Selected Findings

The Israeli Democracy Index

2021

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The Israeli Democracy Index

Each year, the Israeli Democracy Index examines trends in Israeli society relating to the commitment to democratic values, the functioning of government systems, and the degree of trust in government institutions and in elected and appointed decision-makers. Its analysis of survey findings impacts public discourse on the state of Israeli democracy, and creates a comprehensive database for informed decision-making among policymakers. This year, the survey was conducted in June, and selected questions were revisited in October.

Is Israel a good place to live?

Jews

- Agree (strongly or somewhat): 76%
- Disagree (strongly or somewhat): 22%
- Don’t know: 2%

Arabs

- Agree (strongly or somewhat): 66%
- Disagree (strongly or somewhat): 28%
- Don’t know: 6%
Israel's Overall Situation

How would you characterize Israel’s overall situation today?

June 2021

Jews
- 22% Good or very good
- 33% So-so
- 45% Bad or very bad

Arabs
- 48% Good or very good
- 25% So-so
- 27% Bad or very bad

October 2021

Jews
- 23% Good or very good
- 32% So-so
- 45% Bad or very bad

Arabs
- 29% Good or very good
- 30% So-so
- 41% Bad or very bad

How proud are you to be an Israeli? [%, very or fairly proud, 2003–2021]

Jews
- 84.5

Arabs
- 28
Israeli Society

How important is each of these factors in order to be a true Israeli?

- Respecting the laws of the state: 93% Jews, 84% Arabs
- Serving in the IDF: 83%, 16%
- Accepting the definition of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state: 85%, 33%
- Being born in Israel: 51%, 46%
- Speaking Hebrew: 86%, 59%
- Being Jewish: 73%, 12%
- Living in Israel for most of your life: 78%, 65%
Which groups in Israeli society have the highest level of tension between them? [2021]

Jews
- 36%
- 43%
- 12%
- 3%
- 2%
- 4%

Arabs
- 12%
- 64%
- 10%
- 5%
- 3%
- 6%

Over time (total sample, 2016–2021)

2021
- 32%
- 46%
- 12%
- 3%
- 2%
- 5%

2020
- 39%
- 28%
- 17.5%
- 8.5%
- 3%
- 4%

2019
- 37.5%
- 27%
- 22.5%
- 5%
- 3%
- 5%

2018
- 32%
- 30%
- 25%
- 5%
- 5.5%
- 2.5%

2016
- 24%
- 53%
- 10.5%
- 8%
- 2%
- 2.5%

For the first time since 2016, the greatest source of tension is between Jews and Arabs, rather than between Right and Left.
Israel is defined as a Jewish and democratic state. Is there a good balance between the two?

By political orientation [Jews]

Right
- The Democratic component is too dominant: 24%
- There is a good balance between both components: 22%
- The Jewish component is too dominant: 19%
- Don’t know: 11%

Center
- The Democratic component is too dominant: 22%
- There is a good balance between both components: 48%
- The Jewish component is too dominant: 19%
- Don’t know: 10%

Left
- The Democratic component is too dominant: 84%
- There is a good balance between both components: 2.5%
- The Jewish component is too dominant: 10%
- Don’t know: 2.5%

Israelis think that the State of Israel ensures the security of its citizens but doesn’t look out for their welfare. [Total sample]

Agree that Israel ensures the **security** of its citizens: 56.5%

Agree that Israel looks out for the **welfare** of its citizens: 33%
If you could be granted citizenship in a Western country, would you prefer to live there or to remain in Israel?

### Primary factors in thinking about leaving Israel

#### Jewish Israelis
- **38%** Economic situation / cost of living
- **15.5%** The government / current administration / corruption / bureaucracy
- **12%** Security
- **10%** Social tensions

#### Arab Israelis
- **20%** Economic situation / poor quality of life
- **12%** Security
- **12%** Uncertainty / instability
- **11%** Racism / feeling of inequality

#### Jews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Remain in Israel</th>
<th>Move abroad</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Arabs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Remain in Israel</th>
<th>Move abroad</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trust in State Institutions

Trust state institutions very much or quite a bit

June 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Jews</th>
<th>Arabs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IDF</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President of Israel</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Court</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knesset</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Parties</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The level of trust in state institutions among Jewish respondents decreased between June and October, while the level of trust among Arab respondents increased.
The Supreme Court

How would you rate the degree of power of Israel’s Supreme Court?

Jews

- Too much power: 13%
- The right amount of power: 32%
- Not enough power: 13%
- Don’t know: 42%

Arabs

- Too much power: 13%
- The right amount of power: 35%
- Not enough power: 19%
- Don’t know: 33%

By political orientation (Jews)

- Right: 57%
- Center: 24%
- Left: 11%

The Supreme Court should have the power to overturn laws passed by the Knesset if they contradict democratic principles.

Jews

- Agree (strongly or somewhat): 52.5%
- Disagree (strongly or somewhat): 40%
- Don’t know: 7.5%

Arabs

- Agree (strongly or somewhat): 74%
- Disagree (strongly or somewhat): 11%
- Don’t know: 15%
To what degree are the professional decisions of Supreme Court justices influenced by their political views?

