

# The Israeli Democracy Index

# 2013

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## Main Findings



THE ISRAEL  
DEMOCRACY  
INSTITUTE

## About the Israeli Democracy Index

The Israeli  
Democracy  
Index

**2013**

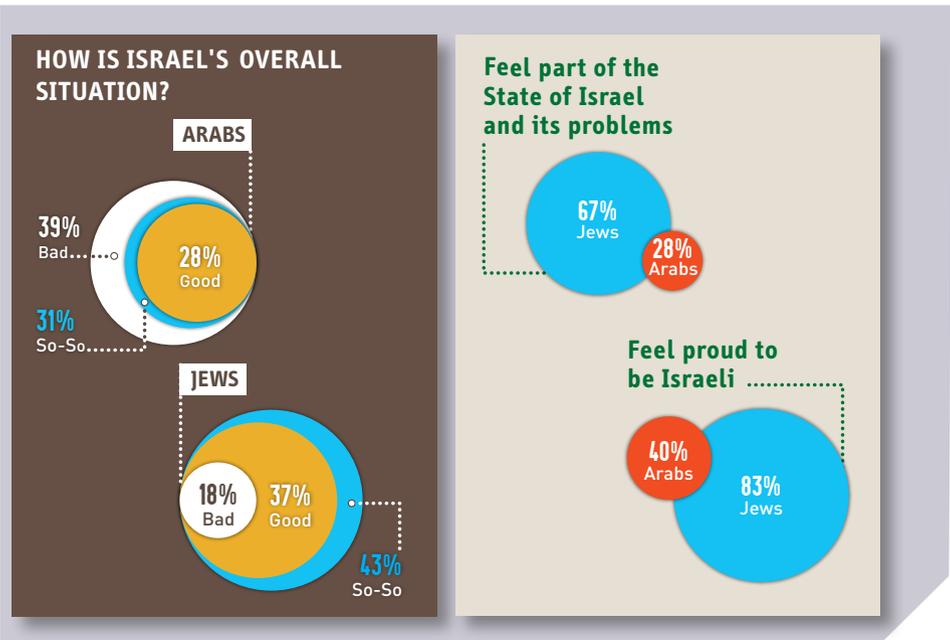
The Israeli Democracy Index is a public opinion poll project conducted by The Guttman Center for Surveys at the Israel Democracy Institute. Since 2003, an extensive survey has been conducted annually on a representative sample of Israel's adult population (1,000 participants). Each survey presents an assessment of the quality of Israeli democracy for that year. On the whole, the project aims at assessing trends in Israeli public opinion regarding realization of democratic values and the performance of government systems and elected officials. Analysis of its results may contribute to public discussion of the status of democracy in Israel and create a cumulative empirical database to intensify discourse concerning such issues.

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Infographics: RoniLevit.com

Full results of the *Israeli Democracy Index 2013* as well as the findings of all previous years can be found in both Hebrew and English on the IDI website: [en.idi.org.il](http://en.idi.org.il)

# How is Israel Doing?

- **The Overall Situation** – Jewish Israelis most frequently assess the country’s overall situation as “so-so” (43.1%), with 36.7% labeling the situation “good” and 18.4% considering it “bad.” By contrast, a plurality of Israel’s Arab citizens assess the situation as “bad” (39.1%), followed by “so-so” (30.8%), and “good” (27.6%).
- **Belonging and Pride** – 83.3% of Jewish Israelis are proud to be Israeli and 66.6% feel part of the state and its problems. Among Arabs, only a minority feel pride in being Israeli (39.8%) or a sense of belonging to the state (28.2%).
- **Democratic Rights** – 41.8% of Israelis feel that the right to live with dignity is upheld “too little” or “far too little” in Israel. The prevailing opinion is that freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly are upheld “to a suitable degree.”
- **Socio-Economic Gaps** – A majority of Israelis (63.5%) agree that it is important to narrow the socioeconomic gaps in Israeli society even if it means paying more taxes.



The data for the Israel Democracy Index 2013 were collected by the Dialog Institute between April 8 and May 2, 2013. The sample consisted of 1,000 respondents (852 Jews and 148 Arabs). The maximum sampling error for a sample of this size is  $\pm 3.2\%$ .

