

Israeli Voice Index January 2023¹

Prof. Tamar Hermann and Dr. Or Anabi

Main Findings

- ❖ This month saw a slight rise in the share of those who are optimistic about Israel's security, though they still do not constitute even half of the Israeli public. By contrast, this is the second consecutive month in which there has been a decline in the level of optimism about the future of democratic rule in Israel, which is even lower than the level of optimism about the future of Israel's national security.
- ❖ A larger share of the public currently opposes the reform of the justice system proposed by Minister of Justice Levin than supports it, though not a majority. Supporters of the reform are much more optimistic than its opponents about the future of democratic rule in Israel.
- ❖ A relatively high proportion (though still a numerical minority) of respondents reported having participated in some form of protest activity against the justice system reform. The share of participants from the Left is noticeably higher than from the Center, and much higher than from the Right. Among Ashkenazi respondents, the share of those who reported participating in a protest activity is double that among Mizrahi respondents.
- ❖ Just over half the public believe that broad protests will have an effect on the implementation of the reform, and of those who hold this view, the largest share think that the protests can moderate the reform. Only a small minority expect that they may lead to the reform being canceled. Among those who have participated in protest activities, the share of those who believe that the protests can influence the reform is (as expected) higher than among those who have not participated.
- ❖ The majority of respondents think that the likelihood is low of a civil war that includes violence breaking out between the two sides, or of violence between one side and the security forces, though the fact that almost one-third consider this a real possibility is hugely significant, and indicates the high level of internal tension in Israel today. Women are more worried about this possibility than are men.
- ❖ Among respondents who have participated in protest activities, the share of those who think there is some likelihood of a civil war breaking out is larger than among those who have not participated.
- ❖ Regarding the forms of protest that the public considers legitimate, a large majority view demonstrations as permissible, and around half think the same of labor strikes and refusing to engage in commerce. Only a minority give legitimacy to blocking the entrances to public and government buildings or to blocking roads for several hours, and only a small minority

¹ Data collection was completed before the terror attacks in Jerusalem over the weekend of January 27.

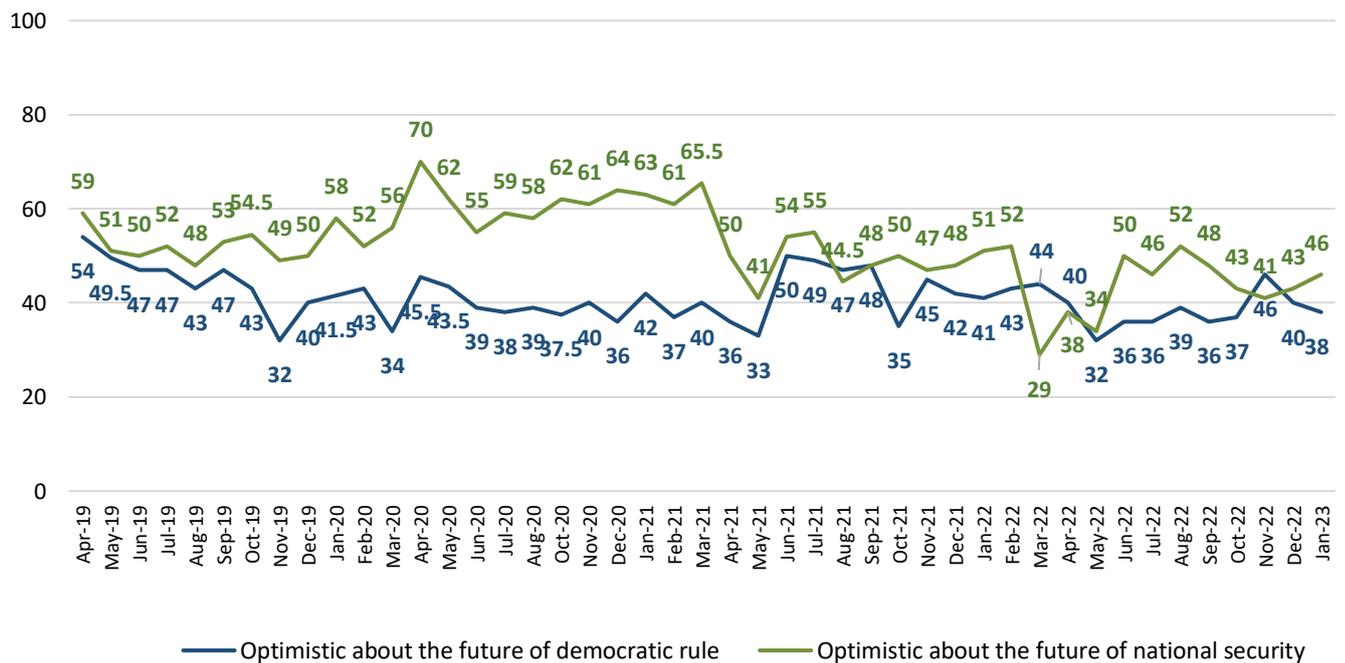
are accepting of not paying tax or not showing up for IDF reserve duty. Those on the Left consider more forms of protest to be legitimate than do those in the Center or on the right.

