.2	20.3	18.4	14.9	17.4	19.9	30.3	40.2	61.1	35.2	35.4	36.0
Somewhat disagree	26.0	17.4	21.5	20.6	14.1	16.1	15.3	23.2	23.5		19.5	20.2	17.2
Somewhat agree	35.7	25.0	27.8	29.2	28.6	27.3	22.4	22.8	21.6	31.8	19.3	19.8	21.3
Strongly agree	20.3	31.2	28.7	30.2	36.9	33.6	37.1	19.0	10.8		21.4	22.3	23.3
Don't know / decline to respond	0.7	3.3	1.7	1.6	5.5	5.6	5.3	4.7	3.9	7.1	4.6	2.3	2.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

* In the years 2003–2009, the question was worded as follows: "A few strong leaders can be more useful for the country than all the discussions and the laws." The four response categories spanned the range from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

In 2012, the wording was: "In your opinion, is the following statement correct or incorrect? 'What Israel needs today is a strong leader who doesn't need to take the Knesset or elections into account.'" The response categories were: "correct" (corresponding with this year's "strongly agree" and "somewhat agree"); and "incorrect" (corresponding with this year's "strongly disagree" and "somewhat disagree").

In 2010–2011, the question was worded as follows: "What do you think of a strong leader who doesn't need to take the Knesset or elections into account, as a method for governing our country?" The response categories were: "very bad" and "somewhat bad" (for the purposes of comparison with this year's survey, these categories were converted to "strongly disagree" and "somewhat disagree," respectively); and "somewhat good" and "very good" (converted to "somewhat agree" and "strongly agree," respectively).

12. Israel used to be much more democratic than it is today.

	2010	2014	2017
Strongly disagree	19.1	28.5	29.6
Somewhat disagree	24.8	22.9	22.1
Somewhat agree	19.4	22.1	19.3
Strongly agree	24.3	17.4	22.2
Don't know / decline to respond	12.4	9.1	6.8
Total	100	100	100

16.1 People understand the term "Jewish state" in different ways. What does it mean to you, in one or two words? (open-ended question; primary meaning; Jewish respondents)

	Jews 2011*	Jews 2017
National connotation	45.4	46.6
Religious connotation	32.5	30.2
Democracy and tolerance	7.8	9.5
Negative connotation	1.0	3.9
Don't know / decline to respond	13.3	9.8
Total	100	100

17. To what extent do you trust each of the following individuals or institutions?

17.1 Media

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Not at all	28.1	23.8	24.3	28.9	26.5	30.4	30.3	34.5	24.4	25.7	25.9	22.4	21.0	29.0	24.7
Not so much	23.3	24.8	25.2	27.0	27.3	31.9	34.1	30.3	22.8	26.1	24.2	44.4	41.9	46.0	45.9
Quite a lot	36.8	36.3	35.0	32.6	31.9	28.7	26.7	24.1	37.4	32.3	32.5	23.8	30.2	20.8	23.4
Very much	11.8	14.7	15.1	11.4	12.5	8.3	7.8	9.7	14.4	14.0	14.8	5.9	5.5	3.3	4.5
Don't know / decline to respond	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.1	1.8	0.7	1.1	1.4	1.0	1.9	2.6	3.6	1.4	0.9	1.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

17.2 Supreme Court

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Not at all	16.0	11.4	22.3	15.5	18.4	25.2	23.2	21.6	13.6	10.7	17.7	10.3	12.1	16.1	15.6
Not so much	13.8	9.1	16.3	15.6	19.1	23.7	17.3	22.0	13.0	12.3	14.4	21.4	19.9	25.1	24.6
Quite a lot	30.4	27.4	28.6	29.0	28.7	29.1	28.1	27.9	27.3	30.5	28.1	33.5	37.0	33.3	33.0
Very much	39.4	49.0	31.4	37.5	29.2	18.3	23.1	23.8	41.4	42.9	32.7	27.4	25.4	22.5	23.4
Don't know / decline to respond	0.4	3.1	1.4	2.4	4.6	3.7	8.3	4.7	4.7	3.6	7.1	7.4	5.7	3.0	3.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

