

Pre-Elections Survey 2, February 2019

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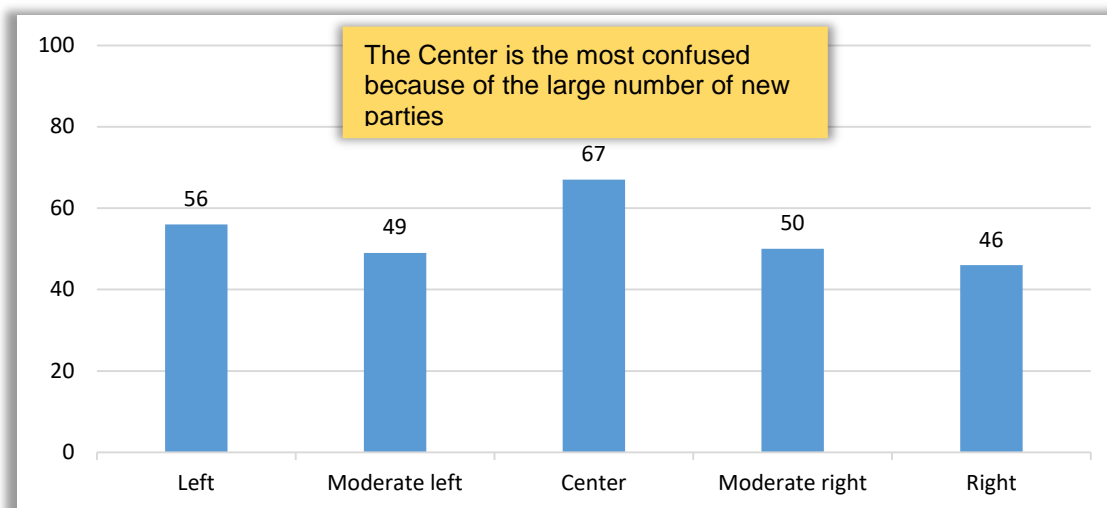
The election season is in full swing - one event follows another and the overall picture changes with dizzying rapidity, leaving large parts of the public in bewilderment. Some previous party loyalties lose their relevance, new possibilities that arose only a short time ago vanish, and other new possibilities surge forward to the point of perhaps fundamentally changing the political map.

Harder than in the past to decide whom to vote for - Amid the ongoing flux we asked: “Do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: ‘Because of the many changes that have recently occurred in the party map, it is harder for me than in the past to decide which party to vote for?’”

Half of the respondents agreed with that statement. **Among the Jews the greatest agreement with the sentence was found among those who defined themselves as in the center**, perhaps because this camp has very recently undergone a reorganization.

A segmentation by voting intentions among the Jews revealed that the difficulty is especially pronounced among potential voters for Kulanu (76%), Bayit Yehudi, which has linked up with Otzma Yehudit (73%), and Geshet (68%). The first and last parties are, according to the polls, hovering near the minimum-votes threshold, while the party in the middle has undergone a huge shakeup with the addition of the Kahanist element- to the chagrin of many past and present Bayit Yehudi voters.