- ❖ The share of those who believe that the divide between Right and Left is the greatest source of tension in Israeli society today is the highest it has been since we began measuring this in 2012.
- ❖ A majority of respondents agree that there should be dialogue between supporters and opponents of the proposed reform so as to reach some form of understanding and compromise.

The National Mood

This month saw another small rise in the share of those who are optimistic about the future of Israel’s national security. By contrast, this is the second consecutive month in which there has been a decline in the level of optimism about the future of democratic rule in Israel. In both cases, the share of optimists is less than half.

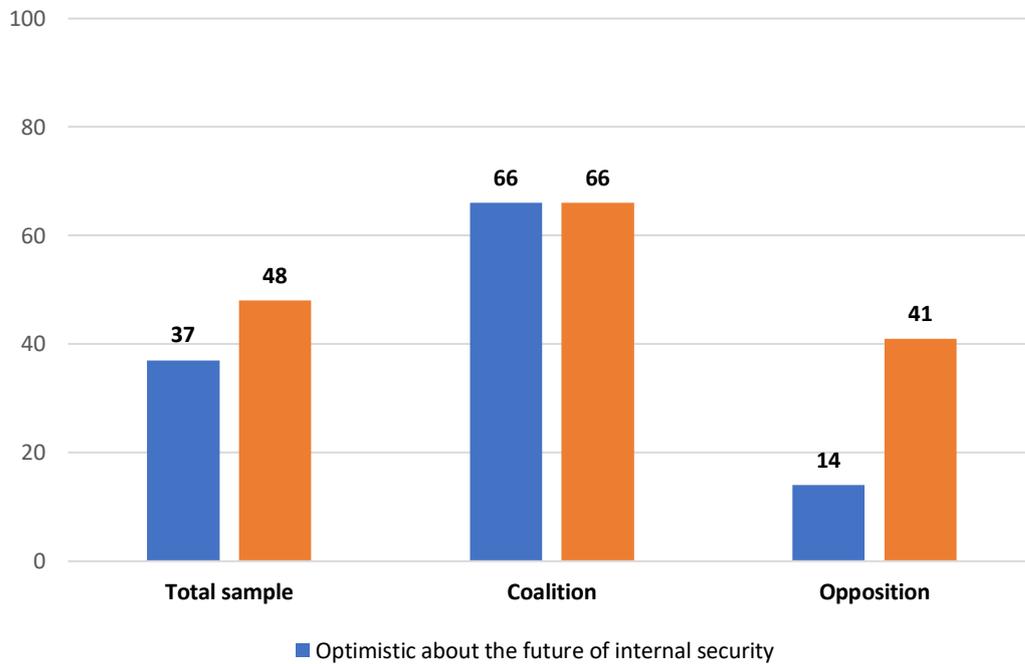
Optimistic about the future of democratic rule in Israel and about the future of national security, April 2019–January 2023 (total sample; %)



While 46% of respondents said they are optimistic in response to the general question about Israel’s security, when this question is split into two more specific versions then the picture becomes more complex: Almost half (48%) are optimistic about Israel’s external (military) security, while only 37% are optimistic about the country’s internal security. Similarly, there are large differences between those who voted for coalition parties and opposition parties at the last elections: While a majority of around two-thirds of coalition party voters are optimistic about the future of both internal and external

security, among opposition party voters 41% are optimistic about the future of Israel’s external security, and just 14% are optimistic about the country’s internal security.

