

The Israeli Democracy Index

2014

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HIGHLIGHTS



THE ISRAEL
DEMOCRACY
INSTITUTE

This Year's Theme

The **Israeli Democracy Index 2014**

focuses on the views of the Israeli public regarding the country's socio-economic situation and its effect on Israeli democracy.

About the Israeli Democracy Index

The Israeli
Democracy
Index

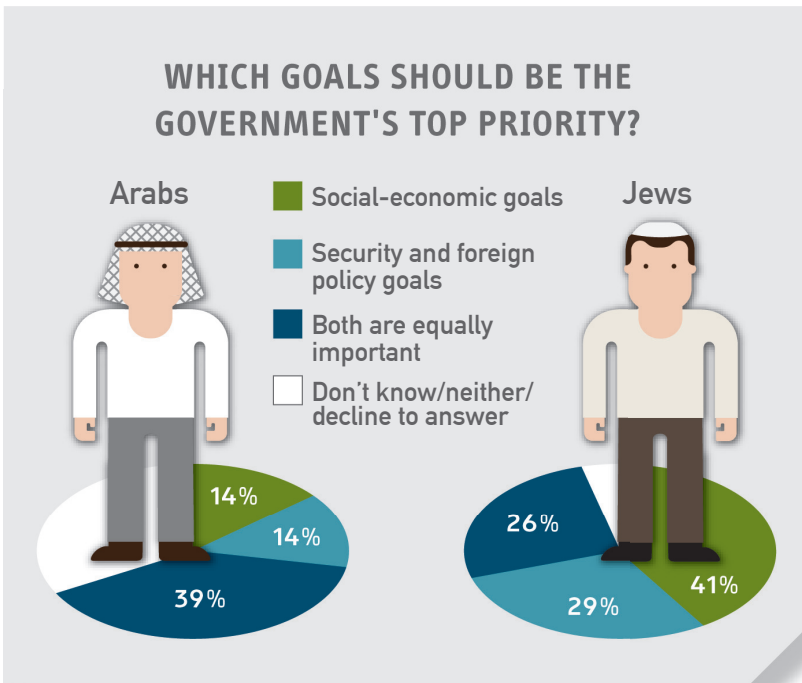
2014

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.

Data for **The Israeli Democracy Index 2014** were collected by the Dialog Institute in April–May, 2014. The study population was a representative national sample of 1,007 adults aged 18 and over. The maximum sampling error for a sample of this size is $\pm 3.2\%$.

Israel's Economy and Government

■ **Priorities** – When respondents were asked to rank their top-ranked social-economic goal and their top-ranked security and foreign affairs goal, they most frequently chose the social-economic goal as the top priority for the Israeli government (37%). Within the Arab and Jewish communities, however, there was a difference: Among Arab respondents, the most frequent response (39%) was that both were equally important; among Jews, there was a clear preference (41.5%) for the social-economic objective.



■ **Economic Security** – Roughly one third (37.5%) of the total sample reported a family income below the national average, with economic difficulties more marked among Israel's Arab population. Approximately one fifth (19%) of the total sample and fully a third (33.5%) of the Arab sample stated that they feel poor. At the same time, when asked if they were satisfied with their family's financial situation, respondents tended to report a moderate level of satisfaction.

- **Dealing with Poverty** – A majority of respondents (55%) are unwilling to pay higher taxes to reduce income disparity, and some two thirds (65%) feel that the situation justifies another round of social protests. The common tendency (48%) is to place responsibility for the standard of living on the government. There is widespread opposition (60%) to the view that poor people are responsible for their situation and could pull themselves out of poverty if only they worked harder.



- **Capitalism or Socialism?** – The largest group of respondents (34.5%) favors the social-democratic economic model, in which there is substantial government involvement in the economic sphere. A similar percentage (33%) advocate a mixed system. Only a minority (18.6%) favor a capitalist system, in which there is a free market with minimal government intervention.
- **Confidence in Economic Bodies** – For the most part, the public expresses a lack of trust toward the major players in the country's economic-social system: the Finance Ministry (59%) and the banks (62%). In the same vein, a majority of respondents (55%) see the influence of the wealthy on government decision-making as harmful to democracy. A substantial majority (79%) think that the major labor unions in Israel (e.g. in the Electric Corporation, railways, ports, and banks) have too much power.

