

Viterbi Family Center
for Public Opinion
and Policy Research

Selected Findings

THE ISRAELI DEMOCRACY INDEX

2023

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THE ISRAEL
DEMOCRACY
INSTITUTE

The Israel Democracy Index 2023

The 21st edition of Israeli Democracy Index, conducted by the Viterbi Family Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research at the Israel Democracy Institute, takes the pulse of the public on the basis of a survey among a representative sample of the entire population of Israel.

The Index is the go-to address for reliable, comprehensive, and up-to-date information on the Israeli public's attitudes and opinions on a broad range of issues at the core of Israeli democracy. The findings and their analysis significantly impact the public discourse and provide policymakers with the information they need for sound decision-making.

As in previous years, data was collected in June of 2023. However, in light of the horrifying attacks on October 7th, the outbreak of the war in Gaza, and the likelihood of their impact on the public's attitudes and opinions in a range of key areas, we revisited several questions included in the June survey in December 2023 and January 2024. The questions that were revisited assessed whether there had been significant changes following the outbreak of the war and among which groups in the population.

The two time periods in which the data were collected reflect two deeply significant events in Israeli history: an unprecedented protest movement against the proposed judicial overhaul, and the intense fighting and tragic loss of lives in the war in Gaza following the October 7 massacre by Hamas.

The findings presented here provide a snapshot of the public's attitudes and beliefs in diverse areas:

- * The overall situation in Israel and the extent to which Israeli democracy is under threat.
- * Trust in official institutions, such as the IDF, the Supreme Court, the police, political parties, and others.
- * Tensions between various groups that make up Israel's social mosaic: Right and Left, rich and poor, Jews and Arabs, secular and religious Jews, and Ashkenazim and Mizrahim.
- * Social solidarity, or "sense of togetherness", both in terms of Israeli society as a whole and just within Jewish society.
- * The potential for a new social contract, looking at whether there is a common set of values in Israeli society and whether a new social and political contract could be underway.

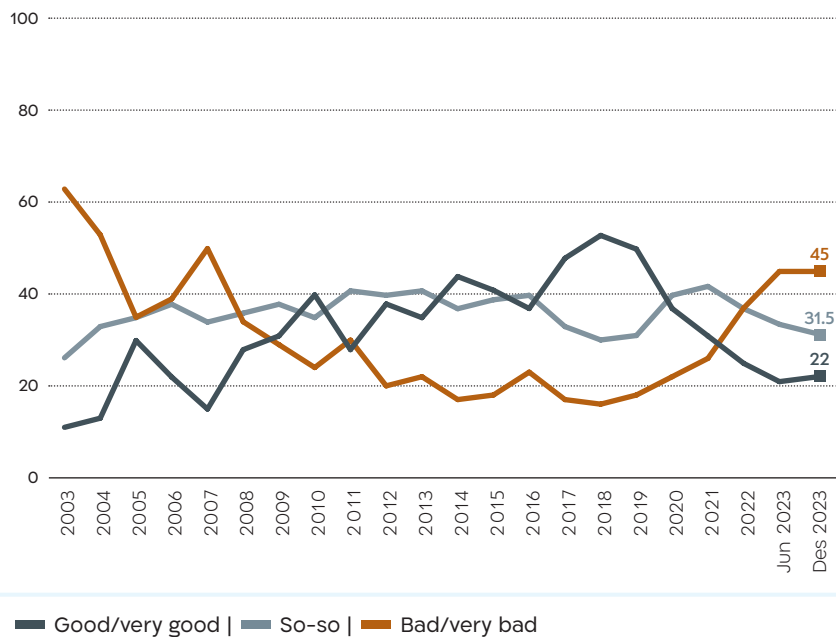
Taken together, the topics in the Israeli Democracy Index paint a complex picture of Israeli society both before and after the tragic events of October 7th, 2023 and the ensuing war. While some areas have seen a great deal of change—such as a surge in the level of trust in the police—other areas remain steady, such as the perception of tension between Jews and Arabs and the Right and the Left.

How is Israel Doing?

