The President's Conference – Israeli Democracy Examined

Auditing Israeli Democracy – 2008
Between the State and Civil Society

Asher Arian, Tamar Hermann
Nir Atmor, Yael Hadar, Yuval Lebel, Hila Zaban

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The President's Conference

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ISRAELI DEMOCRACY EXAMINED

THE 2008 ISRAELI DEMOCRACY INDEX

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Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables

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Summary

The Israeli public is drawing away, at times in disgust, from the political establishment, but is not indifferent to political and social issues on the national agenda. The attitude to civil society – the public bodies and organizations that are not part of state mechanisms and do not operate according to profit considerations – is far more positive. Nevertheless, and despite the continuous decline in the levels of satisfaction with the rule of law, with public service, and with the political leadership, the Israeli public still looks to the state and harbors expectations that the state, rather than any other agency, dictate and direct issues of social and economic policy, and supply all the social services it requires. These are the findings that emerge from *Auditing Israeli Democracy 2008: Between the State and Civil Society*, in Israel's sixtieth independence year.

The public's frustration and disgust with Israel's political system assumes many forms. One is an unwillingness to discuss political issues: Only 43 percent of respondents attest that they talk about political issues with family and friends, and about 60 percent are interested in politics – a dramatic decline from 2006, when 73 percent of respondents said they were. Furthermore, about 73 percent of respondents would not advise their relatives and friends to enter politics. This should be viewed against the backdrop of 68 percent of respondents who agree with the statement that politicians do not tend to take into account the view of the ordinary citizen, and 53 percent who hold that the situation in other democracies is better than the situation in Israeli democracy.

The distancing from the political system does not stem only from the sense that the elected echelons are not attentive, but also from an assessment of the system as corrupt. Anyone familiar with current public discourse in Israel will not be surprised to find that a rare consensus prevails concerning the scope of corruption: 90 percent of respondents state that Israel is tainted by corruption – 60 percent hold that there is corruption on a large scale in Israel, and 30 percent estimate that there is quite a lot of corruption. By contrast, only nine percent estimate that there is little corruption in Israel, and merely one percent hold that Israel is not at all corrupt. More than one-half of respondents (51%) hold that corruption is today a necessary condition to reach the top of the political ladder in Israel, and 60 percent hold that integrity is a politician's most important quality.

As in previous years, participants in the 2008 Democracy Survey were asked for their view of the country's institutions. The most important finding is a decline of 12 percentage points in the public's trust in the Supreme Court – 49 percent trust the Court this year, as opposed to 61 percent last year. Furthermore, for the first time and after many years, the Supreme Court lost its place at the top of the list of institutions that best safeguard Israeli democracy. At the top of the list this year is the media, although trust in the media has also declined by eight percentage points, vis-à-vis last year. In 2008, 35 percent of respondents place the Supreme Court at the top of the list of institutions that best safeguard democracy, as opposed to 36 percent who state that the media is the institution that fulfills this role best.

Trust in the Knesset (29%), in the Prime Minister (17%), and in political parties (15%) has also declined. Furthermore, 82 percent of respondents indicate that the government does not deal well with the country's problems. These findings – in their majority – emphasize the flaws and the inadequacies in the functioning of the Israeli political system and strengthen trends of anti-politics.

In an international comparison, international research institutes awarded Israel higher scores than in previous years. Despite the improvement in Israel's scores on many measures, however, its place in the ranking of the 36 countries included in the sample has not changed, and, in some cases, is even worse. Notwithstanding the improvement in the scores Israel receives on some measures vis-à-vis previous years, the situation in other countries improved even more, and Israel's relative position deteriorated.

Despite the criticism leveled at the functioning of the country's institutions, as noted, the Democracy Survey 2008 shows that most citizens wish to obtain the services they require from the state rather than from civil society: 53 percent of respondents agree that it would be preferable for the state to continue its previous involvement in social and economic areas, as opposed to 28 percent who prefer to reduce state involvement in these areas. Forty-six percent prefer to receive services from state agencies, as opposed to 29 percent who prefer to receive services from social organizations. This, even though 57 percent of respondents hold that the level of services the organizations provide surpasses the level of those provided by the state.

A silver lining can nevertheless be discerned in the Democracy Survey 2008. A trend of slight improvement was recorded in the public's level of satisfaction with the functioning of Israeli democracy: 43 percent are satisfied, as opposed to 34 percent who reported being satisfied in the Democracy Index 2007. The Democracy Survey 2008 also shows that most citizens are very proud of being Israeli (80%), and many (83%) of them are certain they want to remain in Israel for the long term. These findings point mainly to emotional loyalty to the state and the homeland, however, and less to attitudes to the current situation.

Israeli democracy is still fragile and in need of care, particularly given the governance crisis and the trend of distancing from politics, which emerge as prominent in the Democracy Index 2008.

Part One

The Democracy Index 2008

A. Description of the Research and Its Goals

"If a country is already a democracy, how can it become more democratic?"[1]

This question is at the center of the Democracy Index project that, since 2003, has engaged in a periodic evaluation and assessment of Israeli democracy. As is the case every year, the current study asks vital questions about the realization of democratic goals and values in Israel. Its aim is to examine the quality of Israeli democracy – its functioning and performance. This analysis will be able to contribute to the public debate about the situation of Israeli democracy and to the creation of a large information pool that will deepen the discussion of the subject.

The concept of "democracy" has many denotations and an endless number of definitions. The prevalent consensus is that it is a multidimensional phenomenon with a diversity of features and functions.[2] In light of this consensus, the evaluation of the scope of democracy in Israel was based on three significant and distinct aspects, which characterize every democracy and determine its nature: the institutional aspect, the rights aspect, and the stability aspect. Each one of these three aspects (clusters) is divided into a collection of basic features, which provide the basis for evaluating the quality of democracy in every country (Figure 1, below).

The first cluster – the institutional aspect – relates to the system of formal institutions at the basis of the democratic regime, to the division of power between them, and to the reciprocal relationships between the elements that constitute the political system – elected representatives and public officials. This aspect rests on five key characteristics: representativeness, participation, government accountability, checks and balances, and the administration's integrity (or its opposite – its level of political corruption). The first four characteristics are perceived as part of the institutional aspect because they point to reciprocal ties between citizens and their representatives. The last one (integrity) is considered part of the institutional aspect because its absence contradicts civil sovereignty.

The second cluster – the rights aspect – relates to an essential and formal principle in democracy: the protection of human dignity and liberty, of minority rights, and of the rule of law. Six characteristics make up this aspect: political rights, civil rights, social rights, property rights (economic freedom), gender equality, and equality for minorities. The first three rights are compatible with the civil rights underlying the foundation of democratic regimes. Economic rights often appear under the rubric of civil rights, but we decided to present them in a separate

1 Robert A. Dahl, *On Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 2.

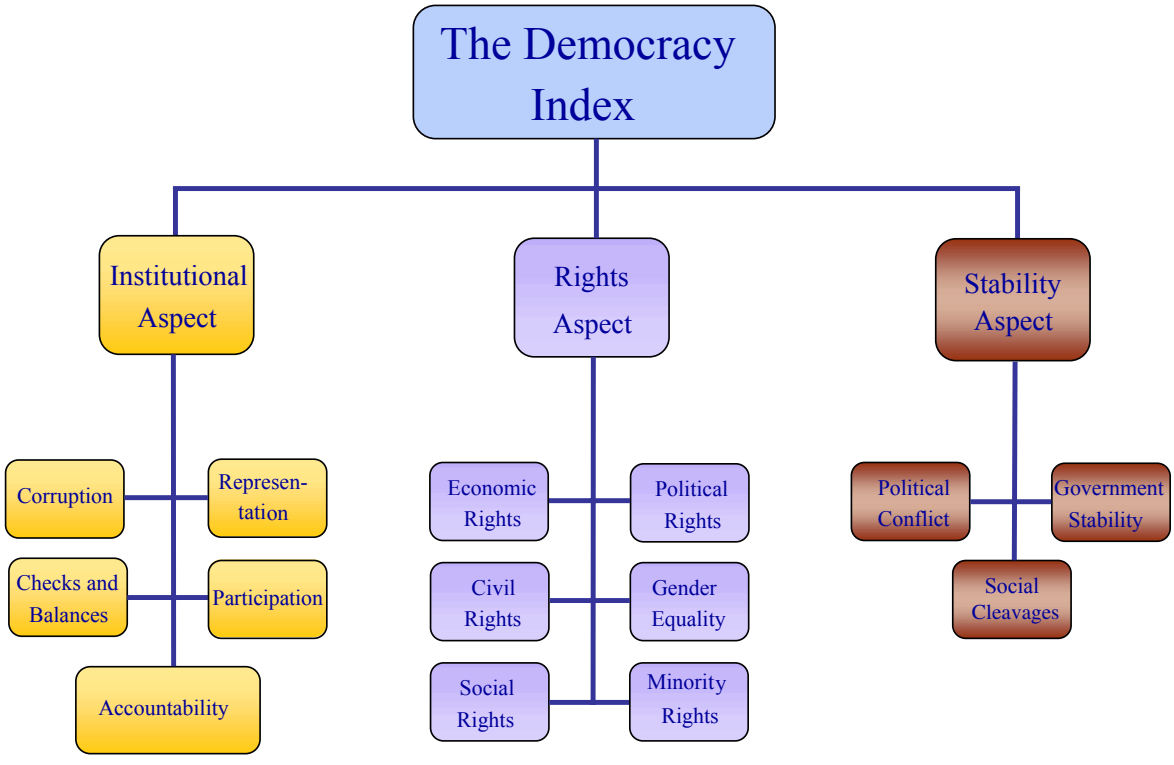
2 For further discussion, see Asher Arian, David Nachmias, Doron Navot, and Danielle Shani, *The 2003 Israeli Democracy Index: Measuring Israeli Democracy* (Jerusalem: The Israel Democracy Institute, 2003), 15–20.

category. The last two characteristics – gender equality and equality for minorities – focus on the realization of the equality principle, both between men and women and between majority and minority groups.

The third cluster – the stability aspect – differs from the previous two because it is not an integral part of democracy's features, and regimes that are not necessarily democratic can be stable. Nevertheless, democratic stability is definitely a goal to which every democratic regime aspires. Its presence, or its absence, can influence a democracy's quality, its prosperity, and its survival over time. The stability aspect includes three main features: the stability of the government, displays of protest and opposition, and social cleavages. The first characteristic relates to the ability to govern effectively (but not to the stability of the democratic regime), the second relates to confrontations between citizens and the government, and the third to tension among various groups in society.

Figure 1

The Structure of the Index



This study examines the situation of Israeli democracy at two levels. We first employed a series of quantitative measures based on the evaluations of international research institutes in several areas (henceforth: democracy indicators). We also examined the reflection of democracy in public opinion, that is, the public's opinions about a spectrum of democratic values and about the functioning of democracy in Israel (henceforth: the Democracy Survey). To obtain a general picture of the public's opinions toward democracy, we conducted a comprehensive public opinion survey within a representative sample of Israel's adult population (Jews and Arabs) in January 2008.

We examined the democracy indicators according to two comparative perspectives: international – vis-à-vis the functioning and performance of 35 other democracies,[3] and historical – vis-à-vis the evaluations of Israel in the last decade (1998–2008).[4] The Democracy Survey presents the findings of the public opinion survey conducted in January 2008 especially for this project. To understand public attitudes regarding the three aspects of democracy and public perceptions of democracy's functioning in Israel, we compared this year's findings to the findings of public opinion surveys in previous Democracy Indices.

The book has two parts. The first is the updated *Democracy Index 2008*, which includes the democracy indicators and the Democracy Survey. As noted, the democracy indicators present the most recent assessments of international research institutes (each in its own field) of the situation in dozens of countries from a comparative perspective. The assessments rest mainly on a combination of primary and secondary sources and on the evaluations of professionals in various countries. This year, the democracy indicators include 19 of the 37 indicators that appear every year in the Index. Each one is examined in a dual comparative perspective: an evaluation of Israel's situation in the last decade, and in comparison with the 35 democracies at the focus of the study. Concerning each indicator, we examined the general trends – improvement, deterioration, or no change – vis-à-vis last year's assessments of Israel, and in comparison with other countries.[5] The Democracy Survey includes a range of set questions that have been used to examine public assessments and attitudes to democracy since 2003. These questions present the situation of democracy in Israel, as well as the measure of support for it and satisfaction with it.[6]

The second part of the book is devoted this year to the evaluation, review, and discussion of *Civil Society in Israel 2008*, as reflected in Israel's public discourse and in the attitudes about the role of civil society, its place vis-à-vis the government, and the

3 The list of countries is based on the Freedom Rating of Freedom House. For further discussion, see ibid.

4 For full details of the 14 features, which include 31 indicators, see ibid. In The 2007 Israeli Democracy Index, we added six World Bank indicators, which raised the total number of indicators to 37. For details, see Asher Arian, Nir Atmor, and Yael Hadar, *The 2007 Israeli Democracy Index: Auditing Israeli Democracy – Cohesion in a Divided Society* (Jerusalem: The Israel Democracy Institute, 2007)

5 For full details of the 37 indicators and for the trends of change since 2003, see below, Appendix 1.

6 For a distribution of answers to the survey's questions since 2003, see below, Appendix 2.

division of responsibility between them. In the Democracy Index 2008, we focus on attitudes and feelings, on perceptions as well as loyalties, on the relationships among various groups in Israeli society, and on specific issues that are part of the current discussion about civil society. Note that this part of the book is among the first studies on the subject in Israel. Some of the questions we asked in the 2008 survey appear in previous public opinion surveys conducted by the Guttman Center. This method enabled us to compare present attitudes to public opinion in the past.

B. The Democracy Indicators

1. A Summary Outline

The 2008 democracy indicators show considerable improvement vis-à-vis the research institutes' assessments of Israel in previous years. As clarified below, however, despite the improvement recorded in many indicators, Israel ranks lower or the same among the countries. Out of 19 indicators updated this year, 10 quantitative indicators showed improvement, and four showed deterioration; in five indicators, Israel received the same evaluations as those of last year. In an international comparison, Israel's ranking among the countries declined in three indicators, remained the same in 11 indicators, and improved in only three, when compared with its position last year. Despite the improvement in Israel's scores in some of the indicators, then, other countries improved even more, and their relative ranking improved vis-à-vis that of Israel.

Following is the evaluations of the external research institutes in a double comparison, international (in comparison with the 35 countries in the sample) and historical (changes vis-à-vis previous evaluations).

2. Israel 2008 as Reflected in the Indicators

(a) Israel 2008 in an International Comparison

The international comparison reveals several changes in Israel's position in the ranking of the 36 democracies. In 11 indicators, Israel remains in the same position as last year; in three indicators, it ranks higher; and in three indicators, its relative position is worse. In the institutional aspect, improvement was recorded in Israel's ranking in three indicators, as opposed to deterioration in its ranking in the three indicators of the rights aspect. Thus, for instance, in the Gender-related Development Index, Israel remains in the 19th place, whereas in the Gender Empowerment Measure, Israel dropped from the 18th to the 20th place.

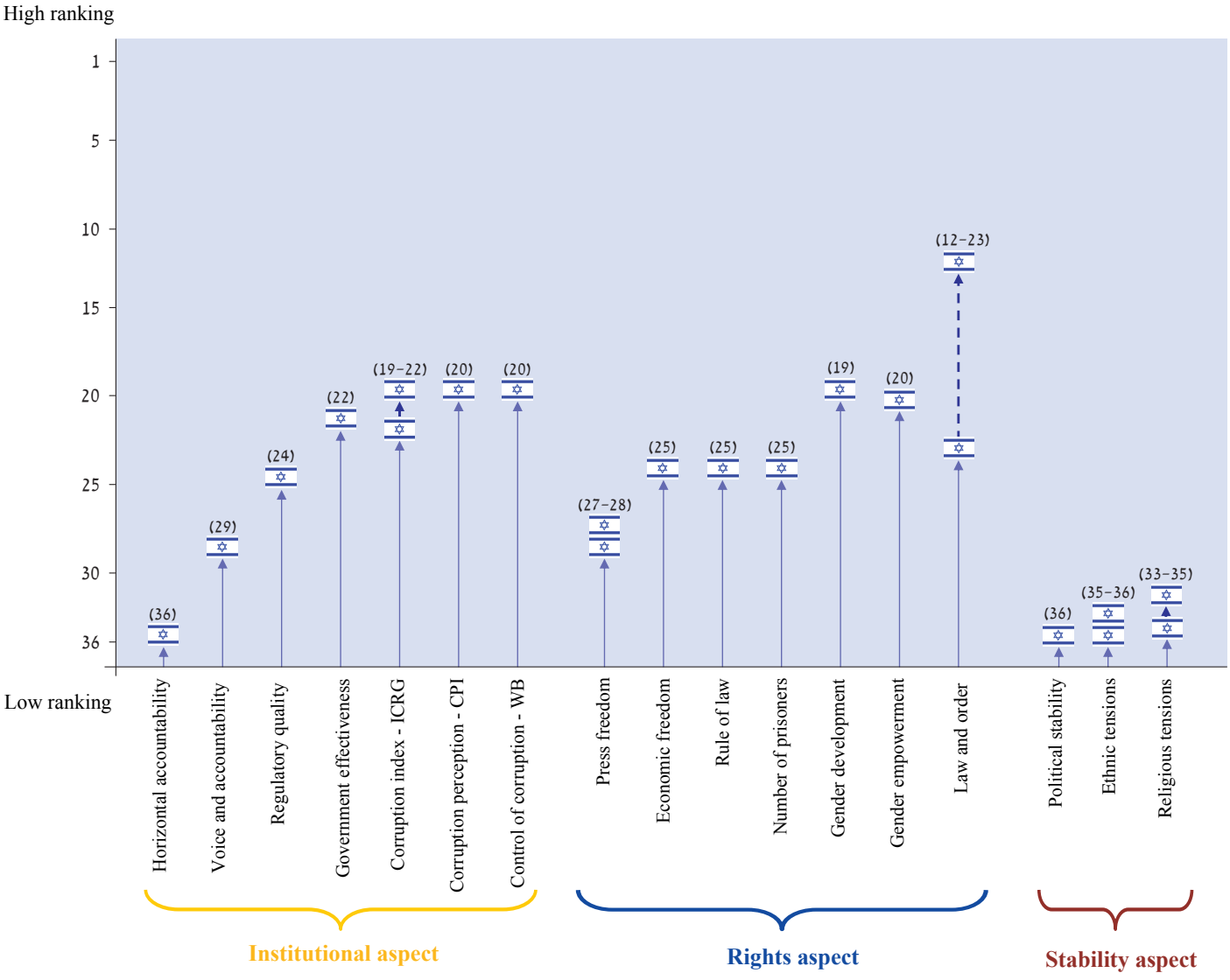
Figure 2 presents Israel's ranking vis-à-vis the other 35 democracies included in the study, according to 17 indicators. The horizontal axis is divided according to the three aspects included in the Index – the institutional aspect, the rights aspect, and the stability aspect. The vertical axis represents Israel's relative ranking vis-à-vis the other democracies. The first place on the axis indicates the highest ranking in the quality of the democracy, and the 36th place denotes the lowest. In several cases, Israel shares a score with several countries (for instance, in the freedom of the press indicator, Israel and Italy share the 27th and 28th place). Note also that Israel's evaluation may be better than last year's but its ranking declined, meaning that the data from other countries were even better, and they ranked even higher.

In the institutional aspect, seven indicators were updated this year: In three of them, Israel's ranking improved, and in four, it remained unchanged. None of the institutional aspect indicators recorded any deterioration. In the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) of Transparency International, Israel's ranking remained stable, in the 20th place among the countries in the study. In the Control of Corruption indicator, published by the World Bank, Israel again remained in the 20th place. In the Corruption Indicator of the ICRG (International Country Risk Guide),

Israel remained in the 19th–22nd place, with Estonia, Hungary, and Japan.[7] In ICRG's horizontal accountability indicator, which examines the army's involvement in politics, Israel has been in the 36th and last place for more than a decade. Israel's ranking improved by one place from last year in the World Bank's Voice and Accountability indicator, from the 30th to the 29th, and also in the Government Effectiveness indicator, from 23rd to 22nd place. The Regulatory Quality indicator also recorded improvement, from the 26th to the 24th place.

Figure 2

Israel's Ranking in the Democracies' Sample, according to 17 Criteria



7 The international corruption indicators, as well as the other indicators cited in this part, are presented in greater detail in the following pages.

In the rights aspect, nine indicators were updated: in three, Israel's ranking has deteriorated, and four showed no change.[8] No improvement was recorded in Israel's ranking in any of the rights indicators. On the Gender-related Development Index, published in the Human Development Report, Israel remained in the 19th place, as last year. The Freedom of the Press indicator of Freedom House recorded no change, and Israel remained in the 27th–28th place in the countries' ranking. No change was recorded in the rate of prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants either, and Israel has remained stable in the rule of law indicator for many years.

Israel's ranking declined on the Gender Empowerment Measure published in the Human Development Report, dropping from the 18th place in 2007 to the 20th this year. A drop was also recorded in the Economic Freedom Index of the Heritage Foundation, from the 23rd to the 25th place. The steepest drop in Israel's ranking was recorded in the Rule of Law index of the World Bank, from the 22nd place last year to the 25th place in 2008.

In the political stability aspect, three indicators were adjusted this year, and none of them recorded any change in Israel's ranking vis-à-vis last year. In the Political Stability index of the World Bank (which includes domestic dangers and threats, including threats of terrorism), Israel remained last (36th place). In the Ethnic Tensions index as well, Israel remained at the bottom of the table (36th place), and in the Religious Tensions index, Israel retains its relative position (33rd–35th place). Generally, Israel's vulnerable point in international evaluations is its stability ratings. Except for the Government Changes Index (which is updated only in election years), Israel is considered to have failed in the stability indicators and consistently receives the lowest assessments in international evaluations. In the absence of social and systemic stability, the country is vulnerable to internal crises.

(b) Israel 2008: Changes vis-à-vis Previous Evaluations

In a historical comparison, the evaluations of Israel this year reveal a slight improvement. Out of 19 indicators updated in 2008, 10 show considerable improvement in Israel's score vis-à-vis 2007, four show no change and five indicators show deterioration. Table 1 below presents the updated indicators according to the vector of the change: improvement, no change, or deterioration vis-à-vis 2007.

The institutional aspect, as noted, includes 15 international indicators: seven were updated this year, and none recorded deterioration.[9] Improvement in the

8 No international comparison is available for two of the nine indicators – the GINI coefficient of disposable income and the GINI coefficient of income.

9 The democracy indicators related to the elections were updated in the *Democracy Index 2006* (published close to the 17th Knesset elections). These include the political participation indicators (voter turnout) and the representativeness indicators (deviation from the proportionality principle and party dominance). For further discussion, see Asher Arian, Nir Atmor, Yael Hadar, *Auditing Israeli Democracy 2006–Changes in Israel's Political Party System:Dealignment Or Realignment?* (Jerusalem: Israel Democracy Institute, 2006).

evaluation of Israel's situation was recorded in five indicators, and two showed no change. The Corruption Perceptions Index of Transparency International recorded a slight improvement, and Israel's score went up from 5.9 in 2006 to 6.1 (in November 2007). The Horizontal Accountability index of ICRG, which examines the army's intervention in politics, recorded no change. A rise vis-à-vis last year was registered in four indicators of the World Bank – Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Control of Corruption, and Voice and Accountability. In the last indicator – the Corruption index of ICRG – Israel's score remained stable.

The rights aspect includes 16 comparative measures, of which nine were updated this year. Four measures recorded improvement: In the two GINI coefficients – for disposable income and for income – a slight improvement was recorded vis-à-vis the assessment that Israel received in the last publication. Slight improvements vis-à-vis previous evaluations were also recorded in the two indices of gender development. Stability was recorded in one indicator – the Law and Order rating of ICRG – showing Israel in a stable position (with a score of 5 out of 6) since the 1990s.

Deterioration was recorded in four indicators belonging to the rights aspect: On the Freedom of the Press index of Freedom House, Israel dropped one point vis-à-vis the previous assessment, and in the Rule of Law index of the World Bank, the weighted score dropped. The two ratings assessing the rate of prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants also registered a drop this year.

Of the six indicators included in the stability aspect, three were updated this year.[10] The two social tensions indicators – Ethnic Tensions and Religious Tensions – have not changed in the last four years. The Political Stability index of the World Bank did record a slight, though negligible, improvement in the evaluation of Israel (from 14.2% last year to 14.4% this year).

10 The government changes and incomplete term of office indicators were updated in the *Democracy Index 2006*. For further details, see ibid. The 31st government began its term on 4 May 2006, and is still in office as of May 2008, except for several personal changes detailed in Appendix 5 below.

Table 1

Israel 2008 as Reflected in the Indicators: Changes Since Previous Assessment*

The Rating	Israel's score in 2008	Israel's score in the previous evaluation	The Scale	Change
Institutional Aspect				
Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)	6.1	5.9	0–10 (0 = high corruption)	↑
Control of Corruption	79.6	73.9	0–100 (100 = high score)	↑
Regulatory Quality	78	75.2	0–100 (100 = high score)	↑
Voice and Accountability	70.2	66.7	0–100 (100 = high score)	↑
Government Effectiveness	83.4	78.0	0–100 (100 = high score)	↑
Horizontal Accountability	2.5	2.5	0–6 (0 = high military involvement)	=
Corruption index	3	3	0–6 (0 = high corruption)	=
Rights Aspect				
GINI coefficient for disposable income	0.3834	0.3878	0–1 (0 = full equality)	↑
GINI coefficient for income	0.5141	0.5225	0–1 (0 = full equality)	↑
Gender-related Development Index	0.927	0.925	0–1 (0 = inequality)	↑
Gender Empowerment Measure	0.660	0.656	0–1 (0 = inequality)	↑
Law and Order	5	5	0–6 (0 = limited law and order protection)	=
Press freedom	29	28	0–100 (0 = full freedom)	↓
Rule of law	70.0	73.4	0–100 (100 = high score)	↓
Rate of prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants, excluding security prisoners	165	158	0–100,000 (0 = few prisoners)	↓
Rate of prisoners per 100,000 population including security prisoners	311	295	0–100,000 (0 = few prisoners)	↓
Stability Aspect				
Political Stability	14.4	14.2	0–100 (100 = high score)	↑
Religious Tensions	2.5	2.5	0–6 (0 = high tension)	=
Ethnic Tensions	2	2	0–6 (0 = high tension)	=

* Measures are presented according to the aspects and according to the change vector (improvement, no change, deterioration).

↑ Points to improvement in the assessment of Israel as an essential democracy vis-à-vis the previous assessment.

↓ Points to deterioration in the assessment of Israel as an essential democracy vis-à-vis the previous assessment.

3. Selected Findings

(a) The Institutional Aspect

(1) Political Corruption

Political corruption, defined as the abuse of public power for the attainment of personal gain, has become a major concern in the political discourse of democratic countries, in general, and Israel, in particular. From year to year, we witness growing media coverage of suspicions that prominent public figures who allegedly use their position in improper ways. Regardless of whether the suspicions lead to indictments, the prevailing consensus views this phenomenon with alarm. That 90 percent of the public believe that corruption is widespread in Israel conveys the extent of public revulsion with this phenomenon.

Measuring the scope of corruption in every country is a controversial issue in the literature, and poses many difficulties for researchers studying corruption levels.[11] Some international research institutes have, nevertheless, attempted to contend with the challenge, raising scholarly and public awareness of the subject. In the Democracy Index, we include three evaluations of different research institutes that every year present comparative data on corruption levels in many countries. Table 2 below presents a summary of their findings.

Transparency International (TI) is considered the leading institute in the struggle against corruption in all its forms and defines its mission as "a world free of corruption." The organization fights corruption, promotes transparence and integrity throughout the world, and raises international awareness on the issue.[12] The usual way of assessing political corruption in every country is to conduct attitudes/opinion surveys among experts in different areas of politics, the administration, and the economy, and ask them to evaluate the level of corruption in their country or in other countries. Every year, TI presents the results of three comparative measures useful to researchers:

1. The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is the best known tool. Transparency International has presented the CPI every year since 1995, based on the evaluations and assessments of experts in surveys conducted in 12 research institutes and organizations. The results of the surveys are summed up in a score given to each of the 179 countries in the study. Scores range between 0–10, and the higher the score, the cleaner the country.
2. The Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) is a tool focusing on the perception of corruption in public opinion, the attempts to contend with it, and the extent of corruption expected in the future. This measure has been presented every year since 2003, based on a public opinion survey conducted in 62 countries, involving 60,000 participants. Respondents are asked for their opinion on civil service institutions (from political parties and the parliament to the police, medical services, educational institutions,

11 For further discussion of the methodological difficulties, see Arian et al., *The 2003 Israeli Democracy Index* (note 2 above).

12 The Israeli chapter of Transparency International is SHVIL. For more information, see www.ti-israel.org (all URLs cited in this book were last retrieved in March 2008).

and so forth). The GCB does not rank countries but agencies and organizations in each country, according to its citizens' perceptions.

3. The Bribe Payers Index (BPI) is a measure that ranks 30 countries and examines the extent of bribe payments of economic firms. The measure relies on a survey conducted among company directors and business executives (about 11,000 respondents), with scores ranging from 0 (extensive bribing) to 10 (no bribing).[13]

Another comparative measure of political corruption is the Control of Corruption index, which is one of six indicators that the World Bank has presented since 1996 in the Worldwide Governance Indicators project. These measures are also presented in the Democracy Index.[14] The six indicators survey 212 countries and regions throughout the world and their data are based on sources from 30 organizations. They present the views of the public sector, the private sector, experts from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and thousands of citizens participating in public opinion surveys. The Control of Corruption index ranges from 0 – low control of corruption – to 100 – indicating full control.[15]

The third organization that publishes a comparative (monthly) update on levels of corruption is the Corruption Index of ICRG (International Country Risk Guide), which views corruption as a stumbling block that can undermine the political order, lead to government changes and, in extreme cases, even to the toppling of the regime. The estimate is provided by ICRG experts, who collect information on corruption in 140 countries.[16] The measure includes seven categories: a score of 0 denotes high corruption, and a score of 6 – no corruption.

In the 2007 CPI of Transparency International, Israel ranks 20th out of the 36 countries in the study, with a score of 6.1 (Figure 3, below).[17] Finland, New Zealand, and Denmark receive the highest scores, whereas Mexico, Thailand, and Argentina close the list. In 2006, Israel ranked in the 20th–21st place, with a score of 5.9, so that the 2007 score indicates some improvement in Israel's relative score and in its ranking. Yet, Israel's ranking beside such countries as Taiwan and Estonia, as opposed to its ranking in 2001 beside the United States and Ireland with a score of 7.6, points to a significant drop over the years in Israel's evaluation.[18]

13 For further information on the three measures of Transparency International, see www.transparency.org

14 For further discussion, see Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay, and Massimo Mastruzzi, *Governance Matters VI: Aggregate and Individual Governance Indicators 1996–2006* (World Bank, Policy Research Working Paper 4280, June 2006): http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi2007/resources.htm.

15 The website at http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi2007/sc_country.asp, enables the comparison of countries (correct as of 2006), and the tracing of changes in the Control of Corruption indicator and in the other five governance indicators since 1996.

16 Data collection and the method for building the evaluations are confidential, and this is the main drawback of this measure. For further discussion, see www.prsgroup.com

17 This assessment is based on six surveys conducted by five international research institutes. Note that Israel actually ranks 30th in the 179 countries included in the study of Transparency International, but in the current study, we compare it with 35 selected democracies.

18 For further information, see www.transparency.org/news_room/in_focus/2007/cpi2007/cpi_2007_table

Table 2

Measures of International Corruption: Summary

Indicator	Scale	Number of Countries Ranked	Estimates since:	Israel's Score in Latest Assessment	Israel's Ranking
Corruption Perceptions Index (TI)	0–10 (0 = much corruption)	179	1995	6.1 (2007)	30
Global Corruption Barometer (TI)	0–5 (5 = much corruption)	62	2003	–	No international comparisons
Bribe Payers Index (TI)	0–10 (0 = much bribing)	30	1999	6.01 (2006)	18–19 (with Hong Kong)
Control of Corruption (WBI)	0–100 (0 = much corruption)	212	1996	79.6 (2006)	43
Corruption Index (ICRG)	0–6 (0 = much corruption)	140	1980	3 (2007)	20–22 (out of 36)

Out of the 30 countries that TI examines in the Bribe Payers Index (BPI), Israel ranked 18th–19th in 2006, with a score of 6.01 it shared with Hong Kong. Switzerland was in first place (7.81) and India closed the list (4.62).[19] In the Control of Corruption index published by the World Bank, Israel ranks 43rd in 2007 (among democratic and non-democratic countries), with a score of 79.6, between Estonia and Cyprus.[20] Finally, in the Corruption index of ICRG, Israel received a score of 3 during the last three years, beside Hungary, Estonia, and Japan, and ranks in places 19–22 out of the 36 democracies at the focus of the Democracy Index.

(2) Government Effectiveness

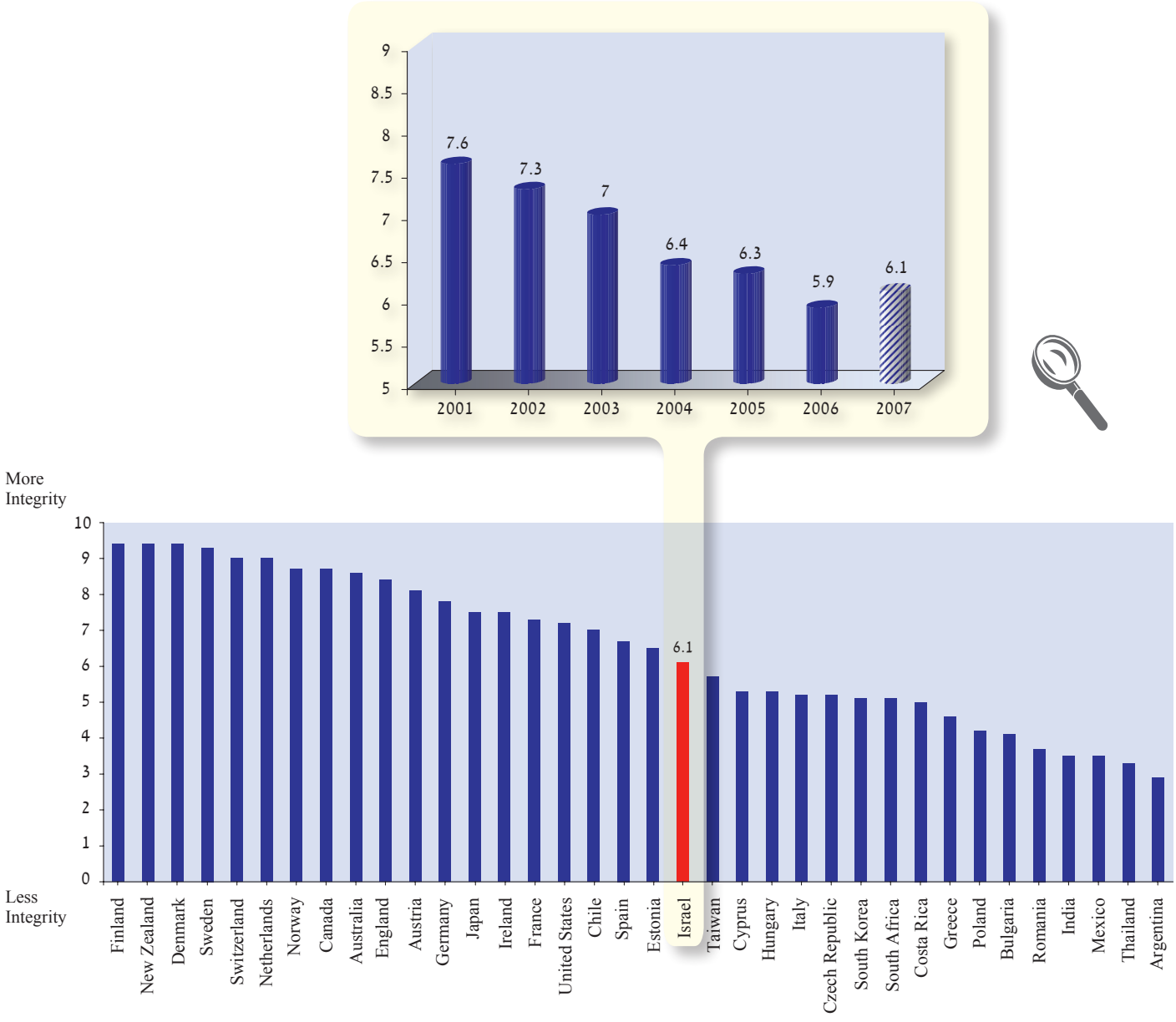
Since 2007, we have included in this review the Government Effectiveness Index published by the World Bank. This indicator examines the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation,

19 No international comparisons are available for the *Global Corruption Barometer*, as noted. For the main results of this survey on selected parameters, see www.ti-israel.org/Index.asp?ArticleID=512&CategoryID=125&Page=1

20 For a detailed report on Israel, see http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi2007/pdf/c109.pdf

Figure 3

Political Corruption: An International Comparison



and the credibility of the government's commitment to these policies.[21] The assessments are aggregated in an index with scores ranging from 0 (denoting non-effective government) to 100 (denoting the highest level of effective government).

21 See Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi, *Governance Matters VI* (note 14 above).

In the latest assessment of government effectiveness, Israel ranks 22nd in the ranking of 36 democracies, with a score of 83.4 percent, between Thailand and South Korea. Heading the countries distinguished by high effectiveness are Denmark, Switzerland, and Norway, and at the bottom of the list are India, Romania, and Argentina. In the last decade, Israel's ranking in this indicator has fluctuated. Although the latest assessment is not the lowest Israel has ever received (since the World Bank began to publish governance indicators in 1996), it has had better evaluations in the past. In 1996, for instance, it received a high score (86.7%) and ranked 20th out of the 36 countries evaluated.

(b) The Rights Aspect

(1) Economic Rights

One of the best known measures, published yearly, is the Index of Economic Freedom. This index was developed by the Heritage Foundation and, in recent years, has been issued jointly with the *Wall Street Journal*. Both the Heritage Foundation and the *Wall Street Journal* are avowed supporters of neo-liberal principles.[22] The researchers who formulated the Index of Economic Freedom view any form of government intervention beyond the minimum required for public life as a violation of individual freedom and, according to their guiding world view, property is an inalienable right.