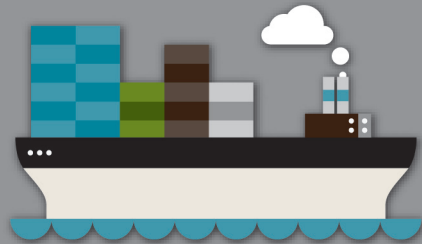
Approx. **60%**

of Israelis have little or no trust in Israel's banks and Finance Ministry



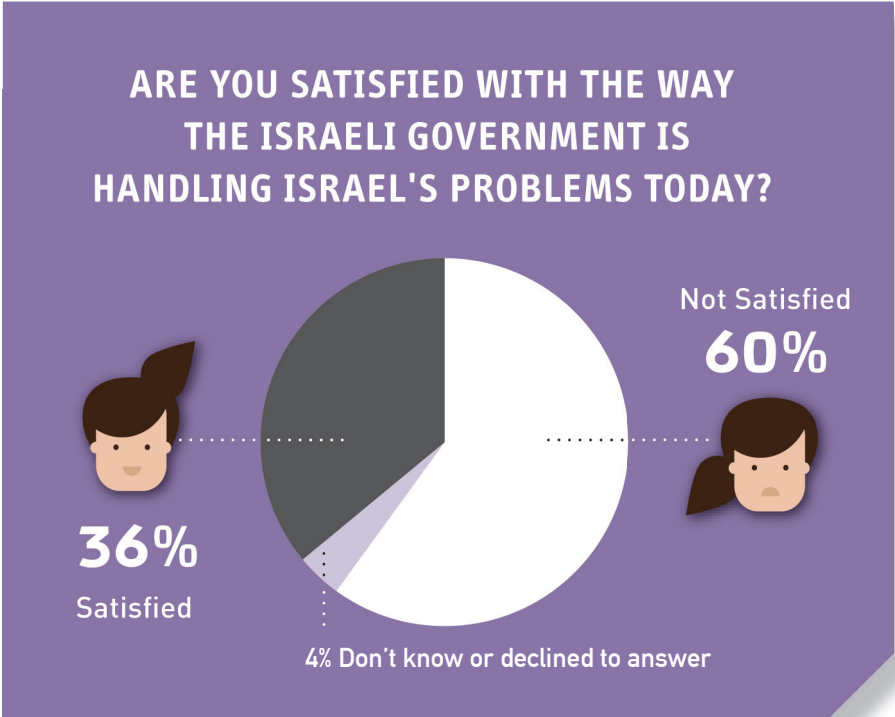
79%

think Israel's major labor unions (electricity, railways, ports, and banks) have too much power



- **Confidence in Government and State Institutions** – The Israeli public has a low level of trust in state and government institutions. A decline was found in the level of trust in all institutions surveyed, as compared to the 2013 survey. The only three institutions that enjoy the trust of a majority of the Jewish public are the Israel Defense Forces (88%), the President of the State of Israel (71%), and the Supreme Court (62%). The scale of trust of Arab respondents is different from that of Jewish respondents: The Supreme Court tops the list (60%), followed by the Police (57%), the President of the State of Israel (56%), and the IDF (51%).

A clear majority (60%) of the public is dissatisfied with how the government is handling national problems.



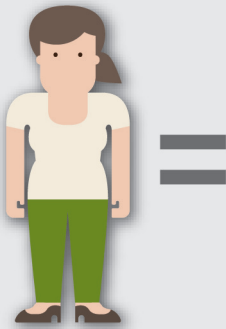
Human Rights and Civic Equality

- **Freedom of Speech** – The Israeli public is divided on the question of whether harsh public criticism of the State of Israel should be banned, with 46% supporting a ban of this nature and 47% opposing it.



■ **Human Dignity** – An overall majority of Israelis (79%)—including Arab citizens, though to a lesser degree than Jews—feel that their personal human dignity is respected in their contact with official bodies. In this year’s survey, the most noteworthy institutions in this regard are the Israel Defense Forces and Israel’s hospitals.

■ **Civic Equality** – Although nearly two thirds (63%) of Jewish respondents disagree with the statement that Jewish citizens of the state should have greater rights than non-Jewish citizens, an overwhelming majority (74%) think that crucial national decisions on matters of peace and security should be made by a Jewish majority. For a sizeable majority (61%), the same is true for decisions regarding governance, the economy, or Israel’s social structure.