17.3 Police

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Not at all	14.9	15.5	19.1	28.7	30.3	35.6	30.3	23.2	20.5	15.8	18.3	16.8	19.1	16.5	17.0
Not so much	18.6	18.3	24.6	26.8	27.1	31.1	27.7	33.5	21.8	21.3	19.8	32.4	34.7	42.5	41.0
Quite a lot	41.6	41.8	36.2	30.7	28.3	23.1	27.2	29.8	38.2	40.0	38.4	35.0	34.2	31.8	32.2
Very much	24.8	23.6	19.5	12.5	11.9	8.4	10.4	11.5	17.9	20.9	20.6	11.5	8.2	7.9	7.8
Don't know / decline to respond	0.1	0.8	0.6	1.3	2.4	1.8	4.4	2.0	1.6	2.0	2.9	4.3	3.8	1.3	2.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

17.4 President of Israel

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Not at all	16.1	12.3	17.6	15.3	54.2	29.6	21.8	14.6	10.8	9.3	13.6	11.8	10.3	15.4	13.1
Not so much	15.6	12.9	16.9	16.9	20.0	22.4	15.9	14.3	9.8	9.6	10.2	12.8	12.0	20.1	15.6
Quite a lot	36.1	33.7	29.4	30.3	14.9	24.1	27.4	25.7	21.8	22.5	22.4	30.0	37.3	35.0	34.2
Very much	31.4	35.5	34.7	33.5	5.6	21.6	30.2	42.3	56.0	56.1	50.6	38.6	32.8	26.4	31.1
Don't know / decline to respond	0.8	5.6	1.4	4.0	5.3	2.3	4.7	3.1	1.6	2.5	3.2	6.8	7.5	3.1	6.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

17.5 Knesset

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Not at all	19.5	24.4	42.2	33.0	32.0	36.2	29.5	25.8	19.7	18.2	20.0	21.5	21.5	24.0	21.3
Not so much	28.6	28.6	33.5	33.7	33.2	33.9	31.4	34.8	27.3	26.1	24.7	37.9	39.4	47.7	50.6
Quite a lot	38.2	37.3	20.0	25.3	26.0	22.9	27.1	27.6	43.3	38.4	37.1	27.7	29.3	22.6	22.1
Very much	13.1	8.5	4.0	7.4	6.2	5.5	8.6	8.8	8.3	14.3	14.8	7.3	6.1	4.0	3.7
Don't know / decline to respond	0.6	1.2	0.3	0.6	2.6	1.5	3.4	3.0	1.4	3.0	3.4	5.6	3.6	1.7	2.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

17.6 IDF

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Not at all	8.8	6.8	8.9	11.2	10.6	13.9	11.3	10.7	7.2	7.1	8.8	5.3	7.7	7.1	6.1
Not so much	7.6	7.1	7.6	9.6	14.8	15.2	7.5	8.1	5.8	5.8	6.7	9.0	6.0	10.0	10.6
Quite a lot	23.4	25.1	27.2	24.9	28.8	26.2	22.8	18.7	17.0	20.2	16.6	27.9	27.0	33.9	32.5
Very much	59.8	59.8	55.7	53.5	43.7	43.9	56.4	60.3	68.8	65.0	65.5	54.5	57.5	47.8	48.4
Don't know / decline to respond	0.4	1.2	0.6	0.8	2.1	0.8	1.9	2.2	1.2	1.9	2.4	3.3	1.8	1.2	2.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

17.7 Government

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Not at all	19.9	27.7	26.6	31.2	37.2	41.4	30.7	30.5	22.3	18.0	20.8	20.0	23.8	28.6	28.5
Not so much	25.4	30.8	30.5	28.8	30.2	32.2	35.4	35.1	25.6	22.5	21.6	39.4	37.0	42.6	41.6
Quite a lot	40.8	35.3	30.3	29.6	23.6	20.1	24.9	26.4	41.1	41.3	36.5	28.6	28.1	21.2	22.7
Very much	13.8	4.4	12.1	9.1	6.6	5.0	6.1	6.3	9.9	15.5	17.5	9.1	8.1	6.0	6.2
Don't know / decline to respond	0.1	1.8	0.5	1.3	2.4	1.3	2.9	1.7	1.1	2.7	3.6	2.9	3.0	1.6	1.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

17.8 Political parties

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Not at all	34.0	37.8	50.3	41.3	44.1	46.9	35.4	32.6	28.3	31.5	26.2	NA	28.3	30.5	29.7
Not so much	33.4	34.0	31.6	35.9	32.5	36.1	39.9	39.3	32.7	30.5	30.9		42.3	51.1	49.0
Quite a lot	28.0	22.8	15.5	19.2	17.5	13.5	16.9	19.8	31.9	28.7	28.6		16.2	12.6	12.9
Very much	4.3	3.8	2.1	3.2	3.1	1.8	2.7	4.0	3.7	5.4	9.1		2.9	1.3	2.4
Don't know / decline to respond	0.3	1.6	0.5	0.4	2.8	1.7	5.1	4.3	3.4	3.9	5.2		10.4	4.5	6.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