The Index of Economic Freedom has been published since 1995 and reviews 162 countries. As it did last year, this year too, the methodology employed in the Index changed, and the data presented here and in Appendix 1 are updated to the 2008 scoring system. The score each country receives is based on a combination of ten economic indicators that represent the extent of its economic freedom. The ten indicators include quantitative assessments of business freedom, trade freedom, fiscal freedom, government size, monetary freedom, investment freedom, financial freedom, property rights, freedom from corruption, and labor freedom.[23]

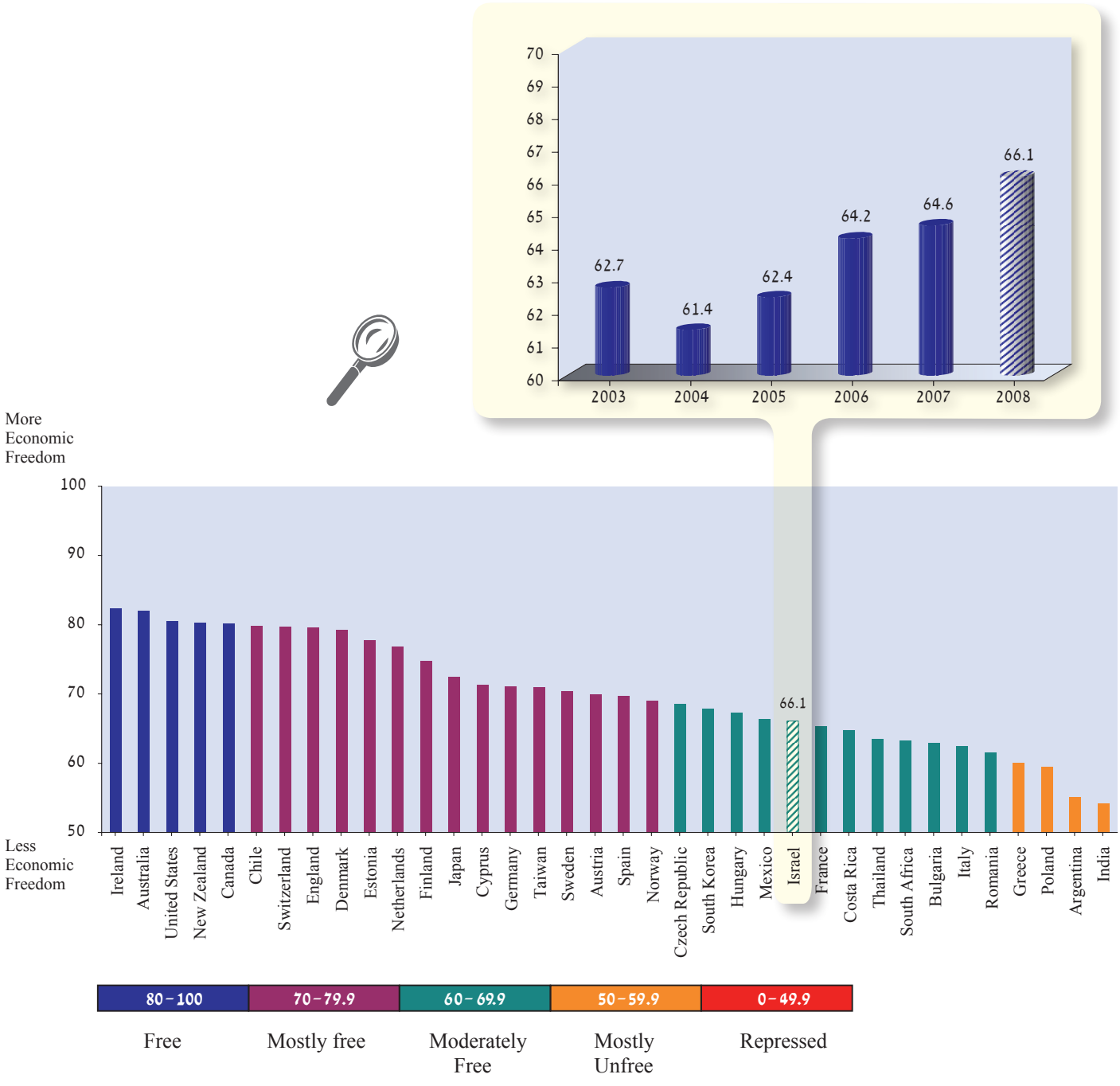
The scale of the Index of Economic Freedom published in January 2008 ranges from 0 percent to 100 percent (0 denotes lack of economic freedom, and 100 maximum economic freedom). Figure 4 shows that the countries that enjoy the most economic freedom in the ranking of 36 democracies are Ireland, Australia, and the United States, whereas India, Argentina, and Poland close the list and are defined as "mostly unfree."

Israel ranks 25th in 2008 (with a score of 66.1%), between France and Mexico. This is a definite drop from recent years: in 2003, Israel ranked 17th; in 2006 – 21st, and in 2007 – 23rd. Although its scores improved over the years (small Figure 4), other countries improved even more, leading to Israel's decline in the international ranking.

22 The index is published every year at the beginning of January.
23 For further information, see www.heritage.org/Index

Figure 4

Economic Freedom: An International Comparison



(2) Political Rights: Freedom of the Press

In the rights aspect, we examine every year the Freedom of the Press index developed by Freedom House in 1979. This measure presents scores on the measure of freedom in the printed and broadcasting media in

195 countries and regions throughout the world.[24] In 2007, Freedom House defined the press as free in 74 countries out of 195 (38%), in 58 countries (30%) as partly free, and in 63 countries (32%) as not free. As for the global population, only 18 percent of the world's inhabitants live in countries where the press is free, 39 percent live in countries where the press is partly free, and 43 percent in countries where the press is not free. The picture emerging from this survey is influenced mainly by China, where the press is not free, and by India, where the press is partly free. These two countries alone are home to about one-third of the world's population.

The Freedom of the Press index is based on a questionnaire of experts' evaluations. The final weighted score of a country reflects the aggregated results of experts' surveys, and is presented in the organization's yearly report. Scores range from 0 (indicating full press freedom) to 100 (indicating lack of press freedom). Countries scoring in the 0–30 range are said to have a free press; countries with a score of 31–60 are said to have a partly free press, and countries with a score of 61–100 points are defined as not free.[25]

Figure 5 ranks the 36 democracies according to their score in the Freedom of the Press index. Finland, Denmark, and Norway are the countries where freedom of the press is greatest; Thailand, Argentina, and Mexico, which are defined as "partly free" (scores higher than 31), close the list. As the figure shows, Israel and Italy are in places 27–28, between South Africa and Chile. The score (71) that Israel received (29 in the original, but scores are presented in reverse here – see the note attached to the figure) is lower than the weighted score in 2004–2006. In sum, press freedom in Israel in 2007 appears to be limited largely by the government, in the spirit of the security constraints affecting the operation of Israeli democracy.

(3) Civil Rights: Law and Order, Rule of Law, and Rate of Prisoners

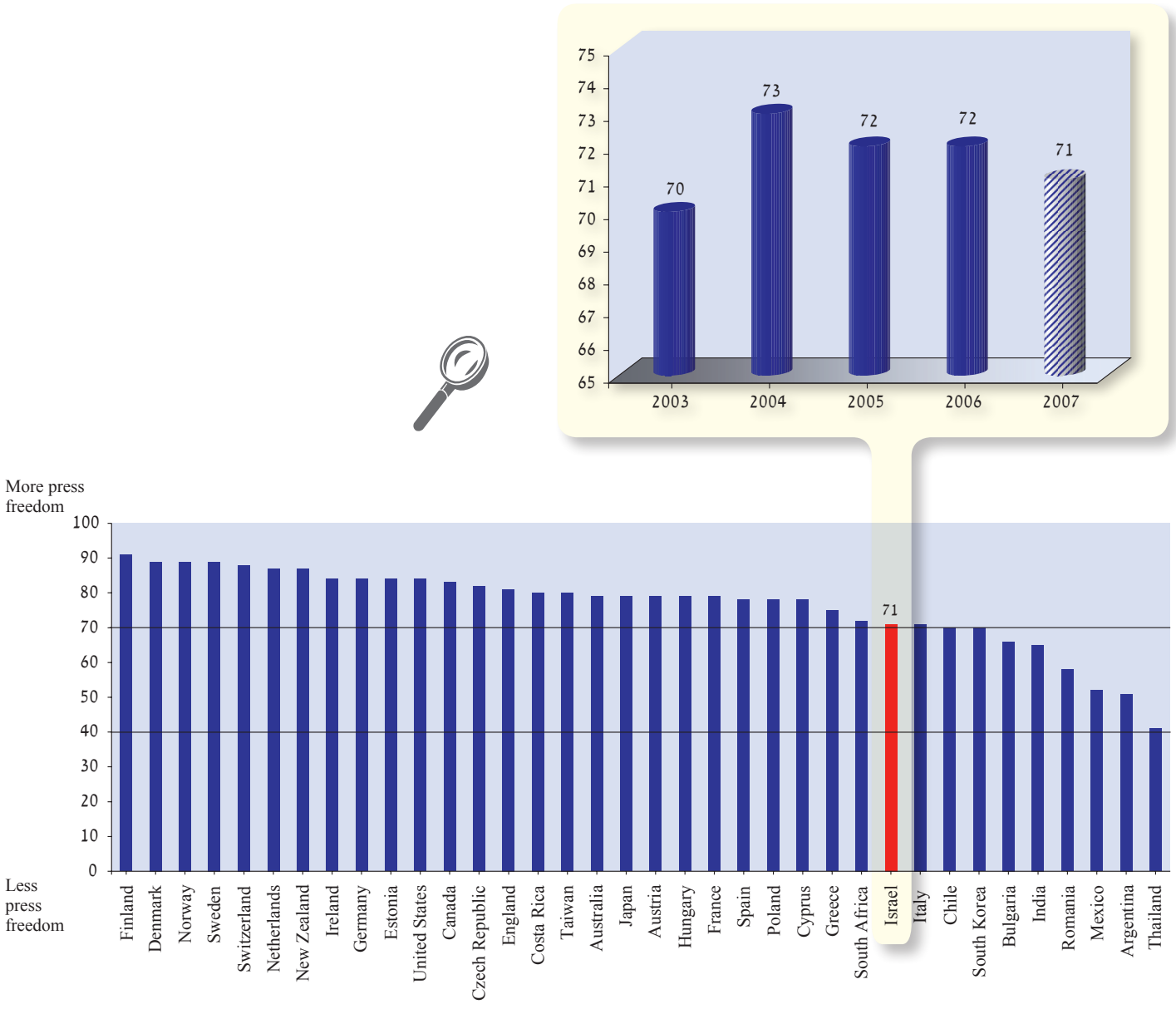
The Law and Order index of ICRG and the Rule of Law index of the World Bank are two of the measures that track the implementation of civil rights, which ensure the independence of the law enforcement system on the one hand, and civil compliance with the country's laws on the other. In the Law and Order rating, ranging on a scale of 0–6 (0 conveying lack of law and order, 6 conveying law and order protection at the highest level), Israel receives a score of 5 beside 12 other countries, including the United States, Germany, Switzerland, and France. This score attests not only to the existence of a functioning government and an institutional structure, but also to a general norm of compliance with the law among the citizens. Still, the score given to one-third of the countries is higher than 5, denoting optimal protection of law and order, which indicates that Israel's high score is not necessarily satisfactory in relative terms.

24 For information on the organization, its studies and publications see www.freedomhouse.org. On the Press Freedom Survey, see *Freedom of the Press 2006: A Global Survey of Media Independence* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007).

25 The Survey was published in 2007, and reflects events between 1 January 2006 and 31 December 2006.

Figure 5

Freedom of the Press: An International Comparison*



* For illustration purposes, scores are reversed, so that a higher score represents greater press freedom.

The Rule of Law indicator of the World Bank is a complementary measure to the Law and Order rating.[26] This is a rating that traces compliance with, and protection of, the rule of law, and trust in law enforcement agencies, the courts, and the police. The scores are on

26 For further information, see the World Bank website (note 15 above).

a scale of 0 to 100 (a score of 100 represents the highest respect for the rule of law). On this measure, Israel received a score of 70 percent – a drop vis-à-vis last year's assessment (73.4%) – and ranks 25th. This drop continues the gradual decline from the mid-1990s, both in the international comparison and in the assessments that Israel receives.

One of the accepted indicators for testing compliance with civil rights and the strictness of law enforcement is to measure the number of prisoners per 100,000 population. The assumption is that a high rate of prisoners points to undue severity and to a law enforcement system constraining individual liberty. This is an additional comparative measure, then, which enriches the picture concerning the protection of civil rights. Previous indices had not included international comparisons on this topic, and this year we have added international data on the rate of prisoners per 100,000 population (Figure 6, below).[27]

Measuring the rate of prisoners per 100,000 population in Israel requires a distinction between two groups: the first rate includes security prisoners (who are residents of the territories); the second excludes security prisoners. In March 2008, Israel held 22,535 prisoners, of them 9,800 security prisoners who are not Israeli citizens.[28] This points to a slight rise vis-à-vis the Democracy Index 2007, which had shown Israel holding 20,959 prisoners, including 9,745 security prisoners. The rise in the number of prisoners (mainly security prisoners) is primarily due to the transfer of several prisons from the army to the Prison Service.[29] These data show that, in 2008, the rate of prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants (including security prisoners) is 311, a rise vis-à-vis the Democracy Index 2007, which recorded 295 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants.

A rise was also registered in the rate of prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants without security prisoners: 165 in 2008, as opposed to 158 in 2007. In 2008, Israel holds 11,920 criminal prisoners. As evident from Figure 6, Israel ranks 25th among the 36 countries examined. The United States is at the top of the list (738 prisoners), followed by South Africa (341 prisoners), Chile (279 prisoners), and Estonia (270 prisoners). In the lowest rungs are India (32 prisoners), Japan (62 prisoners), and Norway (68 prisoners). This comparison holds, as noted, as long as the security prisoners are not taken into account. If we had included them, Israel would have ranked 34th, with only South Africa and the United States to follow.

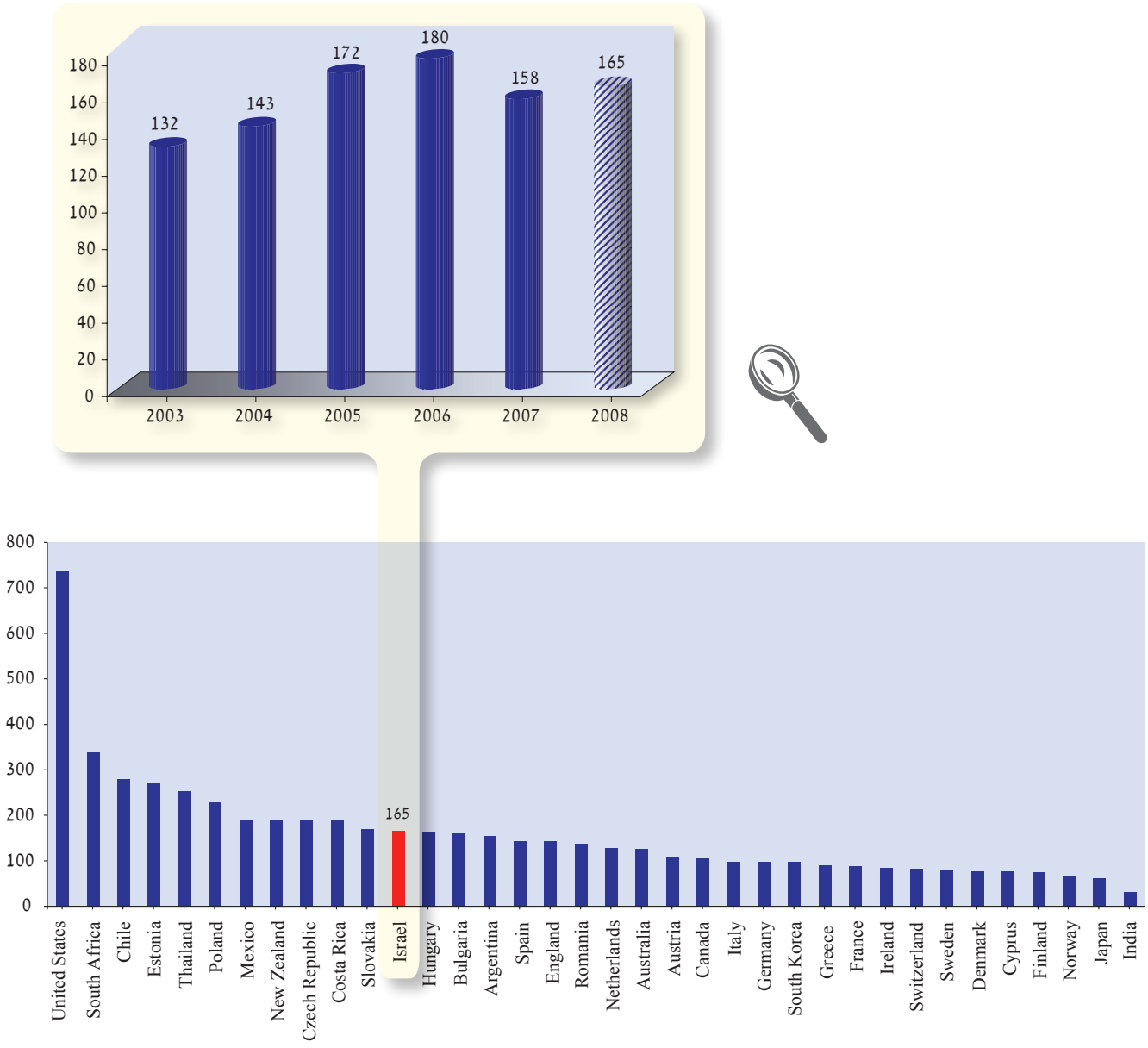
27 Data on this indicator were collected from two sources. For 29 of the countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, from *OECD Factbook 2007: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics* (OECD, 2007): www.sourceoecd.org/factbook. Data for the other six countries were collected from www.prisonstudies.org

28 Figures on this indicator were provided in March 2008 by the Prisons Service spokesperson.

29 In recent years, responsibility for all security prisoners in Israel has been gradually transferred from the IDF (prisons and detention camps) and the police (detention facilities) to the Prisons Service. As a result, the number of prisons in the Prisons Service increased by more than tenfold within seven years. During 2007, two more facilities (Ketsi'ot and Ofer) were transferred to the Prisons Service. See A. Oren, "Approximately One-Third of Prisoners in Israel – Security Prisoners" [Hebrew], *Ha'aretz*, 11/19/2007.

Figure 6

Number of Prisoners per 100,000 Inhabitants: An International Comparison



(4) Gender Equality

Beside the political, economic, and civil rights reviewed so far, we also examine gender rights and gender equality, that is, non-discrimination between men and women. In the Human Development Report, the UN examines the situation in 36 countries according to two measures.[30] These measures

30 See *Human Development Report*, 2007: http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2007-2008

do not focus on the formal rights of women but on the egalitarian implementation of rights granted to both genders, particularly in the areas of work, politics, and education. The measures range on a scale of 0–1 (0 represents inequality; 1 represents full equality).

1. The Gender-related Development Index assesses inequality in the capabilities and achievements of women in three main aspects of human development: life expectancy and health, education, and living standards.
2. The Gender Empowerment Measure assesses inequality in the opportunities of men and women in three areas of empowerment: political participation and partnership in political decision-making; participation in the country's economic activity and power to make economic decisions; control of economic resources.

Figure 7 presents Israel's situation in an international comparison and over the years. By comparison with 35 other democracies, Israel, at the end of 2007, ranked 19th in the Gender-related Development Index and 20th in the Gender Empowerment Measure. At the top of the Gender-related Development Index are Australia, Norway, and Canada, and at the bottom of the list – India, South Africa, and Thailand. In this measure, the gap between countries is relatively small, and to some extent even marginal. In the Gender Empowerment Measure, however, where Norway, Sweden, and Finland have scores close to 1 at the end of 2007, Israel received a low score – 0.66. Although Israel's situation is better than that of Thailand, Romania, and South Korea, which close the list of countries with scores close to 0.5, there is large room for improvement concerning the empowerment of women and the opportunities available to them.

Israel's relative score has improved over the years (small Figure 7). In the Gender-related Development Index, Israel obtained a score of 0.927 at the end of 2007, a slight rise over 2006 (0.925) and 2005 (0.911). This score is high since life expectancy for women in Israel is higher than for men, and since the education levels of women in Israel are high. In the Gender Empowerment Measure, Israel scored 0.66 at the end of 2007. Although this is indeed a slight rise over 2006 (0.656) and 2005 (0.622), inequality between men and women is considerable. Israel, then, is closer to gender equality when women's capabilities and achievements are at stake, but far less so regarding the opportunities that society offers them, as evident in the low rate of women in senior positions in the areas of legislation, civil service, and management.

(c) The Stability Aspect

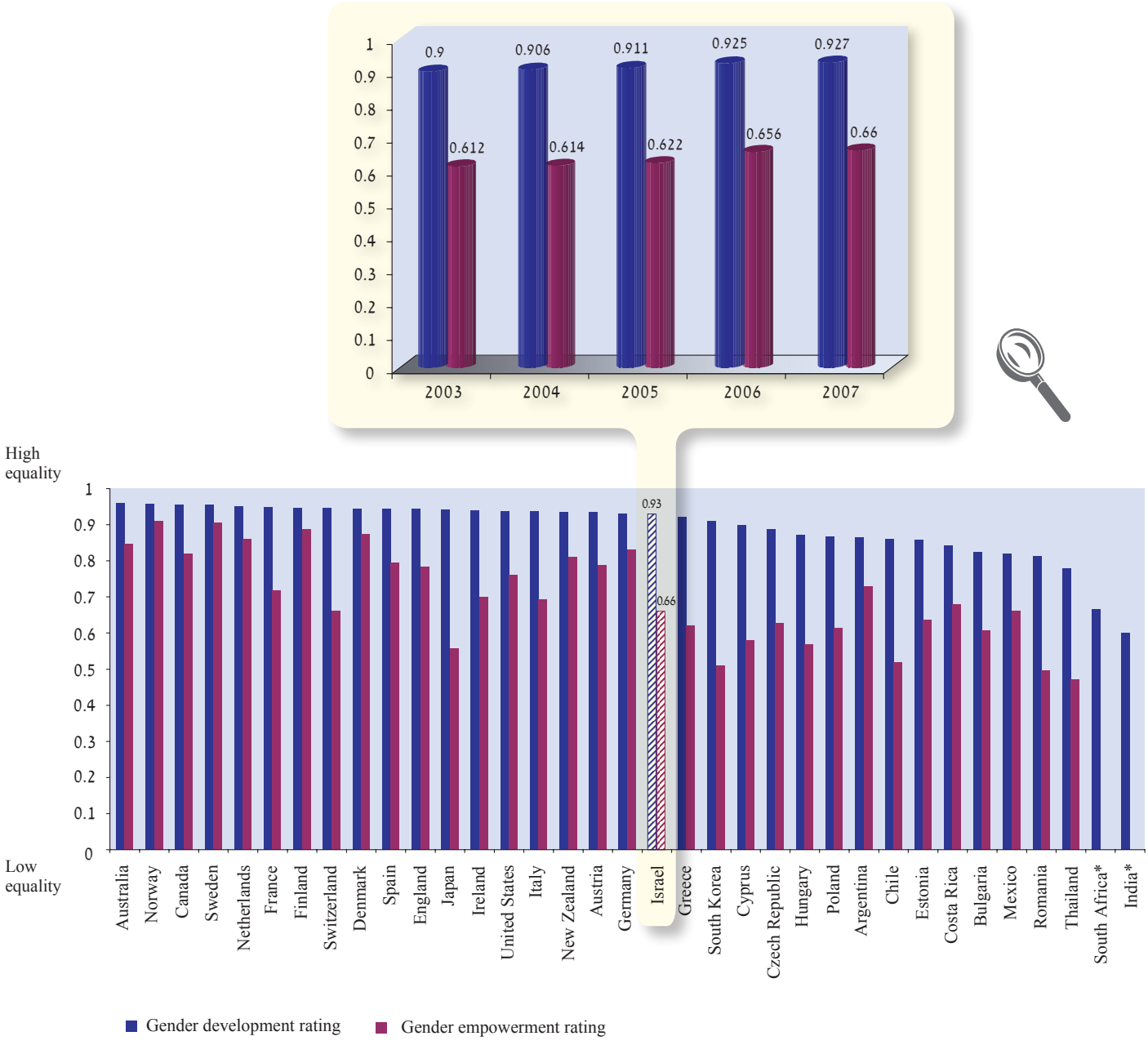
(1) Social Cleavages: Religious and Ethnic Tensions

Most countries have a mixed social structure. Some countries are closer to the definition of a "nation-state" – all the citizens residing within a defined area acknowledge each other as members of the same community.[31] As a rule, however, countries are composed of a web of groups and factions that differ from one another in their origin, their language, their religion, their nationality, and even their culture.

31 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

Figure 7

Gender Equality: An International Comparison



* For these countries data are lacking for one of the measures.

The attempt to assess social cleavages in various countries in quantitative terms is a particularly daunting task. The international research institutes that offer comparative data on the issue of social cleavages are few. The International Country Risk Guide (ICRG) is perhaps the most prominent among them and is given high marks, particularly by the

World Bank, because it presents data on a broad spread of countries and over time.[32] Out of the many measures the ICRG presents monthly, we use two measures that assess the extent of tensions in various countries:

1. The Religious Tensions Index: Estimates the tension between religious groups in the country. The tension may come to the fore in attempts to replace civil law with religious law, to marginalize religious groups from political and social processes, as well as in oppression or coercion aiming to create a ruling religious hegemony.
2. The Ethnic Tensions Index: Evaluates tensions originating in group ascription on racial, national, or linguistic grounds.

Each one of the two measures of social tension includes seven categories, on a scale of 0 to 6: the higher the score, the lower the tension in the society. Figure 8 presents the dimensions of religious tensions in 36 democracies in 2008. As the figure shows, prominent among the countries with low scores are Thailand, and then the Netherlands, India, and Israel (2.5). At the other end, 13 countries receive the highest score (6), including the Scandinavian countries, England, Australia, and New Zealand. In the ethnic tensions index, Israel and Thailand score lowest (2), whereas five countries – Argentina, South Korea, Poland, Finland, and Costa Rica – receive the highest score (6).

When the two indices are examined together, we find that Argentina, Finland, and South Korea are the only three countries with the full score (6 out of 6), that is, they recorded the lowest tension between social groups. By contrast, Thailand, Israel, and India scored lowest in both measures. The bleak conclusion is that, of all the measures examined in the Democracy Index, the internal tension indices are where Israel ranks lowest.

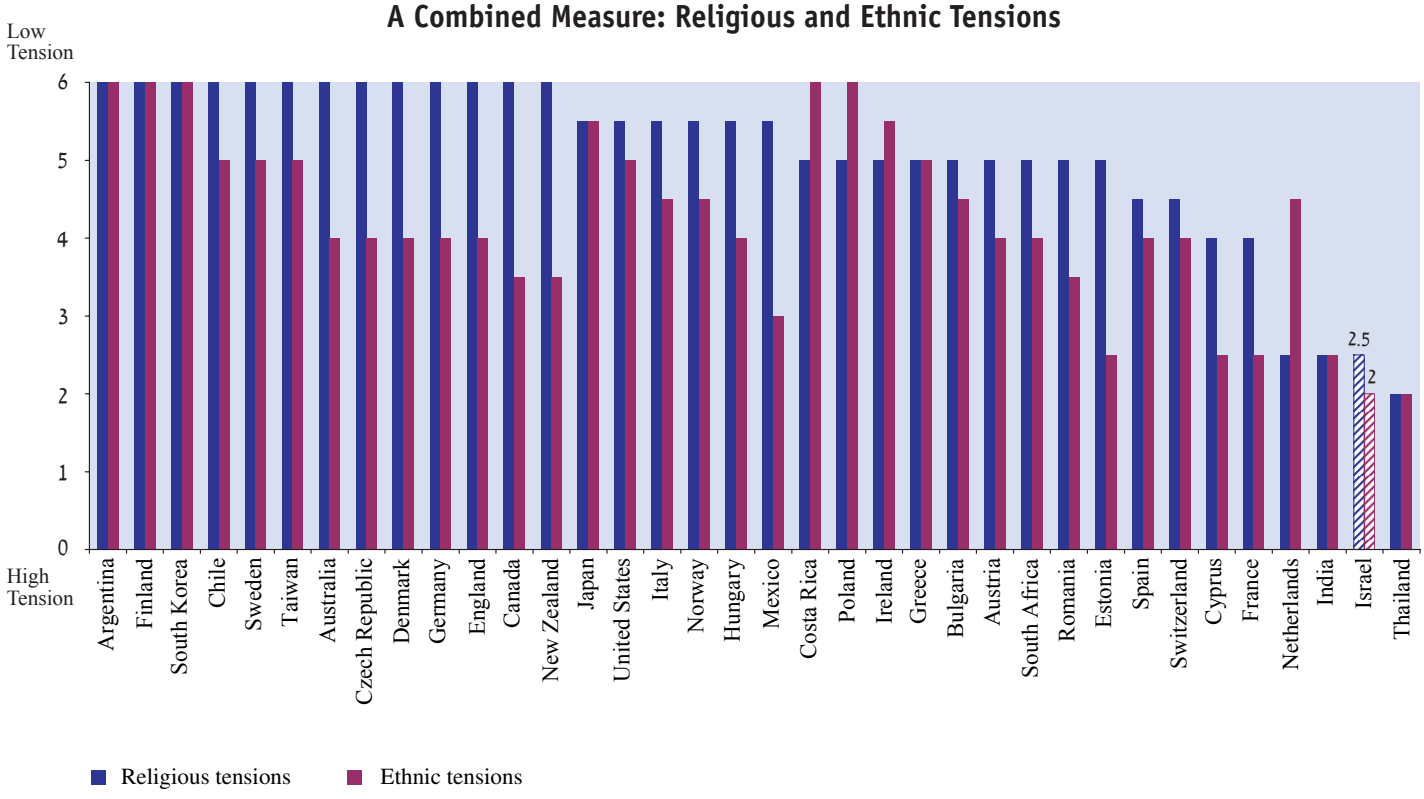
A historical review of the two measures on social cleavages indicates that Israel's situation is uniquely problematic. In 1992–1995, Israel received a score of 2 in the ethnic tensions measure; in 1996–2000, the situation deteriorated and Israel received a score of 1; in 2001, the assessment improved and Israel stabilized again at a score of 2, which it continued to receive until 2008. In the religious tensions measure, Israel scored 3 in 1992–1996; in 1997–2003, Israel's situation was assessed as worse and it received a score of 2; in 2004, the assessment of religious tension improved and Israel was again given a score of 3; in 2005, the situation was assessed as slightly worse and the score dropped to 2.5, which is the score Israel receives in 2008.[33] All the social tension measures – from both a historical and an international comparison perspective – indicate that attempts to moderate tensions in Israel face many obstacles.

32 The score of each country is determined according to an internal assessment of a panel of experts. In determining the score, they rely on local and international press reports and on reports from international organizations. Note, however, that the organization protects the questionnaire as confidential information, thereby failing to meet demands of transparence in its assessments. For further information, see www.prsgroup.com/ICRG.aspx

33 For further discussion, see Asher Arian, Pazit Ben-Nun, Shlomit Barnea, Raphael Ventura, and Michal Shamir, *Auditing Israeli Democracy 2005: A Decade Since the Assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin* (Jerusalem: Israel Democracy Institute, 2005).

Figure 8

A Combined Measure: Religious and Ethnic Tensions



C. The Democracy Survey 2008

1. A Summary Outline

Beside the use of objective international measures, we conducted a public opinion survey aiming to examine the public's assessments and its attitudes toward Israeli democracy. The survey was conducted in January 2008 within a representative sample of Israel's adult population (18+), Jewish and Arab. The sample included 1,201 subjects, who were interviewed in the three languages most widespread in Israel – Hebrew, Arabic, and Russian.[34]

Responses show that the majority of the public is dissatisfied with the functioning of Israeli democracy and that trust in state institutions (the Supreme Court, the Knesset, political parties, the Prime Minister) and in the media is lower than last year. Furthermore, public opinion considers that corruption in Israel is widespread and that people in government are tainted by corruption.

Generally, respondents define Israel's situation as not good. But despite the low evaluation (general and particular) of diverse aspects of Israeli democracy, citizens' mood is good. Most respondents are not overly worried, and a decisive majority holds that they will be able to adapt to the current situation. These data attest to the resilience of Israeli society: citizens estimate that the situation is disheartening, but they can proceed with their life routine.

The survey shows that the Israeli public does not think it influences government policy or that its views are of interest to politicians. Nevertheless, a rise was recorded in the general satisfaction with the functioning of Israeli democracy. Furthermore, most of the public has a sense of belonging to the community and a deep identification with the country, together with a sense of pride about being part of Israel and a willingness to remain in the country.

In sum, the picture that emerges from the Democracy Survey is contrary to the one depicted by the international comparison that was presented at the opening of the chapter. The international comparison points to improvements in Israel's scores, while the public's evaluation of the quality of Israeli democracy dropped in comparison with previous years in the three aspects we examined.

2. Public Perception of Democracy's Implementation in Israel 2008

The perception of democracy's implementation touches on the public's assessment of the way democracy comes to the fore, both by comparison with other countries and in its ability to influence the implementation of democratic principles. The perception of democracy's implementation is tested in three aspects: the institutional aspect, the rights aspect, and the stability aspect.

Five dimensions were examined in the institutional aspect: political participation, representativeness, the scope of corruption, accountability, and citizens' ability to influence policy. The dimension most highly

34 The survey was conducted by the Mahshov Institute. Maximum sampling error, at confidence levels of 95%, is ±2.8.

evaluated by the Israeli public is political participation: 64 percent of the public estimate that the level of political participation in Israel is similar to, or higher than, the level usual in other countries. In an international comparison, however, Israel is not one of the countries with especially high participation rate, and ranks 24th out of the 36 countries that were examined,[35] with 63.5 percent turnout in the March 2006 election. The Israeli public, then, estimates citizens' participation in politics as higher than it actually is.[36] As for integrity in Israeli politics – the dimension ranked second in the institutional aspect – 58 percent hold that levels of political corruption in Israel are similar to, or lower than, those in other countries. This is a prominent topic on the public agenda, and the public's assessments match the international findings noted above about the levels of corruption in Israel. The third dimension in the ranking is representativeness. Fifty-seven percent of respondents estimate that the balance of power in the Knesset conveys, to a large or to some extent, the distribution of views in the public. An international comparison of this dimension indicates that the public assessment is lower than Israel's place in the countries' ranking, which is high as a result of the proportional electoral system in use in Israel. When asked "To what extent do you agree that a politician does not tend to take into account the view of the ordinary citizen?", only 32 percent of the public in Israel 2008 hold that politicians take into account the view of the ordinary citizen and consider it important. This dimension ranks fourth in the institutional aspect. The last dimension, which receives the lowest rating, is the public's ability to influence government policy: Only 19 percent of the public hold that they can influence government policy. This perception does not necessarily attest to the public's actual influence on policy making, but this is the public's view of its capabilities.

In the rights aspect, four dimensions were examined – all touching on public perception of democracy's implementation in Israel: freedom of speech, human rights, equality between Jews and Arabs, and social and economic equality. The dimension that received the highest estimate in this aspect is freedom of speech: 76 percent of the Israeli public hold that freedom of speech in Israel is greater than, or similar to, that prevalent in other countries. The second dimension that received a high assessment in the rights aspect is the protection of human rights: 63 percent of the Israeli public estimate that protection of human rights in Israel is as good as, or better than, in other countries. In this regard, note the distribution of answers given by Jewish as opposed to Arab respondents: 60 percent of Jewish respondents, as opposed to 65 percent of Arab respondents, hold that human rights are protected to a large extent. The gap between these two groups is surprising, because we would have expected the Arab public – a

35 For further discussion, see Arian et al., *The 2006 Democracy Index* (note 9 above), 50.

36 The data on political participation (in the perception of democracy's implementation) differ from the data on interest in and discussion of politics (in democratic attitudes), because different questions were posed attesting to these parameters. We also posed a question concerning interest in politics; findings are reported in part two, below.

minority in a country defined as Jewish, albeit democratic – to assess the protection of human rights in Israel as low. The dimension that ranked third in the rights aspect is equality between Jews and Arabs. Forty-nine percent of the public as a whole hold that such equality prevails. In this dimension too, the distribution of responses between Jews and Arabs is interesting: 52 percent of the Jewish public hold that such equality prevails, as opposed to 33 percent of the Arab public who think so. Sixy-five percent of CIS immigrants who have arrived since 1989 estimate that equality prevails between Jews and Arabs. That Israel's Arab minority (about 20% of the country's population) feels discriminated against, even though not surprising, is problematic in a democratic country. The fourth dimension that we examined in the rights aspect and to which the Israeli public gave the lowest evaluation is social-economic equality: Only 14 percent of respondents hold that equality prevails in Israel. This dimension was analyzed according to respondents' self-definition of their social-economic position. The findings show that, among respondents who hold that there is social-economic equality, 15 percent define themselves as belonging to the upper class, 14 percent to the upper-middle class, 11 percent to the middle class, and 17 percent to the lower class. We also examined the views of those who define themselves as supporting more socialist views, as opposed to those who define themselves as supporting more capitalist views: 12 percent of those who define themselves as socialist, or as more socialist than capitalist, hold that social-economic equality prevails in Israel, as opposed to 13 percent of those who define themselves as capitalists, or as more capitalists than socialists. It is the negligible difference between these two groups that is surprising.[37]

In the stability aspect, we examined three dimensions: stability, the evaluation of democracy's functioning, and social tensions in Israeli society. The public's evaluations are not high in any of these dimensions although, for the first time, respondents' rankings were reversed – the dimension that ranks highest in 2008 is social tension: 64 percent of the public hold that social tension in Israeli society is similar to, or lower than, that in other countries, a truly surprising result vis-à-vis previous years. We discuss this dimension at length below, when we examine the public's evaluation of the relationships between various groups in Israeli society. This evaluation does not match international assessments, which place Israel in the lowest rungs in the 36 countries' ranking. The second dimension we examined in this aspect is political stability. Forty-four percent of the Israeli public hold that the political system in Israel is as stable as, or more stable than, in other countries. This assessment is compatible with the objective international rating, which ranks Israel last among the 36 countries examined.[38]

37 In a 2007 international comparison of the GINI coefficient on disposable income, as it appears in the *Human Development Report*, Israel ranks very low in the equality parameter: 8th in inequality out of the 36 countries in the sample. The Israel Central Bureau of Statistics has published similar data. For further discussion, see Arian et al., *Auditing Democracy 2006* (note 9 above), 68–73.

38 This index was updated in 2006, an election year in Israel. See ibid., 30–32.

The third dimension we tested in the stability aspect, which ranks last among the three, deals with the level of satisfaction with the functioning of Israeli democracy. Only 43 percent are satisfied or very satisfied with the functioning of democracy. The fact that less than one-half of respondents hold this view is a source of concern in a democratic country, where the public chooses its representatives and they – together with other elements – are responsible for democracy's functioning. Although this finding need not imply that the functioning of democracy is actually deficient, the public perception in this regard is not encouraging.

In the institutional and in the rights aspects, then, the perception of democracy's implementation has declined in recent years, whereas the stability and cohesion aspects recorded slight improvement. Figure 9 shows that, except for the perception of freedom of speech, the highest scores granted by Israeli citizens do not exceed 64 percent, and the lowest touch the bottom minimum. This is not a reassuring picture, and must evoke concern in the general public and among decision-makers. Nevertheless, citizens' criticism and readiness to examine reality as is do attest to transparency, to a sense of belonging, and to citizens' involvement in Israeli democracy.

(a) Perception of Democracy's Implementation 2003–2008: Institutional Aspect

In 2008, the Democracy Survey examined the perception of democracy's implementation in each of the three aspects by comparison with the last five years.[39] This comparison enables us to gain a broader perspective of the variables making up the three aspects and also to identify trends. In the institutional aspect, as noted, we examined five dimensions. Over the last six years, a clear trend of decline has become evident in the citizens' perception of the accountability prevailing in the country and of their power to influence government policy. The dimension that the public rates most highly is the assessment of the scope of corruption. In 2005–2008, the public perception of representativeness has been relatively consistent.

The sharpest and clearest trend of decline in the perception of democracy's implementation in the institutional aspect was registered in the political participation dimension. During the last six years, until 2008, the rate of those evaluating that political participation in Israel is similar to, or higher than, participation in other countries dropped by 14 percentage points (from 78% in 2003 to 64% in 2008). These figures add to the picture that emerges from the examination of democratic attitudes in the institutional aspect in recent years, which shows that the level of interest and the level of involvement in politics declined significantly in 2008 (Figure 10 below).