Optimistic about the future of Israel’s internal security and external security (total sample, by vote at the last elections; %)



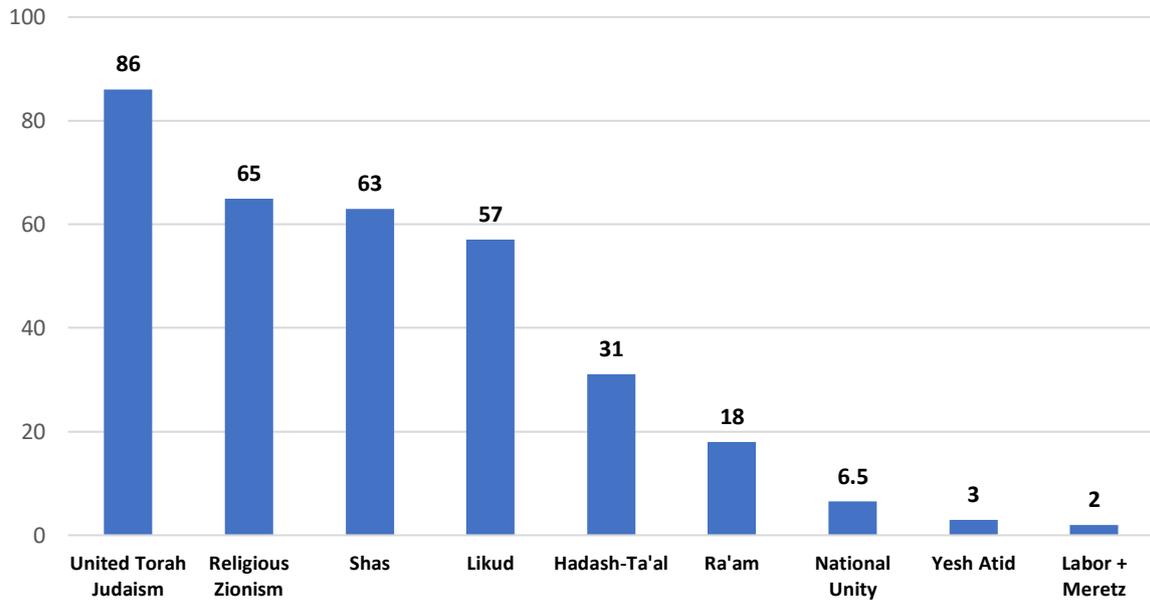
We also found a strong association between opinions regarding the future of Israel’s national security in general and regarding the future of the country’s internal security and external security: 88% of those who are optimistic about Israel’s internal security are also optimistic about the future of national security, and 74% of those who are optimistic about its external (military) security are also optimistic about its national security.

Attitudes Toward the Proposed Reform of the Justice System

The share of those who think that the reform to the justice system proposed by Minister of Justice Levin is quite bad or very bad (43%) is larger than that of those who think it is quite good or very good (31%). Around a quarter of respondents said they don’t know. In the Arab sample, this proportion reached 41%, perhaps indicating the lack of engagement of the Arab public with the argument currently being waged in Israel over this critical issue.

A breakdown of responses by vote at the last elections reveals, unsurprisingly, that a large majority of those who voted for coalition parties (63%) have a good opinion of the reform, while an even larger majority of voters for opposition parties (80%) hold a negative view, with this share larger still among voters for Zionist opposition parties (87%). However, the figure below demonstrates that in both blocs – coalition and opposition – opinions are not homogeneous, and the levels of support or opposition do vary.

Think that the reform to the justice system is very good or quite good (total sample, by vote at the last elections; %)

