

# Israeli Voice Index, February 2021

**Prof. Tamar Hermann and Dr. Or Anabi**

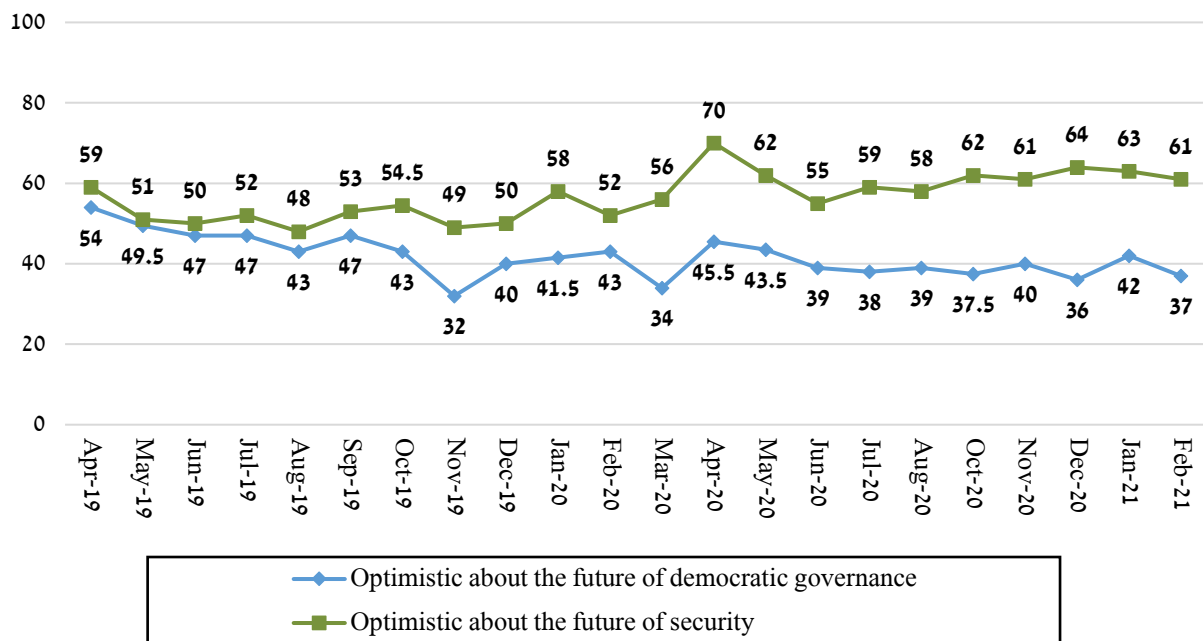
## Main Findings

- ❖ This month saw a slight decline in optimism about the future of Israel's national security and a larger decline in optimism about the future of its democratic governance.
- ❖ As we found in the past, this time too, when we asked an open question, the main factor that the interviewees saw as central regarding whom to vote for was the party's positions on the different issues (primarily socioeconomic, and almost at the identical rate – security issues). When using this approach, the “Just not Bibi/Only Bibi” effect in itself turned out to be of relatively low importance.
- ❖ On the propriety of the elections, about a third of the interviewees – as in the previous election campaigns over the past two years – do not believe that the official election results that will be announced will accurately reflect the voting at the ballot boxes.
- ❖ The public is divided on the question of whether to vote for a small party whose opinions are close to the voter's or for a larger party out of strategic considerations.
- ❖ A majority of the public believes that the upcoming elections will not yield a decisive outcome on the identity of the next prime minister. The exceptions here are Likud voters, a majority of whom anticipate such an outcome.
- ❖ A majority of the public opposes the notion that if Netanyahu wins the upcoming elections, the legal proceedings against him should be halted since a win would mean the people had again handed him the mandate despite the accusations against him.
- ❖ The signing of the surplus-votes agreement between Likud and Religious Zionism does not evoke principled opposition among right-wing voters but does encounter such opposition from centrist and left-wing voters.
- ❖ At present a small majority of the Jewish public still opposes having Arab parties in a coalition and the appointment of Arab ministers, but that majority is smaller than in the past. The change is evident mainly among right-wing and centrist voters, whose opposition may have declined because of Netanyahu's recent overtures toward the Arab public.
- ❖ A majority of the Jewish public, compared to a minority of the Arab public, thinks Israel's security does not play too central a role in the emerging foreign policy of the Biden administration.
- ❖ A majority of the Jews and a minority of the Arabs consider that Iran constitutes an existential danger to Israel.
- ❖ An Israeli military operation against Iran without American agreement is opposed by a majority of the Arab public and also on the Jewish left and center. On the Jewish right it has a majority.
- ❖ A majority of the Arab public, and also of the Jewish left and center, supports a positive Israeli response to the Palestinian Authority's request to provide vaccinations against the coronavirus. Only a minority on the Jewish right favors such a measure.

## The National Mood

The national mood is quite static in recent months. This month, however, a slight decline was measured in optimism about the future of Israel’s national security and a slightly larger decline in optimism about the future of its democratic governance. As in the past, this month there is a majority of optimists about security and a minority of them regarding the future of democracy. It can be hypothesized that the fact that a large majority of the left and center are pessimistic about democracy’s future is related to the election forecasts showing that the chances for a governmental shakeup are not high at the moment.