In June 2023, the survey was conducted at the height of the political struggles and mass protests over the government’s proposed judicial overhaul; in the December survey, we repeated the question in the midst of the war that followed the October 7 attack. Despite the very different background circumstances, the results of the two surveys were almost identical. Moreover, the differences between the various subgroups in the Israeli public also remained the same.

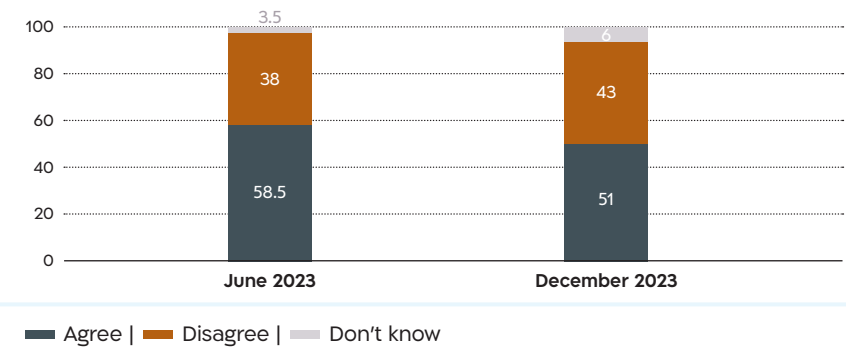
How would you characterize Israel’s overall situation today?

(total sample; %)



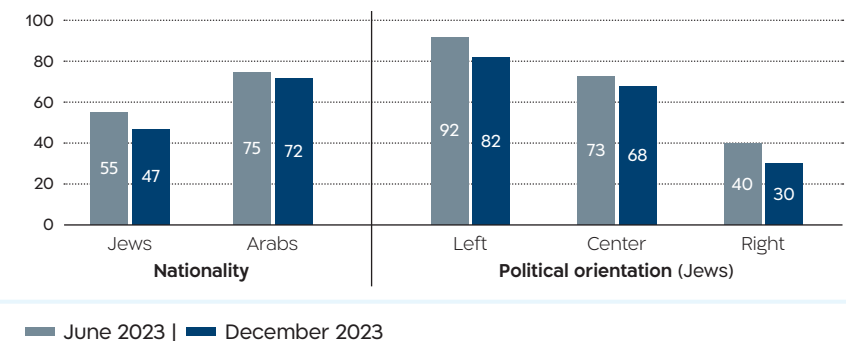
Relative to the June 2023 survey, there was a slight decline in the belief that Israel's democratic system is in grave danger. Most of this decline can be observed among Jewish respondents (down by 8%), where it was common to all three political camps (Left, -10%; Center, -5%; Right, -10%).

Do you agree or disagree that Israel's democratic system is in grave danger? (total sample; %)



Agree that Israel's democratic system is in grave danger (Jews and Arabs; %)