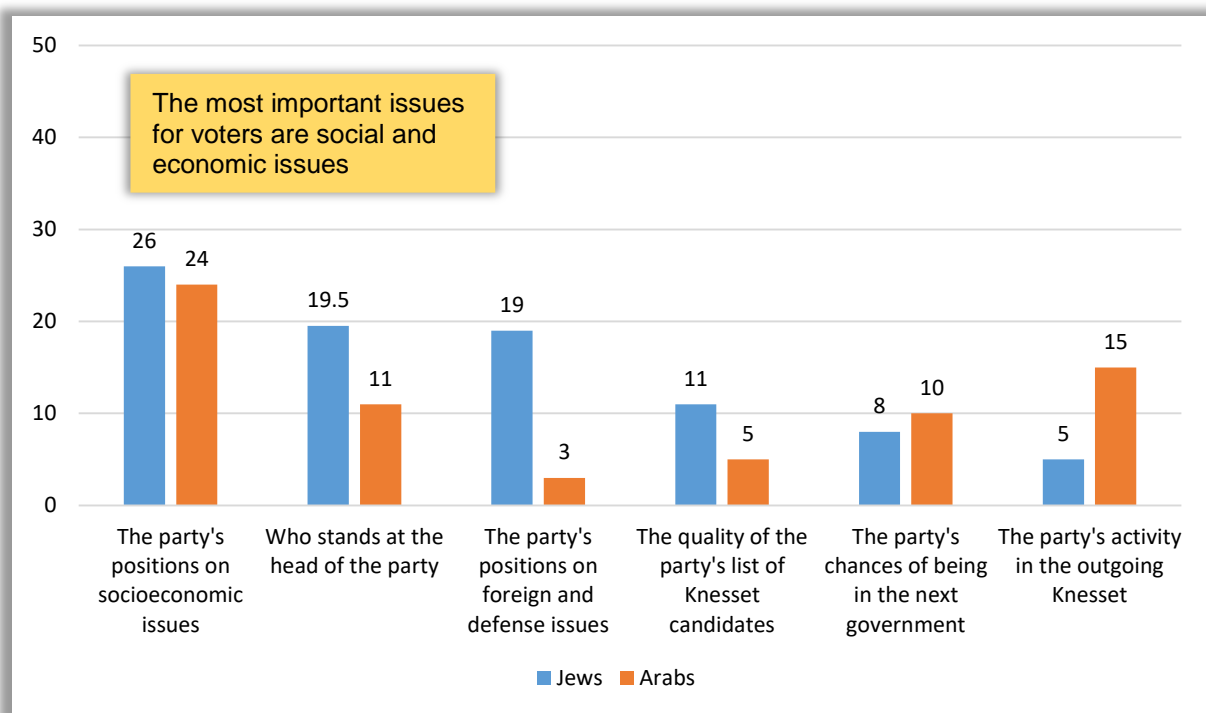
Those agreeing that it is harder than in the past to decide whom to vote for (% Jews)



The **Arab sector**, too, has trouble deciding whom to vote for in these elections. 45% of the Arabs in the survey said they were having greater difficulty doing so than in the past.