### Optimistic about the future of Israel’s democracy and about the future of its national security, April 2019 - February 2021 (% , entire sample)



## The Elections

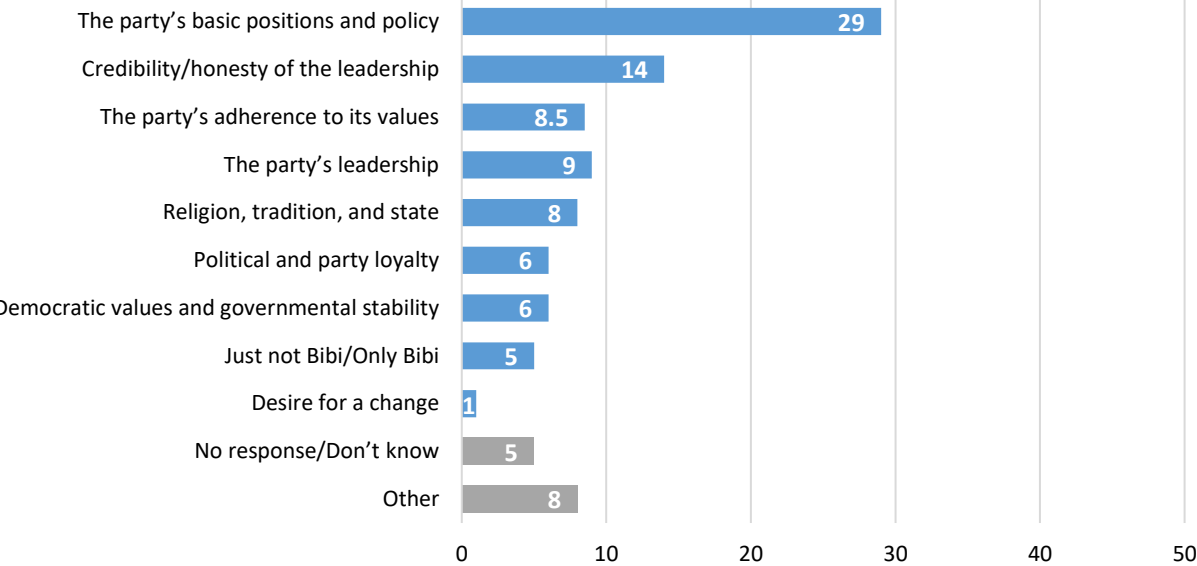
### “Yes Bibi, No Bibi”

Many commentators claim that the elections revolve around a single question: “Yes Bibi, no Bibi.” We decided to look into the matter and this time with the help of an open question, that is, without presenting the interviewees with possible reasons to vote for one party or another. We encoded the responses of the entire public, and nine categories emerged: the party’s basic positions and policy on different issues; the credibility/honesty of the leadership; the party’s leadership; “Just not Bibi/Only Bibi”; political and party loyalty; the party’s adherence to its values; democratic values and governmental stability; religion, tradition, and state; desire for a change; other.

Whether or not one believes the interviewees, we again came up with the result that the party’s positions (primarily on socioeconomic issues) are in first place according to the interviewees’ reporting on their main reason to vote for one party and not another (29%). In second place is the perception of the party’s honesty and integrity (14%). The “Just not Bibi/Only Bibi” reason came in much lower in the ranking.

Moreover, there was great similarity in this ranking among the three political camps (Jews). True, the findings can be forced to yield positive or negative implications for Netanyahu on each of these issues, but the fact is that the “Just not Bibi/Only Bibi” reason does not appear as often as it does in the columns of the various commentators.

**The factors behind voting for a certain party (% , entire sample, encoding of the responses to an open question)**



Below are the rates of interviewees who **explicitly** indicated that the reason for their voting for a certain party is “**Just not Bibi/Only Bibi,**” by voting intention in the upcoming elections:

The intended party to vote for	The reason for the vote is “Only Bibi/Just not Bibi” (%)
Yesh Atid	10
New Hope	10
Likud	8
Yisrael Beiteinu	6
Yamina	5
Shas	4
Labor	3
Joint List	3
Blue and White	2
Meretz	0
Torah Judaism	0

This does not mean, of course, that the “Netanyahu factor” is unimportant to the voters for the parties at the bottom of the table, but apparently it is not the main factor when they decide whom to vote for. (For

