THE 2006 ISRAELI DEMOCRACY INDEX

Auditing Israeli Democracy
Changes in Israel's Political Party System:
Dealignment or Realignment?

Asher Arian, Nir Atmor, Yael Hadar

The President's Conference – Israeli Democracy Examined

Auditing Israeli Democracy – 2006
Changes in Israel's Political Party System:
Dealignment or Realignment?

Asher Arian, Nir Atmor, Yael Hadar

The Israel Democracy Institute is an independent body that assists the Knesset and its committees, government ministries, official institutions, local government bodies, and political parties by submitting research findings and proposing reforms.

The Israel Democracy Institute fulfills its public charge by presenting comparative information on legislation and on the functioning of democratic regimes. It strives to enrich public discourse and encourage new ways of thinking by launching discussions with legislators, executives, and academics on significant issues on the political, social, and economic agenda, and by publishing its research findings.

The Guttman Center was established at the Israel Democracy Institute in 1998, when the Guttman Institute for Applied Social Research was transferred to the IDI. The Guttman Institute was founded in 1949 by Professor Louis Guttman as a pioneering center for the study of public opinion and for the advancement of social science methodology. The goal of the Guttman Center is to enrich public discourse on public policy issues through the information retrieved from the Center's databases and through the public opinion surveys it conducts.

The President's Conference
May 2006
ISRAELI DEMOCRACY EXAMINED

THE 2006
ISRAELI DEMOCRACY INDEX
Auditing Israeli Democracy
Changes in Israel's Political Party System:
Dealignment or Realignment?

Asher Arian, Nir Atmor, Yael Hadar

The Guttman Center
of
The Israel Democracy Institute

Asher Arian – Senior Fellow, the Israel Democracy Institute; Professor of Political Science at the University of Haifa and the City University of New York

Nir Atmor – Research Assistant, the Israel Democracy Institute

Yael Hadar – Research Assistant, the Israel Democracy Institute

Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables

Acknowledgements

Summary of the Democracy Index 2006

Israeli citizens are indifferent to party politics. They no longer consider old party struggles relevant, and few retain a sense of strong identification with one party or another. Although Israelis are extremely interested in politics, talk about politics, and are much more knowledgeable about it than in the past, their level of political activity is low and they do not translate their political interest into actual involvement. This crisis has diverse sources: there is a sense that the ability to influence government policy is low, political corruption is worrisome, and satisfaction with the rule of law and with the leaders is decreasing. All these elements have resulted in a lower voter turnout in the 2006 elections, and their implications for the legitimacy of the government and for the democratic regime should evoke unease among people involved in politics, and not only among them.

Israel is a country that creates and consumes news. 73% of the respondents in the Democracy Survey 2006 reported an interest in politics, 82% reported that they stay informed about politics daily or several times a week through television, radio, and the press, and 67% discuss political issues with their friends and their families. These rates are higher than those found in any other country we considered. But the public's high interest in politics is not translated into action. The link between voters and elected officials translates into distance and alienation, as particularly evident in the fact that only 27% of respondents said they believe in their ability to influence government policy.

The Israeli citizens' level of trust in politicians has decreased considerably over the last few years. Only 22% trust political parties, less than any other public institution, 62% hold that corruption in Israel is high, and about half of the respondents hold that a candidate has to be corrupt in order to get to the top. 51% view themselves as close to a specific party, only 10% think that the country's leaders care for the public good, and only 17% agree that politicians keep the promises they made during election campaigns. 68% report they do not support, are not members, and are not active in any specific party, and only 6% are party members. Furthermore, 61% agree that strong leaders can be more useful to the country than all the discussions and laws.

An additional explanation for the trend of detachment from politics in general and from the political parties in particular may be found in a tendency toward ideological blurring between the large parties: 36% of the Jewish respondents hold that the differences between the large parties on issues of defense and foreign policy are small or nonexistent – a definite rise since 1992 (13%).

As usual, participants in the Democracy Survey were asked for their opinion about the country's institutions. The most significant finding points to a 13% drop in the degree of public trust in the police, a 22% drop when compared to the 2004 survey. Note that the current survey was conducted at the beginning of February 2006, close to the events surrounding the evacuation

of the Amona outpost, when the police was in the eye of a political storm. At the same time, a 9% drop was recorded in the public's degree of trust in the State Attorney, a 7% drop in the degree of trust in the Knesset, a 6% drop in the degree of trust in the media, and a 5% drop in the degree of trust in the Prime Minister. The highest trust was accorded to the IDF (79%), and then to the Supreme Court (68%) and to the President (67%).

Concerning the disengagement: 82% of the respondents held that the use of violence in pursuit of political goals is unjustified in all circumstances. By contrast, a real drop was recorded in the unwavering opposition to the refusal to comply with military orders on moral or ideological grounds and, more specifically – the refusal to obey orders to evacuate settlements: 58% opposed such a refusal, as opposed to 70% a year ago.

As in previous surveys, the Democracy Index 2006 also seeks to examine the strength of Israeli democracy and the level of support for it. This year, a 5% rise was recorded in the rate of those holding that democracy is the desirable regime for Israel, and this rate now stands at 85%. The rate of those holding that democracy is the best form of government is 77%.

Deep social and ideological rifts are a well-known characteristic of Israeli society. Participants in the survey were asked for their views concerning the relationships between different groups in the population. Only 14% held that relationships between Jews and Arabs are good. Among Jews, 26% pointed to good relationships between religious and secular Jews, only 29% opposed the demand that a Jewish majority is required on decisions critical to the country's future, and 62% supported the demand that the government encourage Arab emigration from the country. The Democracy Index 2006 attests to a drop in the level of satisfaction with Israel's general position: 40% of the respondents held that Israel's general position is not good, and 74% of the respondents estimated that the government does not deal well with the country's problems.

A general trend of stability was recorded in the democracy indicators we examined this year: some improved, some worsened, and some showed no change. Concerning indicators that worsened, the political corruption rating and the accountability rating of elected officials deserve mention. On these ratings, Israel's scores were lower than in previous years. The rate of political participation, as expressed in voter turnout on election day, was also considerably lower than in previous elections.

Finally – and on an optimistic note – 86 % of the respondents in the Democracy Index 2006 are proud to be Israeli; 90% want to remain in Israel in the long term, and 69% feel themselves part of the State of Israel and its problems.

Part One

Updating the Democracy Index 2006

A. Description of the Research and its Goals

For four years now, Israeli democracy has been examined and evaluated as part of the Democracy Index project**.** This project's aim is to conduct periodic evaluations of the state of Israeli democracy, and create a database that will promote research and informed discourse on the subject. Every year we present the trends and the changes, both positive and negative, evident in the qualitative and functional components of Israeli democracy. As we did in the previous publications, in the present report we also examine the level of realization of democratic values and goals in Israel by means of "objective" measures on the one hand and through an examination of the public's view of democracy on the other hand. Besides updating the Index, each report sought to focus on a particular topic – youth (2004), the media (2005), and Rabin's assassination (2005). This year, a chapter was devoted to the changes affecting Israel's party system in recent years.

Given a trend observed in recent decades that shows democracy expanding to countries that had not been democratic in the past, attention has been shifted from the causes for embracing a democratic regime to the character and scope of democracy in the various countries. Because of the complexity and diversity of democracy, our study focuses on three central dimensions typical of all democratic regimes, which determine its character: the institutional aspect, the rights aspect, and the stability aspect (Figure 1). The **institutional aspect** includes five central

characteristics: political corruption, checks and balances, representativeness, participation, and the government's level of accountability; the **rights aspect** includes six main characteristics: political rights, civil rights, social rights, economic rights (freedom of property), gender equality, and equality for minorities; the **stability aspect** includes three chief characteristics: political conflict, stability of government, and social rifts.

These 14 characteristics were examined first through international quantitative measures (31 in all) in a dual comparative perspective: international, meaning Israel's situation vis-à-vis that in 35 democracies throughout the world, and historical, meaning Israel's situation over the years. These characteristics were then examined in a public opinion survey that considered to what extent these three aspects prevail in Israel 2006 according to public perception.[1] These two vantage points – from a comparative perspective and from that of public opinion – enable us to evaluate and assess the situation of democracy in Israel now and over the years. The survey was conducted in February 2006 and included a representative sample of Israel's adult population (Jews and Arabs).

This report has two main parts. Part One is an **Update on the Democracy Index for 2006**, which includes the latest data concerning the democracy indicators and the democracy survey, comparing them to the 2003, 2004, and 2005

---

1   For full details of the 31 measures see Asher Arian, David Nachmias, Doron Navot, Danielle Shani, *The 2003 Israeli Democracy Index: Measuring Israeli Democracy* (Jerusalem: The Israel Democracy Institute, 2003).

Figure 1
The Structure of the Index

```
                        The Democracy
                            Index

   Stability              Rights           Institutional
    Aspect                Aspect              Aspect

Government  Political   Economic   Gender   Representa-    Participation
Stability   Conflict     Rights   Equality   tiveness

      Social          Equality for  Political  Political    Checks &
      Rifts           Minorities    Rights     Corruption   Balances

                      Civil       Social              Accountability
                      Rights      Rights
```
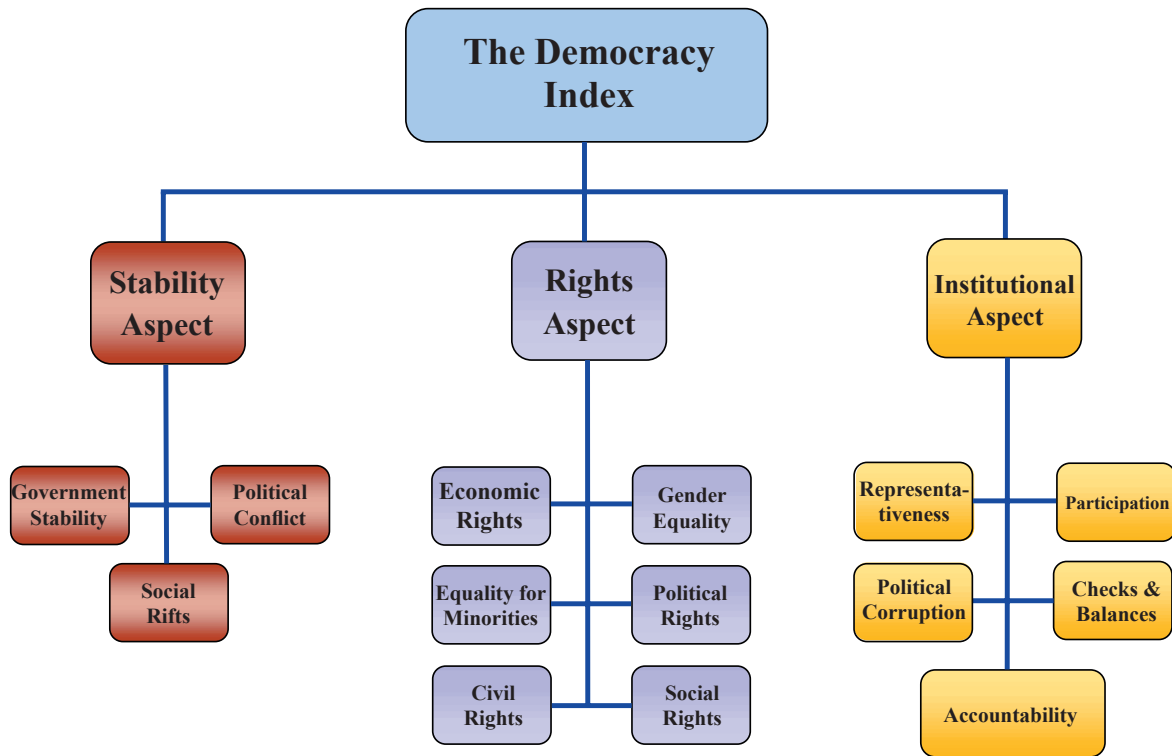
findings. Part Two is devoted to a survey and evaluation of **Israel's Political Party System**, according to the changes it has undergone over the last few years. Here, too, we cite data reporting on the situation of political parties in various countries, focusing on a survey that includes a representative sample of various groups in society and describes their attitude to Israeli parties. Attitudes and feelings, ideological perceptions and loyalties, attitudes towards the parties and the pattern of the relationships between them and their supporters – all will be the subject of study and scrutiny.

B. The Democracy Indicators

As we do every year, we examined and evaluated Israeli democracy. We first report the assessments of several international research institutes that conduct follow-up studies in dozens of countries throughout the world, each one in its field, relying on a series of quantitative indicators. The list of countries examined includes democracies in various areas of the world, new and long-standing ones, stable and developing ones.[2] Besides presenting Israel as it is mirrored in the 2006 ratings, Israel was also examined over time. The aim was to point out general trends – improvement, deterioration, or lack of change. This year, given the elections to the 17th Knesset, emphasis was placed on indicators that have a bearing on the election results.

1. A Summary Outline

This report updates 18 of the 31 ratings examined every year in the Democracy Index. Full details of the evaluations Israel received in the various ratings and of changing trends since 2003 are presented in Appendix 1, Table 1. As a rule, Israel was examined in light of these ratings according to a dual comparison: historically (Israel over the years), and internationally (Israel compared to 35 other democracies). Data shows that in 18 of the updated indicators, Israel's position worsened in six ratings and improved in five ratings, while no change was recorded in the other seven. Note that in some of the indicators that deteriorated in 2006 as opposed to previous years, Israel's relative placement in the countries' ranking actually improved in comparison to the previous report.[3]

In the **institutional aspect**, which examines the formal aspect of democracy, Israel's position relative to that of other countries remains generally as good as it was. In the representativeness ratings – party dominance and the disproportionality – Israel ranks high, particularly due to its proportionate electoral system and its low threshold, which encourage representation of various groups and trends in the legislature. A definite worsening was recorded in the rate of participation in the 2006 elections and in Israel's relative place (a drop from 22nd to 24th place out of the 36 countries examined).[4] Political corruption has also worsened in recent years, and remains a problematic issue in Israel. In the **rights aspect,** Israel's ranking is not as high, and it is placed in the middle third of the scale. Despite a slight improvement in the scope of gender freedom, economic freedom and press freedom remained as they were. Measures of political and economic discrimination of minorities do not show change either. Concerning the **stability aspect**, no changes were recorded in the ratings of political conflict and social rifts.[5] As for the aspect of government

---

2   The countries chosen for comparison with Israel were: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Hungary, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Romania, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, and the United States. For further information about the selection of countries, see note 1 above, p. 15.

3   Due to the lower scores in the evaluations that the research institutes gave to the other countries.

4   See Arian et al, *The 2003 Israeli Democracy Index* (note 1 above), pp. 45-51.

stability, it should be stressed that although elections were brought forward by six months and despite Prime Minister's Sharon sudden illness and the consequent transfer of power to his deputy, government stability was preserved.

Figure 2 presents Israel's ranking over two axes vis-à-vis the 35 countries included in the sample. The figure is divided according to the three aspects included in the index (the institutional, rights, and stability aspects). The vertical axis represents Israel's rank in comparison to the other democracies (1 indicates a high rank and 36 a low one), whereas the horizontal axis represents the 14 indicators updated this year in an international comparison.

Figure 2

Israel's Ranking in the Democracies' Sample According to the 15 Criteria

---
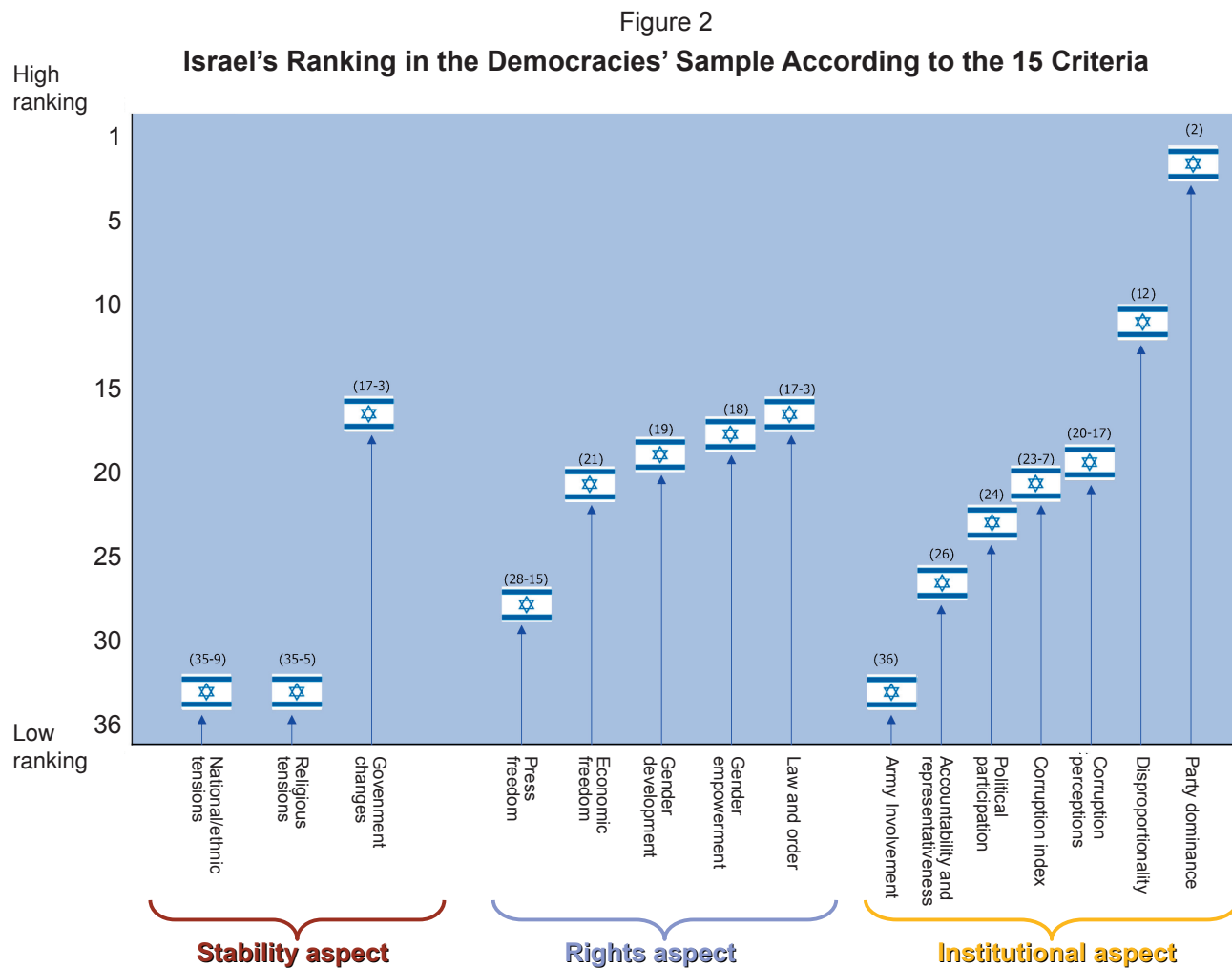
5   For details and extensive discussion of the social rifts measure, see Asher Arian, Shlomit Barnea, Pazit Ben-Nun, Raphael Ventura, Michal Shamir, *The 2005 Israeli Democracy Index: Auditing Israeli Democracy a Decade after the Assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin* (Jerusalem: The Israel Democracy Institute, 2005).

Contrary to previous indices, the distinction between Israel's ranking in each of the three aspects is not clear-cut. Israel ranks high in only a few of the ratings examined this year. Concerning most indicators, it is located in the lower third of the countries' ranking and, in some cases, at the bottom of the scale. In the institutional aspect, Israel ranks low in the extent of accountability shown by its elected officials, and at the bottom of the scale in the rating of "army involvement in politics," which is dictated by Israel's defense concerns. In the rights aspect, Israel's situation is better in the law and order and gender equality indices, but press freedom is low and is also affected by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the stability aspect, considerable improvement is evident in the frequent changes of government that have characterized Israel in the past, but in the two ratings of social tension, Israel ranks very low. These are the vulnerabilities of Israeli democracy, which cannot be ascribed to the "special" characteristics of the Israeli case.

2. Israel 2006 as Reflected in the Indicators: Changes in Comparison to Previous Indices

Unlike the trends of stability or deterioration detected in the 2005 Index,[6] most of the ratings examined in 2006 emerged as balanced: six showed deterioration in the evaluation of Israel's position in 2006, five showed improvement since the last assessment, and seven showed no evidence of change. Israel thus retained its 2005 ranking. Table 1 presents the updated ratings according to the change vector: improvement, lack of change, or deterioration in the situation of Israeli democracy vis-à-vis 2005. Of the five ratings recording an improvement in the evaluation of Israel's position in 2006 vis-à-vis last year, one is in the institutional aspect, two in the rights aspect, and two in the stability aspect; of the seven ratings showing no change, two are in the institutional aspect, three in the aspect of rights and two in the aspect of stability; of the four ratings pointing to deterioration in the evaluation of Israel's position, two are in the institutional aspect and two in the rights aspect. The stability ratings recorded no deterioration this year.

Of the 11 international ratings included in the **institutional aspect**, seven were updated this year. One showed improvement, two showed no change, and four showed deterioration in Israel's position vis-à-vis previous indices. The party dominance measure improved but the disproportionality measure worsened in the two ratings measuring the legislature's representativeness (see Part Two below, dealing with the party system). Two measures showed no change: horizontal accountability, developed by the International Country Risk Guide (henceforth: ICRG),[7] which tests the extent of military involvement in politics, and the ICRG corruption measure, which tests public attitudes toward corruption in the various countries examined.[8] On the first measure, Israel received

---

6   Ibid., p. 25.

7   In this measure, we used five ICRG ratings: horizontal accountability, corruption, law and order, and two tension ratings (national/linguistic and religious). For further information on ICRG, see their website: http://www.icrgonline.com.

8   The corruption index scale ranges between 0 (high political corruption) and 6 (no political corruption). The assessment of corruption in Israel was determined by ICRG experts, who collect information on the situation of corruption from a variety of sources.

a score of 2.5 out of 6 in 2006,[9] identical to its score in 2005. In 2004 and 2003, its score had stood at 3, so that Israel's situation over the last two years has worsened vis-à-vis the previous two. The second rating, the corruption index, showed no change this year, and Israel retained its previous score of 3. In 2004, its score had stood at 4, so that Israel's position in this rating has also deteriorated.

In four of the ratings included in the institutional aspect, the situation worsened in 2006. The first is the Corruption Perceptions Index of Transparency International (henceforth TI), based on expert assessments about corruption in various countries.[10] The scores that Israel received in the Corruption Perceptions Index show a gradual downward trend, from 7.3 in 2003 to 6.3 in October 2005. The next three ratings recording significant drops relate to the political participation dimension (voter turnout in the 2006 elections) and political representativeness (disproportionality principle), which we discuss at length below.

Out of the 15 ratings included in the **rights aspect**, seven were updated this year. Israel's situation improved vis-à-vis last year in two ratings examining the status of women. These ratings are included in the world development indices published every year in the UN Human Development Reports: the Gender-Related Development Index, which measures inequality in the abilities and achievements of men and women, and the Gender Empowerment Measure, which measures equality of opportunities between men and women in countries throughout the world.[11] Three ratings showed no change: press freedom, law and order, and economic freedom indices, published by the Heritage Foundation (detailed below).

Two ratings in the rights aspect that examine the measure of protection accorded to civil rights worsened this year: the ratio of criminal prisoners and the ratio of security prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants. The assumption is that the higher the ratio of prisoners, the greater the rigidity of the law enforcement system and the scope of the restrictions it imposes. This measure has been split in the Democracy Index into the ratio of prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants including security prisoners, and the ratio of prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants excluding security prisoners.

As of February 2006, Israel holds 18,550 prisoners, about 6,000 of them security prisoners who are not Israeli citizens.[12] This data shows that the ratio of prisoners for every 100,000

---

9   A score of 1 indicates high army involvement in politics and a score of 6 indicates low army involvement in politics.

10   The Corruptions Perceptions Index ranges between 0 (high political corruption) and 10 (no political corruption). The Index is published yearly by TI, and is based on expert assessments by policy analysts, academic scholars, journalists, senior executives, and business people — estimating the extent of corruption in their own and other countries. For further discussion see http://www.transparency.org.

11   For a detailed explanation of the methodology and the sources on which the UN relies, see Human Development Report 2005: http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2005.

12   This number refers to security prisoners who reside in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip. Data for this measure was obtained from the Prisons Authority and updated to February 2006. No international comparison was carried out on this variable.

Table 1

Israel 2006 as Reflected in the Indicators: Changes since the 2005 Index*

The Rating	The Scale	Israel's score	Relative Ranking**	Change
Government changes	Number of government changes 1996-2006	4	3-17 (36)	⬆
Completing term	0-100 (100% = full term)	82.22	No international comparison	⬆
Gender development rating	0-1 (0 = inequality)	0.911	15-19 (36)	⬆
Gender empowerment rating	0-1 (0 = inequality)	0.622	18 (33)	⬆
Party dominance	100 - [100 x the number of seats in lower chamber] (100 = high dominance, low representativeness)	413.8	2 (36)	⬆
Religious tensions	0-6 (0 = high tension)	2.5	6-35 (36)	=
National/ethnic/ linguistic tensions	0-6 (0 = high tension)	2	9-35 (36)	=
Law and order rating	0-6 (0 = limited law and order protection)	5	3-17 (36)	=
Economic freedom index	1-5 (1 = large measure of economic freedom)	2.36	21 (36)	=
Corruption index	0-6 (0 = high level of corruption)	3	7-23 (36)	=
Horizontal accountability	0-6 (0 = high military involvement in politics)	2.5	6-36 (36)	=
Press freedom	0-100 (0 = full freedom)	28	15-28 (36)	=
Disproportionality	0-100 (0 = perfect proportionality)	2.72	12 (33)	⬇
Political participation	0-100 (100% = full turnout)	63.2	24 (36)	⬇
Voice and accountability	0-100 (100 = high accountability)	60.2	32 (26)	⬇
Corruption perceptions index	0-10 (0 = high level of corruption)	6.3	17-20 (36)	⬇
Rate of prisoners per 100,000 population including security prisoners	0-100,000 (0 = few prisoners)	265	No international comparison	⬇
Rate of prisoners per 100,000 population excluding security prisoners	0-100,000 (0 = few prisoners)	180	No international comparison	⬇

*   The ratings are arranged according to the change trend (improvement, no change, or deterioration) and according to the set order of the characteristics in the index.

**   The number in parentheses in the relative ranking column shows the number of countries included in the

inhabitants in 2006 stands at 180 – a high number as opposed to previous indices.[13]

Of the five measures included in the **stability aspect**, four were updated this year. The two social tension ratings (religious tension and national/ethnic/linguistic tension) showed no change. The two ratings measuring government stability – government changes and incomplete term of office – showed improvement. In the government changes rating, which measures the number of governments that changed in the last decade, Israel ranks 3-17 in 2006, together with such countries as Holland, Denmark, Germany, and England. Note that stability was preserved despite the serious crises impinging on the government coalition and the ministers' turnover during the implementation of the disengagement from Gaza and the evacuation of three settlements in Northern Samaria. The mechanism of "constructive distrust" adopted after the abrogation of the law for direct election of the Prime Minister deserves note in this context. The purpose of this mechanism is to hamper opposition attempts to bring down the government in the absence of an alternative government that enjoys a Knesset majority. The stability of the 30th government, then, was preserved throughout the term of the 16th Knesset, until Prime Minister Ariel Sharon decided to bring forward the election by six months. The incomplete term of office rating completes this picture. On 4 January 2006, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was hospitalized due to illness and his powers were transferred

to his deputy Ehud Olmert until after the elections to the 17th Knesset, when Olmert became the leader of the largest faction. The stability of the 30th government was solid, better than that of any other Israeli government in the last decade.

3. Selected Findings from the Index

The Institutional Aspect
Political Corruption

Lack of integrity, or "political corruption" as it is commonly known, has played a paramount role in Israeli public discourse of recent years. Last year, we witnessed increasing media coverage of suspicions against prominent figures who, ostensibly, had used their position in unsuitable ways. Regardless of whether or not these suspicions led to indictments, all agree that this is a matter for serious concern. The Democracy Index, as noted, assessed political corruption by relying on the evaluations of two international research institutes: ICRG, which surveys the attitudes of the Israeli public toward corruption, and TI, which examines political corruption according to the assessments of professional experts from abroad.[14]

In 2006, Israel received a score of 3 from ICRG, equal to its score in the 2005 rating. Its relative ranking also remained the same (7-23).[15] This year, therefore, we focused on the Corruption Perceptions Index developed by TI.

---

13   The ratio of prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants in 2003 was 132, in 2004 – 143, and in 2005 – 175.

14   On the data collection methods of these research institutes, see note 10 above.

15   See Arian et al, *The 2005 Israeli Democracy Index* (note 5 above), pp. 31-32.

In this index, each country is given a final score between 0 (highly corrupt) and 10 (highly clean) in a relative ranking of about 70 countries. As evident from Figure 3, in the 2006 ranking of 36 countries Israel ranks 20th, between Estonia and Taiwan, with an average score of 6.3.[16] Finland and New Zealand share first place, with the highest integrity ratings (9.6), followed by Denmark and Sweden. At the bottom of the scale are Argentina, India, and Romania, where corruption is widespread.