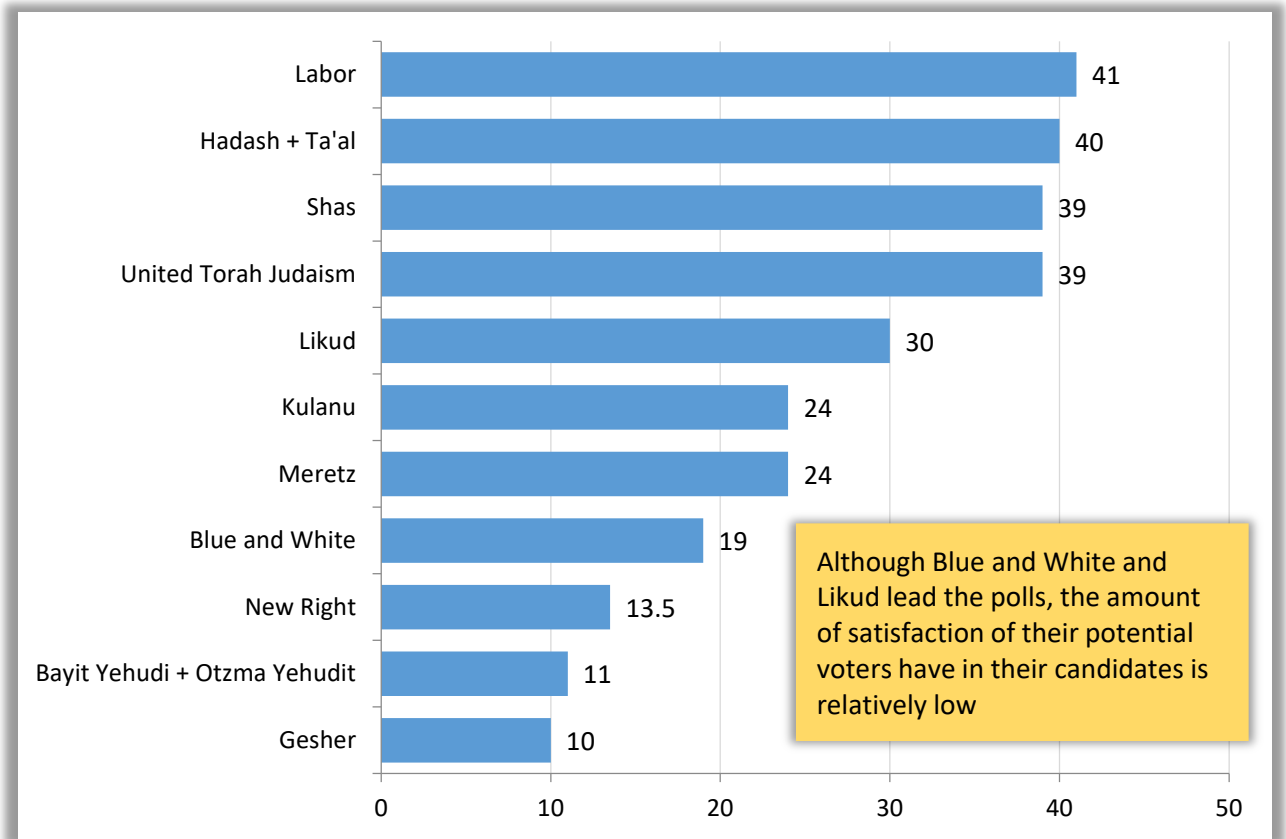
The main consideration in voting - In recent years two claims have been made about the motivations for voting in Israel. Some say that the most influential factor is who heads the party, while others argue that Israelis vote primarily according to the party's position on security issues. Neither of these claims **is strengthened by the survey**. The answers to the question "What is your main consideration when you decide which party to vote for?" show that **in fact the parties' positions on socioeconomic issues** are the main factor in choosing one party and not another, not their leaders or the security issue.

What is your main consideration when you decide which party to vote for? (Jews and Arabs, %)



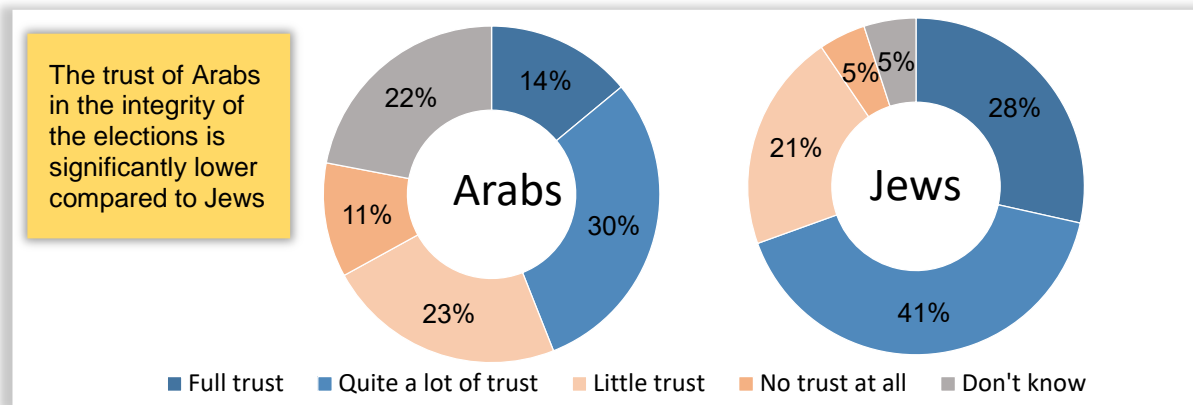
However, the scholarly discourse on the primacy of security has seeped into the public consciousness and produced the phenomenon known in the literature as pluralistic ignorance - which emerges when the situation is one thing but its perception among the public is another because of a lack of awareness of the actual situation. Thus, when the same interviewees ask themselves "What, in your opinion, is the main issue that will influence how Israelis vote in the upcoming Knesset elections?" they do not, paradoxically, deduce the public's overall attitude from their own case but instead repeat the mantra that they hear and read from various experts in the media - the security situation (30%), but immediately behind it - the cost of living (22%). Incidentally, **the Netanyahu investigations (19%) are only in third place here.**