17.9 (Jewish respondents) Chief Rabbinate

	2003	2004	2005	2009	2011	2013	2014	2017
Not at all	35.4	28.0	36.7	32.0	29.1	27.7	32.3	44.3
Not so much	20.8	15.1	24.4	25.9	19.9	19.5	25.8	30.4
Quite a lot	27.1	21.8	20.1	21.1	28.0	26.2	21.2	14.2
Very much	14.9	14.0	16.4	10.7	14.6	16.8	7.9	6.1
Don't know / decline to respond	1.8	21.1	2.4	10.3	8.3	9.8	12.8	5.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

17.10 Attorney General

	2011	2017
Not at all	11.3	17.0
Not so much	14.1	31.2
Quite a lot	34.6	32.4
Very much	29.5	9.6
Don't know / decline to respond	10.5	9.8
Total	100	100

18. Israel is defined as a Jewish and democratic state. Do you feel there is a good balance today between the Jewish and the democratic components?

	2016	2017
There is a good balance between the two components	26.1	26.7
The Jewish component is too dominant	45.1	46.6
The democratic component is too dominant	22.9	20.1
Don't know / decline to respond	5.9	6.6
Total	100	100

20. Is there a political party in Israel today that truly represents your views?

	2012	2016	2017
Yes, there is	37.6	50.6	46.9
No, there is not	57.0	47.5	50.3
Don't know / decline to respond	5.4	1.9	2.8
Total	100	100	100

22. Societies throughout the world are divided into stronger and weaker groups. Which group in Israeli society do you feel you belong to?

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2017
Strong group	21.1	20.2	16.9	21.7	21.4
Quite strong group	43.8	34.5	41.0	38.0	39.9
Quite weak group	17.3	21.4	18.5	16.6	18.0
Weak group	11.7	15.2	12.9	17.7	12.6
Don't know / decline to respond	6.1	8.7	10.7	6.0	8.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100

23. If you could receive American citizenship, or that of any other Western country, would you prefer to live there or to remain in Israel?

	2015	2017
I would prefer to live there	11.7	15.2
I would prefer to remain in Israel	84.3	80.7
Don't know / decline to respond	4.0	4.1
Total	100	100

24–32: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

24. Israel is not a true democracy because a few wealthy individuals influence the government to make decisions that benefit them and harm the average citizen.

	2014	2017
Strongly agree	32.0	28.7
Somewhat agree	23.3	28.9
Somewhat disagree	24.9	21.8
Strongly disagree	14.5	18.1
Don't know / decline to respond	5.3	1.8
Total	100	100

25. There should be a law allowing the closure of media outlets that criticize government policy too harshly.

	2010	2017
Strongly agree	26.3	28.7
Somewhat agree		28.9
Somewhat disagree	66.3	21.8
Strongly disagree		18.8
Don't know / decline to respond	7.4	1.8
Total	100	100

32. A democratic regime is not suited to Israel right now because of its unique security and social issues.

	2010*	2017
Strongly agree	16.6	10.9
Somewhat agree	22.8	11.3
Somewhat disagree	21.8	19.0
Strongly disagree	31.9	56.3
Don't know / decline to respond	6.9	2.5
Total	100	100

* In 2010, the wording was: "A democratic regime is not currently suited to Israel. Because of its serious security, economic, and social problems, it is better for now that there is a strong and effective regime that does not have to take into account the courts, the media, and public opinion."

33. Which of these statements do you agree with more strongly?

	2014	2017
In the long run, if you work hard you'll succeed financially	36.5	47.6
Hard work doesn't guarantee financial success	54.6	49.0
Don't know / decline to respond	8.9	3.4
Total	100	100

36. Do you support, or are you active in, any political party?

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2011	2012	2014	2017
No, I do not support and am not active in any party	74.8	70.6	77.6	64.8	69.3	75.2	67.4	74.8
I support a party, but am not a member	17.1	21.6	14.4	28.7	23.2	17.8*	20.5	18.6
I am a member of a party	4.3	3.3	3.0	3.8	5.4	2.7	6.5	5.7
I am an active member of a party	1.7	2.8	1.6	1.9	1.3	1.3	2.6	ל"ו
I am a member and a party official	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.2	1.1	0.3
Don't know / decline to respond	1.9	1.4	3.1	0.5	0.4	2.8	1.9	0.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

*   In 2012, this category also contained the response "I have party membership, but am not an active member."