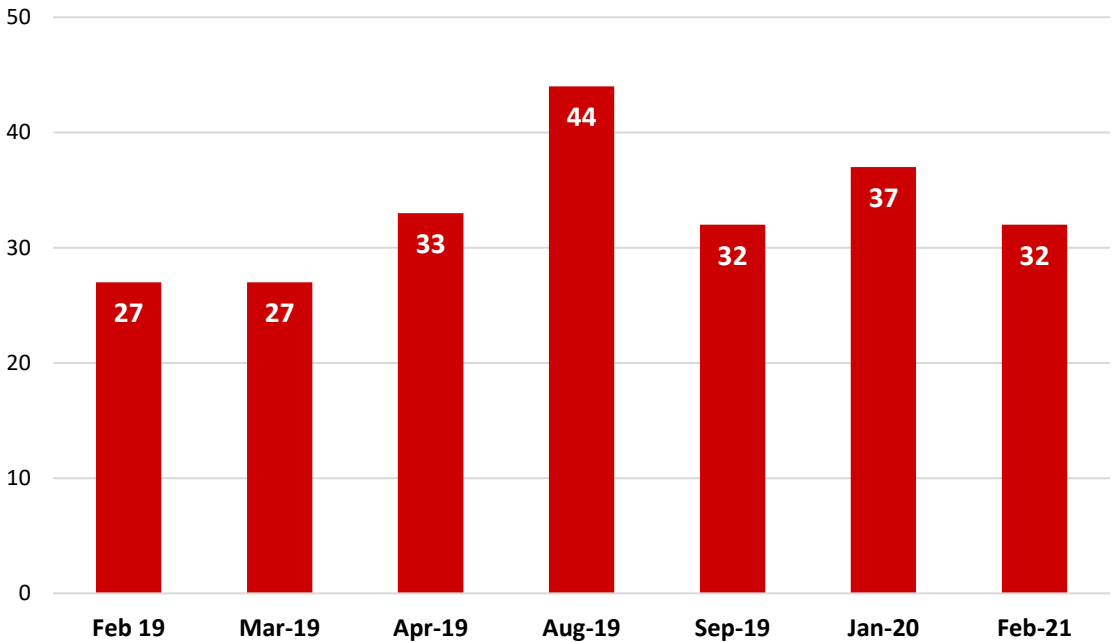
example, Meretz voters are not considering voting for Likud in any case, and their vacillations were probably on whether to vote for Labor or the Joint List. Likewise for Torah Judaism voters, who responded in the past in the largest percentages that they would again vote for the same party, whether Netanyahu will continue to serve is a secondary consideration.)

Propriety of the Elections

In light of our past findings that a considerable portion of the public does not believe that the official election results accurately reflect the voting at the ballot boxes, we again asked: “To what extent do you have or not have trust in the propriety of the voting for the Knesset – meaning that the results to be announced will exactly reflect how the public voted?” Again about a third of the interviewees expressed distrust that there would be a match between the actual voting and the official results to be announced.

In the Arab public the distrust in the election outcomes is much higher than in the Jewish public (43% vs. 29%). We did not find disparities between the three political camps (Jews) regarding the rates of those who do not put trust in the official election results.

**Don’t trust that the official results to be announced will accurately reflect the public’s voting (% entire sample, over time)**

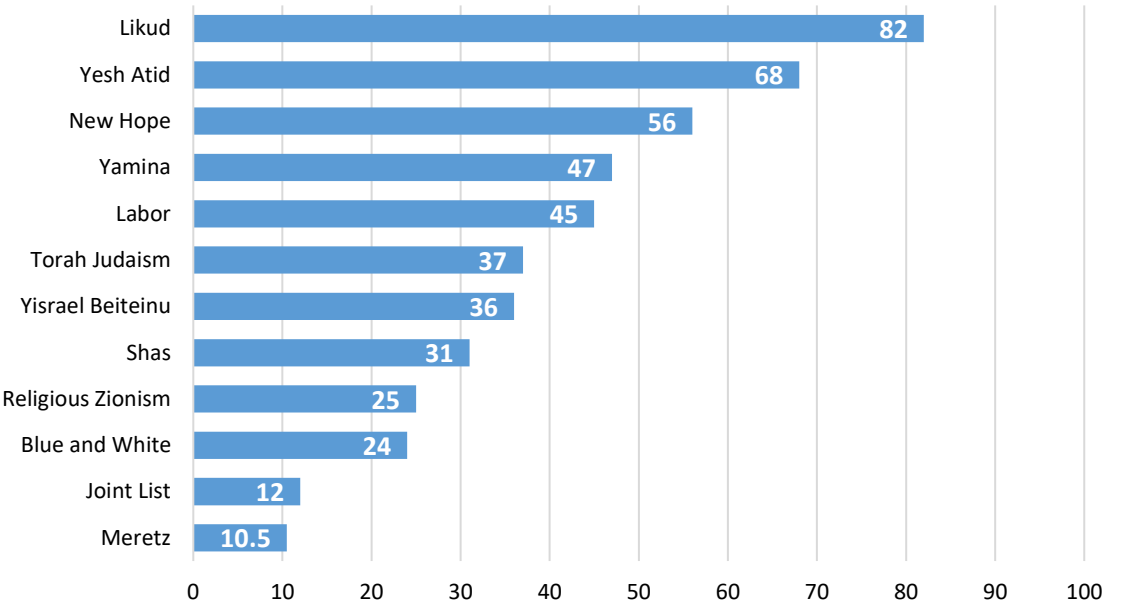


To Vote for the Large Parties?

