

THE ISRAELI DEMOCRACY INDEX

2016

Attitudes of Arab Citizens of Israel

Fadi Omar / In collaboration with the Guttman
Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research team



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Introduction

This publication is a focused addendum to the full research of *the 2016 Israeli Democracy Index*, yet it also stands alone as a separate report. Its aim is to provide a more detailed portrait of the attitudes of Israel's Arab citizens regarding major political and social issues, based on the findings of the 2016 survey.¹

The Arab public is the largest national and religious minority in Israel, constituting approximately 15% of the 18 and over population. To make it possible to analyze the distribution of attitudes among this public and the relation between the questionnaire items and various background variables of the respondents, we expanded the sample of Arab interviewees this year to 362 respondents (around 29% of the total sample), instead of 157 respondents (around 15% of the total sample) as in previous years.² This change is part of an ongoing research effort by the Guttman Center to present a reliable mapping of attitudes among sub-groups within Israeli society, alongside its more routine work profiling the general population.³ The aim of this report is thus to demonstrate what can be learned from an in-depth analysis of sub-groups—in this instance, the Arab public. It presents detailed analyses of responses to some of the questions posed in the 2016 Israeli Democracy Index survey, as well as breakdowns of the responses of Arab interviewees according to such background variables as income, level of formal education, and area of residence.

Our analysis confirmed our hypotheses regarding the relationship between attitudes and sociodemographic background variables. For example, we found a correlation between religion and religiosity (Muslim Arabs were found to be the most religious, followed by Christians and Druze), and between education and income (the higher the level of formal education, the higher the economic status). The findings also indicate a correlation between age and religiosity (older Arab citizens of Israel are more religious than younger age cohorts) and between religion and voting behavior in the Knesset elections (Druze tend to vote more for Zionist parties, while Muslims vote mainly for the Joint [Arab] List). A correlations was also found between area of residence, on the one hand, and religiosity and income on the other (Arab residents of the southern region are more religious and have lower incomes than those in the central and northern regions).

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- 1 For the full responses of the Arab public in the survey, see Tamar Hermann et al., *2016 Israeli Democracy Index, Jerusalem: Israel Democracy Institute, 2016, Appendix 2.*
 - 2 In our calculations for producing the 2016 Israeli Democracy Index, we reduced the relative weight of this larger Arab sample so as to match the proportion of the Arab public in the overall population of Israel.
 - 3 Other examples include the publication of Tamar Hermann et al., *Religious? National! The National-Religious Camp in Israel 2014*, Jerusalem: The Israel Democracy Institute, 2014; and the use of a larger Haredi sample in the survey for *the 2016 Israeli Democracy Index.*

The findings give rise to an important general conclusion: Arab society in Israel is very complex, and attitudes within it are not homogeneous. Thus, the primary contribution of this publication is to illuminate the need for a discerning approach when examining the attitudes of this sub-group within Israeli society. An understanding of internal differences in Israeli Arab society is essential for the transformation of such slogans as “reducing inequality between the Arab public and the rest of Israel’s citizens” and “increasing the sense of civic belonging of Arabs in Israel” into reality.

As stated, the data presented below is based on the responses of the Arab interviewees who participated in the 2016 Israeli Democracy Index survey. This is a representative sample of the adult Arab population of Israel. It was comprised of 362 respondents, aged 18 and above; the maximal sampling error for a sample of this size is $\pm 5.2\%$. Interviews were conducted via telephone by the StatNet Research Institute between May 3 and May 23, 2016.

Findings in Brief

Israel’s Overall Situation and Respondents’ Personal Situation

- Among Arab respondents, the proportion who defined Israel’s overall situation as “good” or “very good” was higher than the proportion who defined it as “so-so,” “bad,” or “very bad.” Among younger respondents (aged 18–34), Druze, voters for Zionist parties (who are represented to a greater extent among the Druze), and residents of the Haifa region, the assessment of Israel’s overall situation was more positive than among other sub-groups. A similar picture was found for the respondents’ assessments of their own personal situation, although, as a rule, they assessed their personal situation as better than that of the state. Both assessments were found to be strongly connected to respondents’ income—the higher the income, the more positive the assessment of Israel’s overall situation and the respondent’s personal situation. In addition, the differences between the Arab and Jewish publics in their evaluation of the overall situation of the state and of their personal situation were found to be small.⁴
- More than two-thirds of the Arab respondents (compared with half of the Jewish respondents) stated that the level of tension between Jews and Arabs was the strongest of all tensions between groups in Israeli society. However, the share of Christian Arabs who gave this response was lower than the equivalent share of Muslims and Druze, and similarly, the share dropped for Arab respondents with a higher level of formal education.

4 A methodological comparison of the attitudes of the Jewish and Arab publics can be found in Hermann et al., *The 2016 Israeli Democracy Index*.

- The broadest consensus within Arab society in Israel, one that transcends all internal divisions and disagreements, relates to discrimination against the Arab citizens of Israel relative to Jewish citizens—all agree that they are discriminated against.

Sense of Belonging and National Identity

- Just over half of Arab citizens of Israel are proud to be Israeli, but breaking down the responses by religion reveals sharp differences: the proportion of Druze who are proud to be Israeli is somewhat higher than that of Christians, and much higher than the proportion of Muslims. Among younger and more educated respondents, a relatively small share reported feeling proud to be Israeli.
- Religion—Muslim, Christian, or Druze—was the most widely selected by Arab respondents as being their primary identity, followed by Israeli identity and Arab identity, to an equal extent. To our surprise, only one in eight respondents chose "Palestinian" as being the most important for them. Interestingly, a large share of the younger and more educated respondents, who on average report being less religious, selected religious identity as being their most important identification.
- There was overwhelming consensus among the respondents in favor of accepting a Jew as a coworker, and a very high proportion also said they would accept a Jew as a neighbor and as a personal friend. Regarding marriage to Jews, a large majority were opposed, with the highest level of opposition found among the Druze.

Democratic Values

- Around half the respondents reported being unwilling to express their political views in the presence of strangers, with women and older respondents being particularly averse. There was a greater share of respondents who gave this answer among Muslims and Christians than among Druze.
- Respondents were divided equally between those who said that, in the case of a conflict between the dictates of their religion and a state court ruling, they would follow their religious dictates, and those who said they would follow the court ruling. As expected, the higher the level of religiosity within a given sub-group (such as among Muslims, or among residents of the southern region), the stronger the preference for following religious commandments.

Trust in State Institutions and Arab Leadership

- The level of trust of the Arab public in institutions of elected representatives (political parties, the Knesset, the government) is even lower than that of the Jewish public, which itself is disturbingly low.
- Arab citizens, like their Jewish counterparts, believe that politicians look out more for their own personal interests than for the interests of the public who elected them.
- Fewer than one-third of the Arab respondents have a high or fairly high level of trust in the Supreme Arab Monitoring Committee. The highest level of trust in the Committee was found among residents of the southern region.
- A majority of the Arab public believes that Israeli Arab politicians are mainly concerned with the problems of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, and insufficiently concerned with the problems of Israeli Arabs. This opinion was found to be more widespread among Christians and Druze than among Muslims.
- Almost three-quarters of Arab respondents would support Arab parties joining the government, including the appointment of Arab ministers.

This diversity of attitudes among the Arab public indicates the simultaneous existence of conflicting trends: integration into Israeli society alongside withdrawal from it and a lack of trust in state institutions alongside a desire for political partnership. The two variables that consistently explain attitudes on many issues are, firstly, religion (Muslim, Christian, Druze), and secondly, area of residence.