38. Which of these statements do you agree with more strongly?

	2013*	2017
Decisions made by a government with a Knesset majority are always democratic decisions	44.5	33.1
Decisions that run counter to such values as minority rights and freedom of expression are non-democratic, even if they are made by a government with a Knesset majority	34.9	53.9
Don't know / decline to respond	20.6	13.0
Total	100	100

*   In the 2013 Index, the response categories were: "Decisions made by the government and Knesset, elected by the majority in free elections, are by definition democratic," and "Decisions that conflict with such values as equality before the law, minority rights, and freedom of expression are not democratic, even if made by a government and Knesset elected by the majority in free elections."

42–52: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

42. Politicians look out more for their own interests than for those of the public who elected them.*

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2016	2017
Strongly agree	19.5	22.8	42.5	49.9	46.9	46.0	43.4	49.5
Somewhat agree	29.4	26.3	28.1	30.3	24.6	28.9	35.9	30.3
Not sure	20.4	21.9	16.8	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Somewhat disagree	17.3	15.6	8.9	11.4	11.6	13.7	15.8	12.8
Strongly disagree	11.1	11.1	2.7	5.4	12.2	6.1	3.2	5.2
Don't know / decline to respond	2.3	2.3	1.0	3.0	4.7	5.3	1.7	2.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

*   Up to 2008, different versions of the question were used.

44. I prefer to keep quiet and not express my political opinions out loud in the presence of people I don't know.

	2016	2017
Strongly agree	18.6	20.9
Somewhat agree	19.9	20.9
Somewhat disagree	20.0	15.5
Strongly disagree	40.8	40.8
Don't know / decline to respond	0.7	1.9
Total	100	100

46. (Jewish respondents) People who are unwilling to affirm that Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people should lose their right to vote.

	2016	2017
Strongly agree	31.9	30.0
Somewhat agree	20.6	14.0
Somewhat disagree	16.8	16.1
Strongly disagree	28.6	36.9
Don't know / decline to respond	2.1	3.0
Total	100	100

47. Politicians in Israel are detached from the public's real needs and problems.

	2016	2017
Strongly agree	39.1	35.4
Somewhat agree	35.9	29.9
Somewhat disagree	17.9	21.4
Strongly disagree	5.1	11.0
Don't know / decline to respond	2.0	2.3
Total	100	100

48. Israelis can always rely on other Israelis to help them out in times of trouble.

	2016	2017
Strongly agree	31.1	31.9
Somewhat agree	40.2	35.4
Somewhat disagree	16.8	18.2
Strongly disagree	11.1	12.3
Don't know / decline to respond	0.8	2.2
Total	100	100

49. Israeli citizens should be prohibited by law from harshly criticizing the state in public.*

	2007**	2008**	2009	2011	2012	2013	2014	2017
Strongly agree	12.0	12.4	35.4	27.5	28.8	37.1	27.4	10.9
Somewhat agree	21.8	21.5	19.3	23.3	19.8	15.3	19.0	11.8
Not sure**	18.5	19.8	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Somewhat disagree	24.4	24.7	18.0	23.6	15.1	13.2	21.7	19.4
Strongly disagree	19.5	15.8	23.0	22.4	32.4	28.9	25.5	55.9
Don't know / decline to respond	3.9	5.7	4.6	3.4	3.9	5.5	6.4	2.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

* Until 2014, the wording was: "Speakers should be prohibited from harshly criticizing the State of Israel in public."

** In 2007 and 2008, five response categories were provided; in recent years, there have been just four categories.

50. It doesn't matter which party you vote for; it won't change the situation.

	2003*	2004*	2006*	2009	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015	2017
Strongly agree	10.8	15.7	16.9	29.2	28.0	22.6	19.7	30.1	13.5	18.4
Somewhat agree	23.1	16.8	19.3	19.7	20.8	20.2	17.4	21.5	15.3	17.0
Not sure	11.8	10.8	13.3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Somewhat disagree	34.3	30.1	23.6	16.1	19.9	17.2	16.2	22.7	18.6	20.9
Strongly disagree	19.9	26.2	26.5	31.7	28.0	33.9	41.9	22.7	50.5	41.4
Don't know / decline to respond	0.1	0.4	0.4	3.3	3.3	6.1	4.8	3.0	2.2	2.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

*	In 2003, 2004, and 2006, there were five response categories, worded slightly differently: Definitely do not agree, do not agree, not sure, agree, definitely agree.