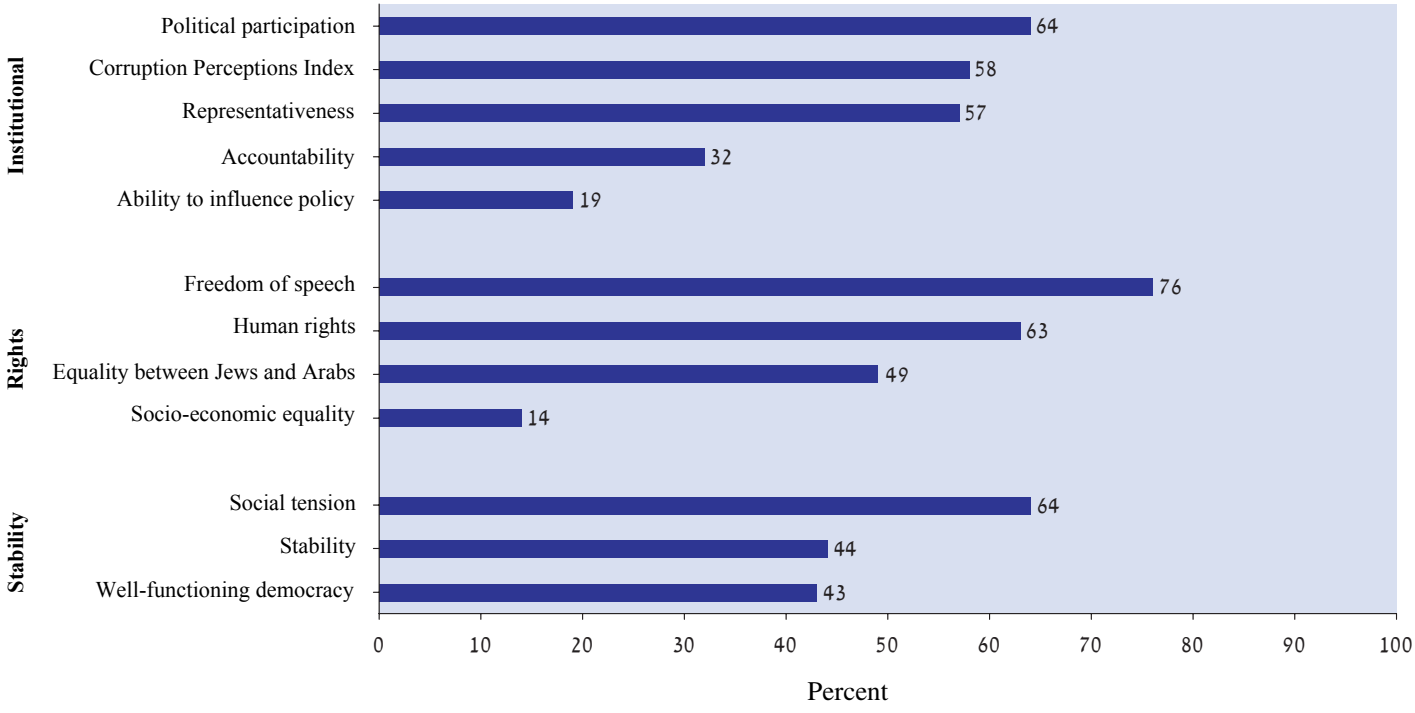
An additional interesting datum is that, in response to the question about electoral inclinations if elections were to take place today, 15 percent answered they would not vote at all, and only 55 percent answered that they knew for whom they would vote.

39 Data for 2004 do not appear in the figure because not all the questions concerning the institutional aspect were asked in that year's Survey.

Figure 9

Perception of Democracy's Implementation: The Israeli Public*

High Score = assessment that the given democratic principle prevails in Israel (percentages)

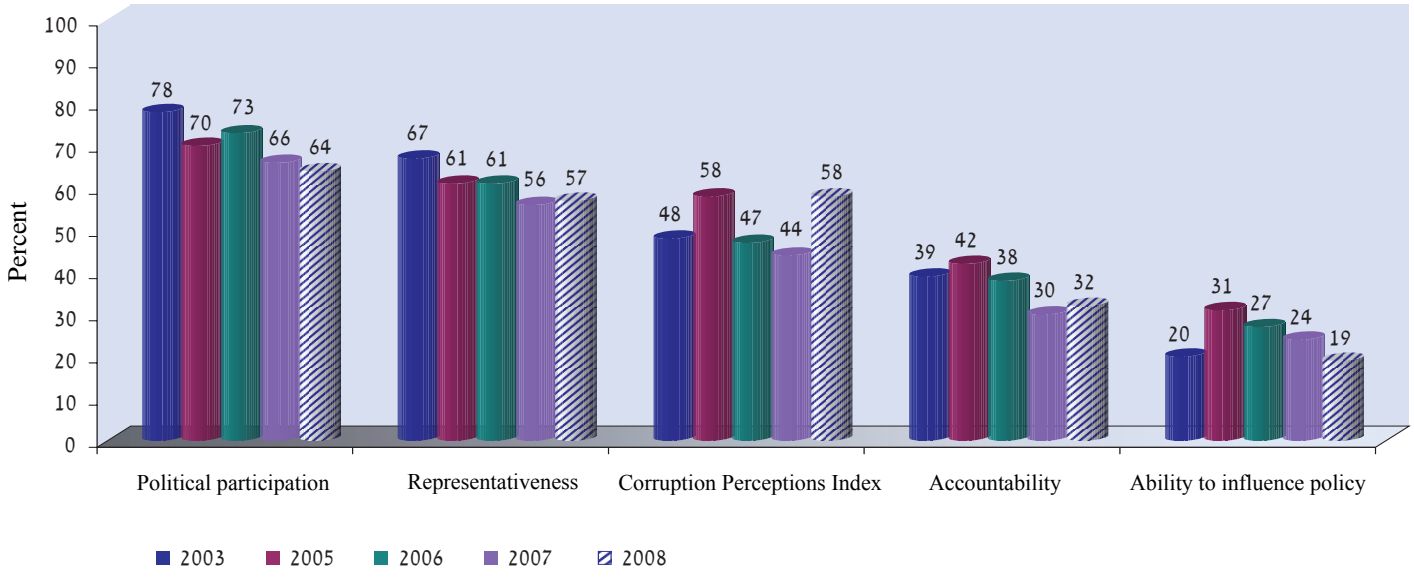


* These are the weighted measures for the various aspects and categories: political participation – In your opinion, do citizens in Israel participate in politics more, or less, than they do in other countries? (more than in others or as in others: 3–5); representativeness – To what extent does the balance of powers in the Knesset express, in your opinion, the distribution of views in the larger public? (to a large or to a certain extent: 1–2); perception of the scope of corruption – In your opinion, is there more, or less, corruption in Israel than in other countries? (less than, or as in, other countries: 1–3); accountability – To what extent do you agree or disagree that a politician does not tend to take into account the view of the ordinary citizen? (disagree: 1–2); evaluating the ability to influence policy – To what extent can you or your friends influence government policy? (to a large or to a certain extent: 1–2); freedom of speech – In your opinion, is there more, or less, freedom of speech in Israel than in other countries? (more or as in other countries: 3–5); human rights – In your opinion, is there more, or less, protection of human rights in Israel than in other countries? (more or as in others: 3–5); equality between Jews and Arabs – Israeli Arab citizens are discriminated against in comparison with Jewish citizens (not at all or to a small extent: 1–2); social and economic equality – Social and economic equality is lacking in Israel (disagree: 1–2); stability – In your opinion, is the political system in Israel stable or not as compared with other democratic countries? (stable or as stable as in others: 1–3); satisfaction with the functioning of democracy – In general, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the functioning of Israeli democracy? (satisfied: 3–4); social tension – In your opinion, is there more, or less, tension in Israel between groups in society than in other countries? (less than, or as in, other countries: 1–3).

Figure 10

Perception of Democracy's Implementation: Institutional Aspect, 2003–2008*

High Score = assessment that the given democratic principle prevails in Israel (percentages)



* The questions for which ratings were weighted appear in the note under Figure 9 above.

(b) Perception of Democracy's Implementation 2003–2008: Rights Aspect

The four dimensions of the rights aspect were examined not only for 2008, but also by comparison with the last five years. The findings point to relative stability in public perception of human rights and freedom of speech and a consistently very low assessment of social-economic equality. By contrast, improvement was recorded in public perception of Jewish–Arab equality.

Figure 12 below shows reactions to the statement "Israeli Arabs suffer from discrimination by comparison with Jewish citizens" in 2003–2008. As the figure indicates, an average drop of three percentage points was recorded in 2008, as opposed to 2005–2007. Nevertheless, the data for 2008 show that approximately one-half of the population holds that Arabs suffer from discrimination.

(c) Perception of Democracy's Implementation 2003–2008: Stability Aspect

We also examined the various dimensions of stability through 2003–2008. An improvement trend was recorded in this period regarding social tensions: a rise of 23 percentage points was recorded in those holding that social tension in Israel declined between 2003 and 2008. The public's assessment of the relationships between society's various groups, then, showed improvement. A country such as Israel, split by many rifts, can draw encouragement from this result, at least insofar as public perceptions are concerned.

Figure 11

Perception of Democracy's Implementation: Rights Aspect, 2003–2008*

High Score = assessment that the given democratic principle prevails in Israel (percentages)

* The questions for which ratings were weighted appear in the note under Figure 9 above.

Figure 12

Israeli Arab Citizens Are Discriminated Against, in Comparison with Jewish Citizens, 2003–2008

Agree and Definitely Agree (percentages)

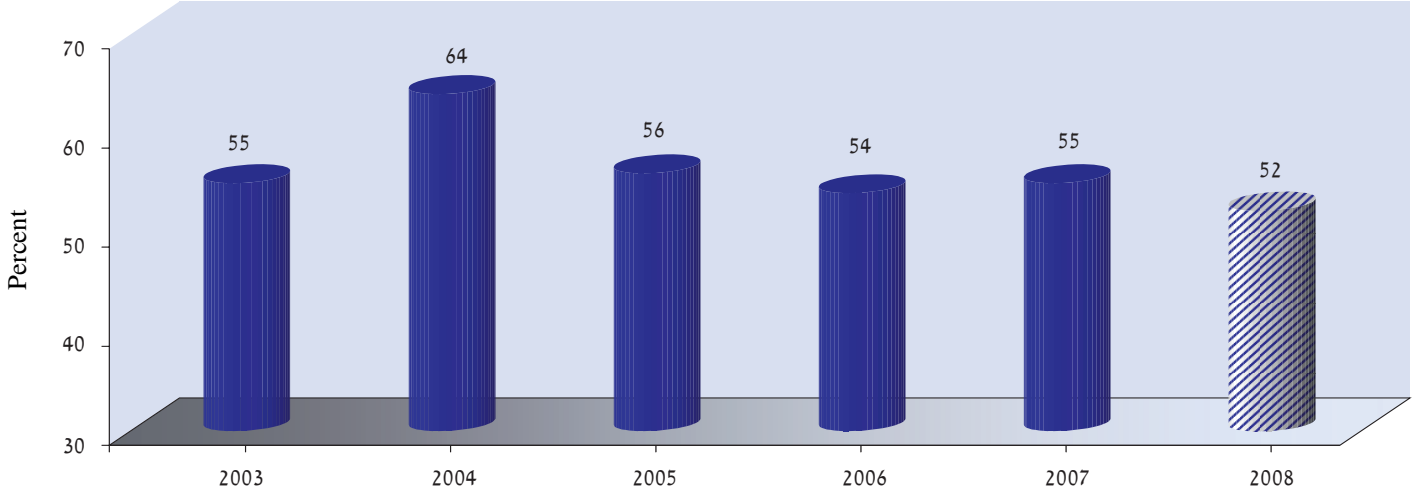
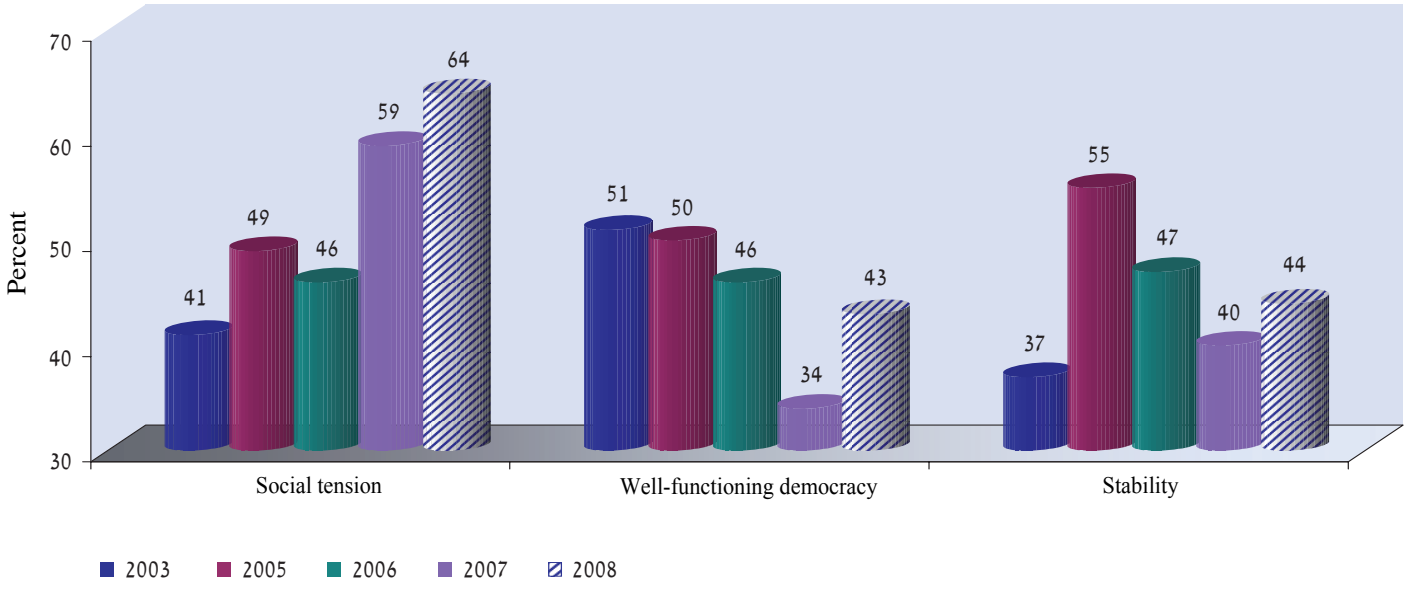


Figure 13

Perception of Democracy's Implementation: Stability Aspect, 2003–2008*

High Score = assessment that the given democratic principle prevails in Israel (percentages)



* The questions for which ratings were weighted appear in the note under Figure 9 above.

3. Democratic Attitudes in the Israeli Public in 2008

Beside the public's evaluations and their perception of democracy's implementation, the Democracy Survey also examined whether the Israeli public adheres to democratic values and norms, and to what extent these values and norms come to the fore in the three aspects noted above. Democratic attitudes are citizens' reports of their actual support for democratic values, as opposed to the perception of democracy's implementation, which is the public's theoretical assessment of the various aspects. In the institutional aspect, we examined the measure of interest in politics and the scope of political discussion; in the rights aspect, we examined attitudes to equality between Arabs and Jews, to freedom of religion, to gender equality, to equal rights for all, and to freedom of speech; in the stability aspect we examined social trust, the degree of identification with Israel, and the opposition to violence. Figure 14 below presents the democratic attitudes of the Israeli public in 2008.

In the institutional aspect, a significant decline (24 percentage points) was recorded in the discussion of politics, which is the most dramatic drop in this Survey, even though involvement with politics is a vital matter in Israel. Concern with politics, however, still remains high by comparison with other countries:[40] 43 percent of respondents attest

40 For further discussion, see Arian et al., *Auditing Israeli Democracy 2006* (note 9 above), 59–61.

that they talk about politics with their friends and family, and 57 percent report much interest in politics. These data match those of the international comparison, which ranks Israel first among the 36 countries that were examined concerning interest in, and discussion of, politics.[41]

In the rights aspect, 83 percent of respondents agree that "all must have the same rights before the law, regardless of political outlook." And yet, when attitudes are examined vis-à-vis specific rights, support for them declines. Thus, 43 percent of respondents agree that a speaker should not be allowed to express harsh criticism of the State of Israel in public, and only 56 percent agree that full equality of rights should be awarded to all citizens, Jews and Arabs. The distribution of responses to this question differs in the Jewish and Arab public. Fifty-two percent of Jewish respondents support this statement, as opposed to 78 percent of Arab respondents. Concerning gender equality, no essential change has been recorded over the years, and it remains stable at 57 percent: 53 percent of men support gender equality, as opposed to 60 percent of the women. Concerning freedom of religion, 36 percent of the public support it. The distribution of support for freedom of religion, according to the self-defined degree of religiosity, shows that 77 percent of secular respondents support it, 45 percent of traditional, 27 percent of religious, and seven percent of Ultra-Orthodox.

In the stability aspect, Israeli citizens express high identification with the country (56%), continuing the trend recorded last year, when 59 percent of respondents said the same. By contrast, a drop was recorded in the level of opposition to violence: 61 percent of the Israeli public in general are opposed to violence, but this implies that 39 percent are not, a significant figure that cannot be ignored. Opposition to violence is a cornerstone of democracy, and a high rate of people who do not adhere to this view poses a problem. Social trust is not high and, of the ten dimensions examined, it has consistently yielded the lowest evaluation. In 2008, only 32 percent of the public attested that they rely on others. The rest (68%) think one should be very cautious in relationships with others.

(a) Democratic Attitudes in the Institutional Aspect, 2003–2008

Indicators of democratic attitudes in the institutional aspect remain strong and stable in Israeli democracy. The scope of political discussion, after remaining stable for four years (2003–2006), showed a sharp drop in the level of interest in politics and some decline in the tendency to talk about politics. In 2008, only 57 percent are interested in politics, and only 43 percent claim that they talk about politics to a large or to some extent, a drop that cannot be disregarded since it is the largest in this year's Democracy Survey. A drop of 24 percentage points in the discussion of politics and of 16 percentage points in the level of interest in politics may attest to alienation and to the distancing of the Israeli public from Israeli politics;

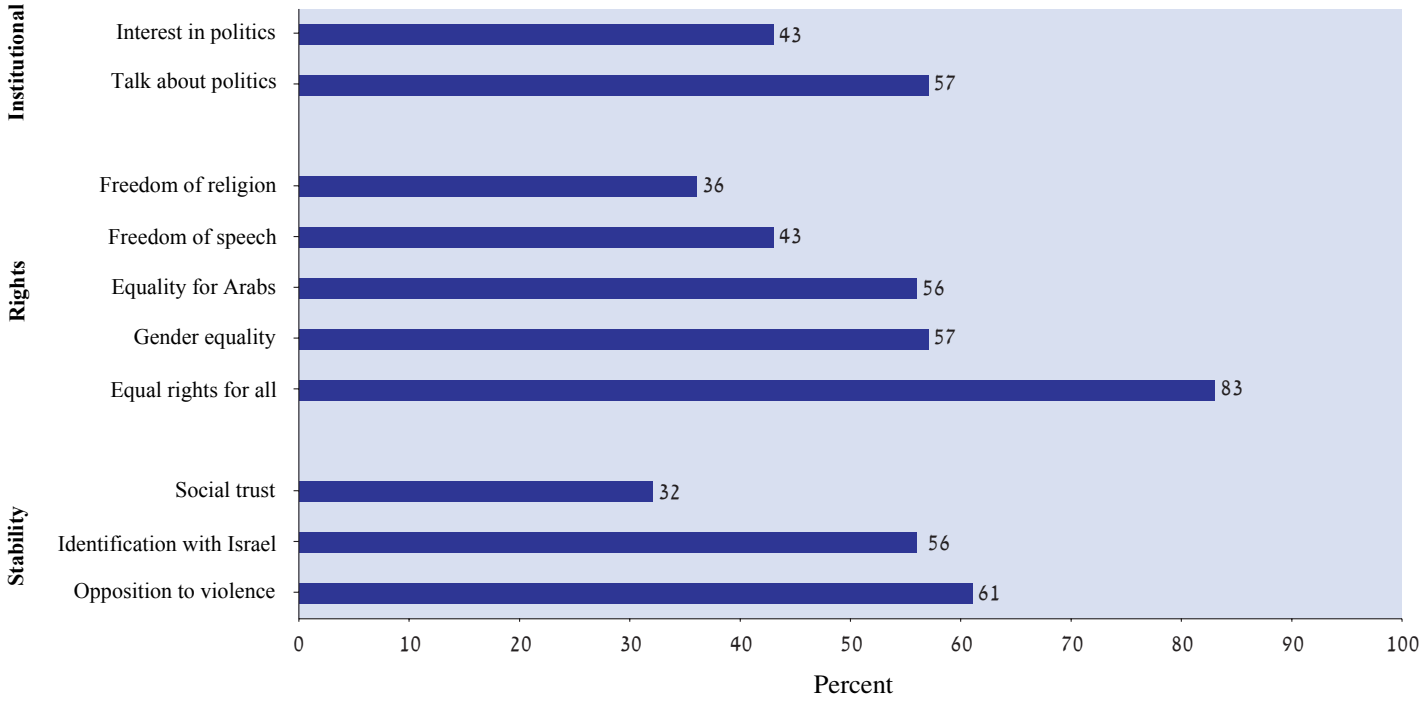
41 Ibid. A question regarding interest in politics was posed as well, and its findings are presented in the second part of this book.

they may express revulsion with politics or unwillingness to be ceaselessly connected to the media. Whatever the case, the 2008 datum is extreme, and whether it attests to a trend of decline or to a one-time drop is not yet clear.[42]

Figure 14

Democratic Attitudes among the Israeli Public*

High score = Expressing attitudes consistent with democratic norms (percentages)



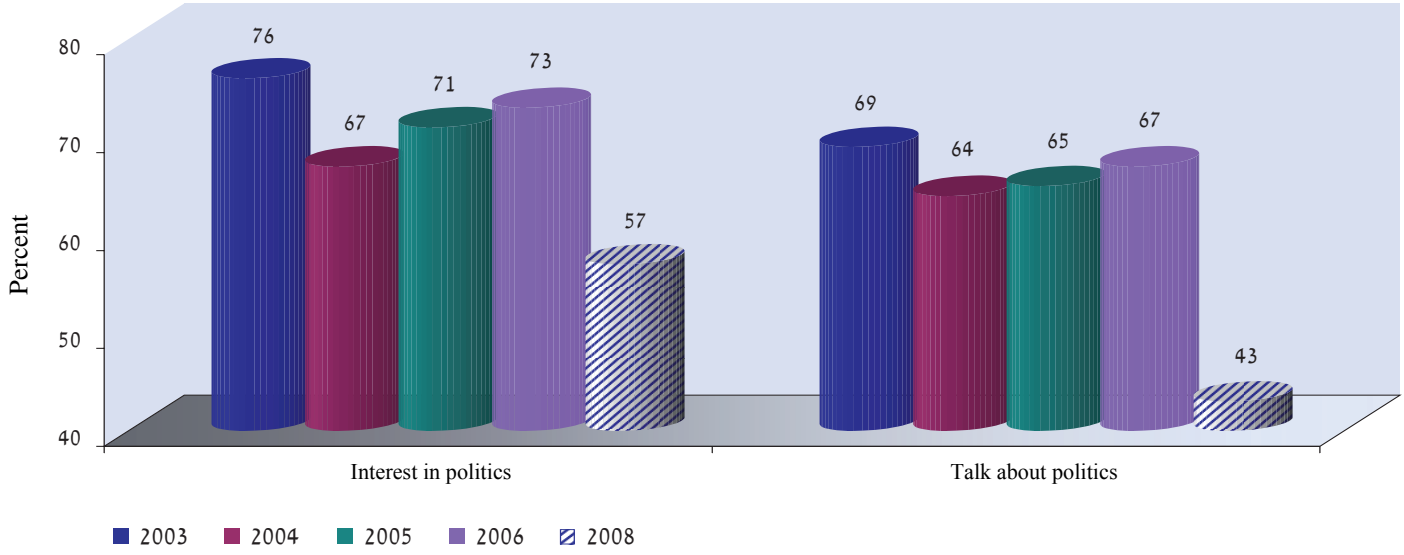
* These are the weighted measures for the various aspects and categories: discussing politics – To what extent do you tend to talk with your friends and family about political issues? (talk: 1–2); interest in politics – To what extent do you take an interest in politics? (interested: 1–2); freedom of speech – A speaker should be forbidden to express harsh criticism of Israel in public (opposed: 1–2); equality for Arabs – To what extent do you support or oppose full equality of rights between Jewish and Arab Israeli citizens (support: 3–4); gender equality – Men are better political leaders than women; freedom of religion – Every couple in Israel should be allowed to marry in any way they wish (agree: 3–4); equal rights for all – All must have the same rights before the law, regardless of their political outlook (agree: 4–5); social trust – In general, do you think that people can be trusted or that one should be very cautious in relationships with others? (trusted: 1–2); identification with the State of Israel – To what extent do you feel yourself to be part of the State of Israel and its problems? (feels part: 1–2); opposition to violence – Using violence to attain political aims is never justified (agree: 3–4).

42 Data on political participation in the section on the perception of democracy's implementation differ from the data on interest in, and discussion of, politics in the section on democratic attitudes because of the different questions posed in the Survey to test these parameters.

Figure 15

Democratic Attitudes: Institutional Aspect, 2003–2008*

High score = Expressing attitudes consistent with democratic norms (percentages)



* The questions for which ratings were weighted appear in the note under Figure 14 above.

(b) Democratic Attitudes in the Rights Aspect, 2003–2008

Over the years, democratic attitudes in the rights aspect have proven stable. The lowest figures in all the rights dimensions throughout this period (vis-à-vis previous years) were recorded in 2007. The rate of respondents holding that freedom of religion should be protected showed a significant drop in 2008, continuing a trend that had begun in 2007. By contrast, the rate of supporters of equal rights for Arabs went up, and so did the rate of respondents supporting equal rights for all (Figure 16 below).

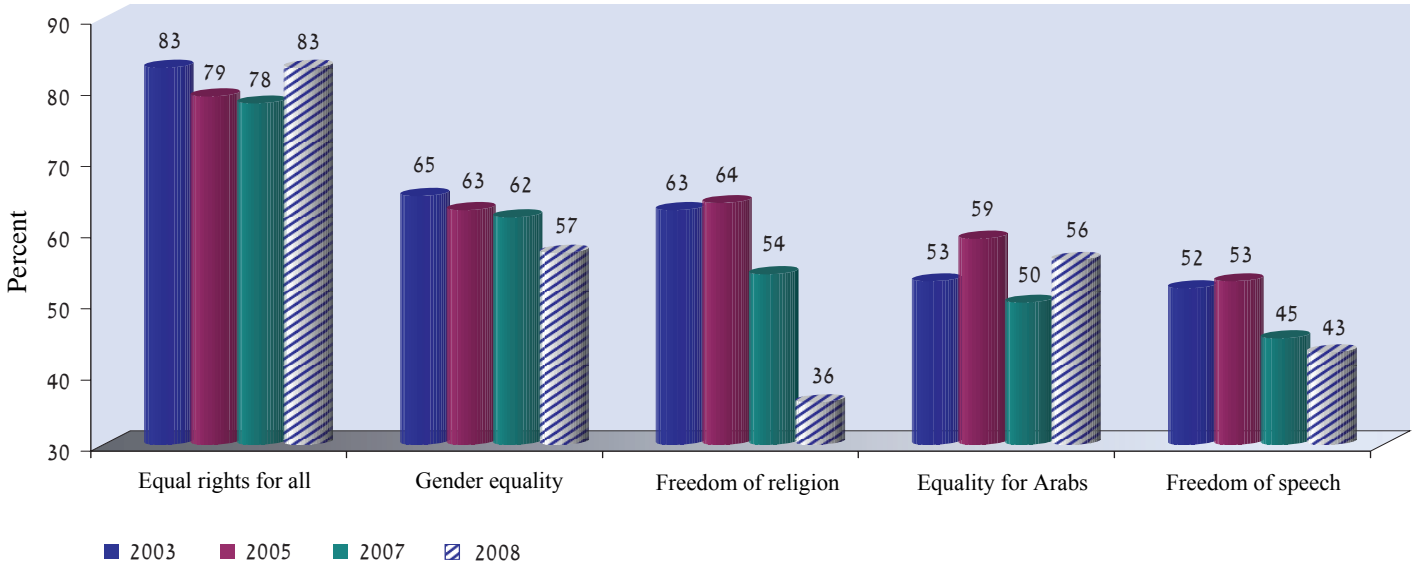
The most significant drop in the rights aspect was found in the freedom of religion dimension. The question we posed was: "Should every couple in Israel be allowed to marry in any way they wish?" The attitude to this statement (opposition or support) was clearly related to the self-defined measure of religiosity. Among respondents who agreed or definitely agreed with this statement, 77 percent were secular, 45 percent traditional, 27 percent were religious, and seven percent Ultra-Orthodox. These figures represent a very sharp drop after several years of relative stability. One reason for it could be secular respondents' reservations about this statement – 23 percent of them do not agree with it.

Note that, concerning democratic attitudes, the need for equal rights for all is a statement that almost all accept. On closer scrutiny, however, we find that only about one-half of respondents support defined rights. In other words, the majority generally wants equal rights for all in theory, but does not necessarily support its actual implementation.

Figure 16

Democratic Attitudes: Rights Aspect, 2003–2008*

High score = Expressing attitudes consistent with democratic norms (percentages)



* The questions for which ratings were weighted appear in the note under Figure 14 above.

(c) Democratic Attitudes in the Stability Aspect, 2003–2008

The three indicators measuring the stability aspect show large variance. Social trust was and remains low, identification with Israel is in decline, and opposition to violence recorded a sharp drop when compared with scores in previous years. A significant decline was recorded last year in the rate of respondents identifying with Israel. The explanation could lie in the difficult security situation that prevailed throughout last year and in the timing of last year's survey, which was conducted under the cloud of the Second Lebanon War, leading to a large and continued drop in the identification with Israel. The current Survey was conducted about two weeks before the Winograd Commission submitted its final report, circumstances that may have affected public mood. Generally, this aspect records a trend that is not positive: a drop in the opposition to violence together with a very low level of social trust.

4. Selected Findings

(a) Public Mood

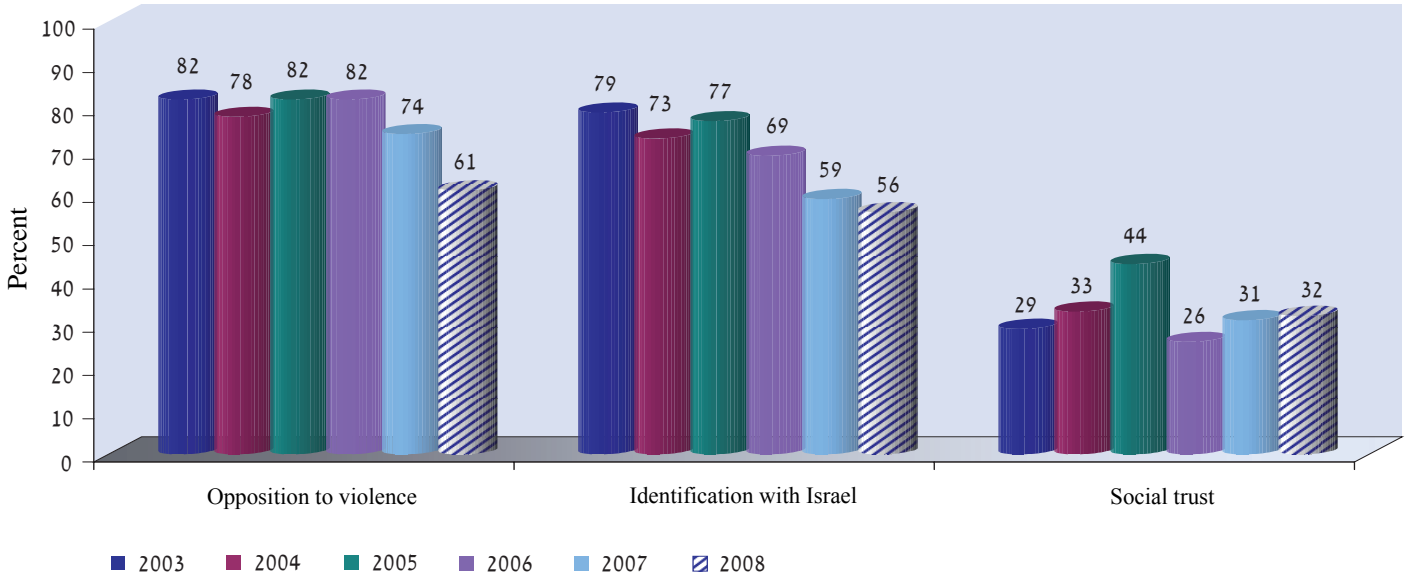
Data for the Democracy Survey 2007 were collected in February 2007, about six months after the Second Lebanon War. The interim report of the Winograd Commission – the Commission of Inquiry established in the wake of the war – was published in April 2007, about two months after the Survey was conducted. For the Democracy Survey 2008, we collected data in January 2008, about two weeks before the publication of the Winograd Commission's final report.[43]

43 For a full report on the Winograd Commission, see www.vaadatwino.org.il/index.html

Figure 17

Democratic Attitudes: Stability Aspect, 2003–2008*

High score = Expressing attitudes consistent democratic norms (percentages)



* The questions for which ratings were weighted appear in the note under Figure 14 above.

The survey's questions sought to gauge the mood of the Israeli public: "What do you think is Israel's situation in general?" "Are you worried these days?" "Do you think you will be able to adapt to the current situation?" Combining the Jewish public's assessments on these three questions reveals an interesting finding over the years: a gap prevails between the public's perception of their personal situation and their perception of the situation of the country. In other words, the personal situation does not correspond to the general sense about the country's situation (Figure 18 below).

A historical comparison of responses to the question "Do you think you will be able to adapt to the current situation?" provides additional insights. Throughout the surveyed years, a decisive majority of the Jewish population claimed it would be able to adapt to the current situation, whatever it might be. This was not unexpected in 1993 – the year of the Oslo Accords – when opportunities seemed to have opened up for a final agreement with the Palestinians. Forty-nine percent of respondents stated then that their mood was good, and 84 percent held they would be able to adapt to the current situation. Surprisingly, at the beginning of 2007, about six months after the Second Lebanon War, 79 percent said they would be able to adapt to the current situation, although only 15 percent defined Israel's situation as generally good or very good. In 2008, 82 percent claimed they would be able to adapt to the current situation, and only 27 percent held that Israel's situation was generally good or very good.

Figure 18

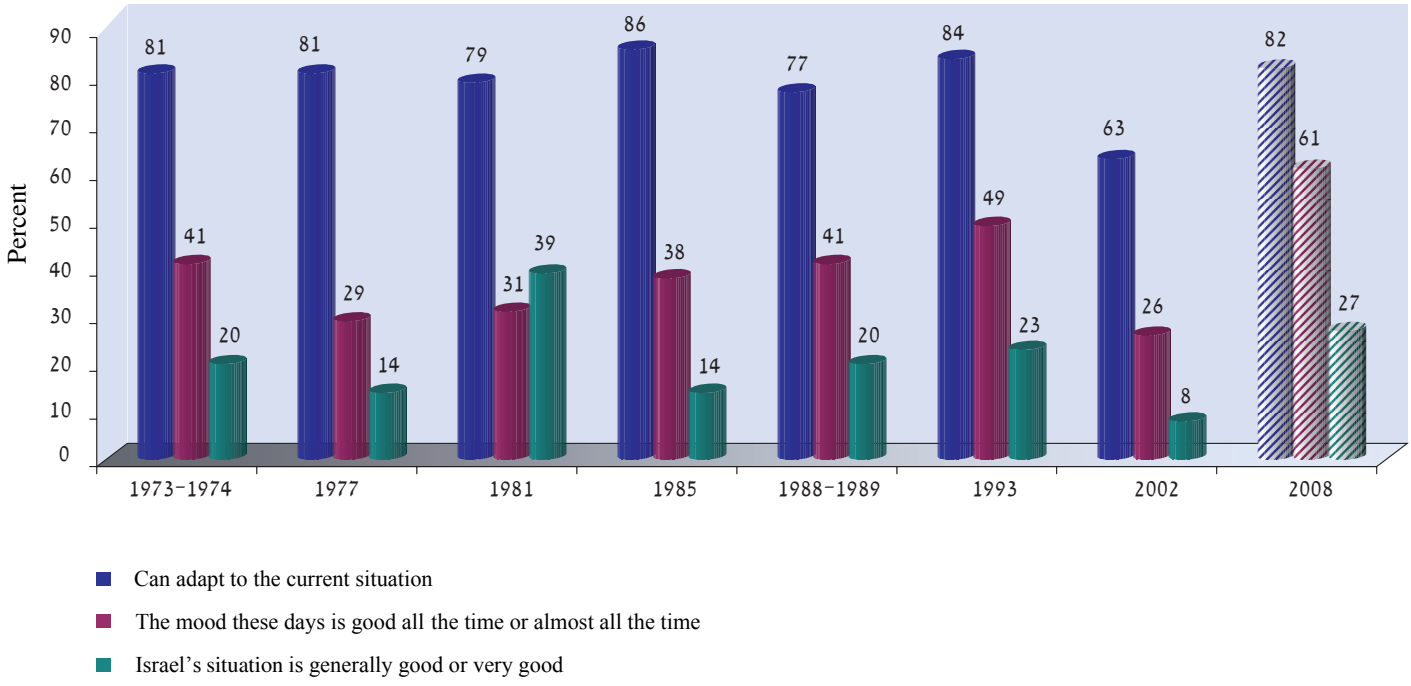
Personal Feelings Given the Current Situation, 1973–2008*

Your mood these days: good all the time or most of the time

Can you adapt to the current situation? Yes

Israel's situation in general: Good or very good

(Jewish sample only: percentages)



* Data on these questions for 1973 and 1974, and for 1988 and 1989 are presented together because not all the questions that the data related to were asked in the same year. Data for 1973 were collected in August–September 1973, and for 1974 in April 1974. Data for 1988 were collected in February 1988, and for 1989 in April and June 1989.

Among the Arab population, results are different: 62 percent of respondents answered that their mood these days is good all the time or most of the time; 72 percent claimed they would be able to adapt to the current situation; and 39 percent held that Israel's situation was generally good or very good.

(b) Public Assessments of the Most Important Problem Facing the Government and of the Way the Government Deals with the Country's Problems

In many ways, Israel functions as a developed democracy and as part of the first world. Israel's GNP for 2008 is 25,864 dollars per capita,[44] unemployment is only 6.6 percent,[45] and the expected growth rate for 2008 is 4.2 percent.[46] Still, we cannot ignore a variety of vexing issues, from security and economic problems to environmental problems and rights of workers in specific sectors. Furthermore, the pace of anomalous events (which has already become routine in Israel but is uncommon in developed countries) is incomparably fast, and dramatic events occur on an almost weekly basis.

The Democracy Survey 2008 posed the following question: "In your view, what is the most important problem the government must deal with?" Responses were many and diverse – 1,201 respondents suggested about 53 possibilities. They can be classified into three main categories: 28 percent pointed to security problems, 12 percent pointed to economic problems, and 11 percent to education problems (Table 3 below).

Responses were broken down according to the language of the interview, which attests to respondents' ethnic origin: Israeli-born (Hebrew), immigrants from the CIS (Russian), and Arabs (Arabic). Most of the respondents who were interviewed in Hebrew held that the most urgent problems the government must deal with are general security problems (27%), education (14%), and the Kassam rockets in Sderot (7%). By contrast, a far higher rate of respondents in Russian (57%) pointed to security problems as the most important issue the government must deal with. Respondents in Arabic held that the most important problems the government must deal with are the economy (19%), and equality between Jews and Arabs (8%).