## The Political System

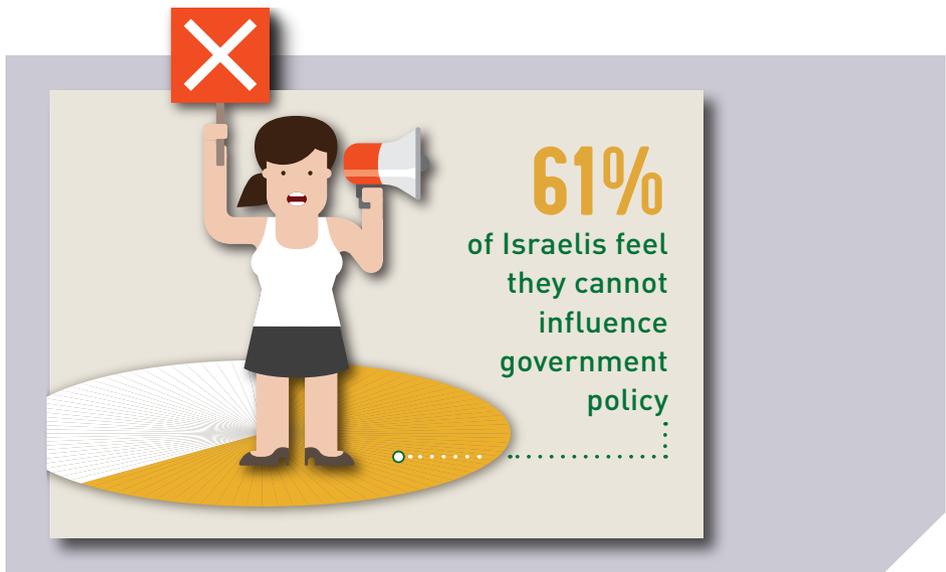
- **Public Confidence** – The 2013 survey showed a slight decline in the level of trust in all state institutions and public servants. As in the past, among Jewish respondents, the Israel Defense Forces (whom 90.9% regard as trustworthy) and the President of Israel (78.7%) top the scale. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court (49.7%) and the media (48.1%) rank highest among Arab respondents.
- **Motivation of Leaders** – While the assessment of Knesset members' performance has improved somewhat, a clear majority of Israelis (68.8%) still feel that politicians are more concerned with their own interests than those of the public.
- **Impact of Voting Patterns** – Voting patterns in the 2013 Knesset elections turned out to have little value in predicting opinion on the issues, underscoring the tenuous status of political parties as political “indicators.” Nonetheless, a majority of respondents (55.3%) perceive differences among the parties and believe their choice of party matters.
- **Electoral Reform** – A majority of Jewish respondents (67.8%) think it would be better to have a few large parties rather than many small ones. Arab respondents were split evenly on this question.



55%

of Israelis think  
there are real  
differences  
between  
Israel's  
political parties

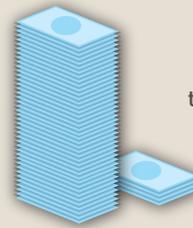
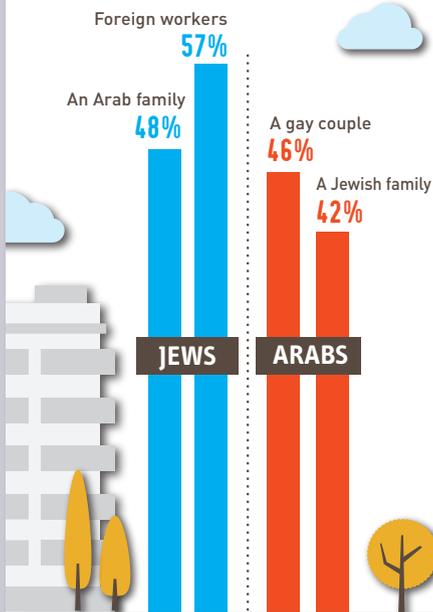
- **Political Interest and Impact** – A majority of Jewish respondents (71.8%) reported that they are interested in politics. By contrast, most Arab respondents (59.6%) reported that they are not interested in politics. In both groups, a majority (61%) feel that they have little or no ability to influence government decisions.
- **Use of Political Violence** – The majority of both Jewish (74.6%) and Arab (67.1%) citizens of Israel are opposed to the use of violence for political ends.
- **Refusal of Orders** – A majority of Jews in Israel (62.8%) feel that soldiers do not have the right to refuse to serve in the West Bank on the grounds that they oppose the occupation. Just over half (50.9%) think soldiers do not have the right to disobey an order to evacuate settlements either. A majority of Arabs support the right to refuse orders in both cases.
- **Patriotism/Nationalism** – The survey findings indicate that, in general, younger Israeli Jews are more patriotic and nationalist than their elders.