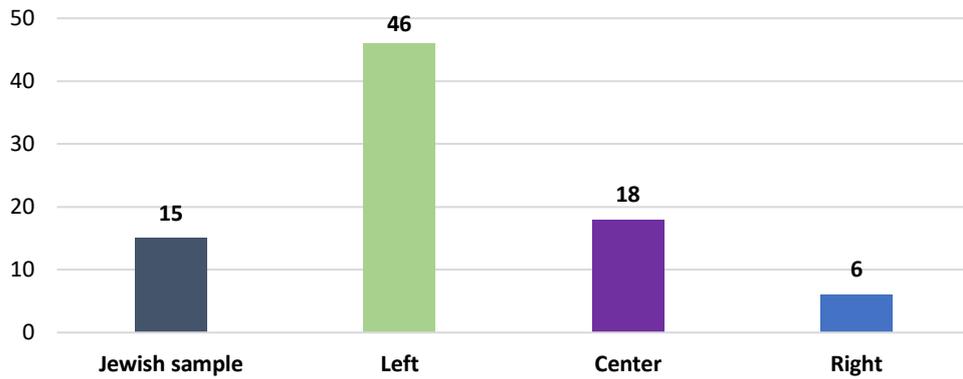


We found a strong association between opinions about the reform to the justice system and the level of optimism about the future of democratic rule in Israel: A large majority (81%) of those who think the reform is good are also optimistic about the future of Israeli democracy, compared to only a small minority of optimists (10.5%) among those who have a negative view of the reform. Indeed, in the latter group, fully 87% are pessimistic about the future of democratic rule in Israel.

Public Protests Against the Reform to the Justice System

Extent of public participation: Around 13% of respondents said that they have participated in at least one protest activity. This is higher than for previous public protests in Israel and exceeds equivalent participation rates internationally, though it is still lower than the participation rate in the “orange” protests against the withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 and the “tent protests” against economic policy in 2011. Among Jewish respondents, participation stands at around 15%, and among Arab respondents, at around 7%. As expected, the highest participation rate among Jews is found on the Left, where almost half said that they have participated in at least one protest activity. Lower rates found in the Center, while some on the Right also reported having participated in protests.

Participated in at least one protest activity (demonstrations, signing a petition, etc.) against the reform to the justice system (Jews, by political orientation; %)



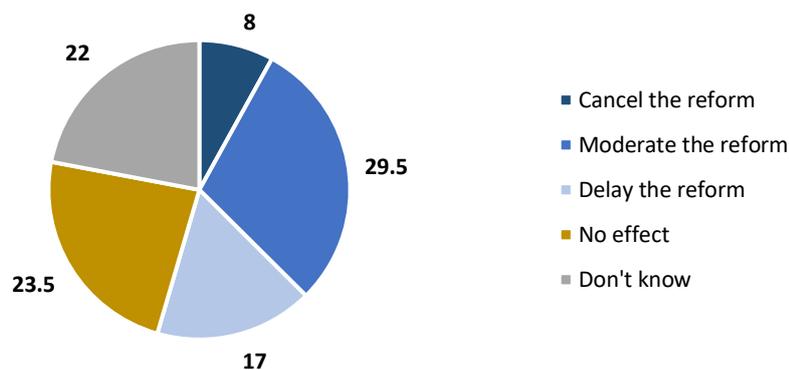
A breakdown of participation among Jewish respondents by ethnic identity reveals that the rate among Ashkenazim (20%) is double that among Mizrahim (10%), with the rate among those who define themselves as mixed being in the middle (15%). The participation rate among immigrants from the former Soviet Union stands at 11%.

The share of older respondents (aged 65 and above) who reported having participated in protest activities is much larger than the equivalent share of the youngest age group (26% and 8%, respectively).

A breakdown of Jewish respondents by religiosity finds that participants in protests skew secular: Participation rates are zero among Haredim, 4% for national religious, 7% for traditional religious, 10% for traditional non-religious, and 27% for secular respondents.

Expected effect of broad public protests: We asked: “In your opinion, can broad public protests influence the government, and if so, how – cancel the reform, moderate the reform, delay the reform, or have no effect?” Just over half the respondents (around 55%) think that broad protests can have some effect, with the smallest share believing that the reform could be canceled, and the largest share that it could be moderated. Less than one-quarter think that the protests can have no effect on the reform to the justice system.

Expected effect of broad public protests on the reform (total sample; %)