The assessment of outside experts concerning Israel's situation in recent years reveals an unflattering picture. In the list of the 36 countries we have been following since 2003, Israel dropped from the 14th place in 2003 to the 17th in 2004[17] and to the 20th by the end of 2005. Germany, which only three years ago had shared the same place (14th) with Israel, now ranks 12th in the list of 36 democratic countries included in the index, with a score of 8.2. Although Israel's ranking in the TI scale is still better than that of

Figure 3
Political Corruption: An International Comparison
Corruption Perceptions Index (TI)

---
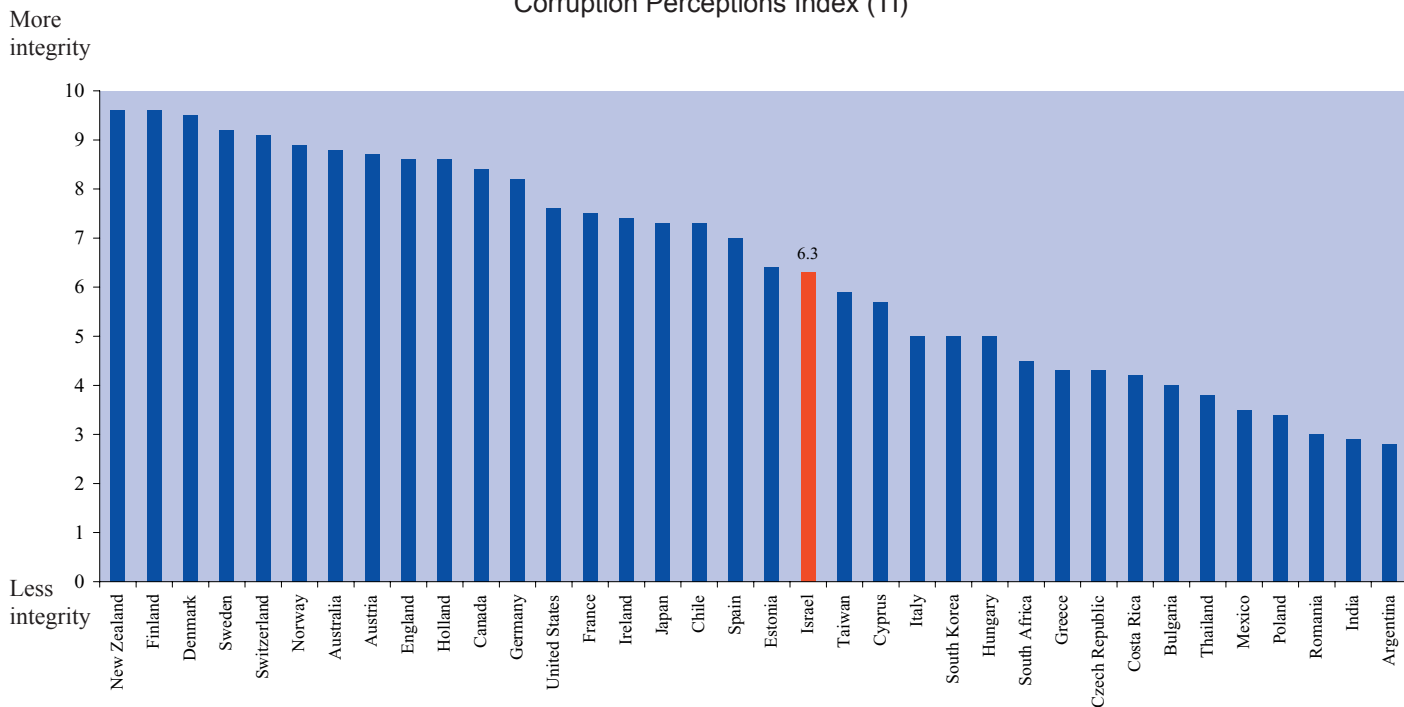
16   The TI report was published on 18 October 2005.
17   See Asher Arian, Shlomit Barnea, and Pazit Ben-Nun, *The 2004 Israeli Democracy Index: Auditing Israeli Democracy – Attitudes of Youth* (Jerusalem: The Israel Democracy Institute, 2004), p. 19.

Italy, Greece, and several countries in Eastern Europe, the bleak picture that emerges from Figure 4 points to a consistent, even if moderate, trend of decline.

Accountability

One of democracy's basic normative principles is that elected officials are supposed to represent their voters and work for their benefit. Although the actual extent of elected officials' attentiveness to voters' preferences is hard to gauge, public officials have a duty to report to the public about their functioning and about the fulfillment of their duties, bearing responsibility for exceptional events and failures within their realm of responsibility. In the Democracy Index, we examine two accountability ratings. The first is the Military in Politics Index, which was also developed by ICRG.[18] Scores in this index range between 0, denoting very high army involvement in politics, and 6, denoting no involvement. In the 2006 index, Israel received a score of 2.5, ranking last among the 36 democracies we examined. This result has been consistent since 2003, attesting to the army's high involvement in Israeli politics. The second measure examines the public's ability to change decision-makers through a system of institutionalized elections (Competitiveness of Executive Recruitment), a measure that was developed by Polity but has not been updated since 2003.[19]

Figure 4
Political Corruption in Israel, 1996-2006
Corruption Perceptions Index (TI)
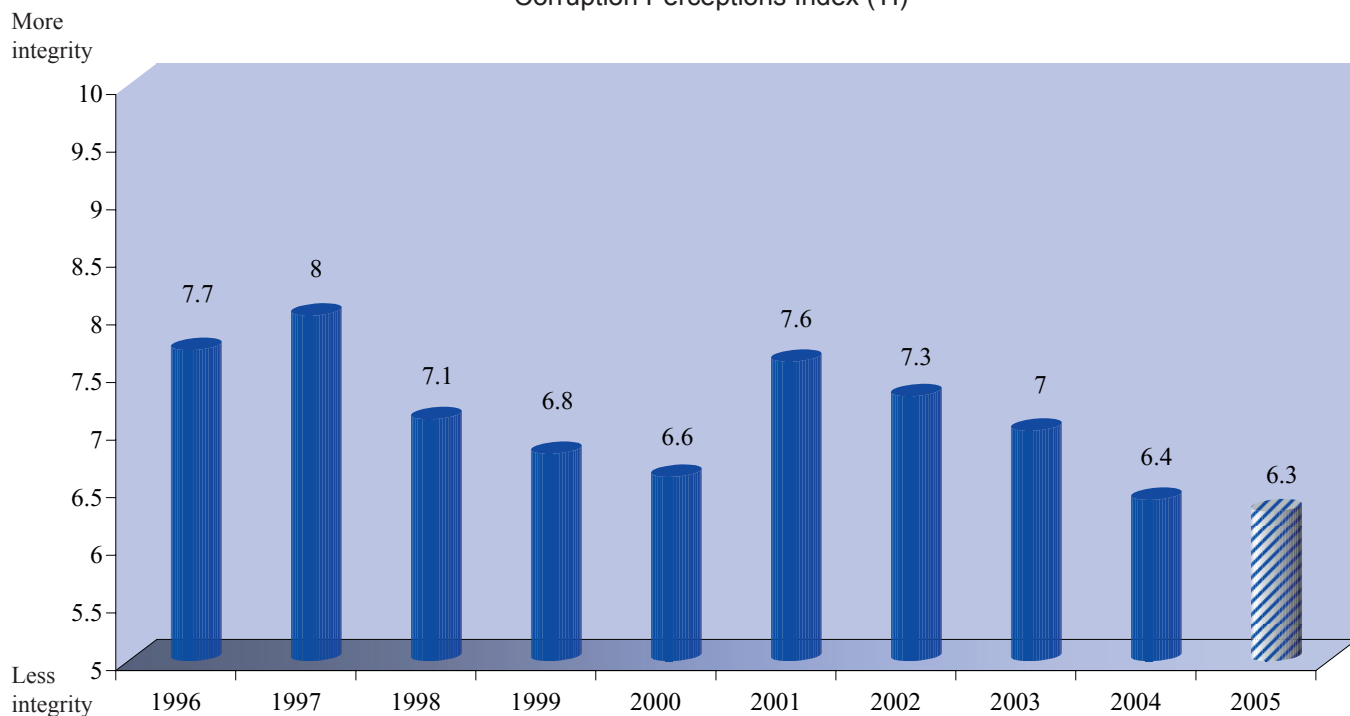
18   For further information see the project's website: http://www.countrydata.com.
19   For data prior to 2003, see: http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/polity.

A further test of accountability is the Voice and Accountability Index, a biennial publication of the World Bank.[20] The World Bank bases its assessments on about ten surveys of international research institutes and on the assessments of experts who, each in his or her field, examine accountability in the various countries. Assessments are collated into a 0-100 scale: the higher the score, the higher the levels of representativeness and accountability.

In the accountability index, Israel has a score of 60.2 and ranks 32nd in the list of 36 countries chosen for the study, between Mexico and Argentina (Figure 5). Denmark, Norway, and Sweden score highest; Thailand, India, and Romania are at the bottom of the list. The picture is even bleaker given that Israel's score has declined in recent years: Israel scored 80.1 in 1996 and, since then, recorded a sharp drop of about 20 points in the World Bank assessments (Figure 6).

The Rights Aspect
Press Freedom

The Press Freedom Survey developed by Freedom House indicates the measure of freedom enjoyed by printed and broadcasting media in 194 countries throughout the world.[21] This data serves governments, international organizations, academic scholars, and members of the media in many countries. Each country obtains a score ranging from 0 (full press freedom) and 100 (no press freedom). Countries scoring up to 30 points are considered free; countries scoring 31-60 points are considered partly free, and countries obtaining scores of 62-100 points are defined as not free.[22]

Israel's ranking in the Press Freedom Survey has not changed since 2004. In the 2005 survey, Israel scored 28, worse than in the weighted score it obtained in 2003 (27), but better than in the weighted score it received in 2000-2002 (30; Figure 7).

Israel's position vis-à-vis the 35 countries in the ranking is not particularly high. As shown in Figure 8, Israel ranks 28th, between Greece and South Korea. Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway are the countries enjoying the highest measure of press freedom; Romania, Thailand, Mexico, and Argentina are defined as "partly free," with scores higher than 31, and they close the list.

20 World Bank Assessments for 209 countries have been published yearly since 1996. The score given to each country is based on a combination of the various scores. The data published this year is correct as of the end of 2004. In May 2006, the World Bank will publish an update of the rating. For further information see http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/govdata.

21 Freedom House, *Freedom of the Press 2005: A Global Survey of Media Independence*, http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/pressurvey.htm.

22 The Press Freedom Survey was published in August 2005, and reflects events from January-December 2004. For details on the Press Freedom Survey see Asher Arian, Shlomit Barnea, Pazit Ben-Nun, and Yariv Tsfati, *The Media and Israeli Democracy from Various Vantage Points* (Jerusalem: The Israel Democracy Institute, 2005).

Figure 5
Voice and Accountability: An International Comparison

High
accountability

Low
accountability
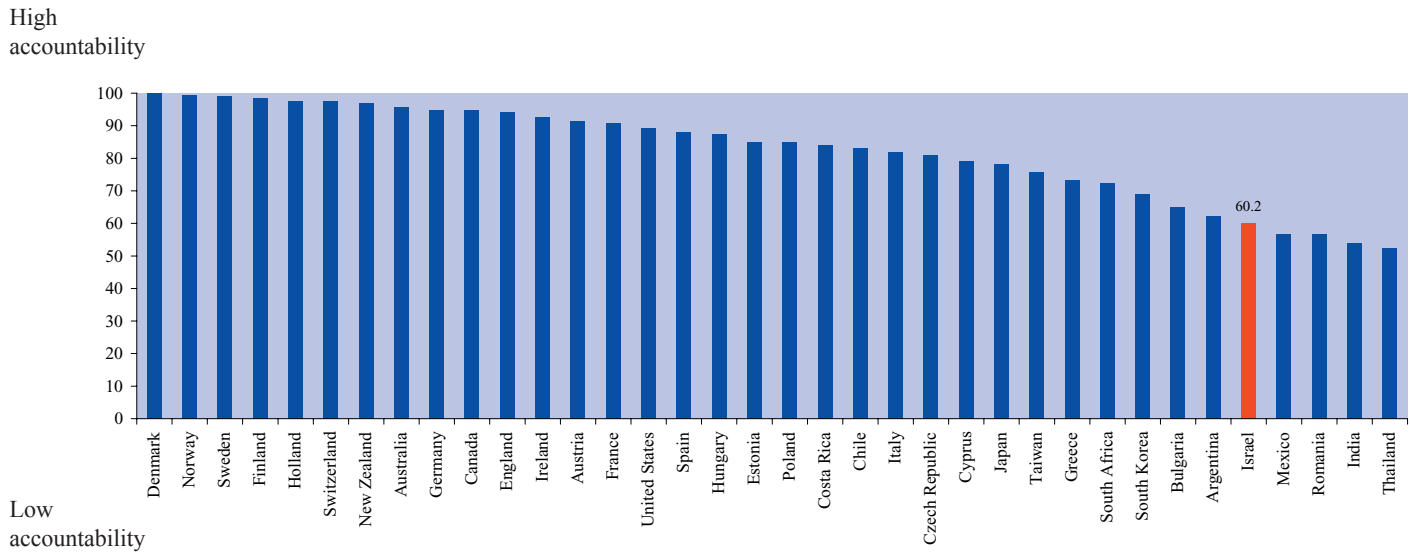
Figure 6
Voice and Accountability in Israel, 1996-2004

High
accountability

Low
accountability
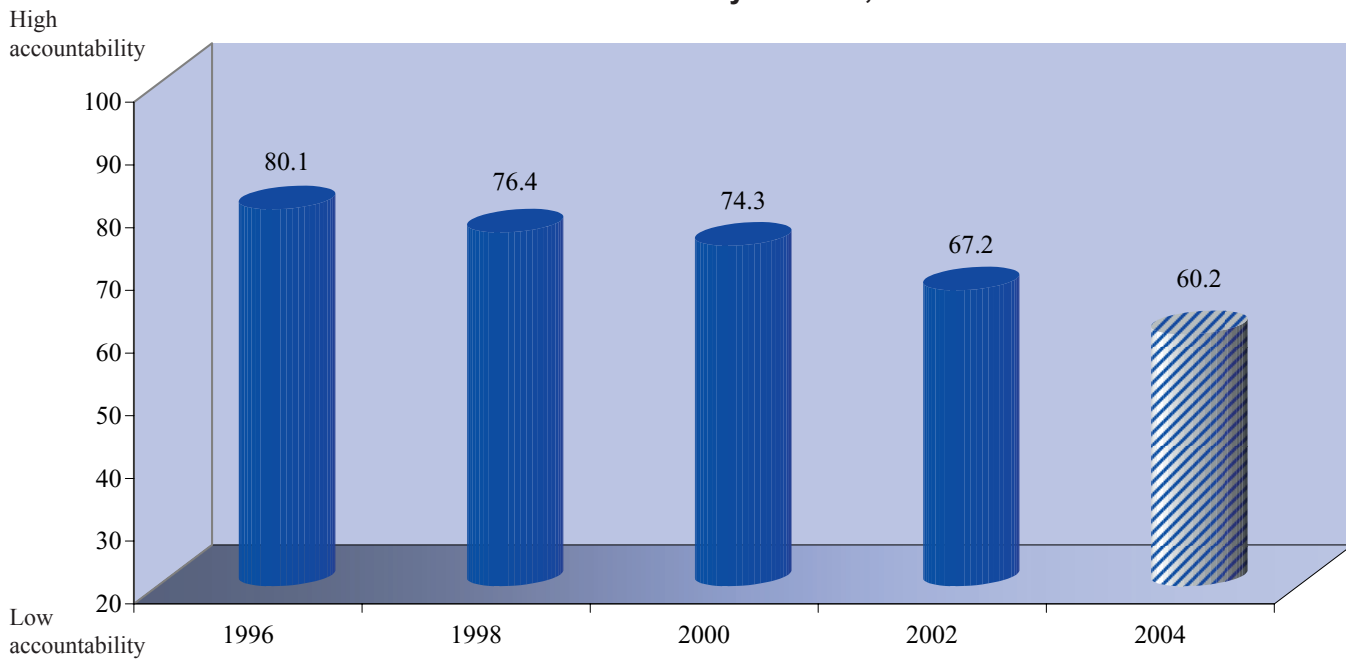
Figure 7

Press Freedom in Israel, 1996-2005

Less
press freedom

More press
freedom
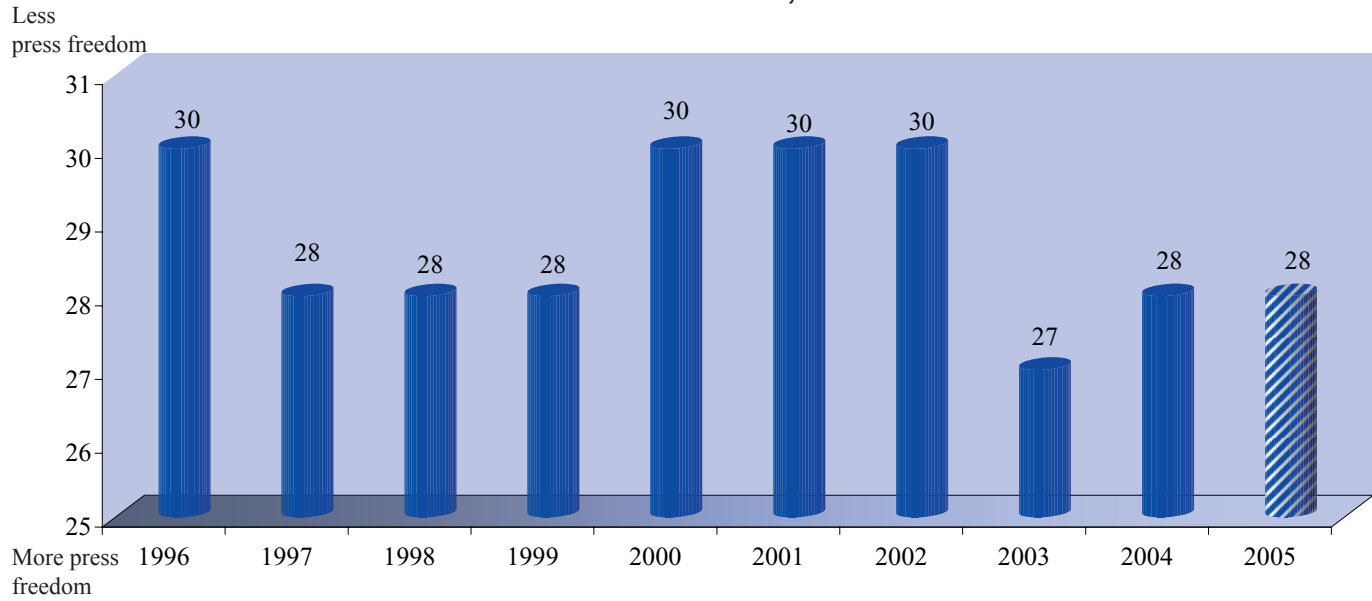
Figure 8

Press Freedom: An International Comparison*

More press
freedom

Less press
freedom
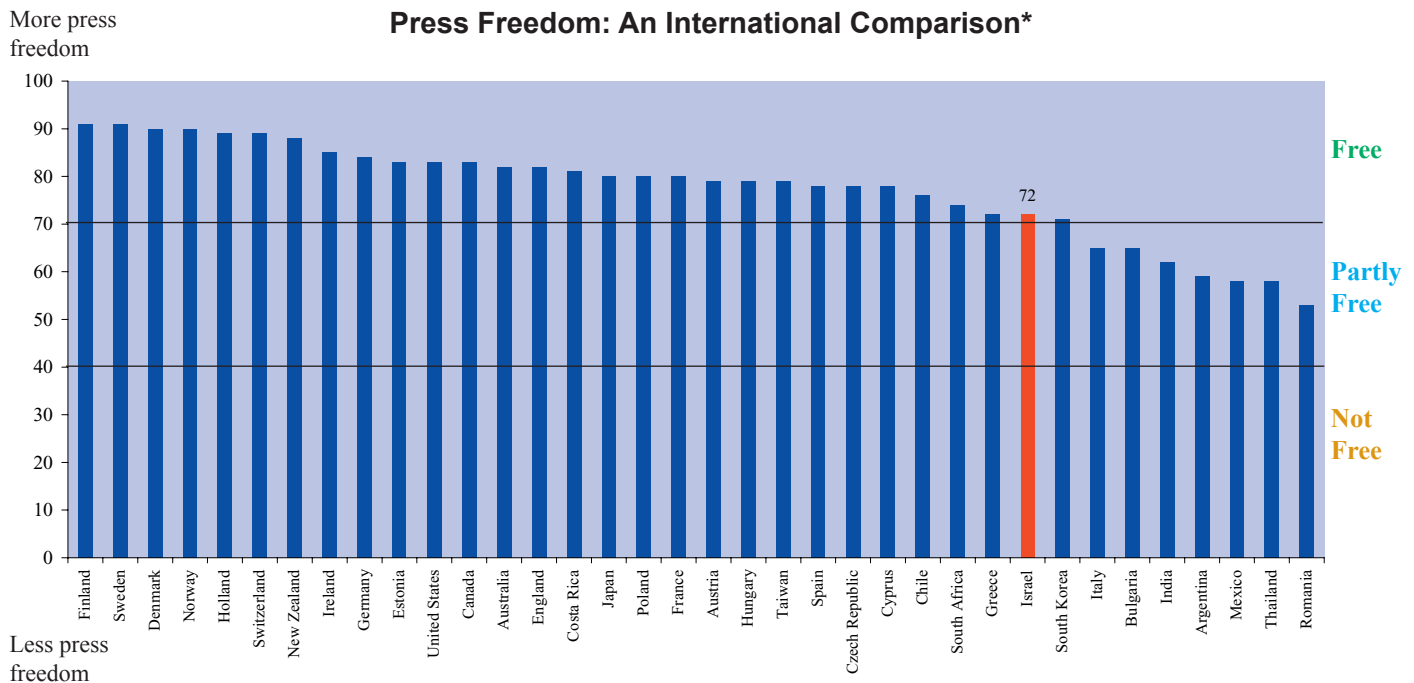
*   For clarity purposes, scores were reversed in this figure, so that a higher score denotes broader press freedom.

Economic Rights (Property)

The Index of Economic Freedom is part of a Heritage Foundation project that measures 50 economic variables in 161 countries.[23] The assessment of economic freedom relies on databases, hard economic data, and interviews with administration officials. Scores range from 1 (free) to 5 (repressed).[24] As evident from Figure 9, Israel ranks 21st, between Spain and Norway on the one side, and Taiwan and Hungary on the other. The 2.36 score given to Israel in January

2006 is the same as its score in the last two years. The countries enjoying the highest levels of economic freedom are Ireland, England, and Estonia, whereas Romania, Argentina, and India close the list and are defined as "mostly unfree."

Gender Equality

Besides the measures of economic and political rights reviewed so far, we examine an additional indicator dealing with gender equality or lack

Figure 9
Economic Freedom: An International Comparison

---

23   See Heritage Foundation, http://www.heritage.org/research/features/index/index.cfm.
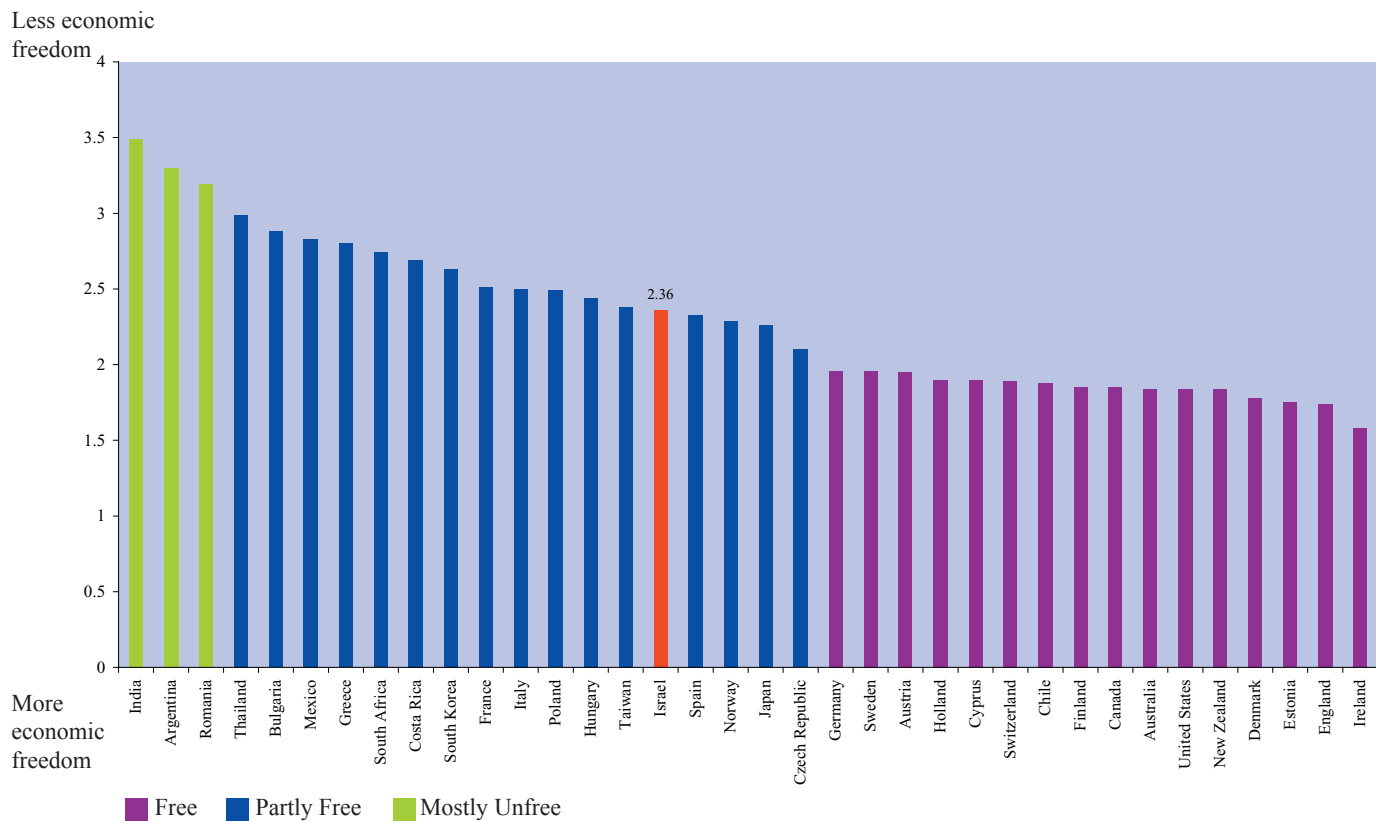
24   The division is: 1-1.99 – free; 2-2.99 – mostly free; 3-3.99 – mostly unfree; 4-5 – repressed.

of discrimination between men and women. The measure tests the actual implementation of equal rights in various areas. As noted, in order to assess the implementation of gender equality in the 36 countries examined, we use two yearly ratings that the UN publishes in its Human Development Report. One is the Gender-Related Development Index, assessing inequality in the abilities and attainments of men and women in three central dimensions: a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living. Scores range between 0 (inequality) and 1 (full equality). The other is the Gender Empowerment Measure, which traces equality of opportunities between men and women in the world in three areas of empowerment: political participation and decision-making, economic participation and decision-making, and power over economic resources.[25]

Israel's position as reflected in the two gender equality ratings shows improvement vis-à-vis the previous Democracy Indices. In the Gender-Related Development Index, Israel's score at the end of 2005 was 0.911, a slight improvement from 2004 (0.906) and 2003 (0.891). This is considered a high score given that, in Israel,

women have a higher life expectancy and higher education levels than men.

In the Gender Empowerment Measure, Israel's score at the end of 2005 was 0.622, a slight improvement over 2004 (0.614), and 2003 (0.596). The inequality between men and women is evident here, since the proportion of women in senior positions in the legislature, in the bureaucracy, and in management is far from egalitarian. In the Gender Empowerment Measure, Israel is located at a regrettable middle – 18th in the ranking of the 32 countries included – between Argentina and Poland.[26] At the top of the scale are Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, and at the bottom are Chile and South Korea (Figure 10). Unlike the case of the Gender-Related Development Index, where the gap between the countries is relatively small, in the Gender Empowerment Index, the gap between Israel and the leading countries is considerable. This data indicates that women in Israel enjoy high equality concerning their personal development, abilities, and achievements, beside inequality in all that concerns their empowerment and the opportunities available to them.

25 See *Human Development Report 2005*: http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2005.
26 The Gender Empowerment Measure has no scores for South Africa, France, and India.

Figure 10

Gender Equality: An International Comparison
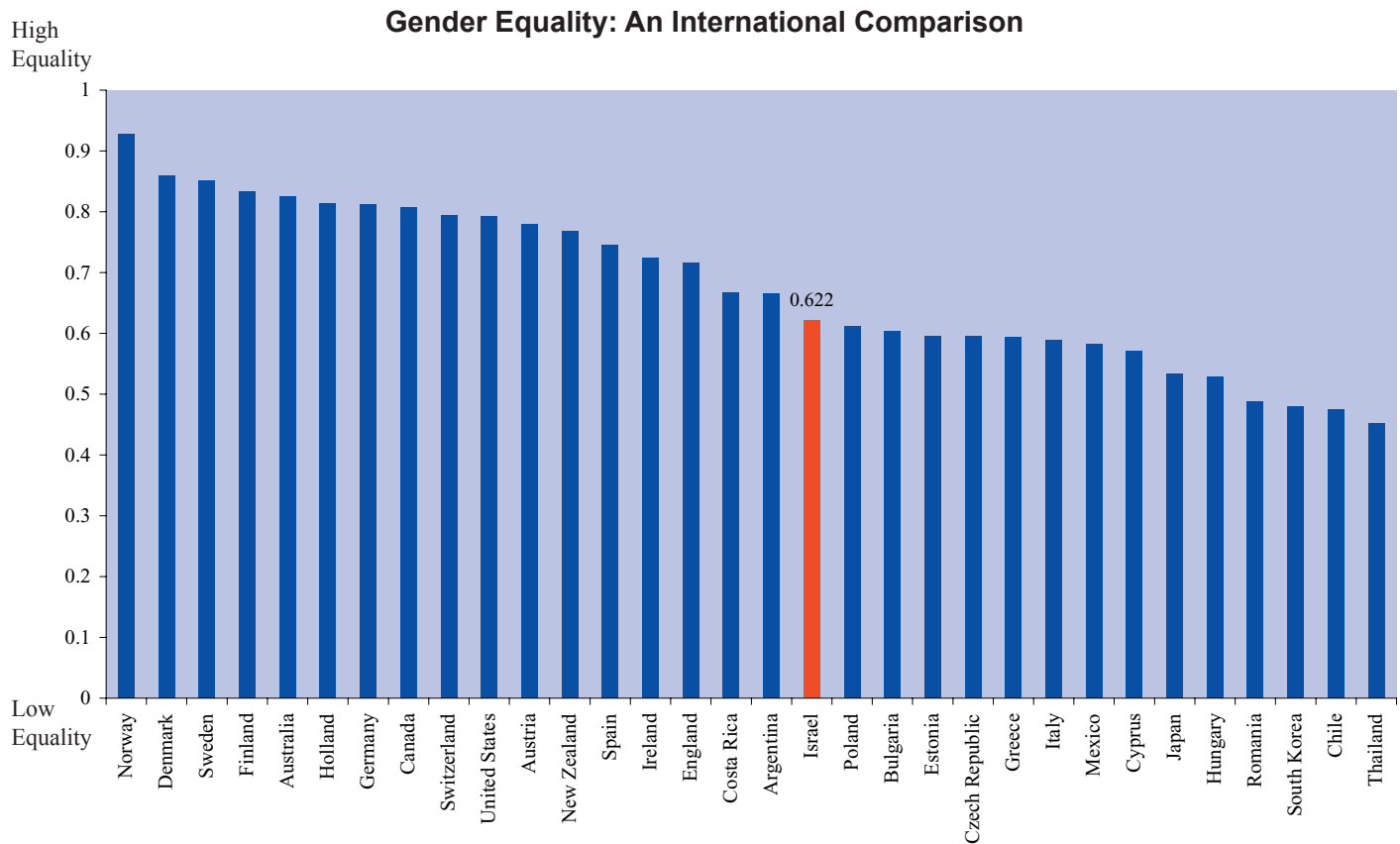
The Stability Aspect
Government Stability

The stability of the political system is an issue of great concern for anyone in politics, standing at the crux of a long-standing controversy between the advocates of strengthening centralist governments, and others who prefer flexibility and consensual arrangements between government authorities. Stability is defined as the absence of fundamental changes or disruptions in the functioning of the political system. In the context of the Democracy Index and as part of the elections topic at the center of this research, we chose to relate to two measures assessing the stability of the political system in Israel, on the assumption that stability strongly influences the quality and functioning of democracy. The two ratings measure the number of government changes and the inability to complete a term of office. The first measures how many times effective control of the executive changed hands (changes in effective executive);[27] the second deals with the frequency of government changes and the completion of the government's term of office as it was set on the day the government was sworn in.