The voters' satisfaction with the lists of candidates for the Knesset - This month the various parties' lists of candidates were signed and submitted. We looked into the potential voters' degree of satisfaction with these lists. It turns out that for all the parties, the majority is moderately or very satisfied with the list, but when it comes to *great* satisfaction the Labor Party comes in first:



The integrity of the elections - In light of claims made after the 2015 elections, particularly on the social networks, that the elections were not “clean” and the results that were announced did not accord with the reality, we gauged for the first time whether this claim has any support in the public. We asked: “To what extent do you have or not have trust in the integrity of the Knesset elections, that is, that the results to be announced will accurately reflect the public’s vote?” It turns out that, indeed, slightly more than a quarter of the interviewees cast doubt on the validity of the results that are publicized. This is a very worrisome finding from the democratic standpoint, though it dovetails with the low level of trust in the establishment that we find repeatedly in recent years.

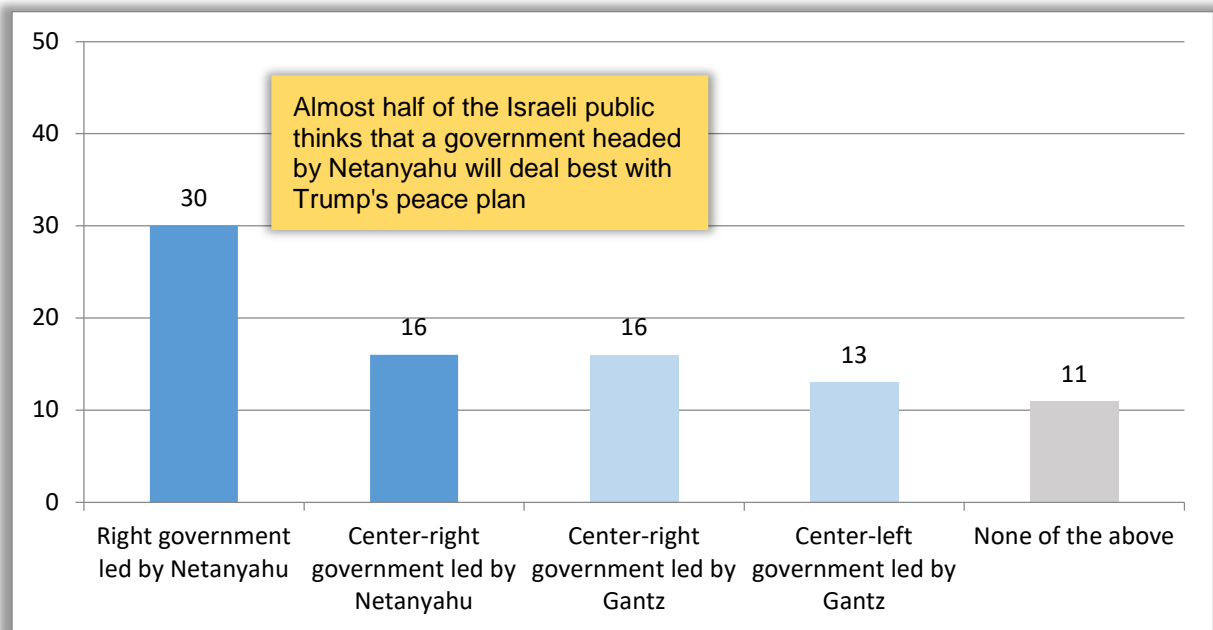
Degree of trust in the integrity of the elections (Jews and Arabs, %)