One of the features of the upcoming elections is a multitude of contending parties (between the last and the current elections, these parties have split up: Blue and White, Labor-Gesher-Meretz, Yamina, Joint List), so that there is a wide choice for each camp. We asked the interviewees for their opinion on this statement: “To bring about a victory in the upcoming elections, it’s necessary to vote for one of the large parties and not for a small party, even if its positions fit mine better.” The public as a whole is divided: 47% disagree and 46% agree.

The position on this matter depends, not surprisingly, on the size of the party the interviewee intends to vote for: a majority of those who intend to vote for a large party agree with the statement, compared to a minority of those who intend to vote for a small party.

**To bring about a victory in the upcoming elections, it's necessary to vote for one of the large parties and not for a small party, even if its positions fit mine better (% , entire sample, by voting intentions)**

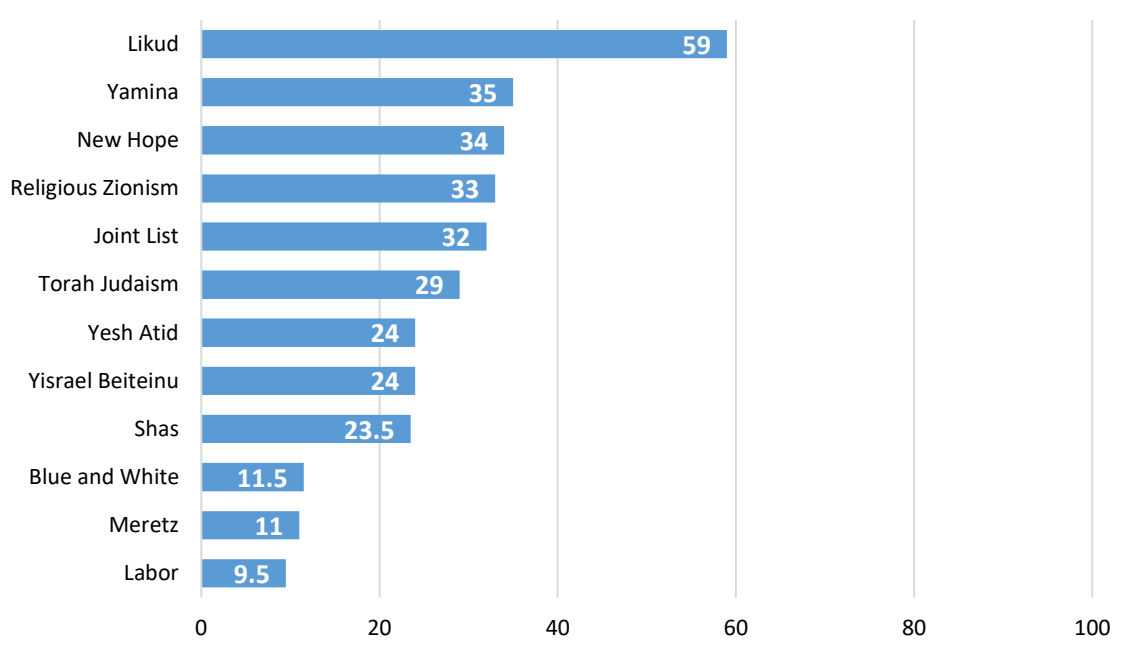


On the Way to a Fifth Round of Elections?

The uncertainty about the election results is very high. Less than a third of all the interviewees (29%) think the upcoming elections will yield a clear outcome on who will be the next prime minister. Only a minority in each of the three camps (Jews) believes such an outcome is attainable: on the left 15% see it on the horizon, in the center 23%, and on the right 36%.

A segmentation by voting intentions for the different parties reveals that only among those intending to vote Likud is there a majority of optimists who see very high or moderately high chances that the elections will produce a clear outcome on who will be the next prime minister.

**Very high/moderately high chances that the upcoming elections will yield a clear outcome on who will be the next prime minister (% , entire sample, by voting intentions in the elections)**