Breaking down the data by sociodemographic variables results in a complex picture, and offers some surprises for those who are not deeply familiar with Arab society in Israel. For example, Druze citizens are, on the one hand, proud of being Israeli and cite their Israeli identity as being their primary identity, yet on the other hand, they are the least willing to accept Jews as spouses, neighbors, or friends.

In all three religious sub-groups the older respondents, despite being more religious, select their Israeli identity as their primary identity to a greater degree than their younger counterparts. Among female respondents, the level of religiosity is higher than among men, their religious identity is more important, and they are generally more critical of state institutions and less willing to express their political opinions to people they don't know. In addition, younger and more educated respondents are less proud of being Israeli, cite their religious identity as their primary identity, and express a lack of trust in the political leadership, Arab and Jewish alike.

Findings in Detail

1. Correlations between Sociodemographic Variables⁵

A review of the demographic data of the sample, whose characteristics are almost identical to those of the samples taken by the Central Bureau of Statistics, makes it possible to describe correlations between various sociodemographic variables.

As already stated, Arabs in Israel belong to one of three religious groups—Muslims, Christians, or Druze. Muslims form around three-quarters of the Arab population; Christians and Druze, around one-eighth each.

Religion and Religiosity⁶

- Around one-third of the respondents defined themselves as religious or very religious; close to half, as traditional; and the rest said they are not at all religious.
- The level of religiosity is higher among Muslims than among Christians and Druze.
- Among the three religious groups, the percentage of respondents who reported being religious was lowest among the Druze—more than a third of Druze respondents said they were not at all religious.
- Women are more religious than men.
- The percentage of those who defined themselves as religious or very religious was lower among the 18-to-34-year-old age cohort compared to older ones.
- The percentage of those who defined themselves as religious was higher among residents of the southern region than among residents of the central, northern, and Haifa regions.
- Those with a higher level of formal education are less religious than those with a lower education level.
- There was a greater percentage of religious respondents among those who did not vote in the 2015 Knesset elections than among those voted for the Joint List. Voters for the Zionist parties (mainly Druze) were found to be the least religious of all.

5 For information about the survey, and for detailed sample data, see Appendix 1.

6 See Table 1 in Appendix 1.

Voting in the 2015 Knesset Elections⁷

- The majority of Muslim respondents voted for the Joint List.
- Slightly more than half of the Christian interviewees voted for the Joint List.
- The majority of Druze respondents said that they voted for Zionist parties.

Formal Education

- The Christians are the group with the highest level of formal education.

Area of Residence⁸

- Most of the respondents in the sample live in the northern region, almost one-fifth in the Haifa region, and around one-eighth in the central and southern regions.
- Half of the Muslims live in the northern region, where they form two-thirds of the Arab population. They are an even greater majority in the central and southern regions.
- The majority of Christians live in the northern region, comprising a minority of the Haifa region's residents.
- Similarly, most of the Druze live in the northern region, with a quarter residing in the Haifa region.

Income⁹

- Incomes were below the national average for the majority of the respondents.
- The average income was higher for younger respondents than for middle-aged and older respondents.
- On average, Druze respondents had the highest income, followed by Christians and then Muslims.
- The highest average incomes in the sample were found among residents of the Haifa region, followed by (in descending order) the central region, northern region, and southern region.

7 See Table 2 and Table 3 in Appendix 1.

8 See Table 1 and Table 2 in Appendix 1.

9 See Table 4 and Table 5 in Appendix 1.

2. Assessment of the Current Situation

Israel's Overall Situation

In general, a plurality of Israel's citizens, both Arab and Jewish, described Israel's overall situation in positive terms. Among Arab respondents, 39% chose to describe the country's situation as "good," compared with 28% who selected "bad" or "very bad," and 32% who said it is "so-so." Overall, the share of Arab respondents who assessed Israel's situation as positive was higher in 2016 than the previous year.

Breaking down the findings by background variables reveals a positive correlation between income and assessment of the country's overall situation: the higher the income, the higher the percentage of respondents who describe the situation as good. This would seem to explain why we found a higher rate of positive assessments of the country's situation among the younger respondents, who reported being better off economically compared to older age cohorts. Among the Druze, the proportion of those who gave a positive assessment of Israel's overall situation was higher than among the other religious groupings. This buttresses another, predictable finding: the percentage of those who assess the country's situation positively was higher among voters for Zionist parties than among voters for the Joint List. Thus, the rate is also higher among those who live in the Haifa region—which has a relatively large Druze population—than in other regions.

Figure 1 \ How would you characterize Israel's overall situation today? (by year; percent)

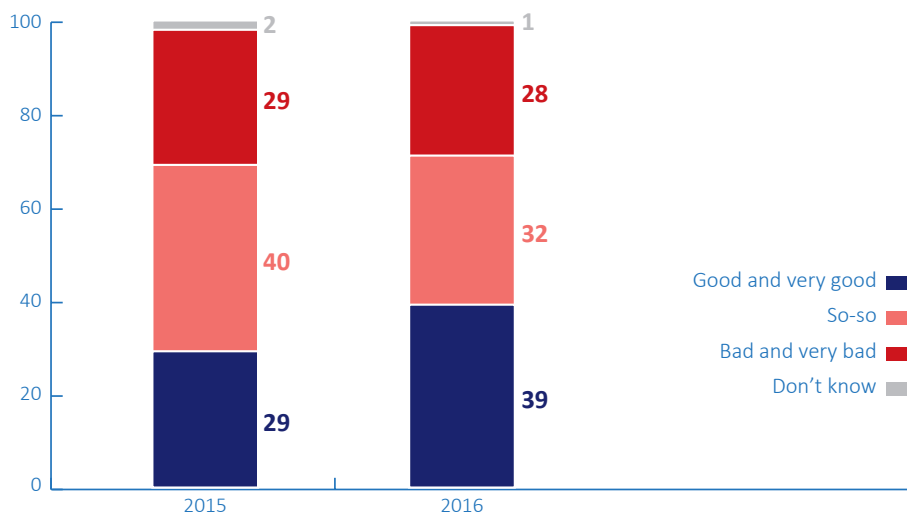
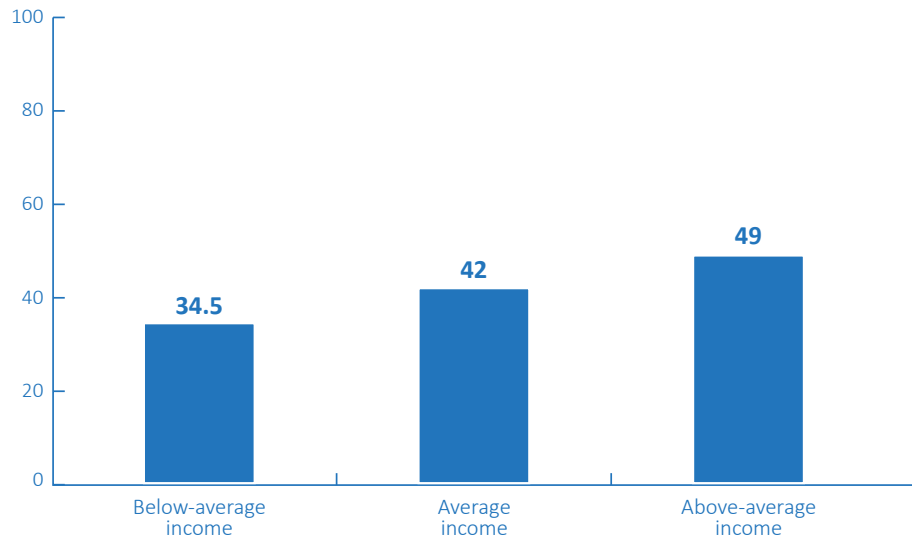