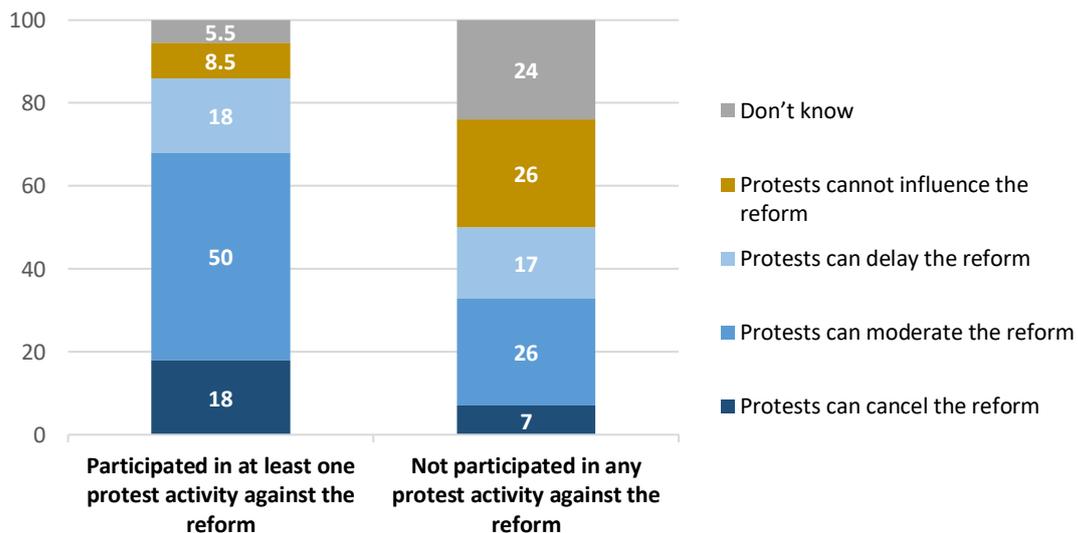


A breakdown of responses by political orientation (Jews) shows that the main assessment in all camps is that the reform could be moderated, though the share of those on the Right who think that the protests will have no effect is exactly three times higher than the equivalent share on the Left.

Broad public protests... (Jews; %)	Left	Center	Right
Can cancel the reform	15	11	3
Can moderate the reform	41	40	28
Can delay the reform	22.5	14	20
Cannot influence the reform	12	19.5	36
Don't know	9.5	15.5	13
Total	100	100	100

A breakdown of these results by participation or non-participation in protest activities reveals expected differences: A large majority (68%) of those who have participated hold that protests can cancel or moderate the reform, a view shared by only a third of those who have not participated. In addition, the share of those who have not participated in protest activities until now who say that they don't know whether or how the protests can influence implementation of the reform is much larger than the equivalent share among those who have participated.

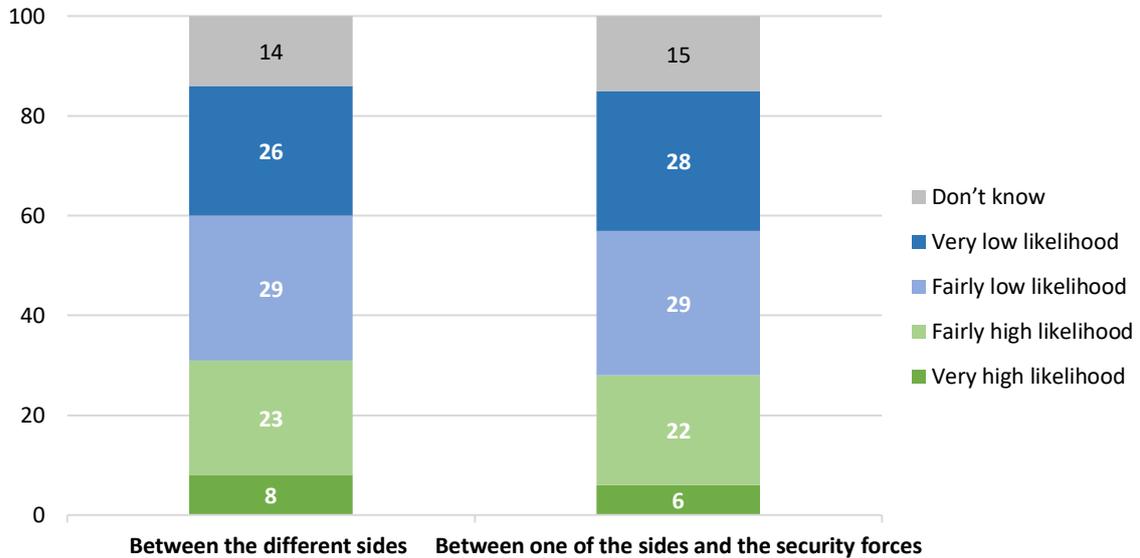
Expected effect of broad public protests on the reform (total sample, by participation in protest activities; %)



Likelihood of violent civil war: Mass protests have the potential to descend into violence, and sometimes even into civil war. We wanted to know the public's assessment of the likelihood that a civil war that includes violence could break out in the foreseeable future, either between the different sides or between one of the sides and the security forces. The majority of respondents think there is

a low likelihood of civil war between the political camps (55%), and slightly more have the same view with regard to clashes with the security forces (57%). Still, it cannot be ignored that 31% consider a violent civil war likely between the different sides of the struggle, and 28% think that there is a likelihood of violent clashes with the security forces.

