

Israeli Voice Index, May 2021

Prof. Tamar Hermann and Dr. Or Anabi

Main Findings

- ❖ As in the previous month, in May as well – apparently against the backdrop of Operation Guardian of the Walls – the sharp decline in the rate of optimists about the future of Israel’s national security continues. For the first time since we began to measure this parameter, there is only a minority of optimists. Also registered is a further drop in optimism about the future of Israeli democracy. On this issue as well, the rate of optimists is almost at its lowest point since the measurements began.
- ❖ About three-fourths of the Jews and about a tenth of the Arabs say Israel’s decision to launch Operation Guardian of the Walls justified itself. On the left (Jews), slightly less than half of those who defined themselves as left-wing find it to be justified in retrospect, compared to a large majority in the center and on the right.
- ❖ A large majority of the Jewish public opposes the claim that excessive force was used in the operation and took too high a price in civilian life in Gaza. Only a small minority of the Arabs hold that view. On this issue as well, we found that on the left, too, a majority opposes that claim, but a smaller majority than in the center and on the right.
- ❖ The Jewish public is evenly split on the question of whether Israel, when planning a military operation, should also take into account its effects on world Jewry.
- ❖ It turns out that the sense of pessimism about the future of national security is in fact focused on the domestic sphere. The highest rate said that the main threat currently facing Israel is the tension between Israel’s Jewish and Arab citizens.
- ❖ If a new government is formed, the two main issues that the public thinks it must address are strengthening unity among the people and closing the socioeconomic gaps.
- ❖ A clear majority of the public thinks the elected president should not intervene in the process of the Netanyahu trial and should not pardon him at the current stage or a later one.

Prof. Tamar Hermann: “The public reacts to the recent events with a decline in optimism particularly about the future of national security, optimism that until recently was very high, in contrast to the low degree of optimism about the future of Israel’s democratic governance. At the same time, the threat that is viewed as primary is not an external one—not the relations with the Palestinians or Iran, but the relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel. This is also reflected in the view that strengthening unity among the people is the main issue that the incoming government must address.”

The National Mood

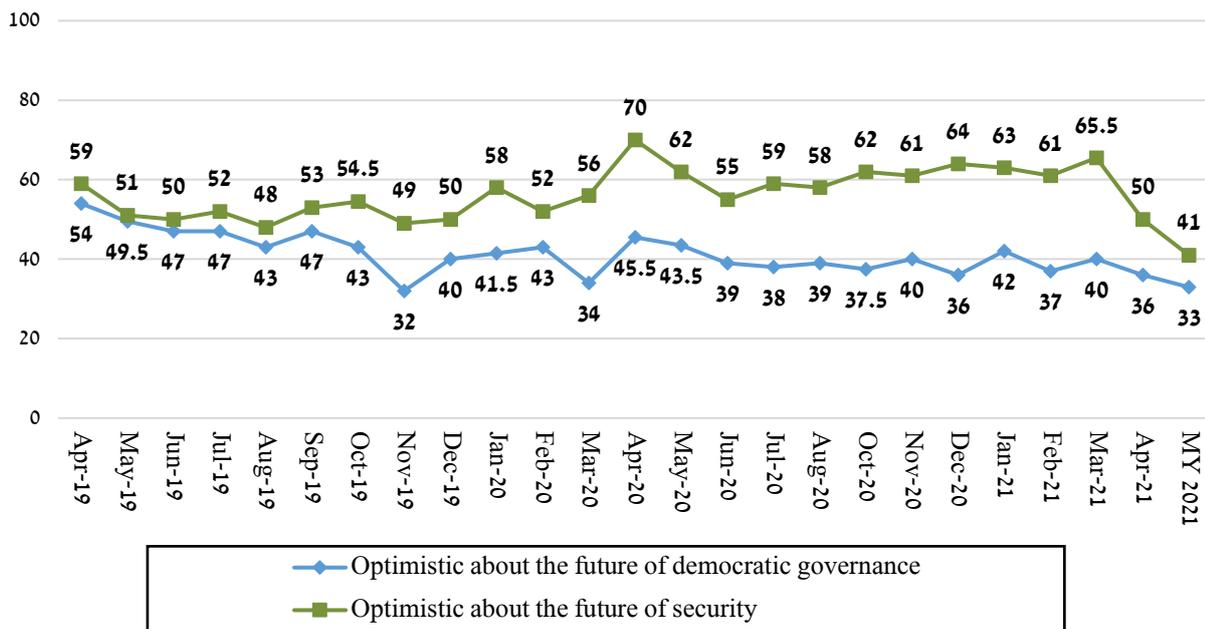
Over the past two months we have seen a steep drop in optimism about Israel’s national-security situation: from two-thirds who were optimistic about it in March (entire sample), the rate of optimists plunged to 41%

this month, or by about 25% in two months. This is the lowest rate of optimists about the future of national security since we began the measurements in April 2019. Indeed, for the first time optimists are only a minority.