Figure 2 \ Describe the overall situation of Israel as “very good” or “good” (by income; percent)

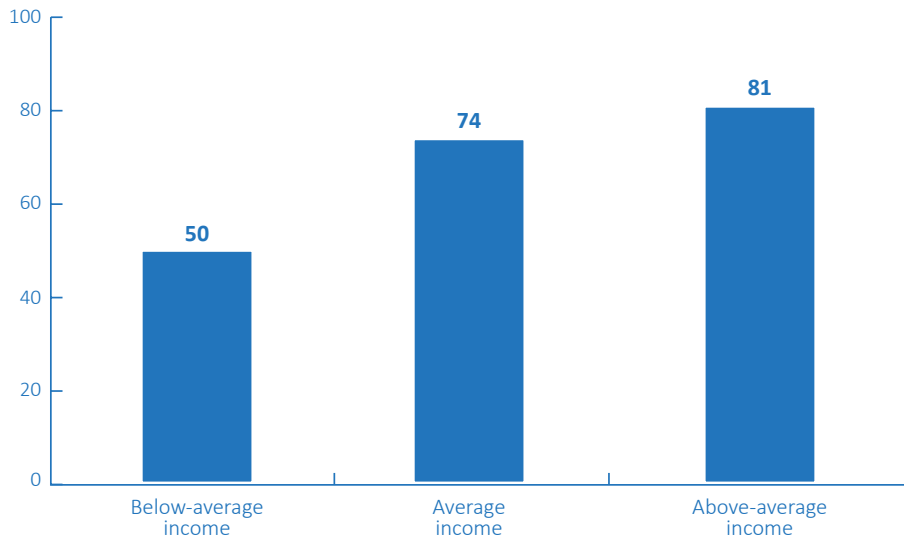


Personal Situation

Overall, more interviewees gave a positive assessment of their own personal situation than of the situation of Israel. Among Arab respondents, 61% described their personal situation as “good” or “very good.” We found that the assessment of personal situation was linked to income (see Figure 3 below) to a greater extent than was the evaluation of the overall situation of the state (Figure 2 above). Accordingly, the share of respondents who rated their personal situation as good was higher among the younger age cohort (65%) than among the older ones (around 58%); among Druze (71%) than among Christians (62%) and Muslims (60%); among those with a higher level of formal education (68% for those with an academic education, 60% for those with a full high-school education or higher education, and 48% for those with only an elementary education or partial high-school education); among residents of the Haifa region (75%) than among residents of the other regions (northern and central—around 60%; southern—47%); and among those who voted for Zionist parties (74.5%) in the 2015 Knesset elections—a large proportion of whom are Druze—than among voters for the Joint List (58%).

It follows that an improvement in the income levels of the population as a whole, and of the Arab public in particular, might, among other things, result in their giving a more positive assessment of their personal situations and of the overall state of the state.

Figure 3 \ Describe their personal situation as “very good” or “good” (by income; percent)



Tension between Arabs and Jews

Although the assessment of most interviewees is that the overall situation of the State of Israel is so-so, they are still concerned by the severity of the tensions that exist within Israeli society. Just like their Jewish counterparts, Arab citizens believe that the tension between Jews and Arabs is greater than that between any of the other groups they were asked about (religious and secular; Right and Left; Ashkenazim and Mizrahim; and rich and poor). This assessment has remained stable and consistent over the years. However, among Arab respondents, a higher share than among Jewish respondents rate this as the strongest source of tension in Israeli society (68% of Arab respondents in the 2016 survey, compared with 50% of Jewish respondents). This response was selected by a far greater share of interviewees than any of the other suggested sources of tension (see Table 1 below).

A degree of variability in this assessment was observed among different groups in the Arab population: while the majority of Christians (56%) said that Arab-Jewish tensions were the most pronounced in Israeli society, this was lower than the equivalent share found among Druze (76%) and Muslims (70%). Education also plays a role in this issue: among those with a higher level of formal education, who tend to have more day-to-day interactions with the Jewish public, the percentage of those who believe tensions are greater between Arabs and Jews than between other groups was lower than the overall rate for all Arab respondents. It is possible that this indicates that interactions with the dominant Jewish group help to moderate

assessments of the severity of these tensions. When it comes to area of residence, we found that the assessment of Arab-Jewish tensions as being the most severe in Israel was more prevalent among residents of the central region (75%) than among residents of the Haifa (70%), northern (67%), or southern (62%) regions. In the southern region, a relatively high proportion (13%) believes that the tensions between rich and poor are the most pronounced.

**Table 1 ** Which groups in Israeli society have the highest level of tension between them? (percent)

Jews and Arabs	68
Religious and secular Jews	10
Rich and poor	8
Right and Left (regarding Israel's foreign policy and national security issues)	6
Mizrahim and Ashkenazim	1
Don't know / refuse to answer	7
Total	100

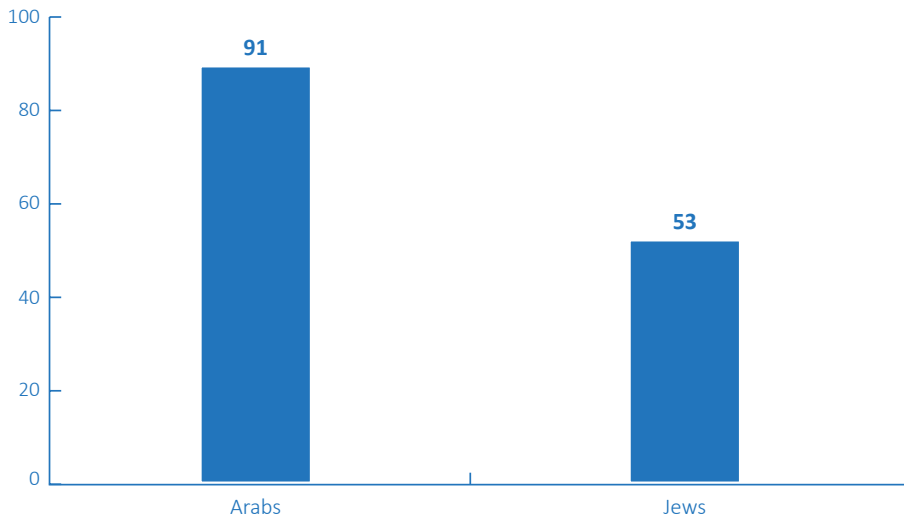
The Relative Situations of Israel's Arab and Jewish Citizens

The question that reveals the most the discomfort experienced by Arab society in Israel, and the relative blindness to it of the country's Jewish majority, concerns discrimination against Arab citizens. On this, there is a broad and steady consensus among the Arab public, transcending religion, economic status, education, and voting patterns: an overwhelming majority of Arab respondents (91%) agree that Arab citizens of Israel are discriminated against relative to Jews. On the other hand, only around one-half (53%) of the Jewish respondents agree with this statement. Thus, the survey findings show a lack of awareness of—or perhaps even an unwillingness to recognize—one of the central feelings and experiences of Arabs as Israeli citizens, living among a large proportion of the Jewish public. The report of the Or Commission noted this gap:

Arab citizens of Israel inhabit a reality in which they are discriminated against. This lack of equality has been documented in a great number of professional surveys and studies, confirmed in court rulings and government decisions, and

expressed in reports by the State Comptroller and other official documents. While there is often a fairly low level of awareness among the Jewish majority regarding this discrimination, it plays a central role in shaping the opinions and feelings of Israel's Arab citizens.¹⁰

Figure 4 \ Agree that Israel's Arab citizens are discriminated against compared with Jewish citizens (by nationality; percent)



3. Sense of Belonging and National Identity

Pride in Being Israeli

Against the backdrop of Arab citizens' deep-rooted sense of discrimination, we tried to figure out if at all and if so – how proud they are in being Israeli and found that, despite everything, a majority (55%) are proud of their Israeli identity, although a significant minority (38%) are not.