51. The party composition of the Knesset is a good reflection of the range of opinions in the Israeli public.*

	2003	2005	2006	2007	2008	2011	2013	2014	2015	2017
Strongly agree	20.5	15.4	15.3	15.1	14.5	26.0	24.7	15.2	27.2	20.5
Somewhat agree	45.6	43.6	43.7	35.2	38.0	33.3	34.2	30.2	31.0	30.4
Somewhat disagree	23.7	27.5	25.6	27.8	27.4	25.0	19.5	26.4	18.9	23.6
Strongly disagree	8.7	10.8	11.8	12.1	12.0	8.5	10.4	20.9	14.3	21.3
Don't know / decline to respond	1.5	2.7	3.6	9.8	8.1	7.2	11.2	7.3	8.6	4.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

* The wording in the past was: "The Knesset is an accurate reflection of the areas of consensus and controversy in the Israeli public."

52. The sizeable income gaps among Israeli citizens harm the democratic character of the state.*

	2014	2017
Strongly agree	26.8	32.0
Somewhat agree	25.3	27.6
Somewhat disagree	23.7	19.4
Strongly disagree	18.7	17.0
Don't know / decline to respond	5.5	4.0
Total	100	100

* In 2014, the wording was: "A state where income disparity is high cannot be a true democracy."

53. How often do you discuss politics with your friends?*

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008**	2011	2015	2017
Very rarely	6.8	10.7	11.0	8.6	15.1	23.2	9.5	19.1	23.8
Quite rarely	24.3	24.6	28.6	24.6	28.4	31.5	19.7	23.3	25.8
Quite often	38.2	37.1	32.4	36.9	30.7	31.1	31.3	39.4	33.6
Very often	30.5	26.5	27.0	29.7	24.6	10.7	39.3	15.2	14.3
Don't know / decline to respond	0.2	1.1	1.0	0.2	1.2	3.5	0.2	3.0	2.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

*   Up to 2011, the wording was: "To what extent do you tend to talk with your friends and family about political issues?" The response categories were: Very often, often, seldom, very seldom.
      In 2015, the wording was: "Do you discuss politics with your friends?"
** The response categories used in 2008 were identical to those used in 2015 and in 2017.

58. The Supreme Court should be denied the authority to nullify laws passed by Knesset members who were elected to their posts by the country's citizens.*

	2015	2017
Strongly agree	16.8	21.8
Somewhat agree	15.2	14.0
Somewhat disagree	15.6	13.8
Strongly disagree	40.0	43.9
Don't know / decline to respond	11.9	6.5
Total	100	100

*   In 2015, the wording was: "The Supreme Court's authority to rescind laws passed in the Knesset by the elected representatives of the people should be revoked."

62. How would you rate Israel's leadership in terms of corruption, where 1 = very corrupt and 5 = not at all corrupt?

	2014	2015	2016	2017
1 – very corrupt	22.8	28.7	27.0	27.1
2	19.8	19.1	27.9	22.7
3	31.4	31.8	30.9	31.2
4	15.2	11.1	10.0	11.1
5 – not at all corrupt	3.2	3.2	2.4	4.5
Don't know / decline to respond	6.6	6.1	1.8	3.4
Total	100	100	100	100
Mean score 1–5	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.4

Appendix 4

Sociodemographic Breakdown and Self-Definitions (Total Sample; %)

Sex	Total sample
Men	47.8
Women	52.2
Total	100

Age	
18–24	14.6
25–34	20.5
35–44	19.6
45–54	15.9
55–64	13.2
65+	15.9
Decline to respond	0.3
Total	100

Education	Total sample
Elementary or partial high school	11.9
Full high school with matriculation certificate	22.1
Post-secondary (teachers' college, nursing school, practical engineering school)	12.7
Post-secondary yeshiva	2.0
Partial academic education (no degree)	7.5
Full academic degree, bachelor's or higher	42.7
Decline to respond	1.1
Total	100

Monthly household income	
Well below average	23.0
Slightly below average	19.9
Average	15.5
Slightly above average	22.2
Well above average	12.4
Decline to respond / not relevant	7.0
Total	100