The gap between the Jewish sample and the Arab sample is large, with the rate of optimists about security among the Jews substantially higher than among the Arabs at 44% vs. 24%. The gaps between the different political camps are also considerable, though currently optimists are not a majority in any of them: left 33%, center 41%, right 49%.

As for confidence in the future of Israeli democracy, here the rate continues to decline as well and stands at only a third, the second-lowest figure since the measurements began. Here too there is a large gap between Jews and Arabs, though in both groups optimists are a minority: 35% of Jews are optimistic about the future of Israel’s democratic governance compared to only 25% of the Arabs. There are also disparities between the three political camps (Jews), but again, here as well the optimists are a minority in each camp: left 29%, center 32%, right 38%.

Optimistic about the future of Israeli democracy and about the future of national security, April 2019—May 2021 (% ,entire sample)

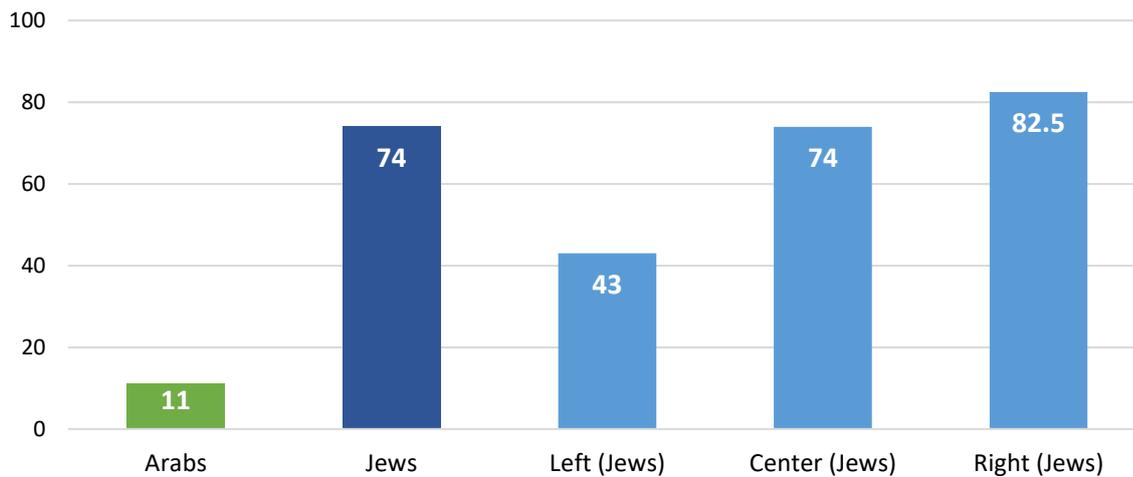


The general trend of decline, however, is not necessarily reflected in the political camps (Jews), apparently because of the progress toward the formation of a “change” government. The left, in fact, saw an increase in the rate of optimists about the future of Israel’s democratic: while a month ago only 15% were optimistic, the figure is now 30%. In the center, too, an increase from 26% to 32% was registered. On the right, though, optimism about the future of democratic governance declined over the past month from 47% to 38%.

Operation Guardian of the Walls

Justification in retrospect – Almost two-thirds of the entire public sees Israel’s decision to launch Operation Guardian of the Walls as having been justified in retrospect. On this issue the gap between Jews and Arabs is huge: among the Jews about three-fourths (74%) think the decision justified itself, compared to only 11% of the Arabs. We found large gaps between the political camps (Jews) as well, with the center closer to the right than the left on this issue: on the left 43% consider that the decision to launch the operation justified itself, compared to a majority of 74% who justify it retrospectively in the center and of 82.5% on the right.