# Jews and Others

- **Rifts in Society** – 68% of the overall sample define the rift between Jews and Arabs in Israeli society as strong (the balance of respondents see it as medium or weak). Additional rifts seen as strong include, in descending order: tensions between rich and poor, the religious-secular divide, differences between right and left, and friction between Sephardim (Mizrahim) and Ashkenazim.
- **More Rights for Jews?** – Jews are split over whether Jewish citizens of Israel should have more rights than non-Jewish citizens: 48.9% agree with this notion, while 47.3% disagree.
- **Attitudes toward the “Other”** – When it comes to having “others” as neighbors, Jews expressed greatest aversion to living next to foreign workers (56.9%), followed by an Arab family (47.6%). Arabs expressed greatest aversion to having a homosexual couple as neighbors (46.2%), followed by a Jewish family (41.9%).

## Who would it bother you to have as a neighbor?



**58%**  
of Israelis feel there is great tension between the rich and poor in Israel

**27%**

of Jews feel that there is great tension between Sephardim (Mizrahim) and Ashkenazim in Israel



- **Arab Emigration** – This year saw a decline in the share of Jews who support government policies that encourage Arabs to emigrate from Israel: 43.8% favor such policies, as opposed to 50.7% in 2010 and 53.6% in 2009.
- **A Jewish Majority for Critical Decisions?** – Most Jewish respondents feel that critical national decisions should be determined by a Jewish majority, both on matters of peace and security (66.7%) and on social/economic issues (56.9%). A majority of Arab Israelis disagree.
- **A Peace Treaty Referendum?** – On the question of who should have the ultimate authority to approve a peace treaty that includes withdrawal from the West Bank, the prevailing response among Jews (30.6%) was that only Jewish citizens should decide the issue by referendum. Among Arab respondents, the most frequent response (45.2%) was that all Israeli citizens should determine the outcome by referendum.

## Who should have the ultimate authority to approve a peace treaty that includes a withdrawal from the West Bank?

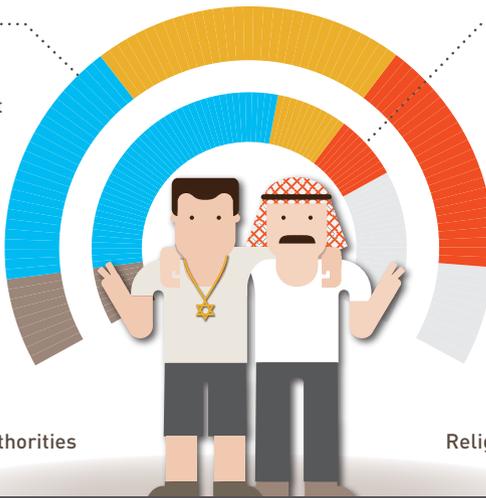


### JEWIS

- 25% The Knesset
- 31% Jewish citizens by referendum
- 25% All citizens by referendum
- 9% Halakhic authorities