63%

of Israeli Jews think Jews should not have greater rights than Arabs

BUT

74%

of Israeli Jews think decisions about peace and security should be determined by a Jewish majority



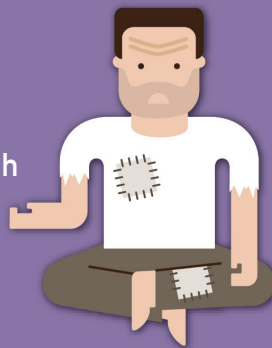
The State of Israeli Society

- **Social Solidarity** – Generally speaking, the public perceives the level of social solidarity in Israel as quite low. The most negative responses came from people who consider themselves outside the mainstream of society: Arab respondents, respondents who identify with the left on matters of security and foreign affairs, and respondents who feel poor.
- **Social Tensions** – Despite the growing importance of the economic divide, Jewish-Arab tensions are still seen as the major fault line in Israel, with 61% of Jews and 45% of Arabs defining the level of tension between the two groups as “high” (58% of the total sample). Over half the respondents (54.5%) see the tension between rich and poor in Israel as high and 52% of respondents deem tension between religious and secular Jews to be high. With regard to other tensions, 45% consider tension between people on the right and left of the foreign affairs and security spectrum to be high, 39% define tension between ultra-Orthodox Jews and religious Zionists as high, and 24.5% define tension between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim as high.

54.5%

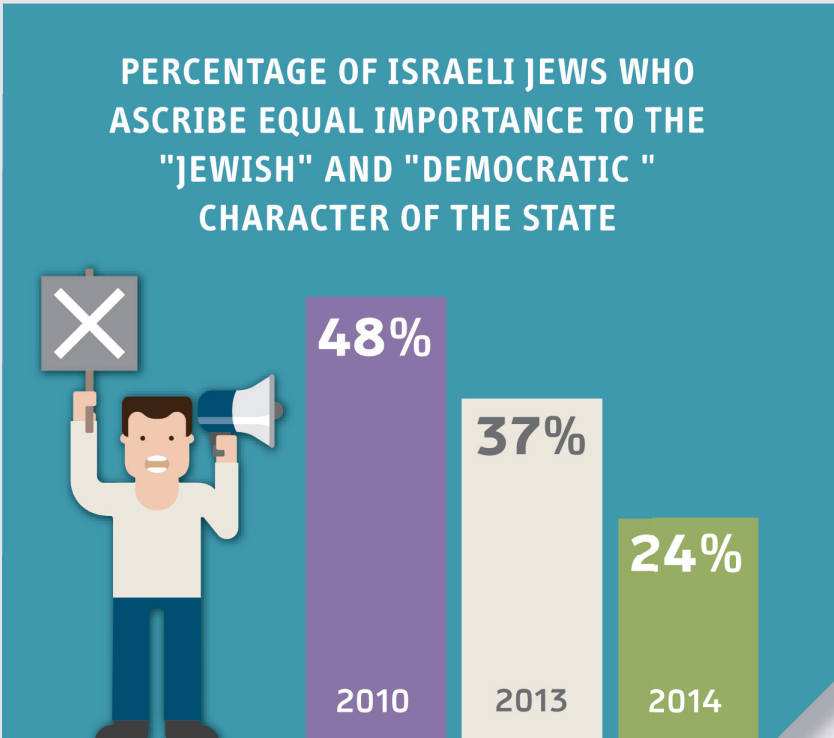
define tension between
rich and poor in Israel as high

Only tension between Jews
and Arabs is seen by the
public as higher (58%)



Jewish and Democratic?

- Although the State of Israel is defined as “Jewish and democratic,” only about a quarter of the Jews surveyed ascribe equal importance to both of these components. Most of the respondents favor one of the two elements, with a slight preference for “Jewish” (39%) over “democratic” (33.5%). The proportion of those ascribing equal importance to these two components of Israel’s identity has declined steadily from 48% in 2010 to a low of 24% in the present survey.



How Does Israel Rank Internationally?

- **General Findings** – This year’s study of international indices revealed that Israel remains squarely positioned in the family of democratic nations. However, there is need for improvement in the following areas: preserving basic freedoms, internalizing democratic values, and raising the level of trust in the government.
- **High Marks** – Israel ranked in the top third of countries for gender equality (ahead of Canada, the UK, and the US) and for satisfaction with life (the same as Belgium, ahead of the US, and after Brazil).
- **Low Marks** – Israel ranked in the bottom third of countries with regard to civil liberties (where Israel ranked quite low, with Lebanon), civic engagement (which includes trust in the government and perceived ability to influence legislation), and political stability and absence of violence/terrorism (where Israel was ranked near Venezuela, India, and Turkey).



Israel is in the
TOP THIRD

of international rankings
of gender equality and
satisfaction with life

Israel is in the
BOTTOM THIRD

of rankings when it
comes to civil liberties,
civic engagement,
and political stability



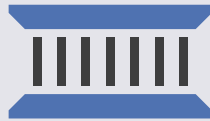
About Us

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.



Full results of the 2014 Index, 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



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