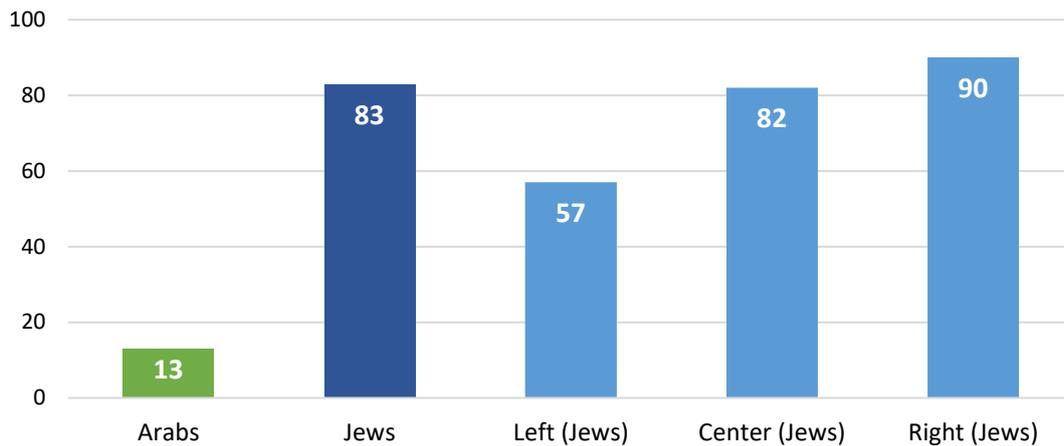
The rate of those who think the decision to launch Operation Guardian of the Walls was justified, by different variables (%)



The use of force – Against the backdrop of the harsh international criticism of Israel regarding the use of force during the operation, we asked: “Some claim that in Operation Guardian of the Walls the IDF used excessive force and caused unjustified harm to civilians in Gaza. Do you support or oppose that assertion?” Among the Jews a large majority (83%) rejects the assertion, while among the Arabs a clear majority (64%) accepts it.

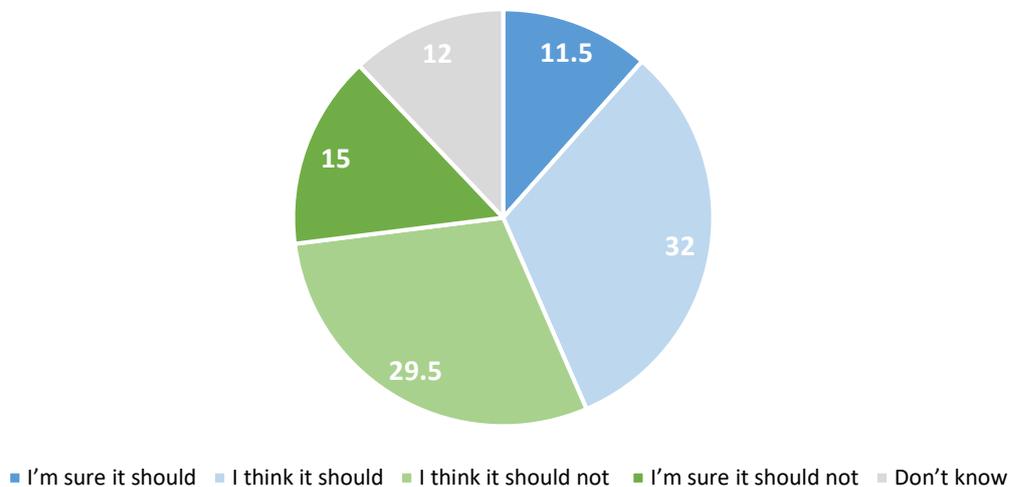
A segmentation of the Jewish sample by political camps revealed a majority opposing that claim in all three camps. This majority varies greatly, however, and here too the center is closer to the right than the left: on the left 57% oppose it, in the center 82%, and on the right 90%.

Oppose the claim that the IDF in Operation Guardian of the Walls used excessive force and caused unjustified harm to civilians in Gaza, by different variables (%)



Relevance of the effect of launching the military operation on world Jewry – In light of the many antisemitic incidents that occurred in tandem with the campaign, we asked: “In your opinion, when Israel makes decisions on military and political measures, should or should it not take into account the likely effects on world Jewry?” The Jewish public is evenly split between 43.5% who think it should take this into account and 44.5% who say world Jewry should not be a consideration when deciding whether to launch a military operation.