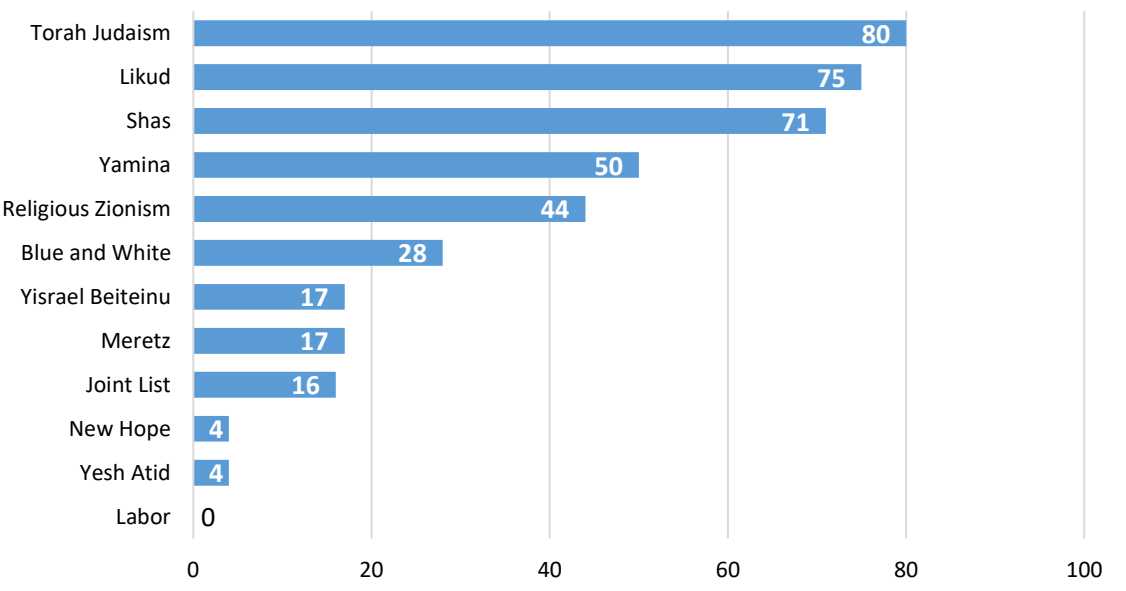


Victory in the Elections = Halting the Legal Proceedings?

Primarily in the right-wing camp, some claim that if Netanyahu wins the upcoming elections it means the people have again handed him the governmental mandate despite the accusations against him, and therefore the legal proceedings against him should be deferred or even canceled. We asked for the interviewees’ degree of agreement or disagreement with this statement: “If Likud headed by Benjamin Netanyahu wins the elections and succeeds to form a government, it will be a sign that a large part of the public wants him as prime minister, and therefore the legal proceedings against him should be stopped at least until the end of his tenure.” The survey findings show that a majority of the public (59%) indeed opposes putting a halt to the trial if those are the results of the elections, but about a third agree that it is what should be done (32%).

As expected, voting intentions are related to a large extent to positions on the issue of continuing the trial: those who want to see Netanyahu as the next prime minister favor halting the trial if he heads the next government, and those who do not – oppose it.

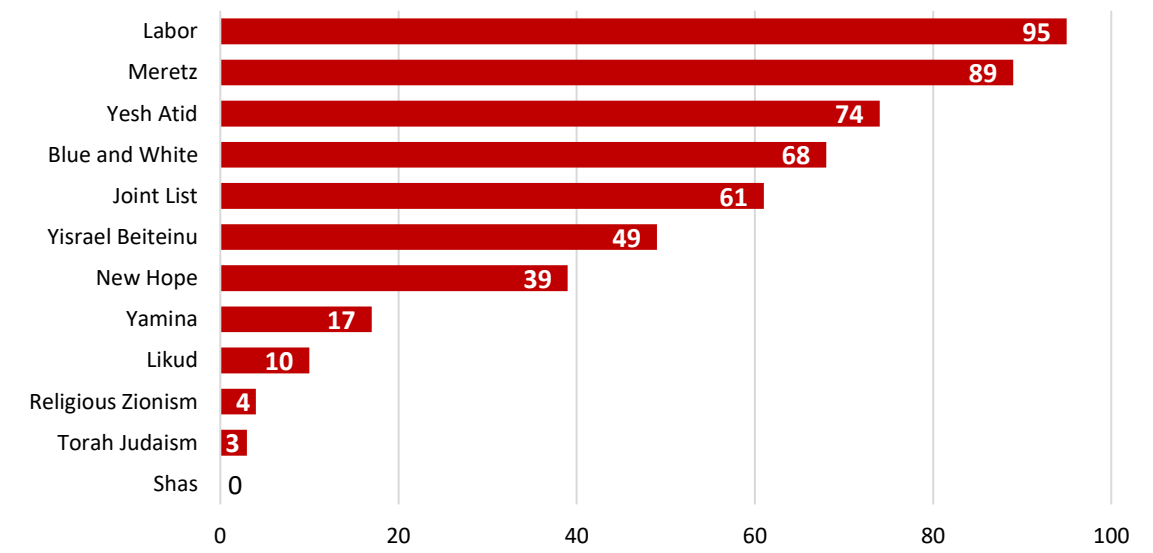
**Agree that if Likud headed by Benjamin Netanyahu wins the elections and succeeds to form a government, it will be a sign that a large part of the public wants him as prime minister, and therefore the legal proceedings against him should be stopped at least until the end of his tenure (% , entire sample, by voting intentions in the elections)**



The Surplus-Votes Agreement between Likud and the Religious Zionism Party

The surplus-votes agreement that these two parties signed sparked many reactions in the media, most of them very critical because of the legitimacy it bestows on radical right-wing positions of candidates like Ben-Gvir. However, the survey data reveal that the public as a whole is less critical: only 40% said the signing of this agreement disturbs them compared to 46% who indicated that from their standpoint it does not constitute any problem. As the diagram below shows, only a tenth of the potential Likud voters are disturbed by this surplus-votes agreement, and it bothers voters for the Haredi parties even less.