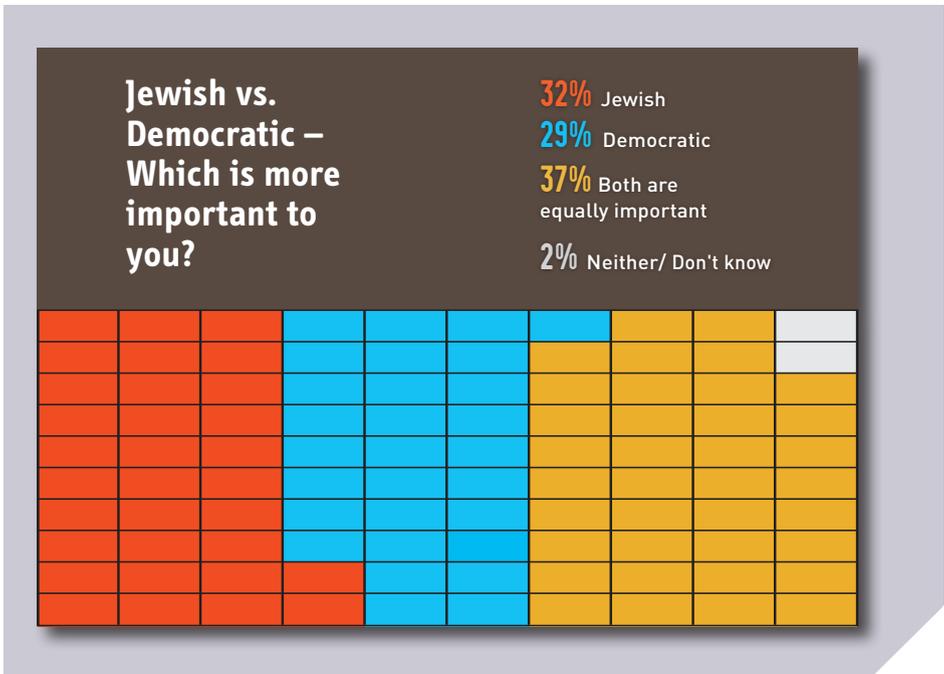
### ARABS

- 10% The Knesset
- 11% Jewish citizens by referendum
- 45% All citizens by referendum
- 9% Religious leaders



# Jewish? Democratic? Jewish and Democratic?

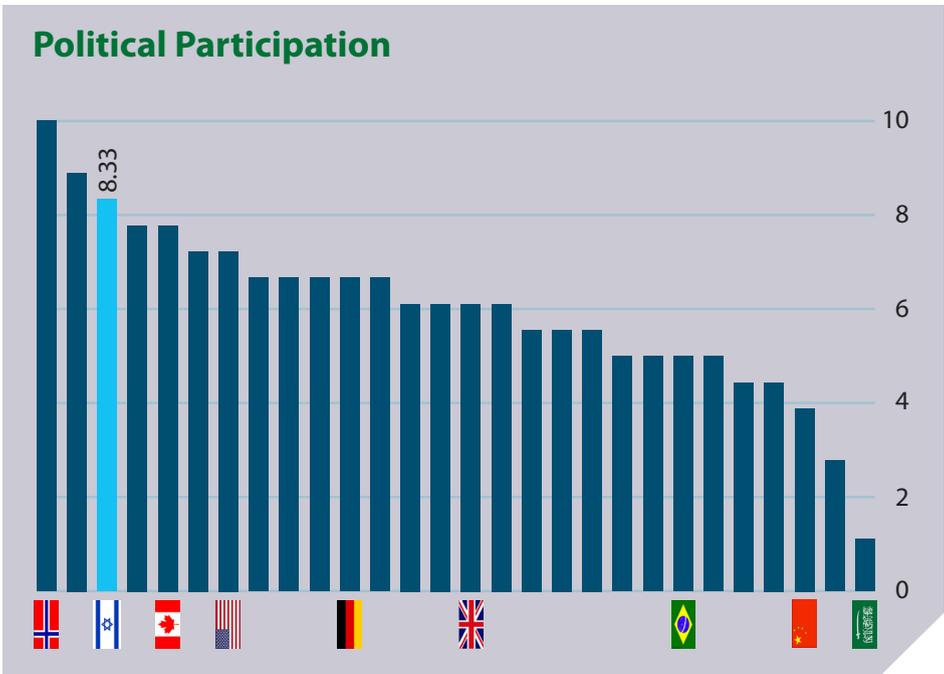
- **Israel's Dual Identity** – A sizeable majority of Jews (74.8%) believe that the State of Israel can be both Jewish and democratic. Only a third of Arab respondents share this view.
- **Jewish or Democratic?** – Roughly one third (32.3% ) of the Jewish respondents think the Jewish component of Israel's definition as a Jewish and democratic state is more important, while 29.2% attach greater importance to the democratic component. The percentage of respondents who prefer the combined definition "Jewish and democratic" has declined steadily in recent years, reaching 37% this year.