When Israel makes decisions on military and political measures, should or should it not take into account the likely effects on world Jewry? (% , entire sample)

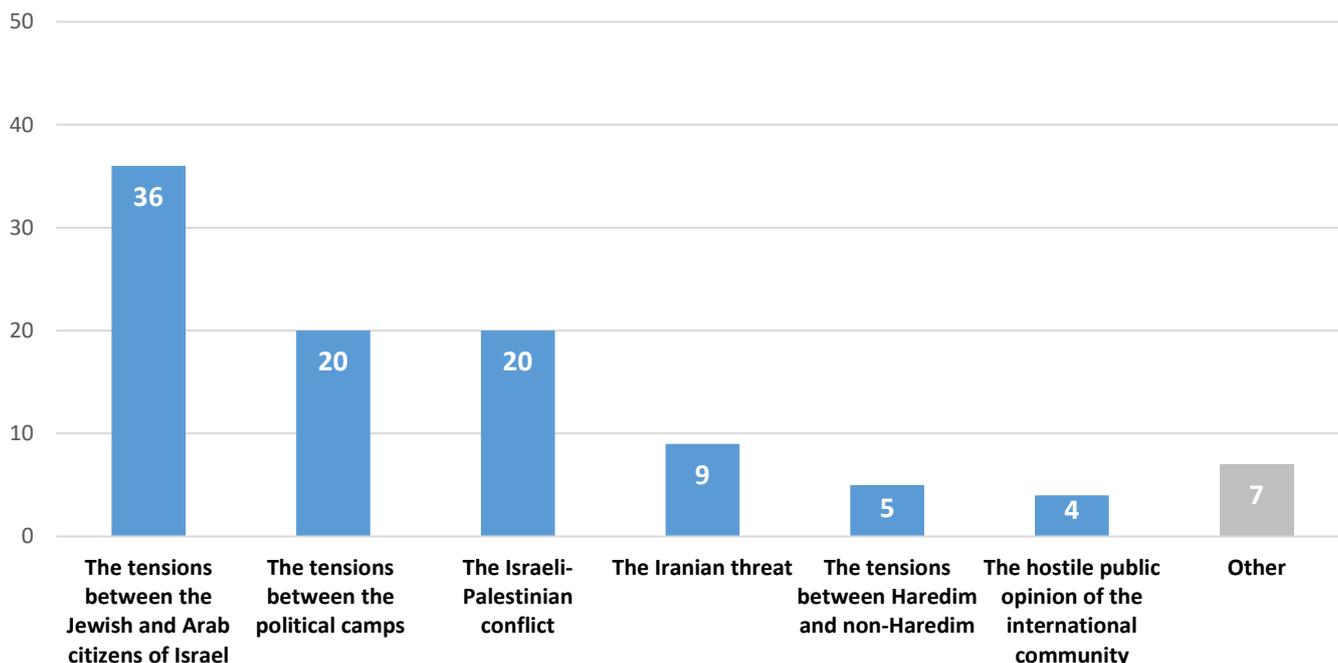


A very interesting finding is that on the left, a small majority (51%) believes Israel should, when launching a military operation, take into account its effects on world Jewry, while in the center and on the right there is no majority here (respectively 44.5% and 43%). A segmentation of the responses to this question by self-definition on a Haredi-secular spectrum found that only among the Haredim does a majority consider that the effects of launching a military operation on world Jewry should influence the decision on whether to go ahead with it (56%). Among the other groups there are no large disparities, and they are divided on this question.

The Main Threat to Israel

Despite what we noted above about the low level of optimism on Israel’s national security, we found that at present the public does not perceive the external security threat as the primary threat to Israel. Apparently under the impact of the violent outbreaks in the mixed cities, it is the tensions between the country’s Jewish and Arab citizens that are perceived as the main threat (36%). After them come the tensions between the political camps and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (20% in both cases). Only a minority sees the other issues (the Iranian threat, the tension between Haredi and non-Haredi Jews, and the hostile public opinion of the international community) as constituting the chief threat to Israel.