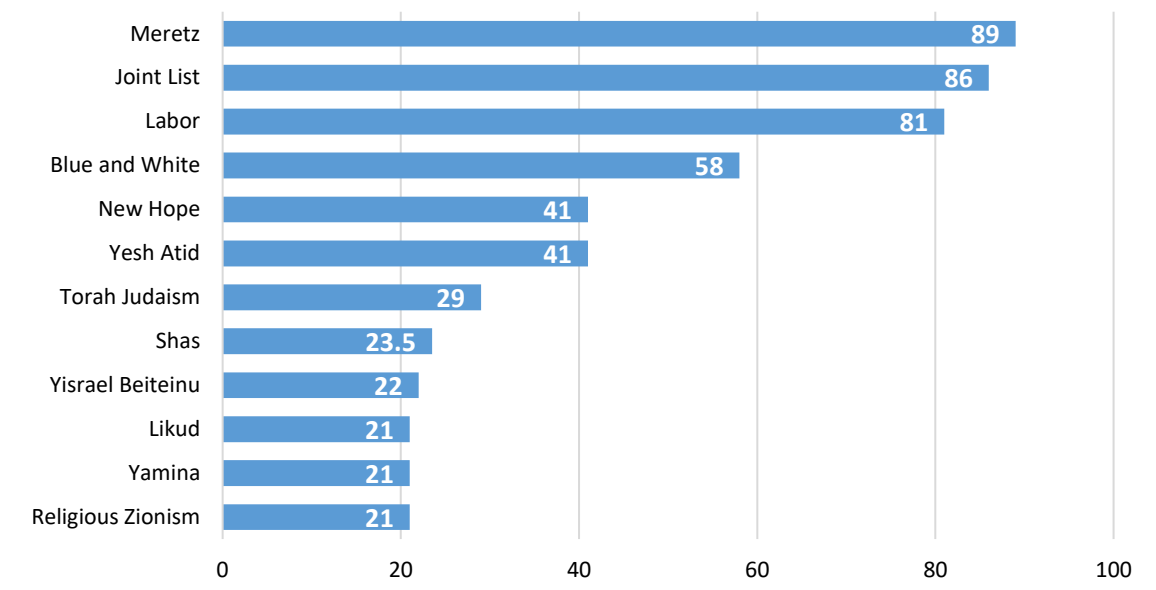
**Disturbing to a quite large or a very large extent that Likud and Religious Zionism signed a surplus-votes agreement (% , entire sample, by voting intentions in the elections)**



Having an Arab Party in a Coalition?

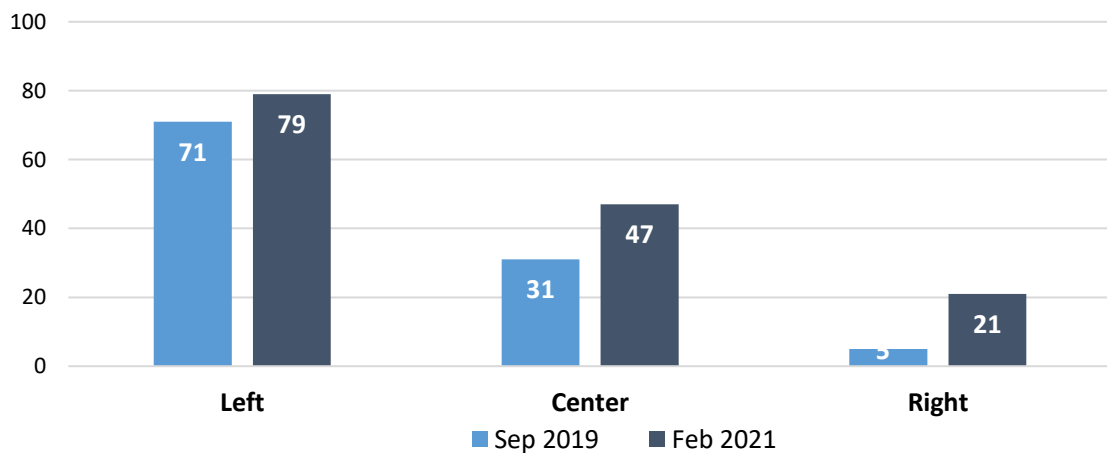
In the Jewish public a small majority opposes having an Arab party in a coalition, including the appointment of Arab ministers (53%), compared to great support in the Arab public (74%). The opposition in the Jewish public is concentrated, not surprisingly, in the right-wing parties, though among Yamina voters it is relatively smaller, perhaps so as not to preclude the possibility of establishing a “Just not Bibi” government with the support of the Arab parties.

**Support having Arab parties in a coalition including the appointment of Arab ministers (% ,entire sample, by voting intentions in the elections)**



A comparison over time suggests that Netanyahu’s unprecedented courting of the Arab public and leadership may have positively changed positions toward the possibility of a Jewish-Arab partnership. For example, in a survey conducted in September 2019, immediately after the elections, less than a fifth of the Jewish public supported this possibility compared to more than a third who support it at present, with most of the change in positions on this issue occurring among the right and the center.