By comparison with previous years, the issues that bothered the public most in 2003 and 2005, although similar to those that trouble the public in 2008, are not identical. The rate of respondents that pointed to the various issues the government must deal with and to their priorities also changed. The most interesting item in Table 3 is the "others" category that was negligible in previous years and now makes up 15.1 percent of all the problems represented in the table. These problems, which were not cited in previous years, include dealing with students, with the army, and with a long list of issues that should, according to the public, be placed now on the government's agenda. Nine percent of the population cited either the prisoners of war or the Kassam rockets in Sderot as the most important problem faced by the government.

In sum, economic issues recorded a sharp drop in the list of the most important problems the government should handle (from 38.4% in 2003 to 13.3% in 2008). Security issues have remained the most important problem the government should deal with (for about 40% of the respondents), and social problems

44 See http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_20072008_en_complete.pdf
45 See www1.cbs.gov.il/reader/newhodaot/hodaa_template.html?hodaa=200820008
46 See www.mof.gov.il/budget2008/pdf/scira_macro.ppt

have also retained a prominent position over the years in the list of the government's important concerns. In 2008, more than one-quarter of the public cited social issues as the most important problems in the agenda. A small proportion of respondents assess political problems as the most important, and this trend too has remained stable over the years.

Another question in this context concerns the public's satisfaction with the way the government deals with the country's problems. Eighty-two percent said that the way the government deals with the country's problems is not so good or not good, and only 18 percent said it is good or very good. These results should evoke concern among members of the government.

The Democracy Survey 2008 examined the public's assessments of the government's performance on specific issues in the military-security realm, in the economic realm, in the social realm, and in the protection of public order (Figure 19 below). Twenty-eight percent of respondents hold that, in the economic realm, the government functions well or very well; 27 percent said so about the government's functioning in the military-security realm; 19 percent stated so regarding the government's safeguarding of public order; and 15 percent held that the government's functioning in the social realm is good or very good.

(c) Satisfaction with Israeli Democracy

To evaluate citizens' general level of satisfaction with the functioning of Israeli democracy, we posed the question, "In general, to what extent are you satisfied, or dissatisfied, with the functioning of Israeli democracy?" Figure 20 (below) presents the answers of Jewish respondents over time and suggests a trend of growing dissatisfaction, which may derive from the functioning of government institutions, the security situation, social gaps, and personal reasons. The fact that only 43 percent of respondents are satisfied with the functioning of Israeli democracy should be a cause for concern for all citizens, and, in particular, for decision-makers.

In the last twenty years, at least one-half of the Jewish public expressed satisfaction with the functioning of Israeli democracy, whereas in 2008, an actual decline in this regard is apparent. Dissatisfaction with the functioning of Israeli democracy is a key issue demanding attention. In a democratic country, citizens elect decision-makers who are supposed to create, or at the very least preserve, a state that functions to the satisfaction of its citizens. An even more worrisome trend emerges from the attempt to assess the public's view regarding Israel's situation in general: only 29 percent of respondents define Israel's situation as good or very good; 36 percent hold that its situation is not so god, and the rest (36%) hold that the situation is not good or not at all good.

Table 3

The Most Important Problem the Government Must Deal With, 2003–2008
(percentages)

Problem	2003 N = 1227	2005 N = 988	2008 N = 1201
Security (general)	34.8	12.7	**27.6**
The Palestinian problem, the future of the occupied territories, the settlements	5	5.8	**1.4**
Terrorism, terrorist attacks, intifada	3.4	2.3	**0.4**
The prisoners of war	–	–	**3**
The Kassams in Sderot	–	–	**5.7**
The disengagement plan	–	17.3	**0.2**
The Iranian threat	–	–	**0.7**
Total Security Problems	43.2	38.1	**39**
Foreign policy, the peace process (general)	6.8	3.9	**3.6**
Reaching a final agreement with the Palestinian Authority	–	1.1	**0.5**
Total Political Problems	6.8	7.4	**4.1**
Total Political and Security Problems	50	45.5	**43.1**
Economy (general)	34.1	13	**11.6**
Reducing unemployment, ensure employment, preventing dismissals	4	5.6	**1.5**
Economic stability, growth, raising living standards	0.3	0.7	**0.2**
Total Economic Problems	38.4	32	**13.3**
Interior, social (general)	5.4	7	**7.7**
Education, youth	1.5	6.9	**11.1**
Narrowing gaps, helping the weak, poverty, Welfare	0.8	6.1	**3.1**
Violence	–	4.1	**1.3**
Individual rights, governance regime, government functioning	1.2	3.1	**1.9**
Fighting corruption, strengthening the rule of law	1.2	2.5	**1.9**
The unity of the people	0.6	1.5	**0.2**
Road accidents	0.1	1.5	**0.5**
Health, pensions	0.1	0.7	**1.2**
Religion and state	0.3	0.6	**0.5**
Environment	0.2	0.2	**0.1**
Total Interior and Social Problems	11.4	34.2	**28.5**
Total Social and Economic Problems	49.8	66.2	**41.8**
Others	0.1	2.2	**15.1**

Figure 19

Assessments of the Government's Functioning

Fulfills its roles well or very well (percentages)

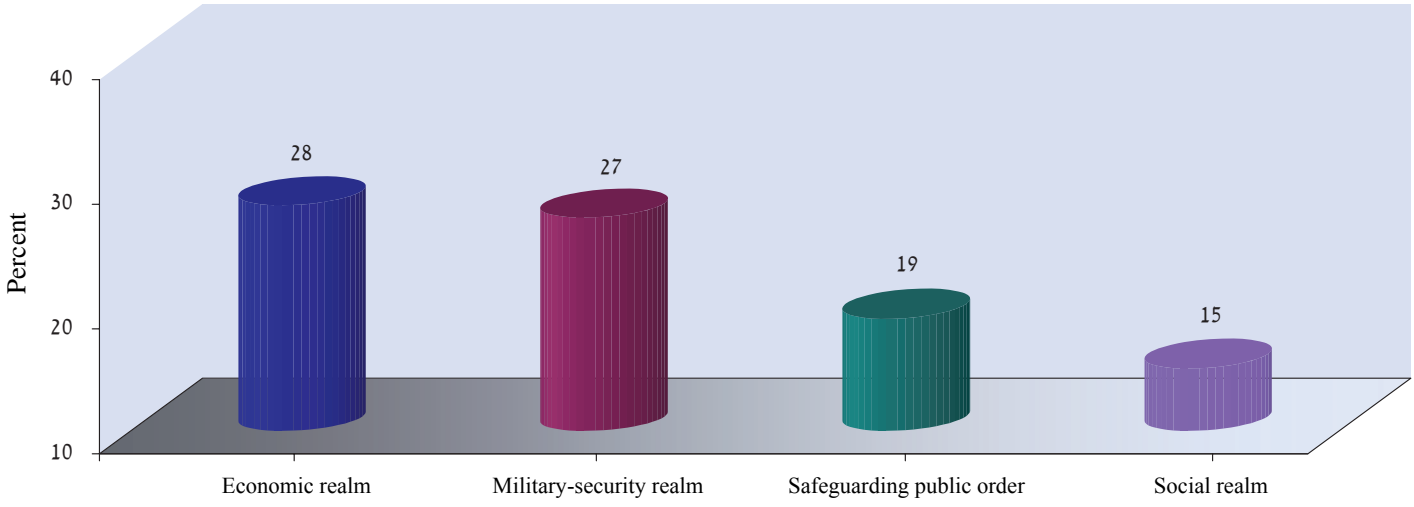
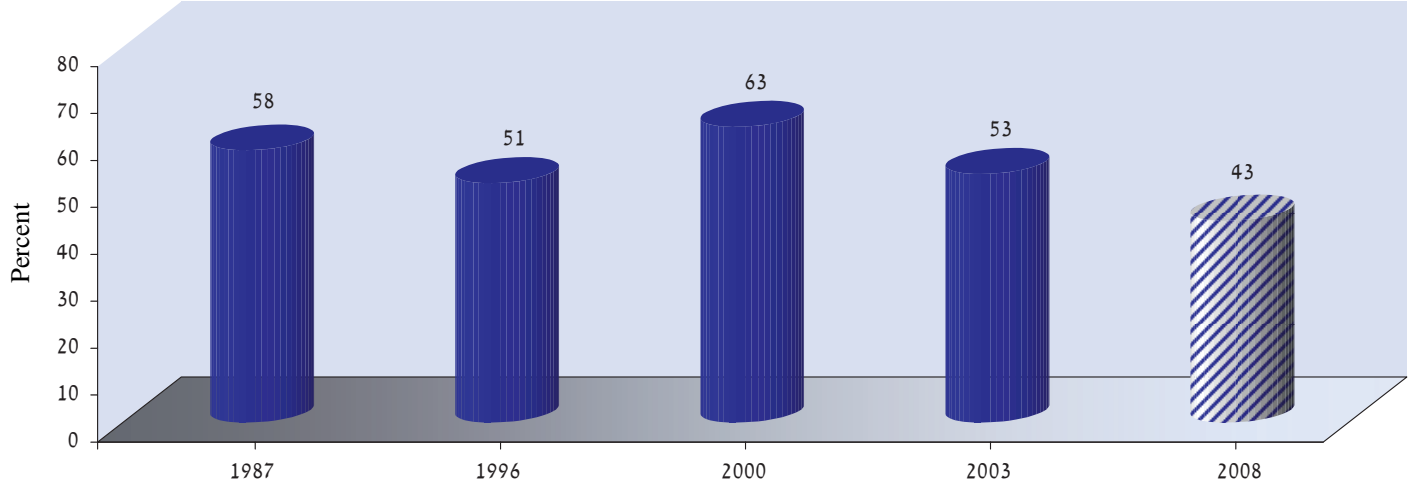


Figure 20

Satisfaction with Israel's Situation, 1987–2008

"What do you think is Israel's situation in general?" Good and Very Good

(Jewish sample only; percentages)



In sum, according to the Democracy Survey 2008, the public estimates that Israel is less democratic than it had been in the past. Citizens' inclination to believe in democratic principles and democratic norms, and their readiness to endorse them, has also declined. Some of the indicators offer clear evidence of a decline in the quality of democracy, as we learn from the drop in citizens' trust in the country's institutions, and in their support for principles underlying democracy. These attitudes, alongside dissatisfaction with the functioning of Israeli democracy and the significant decrease in the rate of citizens who define Israel's situation as good, attest to a negative trend in the attitude of Israeli citizens to Israeli democracy.

(d) Accountability

Every year, the Democracy Survey studies the implementation of the accountability principle. In this context, we examine the extent of citizens' trust that elected officials consider citizens' preferences in their actions, and the extent to which decision-makers are perceived to assume responsibility and to be committed to their roles. The question we posed was: "To what extent do you agree that a politician does not tend to take into account the view of the ordinary citizen?" Data show that the accountability principle in its deep meaning is not implemented (Figure 21 below) and that most citizens do not perceive elected officials as acting to realize the public's preferences. In 2008, 70 percent of respondents in the Jewish sample said that they agree or definitely agree that politicians do not tend to take into account the view of the ordinary citizen, as opposed to 39 percent who said so in 1969. Figure 21 (below), then, points to a rise in the rate of citizens who hold that the accountability principle is not realized in Israel. At present, a minority of only 30 percent of the Jewish public and 39 percent of the Arab public holds that politicians tend to take into account the view of the ordinary citizen. This is a worrisome finding because one of democracy's fundamental principles – even of a representative democracy of the type prevalent in the modern world – is that decision-makers represent the citizens who elect them. These representatives are supposed to take into account citizens' views, and citizens are supposed to believe that their representatives are attentive to their circumstances. A reality where most citizens feel that politicians do not take their views into account could lead to citizens' alienation from their representatives, marring the quality of democracy. Note that we are discussing citizens' assessments rather than actual evidence that politicians in Israel do fail to take the public's views into account. Nonetheless, these assessments do attest to a negative phenomenon.

(e) Social Cleavages in Israel 2008

As demonstrated by the social tension indicator (in the perception of democracy's implementation), and by the social trust indicator (in democratic attitudes), social cleavages in Israel emerge as a problem in many areas. Last year, we devoted much of the *Democracy Index 2007: Cohesion in a Divided Society*,[47] to the rifts in Israel. This year we focused on the unique characteristics of each one of them.

47 For further discussion, see Arian et al., *Auditing Israeli Democracy 2006* (note 4 above), 49–86.

We examined the public's assessments of the relationships between groups in Israeli society in 2008 (Figure 22 below). According to the responses, the deepest cleavage and the worst relationships are those between Arabs and Jews: 85 percent hold that the relationships between Arabs and Jews are not good or not at all good; 72 percent of the Arabs think so and 87 percent of the Jews. This is the most serious rift, attesting to the most severe internal problem in Israeli society. The interesting finding is that the rate of Arabs who hold that relationships between the two groups are not good is lower by 15 percentage points than the rate of Jews who think so.

The second gravest cleavage is the social-economic one, attesting to the relationship between rich and poor. Eighty-one percent said that these relationships are not good or not at all good. This rift has deepened since 2003 (when 75 percent held that the relationship between these groups are not good or not at all good), worsening further during the last year.

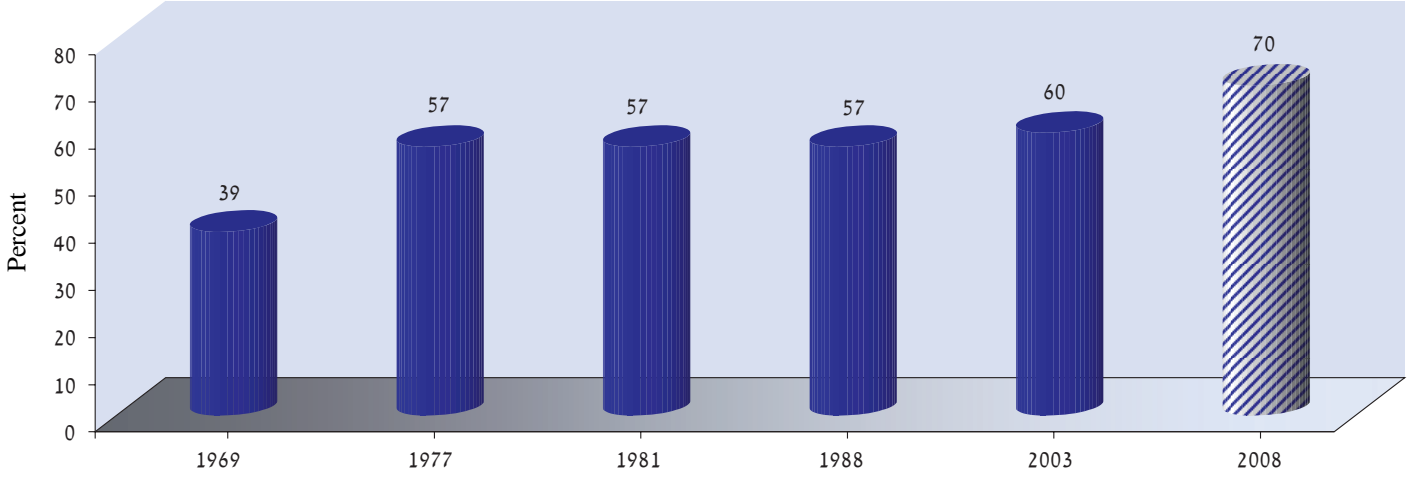
The third serious cleavage is that between religious and secular Jews. Sixty-one percent of Jewish respondents said that the relationships between religious and non-religious Jews are not so good or not at all good. Secular Jews have a more negative perception of these relationships than religious ones: 68 percent of them hold that these relationships are not good or not at all good, while only 45 percent of religious respondents think so.[48] This is an improvement over previous years.

Figure 21

Accountability, 1969–2008

"A politician does not tend to take into account the view of the ordinary citizen"

Agree and definitely agree (Jewish sample only; percentages)



48 Jews who define themselves as traditional or Ultra-Orthodox were not included in the calculations.

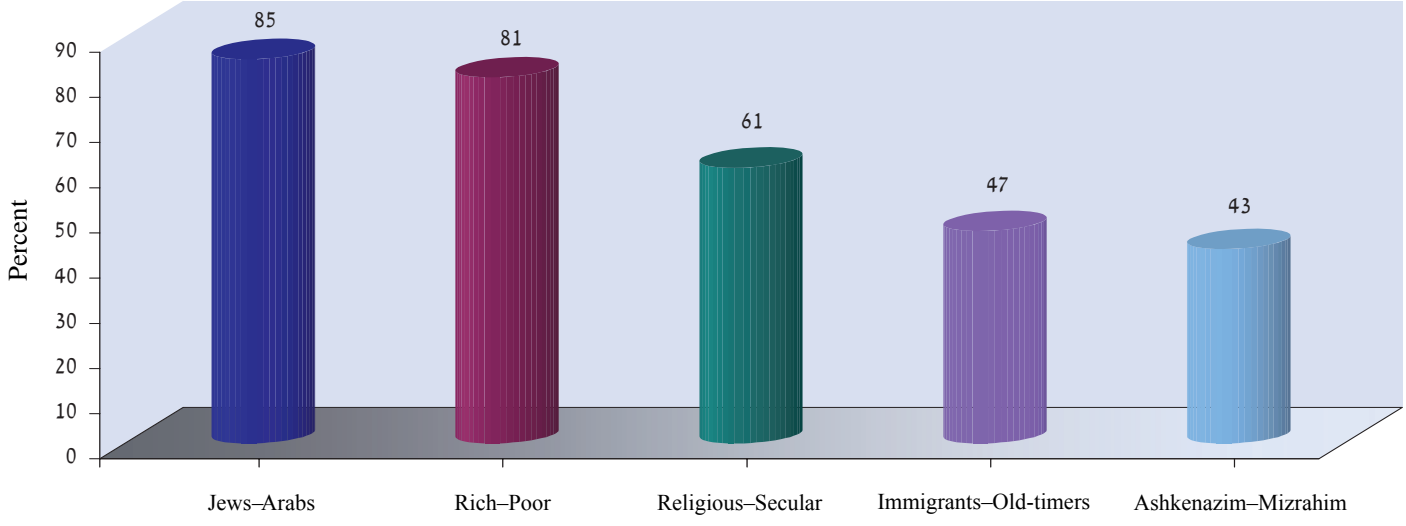
The cleavage ranked fourth in its seriousness in Israeli society is that between immigrants and old-timers. Forty-seven percent hold that the relationships between these two groups are not good or not at all good. In 2007, interestingly, 62 percent thought so, as opposed to 51 percent who thought so in 2003. One would expect this cleavage to diminish as time goes by, but a review of the past few years seems to indicate the opposite. This expectation is met only in 2008, in comparison with 2007.

The last in the ranking of cleavages in Israeli society is that between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim. Forty-three percent of the Israeli public thinks that the relationships between these groups are not good or not at all good. Note that more than one-half of the Jewish public assesses this as a wide rift. In 1989, by contrast, 21 percent of Jews assessed the relationships between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim as not good. In the current survey, as noted, the situation is entirely different and points to a negative trend, contrary to expectations. When breaking down the answers according to respondents' countries of origin, we found the following differences: Among respondents born in North Africa or whose fathers were born there, 44 percent define the relationships between the groups as not good; among respondents born in Eastern Europe (including the CIS) or whose fathers were born in Eastern Europe, 46 percent assess the relationships as not good; among Israeli-born respondents or whose fathers were born in Israel, 41 percent hold that the relationships between the groups are not good, and among those born in North America, Western Europe, or Australia, or whose fathers were born there, 45 percent assess the relationships as not good.

Figure 22

Relationships between Groups in Israel*

Not good or not at all good (percentages)



* For the Arabs-Jews and rich-poor relationships, the sample is of the entire population. For the secular-religious, Ashkenazim-Mizrahim, and new immigrants–old-timers relationships – the sample is of Jews only.

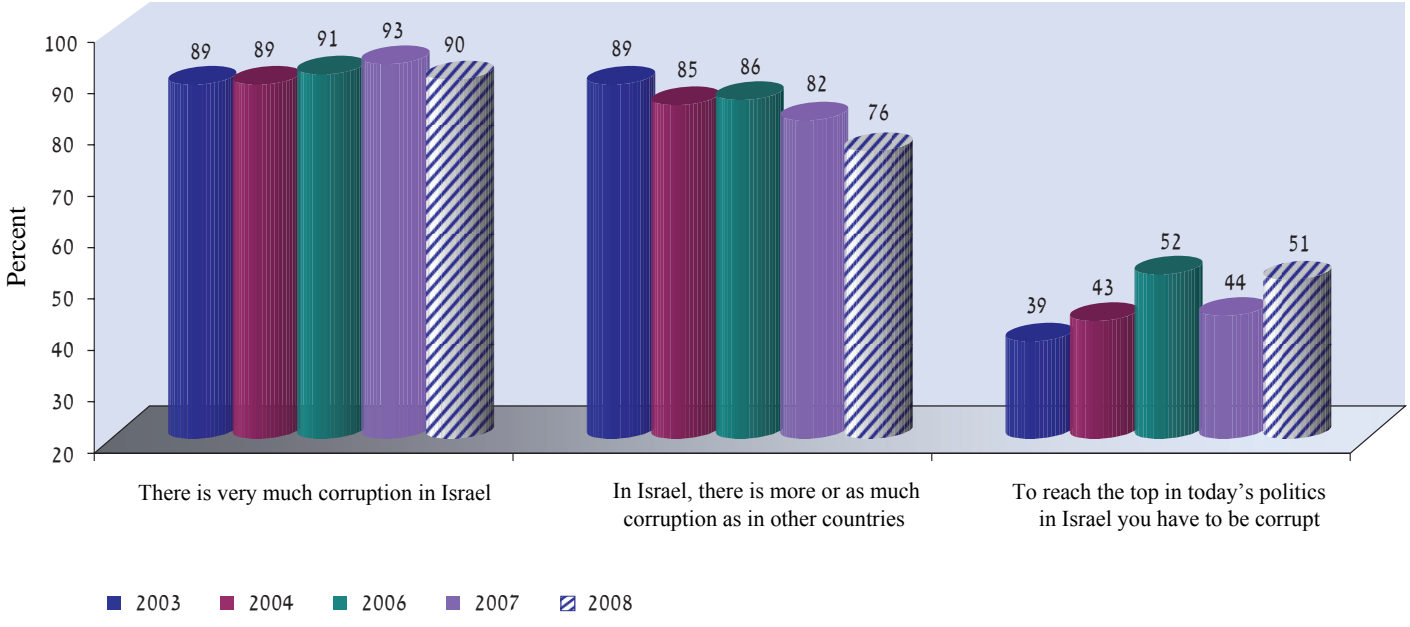
(f) The Perception of Corruption

Over the years, we have posed three questions in the Democracy Survey assessing the level of corruption. One touches on citizens' assessment of the level of corruption in Israel vis-à-vis that in other countries; the second deals with citizens' perceptions of the very existence of corruption in Israel; and the third examines the extent of agreement with the statement "To reach the top in today's politics in Israel you have to be corrupt." These three questions together give a complete picture of citizens' assessment of corruption in Israel (Figure 23).

Responses to the question about corruption in comparison with other countries in the last six years yield a mixed trend. This trend does not point to a positive change in the citizens' evaluation of the extent of corruption in the country. In 2008, 76 percent of the citizens held that corruption in Israel is greater than, or as prevalent as, in other countries. Concerning the prevalence of corruption in Israel, we see no real change in the last six years in the rate of those holding that there is quite a lot of, or large-scale, corruption in Israel. In 2008, 30 percent held that there is quite a lot of corruption in Israel, and 60 percent said there is large-scale corruption. Ninety percent of the citizens, then, hold that corruption prevails in Israel to a large or a very large extent. The distribution of responses to the statement "To reach the top in today's politics in Israel you have to be corrupt" shows agreement among most respondents: 51 percent agree or definitely agree with it, pointing to a rise on previous years, and to a negative trend in this regard.

Figure 23

Perception of Corruption in Israel, 2003–2008 (percentages)



The picture emerging from a combination of all three questions concerning the citizens' evaluation of the level of corruption in Israel is not positive. That citizens hold that corruption in Israel is generally widespread, and particularly that political corruption is widespread among the representatives of the people and the decision-makers, does not contribute to the quality of the democracy. True, these responses do not necessarily convey actual reality, but only citizens' perceptions of it. Nevertheless, when citizens in a democratic country believe that their representatives are dishonest, the result could be a generalized lack of trust in the system and in the laws it legislates, possibly affecting compliance with them.

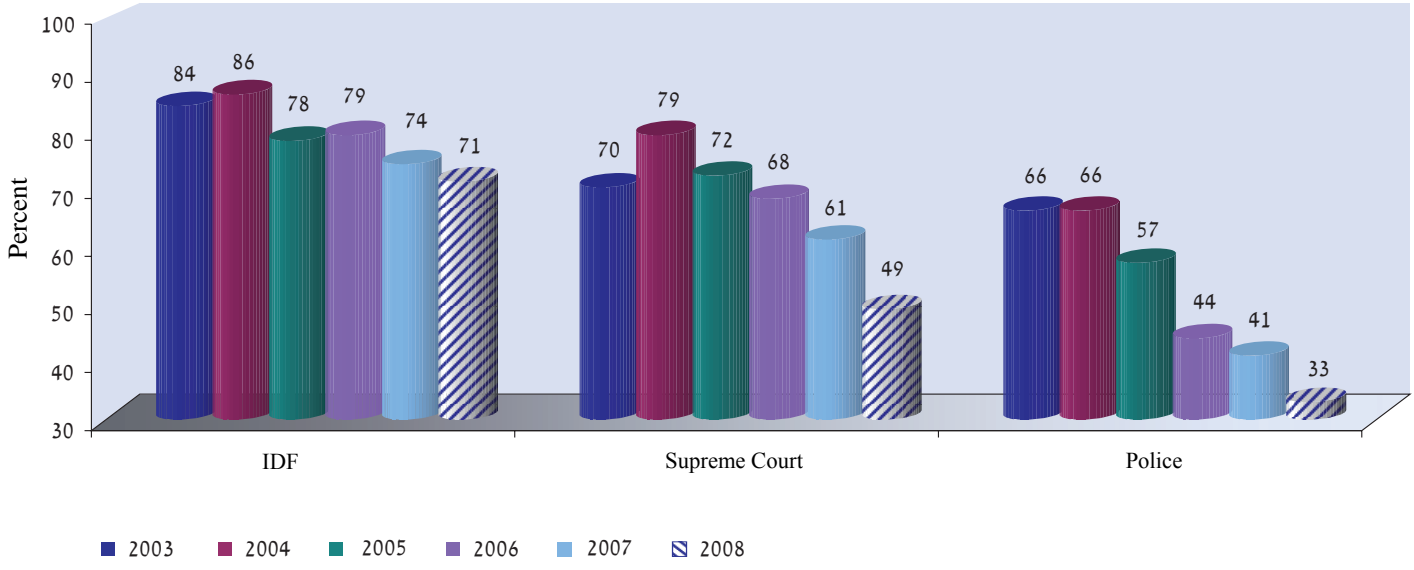
(g) Trust in Institutions

One of the most important measures for assessing stability and cohesion in Israeli democracy touches on the public's trust in key institutions. As is the case every year, respondents were asked to evaluate five institutions and two office holders: the President, the Prime Minister, the IDF, the Supreme Court, the police, the Knesset, and political parties (Figures 24 and 25 below). In 2008, we detect a general trend of decline in trust vis-à-vis previous years. Public trust in the president, however, recorded a real increase, probably given the circumstances in which Moshe Katsav left office. The decline of public trust in the Prime Minister may reflect the significant influence of the

Figure 24

Trust in Key Institutions:
IDF, Supreme Court, and Police, 2003–2008

"To what degree do you have trust in the following people or institutions?"
To a large degree and to some degree (percentages)



Winograd Commission's Report in January 2008, which found the political echelon responsible for some of the mistakes in the Second Lebanon War. Levels of trust in the IDF and in the Supreme Court also declined drastically. We also found a trend of decline in the trust placed in the police. Trust in the political parties and in the Knesset is very low, fitting the trend of declining trust in these institutions over the years. Dissatisfaction with these institutions may reflect a sense that people in key positions are inept. Hard feelings toward the leadership and toward other institutions translate into lack of trust in them, as the following figures show.

Additional questions dealt with the public's trust in the Chief of Staff and the Attorney General. Compared with 2007, trust in the Chief of Staff is higher this year (61% as opposed to 52% in 2007). Note that the previous Chief of Staff, Dan Halutz, resigned when we were conducting last year's Survey, and the current Chief of Staff, Gaby Ashkenazi, was appointed in his place. The situation of the Attorney General is also complex: the Survey shows that 64 percent do not trust him, as opposed to 36 percent who do. This is an extremely important finding because the Attorney General also decides on indictments (which may require the indicted to leave office).

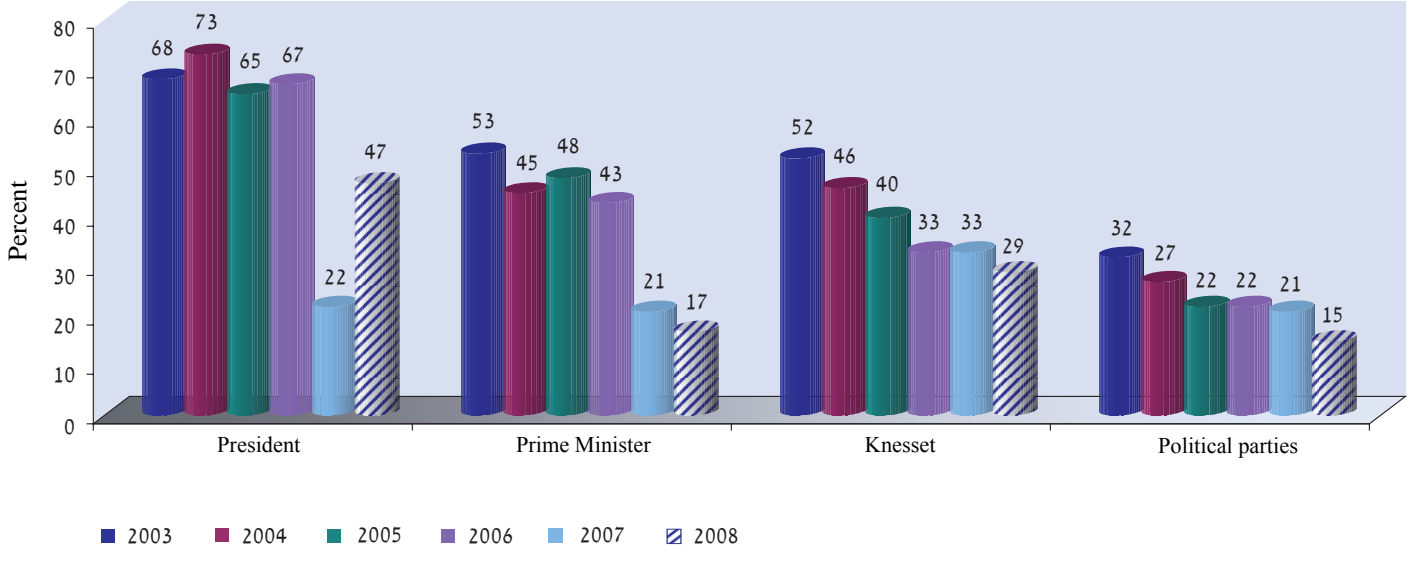
(h) Safeguarding Democracy

In the Democracy Survey 2008, as in those of the last five years, we asked the following question: "In your view, who best safeguards

Figure 25

Trust in Key Institutions:
President, Prime Minister, Knesset, and Political Parties, 2003–2008

"To what degree do you have trust in the following people or institutions?"
To a large degree and to some degree (percentages)



Israeli democracy?" This year, results were reversed: the Supreme Court was replaced by the media as the institution that best safeguards Israeli democracy according to the public. In 2003, 42 percent held that the Supreme Court is the institution that best safeguards Israeli democracy; in 2004, 47 percent thought so, in 2005 – 48 percent; and in 2006 – 47 percent. In 2007, a drop of eight percentage points was recorded in this rate, and only 39 percent ranked the Supreme Court as the institution that best safeguards democracy. In 2008, a further decrease was recorded – down to 35 percent. For the first time since this question was asked (in 2003), the Supreme Court was ranked as the second, rather than the first, institution that best safeguards Israeli democracy (Figure 26 below).

The media, as noted, is the institution that the public – for the first time – ranked as the best safeguard of democracy. Thirty-six percent of the public gave the media the highest score in 2008, continuing the media's rise in public perception in recent years. The greatest leap was between 2006 and 2007, when a significant rise of nine percentage points (from 25% to 34%) was registered in the rate of respondents who ranked the media as the best safeguard of Israeli democracy. Paradoxically, trust in the media is not particularly high, and stands today at 37 percent. On the one hand, the public relies on the media and formulates its views on current affairs on the basis of its messages. On the other hand, trust in the media is not high. Although much criticism is leveled against the media, then, the public still views it as the institution that best safeguards Israeli democracy.

The third and fourth places in the ranking of institutions that best safeguard democracy were also reversed: the Prime Minister, which had consistently ranked third, ranks fourth and last in 2008, although no change was recorded in the public's assessments of him – 13 percent (a rate very similar to that of last year). By contrast, the institution that had received the lowest assessment in the ranking of institutions safeguarding democracy – the Knesset – rose this year to third place: In 2008, 16 percent of the public ranked the Knesset as the institution that best safeguards Israeli democracy, as opposed to stable but low rates of support of 13–14 percent in the last five years (2003–2007). A rise of 3–4 percentage points means a considerable increase of about one-quarter among those ranking the Knesset as the best safeguard of democracy (Figure 26 below).

Despite the changes in the ranking order of the institutions safeguarding democracy in 2008, the interesting finding is not the change in ranking but rather the perception of non-elected institutions as safeguarding democracy, with the public even crowning them as "democracy's guardians." By contrast, only a small proportion of the public views directly, or indirectly, elected institutions as guardians of democracy. Professional bodies are created in order to criticize and scrutinize elected bodies, whose role is to decide and determine policy. The Surveys show that the public believes its elected officials protect democracy less well than civil servants and media professionals. The professionals whose role is to criticize the elected bodies may appear as more credible and honest, and thus viewed as the objective protectors of democracy from the outside. But since the Knesset and the Prime Minister are elected by the public, they are in a way its mirror. The public, then, values its

own choices less than it values professionals and appointed personnel, who are sometimes chosen or appointed by the elected officials.

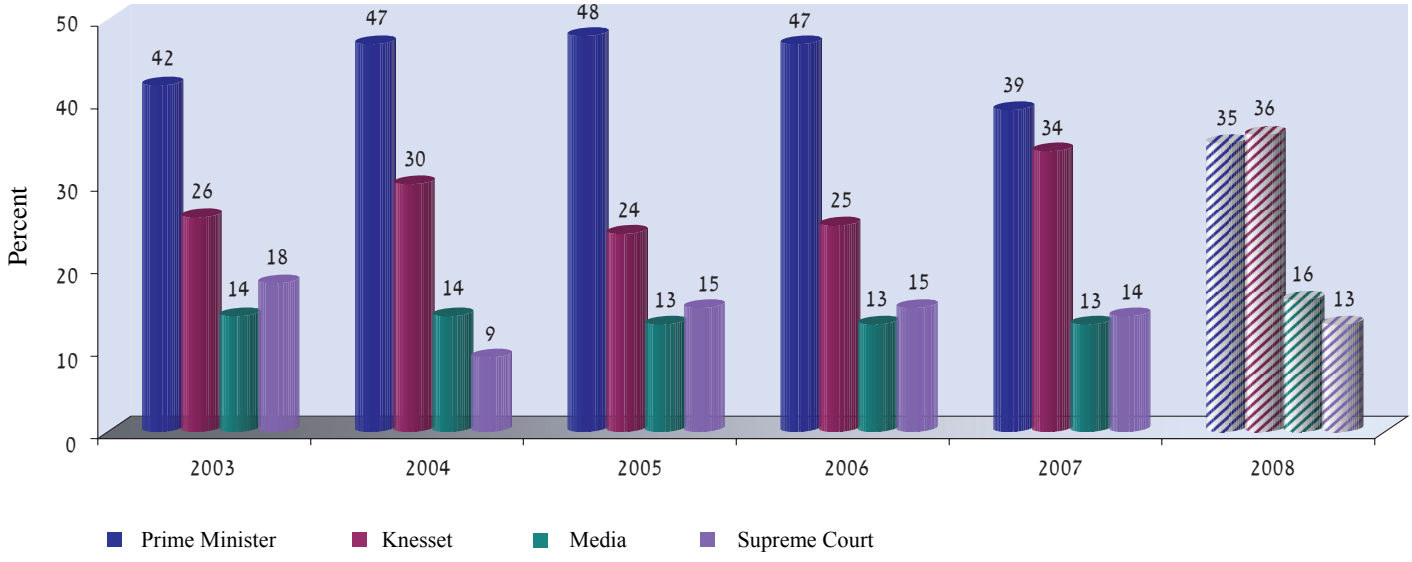
(i) Pride in Being an Israeli, Desire to Remain in Israel for the Long Term, and Trust Levels in Israel's Future Survival

Alongside the data pointing to tensions and social cleavages, other indicators point to a sense of belonging, to pride, to desire to live in the country, and to faith in Israel's future survival. Eighty percent answered that they are very proud (54%) and quite proud (26%) to be Israelis. The remaining 20 percent are not so proud of being Israelis or not proud at all. Among Jews, 85 percent are proud of being Israeli, as opposed to 42 percent among Arabs. Furthermore, 84 percent of secular Jews are proud to be Israeli, 90 percent of the traditional, 89 percent of those who define themselves as religious, and 66 percent of the Ultra-Orthodox. Gaps were also found between classes: 79 percent among those who view themselves as members of the upper class or the upper-middle class are proud to be Israeli, as opposed to 76 percent of those who see themselves as belonging to the middle or lower classes.

Figure 26

Safeguarding Democracy, 2003–2008

"The institution that best safeguards Israeli democracy" (percentages)



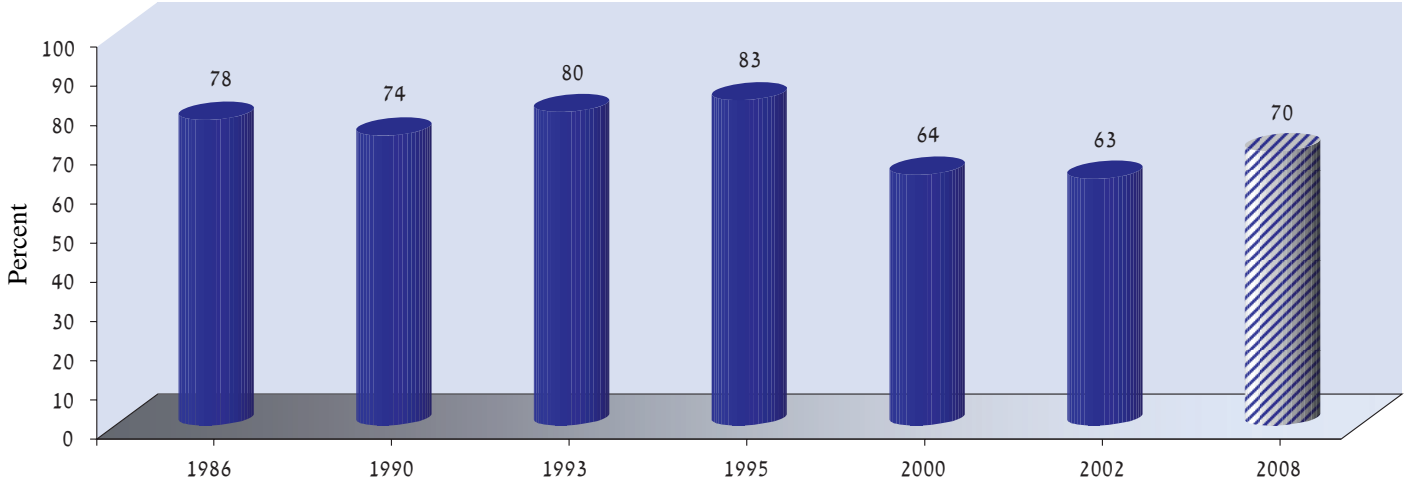
Beyond pride in their citizenship, Israelis also declare their desire to live in Israel and are convinced of their intention to do so in the future. Since 1986, we have asked the following question in the Survey: "Do you want to remain in Israel for the long term?" Figure 27 presents data on those who answered "certain that I do" to this question. Sixty-five percent of all respondents in the 2008 sample said they were certain that they wanted to remain in Israel for the long term; 18 percent said that they wanted to, but were not certain; and five percent were certain they do not want to. This is a drop in the rate of respondents who are convinced they want to live in Israel, by comparison with the last twenty years. And yet, despite the difficult security situation, the complex economic and social circumstances, and the many problems, a majority of the public said they wanted to live in Israel.

