Life in Israel Today

The 2017 Israeli Democracy Index (the fifteenth in the series) examines multiple aspects of Israel's democracy, including its structure, effectiveness, and values. The Index offers a multifaceted, up-to-date portrait of Israeli public opinion, identifying ongoing trends as well as new phenomena in the political and social arenas.

68% of the total sample optimistic about Israel’s future

84% of the total sample believe that Israel is a good place to live

74% of the total sample believe that it is more difficult for young people to manage in life today than it was for the previous generation

81% of the total sample would prefer to remain in Israel even if they had the option of receiving American citizenship or the citizenship of any other Western country

Life in Israel is more difficult than life in most Western countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>do not agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(of the total sample)
Political (dis)Function

‘Israeli democracy is in grave danger’

by political affiliation (Jewish Respondents)

Left wing: 72%
Center: 48%
Right wing: 23%

of the total sample

Jews

agree: 56%
do not agree: 41%
do not know: 3%

Arabs

agree: 65%
do not agree: 26%
do not know: 9%

of the total sample
‘The government does not deal properly with Israel’s primary issues’

Agree, by political affiliation (Jewish respondents)

- **Left wing**: 91%
- **Center**: 73%
- **Right wing**: 49%

64% of the total sample agree.

Large income disparities among Israeli citizens negatively affect the state’s democratic character

(of the total sample)

- **Agree**: 60%
- **Disagree**: 36%
- **Do not know**: 4%
Political (dis)Function

(of the total sample)

The power of judicial review over Knesset legislation should be taken away from the Supreme Court

- **Agree**: 36%
- **Do not agree**: 58%
- **Do not know**: 6%

agree that politicians concern themselves with their own interests rather than the public interest

- **Agree**: 65%

agree that politicians are disconnected from the problems and needs of the public

- **Agree**: 80%

agree that the rules of democracy work well on paper but do not work well when it comes to managing a country effectively

- **Agree**: 41.5%

believe that they cannot influence government policy

- **78%**
Political (dis)Function

Israeli citizens can trust the state to help them when they are in trouble
(of the total sample)

Even though most of the country voted right wing, the left-wing legal system, media, and academia are not allowing the right wing to govern
(of the total sample)

Agree, by political affiliation
(Jewish respondents)

- Right wing: 72%
- Center: 22%
- Left wing: 11%

Agree: 46%
Disagree: 53%
Do not know: 1%
**What does a democratic state mean to you?**

- Freedom and freedom of expression:
  - Jewish Israelis: 46%
  - Arab Israelis: 46.5%

- Equality:
  - Jewish Israelis: 11%
  - Arab Israelis: 26%

- Sovereignty of the people and a responsive government; majority rule:
  - Jewish Israelis: 19%
  - Arab Israelis: 1%

- Human rights and civil liberties; dignity:
  - Jewish Israelis: 3%
  - Arab Israelis: 10%

- Separation of powers, a constitution:
  - Jewish Israelis: 6%
  - Arab Israelis: 2.5%

- Pluralism and concern for minorities:
  - Jewish Israelis: 5%
  - Arab Israelis: 2.5%

**Which aspect, Jewish or democratic, would you like to be stronger?** (Jewish respondents)

- The Jewish aspect: 23%
- The democratic aspect: 32%
- Both aspects in equal measure: 43%
- Do not know: 2%
What does a Jewish state mean to you? (open question)

**Jewish respondents**

- Primarily nationality: 47%
- Primarily religion: 30%
- Democracy and tolerance: 9.5%
- Negative connotation: 4%

**Arab respondents**

- Racism: 29%
- Belongs to Jews only: 26%
- Not democratic: 18%
- Positive connotation: 8%
Jewish and/or Democratic?

Anyone who refuses to declare that Israel is the nation state of the Jewish people should lose the right to vote

- **Agree**: 44%
- **53%**
- **3%** Do not know

**Agree, by political affiliation**
- **Right wing**: 65%
- **Center**: 34%
- **Left wing**: 10%

**Agree, by level of religious observance**
- **Ultra-Orthodox**: 64%
- **National religious**: 62%
- **Traditional religious**: 55%
- **Traditional non-religious**: 50%
- **Secular**: 29%
Fake News?