---

27   For data on the frequency of government changes see *The Political Data* volume, published yearly by the *European Journal of Political Research*.

Figure 11
Government Stability: An International Comparison
Government Changes, 1996-2006

Low
stability

High
stability
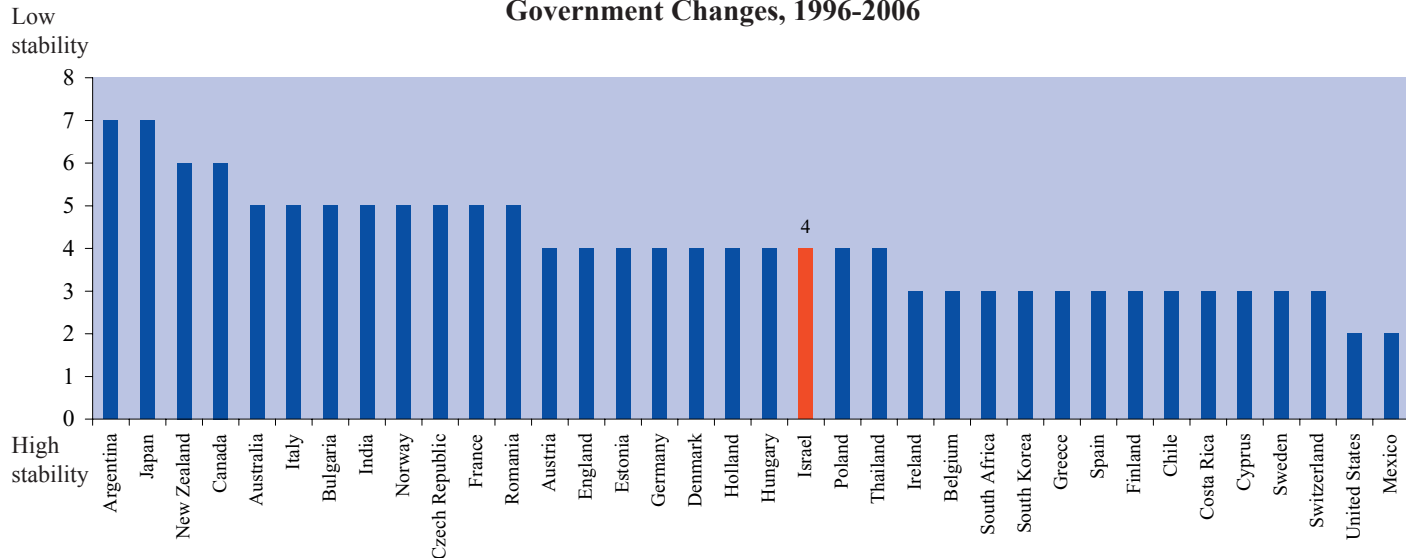
Government Changes

Unlike the other measures reviewed so far, the rate of changes in effective executive is not yearly but relates to the last decade – 1996-2006. Figure 11 above presents the number of government changes in the 36 countries included in the ranking. After the Law of Direct Election of the Prime Minister was abolished in 2001, Israel returned to stability regarding changes of government. In 2006, Israel is in the middle of the scale (3-17), beside such countries as Holland, Denmark, Germany, and England. Two countries that have experienced instability during the last decade are Argentina and Japan, where seven changes in effective executive took place. By contrast, in the United States and in Mexico, which have a presidential system, only two presidents changed during the last decade (the next presidential election in Mexico is scheduled for July 2006).

Incomplete Term of Office

Despite Israel's favorable ranking in the international comparison of countries on the dimension of government stability, it must still contend with the problem of governments failing to complete their term of office,[28] that is, with the problem of whether or not a government was replaced before serving the entire period set by the law. The measure of incomplete term of office is calculated by dividing the time the government served in office – from the day it was sworn in and until the swearing in of the new government – by the time the government should have been in office – from the day it was sworn in and until the date scheduled for the following elections according to the provisions of the Basic Law: The Knesset.[29] This measure, with a 0%-100% range, helps us to identify the instability of governments in Israel.[30]

---

28   See Arian et al, *The 2003 Israeli Denocracy Index* (note 1 above), p. 106.

29   Data was retrieved from the Knesset's website: http://www.knesset.gov.il/govt/heb/GovtByNumber.asp.

30   The drawback of this measure is that it is not included in the available databases on the various democracies.

Table 2
Incomplete Term of Office

Prime Minister	Knesset election	Govt starts term	Govt ends term	Govt term (months)	Planned election date	Planned govt term (months)	Rate of term completion
Yitzhak Rabin	23.6.1992	13.7.1992	4.11.1995	40	29.10.1996	51	78.43%
Shimon Peres	No elections	5.11.1995	18.6.1996	7	29.10.1996	11	63.64%
Binyamin Netanyahu	29.5.1996	18.6.1996	6.7.1999	36	1.11.2000	52	69.23%
Ehud Barak	17.5.1999	6.7.1999	7.3.2001	20	28.10.2003	51	39.22%
Ariel Sharon	No elections	7.3.2001	28.2.2003	24	28.10.2003	31	77.42%
Ariel Sharon*	28.1.2003	28.2.2003	28.3.2006	37	14.11.2006	45	82.22%

*   The 16th Knesset was dissolved on 21 November 2005 and elections for the 17th Knesset were set for 28 March 2006.

The rate of incomplete term of office improved considerably. The 30th government, headed by Ariel Sharon, began its term in February 2003. Despite the political crises and the turnover of ministers, it remained stable for over three years. Nevertheless, over the last decade, this measure also presents a picture of instability in Israeli governments: in the course of the last ten years, the Prime Minister was replaced after every election, and, moreover, no Prime Minister succeeded in completing his scheduled term of office. The 25th government headed by the late Yitzhak Rabin (1992-1995), completed 78.4% of its assigned term, which ended due to his assassination. The 29th and 30th governments headed by Ariel Sharon (2001-2006), did hold out for a prolonged period, but succeeded in completing only 77.4% and 82.2% (respectively) of their assigned time. The 27th government headed by Binyamin Netanyahu (1996-1999), completed 69.2% of its assigned term. The 26th government, headed by Shimon Peres, completed 63.6% of its scheduled time, whereas the 28th government headed by Ehud Barak (1999-2001), succeeded in completing only 39.2% of its official term of office.

C. The 2006 Democracy Survey

Together with the use of the international "objective" ratings presented in the previous section, we conducted a public opinion survey aiming to examine the public's assessment and attitudes regarding Israeli democracy. The Democracy Survey examines the public's assessments concerning the three aspects: the institutional aspect, the rights aspect, and the stability aspect. These aspects enable us to weigh and evaluate the public's perception concerning the implementation of democracy in Israel, including the extent of their support for it and their satisfaction with it. The survey was conducted in February 2006 among a representative sample of Israel's population, including both Jews and Arabs. 1,204 subjects were in the sample, and they were interviewed in Hebrew, Arabic, and Russian.[31]

1. A Summary Outline

The respondents' answers show that most of the public supports democracy as the preferable regime, and close to half are satisfied with Israeli democracy. This finding points to a stable situation of middle levels of satisfaction with Israeli democracy. We also found that a majority of the public supports granting political and civil rights to minorities, such as freedom of expression and religious freedom. The Israeli public is also mostly opposed to violence and to the refusal to serve in the army.

Public trust in political institutions, however, is generally not high. In the same context, public opinion estimates that corruption is not a marginal phenomenon and that people in government are tainted by corruption. Respondents also point to deep social rifts and grave tensions between various groups in Israel.

The survey shows that the Israeli public tends indeed to be interested in politics, but participation in institutionalized political frameworks is extremely low and the public does not feel it has an influence on government policy. Nevertheless, most of the public reports a deep sense of belonging to the community and of identification with Israel, a sense of pride in being part of it, and a wish to remain in the country.

2. The Public Perception of Democracy's Implementation in Israel 2006 According to the Three Aspects

The Democracy Survey comprises the public's evaluations according to the various aspects: the institutional aspect, the rights aspect, and the stability and cohesiveness aspect.

Concerning the institutional aspect, five key dimensions were examined: political participation, representativeness, the perception of the scope of corruption, accountability, and

---

31   The Mihshuv Institute conducted the survey. Sampling error is +/−2.8, at confidence levels of 95%.

the ability to influence policy. The dimension the Israeli public assesses most highly is political participation: about 73% of the public estimate that the level of political participation in Israel is similar to or higher than that in other countries. International comparison, however, does not substantiate this perception. According to the international measure, which relates exclusively to voter turnout, Israel is not included in the list of countries with very high turnouts and ranks only 24th, with 63.2% (see Figure 26). The second dimension in the ranking is representativeness. About 61% of the respondents estimate that the balance of power in the Knesset expresses to a large or to some extent the distribution of views within the public. An international comparison of this dimension attests to a correlation between the public's evaluation and Israel's ranking in the list of countries. As clarified in Part Two below, the reason is the electoral system of proportional representation in force in Israel.[32] Concerning integrity, about 47% hold that the extent of political corruption in Israel is similar to that in other countries or lower. Political corruption is a prominent issue in the public agenda, so that the public's estimates are not surprising. As for accountability – "To what extent do you agree that a politician does not tend to take into account the view of the ordinary citizen?" – the finding is that only 38% of the public in Israel in 2006 ascribe elected officials a high level of accountability. The last dimension, which received the lowest rating in this aspect, is the public's ability to influence policy. Only about 27% of the public hold that they can influence government policy.

Concerning the rights aspect, four key aspects were examined: freedom of expression, human rights, equality between Jews and Arabs, and social and economic equality. The assessment here splits into two: on the one hand, most of the public estimates that freedom of speech (81%) and human rights (61%) prevail in Israel, at least as much as in other countries. But contrary to these two measures, only about 16% think that social and economic equality prevail in Israel. This is compatible with the finding pointing to growing gaps in income distribution in Israel in recent years, according to the GINI coefficient. This coefficient also shows that, in Israel, these gaps are among the largest in the world.[33] As for equality between Jews and Arabs, about 46% hold that such equality prevails. According to the international ratings, political discrimination of minorities in Israel is among the highest in the world.[34]

Concerning the stability and cohesiveness aspect, three dimensions were examined: stability, the evaluation of democracy's functioning, and social tensions. The public's assessment for all dimensions in this aspect are similar: about 47% hold that the political system in Israel is relatively stable, about 46% are satisfied with the functioning of Israeli democracy, and about 46% estimate that tensions in Israeli society are the same as those in other

---

32 The two ratings measuring representativeness are the party dominance rating and the disproportionality rating. See Figures 40 and 41 in Part Two below.

33 See Arian et al, *The 2003 Israeli Democracy Index* (note 1 above), pp. 80-83. The GINI coefficient measures the difference between the actual distribution of income and a theoretical-hypothetical case where every individual in the population receives exactly the same income. This coefficient is designed to measure social inequality.

34 See Arian et al, *The 2005 Israeli Democracy Index* (note 5 above), p. 37.

Figure 12

Assessing Democracy's Implementation in the Israeli Public in 2003 and 2006*

High score = assessment that this democratic principle prevails in Israel (percentages)
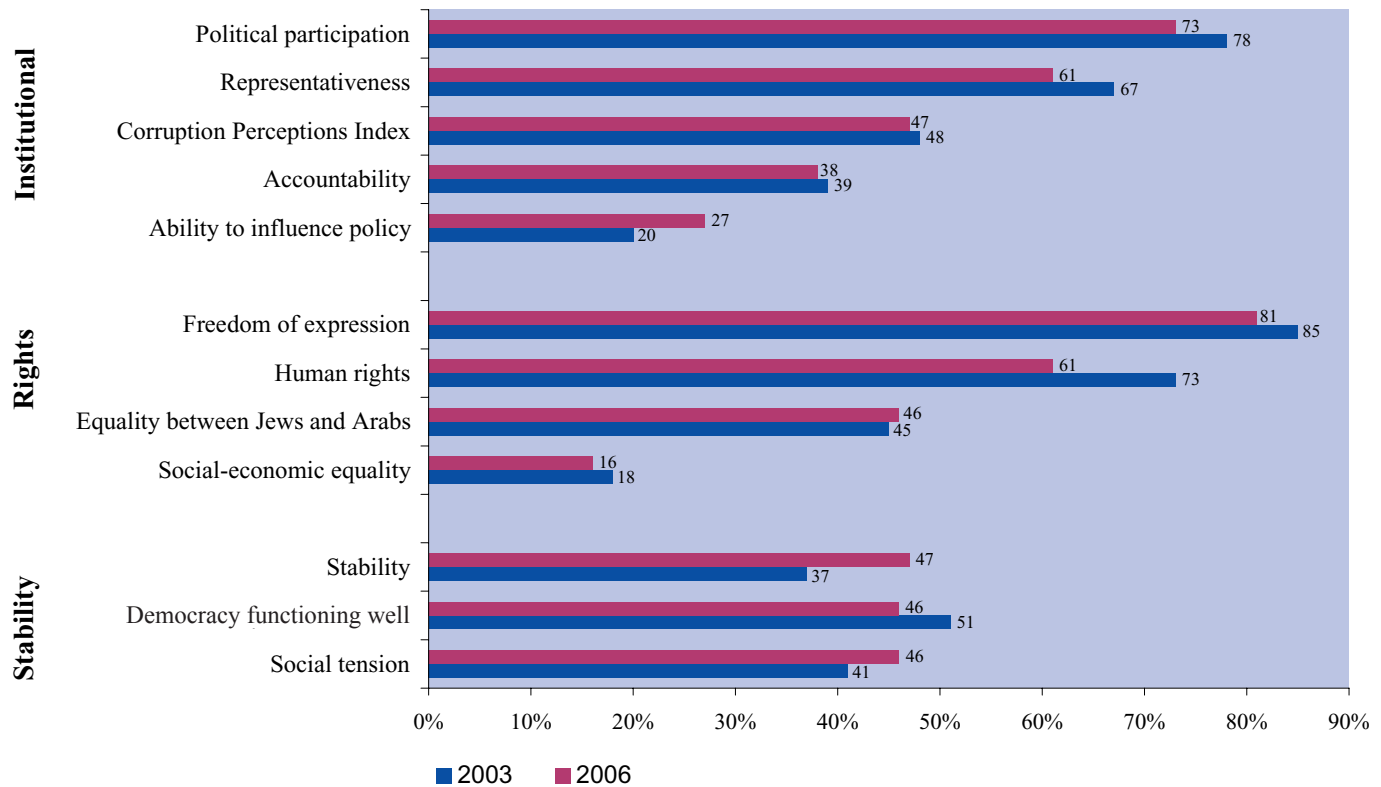
* These are the measures that were weighted from the aspects and categories: perception of the scope of corruption: In your opinion, is there more or less corruption in Israel than in other countries? (less than in others or as in others: 1-3); representativeness: To what extent does the balance of powers 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); 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); evaluating the ability to influence: To what extent can you or your friends influence government policy? (to a large or to a certain extent: 1-2); 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); freedom of expression: In your opinion, is there more or less freedom of expression 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 Arabs are discriminated against as opposed to 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); 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 or as in others: 1-3); 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)

countries or lower. The public's assessment of
the stability and cohesiveness aspect, therefore,
is not particularly high: about half of the citizens
do not think there is stability, are dissatisfied
with the functioning of Israeli democracy, and
hold that, relative to other countries, high tension
prevails between various groups in the society.

To obtain a fuller picture of the public's
estimates of Israeli democracy, we present the
data in comparison to the 2003 survey:
In the institutional aspect – a rise was recorded
in the citizens' assessment of their ability to
influence policy, as opposed to a drop in the
public's evaluation of the rates of political
participation, representativeness, scope of
corruption, and accountability.
In the rights aspect – a drop was recorded in the
public's evaluation of Israel's implementation of
freedom of speech and an even sharper drop
in their evaluation of the protection of human
rights. Regarding social and economic equality,
and equality between Jews and Arabs, almost no
change was recorded in the public's evaluations.
In the stability aspect – the public's estimate of
Israel's political stability and of social tensions
recorded a sharp rise. As for the functioning of
democracy, the public's satisfaction dropped in
2006 in comparison to 2003.

In sum, the perception of democracy's
implementation in the institutional and rights
aspects recorded a drop in 2006, as opposed to an
improvement in the perception of democracy's
implementation in the stability aspect.

(a) The Institutional Aspect

The institutional aspect relates to the country's
institutions, and examines the functioning of the
individuals active within them. Three groups
– Jewish old-timers, immigrants from the CIS,
and Israeli Arabs – were asked for their views
concerning the implementation of democracy
in this aspect. Figure 13 shows differences
between these groups' assessments concerning
the implementation of the dimensions included
in the institutional aspect. One interesting finding
is that immigrants from the CIS believe that their
influence on policy and on representativeness is
far lower than the perceptions of the Jewish old-
timers and the Arabs. By contrast, Israeli Arabs
assess the situation of corruption in Israel as
better than the estimates of the other two groups.

Checks and Balances

One of the basic underlying principles of
democratic regimes is that of restrained
government, including balance between the
three powers. The checks and balances rating
examines the public's evaluation concerning
the relationship between the three powers
– legislative, executive, and judicial.[35] We
consider now the distribution of public attitudes
toward the intervention of the High Court of
Justice in the decisions of the government and
its ministers (Figure 14). In the Democracy
Index 2006, respondents were presented with
the statement: "The HCJ interferes too much
in the decisions of the government and its

---

35   Arian et al, *The 2003 Israeli Democracy Index* (note 1 above), p. 131.

Figure 13

Assessing Democracy's Implementation in the Institutional Aspect among Groups in the Israeli Public

Jewish Old-Timers, Immigrants from the CIS, and Arabs*

High score = assessment that this democratic principle prevails in Israel (percentages)

■ Immigrants from the CIS   ■ Arabs   ■ Jewish old-timers
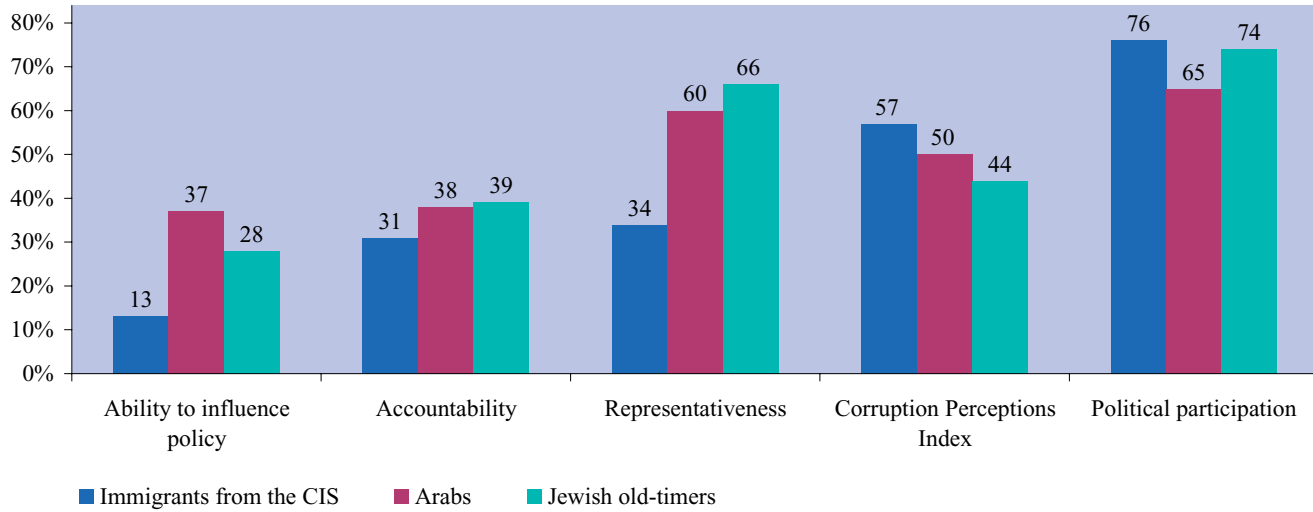
* Responses were distributed according to the language of the interview.

Figure 14

Checks and Balances

"The HCJ interferes too much in the decisions of the government and its ministers"*

Distribution according to level of religious observance (Jewish sample only; percentages)

■ Secular   ■ Religious   ■ Ultra-Orthodox
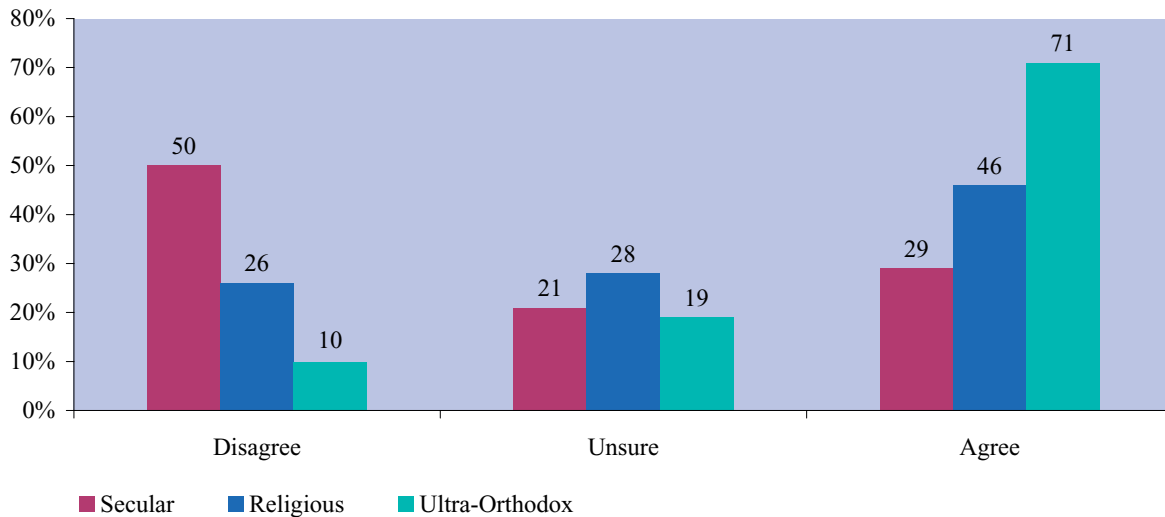
*   Respondents were divided into four levels of religiosity according to their self-definition. Four options of self-definition were offered: secular, traditional, religious, and ultra-Orthodox. This figure presents distributions for the secular, religious, and ultra-Orthodox respondents only. Reactions to the statement were proportionately weighted so as to obtain the full picture only for these three groups, and they do not appear in the Appendix.

ministers." Reactions to this statement were examined according to the respondent's level of religiosity. The rate of religious respondents who agree with this statement (46%) is far higher than that of the secular respondents (29%). 71% of the ultra-Orthodox supported this statement. The correlation between level of religiosity and attitude to the HCJ may explain disputes on religion and state issues, such as marriage laws, or other controversial matters.

(b) The Rights Aspect

This issue relates to the essence of democracy and examines respect for its basic rights and their protection.[36]

Figure 15

Assessing Democracy's Implementation in the Rights Aspect among Groups in the Israeli Public

Jewish Old-Timers, Immigrants from the CIS, and Arabs*

High score = assessment that this democratic principle prevails in Israel (percentages)
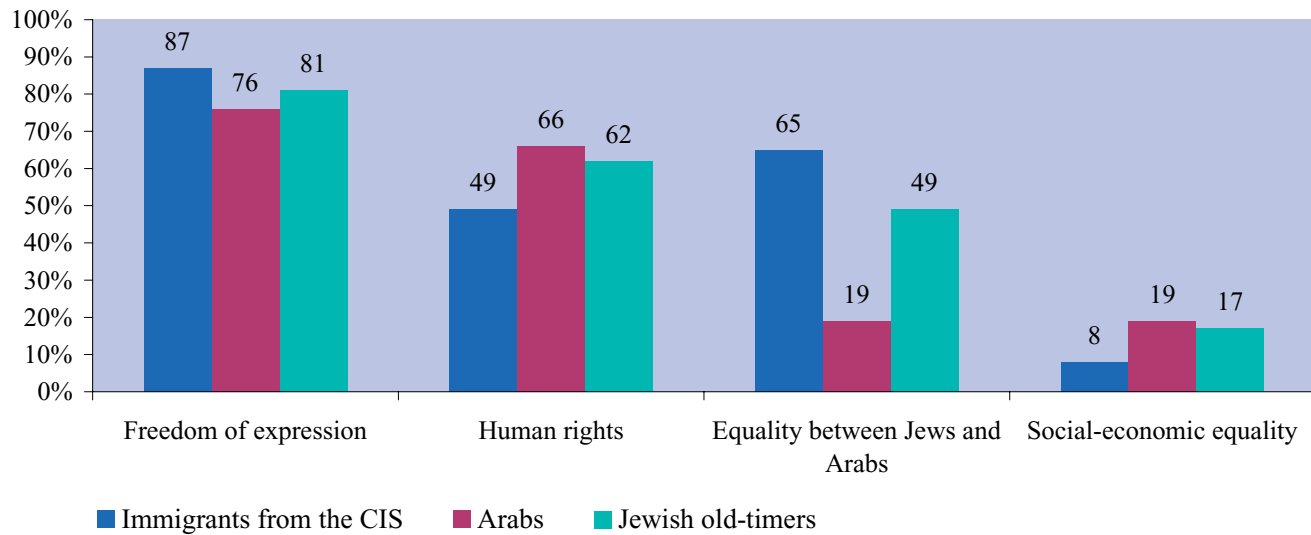
* Responses were distributed according to the language of the interview.

---

36   Arian et al, *The 2005 Israeli Democracy Index* (note 5 above), p. 20.

Assessing Democracy's Implementation in the Rights Aspect among Groups in the Israeli Public

The implementation of democracy in the rights aspect was examined in regard to three groups: Jewish old-timers, immigrants from the CIS, and Israeli Arabs. As Figure 15 shows, a very large gap separates the assessments of Arabs and Jews on equality of rights. As opposed to a small minority within the Arab population holding that equality prevails, Jewish old-timers assess equality as much higher. The evaluation of immigrants from the CIS in this regard is far higher than those of the other groups.

Support for Political and Social Rights in Israel

Respondents were asked to express the extent of their agreement with the statement: "All must have the same rights before the law, regardless of political outlook." Figure 16 shows that about 86% of the Jewish respondents agree or definitely agree with this statement. Over the years, the trend of support for political and social rights has been largely consistent, except for in 1988. Despite social rifts and gaps between society's various groups, then, the findings suggests a basic willingness to protect the rights of the other. This finding attests to tolerance, to pluralism, and to democratic attitudes concerning rights, at least at the declarative level.