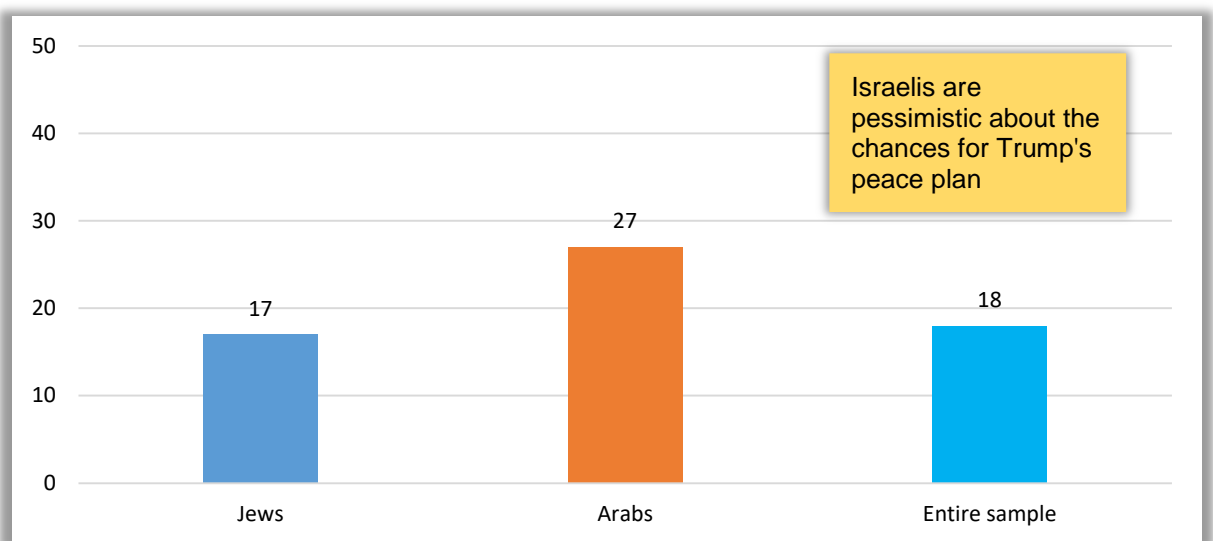
What government will be formed after the elections? This time as well we repeated a question we asked in the previous survey, before the emergence of Blue and White, concerning the respondents' assessments of the chances of various kinds of governments being formed. As in January, this month too the highest rate of interviewees expect that **after the elections a right-wing government headed by Netanyahu will be formed**, but the rate of those saying so declined from 44% to 34%. The rate who think a right-center (or center-right) government will be established did not change (January 38%, February 39%), but this month there was a split between 20% who believe such a government will be led by the right - that is, Netanyahu (20%), and those who expect it to be led by the center - meaning Gantz (19%). Overall, 54% of the public thinks that after the elections a Netanyahu-led government will be formed while 27% believe that one led by Gantz will take shape.

Will it really make a difference if a government of one kind or another is established? The mood of uncertainty to the point of bewilderment is evident on this question as well. Out of the entire sample, 47% agreed with the statement that "When it comes to the main aspects of Israel's foreign and defense policy toward the Palestinians, it does not matter which government is formed after the upcoming elections because the policy in this sphere will in any case be quite similar." Indeed, the same rate also agreed with the corresponding sentence that "When it comes to socioeconomic policy, it does not matter which government is formed after the upcoming elections because the policy of any government in this sphere will be similar." 41% disagreed with the first sentence, 42% with the second. Among the Jews, agreement with the question about the policy on the Palestinian issue is especially high among those defining themselves as in the center (54%), and regarding the socioeconomic sphere, among those defining themselves as moderate right (56%).

Which government will deal more effectively with Trump's peace plan? In light of the reports that after the elections the Trump administration will put a new peace plan on the table, we sought to find out what the public thinks: Which government will better represent Israel's national interest in negotiations in the context of the peace plan? The highest rate thinks a Netanyahu-led government of the right will better represent the national interest (35%). About half that number (18%) prefer a center-right government headed by Netanyahu in this regard. Among the Arabs the highest rate believe that a center-left government headed by Gantz will better represent the national interest (21%); the next response in frequency is that none of the governments presented will better represent the Israeli interest (18%).