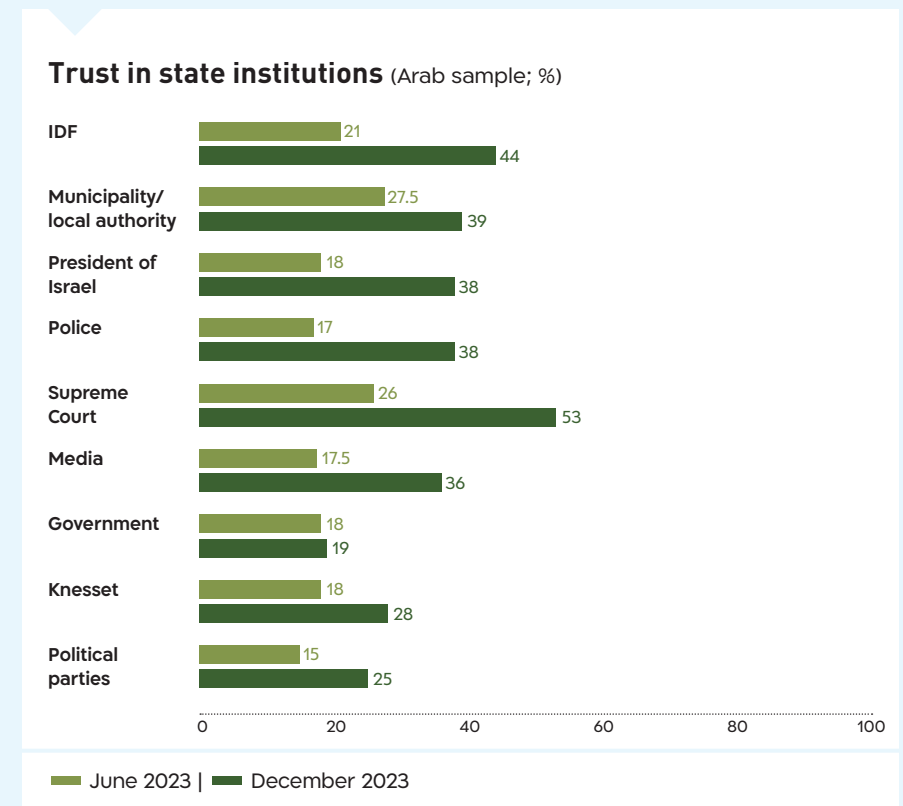
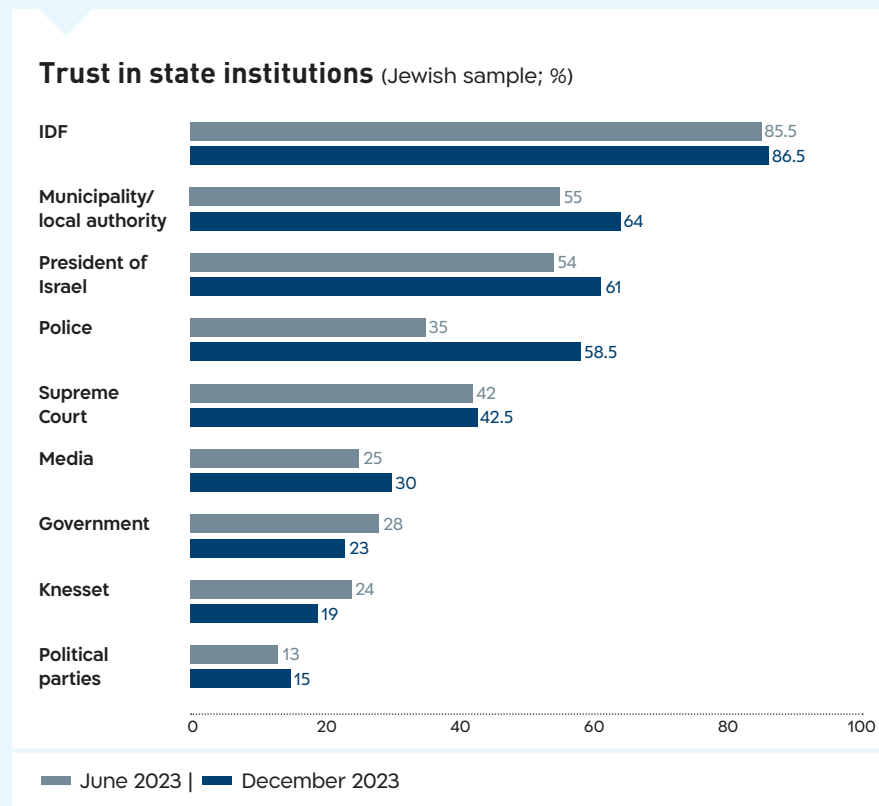
(Jews and Arabs; %)