Perceived likelihood of a civil war that includes violence breaking out in the near future, either between the different sides or between one of the sides and the security forces (total sample; %)



A breakdown of Jewish respondents by political orientation reveals that the share of those on the Left who consider a civil war including violence between the different sides to be likely (46%) is twice the equivalent share on the Right (24%). The Center is closer to the Left on this issue (40%). The picture is slightly different when it comes to violence between one of the sides and the security forces: A sizable share of those on the Left consider this likely (44%), while much lower proportions of those in the Center and on the Right concur (27% in both camps).

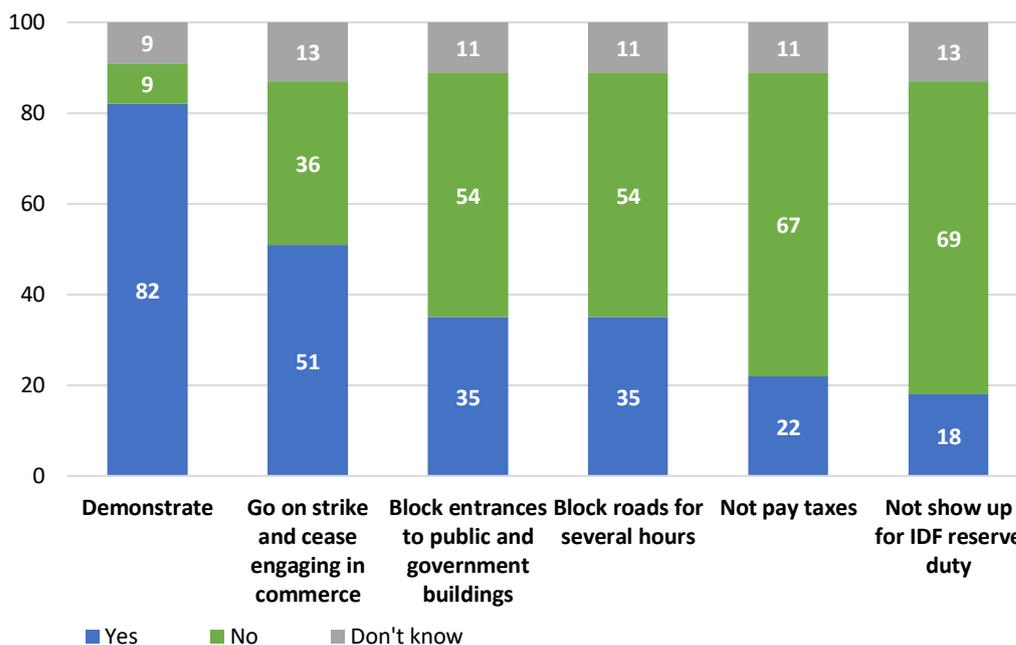
Though the differences between men and women are relatively small on most political issues in Israel, when it comes to the likelihood of a civil war involving violence there is a marked divide: While the majority of men think that this likelihood is low (between the sides, 64%; with the security forces, 65.5%), less than half of women share this view (between the sides, 46%; with the security forces, 49%). In other words, concerns about the prospect of civil war are higher among women than among men.

We broke down responses to these two questions by participation or non-participation in protest activities, on the assumption that there would be differences between the two groups. We found that while more than half (54%) of those who have participated in protest activities consider the likelihood of a civil war breaking out between the different sides to be high, only a quarter (27%) of those who have not participated share the same view. Sizable differences were also found regarding the prospect of violent civil war between one of the sides and the security forces: 41% of those who have

participated in at least one protest activity think that there is a high likelihood of this happening, compared with 26% of those who have not participated. That is, the expectation of violence is higher among participants (though not as high regarding the possibility of clashes with the security forces), and is lower in both cases among non-participants.