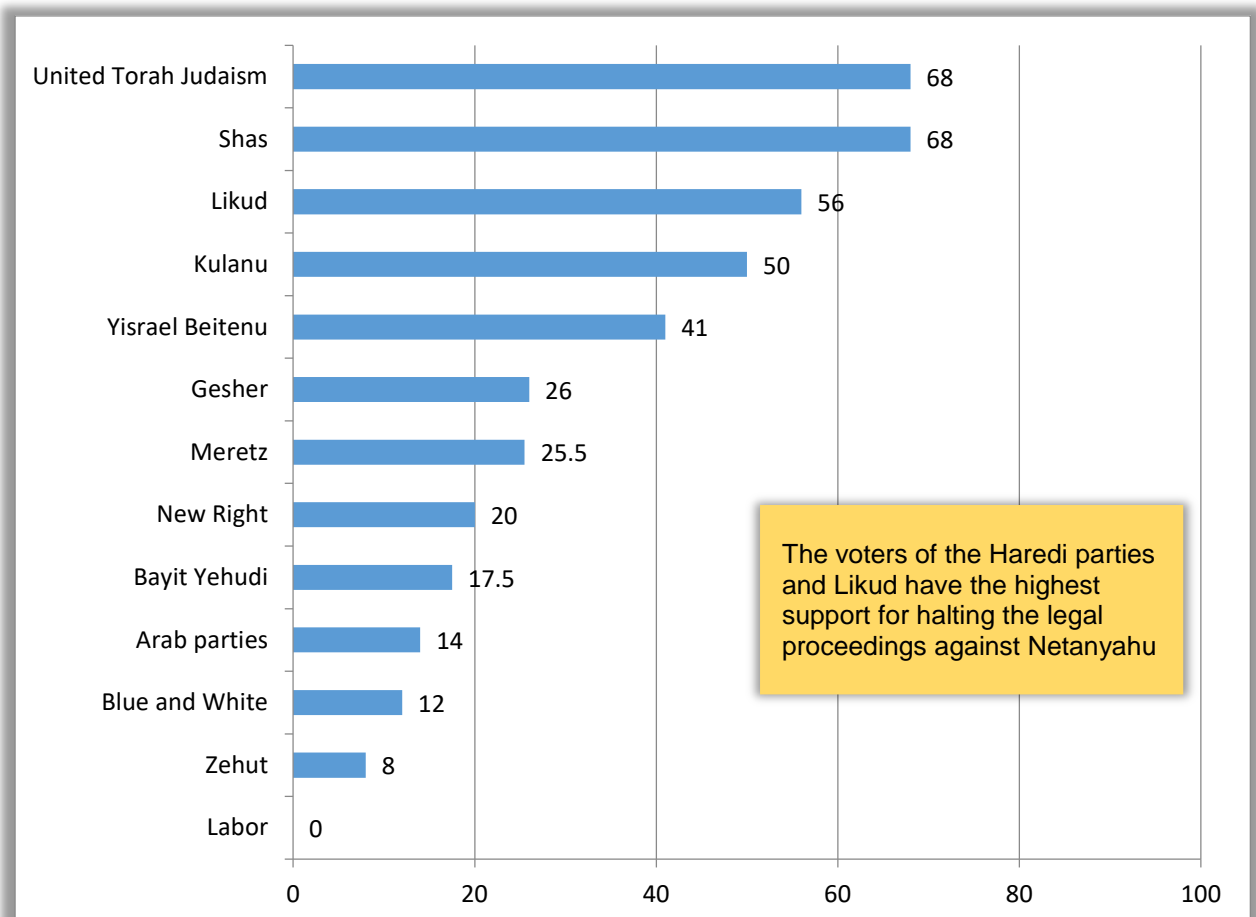


The chances of the Trump plan: Both among the Jews and the Arabs, **only a minority** sees the chances of such a plan bearing fruit as **high or very high** (%)