Public Trust in Institutions

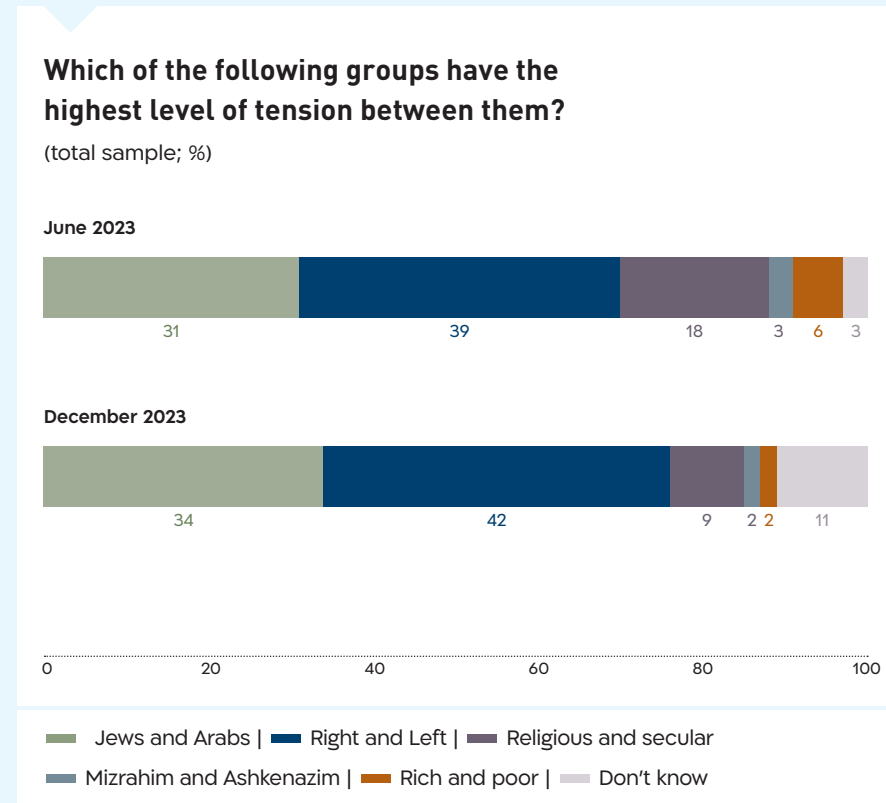
Respondents were asked about their trust in a range of institutions. As in the past, among Jews, the IDF topped the trust rankings, with the political institutions (the government, Knesset, and political parties) down at the bottom. The most significant change in the data after the war was the sharp rise in trust in the police—up by 23% to its highest rating for the last decade. There was also a sizable increase in trust in local authority (9%), again to its highest value since we began measuring it in 2016.

The December survey found a sharp rise in trust in institutions among Israel’s Arab citizens. A possible explanation for this may be that some Arab Israelis fear expressing a critical view of the state during the war. Further research is needed to clarify this complex subject. In both June and December, the Supreme Court topped the trust rankings, while as in the Jewish public, the Knesset and the political parties were ranked lowest by Arab respondents, though a slight increase was found for each.