We also posed a question about the perception of Israel's resilience and its future survival. A large majority (78%) holds – to some extent, to a large extent, or to a very large extent – that Israel will survive despite the difficulties and crises. This rate is lower by 10 percentage points than the one registered last year.

Figure 27

Desire to Remain in Israel for the Long Term, 1986–2008

"Do you want to remain in Israel for the long term?" (Certain)
(Jewish sample only; percentages)



(j) Contribution to the State as a Community

One of the most important features in a democracy at war for a prolonged period is the readiness of its citizens to enlist in the service of the country and contribute to the society. In the Democracy Survey 2008, therefore, we asked several questions on this subject. Two dealt with the relative importance of personal interests and the interests of the country – one from the perspective of leaders and another from the perspective of citizens. A thought-provoking finding is that, among the Israeli public as a whole, an equal rate of respondents (25%) hold that the interests of the country are far more important than personal interests, both for citizens and for leaders. The less encouraging finding is that more than one-half of the citizens (52%) hold that, for the country's leaders, their own interests are more important than the interests of the public. This answer matches the assessment of a majority of the citizens (71%) that politicians today are inferior to politicians of the past. Furthermore, 69 percent of the public hold that one should (usually or always) be cautious in relationships with others. These data do not suggest a sense of solidarity or a perception of the people's representatives as committed to their cause, and the result reflects on the public as a whole.

The distribution of responses to the question, "In your opinion, what is more important for the citizens of Israel, their personal interests or the interests of the country as a whole?" is intriguing and attests to a clear trend over the years – the rate of Jews emphasizing the importance of the country's interests is in decline (Figure 28 below). In 1981, 64 percent said that the interests of the country are more important than personal interests, whereas in 1996, only 35 percent thought so. A further drop was recorded in 2008 – to 28 percent. A sharp rise, however, was recorded in the rate of those placing personal interests before those of the country: six percent in 1981 and seven percent in 1996, and a dramatic rise in the last decade to 37 percent of the Jewish public who, in 2008, said that personal interests are more important than the interests of the country. The trend in the responses stating that personal interests and the interests of the country are equally important also merits attention: in 1981, 25 percent thought so, in 1996 – 59 percent, and in 2008 – 32 percent. All these data point to a change in the importance that citizens ascribe to themselves as individuals as opposed to the importance they ascribe to the country as a collective. The rise in the importance of personal interests points to a weaker sense of solidarity.

What about the public enlisting in the service of society? Military service and the willingness to sacrifice – including one's life – are the best indicators for examining this question. The distribution of respondents' answers indicates that 14 percent would volunteer for elite combat units, 18 percent would enlist as combatants, 32 percent would enlist and let the IDF determine their placement, 13 percent would enlist only as non-combatants, and 24 percent would make an effort to avoid army service. These data relate to a representative sample of the Israeli population. When excluding the two groups that do not enlist in the army – Arabs and Ultra-Orthodox Jews – results were

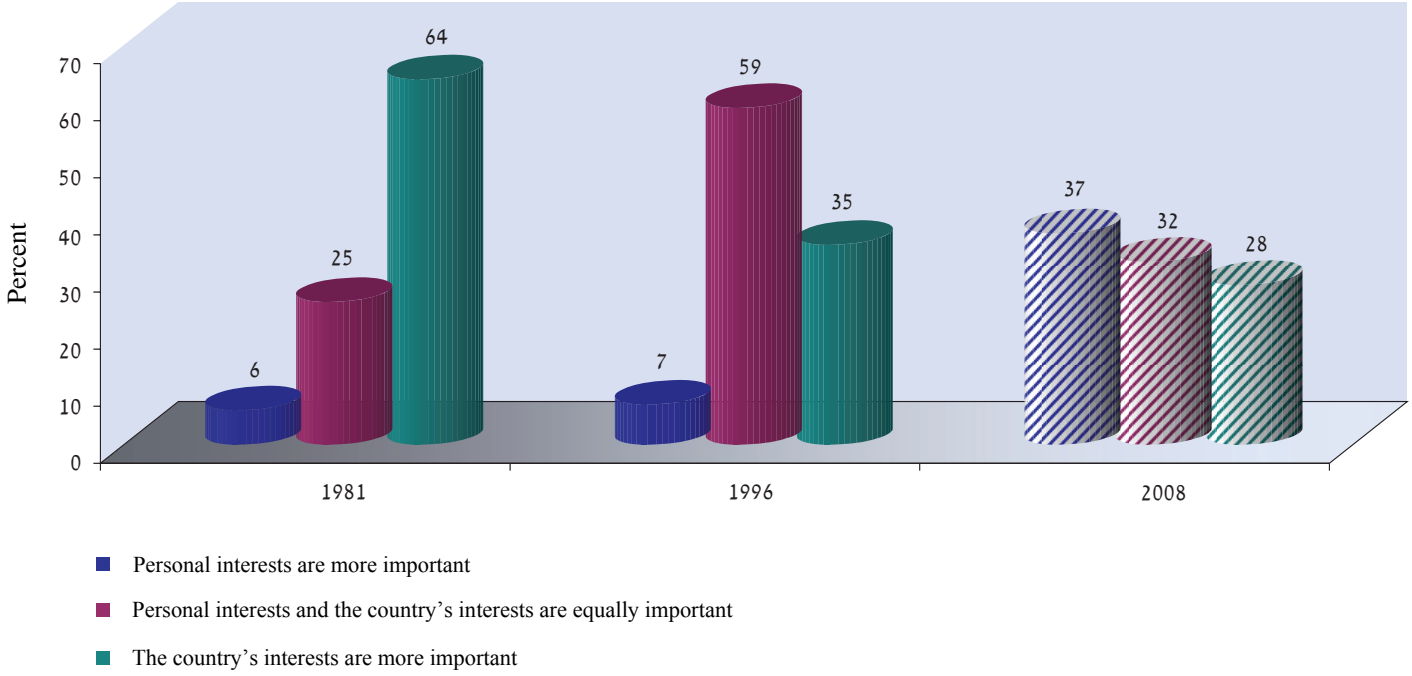
different: 16 percent would volunteer for elite combat units, 21 percent would enlist as combatants, 36 percent would enlist and let the IDF determine their placement, 15 percent would enlist as non-combatants, and 12 percent would make an effort to avoid army service. Among the Ultra-Orthodox, about 25 percent said they would enlist in the IDF in some capability.

In sum, the Survey shows that Israeli citizens value Israeli democracy, are aware of the diverse problems that affect its nature and quality, and wish to contribute to the country and live in it.

Figure 28

What Is More Important to Israeli Citizens, Their Personal Interests or the Interests of the Country?, 1981–2008

(Jewish sample only; percentages)



Part Two

Civil Society as an Interim Measure

A. Introduction

This part of the book will point to two main findings emerging from the data presented below. The first is that Israeli society – despite the social, economic, and political rifts that characterize it today – presents a clear trend of "convergence" cutting across groups and sectors. This convergence is not around the flag, however, but around the consciousness of a governance crisis**,** and around broad agreement concerning serious flaws in the functioning of the political system. It may be this convergence that has resulted in a slightly improved sense of cohesion and in a reduction of tensions between groups in the society mentioned in Part One. The sense of a governance crisis, accompanied by an extremely high level of distrust of key political institutions, culminates in an "anti-politics" consciousness resting on the widespread knowledge that today's established political system and today's politicians are morally and functionally "unworthy." This anti-politics, however, is not a matter of principle. Despite the frustration, the anger, and the contempt for elected officials, together with the disgust with politics as an array of structures and processes, most of the Israeli public today still expects the state and no other agency, not even civil society, to dictate policy in political, social, and economic issues and to provide the full range of services required by citizens.

The second finding is that the public perception of civil society is today far more positive than that of the established political system. The public values its contribution in providing a range of varied services, has no reservations whatsoever about accepting services from social organizations, and even contributes to them (although voluntarism levels are low). The data, however, hint that the Israeli public has not (yet?) internalized the unique value of civil society. At this point, the majority considers it an important and necessary element but only as an "interim measure," due to the failures of the political system and the withdrawal of the state and its deficient performance, particularly in the social and economic areas and in the protection of public order. The Israeli public does not perceive civil society today as a cornerstone of democracy, whose set mission is to serve as a third, balancing entity beside the state, on the one hand, and the economic market, on the other. Indeed, the Israeli public holds that, in an "ideal world," the state rather than civil society is the default option in charge of "running things" and ensuring its citizens the full spectrum of social and other services.

These insights, based on the data we present at length below, require political leaders and the civil society activists to rethink their roles, their functions, their own relationships, and their relations with the public. Supporters of privatization must also be aware that the majority in Israel is not interested in a pure free market economy or in a society run mainly through communitarian frameworks. Most of the public is willing to accept a lower level of services than those available today – at times for pay (from business enterprises) and usually on a voluntary basis (from NGOs) – should the state only return to sponsor them.

We have therefore placed civil society in Israel at the center of the Democracy Index

2008. Attitudes toward it are examined in the context (and against the background) of the public's attitudes toward politics, in general, and toward the established political system, in particular. We have also taken into account respondents' political views and attitudes and their social-demographic characteristics, including their (self-defined) location at the center of Israeli society, close to the center, or at some specific distance from it.[49]

49 On this question, see Appendix 4 below, explaining self-location on the center–periphery continuum.

B. Who Is in the Public Sphere?

The following analysis rests on the assumption that, in a democracy, the public sphere involves a kind of division of labor between three main players: the state (the established political system) in all its diverse agencies (government ministries, local government, government health institutions, the state education system); the economic market, including its various components (commercial firms, banks, industrial enterprises); and civil society,[50] with its many organizations.

Any discussion of the "state – economic market – civil society" triangle must take into account the essential differences between the first two players and the third. First, the state and the economic market have "borders." We know for sure which entities are state bodies and which are not, what is a business firm and what organization does not belong in this category, even if active in the market. Second, the rules of action incumbent on state bodies and economic bodies are usually distinct, and some are even explicitly anchored in law, such as, for instance, the parameters of the electoral system, or, in the economic sphere, the anti-trust law. Third, at least today and probably also in the foreseeable future, these two players have more capital and more human resources than civil society and they maintain close mutual ties (ties that are often considered too close and are labeled the wealth-power connection). By contrast, civil society is essentially different: its borders are undefined, so that it is not always clear who is included and who is not. The definition of civil society organizations is blurred, and many use the terms "third sector" and "civil society" interchangeably, while others oppose this alternative use. Rules of action in this space are also very fluid. We therefore claim – and this is apparently a view the Israeli public shares – that civil society is not a third side in an allegedly equal-sided triangle, which is the graphic and conceptual figure often used to describe the relationships between the state, the economic market, and civil society.

Furthermore, the sharp distinction that prevails between these three players is largely artificial. Despite the structural and functional differences and the conflicts of interests between them, their borders are rather porous. Civil society organizations are thus largely financed by government bodies, although most would not admit this in public, mainly in order to enhance their image as "autonomous" and "clean."[51] For

50 An extensive literature deals with the concept and the essence of the civil society. See, for instance, Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992); Adam B. Seligman, *The Idea of Civil Society* (New York: Free Press, 1992); Ernst Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals* (London: H. Hamilton, 1994); Thomas Janosky, *Citizenship and Civil Society: A Framework of Rights and Obligations in Liberal, Traditional, and Social Democratic Regimes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For a broad discussion of various approaches to the concept of the civil society, see, for instance, David Ohana, "'Civil Society' and Its Critics" [Hebrew], *Democratic Culture* 7 (2003): 9–48.

51 According to the presentation that accompanied the government's proposal for regulating its relationship with the social organizations, the government of Israel transferred 2.2 billion NIS to them just in 2005. See www.pmo.gov.il/PMO/Communication/Spokesman/2008/02/spokemigzar240208.htm. An even more

instance, Rape Crisis Centers in Israel, civil society organizations par excellence, rely on state support, even if inadequate. Centers for migrant workers in various places in the country also operate largely thanks to the support of a local municipality, which is a state entity. In some countries (for instance The Netherlands), the state transfers even pension funds through civil society organizations. Many business firms also support civil society organizations, either through money or goods transfers, staff volunteering, and other benefits. These ties are unknown to many, who hold these are three entirely separate public players. Others find these close ties intolerable, a result of the state's divesting itself of responsibility for its citizens or, alternatively, a way for capitalists to clean their conscience. Supporters of these ties hold that the transfer of money and responsibility for action to NGOs, which are closer to the citizens and more sensitive to their needs, is the correct way. Whatever the case, despite the desire of civil organizations to distinguish themselves from the state and the market, reality shows that the three are indeed very dissimilar, but not clearly differentiated from one another.[52]

Between the state, the market, and civil society, which cover virtually the whole of the public sphere in Western democracies, dynamic reciprocal relationships prevail and close involvement is the rule. Weakening or reducing areas of action and responsibility in one or two of them will thus usually imply strengthening or expanding areas of responsibility in one or two of the others, and vice-versa – strengthening one or two of them will often weaken one or two of the others. Furthermore, each of the three is constantly aware of the others' existence and takes this into account when formulating its strategies. This awareness also leads to a need to organize the public sphere so as to clarify the authority structure, the affinities, and the division of labor between the three parties. Many countries, joined recently by Israel,[53] also have ordinances that anchor

dramatic picture, on the involvement of the American government in the humanitarian intervention of NGOs in international conflicts, appears in the summary discussion of the conference organized by the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) on the subject. See G. M. Tamás, Samuel P. Huntington, Robert Kaplan, and Jessica Tuchman Mathews, *Peaceworks: Sources of Conflict: Highlights from the Managing Chaos Conference* (Washington, DC: USIP Press, 1995).

52 For a discussion of these distinctions in the Israeli context, see Uri Ben-Eliezer, "Is Civil Society Emerging in Israel? Politics and Identity in the New Associations" [Hebrew], *Israeli Sociology* 2 (1) (1999): 51–97. Yael Yishai estimates that the legacy of the state as a key player is still dominant in Israel's public consciousness, and has prevented the development of an authentic civil society. See Yael Yishai, *Civil Society in Israel: Between Mobilization and Conciliation* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2003), 83.

53 On 24 February 2008, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Justice submitted for government approval an unprecedented model designed to regulate relationships between the government, the civil society organizations, and the contributing business sector. This move was an attempt to formulate a uniform policy on three central topics: strengthening cooperation between the three sectors – the civil society, the government, and the contributing bodies; integrating the civil society organizations into the provision of social services, and regulating the taxation of the contributing business community, while increasing accountability, control, and transparence in civil society organizations. See, for instance, www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3510216,00.htm
www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/pages/ShArtPE.jhtml?itemNo=957352&contrassID=2&subContrassID=1&sbSubContrassID=0

these relationships and define legally and administratively what is in the hands of the state, what in the hands of the business market, and what in the hands of civil society organizations.

Despite attempts at regulation, the more prominent development today appears to be the withdrawal of the state and the restriction of its roles, often relying on an ideology of privatization, together with the state's declining status as a leading player on the global stage. At the same time, a sharp rise in the status of economic bodies and multinationals is also evident, together with a parallel rise in the standing of social movements and local, national, and international civil organizations. These social and economic organizations fill, with varying degrees of success, the functional voids that the state has left behind. As we will see below, however, they do not fill the voids left after the state's withdrawal as far as the search for collective identity and social solidarity is concerned. The result is frustration and anger, which play a significant role in the development of "anti-politics."

For the text of the government decision and the detailed documents submitted with it see www.pmo.gov.il/PMO/Communication/Spokesman/2008/02/spokemigzar240208.htm

C. The Public and the Established Political System: The Growth of "Anti-Politics"

Studies conducted in many democratic countries reveal a seemingly strange situation: On the one hand, the public senses that the decision-makers who "populate" the social-political center[54] do not – and should not – have a monopoly on wisdom, on knowledge,[55] and particularly on morality. Many, therefore, hold that citizens should be far more involved in decision-making at the local and even national levels.[56] On the other hand, however, citizens in many countries strongly sense that decision-makers do not heed public preferences sufficiently and often actually ignore them. At best, they choose to operate according to their own discretion and regardless of voters' preferences and, at worst, to implement the wishes and the interests of the bodies that control them.[57]

The view emphasizing that decision-makers do not have a monopoly on wisdom and affirming the need for greater citizen involvement in decisions is distinctly prominent in the "participatory democracy" school. This approach draws on many sources: on the general public's easy (and unprecedented) access to information through many and diversified media channels, which gives "ordinary citizens" a sense of control

54 Modern sociology points out that every social-political system has an institutional and value "center." The center, usually numbering a small number of people, is an aggregation of institutions and formal and informal positions that constitute the focus of authority in a given social-political context. The center formulates and embodies the beliefs, the symbols, and the values hallowed by society, which guide the setting of the specific social-political agenda. The center is where decisions are made and priorities determined. The center is also charged with the mobilization of resources, and determines the identities and sub-identities familiar in this context. The center, then, leads the primary social-political process in society. All those around the center and influenced by its authority, be they individuals or organizations, are defined as "periphery" in various degrees – close (to the center) or far (from the center). The periphery, which includes most of the population, creates mainly the material products and does not determine values, but in some cases "secondary centers" also develop (established with the center's assistance or at least without its opposition), as well as "competing centers" that seek to change the existing one.
Note that the relationship between center and periphery is one of mutual dependence: the center provides authority and values that the periphery "consumes," but depends on the periphery's responsiveness and on the periphery's legitimization of its authority. Edward Shils made the prominent theoretical breakthrough in the definition of the center-periphery continuum in the sociological context with his "Center and Periphery," in *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology*, ed. Edward Shils (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975). For the application of this conceptual distinction in the Israeli context see, for instance, Baruch Kimmerling, 1989. "Boundaries and Frontiers of the Israeli Control System: Analytical Conclusions," in *The Israeli State and Society,* ed. idem (NYC: SUNY Press, 1989), 237-264.

55 This is a clear result of what James Rosenau calls relocation of authority, which he views as an integral part of the global "skill revolution" that erodes the authority of traditional authority centers – parents, teachers, professionals, and the political behavior. See James N. Rosenau, "The Relocation of Authority in a Shrinking World," *Comparative Politics* 24(3) (1992): 253-272.

56 See, for instance, Ortwin Renn, Thomas Webler, and Peter Wiedemann, *Fairness and Competence in Citizen Participation: Evaluating Models for Environmental Discourse* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995).

57 See, for instance, the public opinion survey conducted recently in the United States on these very questions: www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/home_page/461.php?lb=hmpg1&pnt=461&nid=&id

over the relevant knowledge; on the media exposure of decision-makers in their moments of weakness and hesitation; and on the relative ease with which extra-parliamentary civil bodies can form due to the increasing openness of democratic states to civil politics on the one hand, and the availability of cheap and user-friendly means of transportation and communication, on the other. The tension between civil empowerment and the swift political, social, and economic changes entailed by globalization[58] intensifies, and the sense that decision-makers do not take citizens' will into account or, alternatively, adopt populist policies to curry their favor – even at the risk of harm to long-term national interests – all create a new political situation. Underlying this novel, complex, and sensitive plight is the legitimacy crisis of the representative democracy model, a crisis that may eventually impair democratic stability.

One characteristic of the legitimacy and governance crisis is, as noted, the growth of "anti-politics,"[59] signs of which are clearly evident in the current Democracy Index. Anti-politics is widespread in many countries, essentially manifest in increasing disgust with the established political system and with political concerns, and in the de-legitimization of both. As Colin Hay described it: "Once something of a *bon mot*, conjuring a series of broadly positive connotations – typically associating politics with public scrutiny and accountability – 'politics' has increasingly become a dirty word. Indeed, to attribute 'political' motives to an actor's conduct is now invariably to question that actor's honesty, integrity or capacity to deliver an outcome that reflects anything other than his or her material self-interest – often, all three simultaneously."[60] Carl Boggs describes the phenomenon in similar terms: "Politics has become the most denigrated and devalued of all enterprises, robbed of the visionary, ennobling, and transformative qualities that not so long ago were associated with the great popular movements of the 1960s and the 1970s."[61] In fact, "the words 'politics' and 'politicians' have become pejorative terms."[62]

Anti-politics assumes many and diverse practical forms: continued decline in rates of voter turnout at elections; unwillingness of individuals gifted with high leadership qualities to compete for political positions

58 For a fascinating analysis of the factors leading to the prosperity of the civil society against the expanding globalization, see Ulrich Beck, *The Brave New World of Work*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000). See also Michael Shalev, "Have Globalization and Liberalization 'Normalized' Israel's Political Economy?" *Israel Affairs* 5 (1999): 121–155; Zeev Rozenhek, "Inclusionary and Exclusionary Dynamics in the Israeli Welfare State: State Building and Political Economy" [Hebrew], in *Generations, Spaces, Identities: Perspectives on the Construction of Society and Culture in Israel*, ed. Hannah Herzog, Tal Kochavi, and Shimshon Selniker (Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, 2007), 317–349.

59 On the links between the spectrum of factors cited and the growth of anti-politics see the seminal study of Carl Boggs, *The End of Politics: Corporate Power and the Decline of the Public Sphere* (New York: Guilford Press, 2000).

60 Colin Hay, *Why We Hate Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 1.

61 See Boggs, *The End of Politics* (note 59 above), 12.

62 Justin Lewis, Sanna Inthorn, and Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, *Citizens or Consumers?: What the Media Tell Us about Political Participation* (Maidenhead, England: The Open University Press, 2005), 5.

due to the low status of political pursuits; open displays of contempt in the public and in the media for people in such positions; high rates of distrust of decision-makers; unwillingness to participate in the political process by joining a party or participating in demonstrations or home meetings with politicians, and even establishing civil society organizations that openly challenge politicians and the political structure.

The difference between "anti-politics" and "de-politization" merits emphasis.[63] De-politization means disregard for events in the political sphere or a withdrawal from politics. It is manifest in behaviors such as exit,[64] which is a kind of "mental emigration." Unlike ordinary emigration, those who choose an "exit" strategy remain in their habitual residence and in their countries, but they willingly leave the public realm, in general, and the political one, in particular. They deal with their private affairs, do not read the political sections in newspapers, do not watch news on television, do not bother to read the news on the Internet, do not vote in elections, and so forth.[65] Note that, in the mid-twentieth century, low interest in politics was praised and even presented as a mechanism that increases the political stability of democracies given the bitter experience of the 1930s and 1940s – a time when totalitarian movements mobilized the entire public into political, mostly anti-democratic, action.[66] De-politization could indeed deepen when the political system seems to be working properly and taking care of the issues on the agenda. However, it could also denote despair of any chance to influence in light of repeatedly failed attempts to restore and change the system.

"Anti-politics," by contrast, is worlds apart from political indifference. Indeed, it is charged with interest, attitudes, and feelings – even if negative – toward anything "political." Mostly, it reflects acknowledgement of the great importance of the "political," as well as anger and frustration. Anti-politics is not characterized by "exit" but often assumes the form of increased involvement in public affairs, for instance, through the creation of social-political and communitarian networks or through action in civil society organizations. Multiple demonstrations and other protest actions are also typical of anti-

63 As opposed to de-politization at the decision-making level, which is an attempt (often supported by international economic institutions) to detach national decision making – above all on monetary and fiscal matters – from "political" considerations, that is, from electoral considerations. Critics of de-politization at the decision-makers level claim that it isolates them from the democratic political process, renders them immune to reporting and accountability, and places them above the criticism required to protect popular sovereignty. See, for instance, Hay, *Why We Hate Politics* (note 60 above), 91.

64 A. O. Hirschman, "Exit, Voice, and the State," *World Politics* 31 (1978): 90–107.

65 Voting data from various countries show that, generally, rates of voters' turnout in the younger generation are significantly lower than voter turnout rates in older age groups, raising the suspicion that an entire generation has turned its back on establishment politics. The following finding hints at the severity of the problem: in the 2001 elections in Britain, only 39% of the youngest voters participated, whereas the rate of voters in the reality show Pop Idol that same year was higher than the entire rate of voters for the Liberal Party (the third largest party in that election). See Lewis, Inthorn, and Wahl-Jorgensen, *Citizens or Consumers?* (note 62 above), 2.

66 See, for instance, Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (New York: Collier Books, 1962).

politics rather than of de-politization where, as noted, political interest and political action are negligible. Above all, however, anti-politics is a state of consciousness leading to harsh criticism of every move initiated by the political echelon, on the assumption that decision-makers are unworthy, the process is flawed, and political decisions are driven by considerations extraneous to the public interest: "There is evidence that the increasing number abstaining from the electoral process do so less out of disengagement with politics than with contempt for politicians."[67]

Israel today displays clear signs of anti-politics, as shown below. Much has already been written about the continued decline in the rate of voter turnout in elections.[68] The prevalent sense in the public is that the political system is impervious to the citizen's voice and needs. For various (unjustified) reasons, the state has chosen to withdraw from the public sphere and has ceased to comply with its duties to its citizens; politicians lack appropriate qualifications, and politics today is a pursuit suitable only to those willing to bend their moral principles beyond reasonable and worthy limits.

1. Results

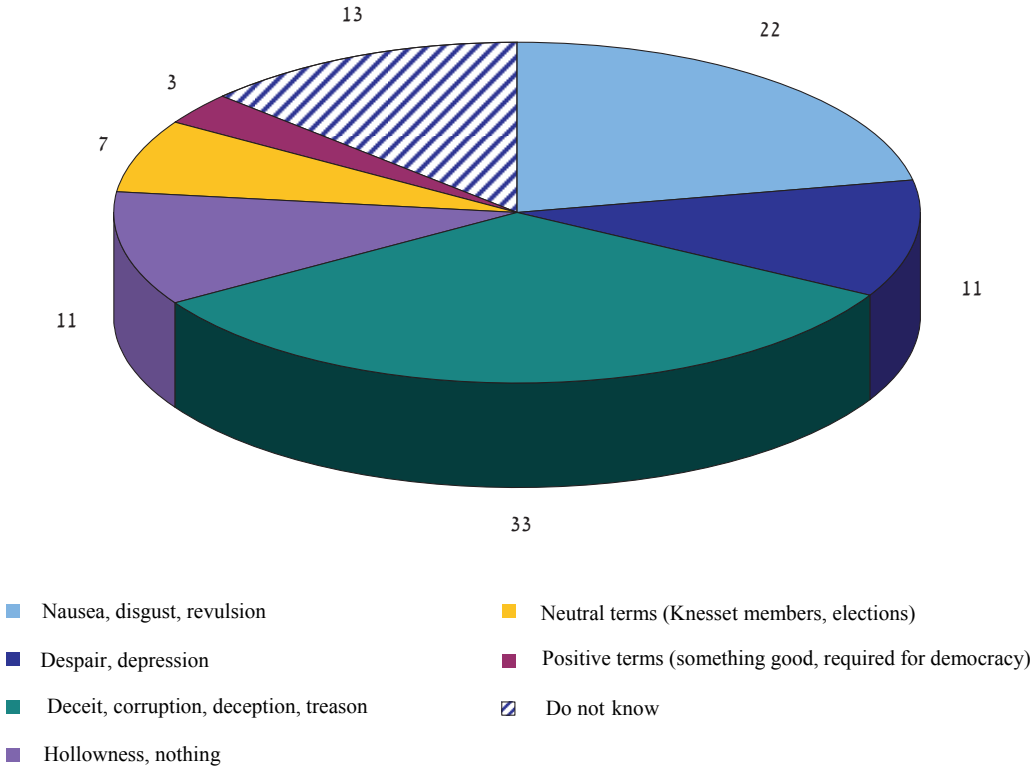
The claim that the word "politics" bears negative connotations in the Israeli public today is almost beyond question. Not only the media, but also daily public discourse, reflect widespread disgust with politics and with those involved in it. The reality in this regard is extremely worrisome since, as the data below show, representative democracy cannot preserve long-term stability and may even be unable to exist with such low legitimization and such deep contempt for elected officials. In response to the (open) question: "When you hear the word politics, what do you feel? What do you think about?" about one-third of respondents noted unpleasant physical reactions of nausea, disgust, and revulsion, or said that the word evokes in them despair and depression (33%). For another third, the word "politics" was associated with patently negative concepts, such as deceit, corruption, cynicism, power struggles, fraudulence, disorder, and anachronism. For 11 percent of respondents, politics evoked an immediate association with "nothing" or "hollowness." Only seven percent mentioned a neutral association, and they attached to the word "politics" such terms as news, Knesset members, or an "inevitable part of democracy." Only three percent thought of positive words when they heard the word "politics," such as "a good form of organization" (the other 13% had no clear association with the word). About two-thirds, then, react extremely negatively to the word "politics" (note that respondents themselves chose the vocabulary). If we add to this the different variations of "hollowness," we come to three-quarters of the public, when only three percent react positively to the word "politics."

67 See Lewis, Inthorn, and Wahl-Jorgensen, *Citizens or Consumers?* (note 62 above), 3.

68 If we consider the last three elections in Israel, we will find that voter turnout rate in 1999 was 78.7%, in 2003 – 68.9%, and in 2006 reached a record low – 63.5%.

Figure 29

Free Associations with the Word "Politics" (percentages)



The negative perception of politics in Israel appears to rest on four main sources, some of which were discussed in the first part of the book: (1) a general sense that decision-makers are inattentive; (2) the assessment that people at the top are dishonest; (3) the assessment that the decision-making system performs inadequately; (4) disorientation and a low sense of the ability to influence the political system.

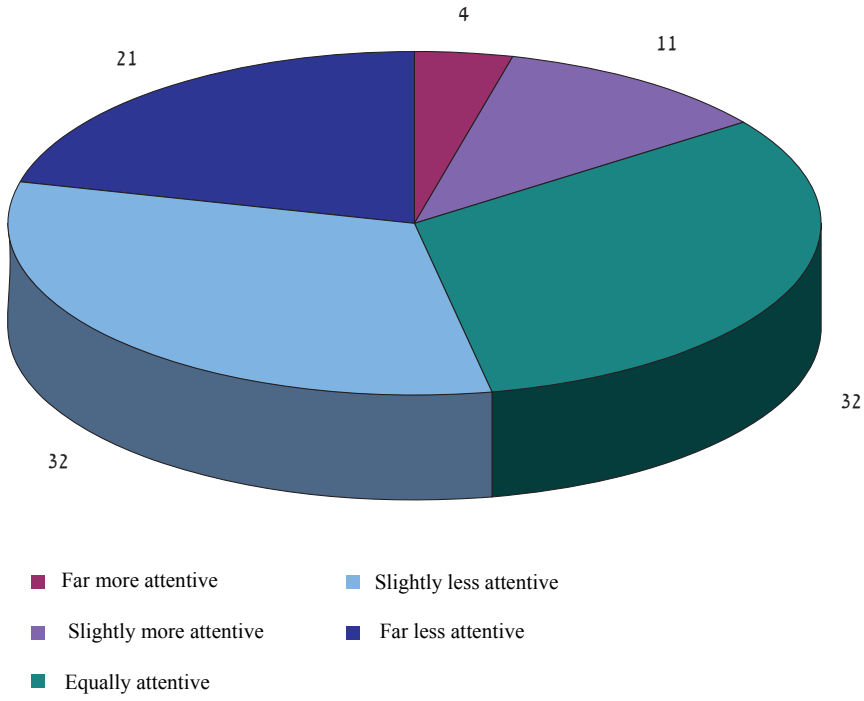
(a) Inattentiveness

The Israeli public, as noted, evaluates the politicians' attention to their voters as low. More than two-thirds (68%) of all respondents agreed with the statement that Israeli politicians do not tend to take into account the view of the ordinary citizen, and only about a third (32%) opposed this statement in various degrees, that is, they hold that politicians do listen to their voters. Furthermore, most respondents (53%) said that, in their view, Knesset members in Israel are less attentive to their voters than elected members of parliament in other countries.

Figure 30

Attentiveness to Voters: Knesset Members Compared with Representatives in Other Countries

In your opinion, are current Knesset members more or less attentive to their voters than elected members of parliament in other countries?



When we analyzed the question of politicians' inattentiveness according to the respondents' Knesset vote in 2006, we found surprising uniformity: voters for all parties – big and small, right and left, coalition and opposition – split into approximately two-thirds who hold that representatives are not attentive to their voters, as opposed to only one-third who think that they pay attention to them. We also examined the assessment of politicians' attentiveness according to the respondents' self-location at the center or the periphery of Israeli society.[69] The proportions of the supporters and opposers of the statement that politicians do not take the citizens' view into account are similar in the center and in the periphery.

Note that this inattention grievance does not necessarily imply a criticism of the electoral system. (A rather common view in Israel holds that, as long as the current electoral system lacks a personal or regional

69 The distribution of the self-location on the center–periphery continuum and the analysis of the self-location according to social-demographic parameters appear in Appendix 4 below.

dimension, representatives will not be more attentive to their voters).[70] As noted in Part One above, the rate of respondents who assess that the balance of power in the Knesset expresses to a large extent (16%) or to some extent (41%) the distribution of views in the public is definitely higher than the rate of respondents who hold that the composition of the Knesset expresses this distribution only to some extent (30%) or not at all (13%). The main responsibility for inattentiveness, then, is ascribed to the Knesset members rather than to the electoral system. This claim against elected representatives is further validated by the distribution of responses to the question about the extent to which Knesset members represent their voters' interests successfully: Only one-third of respondents hold that representatives succeed in properly representing their voters, as opposed to two-thirds who hold that Knesset members are not so successful or not at all successful in this. Here too, we found impressive uniformity among voters for different parties. Nevertheless, we also found several exceptions: among Meretz and NRP voters, we found a higher than average (about 40%) rate of voters who sense that Knesset members fulfill the representation function properly. Among Shas voters, however, only 15 percent think that their Knesset members represent voters' interests adequately. We also found that a majority of voters, both in the center and the periphery, think that representation is flawed. Yet, findings clearly show that fewer people in the periphery than in the center assess that elected officials represent voters' interests adequately. If we relate only to the extremes, we find that over one-third of those who place themselves at the center (36%) hold that representation is adequate, whereas in the periphery, less than one-fifth (19%) share this view.

(b) Dishonesty

Anti-politics, as noted, is fueled not only by a sense of inattentiveness and inadequate representation by elected officials, but also by an assessment of the politicians as corrupt. Anyone familiar with Israel's public discourse today will not be surprised to witness a rare public consensus on the scope of corruption – 60 percent estimate there is large-scale corruption in Israel, and another 30 percent that there is quite a lot of corruption (together – 90%). By contrast, only nine percent assess there is little corruption and one percent alone hold there is no corruption at all. A comparison between the perceived level of corruption in Israel and in other countries also shows that, at least for the public in general, Israel is not "a light unto the nations." Only 24 percent of respondents hold there is less corruption in Israel than in other countries, as opposed

70 At the beginning of March 2008, Knesset members Ophir Pines-Paz and Eitan Cabel (Labor), Menahem Ben-Sasson (Kadima), and Gideon Sa`ar (Likud), presented another bill proposing changes in the electoral system so as to include a regional element. In their explanation to the bill, the four Knesset members write: "The State of Israel is experiencing an unprecedented crisis in the voting public's trust in its elected officials." In their view, the system they proposed would lead to "greater exposure of Knesset members to the judgment and criticism of the public, prior to and in the course of their term of office." See www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3517075,00.html

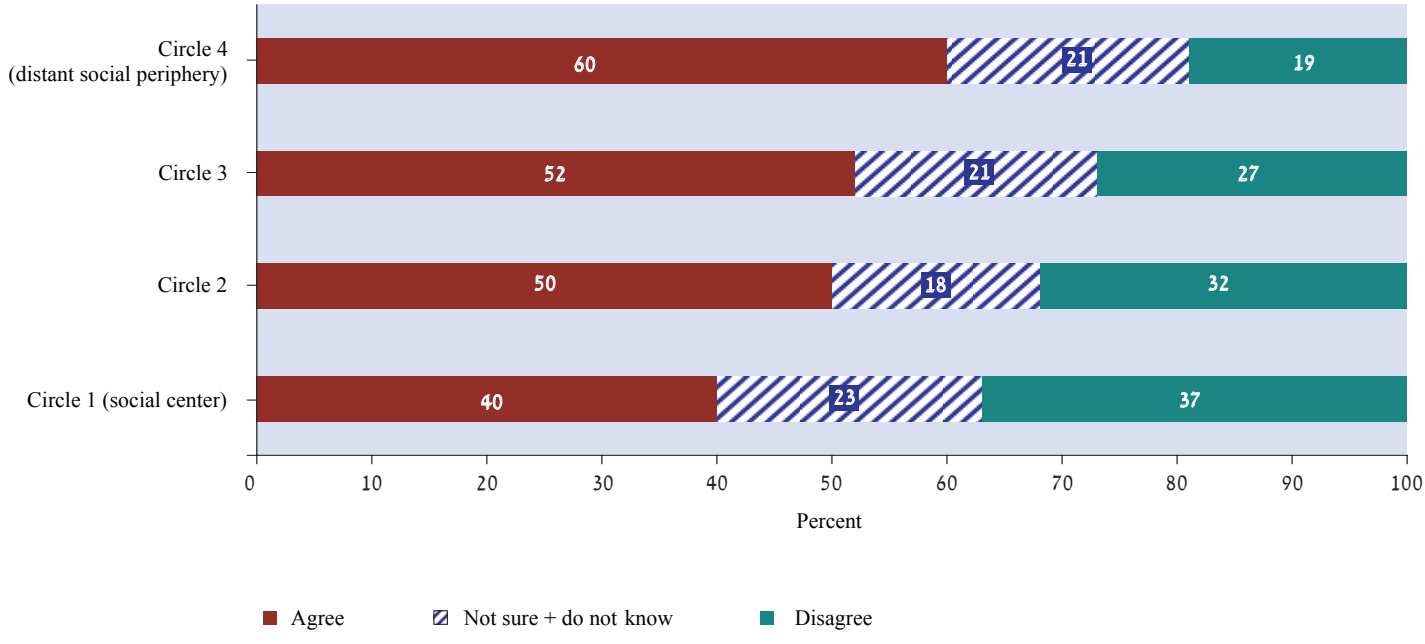
to 42 percent who estimate that corruption in Israel is greater than in other countries. About one-third (34%) hold that corruption levels in Israel resemble those in other countries.[71]

A stunning finding in this context is the distribution of answers to the question "To what extent do you agree with the statement that to reach the top in today's politics in Israel you have to be corrupt?" More than one-half of the public (51%) hold that the statement is indeed true; 18 percent are not sure, and only less than one-third (31%) do not agree with this grave allegation. On this question, prominent (and statistically significant) differences prevail between center and periphery, as Figure 31 shows.

A majority of 60 percent (37% who disagree and 23% who are not sure) of the respondents who located themselves in the center, in circle 1 are not certain that corruption is an inherent feature of every Israeli politician. The conviction that corruption is a "necessary condition" for political success, however, increases gradually with proximity to the periphery, and among respondents who located themselves in the distant periphery, (circle 4), 60 percent think so.