Figure 16
Rights for all, 1980-2006
"All must have the same rights before the law, regardless of political outlook"
Definitely agree and agree (Jewish sample only; percentages)
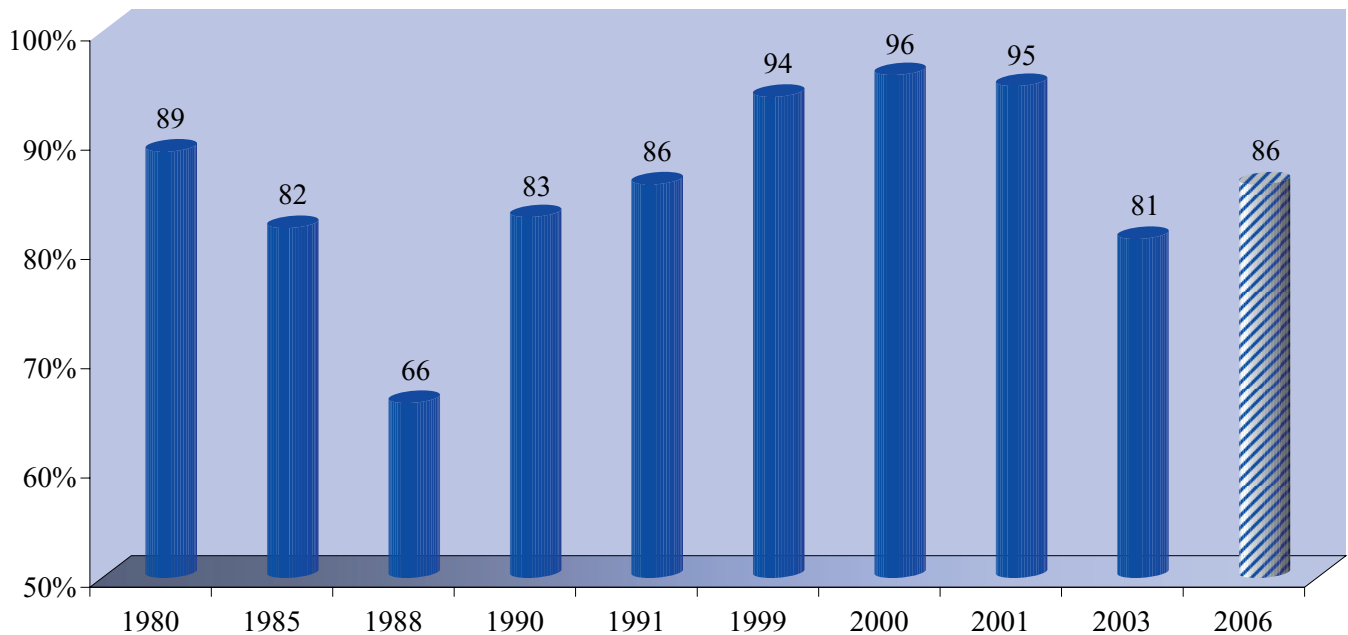
(c) The Stability and Cohesiveness Aspect

Assessing Democracy's Implementation in the Stability and Cohesiveness Aspect among Groups in the Israeli Public

We examined three population groups: Jewish old-timers, immigrants from the CIS, and Arabs. The data in Figure 17 shows that differences in the assessments of various population segments concerning the stability and cohesiveness aspect are very small. Regarding this aspect, the assessments of immigrants from the CIS on all three dimensions are lower than those of Jewish old-timers and Arabs.

The Public's Degree of Trust in Key Institutions in the Last Four Years, 2003-2006

An important measure for determining the stability and cohesiveness of Israeli democracy is the public's level of trust in key institutions. As in every Democracy Index, respondents assessed five key institutions and two positions: the IDF, the Supreme Court, the President, the police, the Prime Minister, the Knesset, and the political parties (Figure 18). A general downward trend in the degree of trust in these institutions is evident in 2006 vis-à-vis 2003 and 2004. A sharp drop was also recorded in the

Figure 17

Assessing Democracy's Implementation in the Stability and Cohesiveness Aspect among Groups in the Israeli Public

Jewish Old-Timers, Immigrants from the CIS, and Arabs*

High score = assessment that this democratic principle prevails in Israel (percentages)
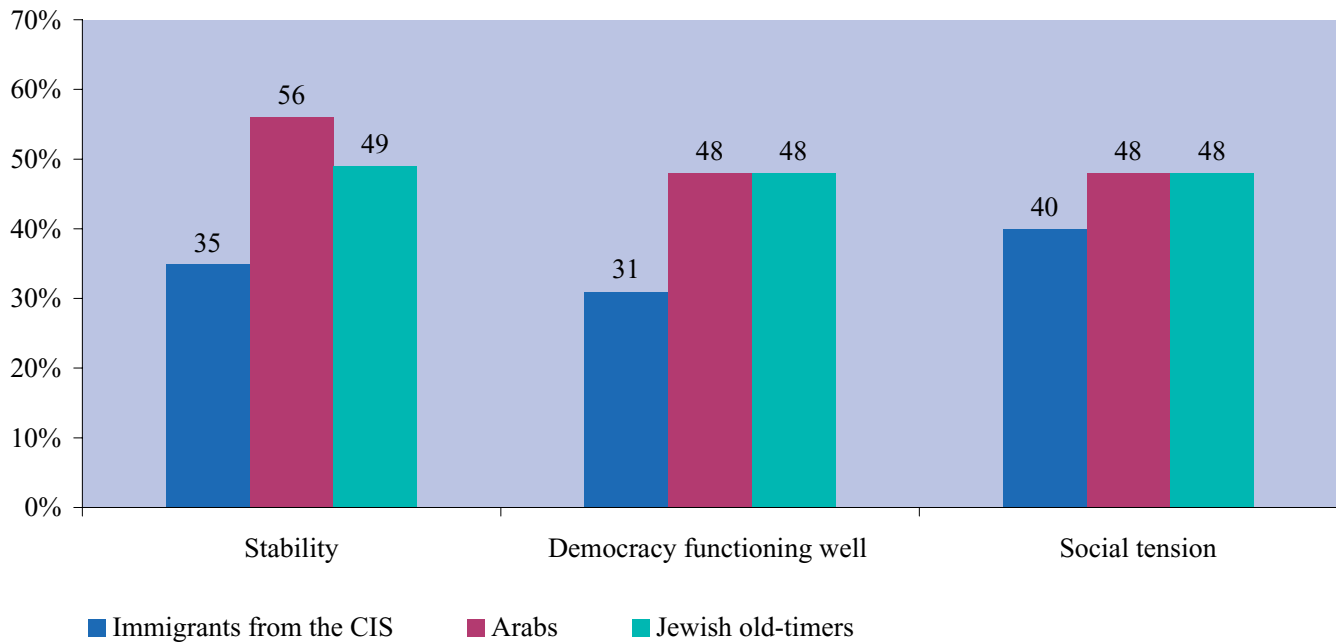
* Respondents were distributed according to the language of the interview.

degree of trust in the Knesset and the police, and a moderate drop in the level of trust in the Prime Minister. By contrast, the degree of trust in two of the three institutions that elicited the highest level of trust showed a rise: as opposed to 2005, trust in the IDF – the institution enjoying the highest level of trust – rose by 1%, and a rise of 2% was recorded in the degree of trust in the President, the institution ranking third in the scale of trust. Note that the high level of trust in these two institutions has remained stable over the years, whereas continuous erosion has been recorded in the trust levels accorded to the Supreme Court and to the Knesset. Trust in the Supreme Court dropped by 11% vis-à-vis 2004 and 4% vis-à-vis 2005. A similar trend was also evident concerning levels of trust in the Knesset: a drop of 13% in 2006 vis-à-vis 2004, and of 7% vis-à-vis 2005.

The Institution that Best Protects Israeli Democracy

A further indication of the degree of trust in certain institutions is the question "What is the institution that best protects Israeli democracy?" (Figure 19). Note that despite the drop in trust in the Supreme Court, it is still perceived as the institution that best protects democracy (47%). Following the Supreme Court in this ranking are the media (25%), the Prime Minister (15%), and the Knesset (13%). Apparently, whereas non-elected institutions are accorded the title of "democracy protectors," only a small section of the public is willing to place institutions that are publicly elected in this category, either directly or indirectly. In other words, the public holds that its elected officials protect democracy less well than public servants and media figures.

Figure 18

Trust in Key Institutions, 2003-2006
"To what degree do you have trust in the following people or institutions?"
To a large degree and to some degree (percentages)

	2003	2004	2005	2006
IDF	84	86	78	79
The Supreme Court	70	79	72	68
The President	68	73	65	67
The police	66	66	57	44
The Prime Minister	53	45	48	43
The Knesset	52	46	40	33
Political parties	32	27	22	22
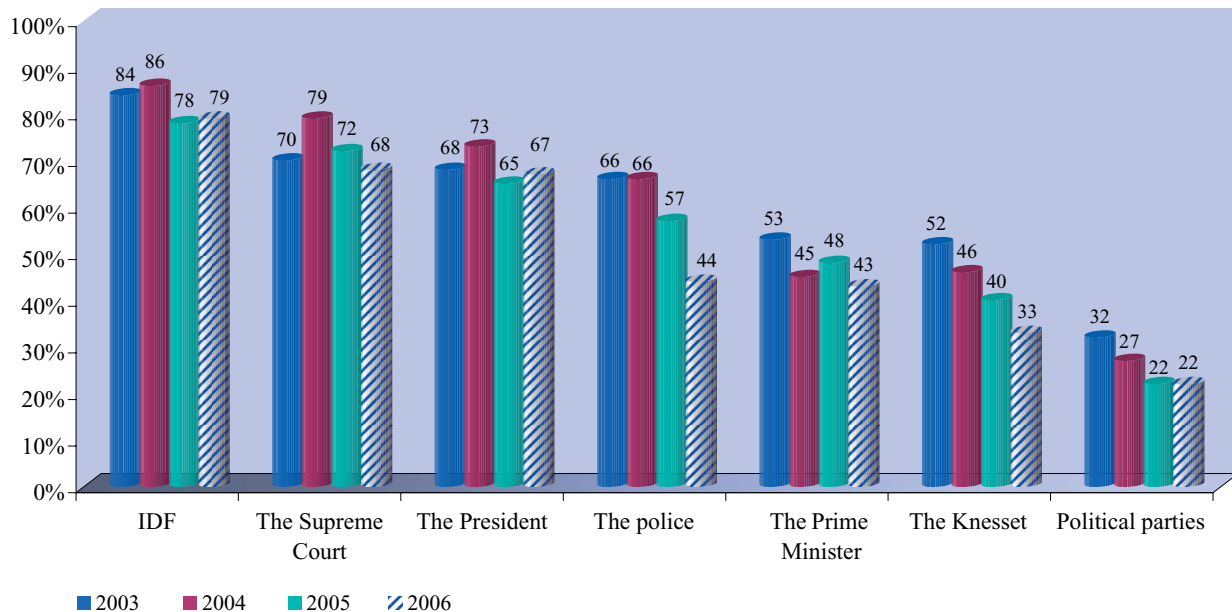
Figure 19
Protecting Democracy, 2003-2006
"The institution that best protects Israeli democracy" (percentages)
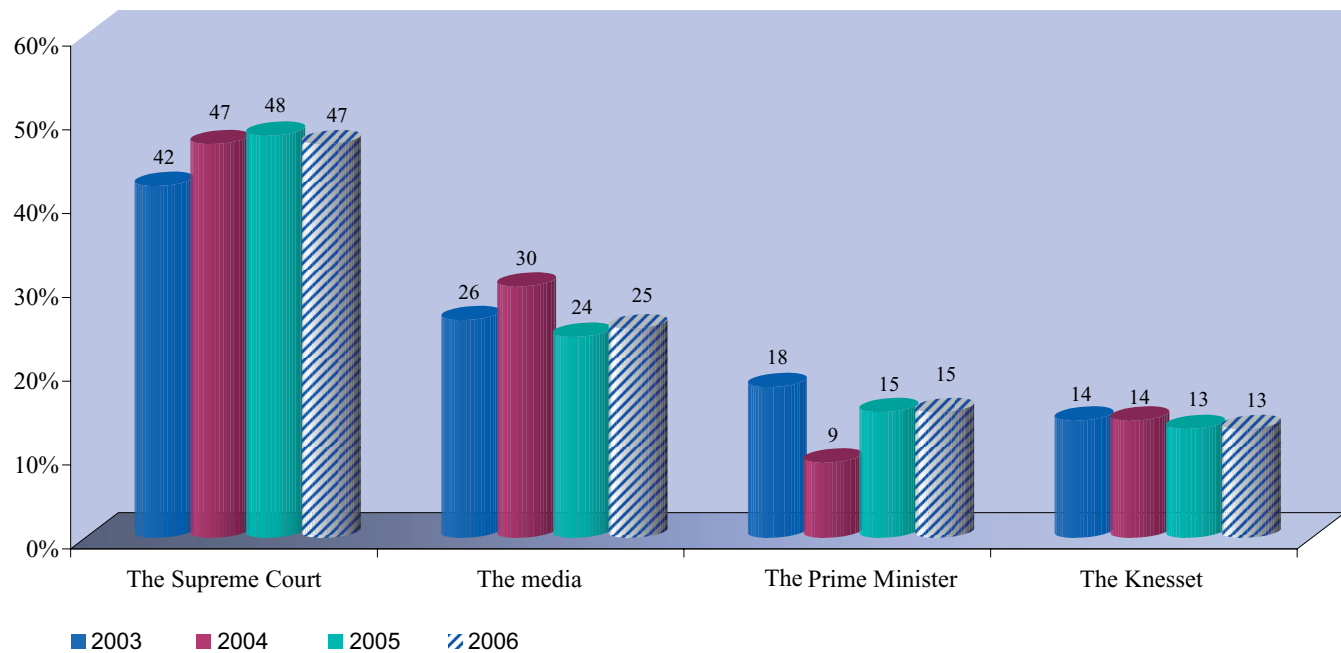
Social Trust in Israel

The following question was asked to estimate the level of social trust in Israel: "Do you think that people can be trusted or that one should be very cautious in relationships with others?" In 2006, 74% of the respondents hold that people cannot be trusted, as opposed to 26% who think that people can always or generally be trusted. Compared with previous years, a sharp drop in social trust was recorded this year, after several years of increase. In 2003, 29% answered that people can be trusted, in 2004 – about 33%, in 2005, we saw a sharp rise to 44% and in 2006, only 26% declare that people can be trusted. Social trust in Israel, then, has eroded, parallel to the weakening of the sense of community and of social solidarity.

Inter-group relationships in Israel

Figure 20 presents the public's estimates of the relationships between groups in Israel in 2006 in the categories of "not good" and "not good at all," as opposed to 2003.

The figure shows an improvement in the evaluation of the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi rift. The public, then, estimates that this rift has healed to some extent, whereas the rich-poor and immigrants-old-timers rifts have worsened. An interesting finding is that the public estimates that the immigrants-old-timers rift is deepening rather than healing over the years.

Figure 20
Inter-group Relationships in Israel, 2003-2006*

Not good and not good at all (percentages)
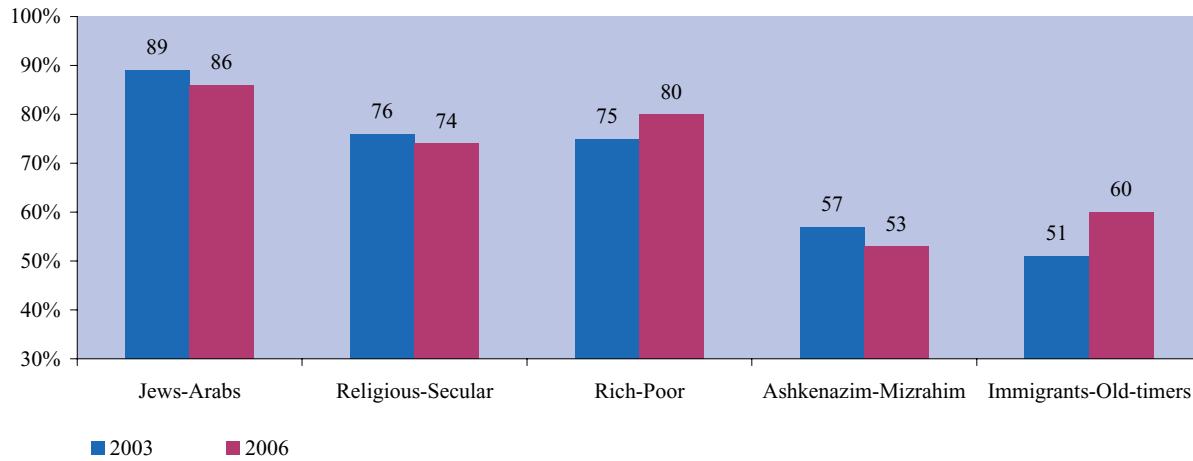
* The sample for evaluating the Arab-Jewish rift and the rich-poor one is from the general population; the sample for evaluating the religious-secular rift, the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi rift and the immigrants-old-timers rifts was drawn from the Jewish sample only.

3. Democracy: Support and Satisfaction

Support for Democracy and Satisfaction with Israeli Democracy

Respondents were asked about their attitudes concerning the statement "Democracy is the best form of government." A drop has been recorded in the rate of support for this statement in recent years, and it now stands at about 76% (Figure 21). Nevertheless, a support level of close to 80% is definitely high. 46% of the public are satisfied or very satisfied with the functioning of Israeli democracy. This rate is not high, and continues the downward trend that began in 2000 (Figure 22).

Figure 21

Support for Democracy in Israel, 1981-2006

"Democracy is the best form of government"
Agree and definitely agree (Jewish sample only; percentages)
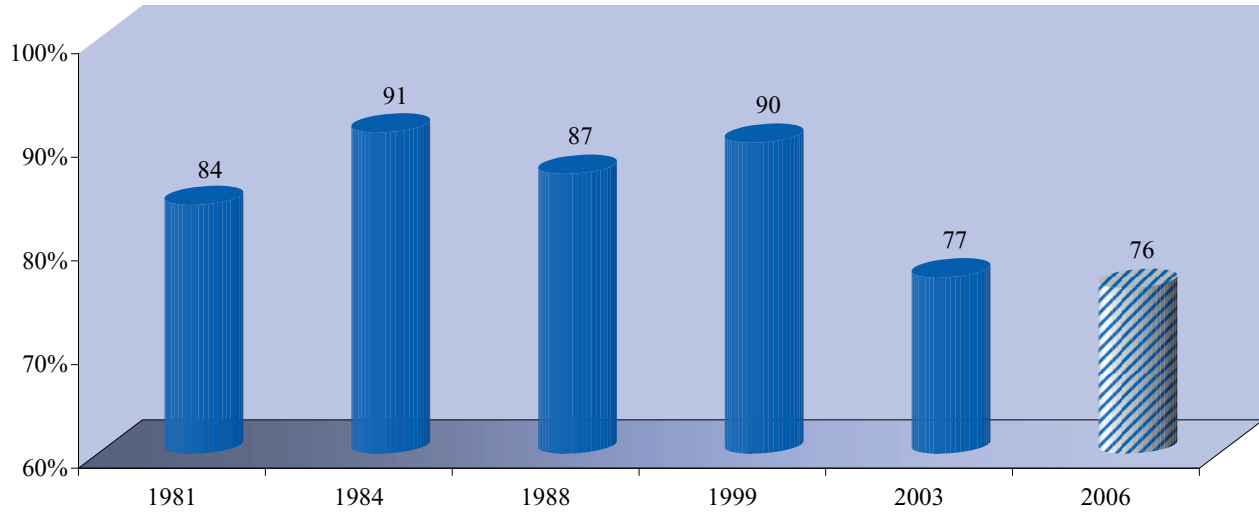
Figure 22

Satisfaction with Israeli Democracy, 1987-2006

"In general, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way in which
Israel's democracy functions?"
Satisfied or very satisfied (Jewish sample only; percentages)
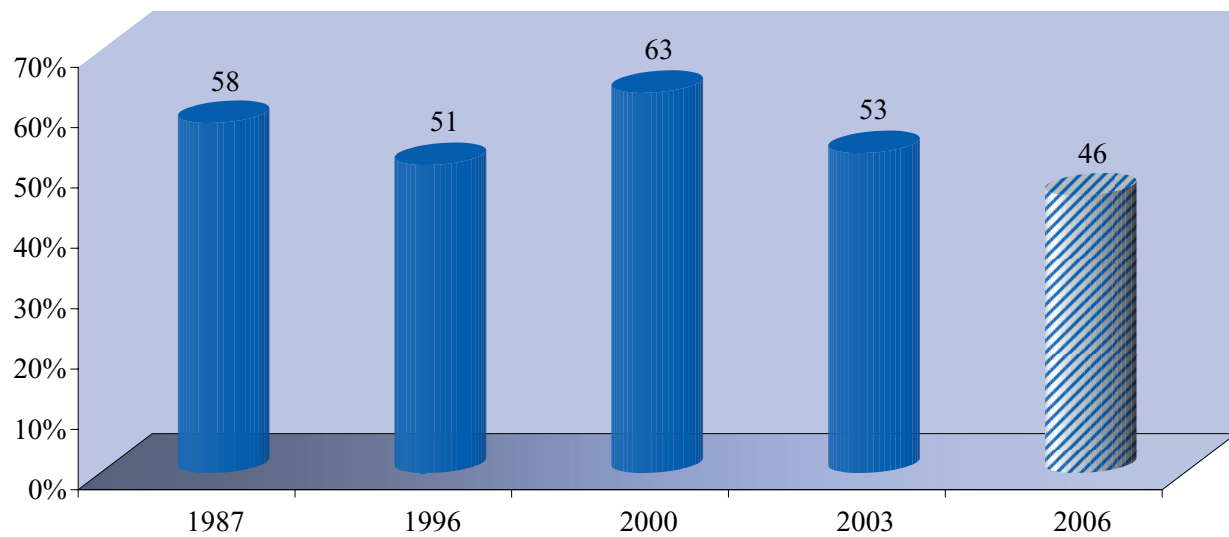
Democratic Attitudes in the Israeli Public According to the Three Aspects

Besides the public's evaluations and perception of democracy's implementation, the Democracy Survey examined whether the Israeli public upholds democratic norms and values, and the extent to which they come to the fore in the three aspects. In the **institutional aspect**, we examined involvement and interest in politics; in the **rights aspect**, we examined attitudes toward equality for Arabs, religious freedom, and equal rights for all; in the **stability aspect**, we examined social trust, identification with Israel, and opposition to violence. Figure 23 shows an increase in the frequency of democratic attitudes concerning equality for Arabs and equal rights for all. By contrast, a drop was recorded in all the other measures examined, except for opposition to violence, which showed no change.

Figure 23

Democratic Attitudes: Israeli Public 2003 and 2006*

High score = expressing attitudes fitting democratic norms (percentages)
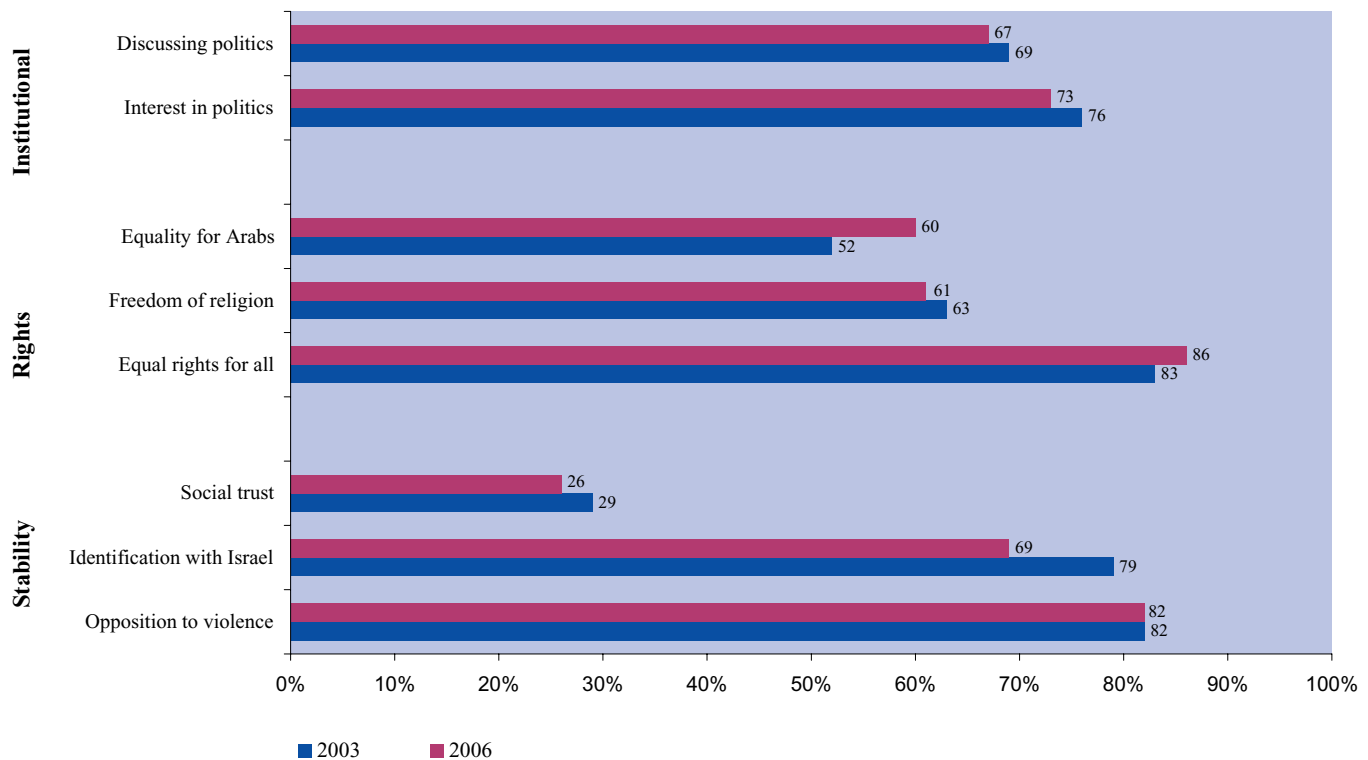
* The following are the variables rated in the various aspects and the categories that were weighted: discussing politics: To what extent do you tend to talk with your friends and family about political issues? (talk: 1-2); interest in politics: To what extent do you take an interest in politics? (take an interest: 1-2); equality for Arabs: To what extent do you support or oppose each of the following: full equality of rights between Jewish and Arab Israeli citizens? (support: 3-4); 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 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).

4. Events in 2005 and 2006 and their Effects on the Public's Assessments of Various Issues in Israeli Democracy

Since August 2005, a number of exceptional and significant events took place in Israel: the implementation of the disengagement plan (August 2005); the founding of the Kadima party (November 2005), and Ehud Olmert's assumption of the role of acting Prime Minister (January 2006). Four surveys were conducted in the course of this period – in June 2005, September 2005, December 2005, and February 2006 – presenting respondents with the same questions. Testing at different points in time enables us to view the effects of each event on the public's assessments.

Israel's Position in General

In June 2005, 43% assessed Israel's position as not good and even as bad. In September 2005, after the disengagement, a sharp drop was recorded in this figure, which stood at about 32%. In February 2006, on the eve of the elections, the public's assessments returned to the June 2005 values of about 40%.

The Effects of the Disengagement on the Public's Assessment of the Likelihood of Civil War

Participants in the survey were presented with the question: "In your opinion, to what extent is there a likelihood of civil war in Israel as a result of the arrangements concerning the future of the territories?" (Figure 24). In June 2005, before the implementation of the disengagement, only 28% held there is no likelihood of civil war. In September 2005, after the evacuation of the settlements, this figure grew by 17%, to 45%, and in February 2006 (with the evacuation of the Amona outpost in the background) the number of those who believe there is no likelihood of civil war in Israel again dropped, and stood at only 21%. In June 2005, two months before the implementation of the disengagement, about 42% of the respondents believed in the likelihood of civil war to a large or to some extent, and in September 2005, immediately after the evacuation of the settlements, their number dropped to around 20% – a gap of about 22%. In February 2006, 46% of the respondents said they believed in the likelihood of civil war to a large or to some extent. In other words, some degree of optimism prevailed concerning the country's social situation immediately after the disengagement, but five months later assessments returned to the June 2005 ratings.

Respondents were then presented with questions about the specific effect of the disengagement. In the September 2005 survey, only 22% held that democracy had been strengthened after the implementation of the disengagement. A similar rate held that the strength of democracy had decreased. Only 37% of the respondents think that Israel's position is better in the wake of the disengagement, and a similar rate holds it has not changed. By contrast, 33% think that the disengagement created an irremediable rift.

Figure 24
**Assessing the Likelihood of Civil War Following the
Arrangements on the Future of the Territories, 2005-2006**
"In your opinion, to what extent is there a likelihood of civil war in Israel as a result of the
arrangements concerning the future of the territories?"
June 2005, September 2005, and February 2006 (percentages)

■ June 2005   ■ Sep. 2005   ■ Feb. 2006
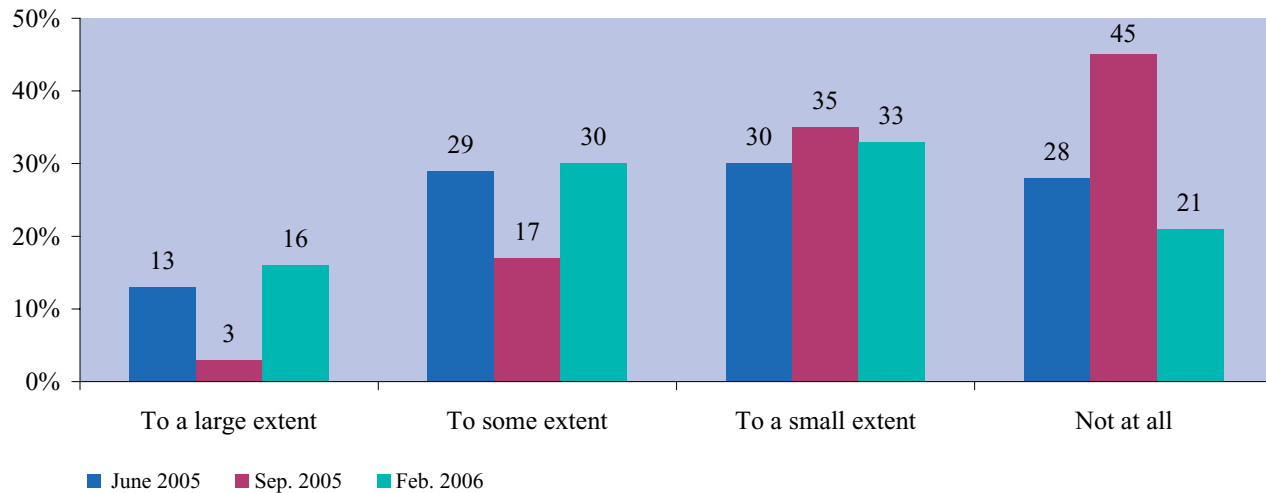
**Trust in Institutions before and after the
Disengagement**

After the implementation of the disengagement,
levels of trust were tested concerning three
institutions: the IDF, the police, and the Prime
Minister. The data in Figure 25 attests to
fluctuations in the degree of trust in the IDF
and the police. In September 2005, the degree
of trust in the police was 67%. Five months

later, in February 2006, it had dropped to 44%.
Generally, the IDF enjoys the highest degree of
trust. In September 2005, 93% of the respondents
expressed trust in this institution and by February
2006, trust in the IDF had stabilized at a fixed rate
– 79%. No change was recorded in the degree of
trust in the Prime Minister (48%) following the
disengagement, but in February 2006, after Ehud
Olmert replaced Ariel Sharon, the rate of those
trusting him had dropped to 43%.