Apparently, the level of pride varies among different groups within the Arab public, being highest among the Druze (83%). In fact, the share of Druze who are proud of being Israeli is similar to that among Jews (86%). Among Christians, too, a majority is proud of being Israeli, but at 64%, this is a far smaller majority than among the Druze. The lowest rate was found among Muslims (49%). A similar picture was found when it comes to voting patterns in the Knesset

¹⁰ *Report of the Or Commission: State Commission of Inquiry into the Clashes Between Security Forces and Israeli Citizens in October 2000*, August 2003, Chapter 1: "Escalation Processes in the Arab Sector Behind the Breakout of the Riots," Section 19.

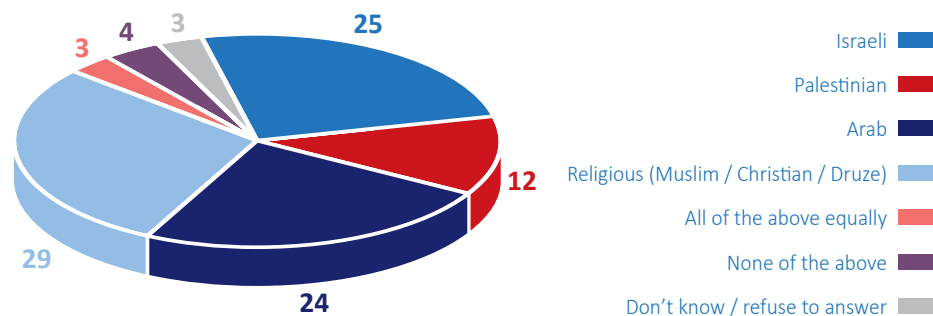
elections: a high percentage of voters for Zionist parties expressed pride in being Israeli (80%), while the rate is below half among those who voted for the Joint List (44%).

Two findings in this context are particularly noteworthy: First, among the younger (18-34) and intermediate (35-54) age cohorts, the percentage of those who are proud of being Israeli (52% and 55%, respectively) was found to be lower than among the older cohort (aged 55 and above—62.5%). This might imply that pride in being Israeli is being eroded among present and future Arab citizens of Israel. An even more disturbing finding was the inverse relation between education and pride: the survey found that the higher the level of formal education, the lower the sense of pride in being Israeli. That is, educated Arabs, the social echelon from which Arab leadership is drawn, identify with the state to a lesser extent, and their sense of pride in their citizenship is weaker. Moreover, since the Arab public's overall level of formal education is rising, it is possible that Arab citizens' pride in being Israeli will continue to decline, unless suitable responses are found to the problems they face- at both the symbolic (civic status) and practical (decent employment, reasonable living conditions in Arab towns and cities, and more) levels.

Individual and Group Identity

The identity of Arabs in Israel includes components of religion, nationality, and citizenship, which both complement and contradict each other. Interviewees were asked which identity is most important to them. A plurality of respondents (29%) chose their religious identity (Muslim, Christian, or Druze) as being most important, followed (almost equally) by their Israeli (25%) and Arab identities (24%). Only around one-eighth of respondents said that their Palestinian identity is most important to them. If this finding is corroborated in future surveys, it will seemingly be possible to state that there is a large gap between the sense of identity of the Arab leadership in Israel, which greatly emphasizes the Palestinian component, and that of the Arab public in Israel as a whole.

**Figure 5 ** Which identity is the most important to you? (percent)



At the same time, the ranking and frequency of identities varies greatly between sub-groups.¹¹ Among Muslims, the religious, Israeli, and Arab identities were selected by almost identical proportions (28%, 25%, and 23%, respectively). Palestinian identity was ranked fourth, a considerable way behind (13%). Among Christians, the highest share of respondents chose their Arab identity as primary (32%), followed by Israeli (22%), religious (18%), and Palestinian identity (14%). Among Druze, a majority selected their religious identity as their primary identification (54%), followed by Israeli identity (37%). In fact, the Druze hardly identified themselves at all as being primarily Arab (5%). None of the Druze respondents said that their primary identity is Palestinian.

Similar to the question on pride in being Israeli, the question about primary identity also produced surprising findings among the younger and more educated groups. Although these respondents reported lower levels of religiosity than did the older and less educated respondents, religious identity was most frequently selected as being the most important. This implies that religious identity does not equate to level of religiosity, and thus a limited or almost nonexistent adoption of religious practices does not necessarily mean a weak religious identity. In any case, this issue requires further exploration, to clarify how these self-definitions regarding religiosity and religious identity are expressed in terms of religious beliefs and practices.

Mirroring their greater levels of pride in being Israeli, the 55+ age group selected their Israeli identity as being most important, in greater proportion than their younger counterparts. It is possible that this reflects an honest sense of affinity for Israeli citizenship among this age group. However, we should not rule out the possibility that this is a form of “social desirability” and those older respondents were wary of expressing a view that could be perceived as critical of the state. In contrast, younger age groups, who are more educated and better off financially, are less preoccupied by these concerns. Indeed, with regards to the question about being wary of expressing one’s opinions publicly (see below), a higher proportion of older than younger respondents reported being unwilling to share their political opinions.

We have already noted the higher level of religiosity among residents of the southern region. It is therefore unsurprising that the proportion of these respondents who report that their religious identity is their primary self-definition is higher than among residents of other regions—with the exception of the Haifa region, where there is a high share of Druze whose religious identity is of primary importance. The higher level of religiosity among women is also reflected in the higher percentage of female respondents who chose their religious identity as being most important (33%, compared with 25% of males).

11 For details, see Table 1 in Appendix 2.

Coexistence

One of the most significant factors in majority-minority relations is the willingness to engage in various forms of relationships with members of the “other” group. In this context, it is accepted practice to describe a scale of relations, from the most intimate (spouse) to the most distant (coworker). Studies show that this scale is quite systematic: those willing to accept members of the other group in more intimate settings (in the family, and as neighbors) are also generally willing to accept them in more distant settings (such as the workplace). But the opposite does not hold true—not all of those willing to engage in more distant relationships are willing to entertain relationships in more intimate contexts. This scale was found to be true of our survey, too, in which we examined the closeness of the relationships that both Jews and Arabs are willing to have with one another. We found that Arabs are more open to having closer relationships with Jews than Jews are with Arabs, although Jews also displayed a clear willingness to engage in these relationships. In both groups, the highest level of recorded opposition was to marriage with a member of the opposite group.

Looking at the Arab sample in greater detail, interviewees were asked whether they would be willing to have a Jew as a spouse, for themselves or their children, a personal friend, a neighbor, or a coworker. There was overwhelming support for accepting a Jew as a coworker (95%), and a high rate of acceptance of Jews as personal friends (88%) and neighbors (86%). On marriage, however, a large majority were opposed (75%). Breaking down the Arab sample by religion reveals that the Christian sub-group displayed the most openness, followed by the Muslims and then the Druze. We also found that differences in the willingness to have relationships with Jews were linked to the level of respondents’ religiosity and the centrality of religious identity to their self-definition. The more religious a respondent, the less willing they are to become personally close to Jews. Furthermore, in cases where religion forbids marrying members of another religion, as is the case for Druze, mixed marriages are deemed to be almost entirely unacceptable (only 2% of Druze respondents would be willing to marry a Jew). Education is positively associated with willingness to engage in relationships with other groups. Indeed, among the more educated interviewees in our sample (who also reported being less religious) we found greater openness to relationships with Jews.¹²

12 For details, see Table 2 in Appendix 2.

4. Democratic Values

Freedom of expression and compliance with the rule of law are essential elements of living in a democratic state. These elements are particularly challenging in the case of minority groups whose sense of belonging to the state is often weaker than that of the majority group. They are particularly charged subjects in the Israeli context, where the minority group has blood ties to the Palestinian people who are enmeshed in an ongoing and violent national conflict with the State of Israel. It is therefore no surprise that the civic status of the Arab public in Israel is fraught with complexity, and even vulnerability.