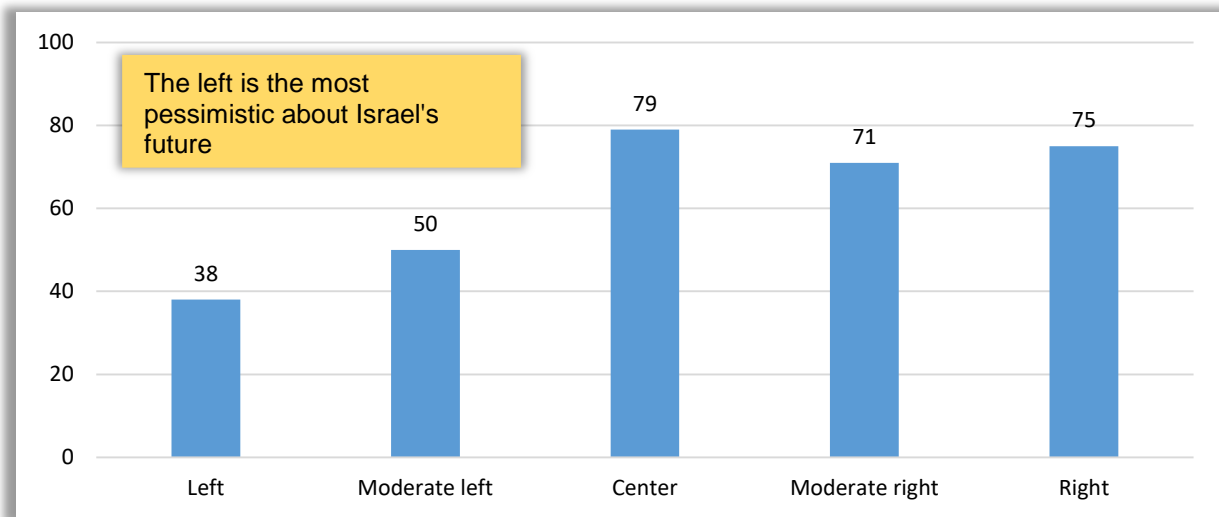
Halting the legal processes against Netanyahu if it will advance the peace negotiations - And then we asked the million-dollar question: “Do you agree or disagree with the claim that if Netanyahu is the next prime minister and advances the peace negotiations with the Palestinians in the context of the new plan, then from the standpoint of the national interest the legal processes against him should be halted?” Among the Jewish interviewees 30% answered this question positively; among the Arabs, about one-fourth. A segmentation of the Jews’ responses by political camp reveals results that are very interesting: the greatest support for halting the processes if there is progress in the peace negotiations **is in fact on the right with its different shadings!** In other words, it appears that “rescuing” Netanyahu is more important to the right-wingers than progress in the negotiations that presumably would entail territorial concessions.

Strongly agree and moderately agree that if Netanyahu as prime minister advances the peace negotiations with the Palestinians, then the legal processes against him should be halted (% , Jews)



Optimism about Israel's future - The last question we looked into this time concerned the interviewees' extent of optimism about Israel's future. We found that 72% of the Jewish interviewees are optimistic compared to 36% of the Arab interviewees. A segmentation of the Jewish interviewees by political camp showed that only among those defining themselves as left are the optimists a minority, and that **the center is currently the most optimistic camp**.

Very optimistic or moderately optimistic about Israel's future (% , Jews)



The survey is a project of the Guttman Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research at the Israel Democracy Institute. This month's survey was conducted by telephone and internet by the Midgam Consulting and Research Institute on February 25-27, 2019. The survey included 600 respondents who constitute a representative national sample of the adult population of Israel aged 18 and over. The maximum measurement error for the entire sample is $\pm 4.1\%$ at a confidence level of 95%. For the full data file see: www.dataisrael.idi.org.il