The public’s view of allowed and forbidden forms of protest: We looked at which forms of protest the public consider legitimate or not. As the figure below shows, a clear majority think demonstrations are allowed, and around half have the same view of going on strike and refusing to engage in commerce. By contrast, only around one-third confer legitimacy on blocking entrances to public or government buildings and blocking roads for several hours, and even fewer take the same view of not showing up for IDF reserve duty. In other words, at this stage at least, there is still no public legitimacy for public disorder or for illegal protests, such as not paying taxes or failing to attend reserve duty.

For each of the following actions, do you think it is allowed or forbidden to perform it in the context of public protests against the government on a matter of supreme national importance? (total sample; %)



Breaking down Jewish respondents by political orientation reveals a highly divided picture: For each of the protest activities we asked about, a higher proportion of those on the Left legitimize it than on the Right. On the Left, a majority was found for each of three forms of protest: demonstrations (97%), going on strike and not engaging in commerce (81%), and blocking roads (61%). Only around a third think that in the context of public protests, it is permissible not to pay taxes and not to show up for IDF reserve duty.

In the Center, only two forms of protest enjoy majority legitimacy: demonstrations (90%) and going on strike and not engaging in commerce (63%). Around one-half also consider blocking entrances to public and government buildings permissible. A much smaller share of those in the Center than on the Left think that blocking roads is allowed (43.5%), and the same goes for not paying taxes and not showing up for IDF reserve duty (21% and 17%, respectively).

On the Right, only demonstrations receive a green light from the majority (88%). None of the other forms of protest are considered legitimate (going on strike and not engaging in commerce, 42%; blocking roads, 26%; blocking entrances to public and government buildings, 23%; not paying taxes, 13%; and not showing up for IDF reserve duty, just 8%).

A breakdown by participation and non-participation in protests finds that those who have participated in protest activities against the reform award more legitimacy to each of the forms of protest we presented than do those who have not participated. In fact, among non-participants, only for demonstrations is there a majority who consider the activity permissible, while among participants there are also majorities for going on strike and not engaging in commerce, blocking roads, and blocking entrances to public and government buildings.

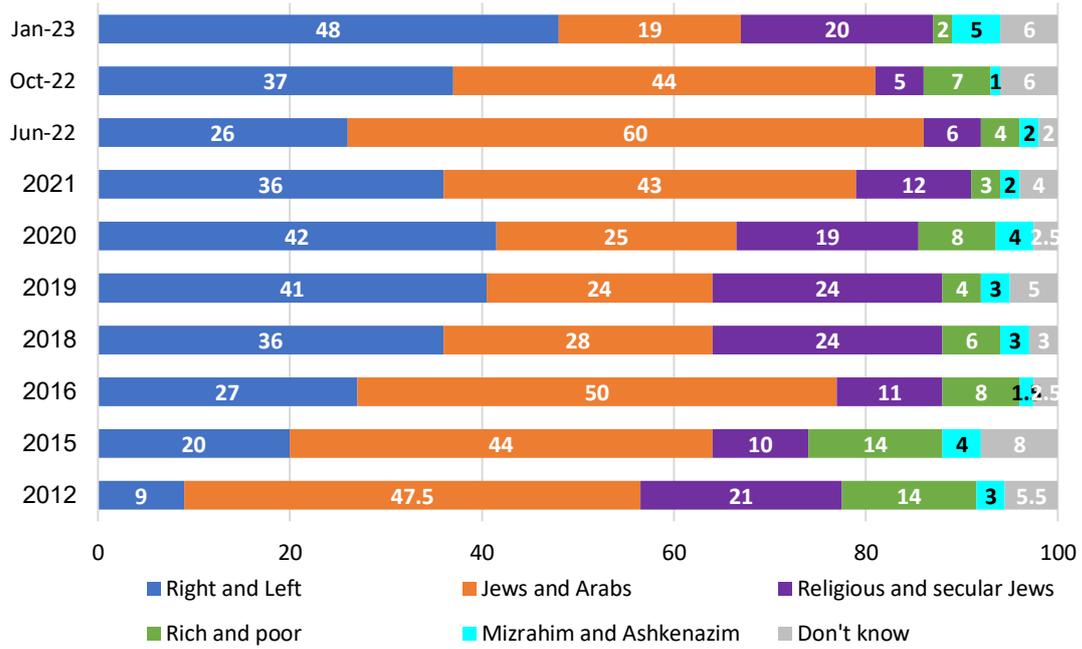
Consider these activities permissible (total sample; %)	Participated in protests	Not participated in protests
Demonstrating	91	80
Going on strike and ceasing to engage in commerce	84	46
Blocking roads for several hours	65	31
Blocking entrances to public and government buildings	61	31
Not showing up for IDF reserve duty	37.5	14
Not paying taxes	35	20