Freedom of Expression

The freedom and confidence of citizens to express their political opinions generally, and in particular opinions that differ from the consensus, are vital signs of a real democracy. The value of freedom of expression is compromised not only by the imposition of formal limitations, but also when citizens are fearful of expressing their opinion in public due to social pressures or concern about possible reactions from the state. This is even more relevant in the case of a minority whose members' opinions may be very different from those of the majority. We therefore decided to examine the extent to which Arab citizens of Israel are unwilling to express their political opinions in the presence of others.

The survey revealed that around 45% of Arab citizens prefer to not state their political opinions in the presence of people they don't know (among Jews, the rate was 37%). The finding that almost one-half of Arab citizens and more than a third of Jewish citizens prefer to not talk about their political views with strangers is a negative symptom of the state of democratic discourse in Israel.

Our survey found that Arab women are more hesitant about sharing their political views than are men; older age groups are more hesitant than younger age groups; and Muslims and Christians are more hesitant than Druze, perhaps because the opinions of the Druze are closer to those of the Israeli consensus. A breakdown of the data by religiosity shows that the non-religious are less circumspect than the religious, which may be connected to the fact that they have a stronger sense of Israeli identity and higher level of formal education, and thus perhaps either their opinions are more publicly acceptable or they feel more confident in standing up for themselves. In addition, residents of the central, northern, and southern regions are less willing to express their political opinions than are residents of the Haifa region (of whom many are Druze). A similar result is seen in the breakdown of data by voting in the 2015 Knesset elections: among voters for Zionist parties, there is less concern about sharing political views than among voters for the Joint List.

Compliance with State Laws

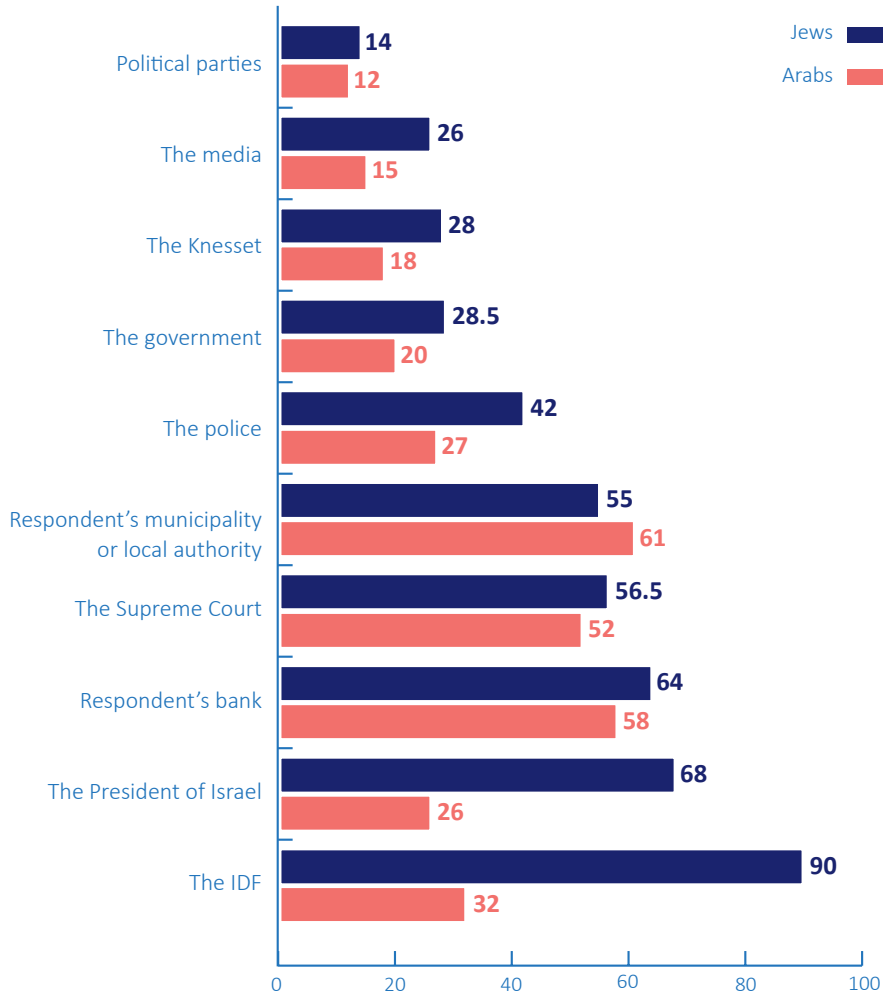
Israel has a large population of religious people for whom religious law and religious leadership are highly important, if not supreme, sources of authority. We wanted to establish the extent of the importance accorded to religious dictates, compared with state laws and legal institutions. In most cases, these two systems exist side by side, each affecting different aspects of individuals' lives. But what happens when a conflict arises between religious commandments and state court rulings? Which one will be considered binding?

Among Arab respondents, 48% said that they would follow religious dictates in such a case, while a similar proportion (44%) would abide by the ruling of the courts. As expected, religion and religiosity, combined, are the most important factors. Among Muslims, who had the highest rate of respondents who define themselves as religious, 56% said that, in the case of a conflict, they would follow religious rulings rather than the courts. Among Druze, who least define themselves as being religious, 32% gave this response, and among Christians, just 24%. Breaking down responses by education, age, and area of residence produced the same result—it is the level of religiosity that determines respondents' opinions on this question.

5. Trust in State Institutions and Arab Leadership

In Israel, as in many other countries, recent years have seen an accelerated decline in the level of public trust in elected leaders. The survey shows that the level of trust of the Arab public in Israel's state institutions is lower in every instance than that of the Jewish public (which is itself low), as can be seen in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6 \ Share of respondents expressing “quite a lot” and “very much” trust in state institutions (by nationality; percent)



Breakdowns of the responses revealed clear differences:

- Muslim respondents reported a lower level of trust than Christians and Druze in every instance:
 - Political parties—Muslims, 9%; Christians, 22%; Druze, 14%.
 - The police—Muslims, 23%; Christians, 36%; Druze, 43%.
 - The government—Muslims, 14%; Christians, 30%; Druze, 48%.

- Druze (81%) have far more trust in the IDF than do Christians (44%) and Muslims (22%).
- Voters for the Joint List have less trust in all institutions than do voters for Zionist parties:
 - Political parties—Only 10% of voters for the Joint List expressed trust in parties, compared with around one-quarter (22%) of voters for Zionist parties.
 - The police—19% (Joint List) versus 41% (Zionist parties).
 - The Knesset—14% versus 29%.
 - The government—11% versus 41%.
 - The IDF—14% versus 65%.
- Residents of the central region have less trust in state institutions than those who live in other regions:
 - Political parties—Only 5% of central region residents expressed trust in political parties, compared with 12% of those in the northern region, 11% in the Haifa region, and 18% in the southern region.
 - The police—central region, 18%; northern region, 32%; Haifa region, 19%; southern region, 33%.
 - The IDF— central region, 14%; northern region, 24%; Haifa region, 34%; southern region, 24%.
 - The government— central region, 9%; northern region, 24%; Haifa region, 19%; southern region, 15.5%.