Figure 31

"To Reach the Top in Israeli Politics Today One Must Be Corrupt:" Distribution of Attitudes (percentages)

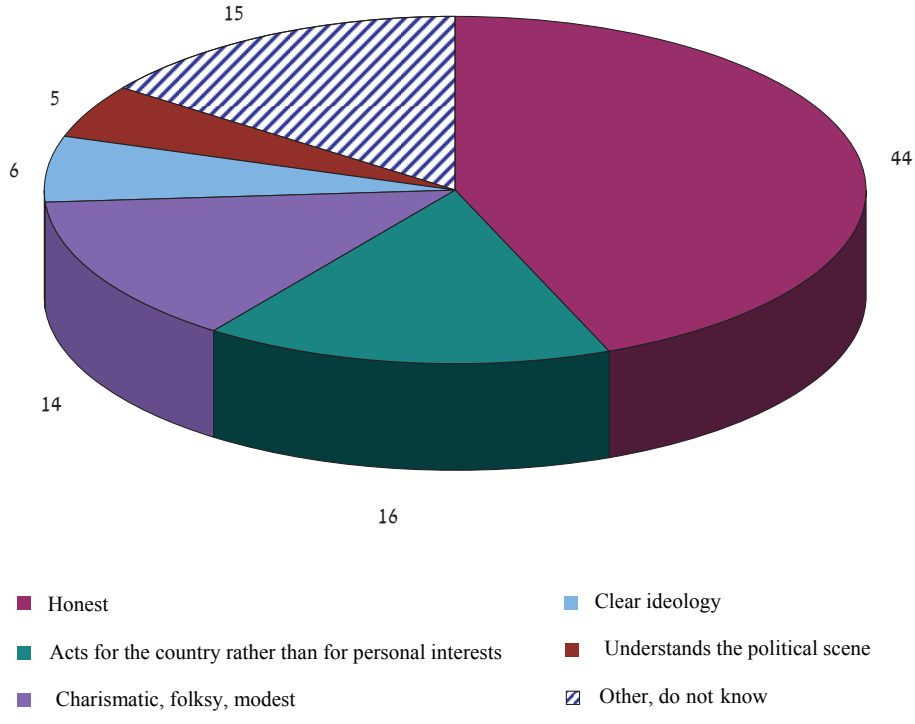


71 See Figure 3 above.

When respondents were asked – also in an open question – to list the qualities required from a worthy politician, the most frequent response (44%) was free from any suspicion of corruption, honest, credible, and so forth; 16 percent placed above all acting for the country rather than for personal or party interests; 14 percent put personal qualities first: a worthy politician is a charismatic person, a leader who provides a personal example, modest, folksy, God-fearing, and so forth; only six percent emphasized ideology as the crucial test, confirming the definition of Israeli society today as "post-ideological." Note the negligible minority (5%) of those who pointed to an understanding of the political sphere as an imperative condition for a worthy politician. A politician's professionalism in Israel, then, is not measured by the same criteria used to test other professionals (doctors, lawyers, pilots, or any other profession) for whom skills and professional knowledge are a preliminary requirement, before character, honesty, and cleanhandedness. This distribution of views may suggest that politics in Israel 2008 is not perceived as a profession but, at most, as an occupation (and one that is not necessarily honorable).

Figure 32

Qualities Required from a Politician (percentages)



An interesting public attitude to the importance of professionalism in national decision-making, though at another level, is evident in the distribution of answers to the question about the idea of renouncing Knesset elections and replacing them with a government of experts prominent in various fields, who will take the national decisions. 60 percent opposed the idea of giving up elections and entrusting national affairs to experts, but 40 percent agreed to it. This attitude evokes difficult questions about the awareness of considerable sections among the Israeli public of the importance of basic democratic procedures and processes (such as elections). It is even more significant given the finding – repeated in this year's survey – that about two-thirds of the Israeli public hold that a few strong leaders can be more useful to the country than all the discussions and laws.

Apparently, the reason for the qualities mentioned as vital for politicians to be considered "worthy" is the widespread sense that these qualities are rare in Israeli politics. Most (58%) of the respondents who said that a politician must be honest, hold that Israel politicians are generally not (37% ranked the politicians in the middle of the honesty scale, and only 5% held that they are honest). The picture is no less gloomy in the reality assessment of those who made competent performance and acting for the country's interests rather than for one's personal interests the most important quality. Here too, the majority (56%) said that Israeli politicians do not meet this demand at all (37% placed them in the middle of the scale, and only 7% assessed them as very worthy according to the criterion of acting for the general interest).

We therefore asked: "In general, what do you think is more important to the country's leaders, their personal interests, or the interests of the country as a whole?" A majority (52%) said that their personal interests are more important to the leaders. The difference between center and periphery on this count is clear: Most (58%) of those who located themselves in the periphery hold that politicians are driven mainly by their personal interests, as opposed to a minority (45%) in the center who hold so. Only 25 percent of all respondents (from both the center and the periphery) hold that, today, the country's interests are more important to politicians, whereas 23 percent hold that the leadership balances between the two sets of interests (national and personal). Respondents granted higher credit to the country's citizens in this regard: 25 percent claimed that the country's interests are more important to the public than personal interests, whereas 36 percent claimed they give equal attention to both types of interests. Only 39 percent hold that the citizens find their personal interests more important. In other words, the rate of respondents holding that the country's interests have primacy for politicians equals the rate of respondents holding the same is true for the general public. The rate of respondents holding that politicians act according to narrow interests, however, surpasses that ascribing this feature to the general public. This is a worrisome finding, because the assumption that some citizens will prefer their personal interest to the public interest is reasonable in a democracy, but elected officials are supposed to serve first and foremost the interests of the country and not only their own.

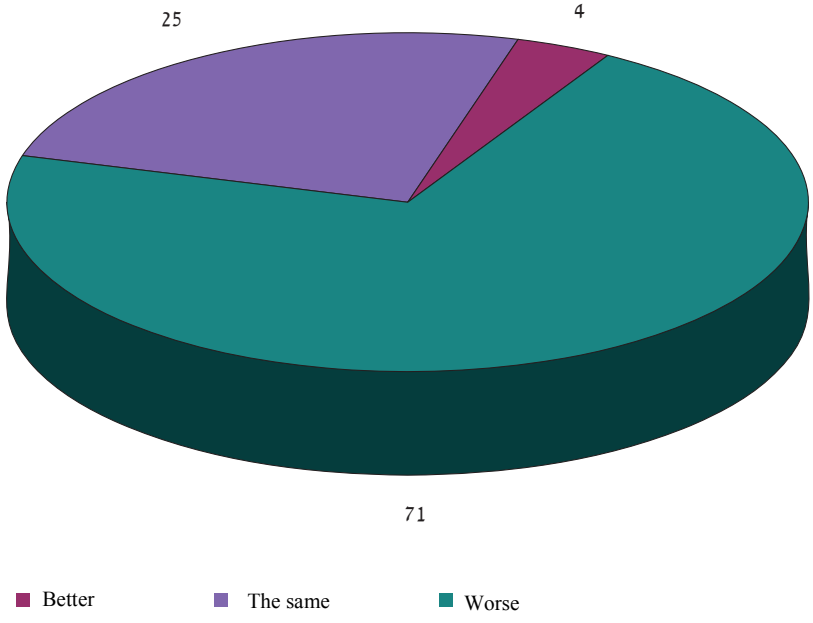
As usual at crisis times, nostalgia paints the past in strong rosy hues. In response to the question, "When you compare Israeli politicians today to what you remember or know about Israeli politicians of the past, are those of today better, worse, or equally good?" – the decisive majority (71%) held that present leaders are worse than their predecessors. Precisely one-quarter (25%) hold that today's leaders are equally good; and only four percent evaluate them as better than past leaders. In a breakdown of the answers to this question, we found no connection with self-location at the center or the periphery, that is, those who define themselves as "insiders" or "outsiders" agreed, almost at the same rates, that the quality of today's politicians is worse than that of their predecessors.

(c) Inadequate Performance

This year's survey points to a low assessment of the political echelon's performance, and to low satisfaction with the functioning of the political establishment. Most (57%) respondents are dissatisfied with the functioning of Israeli democracy. A breakdown of answers to this question according to respondents' vote for the 2006 Knesset elections shows clear differences between voters for different parties. Among voters for the main coalition parties, those satisfied are indeed in the majority (58% of Kadima voters and 48% of Labor voters are satisfied), but the decisive majority of voters for all other parties are not satisfied with the functioning of Israeli democracy.

Figure 33

Assessing Today's Politicians vis-à-vis Those of the Past (percentages)

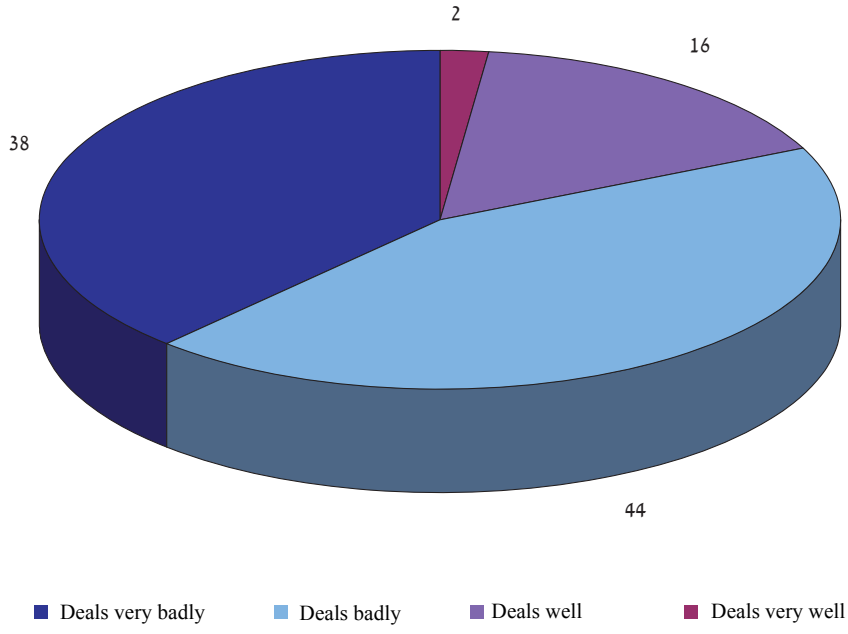


When respondents were asked to express their opinion in general on the way the government deals with the country's problems, those giving a negative evaluation had a clear majority – 82 percent held that the government's way of dealing with problems was unsatisfactory at some level, and only 18 percent held that the government deals with the country's problems well or very well. On this count, we found no differences between those placing themselves at the center or in its proximity and those locating themselves in the periphery – among both, a majority defined problem-handling as inadequate. This question too corroborates the claim of convergence around a negative evaluation of the political system's functioning.

When we turn to specific questions, the worst performance is diagnosed in the social realm: 49 percent of the public asses that the government deals with social issues badly or very badly; 36 percent hold it deals with them so-so; and only 15 percent hold it deals with them well. Concerning the preservation of public order, the situation is similar: 45 percent hold that the government handles these issues badly or very badly; 36 percent hold it deals with them so-so; and 19 percent hold it deals with them well or very well. In the economic realm, the data are only slightly better: 40 percent hold that the government deals with problems in this area badly or very badly; 32 percent hold it deals with them so-so; and 28 percent hold it deals with them well or very well. In all the social and economic areas, then, the recurrent assessment of government performance tends to be negative.

Figure 34

Assessing the Government's Handling of the Country's Problems (percentages)

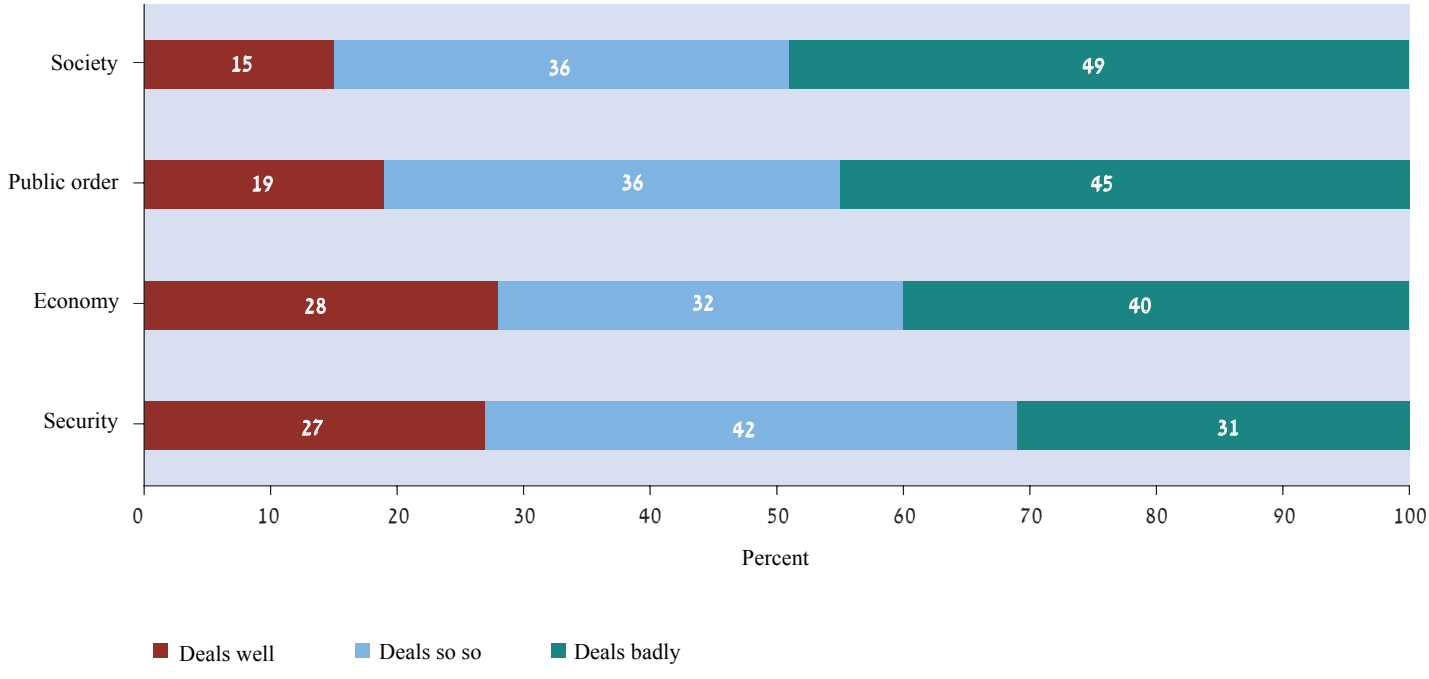


In the security area, the evaluation of performance is slightly better: about one-third (31%) assess the state's performance as bad or very bad; 42 percent hold performance is so-so; and 27 percent hold it is good or very good. These assessments are very significant, since questions of policy and performance on issues of security and foreign affairs have been known to have a decisive influence on the voters' choices (more than other questions have). In this survey too, when respondents were asked – in an open question – to point to the most important problem the government must deal with, security was at the top of the list: 28 percent held that security is the most important; 12 percent held that the economy is the most important; and 11 percent held that education is the most important (the other problems mentioned received low ratings).

On all issues, respondents who located themselves in the periphery had worse assessments of the government's performance than respondents who located themselves in the center or in its vicinity. Particularly prominent was the difference in the evaluation of the government's performance in the area of the economy: 53 percent of respondents in the periphery – as opposed to only 38 percent of respondents in the center – evaluate it as bad or very bad. Similar differences were found concerning security issues: 41 percent of periphery respondents hold that they are handled badly or very badly, as opposed to only 29 percent of respondents in the center who thought so. Although all sections of the public report frustration, then, closeness to the center tones down criticism. Yet, we must keep in mind that self-placement is subjective, and the degree of their criticism

Figure 35

Assessing the Government's Handling of Specific Problems (percentages)



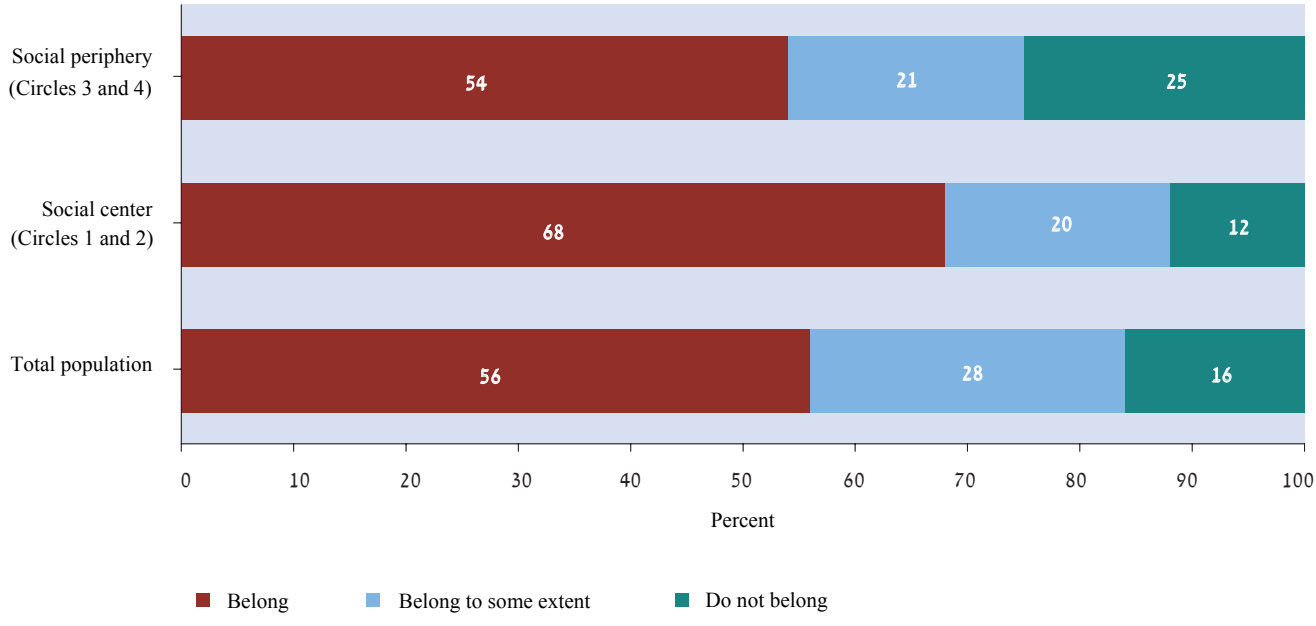
may lead respondents to place themselves at the center or away from it. The same applies to the breakdown of answers according to respondents' vote in the 2006 elections – the assessments of those who voted for the coalitions parties are slightly less harsh (for all issues) than those of voters for opposition parties (except for Shas voters, whose assessments are more negative than others').

(d) Disorientation and a Sense of Lacking Political Influence

The desire of most of the Israeli public to engage in a dialogue with decision-makers and participate in the determination of the national future by having a "voice" in policy shaping comes to the fore in the responses to the following question: "In some countries, when a very important issue – such as a peace treaty – is on the agenda, the citizens take part in it through a referendum. No referendum has ever been conducted in Israel. In your opinion, when fateful decisions are at stake, would it be advisable to involve the Israeli public in the decision by conducting a referendum?" Three-quarters of respondents answered that a referendum in such circumstances is a desirable or very desirable move, and only a quarter held that such a move is undesirable or very undesirable. This finding is further validated by the public's strong sense of belonging to the collective and to the country. In response to the question, "To what extent do you feel yourself to be part of the State of Israel and its problems?" 56 percent reported a strong sense of belonging; 28 percent

Figure 36

Sense of Belonging to the Country and Its Problems (percentages)



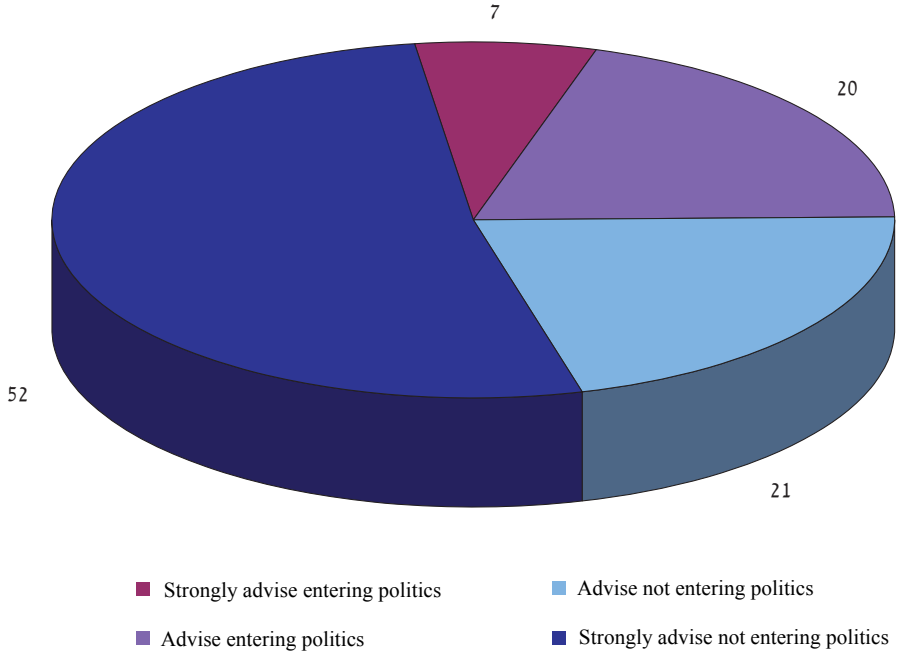
reported a medium sense of belonging, and only 16 percent reported they lacked a sense of belonging.[72]

Unsurprisingly, and as Figure 36 (above) shows, those who locate themselves at the center report a greater sense of belonging than those who locate themselves in the periphery.

We noted in Part One above that less than one-fifth (19%) of the public hold that they can influence government decisions, and a decisive majority (81%) assess their ability to influence as small or non-existent. Interestingly, and contrary to theoretical assertions in this regard, we found no difference on this count between respondents who place themselves at the center or at the periphery: a decisive majority at the center (77%) and at the periphery (83%) sense that the citizens' ability to influence government policy is small or non-existent. Here too, we see the entire public converging around a sense of distance and estrangement from the political system. The distance, however, does not follow from a sense of indifference or "de-politization" but from the sense that decision-makers do not heed the public, do not give it a "voice," and handle affairs in the service of unworthy interests.

Figure 37

Would You Advise a Family Member or a Close Friend to Enter Politics? (Percentages)



72 Note, however, that the yearly Democracy Surveys point to a clear and systematic decline in recent years in the majority that feels itself part of the country and its problems. More than 80% felt so in the early 2000s, and this majority has now been reduced to slightly more than half. Nevertheless, the decline may not reflect a real change in the sense of belonging, but mainly the growing legitimization given in recent years to the expression of "unpatriotic" attitudes of this type.

Disgust and dissatisfaction with the political system and with politicians, and possibly frustration with their non-inclusion, are probably the main explanation for the fact that only 11 percent of respondents reported they had ever thought of entering national or local politics. A similar direction can be discerned in the distribution of responses to the question: "If people close to you, a family member or a close friend, were considering entering politics – what would you advise them?" Only about one-quarter of respondents (27%) would advise their relatives or close friends who are pondering whether to enter politics to actually do so, whereas about three-quarters would advise them to stay away to some extent or to keep away from politics altogether.

The current political disorientation of the Israeli public also comes to the fore in the distribution of responses to the question: "If elections were to take place today, what party would you vote for?" – 47.5 percent of the respondents (almost half!) do not have a preferred party, and reported that they had not decided, or would not vote, or would submit a blank form, or refused to answer concerning their preference. In a country as "political" as Israel, this finding points to voters' great detachment from the political system, or at least from political parties and elected officials.

But does this finding mean that the Israeli public is politically indifferent, meaning that we are witnessing a trend of "de-politization"? It would not seem so, and it does not appear to be a lack of interest or indifference. Despite the deplorable picture concerning the public's attitude to politics and despite studies that point to declining rates of TV news viewers and of subscribers to printed newspapers, respondents' answers in this survey suggest that the situation is not so bad. Sixty-four percent report that they stay informed about events in the political sphere through daily updates from one of the media channels; 13 percent report being thus updated several times a week, 11 percent once or twice a week, and only 12 percent report they rarely or never update information in this regard. Breaking up the answers revealed hardly any differences on this question between those who locate themselves at the center and those placing themselves at the periphery. This is an interesting finding, which contradicts researchers' widely shared working hypothesis whereby people who locate themselves at the center or in its vicinity tend to follow political developments more closely than those who locate themselves in the periphery. In response to the direct question, "What about politics – to what extent does it interest you?" a clear majority reported interest, as Figure 38 (below) shows.

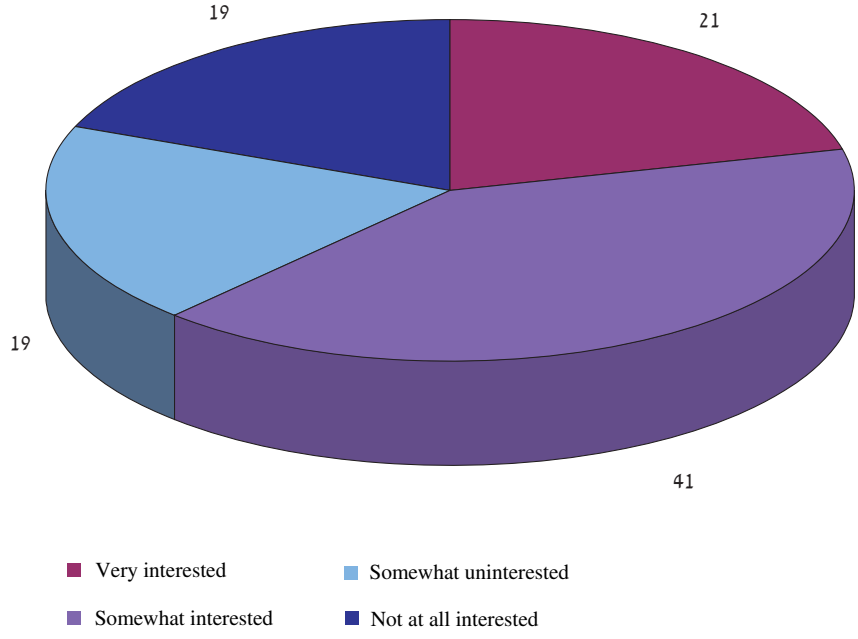
The rate of people talking about politics with those around them is in decline, as noted. Among those who reported interest in politics, however, 58 percent noted that they talk about these issues with family and friends (as opposed to 22% among those who reported they are not interested in politics). Voter turnout in elections, as noted, is at a low point, and political parties seem emptier than ever: Only four percent reported that they have registered as party members, and one percent participated or organized a political meeting at home. But as studies in

other countries show,[73] considerable political activity takes place through other channels: more than one-quarter (26%) reported that they had engaged over the years in some form of activity related to politics (besides voting), and 15 percent reported that they had participated in demonstrations.

Figure 38

Personal Interest in Politics

To what extent are you interested in politics? (Percentages)



73 See, for instance, Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina, eds., *Civic Engagement in American Democracy* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1999).

D. Civil Society and Its Organizations

Although "civil society"[74] is a concept frequently used in Israel – as in many other countries – we find it has many and even mutually contradictory definitions. The simplest definition of civil society is one formulated by negation: Civil society refers to all the organizations and public agencies that are not part of the state bureaucracy and whose operation, unlike that of economic enterprises, is not guided by the profit principle and its maximization.[75] Other definitions pour more independent meaning into the concept and describe civil society as a complex of voluntary associations and local communities, culture and research institutes, and representative bodies in the private and public sectors – an active social web. Less structured and more process definitions of civil society view it as the sum total of social encounters that are not dependent on the government and take place in a public sphere where individuals – regardless of their religious, social, gender, or racial identity – can meet, come together, exchange views, read, present, establish a new community, organize around an idea, or promote a new service. A more ideological definition characterizes civil society as the part of the public sphere that is organized around the principle of transparency and social responsibility.[76]

Although the reference is usually to a trio – state, market, and civil society – the focus of scholarly and political attention is the relationship between the state and civil society, while the relationship between the market and civil society is not often a subject of scientific research and public interest. Some view civil society as the source of the government's legitimization and stability, and some view it as the wellspring of opposition to the state's arbitrariness and to its oppressive and controlling character. Civil society is sometimes perceived as a

74 For an extensive discussion of civil society in Israel, see, for instance, Yishai, *Civil Society in Israel* (note 52 above).

75 Note that the business market, too, is no longer guided solely by considerations of maximizing profits, and takes issues of social responsibility into account. For a discussion of this question, see, for instance, Todd M. Henderson and Anup Malani, "Capitalism 2.0," *Forbes* (March 10, 2008): www.forbes.com/columnists/free_forbes/2008/0310/030.html?partner=aolmag
The recognition that fostering the social context of the working environment of business organizations is extremely important has led, for instance, to the establishment in Israel of "Maala," a professional roof organization of businesses that bring about change in the area of corporate responsibility. The organization, part of a broad network of organizations in many countries dealing with corporate social responsibility, leads processes of development and implementation of strategies of corporate responsibility as a business approach. (The term "corporate responsibility" refers to business operations integrating social, environmental, and ethical values). Every year, Maala publishes the "Maala ranking" of leading companies in the area of corporate responsibility in four main realms: business ethics (an ethical code, an internal ethical operative program); human rights and working environment; community involvement (contribution, volunteering staff, a written social investment policy); and environmental issues (performance, reporting, policy, administration, implementation, and assimilation). See www.maala.org.il/heb/home/a/01

76 Contrary to agencies and office holders in the established political system, however, civil society organizations are not elected and accountability rules are therefore not incumbent on them.

spontaneous product operating on its own, away from the government, and sometimes as the opposite – dependent on the government for recognition and financial support. At times, civil society is described as drawing upon its relationship with the authorities, and at times as replacing the government, when the authorities fail to achieve their aims.[77]

Generally, in established democracies – and particularly those defined as welfare states – civil society is far smaller in scope and resources than the many government departments and agencies, and, consequently, less influential than the government in its effect on processes and structures.[78] As aforementioned, civil society lacks a clear structure and is made up of a plethora of organizational initiatives, which may swiftly appear and vanish or strike root and become a set feature of the public arena. It includes small and large groups and organizations, rich and poor, local and national, as well as many types of organizations with varied purposes – distributing goods, providing services, civil advocacy, influencing policy makers, identity organizations, religious and cultural associations, protecting the environment, and animal rights.[79] The initiative for civic organizing is, as its name intimates, a bottom-up endeavor. In many cases, therefore, its action relies on voluntarism and not on paid employment. And yet, many civic organizations have recently been undergoing institutionalization and professionalization processes that bring them closer – at least image-wise and some claim in essence as well – to state and economic enterprises.

The many organizations[80] and the informal character[81] of most elements of civil society (partially) explain the absence of agreed and uniform rules of action. In most countries, the scope of activities, the

77 See Robert C. Post and Nancy L. Rosenblum, "Introduction," in *Civil Society and Government*, ed. Nancy L. Rosenblum and Robert C. Post (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 1.

78 In countries where the civic society is stronger than the state, the system is usually diagnosed as problematic or even on the verge of collapse. See Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); John W. Harbeson, Donald Rothchild, and Naomi Chazan, *Civil Society and the State in Africa* (Boulder, CO: L. Rienner, 1994).

79 A mapping of all organizations in Israel's civil society appears in many of the publications issued by the Israeli Center for Third Sector Research. See, for instance, *Quick View of Israel's Third Sector – 2005* [Hebrew], in: http://cmsprod.bgu.ac.il/Centers/ictr/inisrael; or in Binyamin Gidron, Michal Bar, and Hagai Katz, *The Third Sector in Israel: Between Welfare State and Civil Society* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2003).

80 The document that accompanied the bill mentioned in note 51 above illustrates the scope of civil society in Israel in recent years. According to this document, about 25,000 civil organizations existed in Israel in 2006, of them 8,200 holding fiscal probity certificates issued by the Registrar of NGOs at the Ministry of Justice, and 4,500 in the category the law defines as NPOs (non-profit organizations). In 2002, there were 236,152 jobs in civil organizations (some paid and some voluntary).

81 A civil organization that does not request tax exemptions, does not hire staff, and does not perform any legal and formal actions, is not required to register. A case such as that of Peace Now is therefore possible. Peace Now was never registered as an NGO and operated in the context of another registered organization – Sha`al Educational Enterprises – as recently noted in a report that a right-wing activist submitted to the Registrar of NGOs at the Ministry of Justice in an attempt to prevent Peace Now from filing a petition at the High Court of Justice. See also Yitzik Wolf, "Report: Peace Now Infringed the NGOs Law" [Hebrew], NFC site, 19 December 2007: www.nfc.co.il/Archive/001-D-149214-00.html?tag=10-15-19

authority, and the obligations of civil society are anchored partially, at most, in legislation or ordinances. The Israeli government, as noted, is currently attempting to regulate in law the activity of civil society organizations and their relationships with the state and with the contributing economic enterprises. The answer to the question "who is in and who is out?" and the definition of civil society's "borders" are vague. Do the same rules apply to a neighborhood soup kitchen that opens and closes according to the cook's whims and to stable and wealthy organizations such as the Israel Cancer Association? The usual answer to this recurring question is that the key concept for understanding civil society is pluralism, and the choir of civil society leaves room for all organizations that are neither state agencies nor profit-seeking economic enterprises.[82]

1. Between State and Society

The saying that we live in a constantly changing global village and that the national state is in a continuous ongoing crisis and struggles or refuses to fulfill many of its traditional functions is by now trite but still highly relevant. Many activists and scholars approach civil society that cuts across national, social, and economic boundaries as offering new hope of social and political solidarity, which in the past had hailed the state as its cornerstone. Ulrich Beck advocates a new type of political society "of individuals, of active civil society here and now, of a civil democracy in Europe that is at once local and transnational."[83] His optimism leads him to claim that this society "can find and develop answers to the challenge of the second modernity – namely, individualization, globalization, falling employment and ecological crisis…. In place of a society fixated on paid work, this vision offers the prospect of gradually gaining sovereignty over time and experiencing political freedom within self-organized activity networks."[84]

How can civil society succeed where the state fails? The answer seems to lie in another closely related concept – "social capital."[85] As it turns out, in societies with high social capital, civil society prospers. Social capital is the informal sociological norm promoting cooperation between individuals and helping to advance cooperation between individuals and groups. The application of the norm begins from cooperation between personal friends and proceeds to cooperation in broader frameworks, relying on such concepts as honesty, keeping commitments, mutuality, and responsibility (for performance). At the political level, social capital promotes communal life, which is vital for the success of a limited government and a modern democracy. Social capital is at times accumulated after individuals repeatedly attempt, in conditions of uncertainty, to minimize damages and

82 See Rosenblum and Post, *Civil Society and Government* (note 77 above), 4.

83 Beck, *The Brave New World of Work* (note 58 above), 5.

84 Ibid., 5–6.

85 On the concept of social capital see, for instance, Francis Fukuyama, *Social Capital and Civil Society* (Fairfax, VA: The Institute of Public Policy, George Mason University, 1999); idem, "Social Capital, Civil Society and Development," *Third World Quarterly* 22 (1) (2001): 7–20.

increase profits (not necessarily economical) through mutual cooperation. At times, it is a by-product of religion,[86] tradition, shared historical experience, and other types of cultural norms.

The concept of "social capital" is related to the "trust range" concept. All individuals and groups sharing in social capital have a known "trust range," namely, a circle of people or groups to whom the cooperation norm applies. The circle also defines (and excludes) those who are not part of it (that is, those who are not included within the norm of cooperation or trust). The discerned decline of trust in political and other social institutions – which was found in surveys and discussed in Part One above – made the topic of trust the focus of extensive scholarly activity. One of the main questions is whether the decline of trust is focused on the country's institutions or "spills over" to the organizations of civil society as well.[87] Below we discuss this issue in the context of Israel.[88]

A "healthy" society is one with significant social capital at its disposal and where a broad trust range prevails, whereas a society lacking or losing social capital and with a narrow trust range risks collapse. In the mid-1990s, Robert Putnam[89] warned that American society had been losing its social capital since the 1950s, a phenomenon that included a dramatic decline in the rate of civic participation.[90] The most distinctive indication was the continued decline in the rates of voter turnout. Putnam pointed to another component in the shrinking social capital in the United States – the decline of trust in the political institutions – and diagnosed it as primary evidence of what he saw as an accelerated process of crumbling and erosion in American democracy. He located the main reason for the sharp and continued decline he had diagnosed in civic involvement, particularly that involving direct face-to-face contact in the United States, in the frequency and increasing legitimization of individualist behaviors, and in the unrestrained (in his view) development of technologies that encourage individualist pursuits, among them television viewing and surfing the Web.

86 The idea of social capital is also entrenched in various religions. A classic instance is the Jewish principle, "Jews are all responsible for one another."

87 See, for instance, Dietlind Stolle, "Bowling Together, Bowling Alone: The Development of Generalized Trust in Voluntary Associations," *Political Psychology* 19 (3) *Special Issue: Psychological Approaches to Social Capital* (1998): 497–525.

88 As noted in Part One above, the trust range of Israelis is rather limited – only about a quarter (27%) think that one can usually trust people, 38% hold that one should usually be very cautious in relationships with others, and 21% live with a sense that one should always be very cautious.

89 Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy* 6 (1) (1995): 65–78. The name of the article and of the ensuing book convey Putnam's metaphorical diagnosis that, although more and more people in the United States bowl, they prefer to do so alone rather than in organized bowling leagues.

90 Note that citizens' participation had always been a distinguishing feature of American society and had been considered the linchpin of American democracy's stability, as the French political thinker Alexis de Tocqueville had already emphasized in 1833 in his famous tractate *Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

Putnam's analysis was met with an enthusiastic reception, but was also subject to harsh criticism.[91] Critics claimed that the past that Putnam nostalgically clung to had been far less rosy than what his analysis suggested: racism and discrimination, and hence the exclusion of individuals and of groups, had been far more widespread in American society in the first half of the twentieth century (and obviously also before that) than in the later years that Putnam judged so harshly. The desire to return to those seemingly "embracing" neighborhood communities, then, involves a high price tag in terms of freedom, since these communities had often been extremely conformist and even oppressive of minority views and of groups that did not behave according to their values and norms. The fundamental claim of the critics, however, was factual. Participation in community activities involving personal face-to-face contact, whose decline Putnam deplored, had indeed dropped, as had political participation in its more traditional patterns, such as voting in elections. At the same time, however, a sharp rise was recorded in the involvement of the American public in new civic activities, such as virtual web communities or international civic organizations.

Concerning the factual description, the current undisputed consensus is that patterns of citizens' participation in Western societies have changed dramatically in the last few decades, including a sharp rise in the number and scope of activity in civil society organizations. At the same time, in many countries we see declining involvement in social and economic areas, and these two developments are mutually linked. Due to these dynamic mutual relationships, the withdrawal of the state often contributes to the prosperity of civil society, which assumes roles the state has stopped fulfilling or never fulfilled in the first place. The growth of civil society follows not only from the withdrawal of the state but, apparently, also from the entry of philosophical-social-pluralistic or multicultural approaches into the public discourse that speak of the need for unique, culture-bound services rather than uniform and state-provided ones. This issue is obviously related to the rise of post-materialistic values, given that the needs deriving from them, or from some of them, are not traditionally recognized by the state as found within its purview of responsibility. For instance, the state had never considered it its duty (nor had others in the past) to defend animal rights, or preserve the cultures of disappearing ethnic minorities, or form support groups (for instance, for homo-lesbian youth), or rehabilitate alcoholics, or promote veganism, and so forth. In this sense, social organizations often anticipate the state in the location of social needs.