Figure 25

Trust in Key Institutions before and after the Disengagement, 2005-2006

June 2005, September 2005, and February 2006

To a large degree and to some degree (percentages)

■ June 2005   ■ Sep. 2005   ■ Feb. 2006
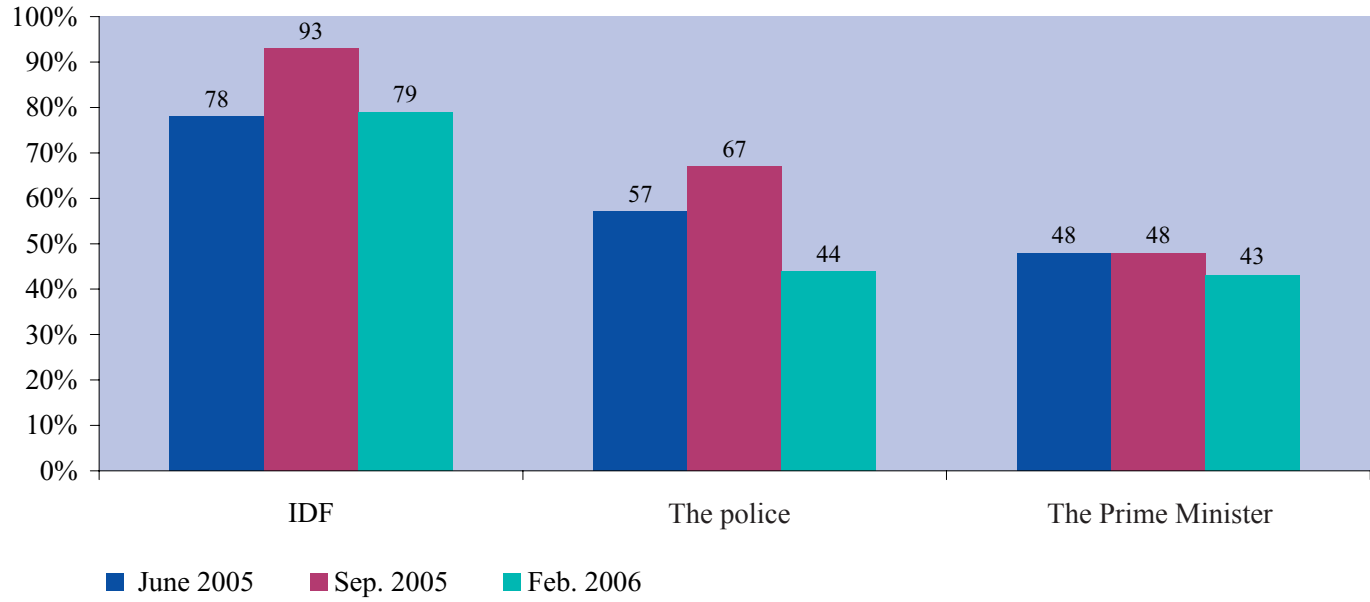
Part Two
Changes in Israel's Political Party System: Dealignment or Realignment?

A. Background

Political parties have many roles, and they are the main tier of political life in a democratic regime. They dictate the political agenda, they choose candidates and anoint leaders, they are involved in the public's socialization processes, and they consolidate values and interests common to various groups in the society. In the course of time, however, we have witnessed increasing changes in their characteristics, their roles, and their mode of functioning, in response to systemic changes in the economy, in the society, and in politics. In fact, we are speaking about an ongoing dynamic of adaptation to changes, which characterizes political parties wherever they are.[37]

As in the above discussion about the democracy indicators, in this part too we compare the state of Israeli political parties to that of parties in other countries as well as to the situation in Israel over time. For the comparison, we used the same 35 countries contrasted with Israel on the democracy indicators, relying on up-to-date data from public opinion surveys conducted in these countries. We also conducted a public opinion survey in Israel on the perception of political parties.

Two terms help us to examine changes in the political system. The first is **dealignment**, which describes a general loosening up of the ties between the society and the parties in

response to processes of social and political modernization.[38] This theory assumes that a weakening of the connections with political parties is a feature of all industrialized western democracies and follows from several factors. The electorate has changed drastically in recent decades, particularly due to the increase in the number of highly educated voters, the rise in living standards, and the expansion of political knowledge. At a time information becomes free and more accessible to a better educated public, coping with political problems is no longer limited to the party system and alternatives to politicians and traditional parties become available. For instance, more and more citizens can find political answers by turning to the media and the parties' traditional roles is now largely fulfilled by communication channels, in their capacity as sources of political information and as a forum for presenting demands. Other explanations for the weakening ties between the political parties and the society lie in the parties themselves, their conduct, and their modes of functioning.

The paramount characteristics of the slackening party system are the instability of election results, evident in the inability to forecast election results and to trace the party map, and in the weakening of party ties, evident in frequent changes in the voters' behavior. This has been an ongoing phenomenon, expressed in various

---

37   Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party," *Party Politics* 1(1) (1995), pp. 5-28.

38   Russell J. Dalton, "The Decline of Party Identification," in *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, ed. Russell J. Dalton and Martin P. Wattenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 19-37.

ways: declining voter turnout, decreasing identification with the parties, high volatility, an increasing tendency among voters to vote for the party opposed to the one with which they had identified in the past, an increase in the number of voters who identify with independent parties, a tendency to postpone the decision about who to vote for to a late stage of the election campaign, a rise in one-issue voting, voting according to the political affiliation or the functioning of the party candidate, a fragmentation of the political party system or the disappearance of veteran parties, the swift rise and fall of new parties, and the entry of new parties into the political system.[39] Researchers are divided concerning the number of indicators pointing to a loosening of the party system.[40] We will try below to present some of this long list of indicators.

The second term helping us understand the configuration of Israeli parties is the **realignment of the party system**, which refers to the change in the traditional balance of power between the parties. The political science literature deals with three types of realignment:[41] critical realignment, secular realignment, and issue evolution realignment. **Critical realignment** follows from a swift change in the political system, mostly

after (exceptional) critical elections and a shock to the party map,[42] describing a disruption in the long-standing balance of the political system following the appearance of new issues on the agenda, a new rift, a deteriorating problem, or a sudden political event.[43] After these critical elections, the new balance is restored and continues for several election campaigns.

S**ecular realignment** is a prolonged process of weakening ties between the voters and the parties.[44] This is a gradual, almost imperceptible, and prolonged process, continuing through several elections and culminating in the creation of a new configuration of political parties or party blocs. A secular realignment emerges in the wake of new socialization patterns in the parties and in the fixed construct of the voting. Its most distinctive manifestation is the transition of groups from one party to another and the creation of new ties and loyalties.[45]

The third type is the **issue evolution realignment**, which is actually a synthesis of the first two types.[46] Here we can identify the rise of new issues or of a new rift, besides a sudden dramatic change in one election, which leaves a mark on the political system for several

39   Russell J. Dalton, Scott C. Flanagan, and Paul A. Beck, eds., *Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies: Realignment or Dealignment?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).
40   Dalton "The Decline of Party Identification" (note 38 above).
41   William J. Crotty, "Party Transformation: The United States and Western Europe," in *Handbook of Party Politics*, ed. Richard S. Katz and William J. Crotty (London: Sage, 2006), pp. 499-514.
42   V. O. Key, "A Theory of Critical Elections," *Journal of Politic*s 17 (1955), pp. 2-18.
43   Walter D. Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York: Norton and Company, 1970).
44   Scott C. Flanagan, "Patterns of Realignment," in Dalton et al. (note 39 above), pp. 95-103.
45   V. O. Key, 'Secular Realignment and the Party System', *Journal of Politic*s 21 (1959), pp. 198-210.
46   Edward G. Carmines and James E. Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).

successive elections. One expression of this realignment is a rise in voter turnout, and the political involvement of citizens who had not been involved in politics in the past.[47]

As noted, the weakening of the party system is an international[48] and not only an Israeli phenomenon.[49] In Israel, the 1992 change in the Law of Direct Election for the Prime Minister was a catalyst in the acceleration of this trend.[50] But what has happened to political parties in Israel since? How does the public relate to them? And what trends can be identified in the party map? This part of the Democracy Index will discuss changes in the Israeli party system and in the public's moods in a comparative perspective, divided into five sections. The first section deals with political participation and its various expressions, such as voter turnout (in Israel and in an international comparison), the

degree of interest in politics, and the perception of the ability to influence. The second focuses on the results of the 2006 elections in Israel, by comparison with previous elections and in an international perspective. The third focuses on the public's moods and on the parties' image: trust in political parties in Israel and in an international comparison, the general alienation from political parties, and the issue of political corruption. The fourth discusses the ties between the citizens and the parties and the voter's self-identification with the parties: changes in party membership, the personalization of politics, support for strong leaders, closeness to the party, and protest votes. The fifth section deals with the ideological component and with issues that affect voting for the Knesset, the blurring of ideological borders between parties, and the rise of centrist parties.

47 Edward G. Carmines and James E. Stimson, "The Dynamics of Issue Evolution: The United States," in *Electoral Change* (note 39 above), pp. 134-153.

48 Dalton, "The Decline of Party Identification" (note 38 above).

49 Asher Arian and Michal Shamir, *Party System Continuity or Change? On Mistaking a Dominant in a Dealigning System* in *The Elections in Israel: 2003*, ed. Asher Arian and Michal Shamir (Jerusalem: The Israel Democracy Institute, 2004), pp. 27-57.

50 Asher Arian and Michal Shamir, "Candidates, Parties, and Blocs: Israel in the 1990s" in *The Elections in Israel: 1999*, ed. Asher Arian and Michal Shamir (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 13-32.

B. Political Participation

Political participation is the opportunity given to all citizens to express their political preferences and influence decision-making processes. Political participation includes many and diversified expressions of direct relationships between voters and elected officials, between the citizens and the government. The public's degree of interest in political developments, conversations between friends or family members about politics, and news watching are examples of political participation. Participating in demonstrations, signing petitions, sending letters to Knesset members, and participating in political discussions are examples of active

political participation and of realizing the value of participation.

1. Voter Turnout

One of the accepted measures for testing the public's political participation is voter turnout. This rate, measured in percentages, is obtained by dividing the number of ballots counted after the elections by the number of voters in the electoral register. In the Democracy Index, we usually compare the turnout in general elections in the 36 countries included in the ranking (Figure 26). The data on voter turnout in the last election is from

Figure 26
Voter Turnout: An International Comparison*
Percentage of Voters out of Registered Voters
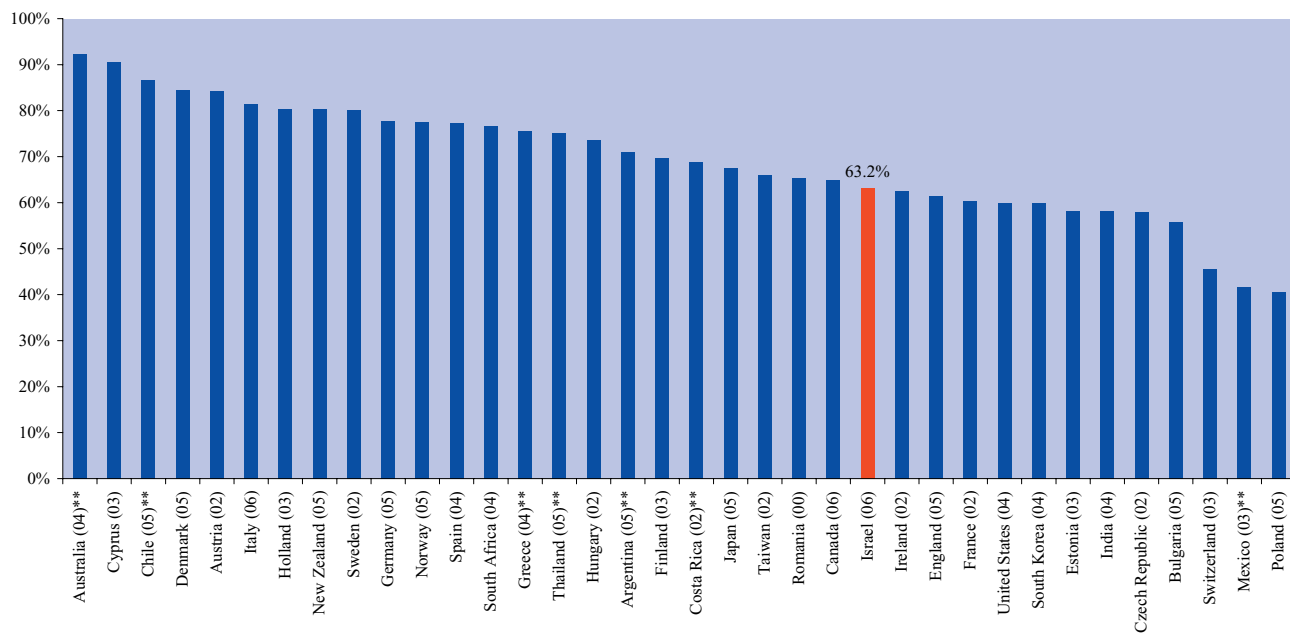
*   The number in parentheses is the election year for which turnout was recorded
** Compulsory voting (enforced at various levels)

the Inter-Parliamentary Union (henceforth IPU).[51] Note, however, that although this rate serves as a central measure of political participation, it does not present the full picture because, in many countries, voting is compulsory.

Figure 26 shows that Israel is in the lowest third of the scale, between Canada and Ireland. The highest turnout was recorded in Australia (92.4% in 2004), in Cyprus (90.5% in 2003), and in Chile (86.6% in 2005). In two of the countries, Australia and Chile, the high turnout is explained by their compulsory voting laws: citizens who do not vote are required to supply an explanation, and are liable for a fine when

they fail to comply with their civil duty. At the bottom of the scale are Switzerland (45.5% in 2003), Mexico (41.7% in 2003), and Poland (40.6% in 2005).

A drop in voter turnout is a typical phenomenon of most western democracies,[52] reflecting a weakening of social ties, a lack of public trust in the traditional party and parliamentary political system, and a growing inclination to resort to alternative, extra-parliamentary channels. Figure 27 presents the turnout in elections for the house of representatives: the left column presents the average turnout in 1949-2006, whereas the right column presents the turnout in the last elections

Figure 27
Average Voter Turnout in 36 Countries, 1949-2006

■ Average voter turnout 1949-2006   ■ Voter turnout in the last election
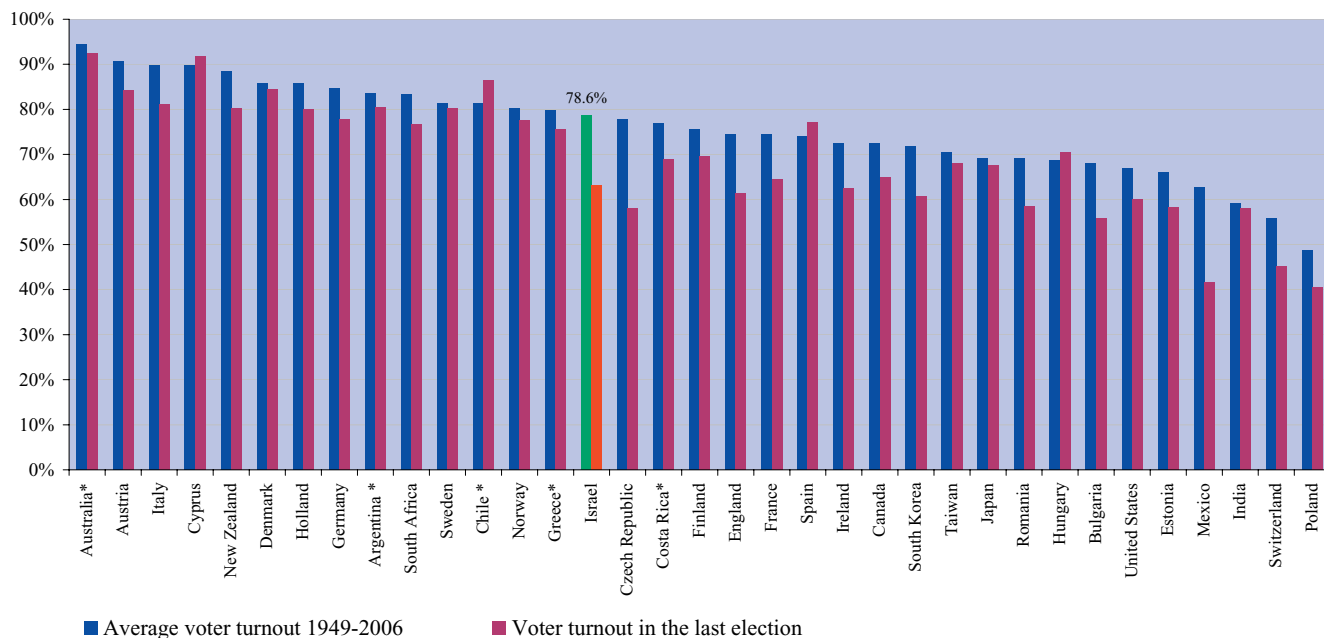
*   Compulsory voting (enforced at various levels)

51   Results are updated to the last parliamentary elections in each country.
     See http://www.ipu.org/english/home.htm.
52   Dalton "The Decline of Party Identification" (note 38 above).

conducted in that country. As the figure shows, a gap was found in most countries between the average turnout and the turnout in elections since 2000. In Ireland, for instance, average turnout in 1949-2002 was 73% but in the last elections, conducted in 2002, turnout was 62.6%, 10% lower than the average. This gap, found in many democracies, attests to a general decline in political participation during elections, which also characterizes Israel.

Voter turnout in the 2006 elections for the 17th Knesset stood at 63.2% of all the citizens in the electoral register (5,014,622 people, 294,547 more than in the 2003 elections).[53] Figure 28 presents turnout rates over the years. The lowest rate was recorded in the special elections for Prime Minister in 2001. In the 2003 Knesset elections, turnout was low – 67.8%. Turnout in the elections for the 17th Knesset on 28 March 2006 shows a real decline vis-à-vis previous years. Average turnout for Knesset elections in 1949-2006 stands at 78.6%. Given this figure, voter turnout in the 2006 elections represents a trend of increasing indifference to, and alienation from, elections and politics in general.

Many researchers prefer to relate to the turnout rates of the voting age population (18 and over) living permanently in Israel. Since the Israeli electoral register also includes citizens who have emigrated to other countries, and since citizens outside the country's borders have no right to vote (except for Israeli emissaries), turnout rates

are a priori downwardly biased. The calculation these researchers suggest is to divide the number of ballots (both valid and invalid) by the number of citizens in the population of the country aged 18 and over. According to this method, turnout in 2006 was 70.8% (3,188,075) of the registered voters living in Israel in 2006 (4,500,000).[54] Although the figure on the Israeli population aged 18 and over is an estimate and this rate is therefore not exact, it does complement the turnout rate calculated on the basis of the registered voters.

The decline in the turnout of Israeli Arabs is even larger and more significant than that of the population in general. Some hold that the low turnout in the 2001 elections is an exception. Nevertheless, the decline in voter turnout and the phenomenon of abstention from voting, which characterizes Arab citizens as well, is further evidence of the weakened support for political parties in general. As shown in Figure 29, the turnout of Arab citizens has been declining gradually since the 1977 elections: from an average of 84% until the 1977 elections to an average of 66% after the 1977 elections. In the 2006 elections, voter turnout was 56.3%, a decline vis-à-vis the average and vis-à-vis the 2003 elections. Whether we speak of alienation or of indifference, the decline in the participation of Israeli Arabs in recent elections expresses clear trends of dissociation from the entire party spectrum.

---

53   Turnout data for Israel was retrieved from the Knesset website. See
     http://www.knesset.gov.il/elections17/heb/index.asp.

54   The estimate of the number of people 18 and over permanently living in Israel was taken from a press announcement
     published by the Central Bureau of Statistics on 22 March 2006. See
     http://www1.cbs.gov.il/reader/newhodaot/hodaa_template.html?hodaa=200624061.

Figure 28
Voter Turnout in Israeli Elections, 1949-2006
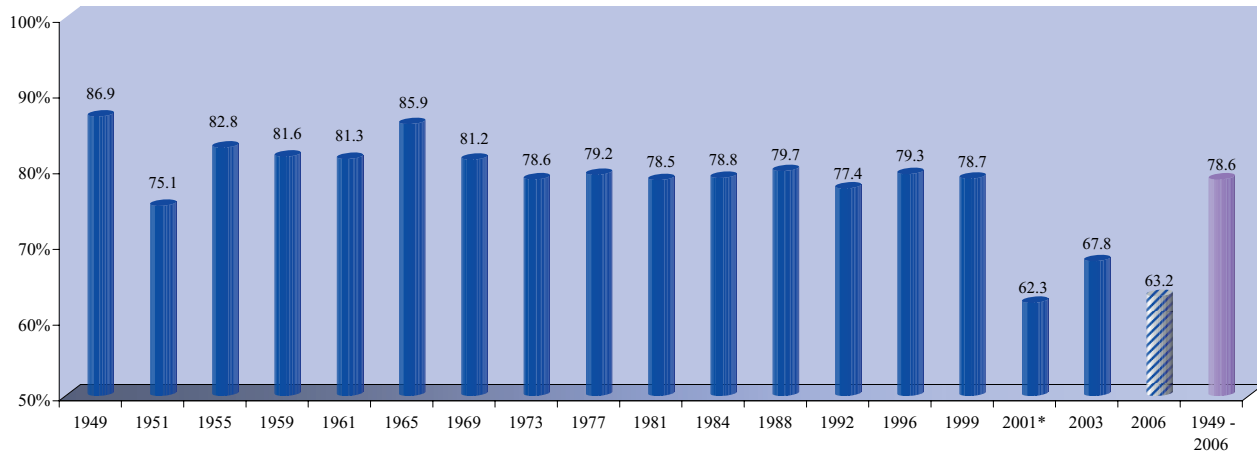
* Special elections for Prime Minister only

Figure 29
Voter Turnout of Israeli Arabs in Elections, 1949-2006 (percentages)
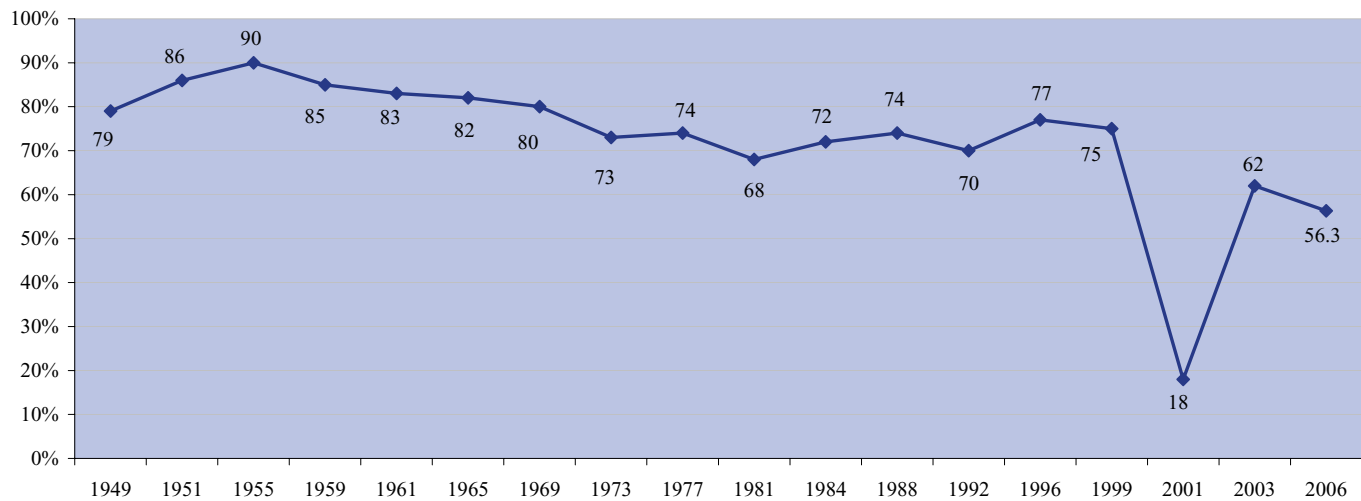
2. Interest in Politics

The Israeli public is highly aware of political developments and follows them closely. In the World Value Survey (henceforth: WVS) for 1999-2003, citizens in different countries were asked questions on a variety of social, economic, and political issues.[55] On three of the questions, Israel ranks first. Figure 30 shows that 70% of respondents in Israel reported they are interested in politics to a large or to some extent, the highest rate in western countries.[56] The Czech Republic, Norway, and Austria are ranked after Israel. Closing the scale are Argentina and Chile, where citizens are interested in politics only to a small extent.

Israel also ranks first on news consumption, as indicated by TV watching, listening to news on the radio, and reading daily newspapers. 89.7% of Israelis stay informed daily or several times a week regarding politics. Germany, Sweden, and the Czech Republic are ranked immediately after Israel, while in England and Ireland, citizens hardly stay informed about politics (Figure 31).

As for talking with friends and family members about political issues, Israel is also first and far ahead of the other countries in the ranking. 37.1% of Israelis answered that they tend to talk about politics often, as opposed to 24.9% in Denmark and 22.9% in Germany, for instance. Japan and Finland are placed at the bottom of the list concerning the tendency to talk about political issues.

Figure 30

Interest in Politics: An International Comparison

"How interested would you say you are in politics?"

Very interested and somewhat interested (percentages)

---
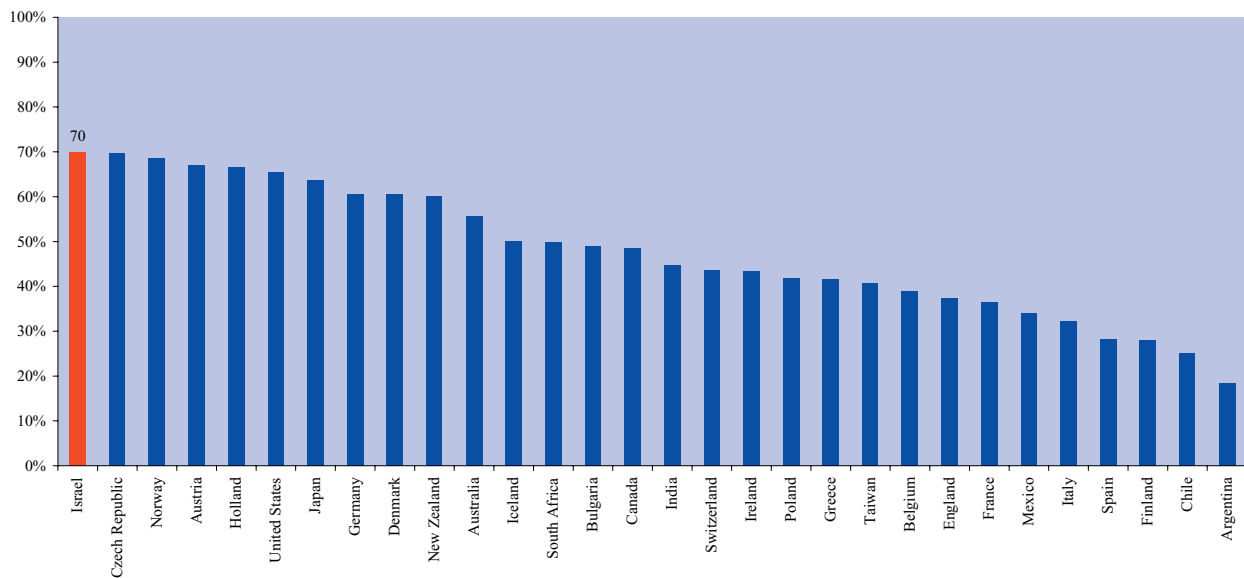
55   The data, including Israel's score, is taken from WVS scores in the 2000s. See http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org.