It would appear that the low level of trust of residents of the central region in institutions is closely connected to the larger proportion of Muslims among this group, and to the greater preference for religious and Arab self-definition relative to residents of other regions.¹³

- Level of formal education was also found to have a damaging effect on trust in institutions:
 - The level of trust in the police is lower among those with an academic education (22%) and those with a high-school education or higher, non-academic training (26%) than among those with an elementary-school or partial-high-school education (36%).
 - This is also the case regarding trust in the Knesset, the government, and the IDF:
 - Only 15.5% of those with an academic education and 17% of those with a high-school education or further education have trust in the Knesset, compared with 24% of those with an elementary-school or partial-high-school education.
 - Only 14% of those in the two most highly-educated groups expressed trust in the government, compared with 35% of those in the two groups with the lowest levels of formal education.
 - For trust in the IDF, the rates are 27% and 29% compared with 44.5%, respectively.

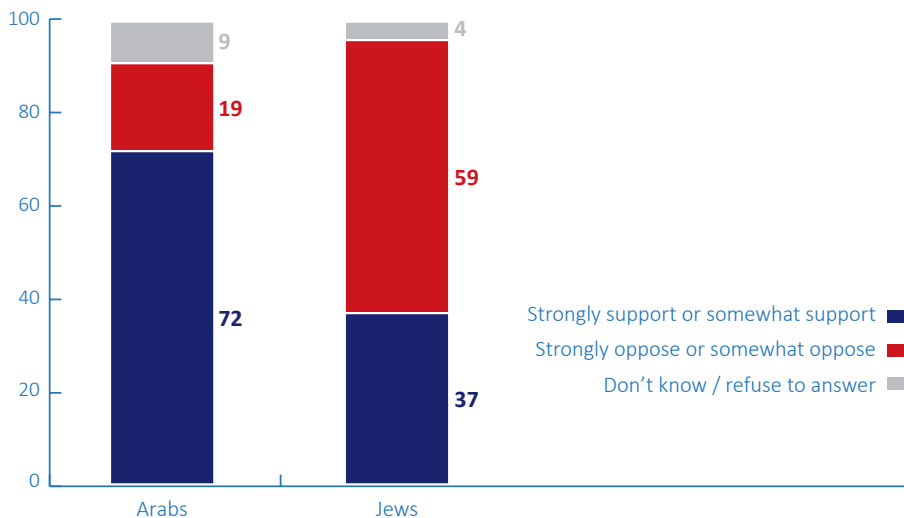
13 See Table 1 in Appendix 2.

This picture of low levels of trust in state institutions accords with the broadly-held agreement of both groups—Jews and Arabs—with the statement that politicians look out for their own personal interests more than they do for the interests of those who elected them (80% and 78%, respectively). Here too, some differences were found between sub-groups in the Arab sample: men agreed with this statement (82%) more than did women (73%); voters for Zionist parties (88%) agreed with it more than did voters for the Joint List (77%); and residents of the Haifa region (86%) were more in agreement with than were residents of the other regions.

Participation in Government

It was surprising to discover that, despite the lack of trust in state institutions, a clear majority of the entire Arab public is in favor of Arab parties joining the government, including the appointment of Arab ministers (72%). Among Jews, the situation is reversed: the majority (59%) opposes having Arab parties in the government.

Figure 7 \ Attitude toward Arab parties joining the government, including the appointment of Arab ministers (by nationality; percent)



Trust in the Supreme Arab Monitoring Committee and Arab Leadership

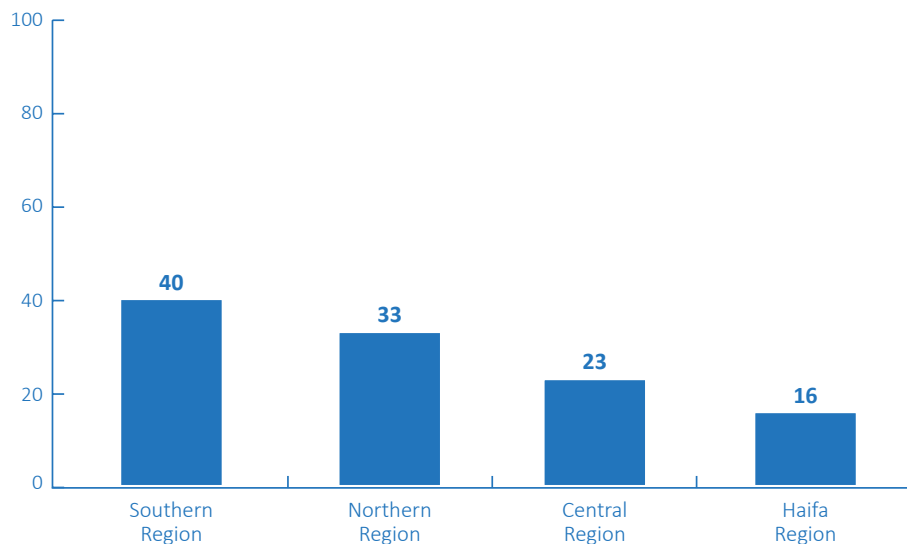
Given the lack of trust in politicians and institutions of elected representatives on a national level, we were interested in the level of trust held by the Arab public in its own independent institutions. We found that only a minority of Arab respondents (29%) reported having very much or quite a lot of trust in the Supreme Arab Monitoring Committee,¹⁴ while the majority (52%) have no trust in this body.¹⁵ We also found that the levels of trust in the Committee were higher among women than among men, and higher among Muslims than among Christians and Druze.

We found an inverse relation between level of formal education and level of trust in this body—the higher the education, the lower the trust. This finding conforms to the same inverse relation found between level of education and level of trust in all other institutions. The level of trust in the Supreme Arab Monitoring Committee was higher among voters for the Joint List (32%) than among voters for Zionist parties, and higher among residents of the southern region than among residents of the other regions. The reason for this last finding might lie in the different nature of the Committee's activities in each region. The particular problems of the southern region, such as the demolition of unrecognized Bedouin houses and settlements, demands more intensive involvement of the Committee, creating a more direct link to residents of the south and greater awareness among them of the Committee's work.

14 The Supreme Arab Monitoring Committee is not an elected body on a national level, but a non-governmental body established by Arab politicians. It serves as an umbrella organization for political parties and other bodies in the Arab sector, coordinating their political activities.

15 It should be noted that the share of those who were unable to rank their level of trust in the Supreme Arab Monitoring Committee was much higher than for any other body or institution we asked about. A survey of the Arab population conducted by the Mada al-Carmel Institute in 2014 found that around 65% of respondents were completely unaware of the activities of the Supreme Arab Monitoring Committee.

Figure 8 \ Share of respondents expressing “quite a lot” and “very much” trust in the Supreme Arab Monitoring Committee (by area of residence; percent)



The lack of trust in the Supreme Arab Monitoring Committee found in this survey gave rise to a question about the Arab public's assessment of the overall functioning of its leaders. On the question of Arab-Israeli leaders' priorities vis-à-vis Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, on the one hand, and the Arab citizens of Israel on the other, we found that a majority of Arab respondents (61%) very much agree or agree quite a lot with the statement that Arab leaders are mainly concerned with the problems of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and insufficiently concerned with the problems of Israeli Arabs. In other words, the Arab public in Israel feels that the Palestinian problem is foremost among the priorities of its elected representatives, while its own problems are relegated to a lower place on the agenda.