The media portray the situation in Israel as much worse than it really is (the total sample)

- **Agree**: 56%
- **Disagree**: 40%
- **Do not know**: 4%

If the government funds the public broadcasting authority, it should be able to influence the content of its broadcast (the total sample)

- **Agree**: 31%
- **Do not agree**: 66%
- **Do not know**: 3%


## Fake News?

### What is the primary source of your information on political topics?

*(respondents were allowed to give more than one answer)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Jews</th>
<th>Arabs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television (broadcast/Internet)</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print media</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networks (Facebook/Twitter)</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online blogs</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with friends/family</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### There should be a law that would allow the closure of a media outlet in the event that it criticizes government policy too severely

*(the total sample)*

- **74%** Do not agree
- **23%** Agree
- **3%** Do not know
Trust in the State’s Institutions

Which State institutions do Israelis trust?

Jews

- IDF: 88%
- President of Israel: 71%
- Supreme Court: 57%
- Attorney General: 44%
- Police: 42%
- Media: 30%
- Government: 30%
- Knesset: 27%
- Chief Rabbinate: 20%
- Political Parties: 15%

Arabs

- Sharia/Qanun Courts: 59%
- Supreme Court: 54%
- IDF: 41%
- President of Israel: 34%
- Attorney General: 31%
- Police: 29%
- Government: 22.5%
- Knesset: 19%
- Media: 18%
- Political Parties: 16%
Human and civil rights organizations such as the Association for Civil Rights in Israel and B’tselem damage the State of Israel

12% of Arab respondents agree

59% of Jewish respondents agree

There are people in Israel who use the right of freedom of expression to harm the State

Agree, by political affiliation (Jewish respondents)

89% Right wing
72% Center
43% Left wing

Illegal refugees and immigrants are eroding the character of Israeli society

Agree, by level of religious observance (Jewish respondents)

74% Ultra-Orthodox
71% National religious
63% Traditional religious
58% Traditional non-religious
32.5% Secular
In an examination of international indices for quality of governance and the functioning of the political system, Israel's rankings as a democracy are not bad compared with all the countries in the sample, but are at the bottom as compared with OECD countries.

**Rights and Liberties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentile of OECD countries</th>
<th>Percentile of all countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political rights (FREEDOM HOUSE)</td>
<td>14-26</td>
<td>71-75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil rights (FREEDOM HOUSE)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>59-61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of the Press (FREEDOM HOUSE)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>67-68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil rights (THE ECONOMIST)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>46-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation and accountability (THE WORLD BANK)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Green: Percentile of OECD countries
- Black: Percentile of all countries
Israel and the World

The Democratic Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political participation (THE ECONOMIST)</th>
<th>89-94</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic equal rights (V-Dem)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic participation (V-Dem)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberative democracy (V-Dem)</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic political culture (THE ECONOMIST)</td>
<td>43-51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85-89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Governance

| The government’s functioning (THE ECONOMIST) | 43-46 |
|                                            | 83-84 |
| The rule of law (THE WORLD BANK)           | 37    |
|                                            | 84    |
| Corruption perception (TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL) | 37 |
|                                            | 84    |
The Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) is an independent center of research and action dedicated to strengthening the foundations of Israeli democracy. IDI works to bolster the values and institutions of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. A non-partisan think-and-do tank, the institute harnesses rigorous applied research to influence policy, legislation and public opinion. The institute partners with government, policy and decision makers, civil service and society, to improve the functioning of the government and its institutions, confront security threats while preserving civil liberties, and foster solidarity within Israeli society. Israel recognized the positive impact of IDI’s research and recommendations by conferring upon the institute its most prestigious award, the Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement.

The Guttman Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research holds the largest, most comprehensive database on public opinion surveys in Israel. Over a span of 60 years and through more than 1,200 surveys, the center has applied rigorous, innovative and pioneering research methods to document the attitudes of the Israeli public regarding thousands of issues in all aspects of life: politics, culture, ideology, religion, education and national security. The center surveys attitudes and measures social indicators, helping policymakers understand trends in Israeli society and craft sound policies that are grounded in data.

The Israeli Democracy Index, a project of the Israel Democracy Institute’s Guttman Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research, offers an annual assessment of the quality of Israeli democracy. For each of the last fourteen years, a comprehensive survey of a representative sample of the Israeli population has been carried out for this purpose. This year’s survey was conducted in May and was comprised of 1,531 respondents. The mission of the Israeli Democracy Index is to document trends in Israeli society as they relate to crucial issues associated with the perpetuation of democratic values.

In furtherance of this goal, the Index gauges the functioning of government institutions and representatives. Analysis of the survey’s results is meant to enrich the discussion of relevant public policy issues in Israel as well as create a comprehensive database that can serve to deepen the public discourse on the state of Israel’s democracy.

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