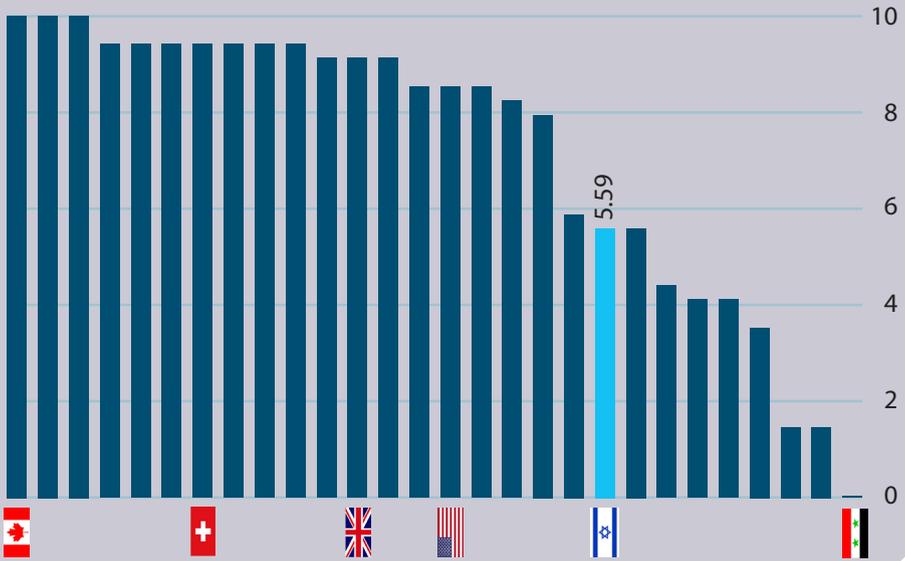
- **Halakha vs. Democracy?** – The share of Jewish respondents who would choose democratic principles over Jewish religious law (halakha) in the event of conflict between the two (42.7%) clearly outstrips those who would favor Jewish law in such a situation (28.2%).

# How Does Israel Compare with Other Countries?

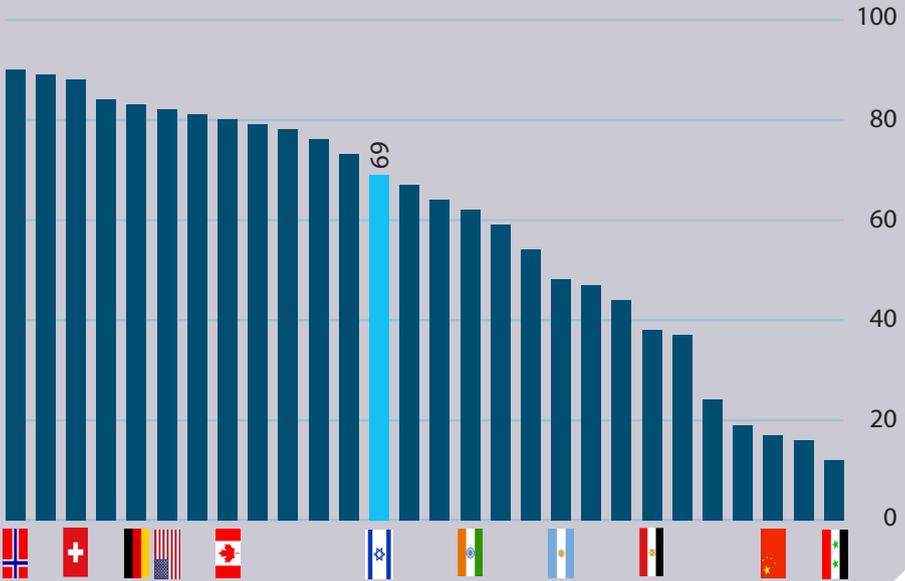
- **Overall Standing** – This year’s annual international comparison did not reveal significant changes in Israel’s position vis à vis the world’s democracies. In most international indices, Israel falls at the midpoint of the scale, adjacent to the new democracies.
- **Strengths and Weaknesses** – Israel scored especially high this year in political participation, and received particularly low grades for civil liberties and religious and ethnic tensions.



## Civil Liberties



## Freedom of Press



## About Us

**The Israel Democracy Institute (IDI)** is a non-partisan “think and do tank” dedicated to strengthening the foundations of Israeli democracy. A 2009 Israel Prize recipient, IDI promotes political reform, democratic values, social cohesion, and solutions in the field of religion and state.

**The Guttman Center for Surveys at IDI** holds the largest, most comprehensive database on public opinion surveys in Israel. Over a span of sixty years, the Center, based in Jerusalem, has applied rigorous, innovative, and pioneering research methods enhanced by its unique “continuing survey.” It has documented the attitudes of the Israeli public regarding thousands of issues, in all aspects of life, in over 1,200 studies that have been conducted since 1947: from everyday concerns to politics, culture, ideology, religion, education, and national security.

All IDI publications may be downloaded for free in full or in part at our website:  
[en.idi.org.il](http://en.idi.org.il)



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