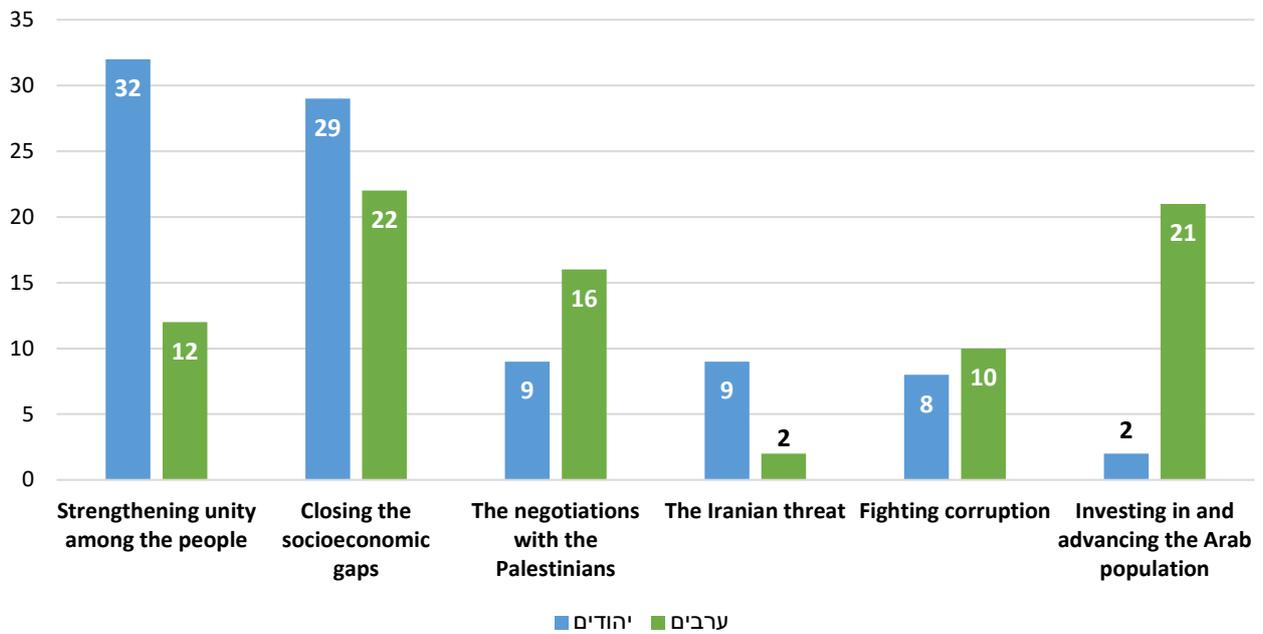
The main threat to Israel (% , entire sample)



The Main Goal of the Israeli Government

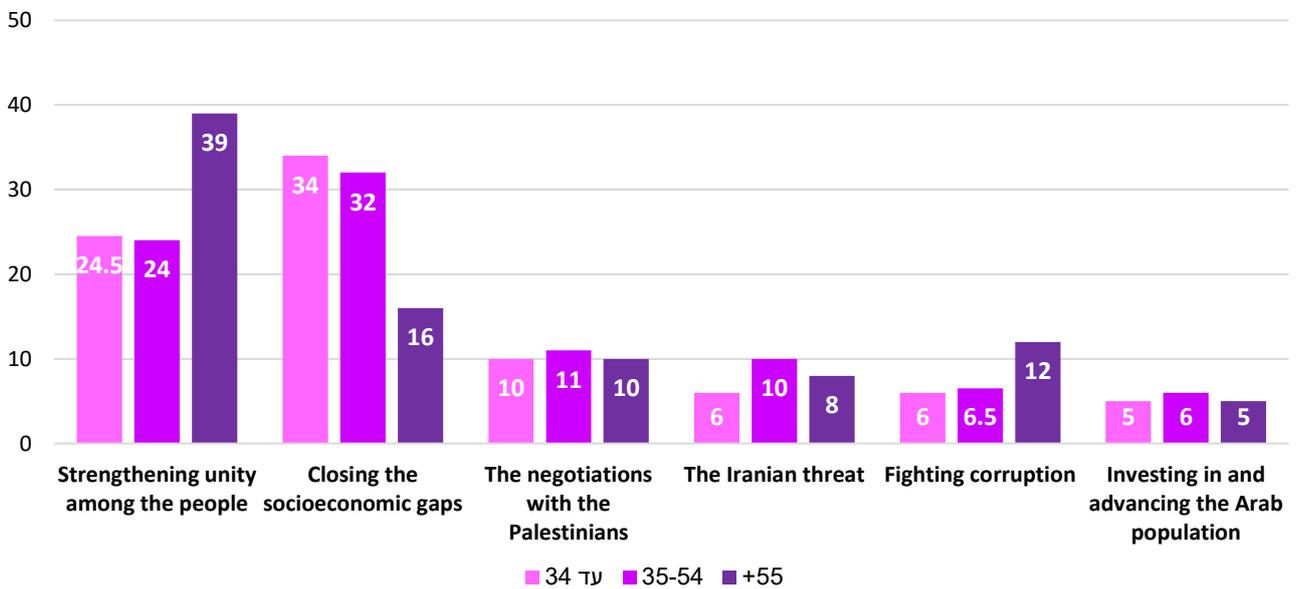
We asked: “If a new government is formed, among the following issues which, in your opinion, is the most important one to address?” In the view of the Israeli public, the two cardinal issues to address are: strengthening the unity of the people (29%) and closing the socioeconomic gaps (28%); far behind come the negotiations with the Palestinians (10%), the Iranian threat, and fighting corruption (8% each). Given that the tensions between the Jewish and Arab citizens are seen as posing a high threat, an interesting and worrying finding is that the goal of “investing in and advancing the Arab population” came in last in the Jewish public’s order of priorities, but in second place for the Arab public. In other words, these populations have very different orders of priorities.