**Support having Arab parties in the government, including the appointment of ministers (% ,Jews, by political camp)**



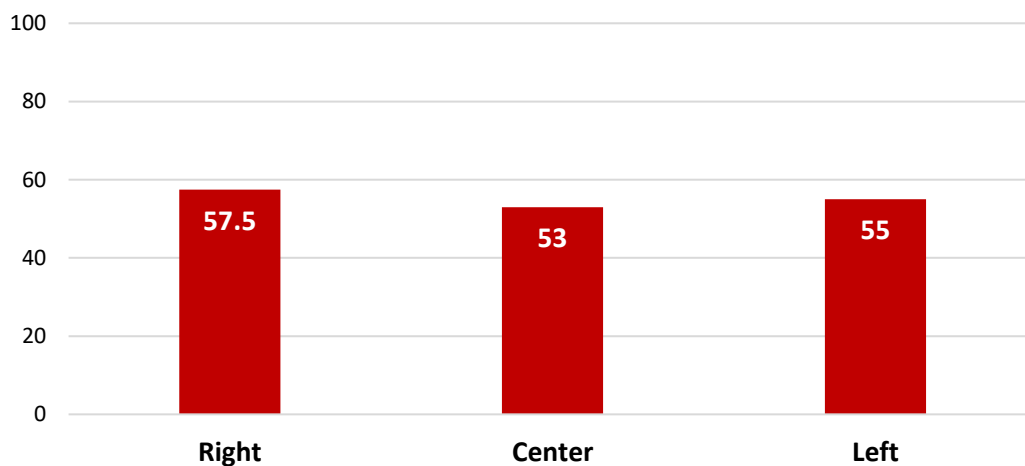


## The International Arena

### The Biden Administration and Israel's Security

A majority of the Jewish public (55%) does not believe Israel's security is a central consideration in the emerging foreign policy of the incoming administration compared to only 29% of the Arab public, which apparently ascribes excessive concern for Israel's security to the new administration. Indeed, among the Jews there has been an increase in the rate of those making that assessment compared to a measurement we conducted immediately after the elections, in which only 50% thought it was not a central consideration for the incoming administration (among the Arabs there is no change on the issue). This increase is interesting because the new administration still has not taken any steps regarding the Middle East. A more interesting finding is that there are almost no gaps in this assessment between the three political camps (Jews).

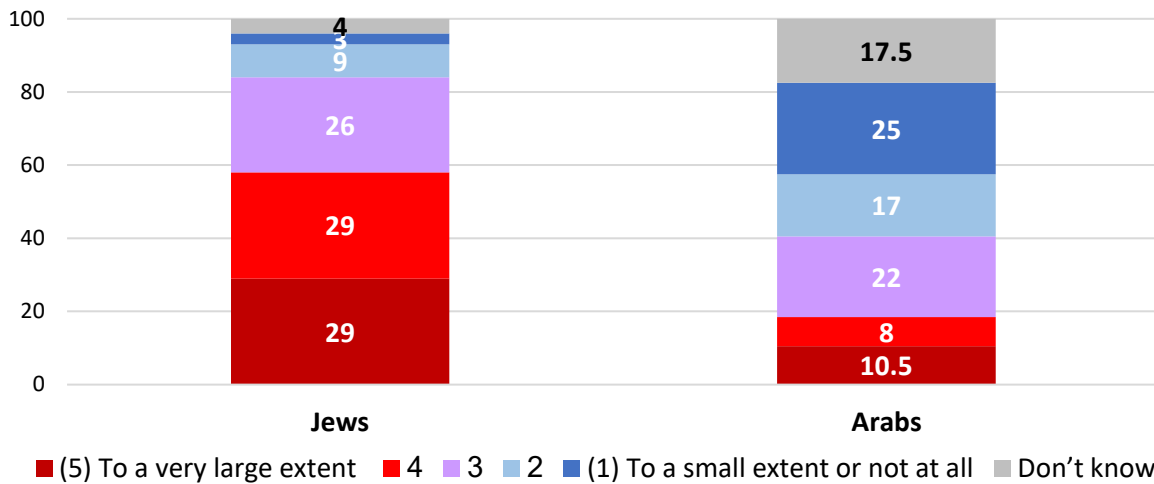
**For President Biden, when formulating the American foreign policy, Israel's security is a central consideration to a quite small or very small extent (% , Jews, by political camp)**



### **Is Iran an Existential Danger?**

Since Iran is one of the bones of contention between Israel and the Biden administration and also an issue that Prime Minister Netanyahu has often been talking about lately, we wanted to know to what extent the Israeli public sees Iran as an existential danger. The perceptions of the Jews and the Arabs on this matter are completely different. Whereas a Jewish majority regards Iran as an existential danger to Israel, only a minority of the Arab public perceives it as such.