Specifically, criticism of the Arab-Israeli leadership on this issue was stronger among men (65%) than women (56.5%); and more prominent among Christians (72%) and Druze (68%) than Muslims (59%). In terms of voting, the fiercest criticism came from voters for Zionist parties (76%), although there was also a majority with a critical opinion among voters for the Joint List (59%) and among those who did not vote (58%).

Conclusions

How is it possible that most Israeli Arabs in Israel are proud of being Israeli, while an overwhelming majority feels that they are discriminated against? Why do most Arabs think that the tension between Arabs and Jews is the most serious point of friction in Israeli society, and yet a large majority is willing to accept Jews as friends and neighbors? How can it be that, while Arabs have little trust in state institutions and are highly critical toward their elected representatives, most are in favor of Arab parties joining the government and the appointment of Arab ministers?

This tapestry of conflicting views is indicative of the complex situation being experienced by Arab citizens of Israel, which is highlighted by competing integrationist and separationist trends. Overall, the findings of the 2016 Israeli Democracy Index show that Arab citizens seek increased integration in Israel, as evidenced by the fact that Israeli identity plays a central, if not primary, role in their self-definition. Other supporting findings for this idea include the levels of pride in being Israeli, and overwhelming support for Arab parties to join the government. On the other hand, there is almost unanimous agreement among the survey's respondents that they suffer discrimination. This pervasive attitude is reinforced by the finding that almost half of Arab citizens are both unwilling to express their political opinions in the presence of strangers and would abide by religious dictates, and not the rulings of a state court, should the two conflict with one another.

The breakdowns we performed on the data reinforce the realization that Arab society in Israel is not homogeneous, and that each religious group—Muslim, Christian, and Druze—has its own distinct attitude towards integration and segregation. It is very clear that such beliefs are also dependent on sociodemographic variables as religiosity, area of residence, age, sex, income, and level of formal education. Of the many variables we examined, the two that consistently explained many of the attitudes surveyed were, first of all, religion (Muslim, Christian, Druze), and second, area of residence.

In conclusion, we present the following brief sketch of the integration-separation profile according to eight variables:

1. **Religion.** Israel's Druze citizens are proud of being Israeli, and their assessment of the overall situation of the state and of their personal situation is more positive than that of Christians, and far more positive than that of Muslims. Druze are also less hesitant than Christians and Muslims to express their political views in the presence of strangers.

However, in terms of personal integration with the Jewish majority, Christians are more accepting of Jews as neighbors, personal friends, and coworkers than Muslims are. Druze, on the other hand—despite their closer daily interactions with the Jewish majority, such as in the IDF—are less willing to maintain close relationships with Jews, especially when it comes to marriage, seemingly due to the more stringent opposition of the Druze religion to intermarriage.

2. **Area of residence.** The link between religion, on the one hand, and area of residence and income, on the other, may explain some of the differences found between regions as they pertain to the various parameters of integration. In general, residents of the Haifa, northern, and southern regions tend to view the overall situation of the state more positively. This, as opposed to residents of the central region, most of whom are Muslim, who place a premium on their religious and Arab identities, vote for the Joint List, and view Arab-Jewish tensions as being the main focal point of friction in Israel.

The worse off economic situation of the residents of the southern region offers an explanation for their less positive view of their personal situation, as compared to residents of the other regions. The south also has the highest rate of respondents who point to tensions between Arabs and Jews as being the most pronounced of inter-group tensions in Israeli society.

The connections between the other variables and the integration of Arabs in Israeli society are less consistent and less clear:

3. **Sex.** It appears that Arab men are more willing to integrate into Israeli society than Arab women—the most popular primary identity among women is their religious identity, whereas the majority of men value their Israeli identity above all other forms of self-definition. Women also report, at a higher rate than men, being unwilling to express their political views in public.

4. **Age.** The younger age group reports having higher incomes and more formal education than the older cohorts. Yet, despite reporting being less religious, the younger population's primary identity is their religious self-definition. Among the intermediate age group, it is their Arab and religious identities that hold sway, while among the older respondents, the Israeli identity is preeminent. And finally, perhaps because of their higher incomes and levels of education, the younger respondents view the overall situation of the state and their personal situation more positively.

5. **Religiosity.** A higher level of religiosity is linked, as expected, to isolationist and separationist tendencies. Thus, a higher level of religiosity also predicts a higher selection rate of religious identity as primary, and a preference for following religious dictates over state court rulings in the case of a clash between the two.

6. **Level of formal education.** A higher level of formal education is associated with greater openness to integrating into Jewish Israeli society. And the higher the level of education, the lower the level of religiosity, the greater the willingness to abide by state court rulings rather than following religious dictates. Israeli Arabs with higher education are more willing to engage in interpersonal relations with Jews and fear less expressing public opinions. Last but not least they expressed a more positive assessment of their personal situation. However, we found that higher levels of education were associated with lower levels of pride in being Israeli.

7. **Income.** The only direct association for income is with assessments of the overall situation of Israel and respondents' personal situation.

8. **Voting in Knesset elections.** As expected, voters for Zionist parties are more inclined toward integration in Israeli society than voters for the Joint List, and the formers' attitudes are aligned in other respects with those who share these integrationist tendencies.

A similarly complex picture is also revealed regarding **trust in national and Arab public institutions and political leadership**, and the willingness to be involved in Israeli politics. In general, the majority of the Arab public lacks trust in institutions and is critical of politicians, both in general and regarding the Arab political leadership in particular. A majority believes that Arab politicians are more concerned with the problems of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and insufficiently concerned with the problems of Arabs in Israel. Moreover, only a minority has trust in the Supreme Arab Monitoring Committee. At the same time, most are in favor of Arab parties joining the government.

On this issue, too, a breakdown of responses by population segments reveals differences between the sub-groups. There is greater trust among Muslims in the Supreme Arab Monitoring Committee than among Christians or Druze. In addition, Muslims are less inclined than the other two groups to agree with the statement that Arab politicians are overly concerned with the problems of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and insufficiently concerned with the problems of Israeli Arabs. With regards to geography, levels of trust in the Supreme Monitoring Committee are highest among residents of the central region, and lowest among those who live in the Haifa region. Trust in the Committee is higher among women, members of the 35–54 age group, voters for the Joint List, those with lower levels of formal education, and the more religious.

Based on our findings, it is clear that Arab society in Israel is diverse, encompassing multiple interests and voices. All of the variables by which we analyzed responses to specific questions should be taken into account, perhaps along with additional variables that we have not yet considered, not only when reporting the results of surveys and public opinion research, but also—and more importantly—when formulating official policy regarding Arab citizens of Israel.