The well-known theory of "market failure" deserves mention here. This theory holds that a democratic government operating under free market conditions cannot provide today, even if it wanted to, the entire range of services and goods that its citizens wish or require. The reason is that the majority of the public would not be willing to cover the enormous costs of providing such a broad spectrum of services. Indeed, as noted below,

91 See, e.g., Everett Carll Ladd, *The Ladd Report* (New York: Free Press, 1999).

the Israeli public is not willing to assume the burden of such an expanded range of state services. Furthermore, even if the state were willing to provide broad services – as defined and allocated at the discretion of the people who are in charge of them on its behalf – many would contest the decisions of state agencies concerning the services and goods that the state should provide, the minimum level required, and the question of whether the state should raise above this minimum, and by how much. The "market failure" theory claims that reaching agreement on the scope and nature of the services the state should provide is particularly hard in pluralistic or multicultural societies. Governments, therefore, prefer to limit their supply, particularly in realms of social welfare.

Can a civil society step into the state's big shoes? The answer to this question is complex. First, as noted, the resources of civil society are too meager to allow it to assume this heavy burden. Second, contrary to the "market failure" theory are empirical findings[92] refuting the claim that in split societies lacking consensus on overall civic needs, the third sector is larger than in societies with a prevalent consensus on what the state should provide and on the level of services. Third, contrary to the state, civil society does not have to provide a specific array of services. It is under no obligation to provide universal services to every person in need, and need not take into account the desires and preferences of its services' beneficiaries. Indeed, in the experience of many citizens, civil organizations often appear and disappear quite swiftly, and cannot be coerced to provide services they do not wish to give, as they cannot be compelled to provide services to those who in their view are not entitled to them. For instance, a charity organization may decide to allocate funds to people suffering from some type of disability, or belonging to a specific ethnic group, or even condition assistance on support for some ideology.

Finally, beside the "market failure" we could point to a "voluntarism failure": most social organizations are not strong, rich, or developed enough to meet the new needs derived from the entry of new ideas they introduced into the public discourse (such as, for instance, protecting the environment). Hence, perhaps contrary to expectations, these organizations and obviously also the citizens exert pressure to return the handling of the new needs to the state. At times, when civil organizations succeed in placing a particular issue on the general agenda (for instance, environmental protection), the issue "surfaces" upward, and the state assumes responsibility for handling it. A common view, therefore, is that despite the positive aspects in the state's withdrawal from many areas and the expansion of civil society's concerns – mainly the collapse of monopolies in many services the state had provided at an unsatisfactory level – this was generally a negative trend and the state should return to the scene and improve the services it provides.[93]

92 Lester Salamon and Helmut Anheier, "Social Origins of Civil Society: Explaining the Nonprofit Sector Cross-Nationally," *Voluntas* 9 (3) (1998): 213-248.

93 A demand for a return of the state was the basis for establishing the Yesod group (Hebrew acronym for Social-Democratic Israel). Extensive information on the group and its aims appears in its website: www.yesod.net/yesod/about_yes.html

Before we embark on an analysis of the findings related to the attitudes of the Israeli public to civil society, we will briefly consider the meaning of the "center–periphery" continuum and its relationship to the status of civil society.

Generally, we may say that civil society is located outside the social-political center. Contrary to state institutions, civil society organizations have no formal (contrary to professional or moral) authority, and they are not allowed to make decisions or formulate procedures of action or rules of the game for the collective. The relationship between the center and civil society may be close or distant, friendly or confrontational. Civil society organizations can function as "secondary centers," which recognize the center and its authority and are recognized by it, or as "competing centers," which challenge the center, the values it generates, and the rules of the game it sets. "Competing centers" are therefore ignored, or even persecuted by, the center. The development of a civil society as a "competing center" is related to the concept of "citizen empowerment," which is also closely related to the center–periphery continuum. Although the decisive majority of the citizens are naturally located at the periphery rather than at the center, a phenomenon of "citizen empowerment" has been evident in many democracies in recent decades, implying a strengthening of the periphery at the center's expense. People who are not at the center and have no official position feel today, much more than in the past, that they can formulate and express opinions on political, social, and economic issues, and can also try to influence policy at the center, often through the organizations of civil society. The legitimization for such behavior is anchored in a fundamental conception whereby, in democratic regimes, the citizen is the true sovereign, so that civil demand for a "voice" in all that concerns collective issues does not constitute a "rebellion." In other words, although civil society is a phenomenon developing in the social-political periphery, it embodies a fundamental democratic principle, hence the legitimacy of its stand vis-à-vis the state.

The center–periphery continuum is also significant in the analysis of public attitudes to the topics discussed here. This view rests on the assumption that individual attitudes toward structures and processes in the social-political system depend largely on the person's position vis-à-vis the decision-makers and vis-à-vis the place where the dominant value system in that context takes shape.

2. Findings

Israel, as have many other countries, has witnessed a dramatic growth in the number of civil society organizations in recent years, together with a vast expansion of their spheres of action. In the Israeli context, civil society performs some of the state's traditional roles in the material realm (providing services and goods, such as food to the needy, public advocacy, or medical and support services that are not provided by the state). But civil society plays an even more central role in the public discourse on setting priorities and formulating values. Through its mere existence, then, civil society in Israel challenges – from the periphery – the center's right to determine, monopolistically, constitutive social values and priorities for the entire society. The common perception, then, is that the state and civil society are

players in a kind of "zero sum game" in the public sphere – what one abandons, the other voluntarily or forcibly takes, particularly regarding the supply of services to the citizens. Furthermore, many organizations of civil society devote most of their energy to the exposure of the actual or apparent flaws of the established political system, presenting themselves as a clean and worthy alternative to all the political system's agencies.[94] Nevertheless, and although the centrality of the state has been eroded in recent years, the state is still deeply embedded in Israel's public consciousness and also in its political, social, and economic practices.[95]

The first question we posed concerns a preference for the state's agencies as opposed to a preference for civil society, against the background of the state's withdrawal: "As we know, the state used to fulfill many social and economic roles that today are fulfilled by social organizations and business companies. Some claim that restriction of state involvement in social and economic areas is a good thing, whereas others think it would have been preferable for the state to continue fulfilling these roles. With which of these claims do you agree more?"

As Figure 39 shows, a clear majority of the Israeli public – more than half – agree with the claim that it would be preferable if the state had continued its previous involvement in social and economic areas, and only one-quarter prefer the state's more restricted involvement in these realms.

94 Ometz, for instance, defines its aim as follows: "Ometz – citizens for good governance and social-legal justice – is a registered NGO that seeks to ensure quality of life for all the country's residents. The organization was founded in 2003 by a group of academics, businesspeople, civil service pensioners (including senior police officers), and activists in other social organizations, who felt a need to establish an independent civil entity to serve the public interest and promote good governance, together with social and legal justice." http://ometz-il.org/Who.htm
Another instance is the "Yesharim" site, which formulates its goal as follows: "Corruption, violence, and delinquency have become an accepted way of life in Israel! The government, the Knesset, the parties – are corrupt and detached from the citizens! The parties are divided, split within and between themselves , and they divide the people! Are you concerned about corruption and about the trampling of the law? Join us for a citizens' revolt!": www.yesharim.org.il/index.html
Note that, beside those exposing corruption are others who fear the implications of what they view as corruption hysteria, fueled by various elements within the civil society. In their view, this hysteria could deter worthy individuals who are willing to become active in the political-public sphere. Thus, for instance, journalist Guy Bekhor writes (11 January 2007): "Corruption! Corruption! Corruption! All around is corruption, the monster of corruption works overtime, talk backers scream, the masses applaud, the press makes a living, but the country is bleeding. Do all these bandwagon-purists really care about the society and the country? And altogether, how really corrupt are we? Could it be that the turbid wave around corruption leads to the opposite and no less grim result? [...] Where do we get to with this cynical and revolting public wave of accusations everywhere? To the emasculation of ministers, officers, and public officials. Since they fear commissions of inquiry, the State Comptroller, the press, the High Court of Justice, and what not, they do not take any risks. They do not endorse any initiative or engage in any effort. The country halts in fear. The cheap public demagoguery, spurred by interested parties, restrains the government and the entire civil service" [Hebrew]: www.gplanet.co.il/prodetailsamewin.asp?pro_id=149

95 On the unique and complex relationship between the state and the civil society in Israel, see, for instance, Uri Ben-Eliezer, "State Versus Civil Society? A Non-Binary Model of Domination through the Example of Israel," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 11 (3) (1998): 370–396.

A breakdown of the answers to this question according to self-location in the various center–periphery circles, as well as the analysis of the responses according to social-economic class (upper, upper-middle, lower-middle, or lower) did not find statistically significant differences in preferences concerning state involvement. At all levels of closeness to the center and in all classes, most respondents prefer high state involvement. Contrary to expectations, self-location along the capitalism-socialism ideological continuum did not lead to significant differences either. In the group of respondents defining their ideological preference in a capitalist direction, again contrary to expectation, the rate of those who preferred state involvement surpassed the rate of those who preferred the state to limit its involvement in the social-economic area.

A preference for the state – rather than civil organizations – to bear responsibility for services to the citizens is also expressed in the distribution of answers to the question "If you had to receive a particular service, would you prefer to receive it from a social organization or from a state agency?" Here too, the rate of those preferring to receive the service from the state clearly surpassed the rate of those who prefer to receive the service from a social organization, as Figure 40 below shows.

Figure 39

Preferences Concerning State Involvement in Social and Economic Issues (percentages)

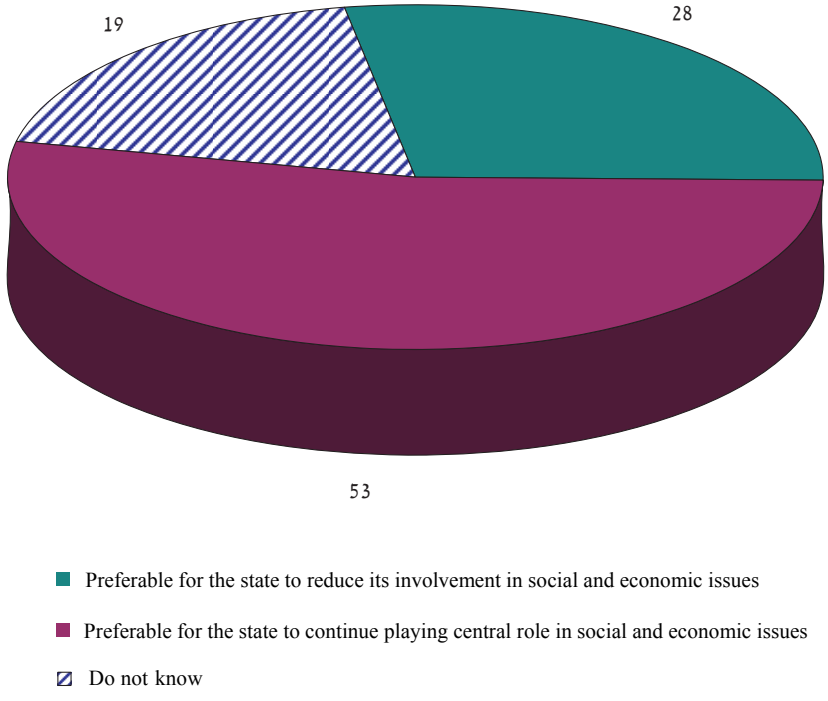
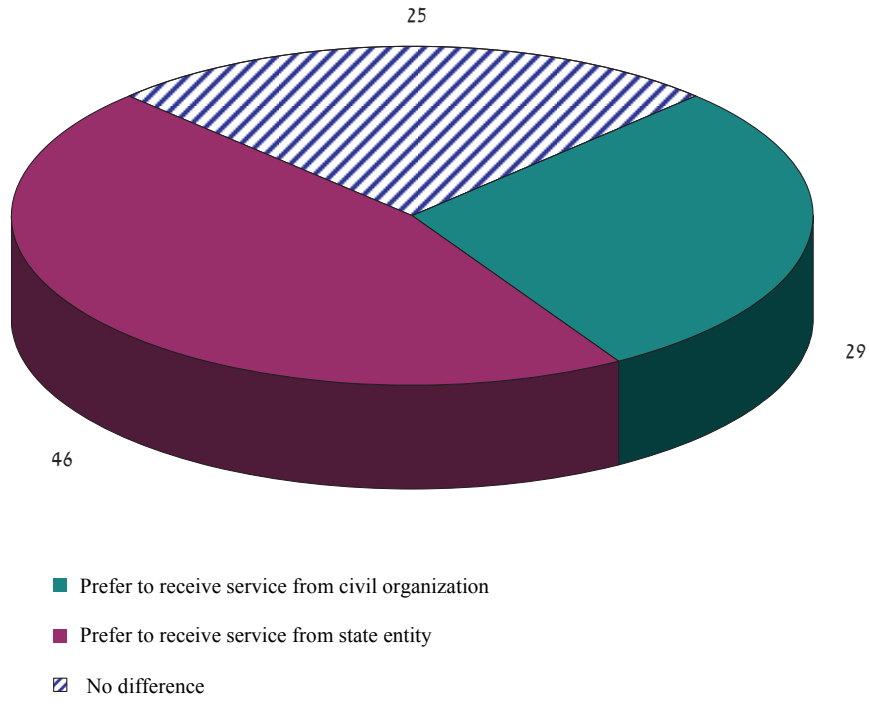


Figure 40

Preference Concerning Service Providers (percentages)



A breakdown of the preference regarding who will provide the services – the state or a social organization – according to respondents' voting for the Knesset in the 2006 elections revealed an interesting finding: voters for the Gil Pensioners' Party, more than voters for all other parties, are interested in receiving services from the state. One of the explanations for this result is that pensioners had historically been used to a situation where the state had provided most services to the citizen (although we know that voters for this party are not necessarily pensioners). By contrast, voters for Shas and United Torah Judaism – the Ultra-Orthodox parties – are more interested than voters for all other parties in receiving services from non-state social organizations. This finding could reflect the prevalence of these organizations in Ultra-Orthodox society (such as charity and religious groups) and the customary practice of receiving services from them. A further reason could be the cautious attitude of Ultra-Orthodox society toward the state and its representatives.

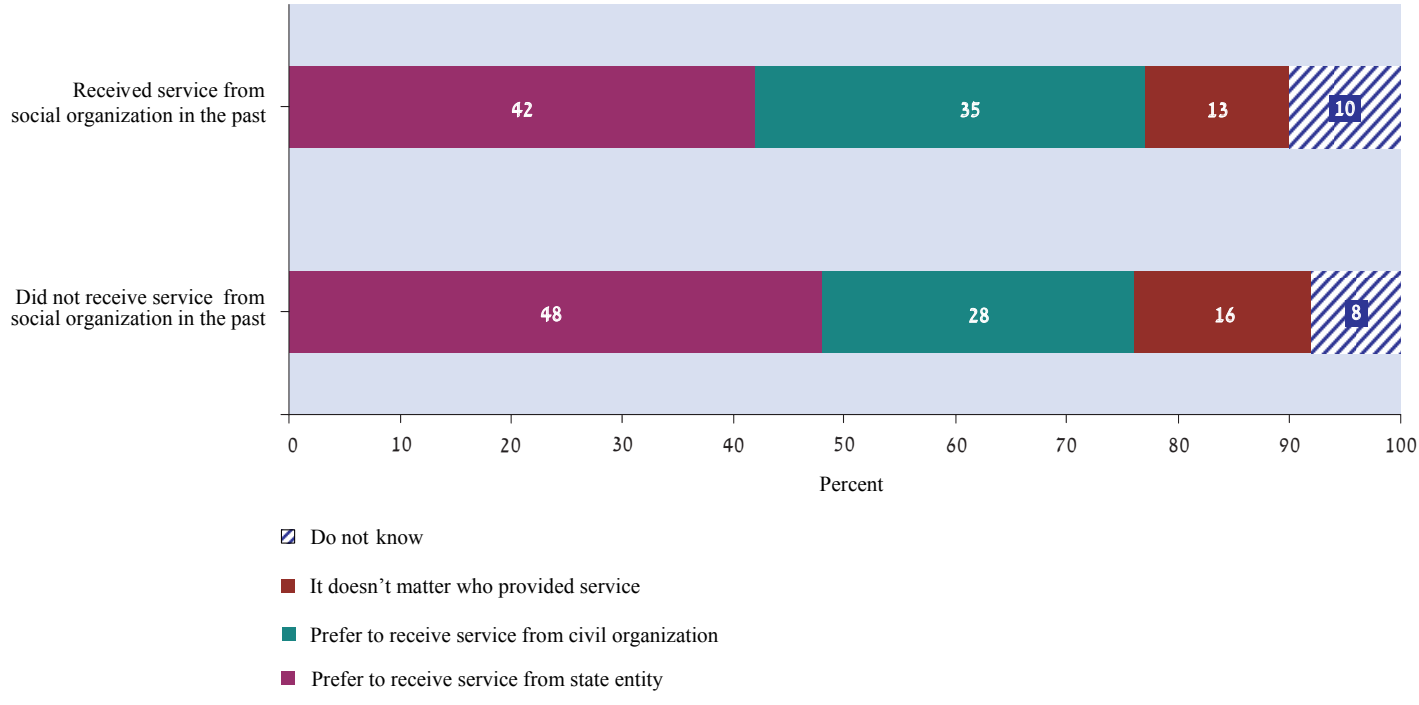
We tried to examine whether the preference for receiving the service from the state reflects dissatisfaction with the quality of the services provided by civil society organizations. Hence, we asked: "Have you ever received services from one or more of these organizations?" Responses clarify that a decisive majority (77%) had never received services from any civil society organization, and only 23 percent had. Another interesting result is the surprising finding that, of those who located themselves in the periphery, the rate of those attesting

they had received service from one of the social organizations is lower than the rate of service recipients among those locating themselves at the center and its vicinity. This finding raises the possibility that the social organizations do not reach those who need them most, and perhaps even that people in the social-economic periphery do not know how to use the range of services that the social organizations offer. A breakdown of the findings according to the Knesset voting patterns in 2006 distinctly suggests that voters for United Torah Judaism report more than voters for all other parties that they had received service in the past from one or more non-state social organization. This result supports the interpretation that this party's voters are more ready to receive services from community organizations than from the state.

Cross-checking answers to the two questions – preference for receiving services from the state or from a social organization and the report about having received service from such an organization in the past – pointed to a loose link between past experience and the preference for a service provider (Figure 41). The frequent view both among those who had received service in the past from a social organization and among those who had not is that they would prefer to receive the service from the state. Nevertheless, the preference for receiving service from a social organization is slightly higher among those who had received service from such an organization in the past, as opposed to those who had not. Previous experience as a service receiver from a social organization, then, is a factor that slightly lowers "dependence" on the state.

Figure 41

Preference Concerning Services Providers, by Previous Experience as a Service Receiver
(percentages)



So far, then, we may conclude that, despite the strong privatization trends, the Israeli public prefers to receive services from the state rather than from social organizations.

Beside the service reception dimension, we also measured the attitude toward civil society at the level of involvement with organizations belonging to this sector. The current level of voluntarism is not high: only one-third of the respondents attested they had ever volunteered in a social organization (37%) and the majority (63%) had never done so. A reverse relationship was found in answers to the question of whether respondents had ever made donations to any organization. Generosity emerged as the rule: the vast majority (80%) attested that they had, and only 20 percent said they had never contributed to any social organization, as Figure 42 shows. The public's readiness to support action in the context of civil society, then, is high when the required level of commitment is low (donations) and low when the commitment required is higher (volunteering).

As one may expect, among those who located themselves at the center or in its proximity, the rate of those attesting they had ever donated funds to social organizations (84%) is considerably higher than the rate of those in the periphery reporting so (70%), as Figure 43 shows. This finding could be explained through the better economic situation of people at the center, but apparently also by their lower sense of alienation from society. The picture concerning voluntarism is similar: Those at the center and in its vicinity volunteer more (at least according to their own reports), perhaps because they have more free time and more resources, which enable them to reduce their working hours and volunteer. Again, volunteering may also be driven by the higher sense of belonging among respondents locating themselves at the center.

Figure 42

Patterns of Personal Involvement in Civil Society Activities (percentages)

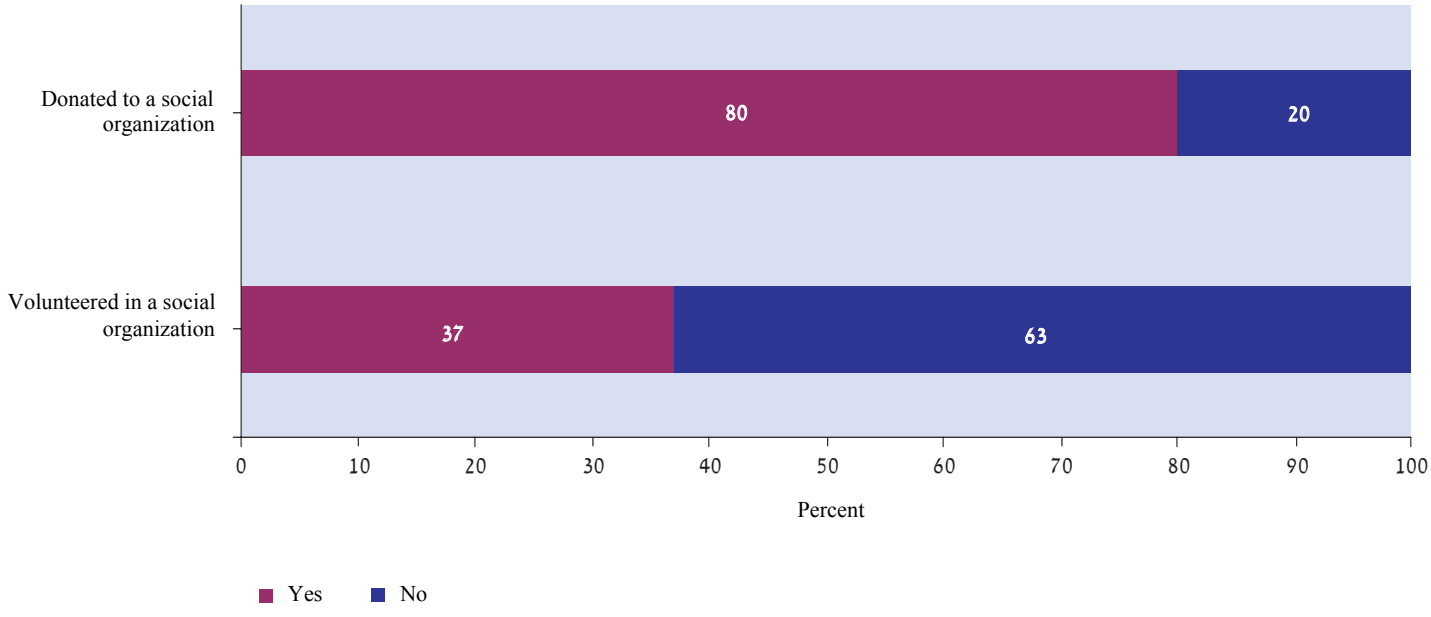
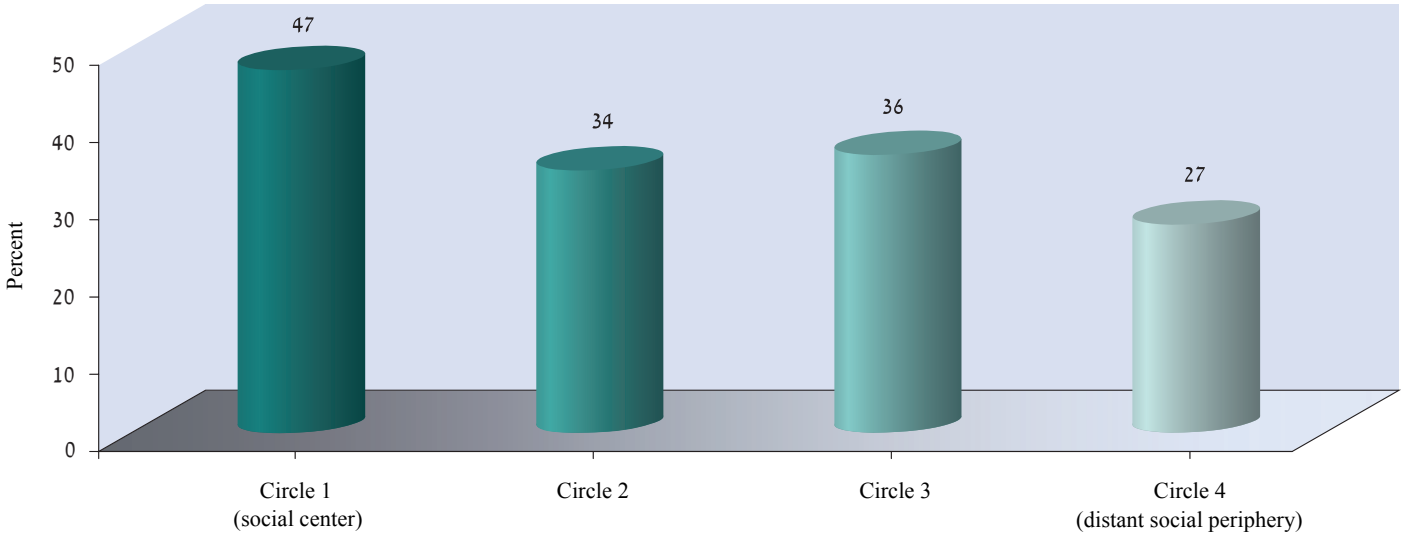


Figure 43

Volunteering Rates by Self-Location on the Center–Periphery Continuum (percentages)



Is there any connection between receiving service and volunteering or contributing? Are service beneficiaries more inclined to contribute or volunteer than those who are not? Cross-checking of the responses to the above questions shows that service receivers do tend to contribute to social organizations more (87%) than those who have not received services (78%), as Figure 44 below shows. The motivation to volunteer also seems to rise after receiving service: One-half of the service beneficiaries volunteered in one of the social organizations, as opposed to only about one-third among non-beneficiaries (Figure 45 below). (An alternative explanation could be that what affects seeking service and volunteering is a third variable, such as awareness of the existence and the role of social organizations, but we have no data to confirm or refute this alternative explanation).

Concerning the quality of service, we asked: "What is your opinion of this claim: 'The state has many and broad areas of responsibility and, therefore, the level of social and economic services it gives the citizens will always be lower by comparison to the services in the same area provided by a social organization, a private philanthropist, or a business firm closer to the citizens and specializing in a particular field?'" The majority (57%) agrees with this claim and holds that the state, due to its extensive activity, will provide services at a lower level than those that social organizations, private philanthropists, or even business firms can provide (43% oppose this claim).

Figure 44

Receiving Services from a Civil Organization, by Contributions (percentages)

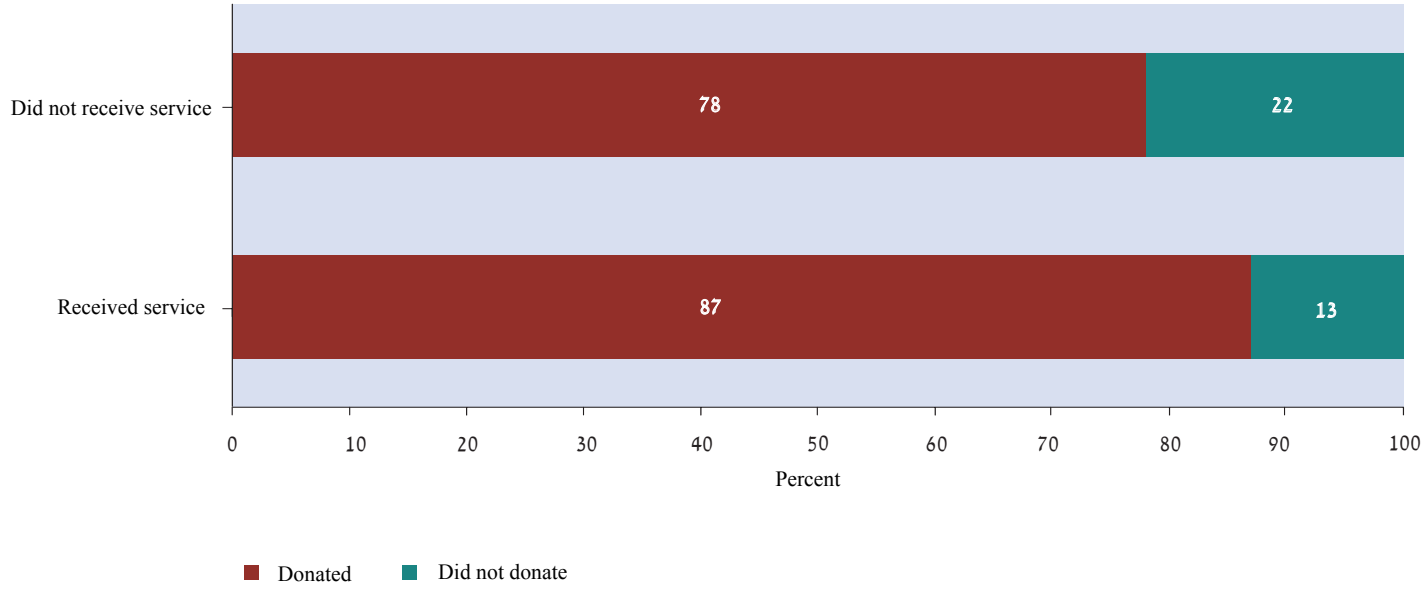
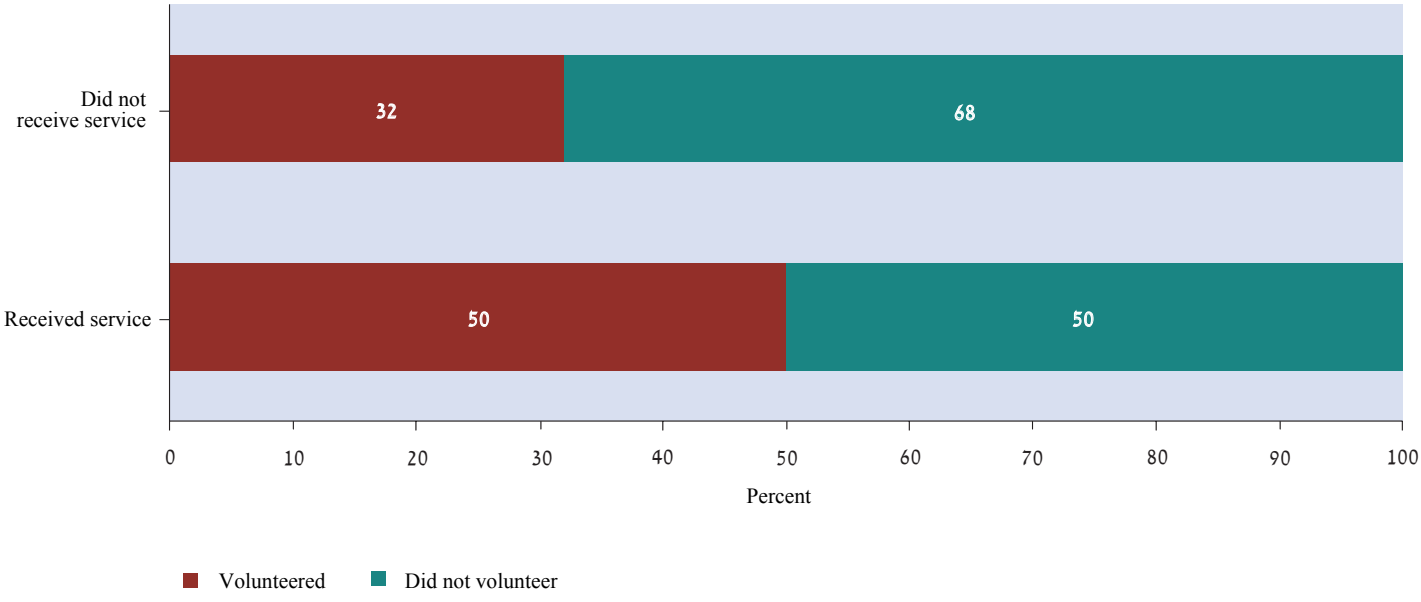


Figure 45

Receiving Services from a Civil Organization, by Volunteering (percentages)

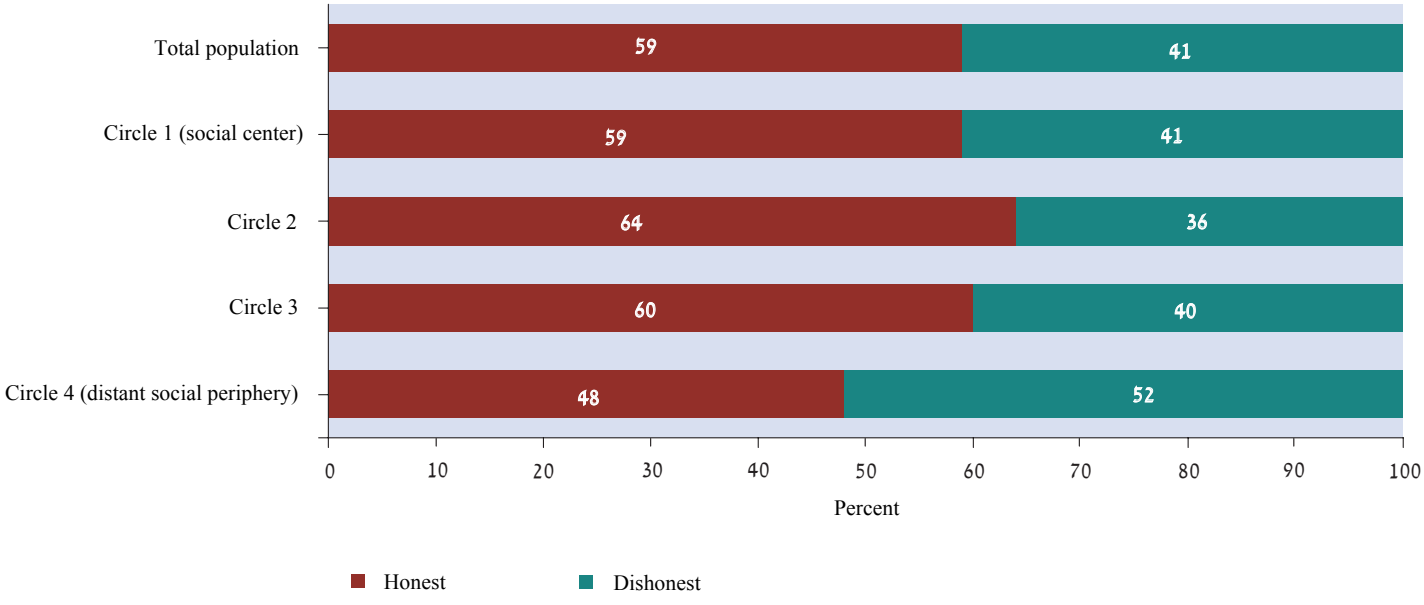


We also examined a possible link between the assessment of the level of services the state can provide as opposed to the level of services that social organizations, private philanthropists, or business concerns can supply, and the preference to obtain services from the state or from other organizations. The rate of respondents preferring to obtain services from the state among those holding that the level of state services is always lower than the services provided by business firms or social organizations is only slightly lower than their rate among those who reject this claim. The finding that respondents who expect a lower level of service from the state also prefer to receive these services from it rather than from social organizations could be attributed to the above assertion that, generally, the preference in Israel is to receive services from the state.

Given the public's widespread conviction about the prevalence of corruption in the established political system – which excludes politicians from the public's "trust range" – we examined how Israelis assess the honesty of social organizations. We asked: "These social organizations, sustained mostly by donations, often have big budgets and large staffs. To what extent can we assume that most of these organizations are honest, that is, that they indeed use the donations only for the intended purpose?" What we found is that suspicion has percolated down here as well. A considerable minority – 41 percent – among respondents holds that social organizations are also dishonest, although a majority – 59 percent – holds they are not corrupt. A breakdown of responses according to respondents' self-location at the center or the periphery shows that people who place themselves in the fourth circle, the distant periphery, are the most suspicious (Figure 46). Only among them, the majority (52%) thinks or is sure that social organizations are not honest, apparently due to their sweeping distrust of all establishments – from state institutions up to civil society organizations.

Figure 46

Assessment of Honesty in Civil Society Organizations (percentages)



E. Summary

The Israeli public is united in its view that the state is in the throes of a deep crisis of governance. This sense is anchored, above all, in the public's perception of politicians and of the behavioral code prevalent in the established political system (and not, for instance, of the current electoral system) as the root of all evil. The established political system is perceived as inattentive, inefficient, and corrupt. This negative perception is particularly strong in the social-political periphery (according to respondents' self-location), and begets an "anti-politics" consciousness, which combines disgust and frustration with professional politicians and political establishments on the one hand, with interest in non-establishment social-political activities at the level of civil society, on the other. Despite the harsh criticism of the established political system, therefore, there is no "de-politization" of the Israeli public. Quite the contrary, most of the public has a strong sense of belonging to society and to the country and is interested in its surroundings; the phenomenon of "exit" or voluntary detachment from political issues is relatively marginal.

The prevalent sense in the public today is that state bodies do not deal properly with current problems. Dissatisfaction is particularly prominent with the handling of social and economic problems and with issues of internal security, and less so with the handling of security and foreign affairs questions. In this context too, dissatisfaction is stronger among respondents who locate themselves in the periphery, as opposed to those who locate themselves at the center.

Civil society and its organizations are appreciated and supported but are perceived by most of the public as an "interim measure" rather than as an agency that can, or should, replace the state in the role of main provider of services to the public. Against this background, we can understand the strong demand of all social circles to restore the state as the main player in the political-social-economic arena – even though many assess that the quality of the services provided by civil society will always be better than those the state can provide.

The reciprocal relationships between the public and civil society come to the fore in the provision or reception of services, but also in donations and voluntarism. Clearly, however, the donations dimension is stronger than the voluntarism dimension, and a personal history of receiving services is associated with a readiness to donate and to volunteer. As for receiving services from civil society organizations, the surprising finding was that respondents who locate themselves in the periphery report receiving such services less than respondents who locate themselves at the center. This report raises the question of whether social organizations successfully locate those who require their services most, or whether parts of the distant periphery remain not only outside the assistance range of the established system but also outside that of civil society. By comparison to the political establishment and to professional politicians, organizations of civil society are indeed perceived as honest, but here too we find harsh criticism of those who locate themselves in the periphery as opposed to

those who locate themselves at the center. Findings show that respondents who locate themselves at the periphery display a large degree of suspicion, not only of the established political system but also of civil society.

Epilogue

If ordinary Israelis were asked to characterize Israel, they would define it as a country with an active civil society and with official political institutions weaker than what they expect. They would probably say that the government could implement policy if it only wished, but too often chooses not to – not to fulfill the regulator's role and not to provide services. The reasons are many and varied – from considerations related to the government coalition to international pressures. Beyond them, however, deep in their hearts, Israelis suspect that politicians refrain from implementing policy due to egoistic considerations (such as the desire to keep their jobs or to help themselves, their family, and their friends).

Yet, the reality on which Israelis base their expectations is changing right in front of their eyes. They do excel at describing the strong regime that had prevailed in Israel in a not too distant past, but as the Democracy Index 2008 shows, things are actually changing – the state is reducing its scope of activity and disclaiming responsibility for economic welfare. It thereby allows the strong to become stronger and the weak to weaken further. Even the IDF is perceived as weaker than it had been given its conduct during the Second Lebanon War. The vacuum that was created has been occupied by NGOs operating for such aims as social justice, civil rights, and the environment.

Ordinary Israelis acknowledge the continued efforts of the people and the many civil organizations acting for worthy aims, and are unhappy with the state's changing patterns of action. They are confused and disappointed. They expect the state to provide services as a self-evident matter. They view their government as the address for demands and complaints. They find difficulty adapting to the changes sweeping the country with the opening of markets, privatization, and global economy. They are also against the changes taking place in the political system, in the parties, and in the politicians' conduct. They are not ready to privatize the government, the political parties, or the politicians.