**On a scale from 1 = “Not at all” to 5= “To a very large extent,” to what extent, in your opinion, does Iran currently constitute an existential danger to Israel? (% , Jews and Arabs)**



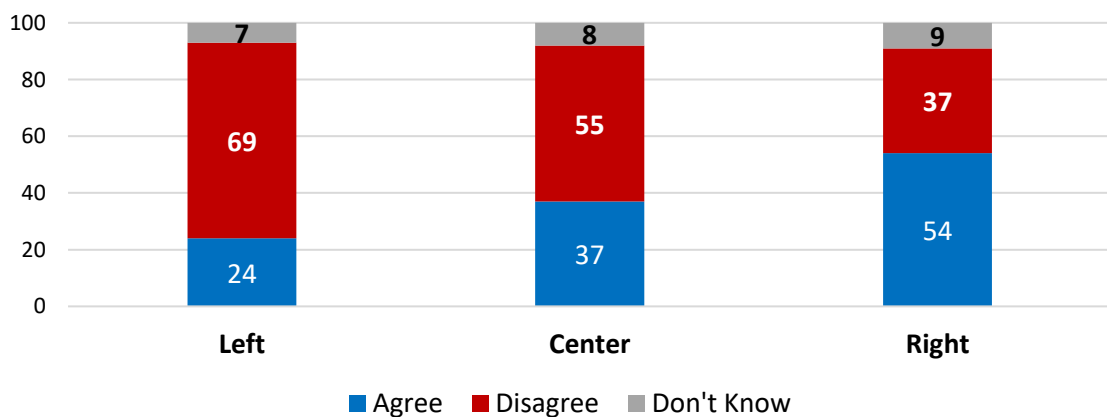
We found considerable gaps in assessment of the Iranian danger between the three political camps (Jews): on the left 41% see it as large (categories 4+5), in the center 53%, and on the right a hefty majority of 64% views it as a large threat.

An Israeli Military Attack on Iran

We wanted to know the public’ position on the question of whether Israel should militarily attack Iran’s nuclear facilities even without American agreement. Here too we found a large gap between Jews and Arabs: the Jewish public is quite divided on this question (45% in favor of an attack even without American agreement compared to 46% who are against such a move), while among the Arabs a large majority opposes such a step on Israel’s part (65.5%).

A segmentation of the responses by political camp (Jews) shows that on the left and in the center, a majority opposes an Israeli military move against Iran without American agreement, compared to a majority on the right that favors it.

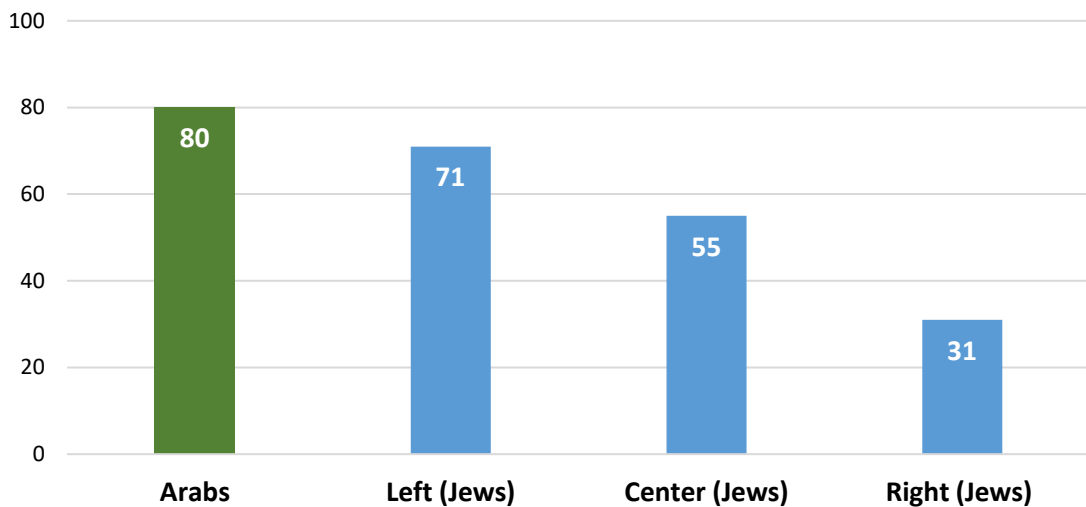
**Israel should militarily attack Iran’s nuclear facilities even without US agreement (% , Jews, by political camp)**



Provide Anti-Coronavirus Vaccinations to the Palestinian Authority?

In the Arab public there is almost a complete consensus (80%) that Israel should respond positively to the PA's request for vaccinations against the coronavirus. The Jewish public, however, is divided on this question (45% in favor and 47% against). The gaps between the political camps (Jews) on this question are very large: on the left the majority supports Israeli consent to the PA's request to provide them with vaccinations against the virus (71%). In the center a majority also supports it, but a smaller one (55%), while on the right less than a third (31%) favor responding positively to the PA's request.

**Israel should respond positively to the PA's request to provide them with vaccinations against the coronavirus (% support, Arabs, Jews by political camp)**



*The Israeli Voice Index for February 2021 was prepared by the Viterbi Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research of the Israel Democracy Institute. In the survey, which was conducted on the internet and by telephone (supplements of groups that are not sufficiently represented on the network) from March 1 to March 3, 2021, 605 men and women were interviewed in Hebrew and 150 in Arabic, constituting a representative national sample of the entire adult population of Israel aged 18 and older. The maximum sampling error for the entire sample was  $.364\pm\%$  at a confidence level of 95%. The fieldwork was done by the Midgam Institute. For the full data file see: <https://dataisrael.idi.org.il>*