56   Ibid.

Figure 31

Staying Informed about Politics: An International Comparison
"How often do you follow politics in the news on television or on the radio or in the daily papers?"
Every day or several times a week (percentages)
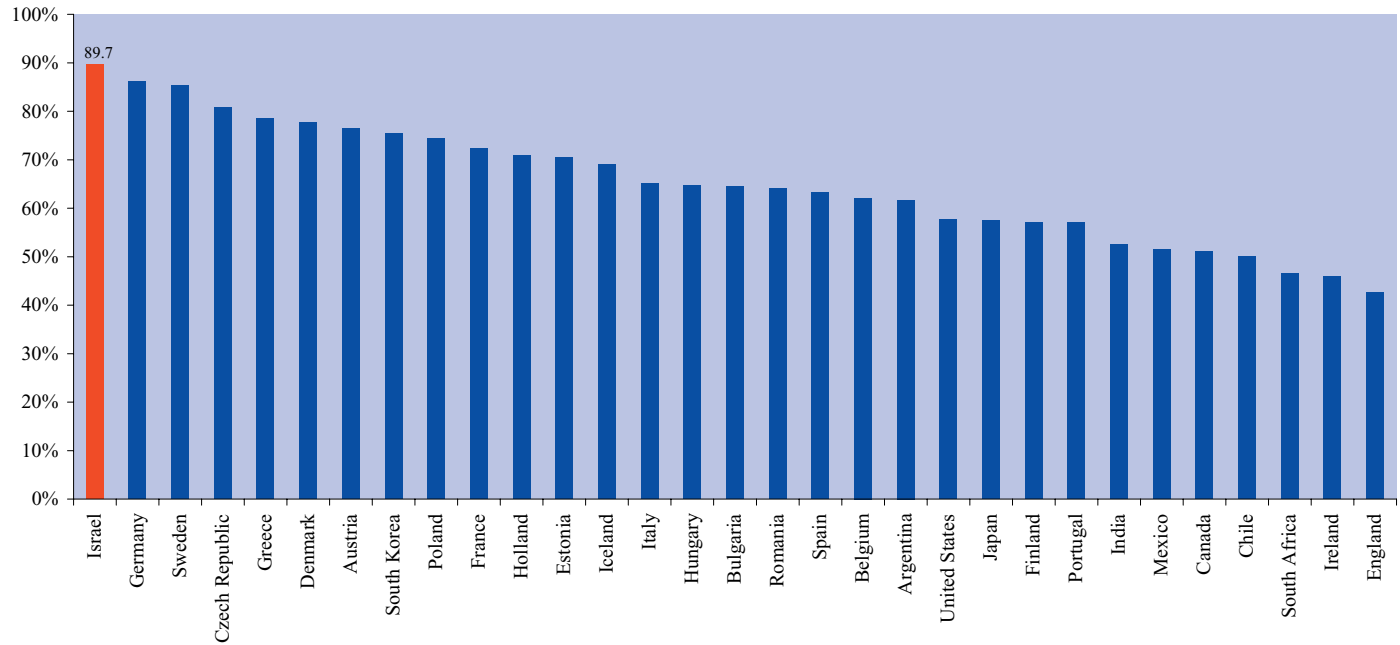
Figure 32

Talking about Politics: An International Comparison
"When you get together with your friends, would you say you discuss political matters
frequently, occasionally, or never (percentages)
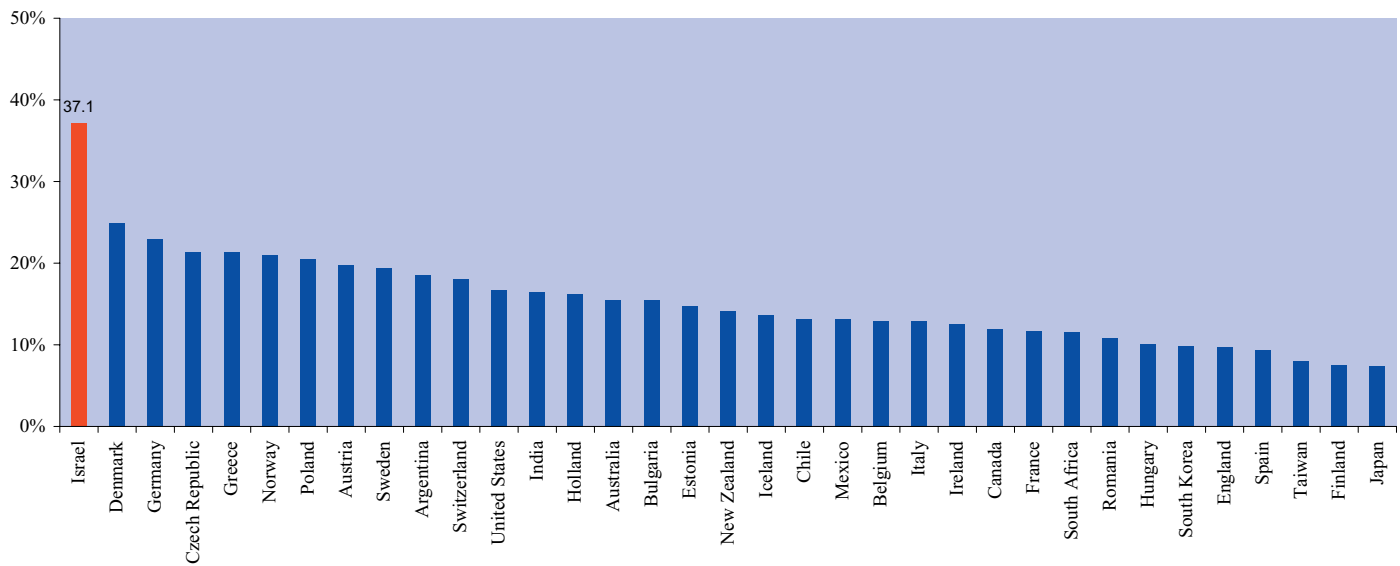
Israel, then, ranks in the top places in an international comparison on all the questions bearing an interest in politics. The long-term picture in Israel also offers a similar picture: in the 1970s, the average rate of respondents stating that they tend to talk about politics was about 50%, and in the 2000s, close to 70% of the respondents reported they do so (Figure 33). In 2003, the rate of respondents stating they tend to talk to a large or to some extent with their friends and families about political issues was 71% (Jewish sample only). In the 2006 Democracy Index, 70% of the respondents said they are interested in politics to a large or to some extent, as they did last year.

In the Democracy Indices we have been conducting since 2003, we ask participants how often do they stay informed about what's going on in politics through TV, the radio, or the press. In 2003, 87% of the respondents said they stay informed every day or several times a week. In 2005, the rate of those who stay informed frequently dropped to 81%, but remained high. In 2006, 82% said they stay informed frequently on political issues, a slight rise over last year. The citizens' interest in politics and the frequency of their updates about political issues, then, remain high and stable.

Besides the citizens' interest in politics, another question touches on the perception of the value of implementing political participation, that is, on the ability to influence political processes: "To what extent can you and your friends influence government policy?" As evident from

Figure 33
Talking about Politics in Israel, 1973-2006
"To what extent do you tend to talk with your friends and family about political issues?"
To a large extent or to some extent (Jewish sample only; percentages)
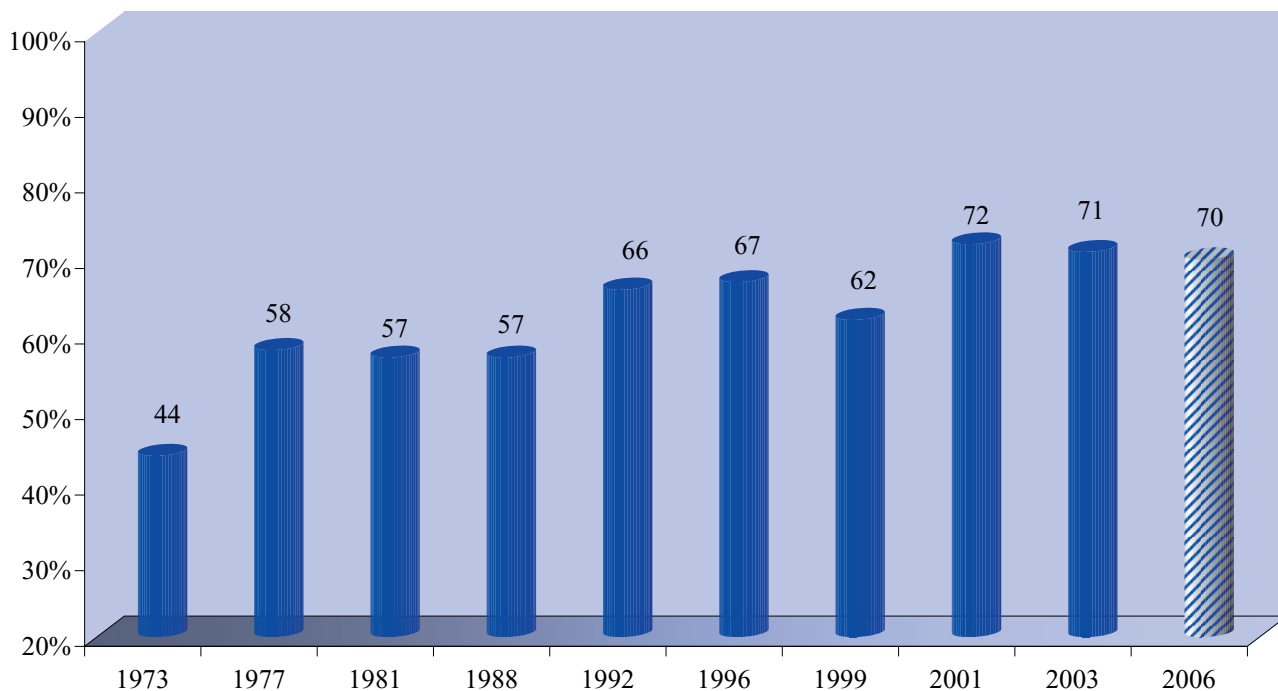
Figure 34, only 26% of the survey's participants believe that they and their friends can influence government policy to a large extent or to some extent, as opposed to 74% who believe that they can only influence policy to a small extent or not at all. In 2003, 21% held that they have a large or some influence on policy-making.[57] This figure represents a sharp drop from the 1980s and the 1990s, when 30% of the respondents believed they could influence government policy.

Another question examined in the survey concerns the centrality of the election campaign. 56% held that they agree or definitely agree with the statement: "Elections are a good way of bringing governments to relate to the people's view." 22% do not agree or definitely do not agree with this statement, and 22% are not sure.

The Democracy Index also tests the degree of implementation of the accountability principle, which is the belief that elected officials do take into account citizens' preferences in their functioning. It also examines to what extent decision-makers are perceived as people who view themselves as bearing responsibility and as committed to their roles. Findings indicate that the principle of accountability, in its more profound meaning, is not implemented (Figure 35). Most citizens do not perceive elected officials as acting to realize the public's preferences. 62% answered that they agree or definitely agree

Figure 34

Assessing the Ability to Influence Government Policy, 1973-2006

"To what extent can you or your friends influence government policy?"
To a large extent or to some extent (Jewish sample only; percentages)

---
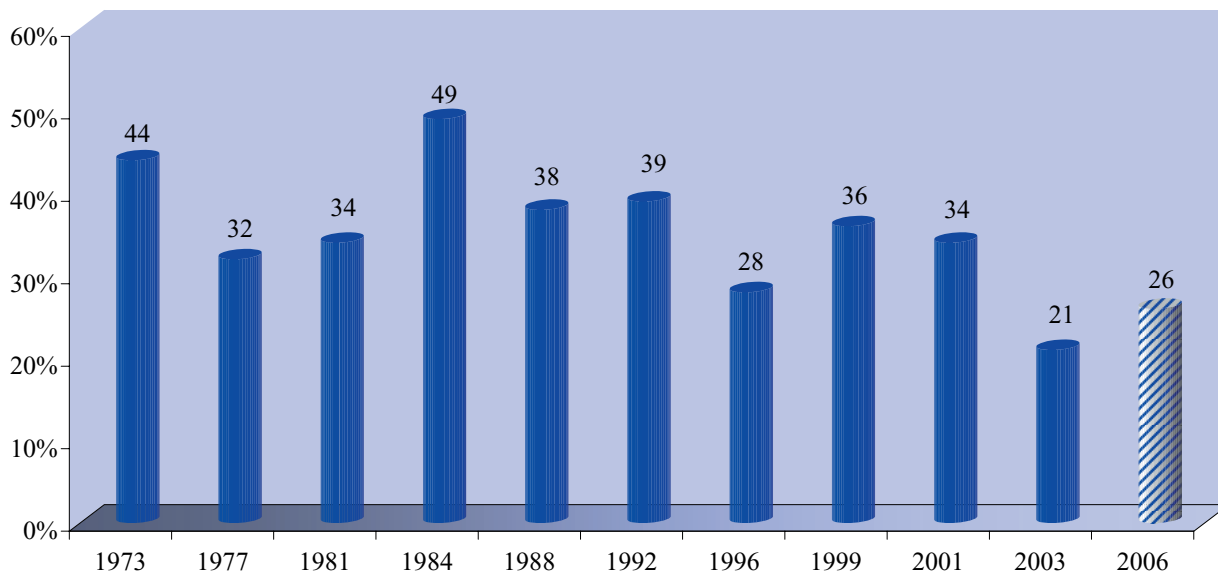
57   Arian et al, *The 2003 Israeli Democracy Index* (note 1 above), p. 142.

that politicians do not tend to take into account the view of the ordinary citizen, as opposed to 39% who claimed so in 1969. The picture of dissatisfaction with and alienation from political institutions is completed by reactions to the statement: "It makes no difference who you vote for. It does not change the situation." 36% of the respondents agree with this statement to a large or to some extent.

Israelis are interested in politics, talk about politics, stay informed about politics, and even feel closer to politics than in the past, although many indeed claim that politicians do not address their views and their demands. Nevertheless, as clarified below, the citizens' level of political activity is low, and the public does not translate its political interest into real action.

Figure 35
Accountability in Israel, 1969-2006
"A politician does not tend to take into account the view of the ordinary citizen"
Agree and definitely agree (Jewish sample only; percentages)
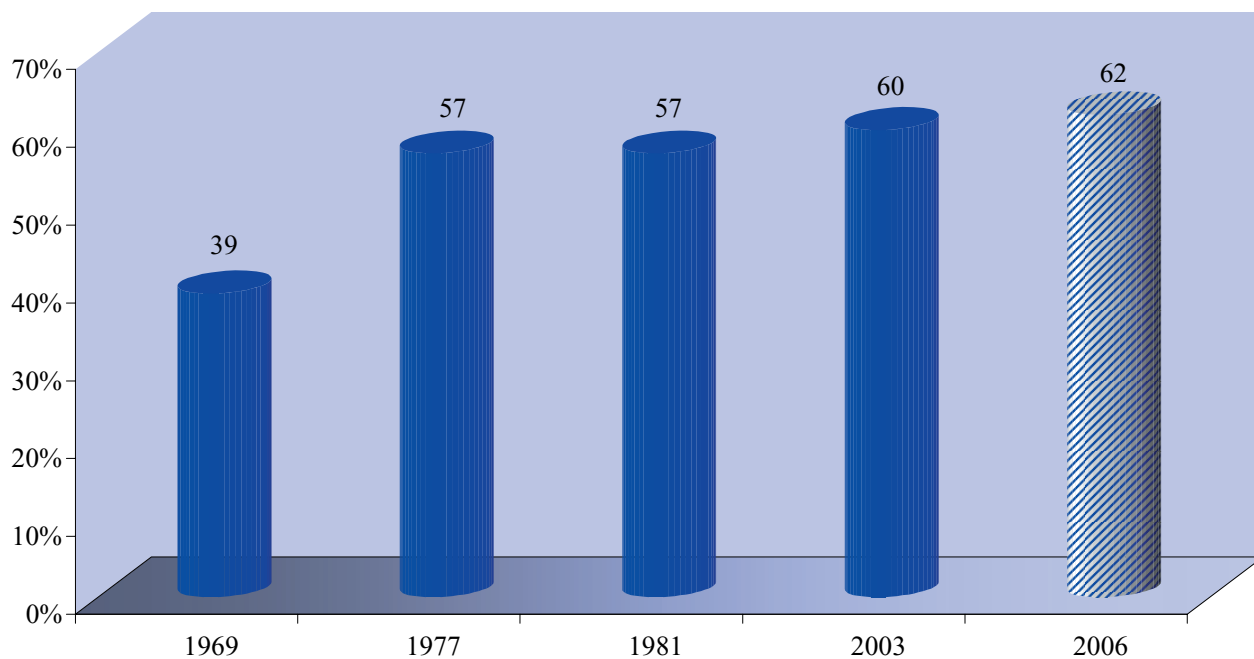
C. Election Results

1. Israel's Party System

The party system is characterized by mutual relationships between the parties comprising it, and varies from country to country. Many variables shape this system, some institutional (such as the electoral system, the formula for allocating parliamentary seats, the voting districts, and the government regime), and some social (the social structure, the social rifts, and the most burning political issues in the public debate). A concern with the party system requires a preliminary classification of the parties according to their attitudes on issues of policy and ideology, according to the characteristics of

their voters or elected officials, according to their development over time, or according to their representation in the legislature (Figure 36).

Many features single out Israel's political system in general and the Israeli party map in particular. The proportional electoral system is indeed a common feature of many democracies throughout the world. But the fact that the entire country is one electoral district, the rigid party-listing, and the low electoral threshold enable greater competitiveness and more splits in Israel's parties, which are also affected by Israel's unique social structure. The political rifts in Israel's split and fractured society and its

Figure 36
The Map of the Parties, 1988-2006

Arab Lists (Hadash; Balad; Mada; Ra`am-Ta`al; Progressive List for Peace)
Left/moderate left (Labor; Mapam; Am Ehad; CRM (Ratz); Meretz)
Center (Shinui; Center Party; Pensioners; Third Way; Kadima)
Moderate right (Likud; Tzomet)
Yisrael Be'Aliyah
Religious (Yahadut Ha-Torah; Degel Ha-Torah; Shas)
Right (Moledet; Ichud Leumi; Yisrael Beitenu; NRP; Tehiya)
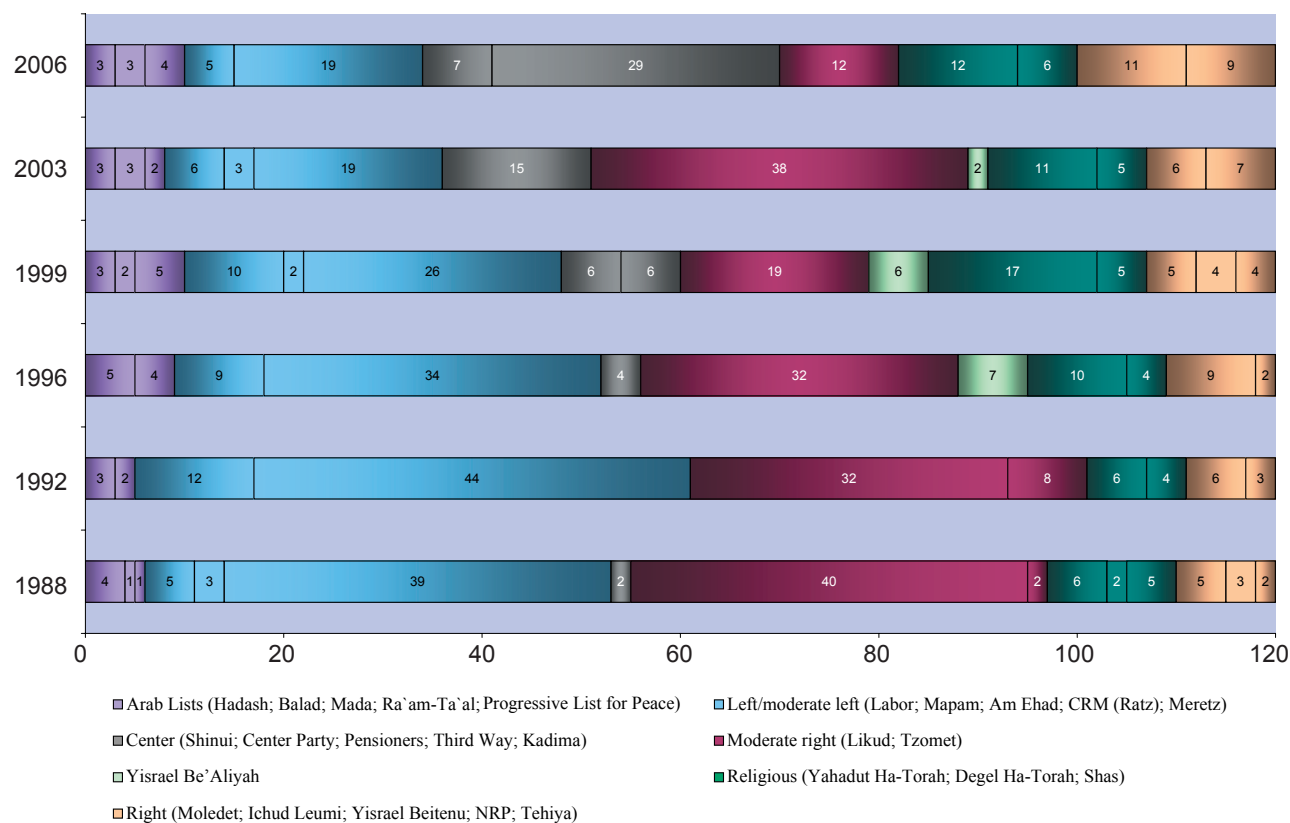
many disagreements contributed to the creation of a unique and highly diversified party system. The party map, as Figure 36 shows, is so varied that no electoral campaign resembles previous ones. The 1980s were characterized by neck and neck competition between the two large parties – Likud and Labor. In the 1990s and the 2000s, Israeli citizens found themselves in a more competitive and polarized system, which brought them five Knesset and three Prime Minister elections.

The proportional system, as well as the increasing prominence of social rifts, contributed to a growth in the number of parties contending and represented in the Knesset.[58] The first peak was recorded in 1981, when 31 lists contended, and this was also the case in the 1999 and 2006

elections. Figure 37 presents the number of parties contending in Knesset elections and the number of parties that have been represented since 1988; at the end of the 1980s, 27 lists contended and 15 attained representation. In 1992, the number of contending lists dropped to 25, after the electoral threshold was raised that year to 1.5%, and the number of parties that attained representation dropped to 10. The enactment of the Law of Direct Elections for the Prime Minister in the 1996 elections led at first to a drop in the number of lists contending for the Knesset, and only 22 lists submitted their candidacy for the 14th Knesset (and two even withdrew before the elections). The number of lists competing was still low, particularly since the parties had not yet succeeded in exploiting the advantages offered by a split vote, and 11 lists

Figure 37
Number of Lists and Number of Parties that Contended and Gained Knesset Representation, 1988-2006

Legend: ■ Contended in Knesset elections   ■ Represented in the Knesset

---
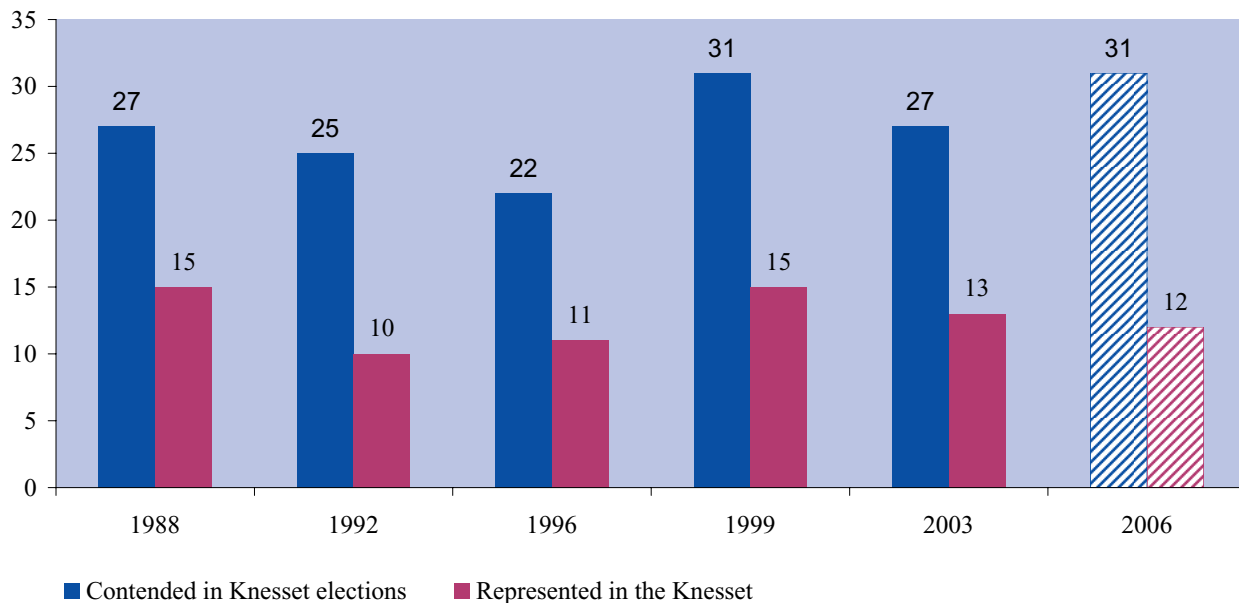
58   Arend Lijphart, Peter J. Bowman, and Reuven Y. Hazan, "Party Systems and Issue Dimensions: Israel and New Democracies Compared," *Israeli Affairs* 6 (2000), pp. 29-51.

finally attained representation. By 1999, however, the number of competing lists stood already at 31, and half (15) attained Knesset representation. In the 2003 elections, the number of competing lists dropped to 27, but the number of parties that attained representation remained high – 13.[59] On 10 February 2006, 31 parties submitted lists for the Knesset elections and 12 gained representation. The electoral threshold in these elections was 2%. Hence, 19 lists never gained representation although, together, they polled 185,235 votes (about 5.9% of the valid ballots).

The high number of parties contending could also be explained in terms of the split between "veteran parties" and "new parties."[60] The "veteran parties" were founded before Israel was established and in the first years of the state – Mapai (eventually the Alignment and Labor), Herut (eventually Likud), Agudat Yisrael (eventually Yahadut Ha-Torah), the National Religious Party (NRP), and MAKI (the Israel Communist Party – eventually Hadash). The "new parties," however, introduced a new leadership and a new ideology and succeeded in attaining representation. Thus, for instance, four new parties contended in the 1977 elections and gained 20 seats. The Civil Rights Movement (Ratz) obtained one seat, the Left Camp of Israel (Sheli) and Shlomtzion gained two seats each. The most significant achievement in these elections was that of The Democratic Movement for Change (DMC), which gained 15 seats.

Figure 38
Veteran Parties and Number of Knesset Seats, 1988-2006
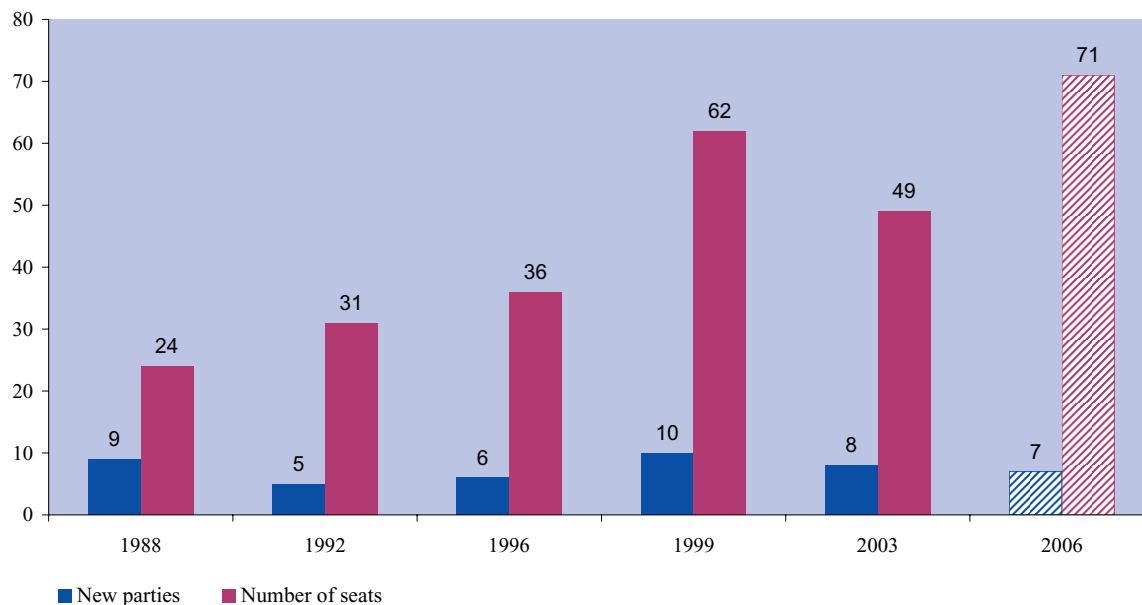
59 Immediately after the elections, the Yisrael Be'Aliyah party headed by Natan Sharansky joined the Likud. Am Ehad led by Amir Peretz joined Labor.

Figure 38 presents the new parties and the number of seats they have attained together since the 1988 elections. In the 1988 elections, 9 new parties gained 24 seats. Tzomet, founded by Raphael Eitan, and Moledet, headed by Rehavam Zeevi, gained 2 seats each. Degel Ha-Torah, supported by the Lithuanian branch of ultra-Orthodoxy, gained 2 seats, and the Arab Democratic Party (MADA) and the Progressive List for Peace 1 seat each. Shas gained 6 seats, and 3 factions that united (Ratz, Mapam, and Shinui) gained 10 seats. In the 1992 elections, 10 parties obtained representation after they passed the electoral threshold, which was raised that year to 1.5%. 5 veteran parties and 5 new parties together gained 31 seats.[61] The interesting phenomenon in those elections was a significant rise, for the first time, in the representation of the new parties: from 24 seats in 1988 to 31 in 1992.

During the period of direct elections for the Prime Minister, the new parties continued to gain strength. Israeli voters split their vote between the party with which they had a sectarian identification and the leader they wanted to see as prime minister.[62]

In the 1996 elections, 22 parties contended in the Knesset elections, 11 gained representation.

6 new parties also gained representation, and together obtained 36 mandates.[63] In the 1999 Knesset elections, 31 lists contended in the Knesset elections and 15 succeeded in attaining representation. 5 parties entered the Knesset for the first time.[64] Their electoral power was further strengthened in the 14th Knesset, and they held more than 50% of the seats. Although most of the new parties are not actually long-lived, their increasing share of Knesset seats continues to threaten the dominance of the older parties.

Direct elections for the Prime Minister were annulled on 7 March 2001, and the new electoral arrangements were enforced in the elections for the 16th Knesset in 2003. In these elections, the trend pointing to the new parties' increasing strength was indeed weakened, but together they still held a large number of seats (49).[65] In the 2006 elections, a serious weakening was recorded in the veteran parties: all 5 of them together gained only 50 seats, whereas the 7 new parties together gained 70 seats.[66]

Frequent party turnover and the emergence of new parties are responses of the party system to the changes affecting the society. And yet, despite the impressive growth in the number and strength of the new parties, they tend to join other parties, split up, and at times even

---

60   Giora Goldberg, "'Bringing Forth the Old from the New: The Growth of New Parties in Israel" [Hebrew], *The Demise of Parties in Israel*, ed. Danny Korn (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1998), pp. 167-178.

61   Meretz gained 12 seats, Tzomet – 8, Shas – 6, Moledet – 3, Mada – 2.

62   Ofer Kenig, Gideon Rahat, and Reuven Hazan, "The Adoption and Abrogation of Direct Elections for Prime Minister and their Political Consequences", in *The Elections in Israel: 2003* (note 49 above), pp. 53-93.

63   Shas gained 10 seats, Moledet – 2, Yisrael Be'Aliyah – 7, Third Way – 4, Meretz – 9, Mada-Ra`am – 4.

64   Shas – 17 seats, Ichud Leumi – 4, Israel Beitenu – 4, Yisrael Be'Aliyah – 7, Center Party – 6, Am Ehad – 2, Shinui – 6, Meretz – 10, Ra`am – 5, Balad – 2.

65   Shinui – 15, Shas – 11, Ichud Leumi – 7, Meretz – 6, Am Ehad –3, Yisrael Be'Aliyah – 2, Balad – 3, Ra`am – 2.

66   Kadima – 29, Shas – 12, Yisrael Beitenu – 11, Gil – 7, Meretz – 5, Balad – 3, Ra`am-Ta`al – 4.

disappear from the political map. In the test of time, new parties contribute to uncertainty in the political system.