Israelis are not satisfied with the political system or with politicians. They assess that corruption in Israel is spreading and becoming inseparable from the political system, even more than is acceptable in other countries. Not unrelated to all these – trust in the institutions that had been esteemed in the past, such as the Supreme Court, is sliding on a slippery slope, and trust in elected officials has already touched bottom. The explanation lies partly in the fact that the system – despite the changes taking place – has remained highly centralized, so that the citizens naturally looks up to the top of the pyramid. Israelis understand hierarchy, not processes; they are more interested in action and its results and less in circumstances and excuses.

As noted, the more the government withdraws from the public sphere, civil society enters and fills the vacuum that has been created. Yet, although civil society is supported and trusted by the public, the scope of volunteering to its organizations does not match the scope of support for it. The Israeli public expresses support for civil society and its organizations, but only few invest (some even a great deal of) time and energy in its activities. Despite the high evaluation

of civil society, the public does not think its organizations could replace the state, even in areas where the services of civil society are considered to be of higher quality than those that the state could supply. Civil society and the vital services it provides are not perceived as equal in value to the state and the services it should give, but as a default option or an interim measure. This is the background of the resolute demand of the Israeli public to restore the state's function and reassume its position as the main player in the political-social-economic arena.

According to international measures and other indices we survey every year, Israeli democracy emerges as one progressing in the direction of Western democracies. Nevertheless, the Israeli public gives negative marks to the quality of its democracy. The public's satisfaction with the functioning of Israeli democracy is not high, and the citizens do not relate to Israeli democracy as a self-evident entity. The deepening crisis in all that concerns trust in government institutions and in political leadership – the ability of leaders to lead and their integrity – points to a serious problem of legitimization. Such feelings can accelerate processes that weaken democracy, including refraining from participation in elections. The Israeli public senses that it gives the country a great deal but receives little. It has a sense of belonging and makes a significant contribution in order to live here. Owing to the widening gap between giving and receiving, however, this public may come to refrain from paying taxes because it feels they are wasted and may refuse to serve in an army unprepared for battle.

Israel faces a gloomy plight of lack of balance between the expectations from the state and the developments that prevent the realization of the public's expectations from their country. The state is indeed perceived as an important provider of services and those involved in politics are judged by their actions for the benefit of the public's needs and demands. But when the public thinks that its elected officials act to promote their private interests while the public will is not implemented, a situation dangerous to democracy is created. The Israeli public does not react with alienation or distance from politics, but with feelings that can be defined as anti-politics. These feelings involve longing for the good old days (whether there were good old days or not is a separate question) and with a deepening erosion in the support for the political parties and for the politicians who shape the system. Should these trends persist, citizens' involvement in the political system will gradually decrease as distrust and revulsion become even stronger.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Summary of the Democracy Indices, 2003-2008

1. The Institutional Aspect						
Rating	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
1. Vertical accountability 1–3 (1 = unregulated elections)	3	–	**3**	–	–	–
2. Horizontal accountability 0–6 (0 = high army involvement in politics)	3	3	2.5	2.5	2.5	**2.5**
3. Deviation from the proportionality principle 0–100 (0 = perfect proportionality)	2.55	–	–	**2.72**	–	–
4. Party dominance 100 – [100 number of seats in the lower house] (100 = high dominance, low representativeness)	300	315	324	**413.8**	–	–
5. Level of constraints on the executive in implementing policy 1–7 (1= unlimited authority)	7	–	**7**	–	–	–
6. Scope of constraints on the executive to change policy 0–1 (0 = no limitations)	**0.7864**	–	–	–	–	–
7. Voter turnout in national elections 0–100 (100% = full turnout)	67.8	–	–	**63.5**	–	–
8. Voter turnout out of registered voters 0–100 (100% = full turnout)	74.4	–	–	**70.8**	–	–
9. Voter turnout in local elections 0–100 (100% = full turnout)	57.4	**50**	–	–	–	–
10. Corruption Perceptions Index (TI) 0–10 (0 = high level of corruption)	7.3	7	6.4	6.3	5.9	**6.1**
11. Corruption Index (ICRG) 0–6 (0 = high level of corruption)	3	4	3	3	3	**3**
12. Voice and accountability (WB)* 0–100 (100 = high accountability)	65.7	62.3	66.7	**70.2**	–	–
13. Control of corruption (WB)* 0–100 (100 = high control)	82.4	78.4	73.9	**79.6**	–	–
14. Regulatory Quality (WB)* 0–100 (100 = high control)	76.4	76.4	75.2	**78.0**	–	–
15. Government Effectiveness (WB)* 0–100 (100 = high governance effectiveness)	80.9	86.1	78.0	**83.4**	–	–

2. The Rights Aspect						
Rating	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
1. Competitiveness in participation 1–5 (1 = suppress opposition activities)	5	–	**5**	–	–	–
2. Press freedom 0–100 (0 = full freedom)	30	27	28	28	28	**29**
3. Human rights violations 1–5 (1 = protection of human rights)	**4**	–	–	–	–	–
4. Prisoners per 100,000 population 0–100,000 (0 = few prisoners)	132	143	172	180	158	**165**
5. Prisoners per 100,000 population, including security prisoners 0–100,000 (0 = few prisoners)	173	189	252	265	295	**311**
6. Law and order 0–6 (0 = low respect for law and order)	5	5	5	5	5	**5**
7. Freedom of religion 1–7 (1 = total freedom)	**3**	–	–	–	–	–
8. GINI rating for disposable income 0–1 (0 = full equality)	0.3685	0.3799	0.3878	**0.3834***	–	–
9. GINI rating of income distribution 0–1 (0 = full equality)	0.5265	0.5234	0.5255	**0.5141***	–	–
10. Economic freedom index 0–100 (0 = broad economic freedom)	62.7	61.4	62.4	64.2	64.6	**66.1**
11. Gender Development Rating 0–1 (0 = lack of equality)	0.891	0.900	0.906	0.911	0.925	**0.927**
12. Gender Empowerment Rating 0–1 (0 = lack of equality)	0.596	0.612	0.614	0.622	0.656	**0.660**
13. Political discrimination of the minority 0–4 (0 = no discrimination)	3	–	**3.5**	–	–	–
14. Economic discrimination of the minority 0–4 (0 = no discrimination)	3	–	**3.5**	–	–	–
15. Cultural discrimination of the minority 0–12 (0 = no discrimination)	1	–	**0**	–	–	–
16. Rule of Law (WB)* 0–100 (100 = high control)	75.5	73.1	73.4	**70.0**	–	–

3. The Stability and Cohesion Aspects						
Rating	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
1. Government changes Number of government changes 1996–2006	5	–	5	**4**	–	–
2. Incomplete term of office 0–100 (100% = full term)	77.42	–	–	**82.22**	–	–
3. Weighted political conflict index 0–infinity (0 = no conflict)	3,100	–	**10,462**	–	–	–
4. Religious tensions 0–6 (0 = high tension)	2	3	2.5	2.5	2.5	**2.5**
5. Ethnic tensions 0–6 (0 = high tension)	2	2	2	2	2	**2**
6. Political stability (WB)* 0–100 (100 = high stability)	10.8	11.3	14.2	**14.4**	–	–

* Latest assessments of research institutes, as of March 2008

Appendix 2: Democracy Index 2008 Compared with Democracy Indices 2003–2007

(Full sample; percentages)

1. The Institutional Aspect							
Characteristic in the Index	**Survey questions**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
A. Implementing the accountability principle: perception							
Actions of elected officials relative to the people's preferences	To what extent do you agree or disagree that a politician does not tend to take into account the view of the ordinary citizen? (Disagree)	38	38	42	38	30	**32**
B. Political participation							
1. Level of political participation:							
Staying informed	How often do you stay informed about what's going on in politics through TV, the radio or the press? (every day or several times a week)	87	79	81	82	82	**78**
Talking about politics	To what extent do you tend to talk with your friends and family about political issues? (talk)	69	64	65	67	56	**43**
2. Perception of the implementation of political participation:							
Evaluating participation level	In your opinion, do citizens in Israel participate in politics more or less than they do in other countries? (more)	40	49	37	38	34	**32**
Sense of impact	To what extent can you or your friends influence government policy? (can)	20	18	31	27	24	**19**
C. Representativeness							
	To what extent does the balance of powers in the Knesset express, in your opinion, the distribution of views in the public? (express)	67	–	61	61	56	**57**

1. The Institutional Aspect - Continued							
D. Integrity in government							
Evaluating extent of corruption in Israel	In your opinion, is there more or less corruption in Israel than in other countries? (less)	11	15	22	14	18	**24**

2. The Rights Aspect							
Characteristic in the Index	**Survey questions**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
A. Political and civil rights							
Attitudes to political and civil rights							
	All must have the same rights before the law regardless of political outlook (agree)	83	–	79	86	78	**83**
Freedom of religion	Every couple in Israel should be allowed to marry in any way they wish (agree)	63	60	64	61	54	**55**
Perception of the implementation of rights in Israel in a comparative perspective	In your opinion, is there more or less protection of human rights in Israel than in other countries (less)	27	40	33	39	36	**37**
	And freedom of expression? (less)	15	17	24	19	21	**24**
B. Social and economic rights							
Support for social–economic policy	Concerning the structure of economic life in Israel, do you support a socialist or a capitalist approach? (socialist)	54	60	58	59	59	**63**
Perception of the implementation of social and economic rights	Social and economic equality in Israel is insufficient (agree)	82	88	80	84	72	**76**
C. Equality for minorities							
Readiness for equal rights between Jews and Arabs	To what extent do you support or oppose each one of the following: Arab parties (including Arab ministers) joining the government (support)	38	45	44	41	30	**36**
	Full equality of rights between Jewish and Arab Israeli citizens (support)	53	64	59	60	50	**56**
	Agreement of a Jewish majority is required on decisions fateful to the country, such as returning territories (opposed)	26	23	34	29	34	**38**

2. The Rights Aspect - Continued							
	The government should encourage Arab emigration from the country (opposed) [Jews only]	43	41	50	38	45	**44**
Perception of actual equality	Israeli Arabs suffer from discrimination as opposed to Jewish citizens (agree)	55	64	56	54	55	**47**

3. The Stability Aspect							
Characteristic in the Index	**Survey questions**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
A. Satisfaction with the government	What do you think is Israel's position in general? (not good)	63	54	35	40	50	**34**
	What is your opinion about the way the government deals with the country's problems today? (not good)	78	78	67	74	86	**82**
B. Assessing stability in Israel							
	In your opinion and compared with other democratic countries, is the political system in Israel stable or unstable? (unstable)	63	–	46	53	60	**57**
C. Protest and Opposition							
Opposition to violence	Using violence to attain political aims is never justified (agree)	82	78	82	82	74	**61**
D. Trust in Institutions							
Degree of trust in various institutions	To what degree do you have trust in the following people or institutions? Political parties (have trust)	32	27	22	22	21	**15**
	Prime minister (have trust)	53	45	48	43	21	**17**
	The media (have trust)	49	51	50	44	45	**37**
	Attorney General (have trust)	58	66	60	51	45	**35**
	Supreme Court (have trust)	70	79	72	68	61	**49**
	The police (have trust)	66	66	57	44	41	**33**
	The president (have trust)	68	73	65	67	22	**47**
	The Knesset (have trust)	52	46	40	33	33	**29**
	The IDF (have trust)	84	86	78	79	74	**71**
	Government (have trust)	55	41	42	39	31	**25**
The institution that best protects Israeli democracy	Who best safeguards Israeli democracy – the Prime Minister, the Supreme Court, the Knesset, or the media?						

3. The Stability Aspect - Continued							
	The Prime Minister	18	9	15	15	14	**13**
	The Supreme Court	42	47	48	47	39	**35**
	The Knesset	14	14	13	13	13	**16**
	The media	26	30	24	25	34	**36**
E. Social Trust	In general, do you think that people can be trusted or that one should be very cautious in relationships with others (trusted)	29	33	44	26	31	**31**
F. Social Cleavages	In your opinion, the relationships between religious and secular Jews are good or not good? (good) [Jews only]	24	28	31	26	34	**39**
	And the relationships between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim? (good) [Jews only]	43	53	51	47	45	**57**
	And between Israeli Arabs and Jews? (good)	11	16	11	14	13	**15**
	And between new immigrants and old-timers? (good) [Jews only]	49	40	37	40	38	**53**
	And between rich and poor? (good)	25	24	19	20	22	**19**
Assessing the level of tension between groups in Israel vis-à-vis other countries	In your opinion, is there more or less tension in Israel between groups in the society than in other countries? (less)	7	15	20	15	24	**29**
G. Connection to the community							
Pride in being an Israeli	To what extent are you proud to be an Israeli? (proud)	84	79	83	86	77	**80**
Desire to remain in Israel	Do you want to remain in Israel for the long term? (want)	88	87	89	90	80	**83**
Feels part of Israel and its problems	To what extent do you feel yourself to be part of the State of Israel and its problems? (feels part)	79	73	77	69	59	**56**

4. Democracy: Support and Satisfaction							
Characteristic in the index	**Survey questions**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
Support for democracy	A few strong leaders can be more useful to the country than all the discussions and the laws (disagree)	44	42	43	40	31	**35**
Satisfaction with Israeli democracy	In general, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the functioning of Israeli democracy? (dissatisfied)	49	55	51	54	66	**57**

Notes

1. All the findings are quoted in percentages.
2. The data present the two "high-end " categories concerning democracy for questions offering four or five categories (that is, 1–2 or 3–4 or 4–5) and the high-end category in questions with 2–3 categories (that is, 1 or 2 if the question is dichotomous and 1 or 3 if there are three categories).
3. The Appendix includes some of the questions that appear in the Democracy Survey 2008, by comparison with the previous five years. The questions for which responses are not detailed in Appendix 2 are detailed in Appendix 3.
4. When questions are addressed only to the Jews in the sample, square brackets appear beside the question.
5. The size of the sample in 2008 was 1,201, sampling error was ±2.8 with a 95% confidence level; the size of the sample in 2007 was 1,203, sampling error was ±2.8 with a 95% confidence level; in 2006 the size of the sample was 1,204, sampling error was ±2.8 with a 95% confidence level; the size of the sample in 2005 was 1,203, sampling error was ±2.8 with a 95% confidence level; the size of the sample in 2004 was 1,200, sampling error was ±2.9 with a 95% confidence level; the size of the sample in 2003 was 1,208, sampling error was ±3.1 with a 95% confidence level.

Appendix 3: Distributions in the Democracy Survey, January 2008 (percentages)

1. What is your mood like these days?
   1. Good all the time or almost all the time 23
   2. Good most of the time 39
   3. Sometimes good, sometimes not good 27
   4. Not good most of the time 7
   5. Not good almost all of the time 4

2. Are you worried these days?
   1. Always 12
   2. Almost always 14
   3. Often 20
   4. Sometimes 34
   5. Almost never or never 20

3. Do you think you will be able to adapt to the current situation?
   1. I am sure I will 31
   2. I think I will 49
   3. I think I will not be able to 12
   4. I am sure I will not be able to 8

What do you think about Israel's performance in the following specific areas?

	1 (very poor)		3 (average)		5 (very good)
4. Military-security sphere	19	12	42	19	8
5. Economic sphere	22	18	32	21	7
6. Social sphere	29	20	36	11	4
7. Safeguarding public order	25	20	36	14	5

8. What is your level of trust in the resilience and future existence of Israel?
   1. Definitely trust 26
   2. Trust 31
   3. Quite trust 21
   4. Do not quite trust 13
   5. Do not trust 4
   6. Do not trust at all 5

9. Imagine Israeli society as four concentric circles when the smallest is numbered 1 and denotes the "center" of the society, circle 2 around it denotes the people who are close to the center but do not really belong to it, circle 3 denotes the citizens who are further from the center, and circle 4 denotes those who are furthest from the center. In which of these four circles do you feel you are?
   1. Closest to the center 15
   2. Close to the center but not really there 30
   3. Further from the center 40
   4. Even further from the center 15

10. In your opinion, what is more important for the citizens of Israel, their personal interests or the interests of the country as a whole?
   1. The interests of the country are far more important 25
   2. Personal interests and the interests of the country are equally important 36
   3. Personal interests are far more important 39

11. In general, what do you think is more important to the country's leaders, their personal interests, or the interests of the country as a whole?
   1. The interests of the country are far more important 25
   2. Personal interests and the interests of the country are equally important 23
   3. Personal interests are far more important 52

12. When you compare Israeli politicians today to what you remember or know about Israeli politicians of the past, are those of today better, worse, or equally good?
   1. Today's are better 4
   2. The same 25
   3. Worse 71

To what degree do you have trust in the following people or institutions?

		1 No trust at all	2 Little trust	3 Have some trust	4 A lot of trust
13.	The State Attorney	34	30	26	10
14.	The State Comptroller	25	27	28	20
15.	The Chief of Staff	21	18	31	30

16. In your opinion, is there corruption in Israel or not?
   1. No corruption 1
   2. A little corruption 9
   3. Quite a lot of corruption 30
   4. Large scale corruption 60

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

		1 Definitely disagree	2 Disagree	3 Not sure	4 Agree	5 Definitely agree
17.	A speaker should be forbidden to express harsh criticism of Israel in public	17	26	21	23	13
18.	Men are better political leaders than women	28	29	16	18	9
19.	To reach the top in today's politics in Israel you have to be corrupt	12	19	18	29	22
20.	Every couple in Israel should be allowed to marry in any way they wish	19	17	9	24	31

21. How often do you stay informed about what's going on in politics through TV, the radio or the press?

1. Every day	65
2. Several times a week	13
3. Once or twice a week	11
4. Rarely	9
5. Never	3

22. To what extent, in your opinion, do Knesset members represent the voters' interests successfully?

1. Very successfully	3
2. Successfully	29
3. Not so successfully	43
4. Not at all successfully	25

23. In your opinion, are current Knesset members more or less attentive to their voters than elected parliamentary representatives in other countries?

1. Much more attentive	4
2. More attentive	11
3. Equally attentive	32
4. Slightly less attentive	32
5. Much less attentive	21

24. What do you think about the idea of giving up Knesset elections and shifting to a government of experts prominent in various fields – to be chosen, for instance, by appointing committees – that will take all the decisions?
    1. I like the idea very much 17
    2. I like the idea 23
    3. I dislike the idea 24
    4. I don't like the idea at all 36

25. Have you ever considered entering national or local politics?
    1. Yes 11
    2. No 89

26. If people close to you, a family member or a close friend, were considering entering politics – what would you advise them?
    1. Strongly advise entering politics 7
    2. Advise entering politics 20
    3. Advise not entering politics 21
    4. Strongly advise not entering politics 52

27. What about politics – to what extent are you interested?
    1. Not at all interested 19
    2. Somewhat uninterested 19
    3. Somewhat interested 41
    4. Very interested 21

28. Have you ever been involved in any activity related to politics(except for voting), such as going to demonstrations, handing out stickers, joining a party, organizing or participating in a political meeting?
    1. No 74
    2. Yes (what?) Describe: 26
        (a) Participated in demonstrations 16
        (b) Joined a political party 4
        (c) Handed out stickers 3
        (d) Participated in a political meeting 1
        (e) Organized a political meeting 1
        (f) Don't remember 1

29. In some countries, when a very important issue – such as a peace treaty – is on the agenda, the citizens take part in it through a referendum. No referendum has ever been conducted in Israel. In your opinion, when fateful decisions are at stake, would it be advisable to involve the Israeli public in the decision by conducting a referendum?
    1. Very advisable 46
    2. Advisable 29
    3. Not advisable 15
    4. Not at all advisable 10

30. As we know, the state used to fulfill many social and economic roles that today are fulfilled by social organizations and business companies. Some claim that the restriction of state involvement in social and economic areas is a good thing, whereas others think it would have been preferable for the state to continue fulfilling these roles. With which of these claims do you agree more?
    1. More with the claim that for the state to reduce its involvement in social and economic areas is a good thing 28
    2. More with the claim that it would be preferable if the state had continued its previous involvement in social and economic realms 53
    3. I don't know 19

31. Many organizations are active in Israel today, such as "Latet," "Yad Sarah," "Israel Cancer Association," "Zaka," and so forth. Have you ever donated money to one or more of these organizations?
    1. Yes 80
    2. No 20

32. Have you ever volunteered for any social organization?
    1. Yes 37
    2. No 63

33. Have you ever received services from one or more of these organizations?
    1. Yes 23
    2. No 77

34. If you had to receive a particular service, would you prefer to receive it from a social organization or from a state entity?
    1. Prefer to receive the service from the social organization 29
    2. Prefer to receive the service from a state entity 46
    3. It makes no difference 25

35. What is your opinion about the following claim: "The state has many and broad areas of responsibility. The level of social and economic services it provides the citizens will always be lower by comparison to the services in the same area provided by a social organization, a private philanthropist, or a business firm closer to the citizens and specializing in a particular field."
    1. Strongly disagree 18
    2. Disagree 25
    3. Agree 42
    4. Strongly agree 15

36. These social organizations, sustained mostly by donations, often have big budgets and large staffs. To what extent can we assume that most of these organizations are honest, that is, that they indeed use the donations only for the intended purpose?

1. Sure that most are honest	11
2. Think that most are honest	48
3. Think that most are not honest	26
4. Sure that most are not honest	15

37. If you were about to go to the army now, what would you do?

1. I would make an effort to avoid army service	23
2. I would enlist, but only as a non-combatant	13
3. I would enlist and let the IDF determine my placement	32
4. I would enlist and ask to serve as a combatant	18
5. I would enlist and volunteer for an elite combat unit	14

38. Some would say that people in Israel should now be asked to be ready to make many concessions and lower their standard of living (buy less, pay more taxes, etc.). Do you agree with this?

1. Yes, people should definitely be ready for many concessions	12
2. They should perhaps be ready for many concessions	15
3. Perhaps they should not be ready for many concessions	16
4. No, people should definitely not be ready for many concessions	57

39. In light of the current situation, do you feel that the government requires from you personally:

1. Too many concessions	42
2. The right measure of concessions	42
3. Too few concessions	16

40. To what extent are you interested in politics?

1. To a large extent	23
2. To some extent	34
3. To a small extent	26
4. Not at all	17

41. How often do you tend to talk with your friends and family about political issues?

1. Very often	11
2. Often	32
3. Seldom	33
4. Very seldom	24

42. There is much talk about left and right in politics. Where would you rank yourself along a left–right continuum, when 1 is the right end and 7 the left end?

1– Right	2	3	4	5	6	7 – Left
20	10	19	26	12	5	8

43. What is your position concerning the evacuation of Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria in a final settlement?
    1. There should be no evacuation under any circumstances 46
    2. Ready to evacuate all the small and isolated settlements 30
    3. Ready to evacuate all settlements, including the large settlement blocs 14
    4. Don't know 10

[For Jews] Which of the following terms best defines your identity?
The first? The second? The third? The fourth?
1 Israeli 2 Jewish 3 My ethnic group (Ashkenazi/Sephardi) 4 My secularism/religiosity

	Israeli	Jewish	Ethnic group	Secular/religious
44. First	42	47	3	8
45. Second	35	37	11	17
46. Third	12	12	37	39
47. Fourth	12	6	49	33

[For Arabs] Which of the following terms best defines your identity?
The first? The second? The third? The fourth?
1 Israeli 2 Palestinian 3 Arab 4 My Religion (Muslim\Christian\Druze)

	Israeli	Palestinian	Arab	My religion
48. First	18	25	49	8
49. Second	18	29	37	16
50. Third	10	26	35	29
51. Fourth	42	5	5	48

Notes

1. All the results are percentages.
2. The size of the sample in 2008 was 1201, sampling error was ±2.8 with a 95% confidence level; the size of the sample in 2007: 1203; the sampling error at a 95% level of confidence is ± 2.8. In 2006: 1204; the sampling error at a 95% level of confidence is ±2.8. The size of the sample in 2005: 1203; sampling error at a 95% level of confidence ± 2.8. The size of the sample in 2004: 1200; sampling error at a 95% level of confidence ± 2.9. The size of the sample in 2003: 1200; sampling error at a 95% level of confidence ± 3.1.

Appendix 4: Location on the Center–Periphery Continuum (Self-Defined)

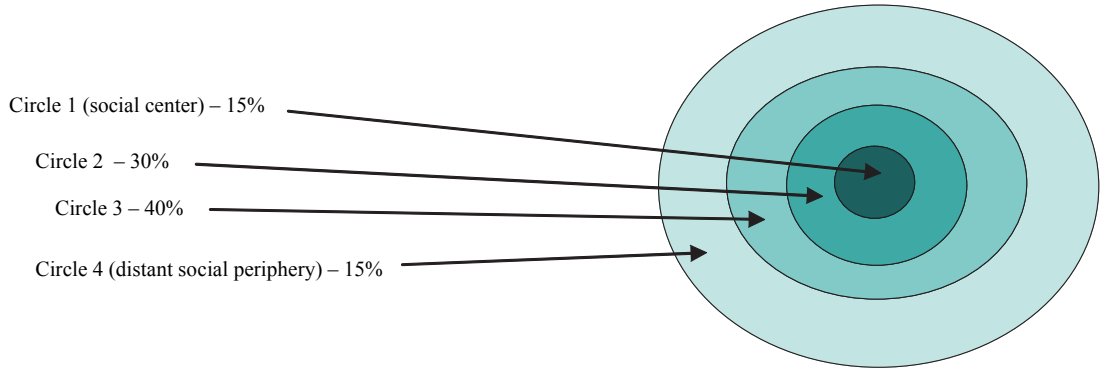
In the Survey, we asked the following question: "Imagine Israeli society as four concentric circles when the smallest, numbered 1, denotes the "center" of the society, circle 2 around it denotes the people who are close to the center but do not really belong to it, circle 3 denotes the citizens who are further from the center, and circle 4 denotes those who are furthest from the center. In which of these four circles do you feel you are?" Results are presented in Figure A-1.

The figure shows that almost half – 45 percent (15%+30%) – of the Israeli public locate themselves at the center or in the adjacent circle, whereas the other half – 55 percent (15%+40%) – feel further away. Only 15 percent of the public feel that they are in the periphery that is furthest from the center.

We tried to find which Israelis feel they are at the center and which feel far from it. In this context, we examined the following variables: nationality, gender, age, ethnic extraction (Jewish sample only), income, education, self-defined class ascription. Fascinating findings emerged from the social-demographic breakdown of the self-location along the center–periphery continuum, some expected, and others less so. Table A-1 below presents the averages (ranging 1–4) for all the categories examined. A low average attests to a self-location **close** to the center – circle 1 – and a high average attests to great distance from the center – circle 4.

Figure A-1

Location on the Center–Periphery Continuum (Self-Defined)



Averages show that some of the common hypotheses about the place of certain groups in Israeli society, at the center or at the periphery, rest on an empirical basis – for instance, the fact that Jewish Israelis' sense of belonging is stronger than non-Jews'. But other assumptions were not confirmed and were even refuted – for instance, that men sense that they belong more strongly than women, or that the rich sense that they belong more strongly than the poor. Furthermore, we found that a sense of centeredness or of peripherality is not strongly associated with objective measures. For instance, although women and Arabs are not adequately represented in the media,[96] and suffer economic discrimination,[97] these facts are not proportionately manifest in these groups' sense of belonging or of peripherality. The most interesting finding, however, is probably an absence of large differences between the averages of the 25 categories presented in the table, all ranging between 2 and 3 (minimum 2.36; maximum 2.84). This closeness between the averages of the various categories indicates that, at least concerning self-location vis-à-vis the center, Israeli society is more homogeneous than commonly thought.

96 On the continued non-representation in the media of Arabs and other groups targeted for discrimination, such as women and new immigrants, see, for instance, *Present and Absent at Prime Time: Research Report,* Second Authority for Television and Radio. www.rashut2.org.il/editor/uploadfiles/final%20134.pdf

97 See, for instance, the reports of The Israel Women's Network on the discrimination of women in the area of salaries www.iwn.org.il/inner.asp?newsid=32 and in the area of political representation www.iwn.org.il/innerEn.asp?newsid=163

Table A-1

Self-Location Center–Periphery Continuum (groups averages)

		Group Average (1–4)
Nationality		
	Jewish Israelis	2.50
	Non-Jewish Israelis	2.71
Gender		
	Women	2.51
	Men	2.58
Age		
	18–25	2.53
	26–45	2.56
	46–65	2.42
	66+	2.72
Ethnic group (Jews only)		
	Ashkenazim, 1st and 2nd generation	2.36
	Mizrahim, 1st and 2nd generation	2.45
	Israelis, 3rd generation and later	2.51
	CIS Immigrants, 1st and 2nd generation	2.56
Observe Tradition		
	Not at all	2.62
	Slightly	2.45
	To a large extent	2.49
	Meticulously	2.79
Education		
	Elementary	2.84
	Secondary	2.56
	Academic	2.50
Income		
	Below average	2.55
	Average	2.50
	Above average	2.63
Class		
	Upper + upper-middle	2.37
	Middle	2.62
	Lower + lower-middle	2.63

Appendix 5: Calendar of Events, May 2007 – May 2008

The Executive Power

The 31st Government of Israel (as of 1 April 2008)

Ministry	Minister	Faction
Prime Minister	Ehud Olmert	Kadima
Deputy Prime Minister	Haim Ramon	Kadima
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Acting Prime Minister	Tzipi Livni	Kadima
Minister of Defense	Ehud Barak	Not Knesset member
Minister of Finance	Ronnie Bar–On	Kadima
Minister of Justice	Daniel Friedmann	Not Knesset member
Minister of Internal Affairs	Meir Sheetrit	Kadima
Minister of Transportation and Road Safety	Shaul Mofaz	Kadima
Minister of Industry, Trade and Labor	Eliyahu Yishai	Shas
Minister of Communications	Ariel Atias	Shas
Minister of Education	Yuli Tamir	Labor–Meimad
Minister of Health	Yaakov Ben Yizri	Gil Pensioners Party
Minister of Internal Security	Abraham Dicter	Kadima
Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development	Shalom Simhon	Labor–Meimad
Minister of Science, Culture and Sport	Raleb Majadele	Labor–Meimad
Minister of Environmental Protection	Gideon Ezra	Kadima
Minister of Pensioner Affairs	Rafi Eitan	Gil Pensioners Party
Minister of Immigration Absorption	Jacob Edery	Kadima
Minister for the Development of the Negev and the Galilee	Jacob Edery	Kadima
Minister of Welfare and Social Services	Isaac Herzog	Labor–Meimad
Minister of Diaspora Affairs, Social Affairs, and the Struggle against Anti-Semitism	Isaac Herzog	Labor–Meimad
Minister of Housing and Construction	Ze'ev Boim	Kadima
Minister of National Infrastructure	Binyamin Ben–Eliezer	Labor–Meimad
Minister of Religious Affairs	Yitzhak Cohen	Shas
Ministers without Portfolio	Ruhama Avraham Balila Ami Ayalon Meshulam Nahari	Kadima Labor–Meimad Shas
Deputy Minister of Defense	Matan Vilnai	Labor–Meimad
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs	Majalli Whbee	Kadima

Key Dates, May 2007 – May 2008

May 2007

Winograd Report	**1**	Interim report of the Winograd Commission on the Second Lebanon War strongly criticizes the failures of the political echelon during the war. Members of the Kadima Knesset faction align behind Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.
Government	**1**	Minister without Portfolio Eitan Cabel (Labor–Meimad) resigns from the government after the interim report of the Winograd Commission. MK Avigdor Itzhaky (Kadima) resigns his position as coalition chairperson following the publication of the report.
Police	**1**	Police Major General Dudi Cohen is appointed as the 16th Police Commissioner.
Demonstration	**3**	Over 100,000 people demonstrate at Rabin Square and demand the resignation of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert following the Winograd Commission's interim report.
The New General Labor Federation (Histadrut)	**14**	Elections at the New General Labor Federation: Ofer Einy is elected chairperson.
Parties	**28**	First round of elections for the leadership of the Labor Party, with five candidates contending: former Prime Minister Ehud Barak (35.6%); MK Ami Ayalon (30.4%); the incumbent chair, Minister Amir Peretz (22%); MK Ofir Pines–Paz (8%); and MK Dani Yatom (2.2%). In the first round, none of them gains the required 40 percent of the vote, and a second round is therefore set for 12 June.
President	**30**	Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres announces his candidacy for the presidency.

June 2007

Parties	**6**	Ehud Barak announces that, under his leadership, the Labor Party will leave the government unless Prime Minister Ehud Olmert resigns before the publication of the Winograd Report's final conclusions.
Parties	**12**	In the second round of the elections for the leadership of the Labor Party, Ehud Barak, with 53 percent of the vote, defeats Ami Ayalon, who receives 47 percent of the vote.
President	**13**	The Knesset elects Shimon Peres, aged 84, as Israel's ninth President.

Knesset	**13**	Changes in the Knesset: Isaac Ben-Israel (Kadima) joins the Knesset instead of Shimon Peres.
	15	Minister of Defense Amir Peretz resigns, and so does his deputy, MK Ephraim Sneh.
Government	**18**	The government confirms the appointment of Ehud Barak as Minister of Defense who, on the same day, takes his oath of office at the Knesset.
President	**28**	Attorney General Menny Mazuz signs a lenient plea bargain with President Moshe Katsav. As part of the settlement, Katsav assumes personal responsibility and agrees to resign; rape charges will be erased from the indictment, but he will admit to charges of non-consensual indecent assault and sexual harassment.
	29	Moshe Katsav submits his resignation to the Speaker of the Knesset, Dalia Itzik. Following his resignation, Itzik, who had been substituting for the president, becomes acting president.

July 2007

Government	**1**	Minister of Finance Abraham Hirschson submits his resignation from the government, following a police investigation on suspicions of misappropriation of public funds.
	4	Rotation in government portfolios: Ronnie Bar–On is appointed Minister of Finance; Meir Sheetrit, Minister of Interior; Zeev Boim, Minister of Housing; Jacob Edery, Minister of Absorption and Minister for Development of the Negev and the Galilee; Ruhama Abraham Balila, Minister without Portfolio; Haim Ramon, Deputy Prime Minister.
Knesset	**9**	The Knesset passes the second and third reading of the bill submitted by Minister of Justice Daniel Friedman limiting terms of office for court presidents – the president, the vice–president, and the deputy president – to seven years.
Parties	**9**	Silvan Shalom (Likud) announces his withdrawal from the contest for the Likud leadership and attacks the candidate Benjamin Netanyahu.
President	**15**	Shimon Peres takes his oath of office as the ninth President of Israel.
Knesset	**17**	The Knesset ratified the extension of the Tal law for five years.
President	**23**	President Shimon Peres approves the clemency plea of former MK Naomi Blumenthal and commutes her prison term to a two months suspended sentence and six months community service.
Media	**30**	Launching of *Israel Today* – a new freebie – owned by billionaire media publisher Sheldon Edelson.

August 2007

Primaries	**14**	Primaries for the Likud leadership: Benjamin Netanyahu wins 73 percent of the vote and defeats Moshe Feiglin (23.5%).

September 2007

Poverty Report	**4**	The National Insurance Institute publishes the 2006 Poverty Report, showing that poverty figures are no longer growing but the rate of the working poor is on the rise. In 2006, 1,650,000 people in Israel lived below the poverty line.
Government	**24**	The Knesset confirms the appointment of MK Ami Ayalon (Labor) as Minister without Portfolio. MK Eli Aflalo (Kadima) is appointed as coalition chair.

October 2007

Knesset	**8**	Changes in the Knesset: Jonathan Plessner (Kadima) replaces Shlomo Breznitz.
Prime Minister	**14**	Attorney General Menny Mazuz orders the opening of a criminal inquiry against Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on a suspicion of fraud and breach of trust offenses in two affairs: the Investment Center and the political appointments at the Small Business Authority.
Parties	**16**	MK Moshe Sharoni (Gil) is removed as faction chairperson.
Knesset	**17**	The Knesset concludes first reading of a bill that authorizes the court to deny citizenship for breach of trust offenses.
Knesset	**24**	The House Committee of the Knesset recommends the removal of MK Moshe Sharoni (Gil) as chairperson of the Labor, Welfare, and Health Committee, two hours after the Committee ratified his bill to increase old-age pensions from 20 percent to 26 percent of the average salary.
Prime Minister	**29**	Prime Minister Ehud Olmert announces at a press conference that he suffers from prostate cancer.
Knesset	**31**	The Knesset plenum approves a preliminary reading of two bills stating that an Israeli citizen who visits an enemy country will not be able to contend for a Knesset seat.

November 2007

12th Anniversary of Yitzhak Rabin's murder	**4**	Thousands attended the memorial rally in Tel Aviv. The Prime Minister's murderer Yigal Amir celebrates in jail the circumcision of his first-born son.

IDF	**6**	According to IDF data, 27 percent of men and 43 percent of women of enlistment age do not join the army. Religious grounds are the main reason for non-enlistment.
Jerusalem	**14**	The Knesset ratifies the preliminary reading of a bill stating that any concession of territory in Jerusalem will require a majority of 80 Knesset members.
Annapolis	**27**	Regional leaders gather in Annapolis and agree to reach a comprehensive solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict until the end of 2008.

December 2007

State Attorney	**17**	Moshe Lador replaces Eran Shendar as State Attorney.
Legislation	**17**	The Knesset ratifies the third reading of the "Big Brother Law," enabling the court to allow a police officer or another investigating authority to retrieve information from databases.
Knesset	**18**	The Knesset ratifies the second and third reading of two bills intended to reduce social gaps: negative income tax and a more egalitarian distribution of the tax burden (lowering income tax rates).
Knesset	**27**	The Knesset ratified the third reading of the state budget, set at 304 billion NIS.
	31	The Report of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee emphasizes the failure of the IDF in the Second Lebanon War, and refrains almost entirely from dealing with the government's functioning.
Israel's population	**31**	The Central Bureau of Statistics publishes on the eve of 2008 that the population of Israel is 7.241 million, of them 75.6 percent Jews (growth of 1.7%).

January 2008

Government	**6**	Two years after the dismantling of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the government decides to re-establish it. Yitzhak Cohen (Shas), who had officiated as Minister without Portfolio, is appointed to head it.
Commission of Inquiry	**7**	The Knesset State Control Committee decides to establish a state commission of inquiry to examine the government's assistance to Holocaust survivors.
Political	**9**	United States President George Bush comes to Israel and to the Palestinian Authority for a three-day visit.
Government	**16**	Yisrael Beitenu announces it will leave the coalition following the negotiations on core issues with the Palestinians.

Knesset	**20**	Former Supreme Court Justice Dalia Dorner is appointed to head the state commission of inquiry to examine state support of Holocaust survivors.
Winograd Report	**30**	After 16 months, the Winograd Commission submits its final report to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense.

February 2008

Minister of Defense	**3**	Labor leader Ehud Barak announces he will remain in the government despite the publication of the Winograd Commission's conclusions.
Knesset	**10**	Changes in the Knesset: Shlomo Mula (Kadima) replaces Avigdor Itzhaky, who resigned from the Knesset.
Immigration	**24**	The Central Bureau of Statistics publishes that 18,129 new immigrants came to Israel in 2007. This is the lowest number of immigrants arriving in Israel since 1988.
Knesset	**25**	The Knesset ratifies the second and third reading of a bill whereby all forms of organization, exhortation or encouragement of Nazism or racism will be illegal and will be considered a criminal offense

March 2008

Knesset	**11**	The amendment to the Knesset Elections Law passes the second and third reading. The law states that, in the elections to the 18th Knesset, the period of propaganda broadcasts will be shortened from 21 to 14 days.
Parties	**18**	Chaim Oron (Meretz) replaces Yossi Beilin as party leader, winning 55 percent of the vote among 15,000 party members, in a contest against Ran Cohen and Zahava Gal–On.

April 2008

Katsav affair	**8**	In a surprising move, the former president retracts from his agreement to a plea bargain with the prosecution.

May 2008

Prime Minister	**9**	On the eve of Independence Day, the information is released for publication that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is under police investigation for the unlawful receipt of money from businessman Morris Talansky through advocate Uri Messer. Olmert pledges to resign if indicted.