What is the most important issue for the next government to address? (% , Jews and Arabs)



A segmentation of the most important issue for the next government to address by age of the interviewees reveals that the most important issue for older people (55+) is strengthening the unity of the people, while the most important one for younger people is closing the socioeconomic gaps (up to 34: 34%; 35-54: 32%).

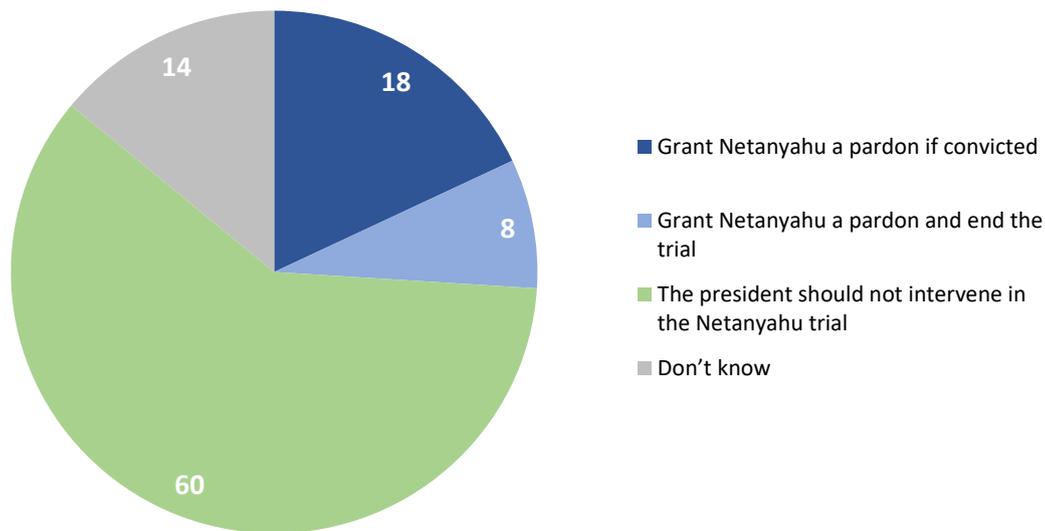
What will be the most important issue for the new government to address? (% ,entire sample, by age)



The President and the Netanyahu Trial

It is sometimes proposed that to escape the political imbroglio and calm the winds among the population, the elected president should pardon Netanyahu, whether already at the trial stage or after he is convicted. It turns out that a majority of the public (60%) opposes an intervention by the president in Netanyahu's legal process.

The right step for the president to take if asked to intervene in the Netanyahu trial, by different variables (% ,entire sample)



The gaps between the political camps (Jews) are large, but even on the right the majority does not favor a pardon. The rate of those who say the president should not intervene comes to 95% on the left, 76% in the center, and 48% on the right (here 31% favor the president putting an end to the trial while only 8% favor pardoning Netanyahu if convicted).

The Israeli Voice Index for May 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) on May 30-31, 2021, 615 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 $\pm 0.359\%$ 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>