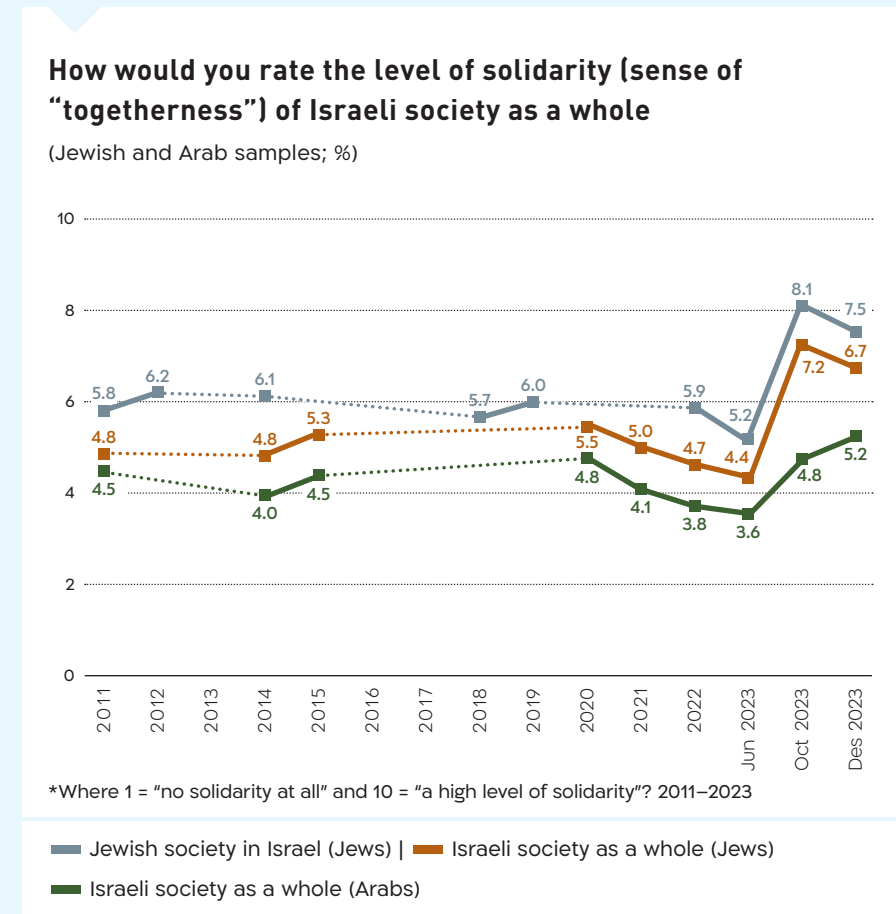
Tensions in Israeli Society

In both surveys (June and December), Right and Left were considered the two groups with the highest level of tension between them, followed by Jews and Arabs in second place, and religious and secular in third. However, the percentage of respondents who cited the religious-secular divide was lower in the second survey, a finding which presumably can be attributed to the rapprochement between the secular and religious publics brought about by the war, at least as of late-2023.



Social Solidarity

Following record-low assessments of levels of social solidarity during the protests on the judicial overhaul, just one week after the outbreak of the war, there was an upsurge in the sense of solidarity, which declined shortly thereafter among Jewish Israelis.

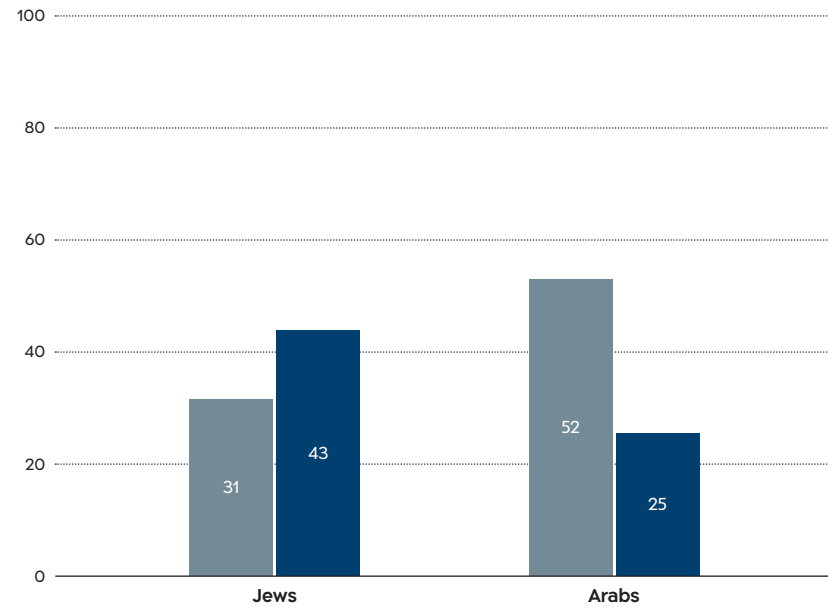


A New Social Contract?

Among Jews, there was a slight increase between June and January in the percentage of respondents who believe that Israelis share a broad national consensus, while among Arabs, this percentage dropped by almost half during that period.

Agree that there is a common set of values shared by a majority of Israelis today?

(Jews and Arabs; %)