2. The Power of the Large Parties

The process of decline affecting the veteran parties (first organizationally and then electorally) is evident in the size of the three large parties since 1988. The continuous rule of the Mapai-Alignment party ended in 1977 and the Likud and Labor have since vied for power. In the 1980s, the race was extremely close: in 1981, the two parties together gained 95 seats, and the gap between them was only 10,405 votes; in 1984, their combined strength was reduced to 85 seats (the Likud went down from 48 to 41; Alignment from 47 to 44).

Figure 39 reports election results, and underscores the strength of the three large parties since the 1988 elections. In 1988, the two large parties together split 79 seats (66% of the Knesset mandates). The 1992 elections returned Labor to power with 44 seats, but the combined strength of the two large parties declined slightly, to 76 seats. Direct elections for the Prime Minister in 1996 diluted their strength even further. The drop of the Likud to 34 seats and of Labor to 32 seats was a heavy blow to both parties, and their combined strength dropped to 66. But the substantial drop in their strength was recorded in 1999 when, together, they obtained only 45 seats. In the 2003 elections, their situation improved and they obtained 57 seats together but, in historical terms, their joint strength remained low. On 17 May 2004, the Knesset raised the electoral threshold from 1.5% to 2%.

Figure 39
The Size of the Three Largest Parties, 1988-2006
(Seats)

■ Largest party   ■ Second largest party   ■ Third largest party
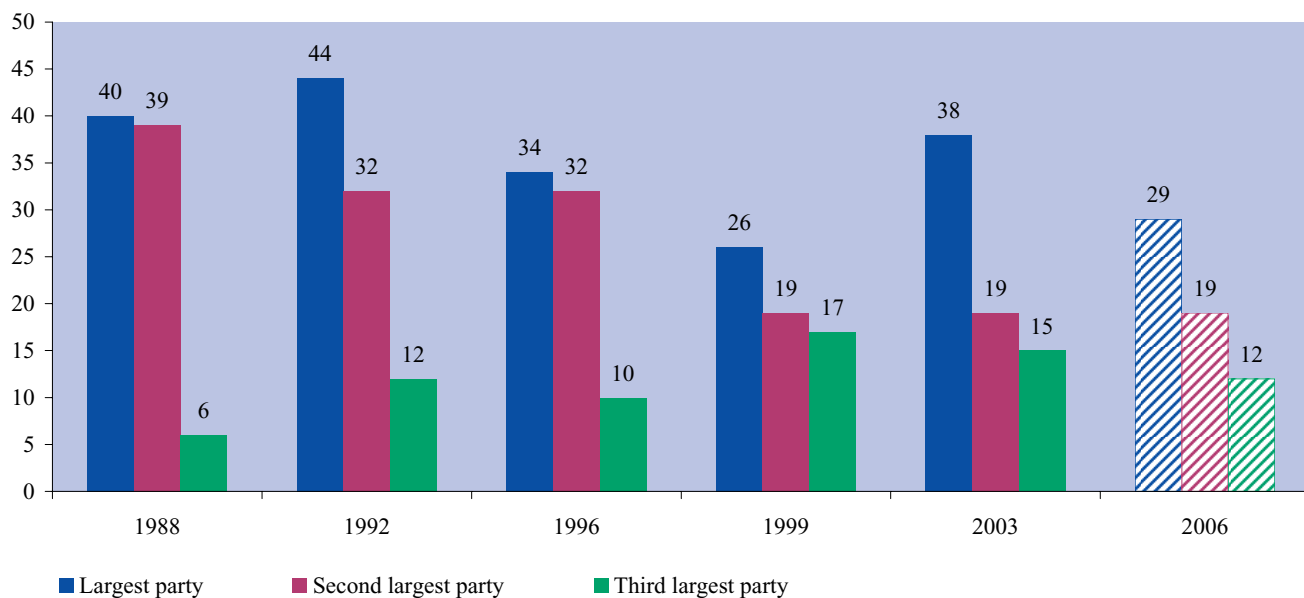
In the 2006 elections, Kadima obtained 29 seats and became the largest party. Labor, with 19 seats, became the second largest. The combined strength of the two large parties dwindled considerably: from 57 in the 2003 elections to 48 in 2006.

An interesting point emerging in Figure 39 is the appearance of a third party, which tempered the trend of concentrating votes within the two large parties while it strives for the center of the political map. In the 1977 elections, the DMC captured 15 seats and became the third largest party. Most of its votes came at the expense of the Alignment. In the 1980s, the power of mid-sized parties dwindled due to the growing competition between the two large ones. In the 1992 elections, it was Meretz that won 12 seats, and in 1996, Shas obtained 10 seats. In 1999, the Center Party stood for election but suffered a defeat and captured only 6 seats, while the third place went to Shas with 17 seats. In the 2003 elections, Shinui was the party that captured third place, with 15 seats. In the 2006 elections, two parties share third place, with 12 seats each: Shas and the Likud. The contest between the three parties was and still is an ongoing struggle to capture the center of the political map.

3. Representativeness: Party Dominance and Disproportionality

The legislature in democratic countries is a kind of microcosm of the society. An examination of its composition enables us to identify groups in the public that seek to influence decision-making processes in the country. Representativeness is a crucial principle of every democracy. In the Democracy Indices, we usually assess the extent of representativeness in Israel in an international comparison. For this purpose, we rely on the Cross National Time-Series Data (henceforth CNTS), which presents the party dominance rating, that is, the prominence of the largest party in the house of representatives.[67] Scores in the dominance rating range from 100 to the product of the number of seats in the legislature times 100. The smaller the number of seats in the largest party, then, the higher the rating, with a high rating attesting to high representativeness and no party dominance.

In the party dominance measure, Israel ranks second in the list of 36 countries (Figure 40). Given the victory of Kadima in the 2006 elections with 29 Knesset seats, Israel's score points to high representativeness and lack of party dominance (413.8). India and Argentina rank below Israel, and only Belgium is placed before it. Belgium represents an extreme case in the countries ranking, showing high representativeness: of the 150 seats in the parliament, the two largest parties (liberal and socialist) obtained 25 seats each in the 2003 elections. The drawbacks of high representativeness are worth noting in this context: problems in governance and difficulties in creating coalitions. By contrast, countries such as Thailand, South Africa, and Japan, placed at the lowest end of the ranking, have low representativeness: the large parties gained an absolute majority in the parliament.

---

67   The measure of party dominance was developed by a research team led by Arthur Banks, who directs the CNTS Institute. See the project's website http://www.databanks.sitehosting.net.

Figure 40
Representativeness – An International Comparison:
Party Dominance Measure

More
representativeness

Less
representativeness
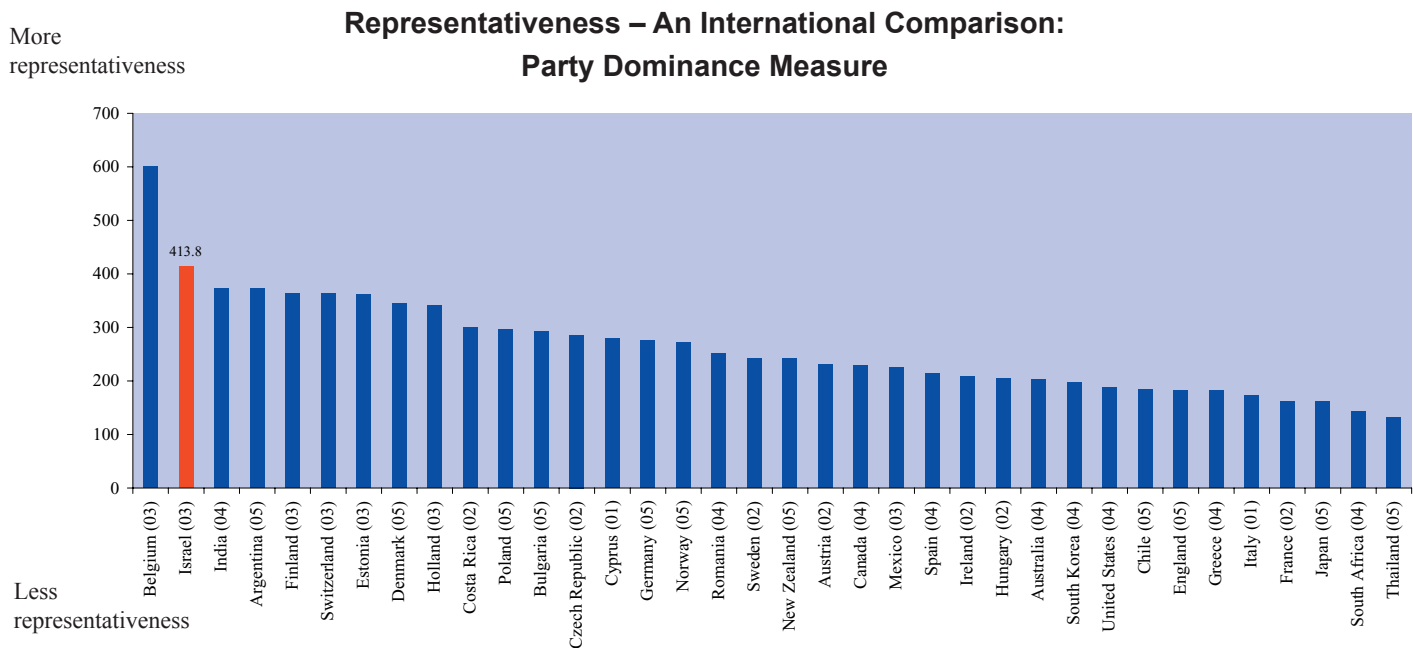
The complementary measure to party dominance was developed by Michael Gallagher and is known as the Disproportionality Index or The Least Squares Index (LSq.).[68] This index aims to estimate to what extent the number of seats held by parties in the House of Representatives corresponds to the percentage of the votes each party received in the general elections. The index depends mainly on the electoral system, but is also a consequence of the voters' preferences.[69] In countries that encourage the principle of representativeness and have a proportional electoral system, the correlation between the votes and the number of seats was

higher. By contrast, countries that prefer the majority principle and have a majority electoral system show disproportionality and bonuses for the large parties.[70] The measure ranges between 0 (perfect proportionality) and 100 (no proportionality). The higher the score, the greater the disproportionality.

As Figure 41 shows, Israel ranks 12th in the list of 33 democracies. In a comparison with other countries, the 2.72 score that Israel received in 2006 attests that it does not deviate significantly from the proportionality principle. In 2003, the score was 2.55, so that Israel's situation in this

68 Michael Gallagher, "Proportionality, Disproportionality and Electoral Systems," *Electoral Studies* 10(1) (1991), pp. 33-51.
69 The "psychological effect." For further discussion, see Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State* (London: Methuen, 1954).
70 The formula for the calculation is as follows: square the gap between the votes and the seats of all the parties that participated in the election (including those who were ultimately not represented), divide by two, and obtain the square root of the result. For further discussion, see Gallagher, "Proportionality, Disproportionality" (note 68 above) pp. 40-41.

regard has slightly worsened, mainly because of the 2% electoral threshold first implemented in the 2006 elections and because about 6% of the valid ballots are not represented in the Knesset. Nevertheless, the Israeli system is still highly proportional due to its single district constituency and its relatively low electoral threshold. Austria shows the highest correlation between the distribution of votes and the distribution of seats, whereas France and Britain show the highest deviation in the division of votes into seats. For instance, in the British elections of May 2005, the Liberal Party received 22% of the vote but only 9.6% of the parliamentary seats. The reason is the simple plurality method of first past the post in their voting districts. According to this method, only one representative is elected in every district – "winner takes all" – and votes given to the other parties are not represented at all. Another

interesting example is the parliamentary election results in the Palestinian Authority, conducted on 25 January 2006: the Movement for Reform and Change (Hamas) won 44.5% of the vote in the national contest (the division formula is proportional). But after weighing in the regional votes, it received 56% (74 seats) of the 132 seats in the parliament.[71]

Another measure common in the literature examines the representation of women in legislative bodies throughout the world.[72] Figure 42 shows that the representation of women in Israel is still low relative to the 36 countries in the ranking. In the 2003 elections, 18 women were elected, and they were only 15% of the chosen representatives. In the 2006 elections, their number dropped to 17,[73] still low in comparison to the 36 countries in the ranking. Men, by contrast, occupy 85.8% of Knesset seats, far beyond their

Figure 41

Representativeness – An International Comparison: Disproportionality
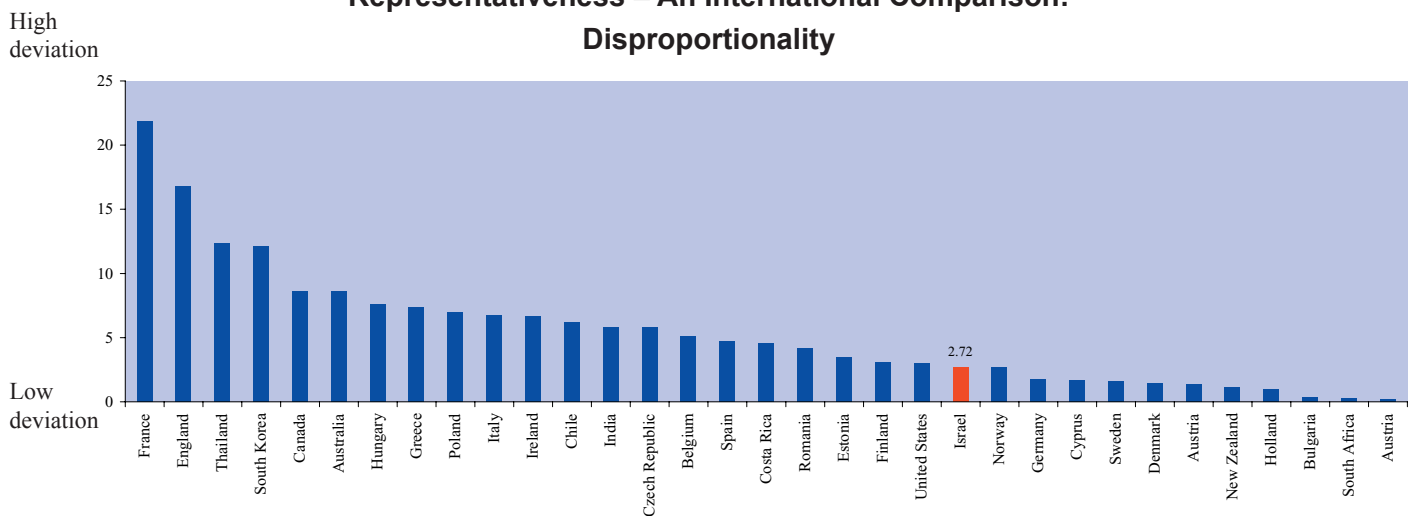
71   See the website of the Palestinian Authority's Central Electoral Committee: http://www.elections.ps/english.aspx.

72   The following data is retrieved from the IPU website and is correct as of 2005: http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp.

73   Kadima – 6 women, Labor – 5, Yisrael Beitenu – 3, Likud – 1, Meretz – 1, Gil – 1.

rate in the population. The parties did place women in their Knesset lists in slots giving them a realistic chance of election, but the 2006 elections showed no change in the patterns of voting and electing women in Israel. Figure 42 shows that, in an international comparison, Israel ranks 24th in the representation of women, between the United States and Ireland. Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark head the list, and the rate of women among their members of parliament is about 40%. At the other end are Cyprus, India, and Japan, where the number of women members of parliament is particularly low.

4. Electoral Volatility

Voting patterns are not consistent in the Israeli public, which tends to change its vote from one election to another. This phenomenon is typical of voting behavior in many democracies, and is not unusual. One way of assessing the extent of change in the voters' behavior is the electoral volatility measure developed by Mogens Pedersen. The measure tests the shift of votes between parties and between one election and the next.[74] Studies dealing with electoral volatility identified three explanations for this phenomenon: economic, institutional, and others bearing on the social structure.[75] Changes in the economic situation may lead to changes in the preferences of many citizens and to a shift from one party to another in response to the governing party's policy. Political institutions can also influence electoral volatility, particularly when changes affect electoral laws or the authority of the executive power;[76] the social structure

Figure 42

Women's Representation in Legislatures: An International Comparison, 2006
(percentages)
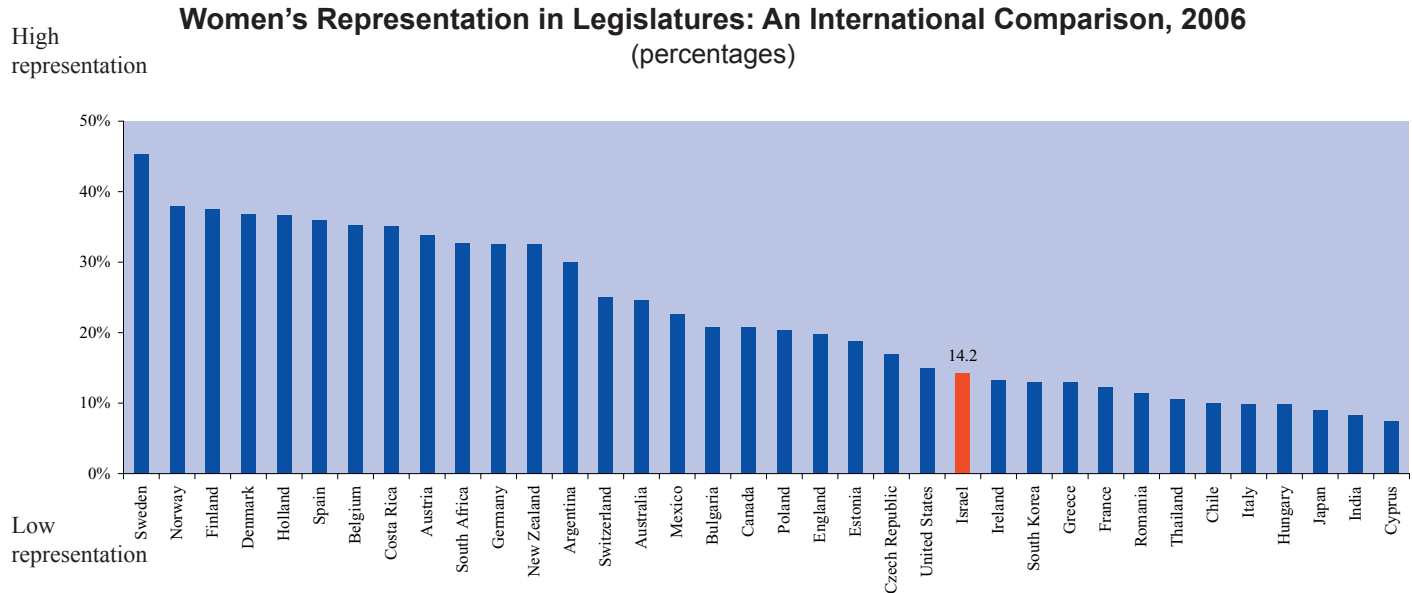
74 Mogens N. Pedersen, "The Dynamics of European Party Systems: Changing Patterns of Electoral Volatility," European *Journal of Political Research* 7(1) (1979), pp. 1-26.

75 Stefano Bartolini and Peter Mair*, Identity, Competition and Electoral Availability: The Stabilization of European Electorates, 1885-1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

76 Kenig, Rahat, and Hazan, "The Adoption and Abrogation" (note 62 above), pp. 65-66.

and social rifts can also lead to identification with one party and unwillingness to connect to another party.

The Electoral Volatility Index ranges between a score of 0, indicating lack of volatility between parties, and a score of 100, indicating full volatility.[77] Figure 43 presents electoral volatility in Israel since the end of the 1970s. The 1988 and 1992 electoral campaigns show a similar volatility rate – about 13%. Since no institutional changes can be dated to this time, social and economic factors were probably the influences affecting voting trends. When direct elections for the Prime Minister were instituted in the 1996 elections, a rise in electoral volatility was recorded, which actually reached its peak

after the abrogation of the direct election law: in 2003, the electoral volatility rate was 26.8%, reflecting the influence of the changes in the electoral system upon the voters' behavior.[78] In the 2006 elections, it rose to 37.5%, the highest ever. The rise of Kadima at the center of the political map and the decline in the Likud's power, the disappearance of Shinui and the success of the pensioners' party are signs of high electoral volatility. The instability of electoral campaigns and the parties' electoral volatility are a significant indication of a weakened party system in Israel.

Another indication of electoral volatility emerges from the comparison between Israel and other countries. Figure 44 presents Israel's average

Figure 43
Electoral Volatility in the Knesset, 1977-2006
(percentages)

---
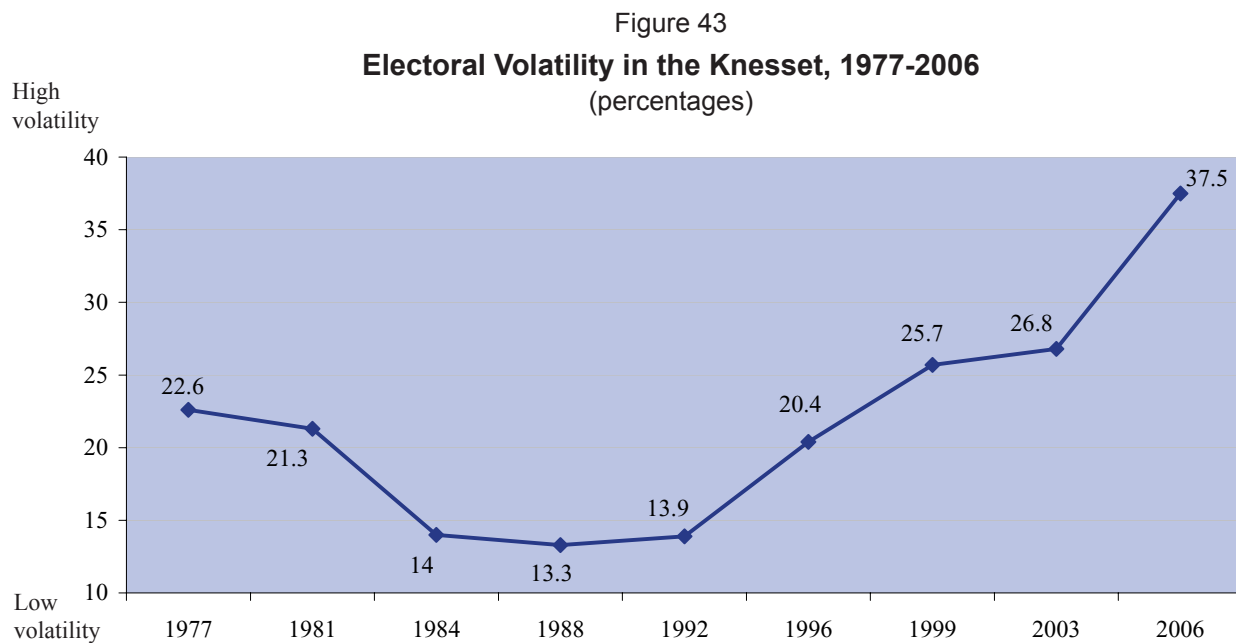
77   The formula for calculating the index is to subtract the votes that each party received in the previous election from the votes it received in the current election and divide it into two. For further discussion, see Bartolini and Mair, *Identity, Competition and Electoral Availability* (note 75 above).

78   Kenig, Rahat, and Hazan, "The Adoption and Abrogation" (note 62 above), p. 66.

position in 1977-2006 beside the average position of selected countries in 1980-2000.[79] Concerning electoral volatility, Israel ranks in the lower third of the list of countries (18th place out of 29), between Italy and Taiwan. In the United States, in Australia, and in Greece, electoral volatility is low and indicates a highly stable identification with the large, traditional parties. By contrast, in Romania, Poland, and Estonia, electoral volatility is high and attests to inconsistency in the voters'

preferences and, possibly, to a weakening of the entire party system.

The election results, the changes in the segmentation of the parties' map, the impressive rise of the new lists at the expense of the large parties, the representativeness and electoral volatility measures – all point to the fragility and instability of the party system in Israel. But the public expresses its dissatisfaction not only in electoral terms.

Figure 44
Average Electoral Volatility: An International Comparison
(percentages)

---
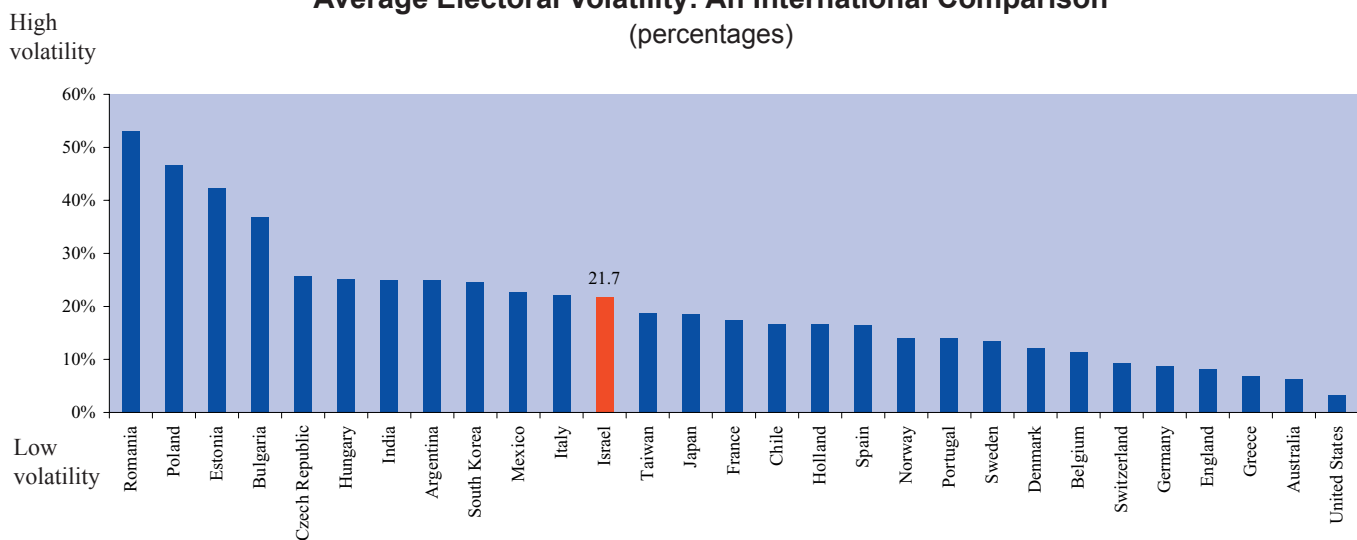
79   The data for the 28 countries in the figure is taken from Scott Mainwaring and Mariano Torcal, "Party System Institutionalization and Party System Theory after the Third Wave of Democratization," in *Handbook of Party Politics* (note 41 above), pp. 204-227.

D. The Public's Moods and the Image of the Political Parties

People in developed countries feel closer today to political life. They are more interested in politics than before, talk more about political issues in their social and family membership groups, and stay informed about political events. The high interest in politics, however, often exposes its negative dimensions. The media, which fulfils the role of democracy's watchdog, investigates, exposes, and shows involvement in politics. It presents new angles and submits political parties to an ongoing test. Changes in the public's mood and in the parties' image have many causes. The dilution of the parties' ideological component, the looser ties between the public and the government, the parties' organizational weakening, the increasing evidence of corruption and the growing suspicions of political corruption – all are some of the explanations for the changed image of political parties in the public view.

As shown in previous sections, the Israeli citizen's degree of trust in politicians has declined greatly in recent years, as has the belief in the public's ability to influence government policy. The previous section reviewed the public's trust in the parties as opposed to other political institutions. We now turn to an examination of the public's moods and the

parties' image in the public perception over time and in an international comparison, which have also influenced the parties' position in 2006.

1. Trust in the Parties: An International Comparison

The skeptical attitude that many Israelis have developed toward the parties in general and toward the Knesset in particular has several causes. Israel was transformed from a collectivistic into an individualistic state, shifting from a socialist to a capitalist economy, and experienced many social changes, rising educational standards, economic growth, and a transition to post-materialistic values.[80]

The declining trust in the parties and a tendency to indifference toward them are moderate in Israel in comparison with other democracies. In a series of surveys conducted by WVS in recent years, Israel ranks close to the lower third in a list of 19 countries where participants were presented with the question about trust in the parties (Figure 45).[81] The degree of trust in the parties is indeed higher in Israel than in New Zealand, Argentina, and South Korea, but lower than in most countries, including South Africa, Uruguay, Taiwan, and India.

80   Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
81   See WVS (note 55 above).