Groups with the Highest Level of Tension Between Them in Israeli Society

Against the backdrop of public disagreements over the proposed justice system reform and more, we once again asked our respondents about which groups they consider to have the highest level of tension between them in Israeli society today. We found an all-time high in the share of those who named Right and Left as the most conflictual groups—42.5% this month, compared with 34% when we last asked in October 2022, and a multi-year average of 27.7% over the last decade. There has also been a considerable rise in the proportion of respondents indicating religious and secular Jews as the groups with the highest level of tension (18% this month, compared with 6% in October 2022).

Analysis of the Jewish sample reveals that almost half (48%) listed Right and Left as the groups with the highest level of tension between them today (compared with 37% in October 2022), and that the share of those naming religious and secular Jews has risen over the same period from 5% to 20%.

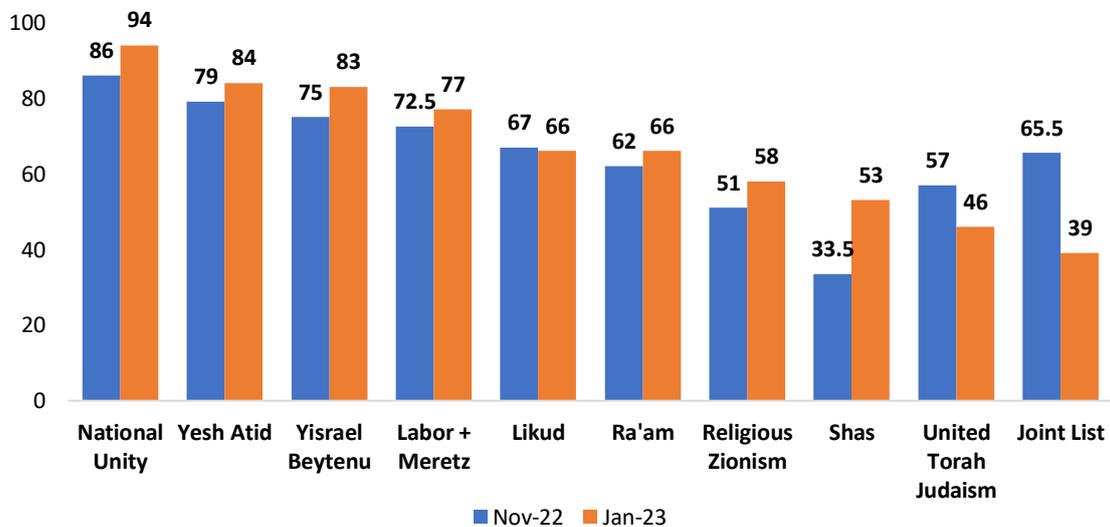
Groups with the highest level of tension between them today (Jews; %)



Openness to Dialogue and Compromise Over Legislation

In light of the increasingly harsh tone of public debate in Israel, we asked again this month about the level of openness to dialogue regarding proposed legislative changes in order to reach some form of compromise. In a similar finding to November (66%), a majority of this month’s respondents agree that there should be dialogue between the sides (63%). Support for this suggestion is higher among those who voted for opposition parties than among voters for coalition parties (77.5% compared with 60%, respectively), while among voters for Zionist opposition parties the level of approval reaches 84%.

Agree that in order to bridge the divide between the political camps, there should be dialogue about the proposed legislative changes and an attempt to reach compromise (total sample, by vote at the last elections; %)



The January 2023 Israeli Voice Index was prepared by the Viterbi Family Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research at the Israel Democracy Institute. The survey was conducted via the internet and by telephone (to include groups that are under-represented on the internet) between January 23 and 26, 2023, with 600 men and women interviewed in Hebrew and 118 in Arabic, constituting a nationally representative sample of the adult population in Israel aged 18 and over. The maximum sampling error was $\pm 3.59\%$ at a confidence level of 95%. Field work was carried out by Midgam Research and Consulting Ltd. The full data file can be found at: <https://dataisrael.idi.org.il>.