Appendix 1

Table 1 \ Sample Characteristics (percent)

Sex	
Male	51
Female	49
Total	100
Age	
18-34	43.5
35-54	36.5
55+	20
Total	100
Religion	
Muslim	73
Christian	14
Druze	12
Don't know / refuse to answer	1
Total	100



Religiosity	
Very religious	4
Religious	26
Traditional	48
Not at all religious	21.5
Don't know / refuse to answer	0.5
Total	100
Area of Residence	
North	56
Haifa	18
Center	12
Jerusalem	1
Tel Aviv	1
South	12
Total	100

**Table 2 ** Muslims, Christians, and Druze (by religiosity, level of formal education, area of residence, and voting pattern in the 2015 Knesset elections; percent)

		Muslims	Christians	Druze
Religiosity	Very religious	3	2	7
	Religious	32	6	14
	Traditional	47	58	43
	Not at all religious	17	30	36
	Don't know / refuse to answer	1	4	0
	Total	100	100	100
Level of Formal Education	Elementary or partial high school	26	22	26
	Full high school or further	37	26	43
	Partial or full academic	36	50	31
	Don't know / refuse to answer	1	2	0
	Total	100	100	100
Area of Residence	North	49	74	69
	Center	16	0	2
	Haifa	16	22	26
	South	17	2	0
	Other	2	2	3
	Total	100	100	100

		Muslims	Christians	Druze
Voting Pattern in the 2015 Knesset Elections	Joint List	64	54	10
	Zionist parties	9	8	56
	Did not vote despite having the right to vote	21	26	19.5
	Don't know / refuse to answer	6	12	14.5
	Total	100	100	100

**Table 3 ** Religiosity (by sex, age, level of formal education, area of residence, and voting pattern in the 2015 Knesset elections; percent)

		Very Religious	Religious	Traditional	Not at all religious	Don't know / refuse to answer	Total
Sex	Male	2	18	48	30	2	100
	Female	5	34	47.5	12	1.5	100
Age	18-34	3	18	50	28	1	100
	35-54	4.5	33	48.5	12	2	100
	55+	3	32	40	25	0	100
Level of Formal Education	Elementary or partial high school	6.5	34	43.5	16	0	100
	Full high school or further	3	28	46	21	2	100
	Partial or full academic	2	18.5	52	27	0.5	100
Area of Residence	North	2.5	25	50	22	0.5	100
	Center	2	29.5	48	18	2.5	100
	Haifa	5	19	42	30	4	100
	South	9	40	44	7	0	100
Voting Pattern in 2015 Knesset Elections	Joint List	3	27	47	21	2	100
	Zionist parties	8	16	45	31	0	100
	Didn't vote despite having the right to vote	4	34	43	18	1	100

Table 4 \ Income (by age, religion, and level of formal education)

		Income (average from 1 to 5)*
Overall Sample		2.3
Age	18-34	2.5
	35-54	2
	55+	2
Religion	Muslim	2.2
	Christian	2.4
	Druze	2.6
Education	Elementary or partial high school	1.5
	Full high school or further	2.2
	Partial or full academic	2.8

- * 1 = Well below average
 2 = Slightly below average
 3 = Average
 4 = Slightly above average
 5 = Well above average

Table 5 \ Area of Residence (by religion, income, and voting pattern in the 2015 Knesset elections)

	North	Center	Haifa	South	
Religion (percent)	Muslim	65	98	66	98
	Christian	18	0	17	2
	Druze	14	2	17	0
	Don't know / refuse to answer	3	0	0	0
	Total	100	100	100	100
Income (average, 1–5)	2.2	2.5	2.6	2.0	
Voting Pattern in 2015 Knesset Elections (percent)	Joint List	52	73	56	56
	Zionist parties	15.5	5	19	13
	Didn't vote despite having the right to vote	22	19.5	17	24
	Don't know / refuse to answer	10.5	2.5	8	7
	Total	100	100	100	100

Appendix 2

Table 1 \ Primary Identity (by sex, age, religion, religiosity, level of formal education, area of residence, and voting pattern in the 2015 Knesset elections; percent)*

	Primary Identity Selected by Largest Share of Respondents in Group	Primary Identity Selected by Second-Largest Share of Respondents in Group	Primary Identity Selected by Third-Largest Share of Respondents in Group	Primary Identity Selected by Fourth-Largest Share of Respondents in Group
Sex				
Male	Israeli (28)	Arab (26)	Religious (25)	Palestinian (11)
Female	Religious (33)	Arab (22)	Israeli (21.5)	Palestinian (13)
Age				
18-34	Religious (32)	Israeli (22)	Arab (21)	Palestinian (14)
35-54	Arab (31)	Religious (27)	Israeli (24)	Palestinian (10)
55+	Israeli (32)	Religious (28)	Arab (18)	Palestinian (12)
Religion				
Muslim	Religious (28)	Arab (25)	Israeli (23)	Palestinian (13)
Christian	Arab (32)	Israeli (22)	Religious (18)	Palestinian (14)
Druze	Religious (54)	Israeli (37)	Arab (5)	Palestinian (0)

* All rows total 100% with the addition of the following responses: All of the above equally; None of the above; Don't know / refuse to answer.

	Primary Identity Selected by Largest Share of Respondents in Group	Primary Identity Selected by Second-Largest Share of Respondents in Group	Primary Identity Selected by Third-Largest Share of Respondents in Group	Primary Identity Selected by Fourth-Largest Share of Respondents in Group
Religiosity				
Very religious	Religious (76)	Israeli (8) Palestinian (8) Arab (8)		
Religious	Religious (47)	Israeli (22)	Arab (17)	Palestinian (11)
Traditional	Arab (30)	Religious (26)	Israeli (24)	Palestinian (7.5)
Not at all religious	Israeli (31)	Palestinian (25)	Arab (23)	Religious (9)
Level of Formal Education				
Elementary or partial high school	Israeli (40)	Religious (34)	Arab (15)	Palestinian (4)
Full high school or further	Religious (28)	Arab (27)	Israeli (25)	Palestinian (11.5)
Partial or full academic	Religious (28)	Arab (27)	Palestinian (17)	Israeli (13)
Area of Residence				
North	Israeli (28)	Arab (26)	Religious (25)	Palestinian (11)
Center	Arab (29.5) Religious (29.5)	Israeli (20.5)	Palestinian (13)	
Haifa	Religious (33)	Arab (22)	Israeli (17)	Palestinian (12.5)
South	Religious (40)	Israeli (27)	Arab (16)	Palestinian (13)

	Primary Identity Selected by Largest Share of Respondents in Group	Primary Identity Selected by Second-Largest Share of Respondents in Group	Primary Identity Selected by Third-Largest Share of Respondents in Group	Primary Identity Selected by Fourth-Largest Share of Respondents in Group
Voting Pattern in 2015 Knesset Elections				
Joint List	Arab (32)	Religious (26)	Palestinian (16)	Israeli (16)
Zionist parties	Israeli (48)	Religious (32)	Arab (14)	Palestinian (4)
Didn't vote despite having the right to vote	Religious (35.5)	Israeli (26)	Arab (16)	Palestinian (8)

Table 2 \ Willing to Accept a Jew (by religion and level of formal education; percent)

		As your spouse or that of your children	As a personal friend	As a neighbor	As a coworker
Religion	Muslim	24	87	86	95
	Christian	30	98	98	100
	Druze	2	81	71	95
Level of Formal Education	Elementary or partial high school	17	84	79	92
	Full high school or further	18	88	89	97
	Partial or full academic	30	92	88	97

The Israeli Democracy Index is prepared annually by the Guttman Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research, and provides an updated assessment of the caliber of Israel's democracy. A large-scale survey of a representative sample of the Israeli population has been conducted on an annual basis over the last fourteen years. The Index aims to uncover important trends in Israeli society regarding the realization of democratic values and goals, and the functioning of Israel's governing systems and elected officials. Ultimately, analysis of the survey results presented in the Index is meant to contribute to the public discourse on the state of the country's democracy, and create a deep reservoir of knowledge that will help broaden the discussion on this issue.

While this publication is part of an ongoing research effort, this year's Israeli Democracy Index shines a spotlight on Arab society, which constitutes around one-fifth of the country's population. Analysis of the 2016 survey results reveals an important general insight: Arab society in Israel is a complex entity, encompassing a diverse array of opinions. An appreciation of these internal differences—as presented in the Index according to segmentation by sex, age, residence, religion, religiosity, education, income, and voting behavior in the 2015 Knesset elections—is crucial for an in depth understanding of the Israeli Arab public. In addition, such comprehensive data and analysis are vital to the transformation of reducing inequality between Israel's Arab and Jewish publics from an empty slogan into reality.

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