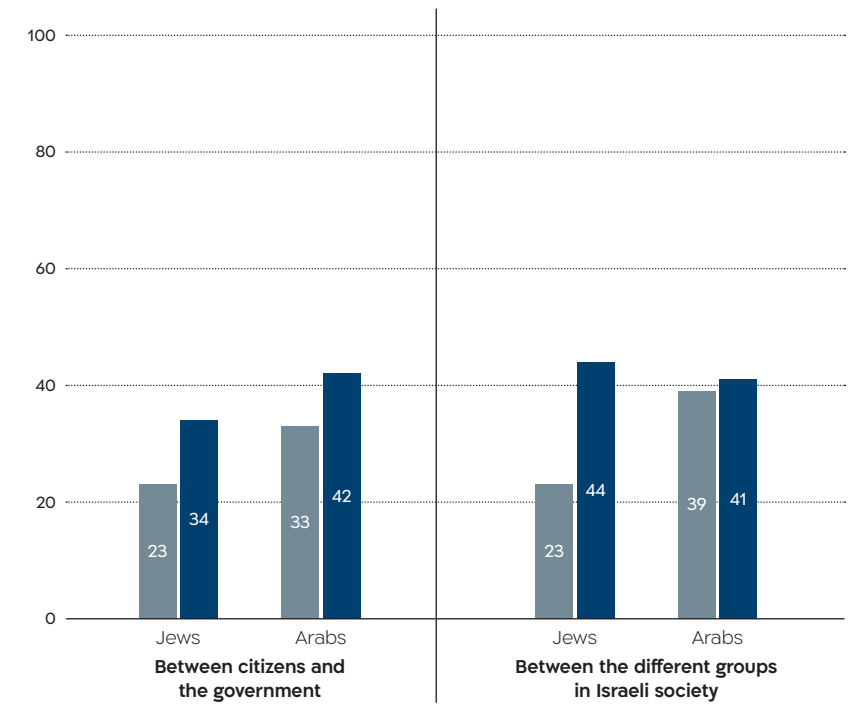


■ June 2023 | ■ December 2023

In June 2023, at the peak of the tensions in Israeli society, only a quarter of the respondents believed that there is a high likelihood of a “new social-political contract” regarding both relationships between different sectors of society, and between citizens and the government. The January 2024 survey found an increase in these percentages, particularly in the latter (between citizens and the government, 35%; between the different groups in Israeli society, 43%).

Agree that there is a high likelihood of a “new social-political contract” emerging in Israel

(Jews and Arabs; %)