The Judicial System

How fair was the judge’s ruling (among those who have had involvement with the legal system)?

By political orientation (Jews)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>So-so</th>
<th>Unfair</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Upholding Democratic Principles

To what extent are the following principles upheld in Israel today?

**Minority rights**

- **Jews**
  - Too much: 23%
  - The right amount: 29%
  - Too little: 40%

- **Arabs**
  - Too much: 24%
  - The right amount: 12%
  - Too little: 61%

**The right to live in dignity**

- **Jews**
  - Too much: 10%
  - The right amount: 31%
  - Too little: 54%

- **Arabs**
  - Too much: 24%
  - The right amount: 20.5%
  - Too little: 53%

**Freedom of expression**

- **Jews**
  - Too much: 34%
  - The right amount: 34%
  - Too little: 28%

- **Arabs**
  - Too much: 25%
  - The right amount: 24.5%
  - Too little: 44.5%

**Separation of powers**

- **Jews**
  - Too much: 11%
  - The right amount: 30%
  - Too little: 42%

- **Arabs**
  - Too much: 21%
  - The right amount: 24.5%
  - Too little: 41%

With regard to all four democratic principles we examined, only a minority of the Israeli public believe that they are upheld to the extent that they should be. This is the case among both Jews and Arabs. Arabs perceive protection of minority rights as the least upheld principle, and Jews—the right to live in dignity.
To deal with its unique problems, Israel needs a strong leader who is not swayed by the Knesset, the media, or public opinion.

Jews

Agree (strongly or somewhat) 55%
Disagree (strongly or somewhat) 40%
Don’t know 5%

Arabs

Agree (strongly or somewhat) 61%
Disagree (strongly or somewhat) 32%
Don’t know 7%

Over time (%, strongly or somewhat agree; total sample, 2014–2021)

Jewish citizens of Israel should have more rights than non-Jewish citizens.

Over time (strongly or somewhat agree, Jews, 2018–2021)

By political orientation

Strongly or somewhat agree (Jews, June 2021)

Left 5%
Center 28.5%
Right 57%
The democratic system in Israel is in grave danger.

Over time, by political orientation
[%, strongly or somewhat agree, Jewish sample, 2017–2021]

Is Israel’s leadership corrupt?

(1) Very corrupt (2) (3) So-so (4) (5) Not at all corrupt Don’t know
## Israel and the World

### Israel's score on international indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Score 2020</th>
<th>Average score 2010–2019</th>
<th>Change in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Democratic Rights and Freedoms</strong></td>
<td>Political rights (Freedom House)</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>−7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civil liberties (Freedom House)</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>−2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom of the press (Reporters without Borders)</td>
<td>69.1</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>−0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Democratic Process</strong></td>
<td>Voice and accountability (World Bank)</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>−0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political participation (Economist Intelligence Unit)</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>+8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Egalitarian democracy (V-Dem)</td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>80.3</td>
<td>−0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participatory democracy (V-Dem)</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>−2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deliberative democracy (V-Dem)</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>−2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democratic political culture (Economist Intelligence Unit)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governance</strong></td>
<td>Functioning of government (Economist Intelligence Unit)</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>+0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rule of law (World Bank)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>−0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corruption</strong></td>
<td>Control of corruption (World Bank)</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>−9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of corruption (Transparency International)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>−1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regulation</strong></td>
<td>Regulatory quality (World Bank)</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>−0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Equality</strong></td>
<td>Equal distribution of resources (V-Dem)</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>−3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) is an independent center of research and action dedicated to strengthening the foundations of Israeli democracy. IDI works to bolster the values and institutions of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. A non-partisan think-and-do tank, the Institute harnesses rigorous applied research to influence policy, legislation, and public opinion. IDI partners with political leaders, policymakers, and representatives of civil society to improve the functioning of the government and its institutions, confront security threats while preserving civil liberties, and foster solidarity within Israeli society. The State of Israel recognized the positive impact of IDI’s research and policy recommendations by bestowing upon the Institute its most prestigious award, the Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement.

The Viterbi Family Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research conducts rigorous empirical research on the views and attitudes of the Israeli public regarding the functioning of the country’s democratic system and its commitment to core democratic values. Data Israel: The Louis Guttman Social Research Database, maintained by the Center, presents current and historical survey data and other material collected since 1949 by the Institute for Applied Social Research founded by Prof. Guttman, and which have been donated to IDI. The Viterbi Family Center strives to inform public discourse and debate in Israel on social and policy issues, by generating, analyzing, and publicizing reliable and up-to-date information, and making it readily accessible to researchers, the media, and interested members of the public in Israel and around the world.

The Israeli Democracy Index, published annually since 2003, assesses the state of Israeli democracy. It is based on an in-depth and detailed survey of a representative sample of Israel’s adult population. The Index aims to explore trends in Israeli society on fundamental questions relating to the realization of democratic goals and values, and the performance of government systems and elected and appointed officials.