Nationality	Total sample
Jews and others*	84.4
Arabs	15.6
Total	100

Religion	Arabs
Muslim	72.5
Christian	10.6
Druze	11.3
Other	5.6
Total	100

Ethnic affiliation**	Jews, self-defined
Ashkenazi	47.5
Mizrahi	18.3
Sephardi	15.4
Mixed / both	7.6
Neither Ashkenazi nor Mizrahi / Israeli	7.8
Other (Russian / not Jewish)	1.5
Don't know / decline to respond	1.9
Total	100

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*   Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) defines the category of "others" as comprising "non-Arab Christians," those with "no religion," and those with "no Ministry of Interior religious classification."

**   The responses offered by the interviewers were limited to Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, or Sephardi.

Political orientation	Total sample	Jews	Arabs
Right	24.2	28.6	0.6
Moderate Right	17.6	20.5	1.9
Center	25.0	24.7	26.9
Moderate Left	14.6	14.0	18.1
Left	8.7	7.3	16.3
Don't know / decline to respond	9.9	4.9	36.2
Don't know / decline to respond	100	100	100

Voting patterns in 2015 Knesset elections	Jews	Arabs
Didn't vote	5.8	26.9
Decline to say whether voted or for which party / blank ballot	13.3	9.3
Hareshima Hameshutefet (Joint List)	0.1	48.1
Likud	22.8	1.9
Hamahane Hatziyoni (Zionist Union)	17.0	5.0
Yesh Atid	10.0	1.9
Habayit Hayehudi	6.8	—
Kulanu	3.6	5.0
Yisrael Beytenu	1.9	—
Meretz	6.3	1.9
Yahadut Hatorah (United Torah Judaism)	5.8	—
Shas	2.7	—
Yachad	2.7	—
Other party	1.2	—
Total	100	100

Religiosity	Jews
Haredi	10.7
National Haredi	0.8
National religious	11.5
Traditional religious	12.0
Traditional non-religious	20.2
Secular	43.9
Other / decline to respond	0.9
Total	100

Religiosity	Arabs
Very religious	2.5
Religious	27.5
Traditional	58.1
Not at all religious	11.9
Total	100

Political orientation, by religiosity (Jews)	Right	Center	Left	Don't know / decline to respond	Total
Total sample	49.2	24.6	21.4	4.8	100
Haredi	74.2	10.1	3.4	12.3	100
Religious (national religious and national Haredi)	88.3	5.8	3.9	2.0	100
Traditional religious	68.0	22.0	5.0	5.0	100
Traditional non-religious	51.8	25.0	17.9	5.3	100
Secular	26.2	34.2	36.6	3.0	100

Religiosity, by religion (Arabs)	Very religious	Religious	Traditional	Not at all religious	Total
Total sample	2.6	28.5	57.0	11.9	100
Muslim	3.4	34.5	51.7	10.3	100
Christian	—	17.6	64.7	17.6	100
Druze	—	—	83.3	16.7	100

The Research Team

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The Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) is an independent center of research and action dedicated to strengthening the foundations of Israeli democracy. IDI works to bolster the values and institutions of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. A non-partisan think-and-do tank, the Institute harnesses rigorous applied research to influence policy, legislation and public opinion. The institute partners with political leaders, policymakers, and representatives of civil society to improve the functioning of the government and its institutions, confront security threats while preserving civil liberties, and foster solidarity within Israeli society. The State of Israel recognized the positive impact of IDI's research and recommendations by bestowing upon the Institute its most prestigious award, the Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement.

The Guttman Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research was established in its current configuration in 1998, when it became a part of IDI. The Guttman Institute was founded in 1949 by Professor Eliyahu (Louis) Guttman and has since enriched the public discourse on thousands of issues by way of rigorous applied and pioneering research methods, enhanced by the unique "continuing survey" that has documented the attitudes of the Israeli public in all aspects of life in over 1,200 studies.

The Israeli Democracy Index is a public opinion poll project conducted by the Guttman Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research. Since 2003, an extensive survey has been conducted annually on a representative sample of Israel's adult population. Each survey presents an estimate of the quality of Israeli democracy for that year.

The project aims to assessing trends in Israeli public opinion regarding realization of democratic values and the performance of government systems and elected officials. Analysis of its results may contribute to a public discussion of the status of democracy in Israel and create a cumulative empirical database to intensify the discourse concerning such issues.