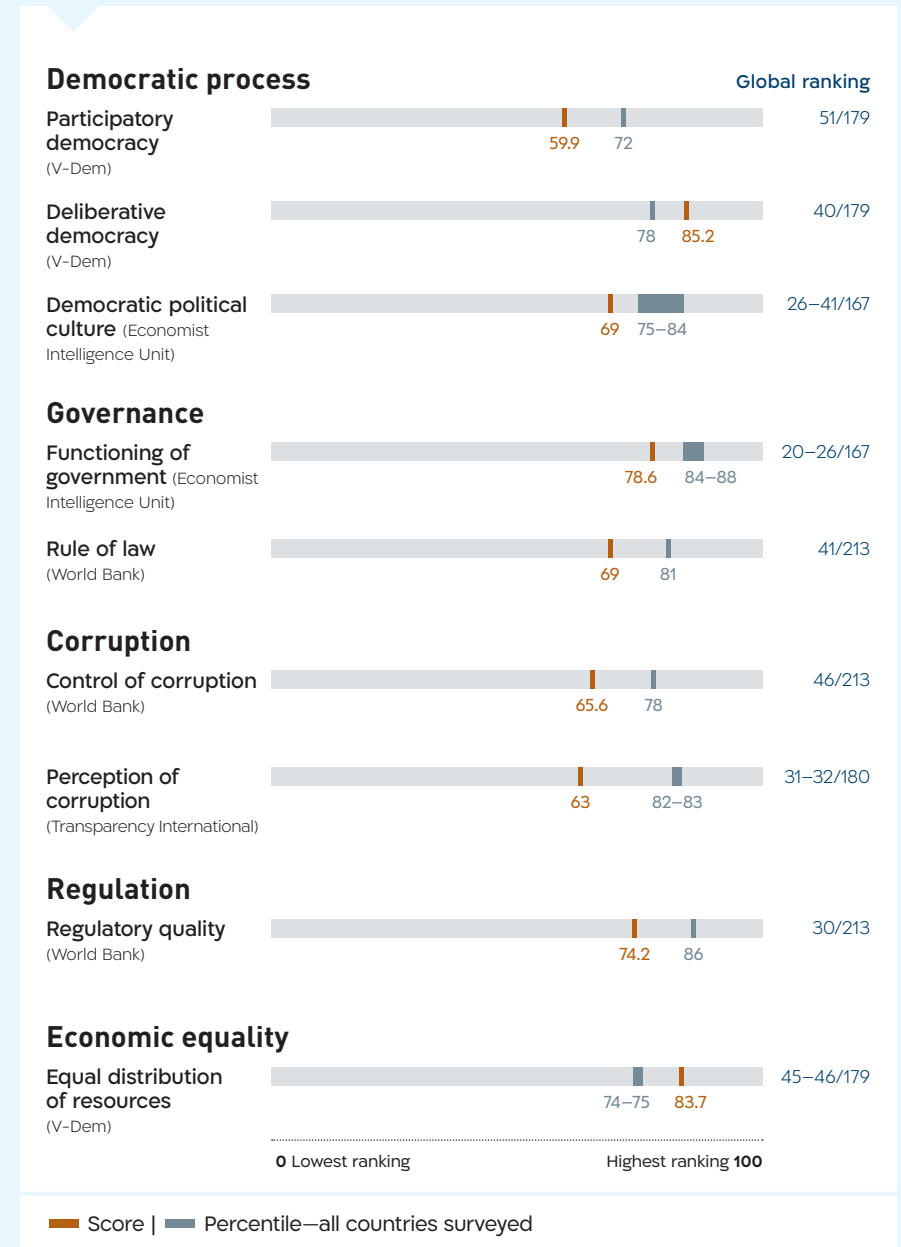
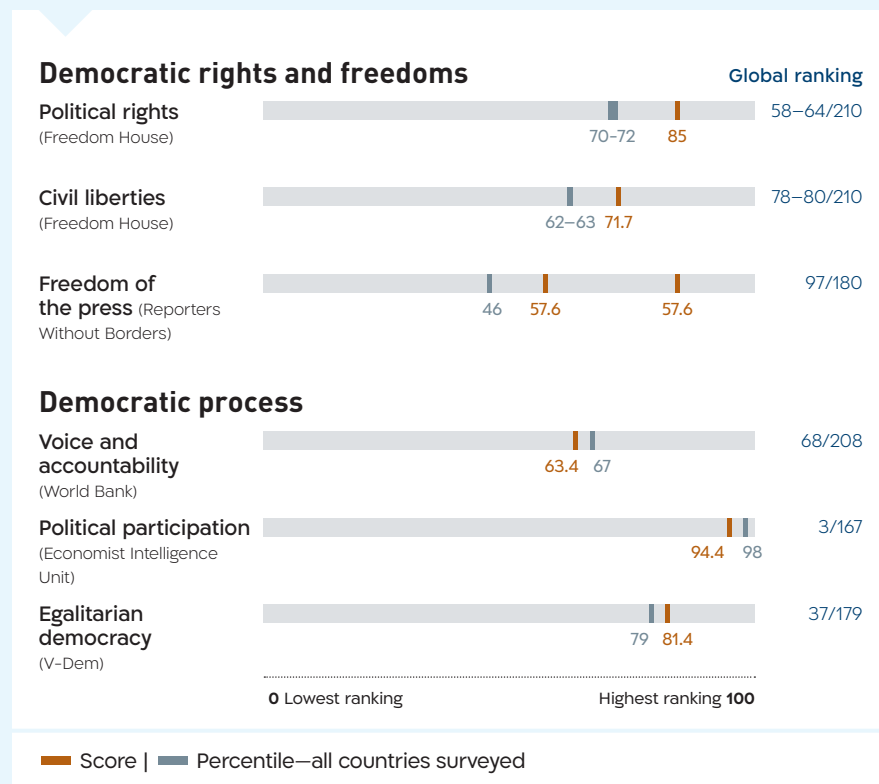


■ June 2023 | ■ December 2023

Israel and the World

To provide a broader context to these findings, we look at a number of indicators of freedom and democracy as compared with other developed countries. Of the 15 indicators, Israel ranked highest in political participation, compared with almost all countries surveyed and the OECD states.

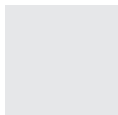
The full Index report presents the multi-year averages which show that in most indicators, the assessments of Israeli democracy have remained stable over the years.



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.



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