Figure 45

Trust in Political Parties: An International Comparison of Selected Countries

(percentages)
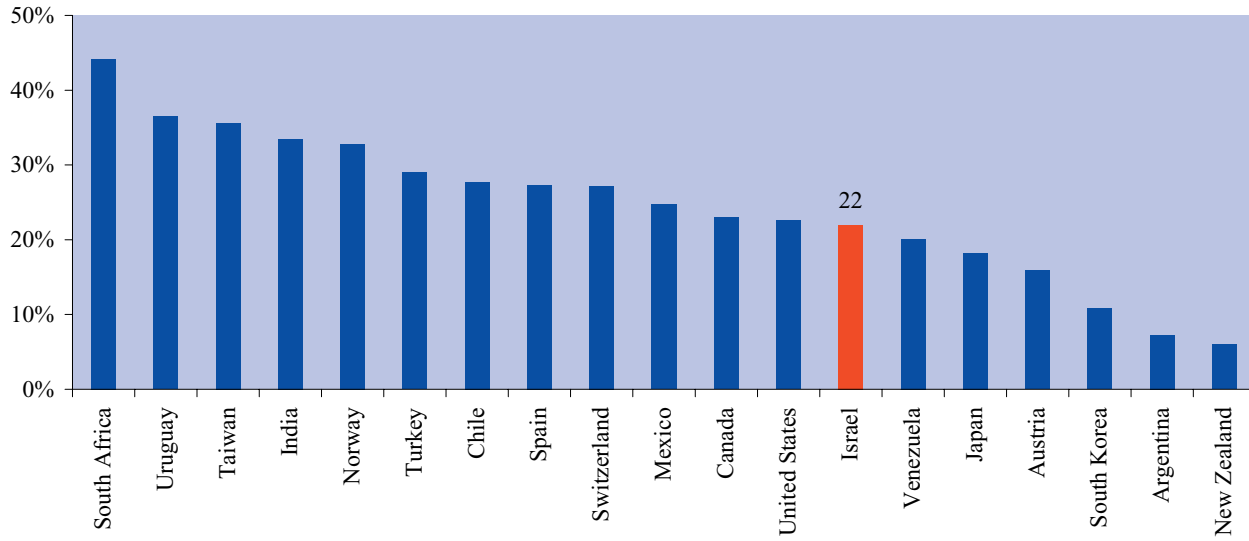
Figure 46

Trust in the Parliament: An International Comparison

(percentages)
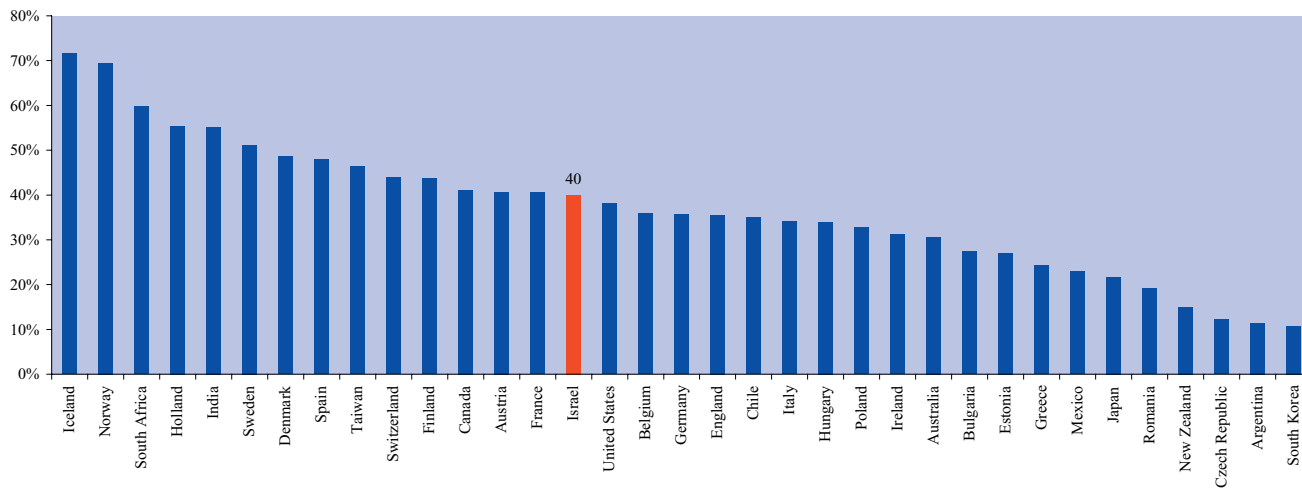
The public's degree of trust in its elected officials is also expressed in their trust in the legislature. In the WJS survey, Israel ranks 15th, between France and the United States, with 40% support for the House of Representatives. Trust in elected officials is highest in Iceland, Norway, and South Africa and lowest in South Korea, Argentina, and the Czech Republic (Figure 46).

2. Trust in Political Parties in Israel

The trust of the Israeli public in the parties is not high. This institution enjoys the lowest level of trust of all the political institutions presented above.[82] In the Democracy Survey 2006, 22% of the respondents state that they trust political parties to a large or to some degree. Although this figure shows no change in comparison to the 2005 Survey, it is low in comparison to the 2003 and 2004 Democracy Indices – when trust levels were respectively 27% and 32% – and a trend of weakening trust in the parties can also be detected.

In the 2006 Democracy Survey, 42% of the respondents indicate that they do not trust political parties at all, and 36% have some trust in them. The segmentation of trust according to the groups in the society shows a similar picture: about 40% of religious, traditional, and secular Jews report they do not trust political parties, as opposed to 55% of the ultra-Orthodox. Interestingly, the rate of respondents who do not trust the parties changes according to education levels. Of all the respondents who declare they do not trust the parties at all, about 60% do not have an academic degree. When

trust in the parties was analyzed according to age, half of the respondents aged 51-60 distrust the parties, a high rate vis-à-vis the other age groups (40%).

Many issues influence moods in the society and in the public's attitude toward the parties, and political corruption is the most prominent. Corruption exposures during the last Knesset term, together with the legal discussions and decisions that followed in their wake, led many people to a sense of revulsion at the political system. 62% of the public hold that Israel is to a large extent corrupt, and only 9% hold that corruption is low or nonexistent. Furthermore, the public senses that the price of government is to renounce integrity. In the 2006 Survey, 49% of the respondents note that getting to the top in politics requires one to "be corrupt."

We may also learn about the level of trust in the parties from the voters' attitude to participation in the last election. 41% of the respondents assessed that the issue of corruption would greatly affect their vote. Their negative attitude to the elections, derived from their negative attitude to the political system, follows largely from the lack of integrity they ascribe to politicians in general.

Another finding supporting the further weakening of the parties is the public's attitude to the issue of politicians keeping their promises: only 17% of the respondents agree with the statement: "The politicians we elect try to keep the promises they made in the election campaign."

---

82   See Figure 18.

In sum, skeptical attitudes toward the parties are woven into the web of the public's high interest in politics and in the people involved in them. Political corruption features as a decisive issue, particularly given that more than half of the respondents hold that Israel is in a bad position vis-à-vis other countries. The Democracy Survey points to trends of increasing distrust in politicians' promises and of the public drawing away from the political system as a whole. These trends denote a weakening of the party system.

E. The Voter's Self-Identification with the Parties

An ongoing process of loss of trust in the parties was noted. As in other countries where the party system is slackening,[83] parties in Israel have also lost many of their members. This drop is tied to another characteristic that leads to detachment from political parties – the voters' self-identification with the parties. To analyze the current situation in Israel's party system, we will examine several questions reflecting the voter's self-identification with the party.

1. Party Membership

Party membership was once very important for various reasons, the main one being the need for fundraising: members' dues were vital to ensure the party's existence and its organizational renewal. In the course of time, income from membership dues dropped drastically, and in 1973, the parties promoted the Political Parties Financing Law, which became an alternative source of funds. Political parties had in the past provided many and important services for their members, from housing, through health, education, and cultural services, and up to mediation between their members and state institutions. Parties had activists, members, and many supporters, but numbers eventually dwindled and the glow of political parties was progressively dimmed.

A prominent measure of the parties' strength and functioning is the number of their supporters, members, and activists. Figure 47 presents rates of party membership in an international comparison. Israel ranks 13th out of 30 countries, between Argentina and Ireland below and Canada above, with 6.5% of the respondents reporting that they are party members.[84]

When the situation in Israel is considered over time, we find a long-standing and moderate trend of detachment from the parties. More and more people attest they do not support a specific party and are not active in or members of any party. In 1969, 58% of the respondents indicated that they supported a specific party or were active in or members of a party, whereas in the 2000s, their number dropped to about 40%. Figure 48 presents an upward trend in the dissociation from political parties: in the Democracy Survey 2006, 68% of the respondents indicated that they did not support a specific party and were neither members of nor active in any party. The rate of respondents who indicated they were party members but were not active also dropped sharply: from a height of 18% in 1969 to 16% in 1973, to 10% in 1981, and to 8% in 1984 and 1988.[85] In 2006, only 6% of respondents reported they were party members.

---

83   For further discussion, see Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

84   Data is taken from the series of surveys conducted by WVS in 2000-2005 (note 55 above).

85   Asher Arian, *Politics in Israel: The Second Generation*, (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2005), p. 177.

Figure 47
Rates of Party Membership: An International Comparison
(percentages)
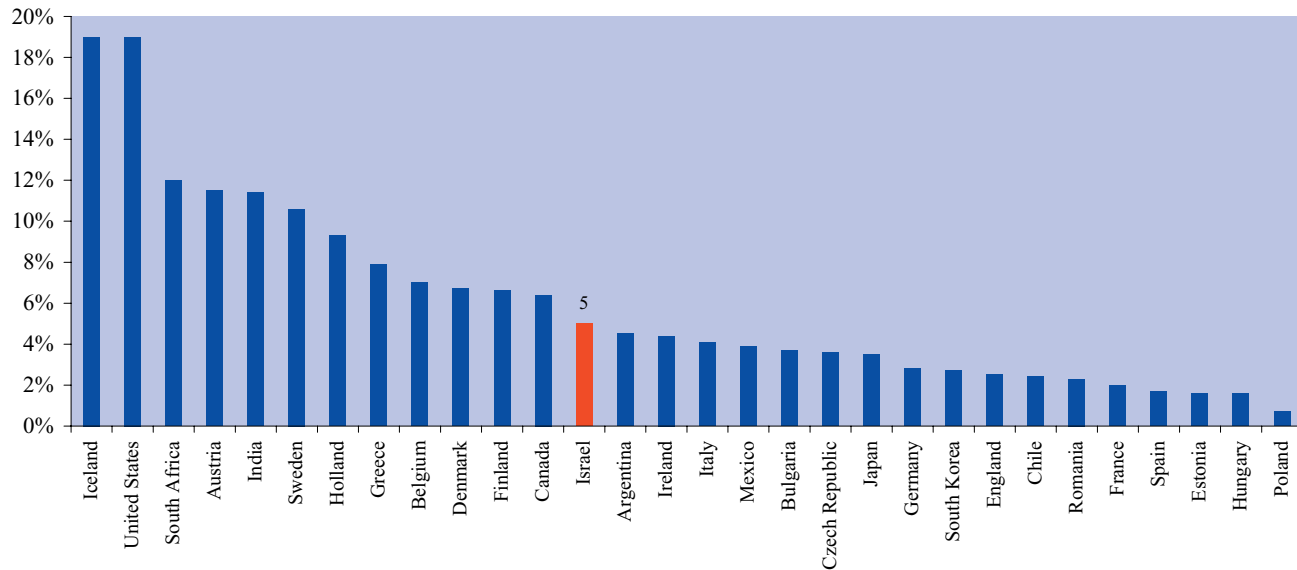
Figure 48
Support, Membership, and Party Activism, 1969-2006
Is not a supporter, a member, or a party activist *
Member, activist, and office holder (Jewish sample only: percentages)

■ Is not an activist, a member, or a supporter   ■ Member
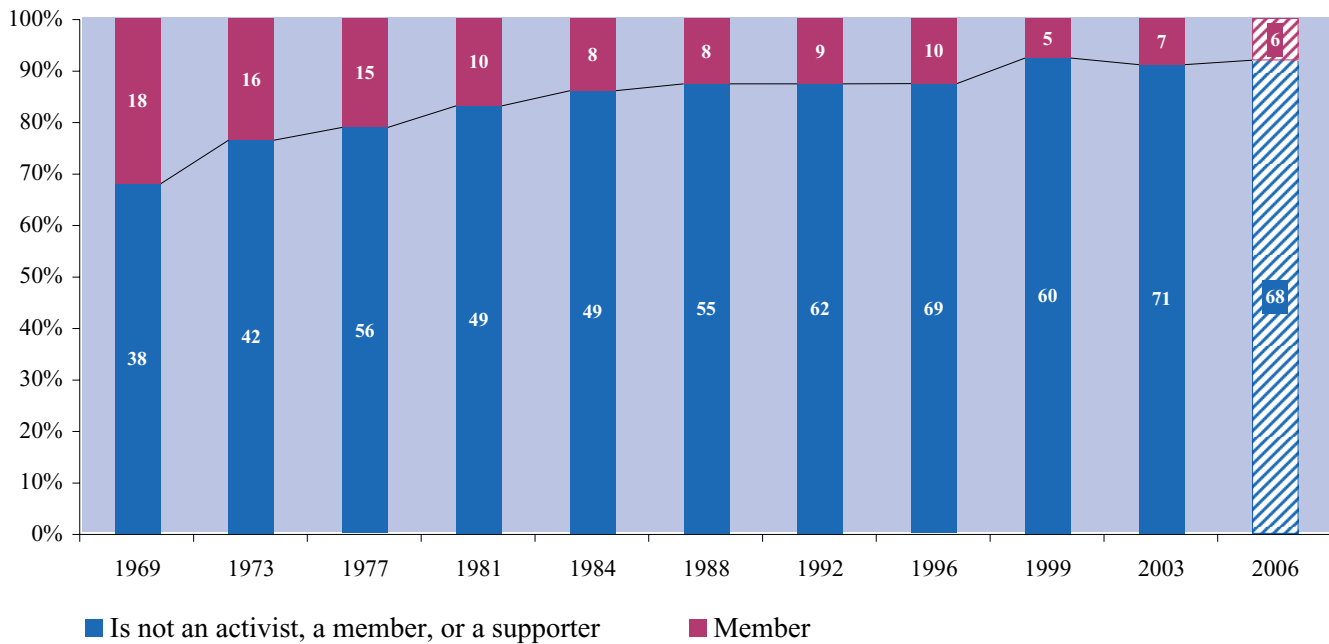
* Data reports the rate of respondents answering as above and proportionately completed to 100%.

2. The Personalization of Politics

Another prominent characteristic of the citizens' attitude to the parties is the personalization of politics, meaning the focusing on the politicians' personalities rather than on their parties. Personalization is a widespread political phenomenon in western countries, originating in the media's growing involvement in politics.[86] In an era focusing on the "leader," the public increases its involvement in political life, shows high interest in politics in general and in politicians in particular, and, to a large extent, also feels closer to its representatives. But concentrating on politicians and placing them in the spotlight often serves to expose their negative sides.

The Law of Direct Election for the Prime Minister gave prominence to the leader in the Israeli struggle for power. The political importance of inter-party competition became secondary, whereas the figure and the personal image of the contenders for the Prime Minister's role became decisive. The electoral system's center of gravity shifted to the personal contest, marginalizing party ideological issues. Even after the law for direct election was abolished, the leader still remained at the center.

Beside the personalization trend in Israeli politics, the yearning for "strong leaders" presented in Figure 49 is particularly interesting. In April 2003, 56% of the respondents indicated that they agree or definitely agree with the claim

Figure 49
Support for Strong Leaders in Israel, 1969-2006
"Strong leaders can be more useful to the country than all the discussions and laws,"
Agree and definitely agree (Jewish sample only; percentages)
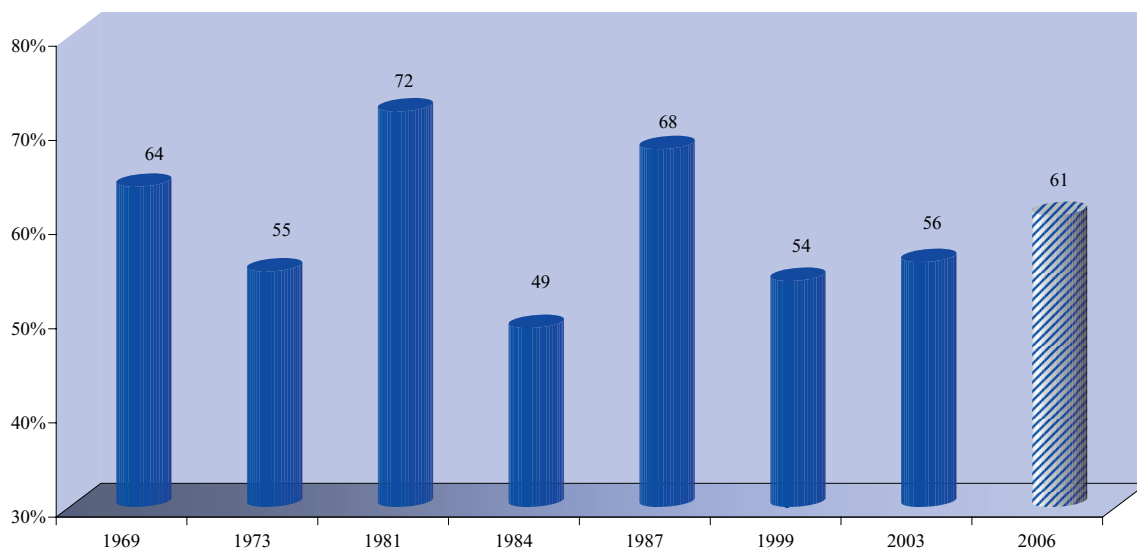
86 Orit Galili, *The Tele-Politicians: A New Political Leadership in the West and in Israel* [Hebrew], (Tel-Aviv: Ramot, 2004), p. 14.

that "strong leaders can be more useful to the country than all the discussions and laws," whereas 44% disagreed. In February 2006, their rate was 61%, as opposed to 39% who disagreed. Note that this trend remained steady over the years, and that more than 50% of the respondents retain a consistent belief in the need for a strong leader.

The support for "strong leadership" is a prominent feature in the comparison with other democracies as well. In the WVS public opinion surveys, Israel ranks 32 in the list of 35 countries examined for the rate of their support of "strong leaders" (Figure 50), beside Mexico, India, and Romania. Support for strong leaders in countries such as Denmark, Iceland, and Greece is far lower.

3. Closeness to a Particular Party

Two central questions reflect the citizen's self-identification with the parties: "In general, do you see yourself close to a particular party" and "How close do you feel to the party you indicated?" The answers to these questions are presented at three points in time in the last decade: 1996, 2003, and 2006. This presentation enables us to identify an ongoing trend and detect changes in the number of people who see themselves as close to a particular party. The data points to a drop in the citizen's identification with political parties, suggesting a weakening of the party structure in general (Figure 51).

In the last election campaign, we witnessed a unique phenomenon: besides the two large

Figure 50
Support for Strong Leaders: An International Comparison
"Strong leaders can be more useful to the country than all the discussions and laws,"
Agree and definitely agree (percentages)
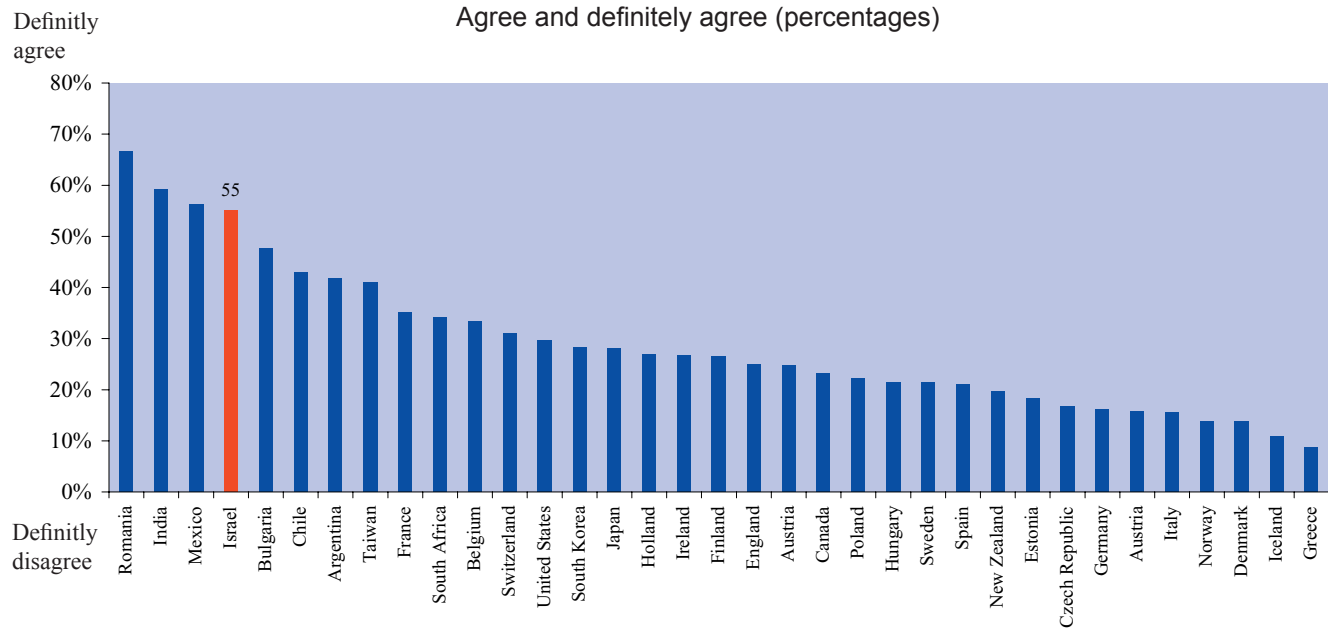
Figure 51
Closeness to a Particular Party: 1996, 2003, and 2006
"In general, do you see yourself as close to a particular party?" Yes
"How close do you feel to the party you indicated?" Very close (percentages)*
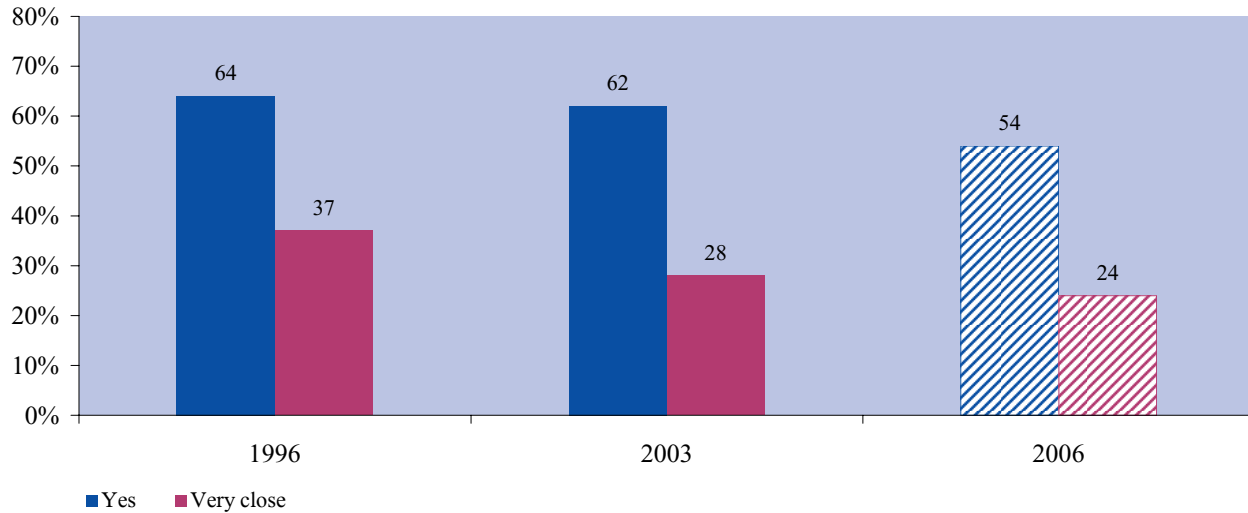
* The 2003 data is taken from The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems http://www.umich.edu/~cses. Respondents were presented with three options in answer to the question: "In general, do you see yourself as close to a particular party?" Yes, No, Don't know. The data in the figure presents the first two options weighted to reach 100%.

parties, the Likud and Labor, a new party emerged – Kadima. Several questions were asked in the survey aiming to gauge how the public assesses Kadima. In December 2005, after the party was created, the question we asked was: "In your opinion, what party is 'the true Likud'?" About 26% said that Kadima led by Ariel Sharon was for them "the true Likud," as opposed to 43% who said that the Likud headed by Binyamin Netanyahu was in their opinion "the true Likud." To the question "In the coming elections, will you vote as you usually vote?" 65% of the respondents answered yes. This is an interesting finding in light of the strong public support enjoyed by Kadima, attesting that most of the public still identifies with the veteran parties but their identification has been gradually decreasing.

4. Location on the Right-Left Continuum

One of the most important measures when examining changes in the party system is the respondents' self-placement along the right-left continuum. Since Israel's establishment and until 1977, the Israeli party system was based on one dominant party, and most of the public identified with the left. This system collapsed in 1977, and was replaced by one of two similar sized blocs, with the right enjoying a slight advantage. From that point onward, support for the right rose consistently until 1988. During the 1990s, the right bloc was slightly weakened and by 1999, both camps were almost equal in size. The significant change occurred in

Table 3

Self-Identification Right-Left, 1969-2006

(Jewish sample only; percentages)*

	1969	1973	1977	1981	1984	1988	1992	1996	1999	2003	2006
Left/Moderate left	25	22	18	17	23	26	30	36	39	27	26
Center	26	33	29	39	21	11	18	16	11	17	21
Right/Moderate right	16	23	28	33	38	49	42	39	50	52	40
Religious	6	7	6	6	2	4	3	3	2	2	3
Not interested in politics/ none/ don't know	27	15	19	6	15	10	7	6	9	2	10

*   The question was: "With what political trend do you identify?" Options were: (1) Left; (2) Moderate left; (3) Center; (4) Moderate right. (5) Right. The options of religious, not interested in politics, none, don't know, were not offered, and were suggested by the respondents.

Figure 52

Self-Identification on a Right-Left Continuum, 1988-2006

Right = 1, Left = 7 (Jewish sample only; percentages)
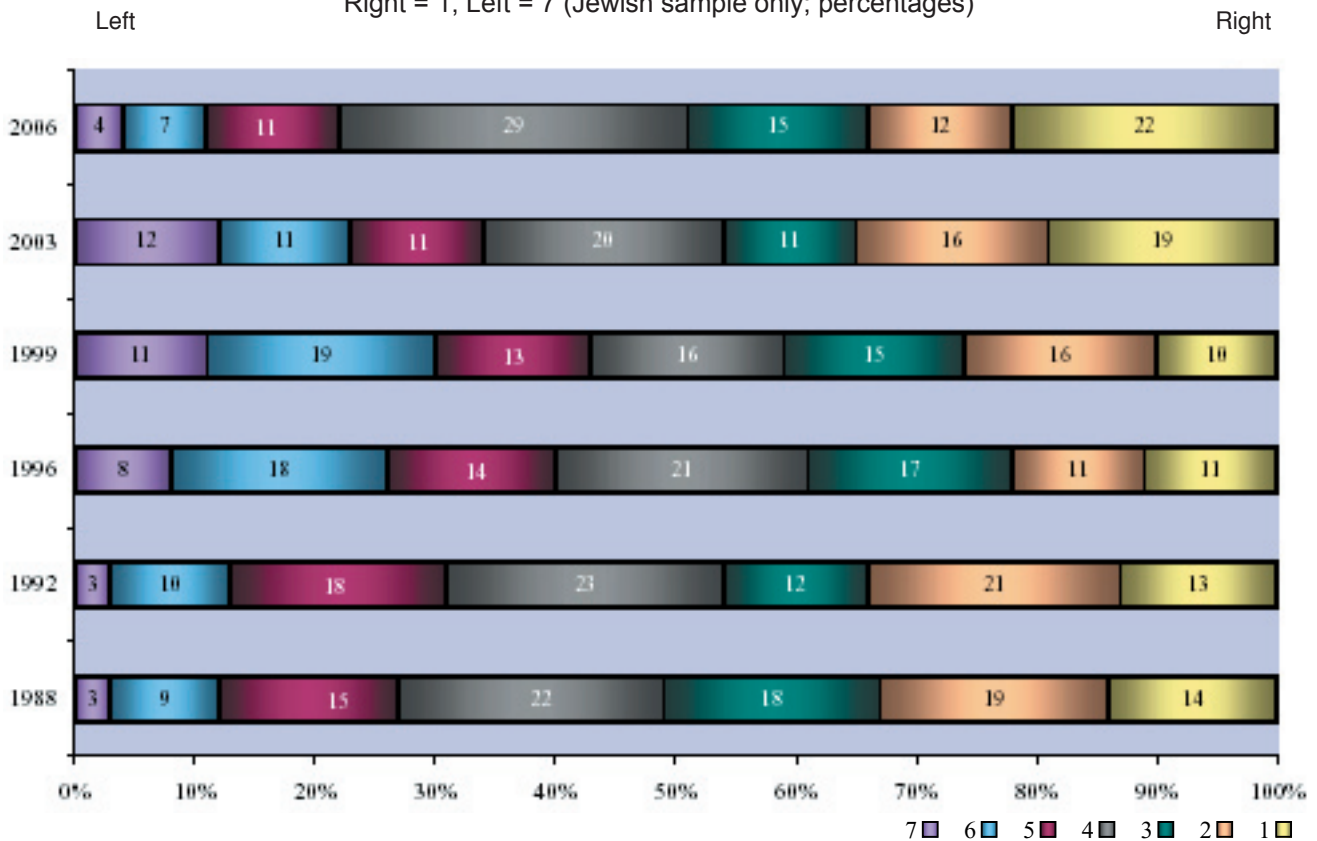
2003, when identification with the right bloc increased significantly. In this sense, the 2003 elections point to a return to the 1977 pattern.[87] In 2006, the realignment trend continued with a dissociation from the right and a shift toward the center, together with growing identification with the center of the political map. (Table 3)

As Figure 52 shows, about half of the respondents in 1988 placed themselves in the center and on the left, and the number of those identified with the right was almost double the number of those identified with the left. In 1996, the rates of those identified with the left and the right were almost equal, and from 2003 onward, we see a decline in the rate of those identified with the left and an increase in the rate of those identified with the center and the right. Over a quarter of all the respondents place themselves at the center of the political spectrum. These trends point to a realignment of the party system.

The data in Table 3 and in Figure 52 is slightly different. In Table 3 ("With what political trend do you identify?") we see a retreat from the right toward the center. By contrast, Figure 52 shows that the left declines, the right grows, and the center remains as it was. The gap results from the 10% of respondents who answered the question "With what political trend do you identify?" by saying they are not at all interested in politics or do not identify with any trend. Some chose not to answer this question at all. This is the highest rate of such responses since the 1990s. In 2006, we see a very high identification with the center: 21% identify with the center, and 29% rank themselves precisely in the middle of the left-right continuum, which is divided into seven categories. Another interesting finding is the identification with the far right end of the right-left continuum: 22% of the respondents placed themselves at this point – a rise of 3% in comparison to 2003.

---

87   Arian and Shamir, *The Elections in Israel:1999* (note 50 above), pp. 27-52.

F. The Ideological Component

One phenomenon typical of party systems throughout the world, including Israel, touches on the ideological changes parties are currently undergoing. In the last two decades, political parties have become "catch-all parties." The desire of large parties to expand the circle of their supporters as far as possible leads to the blurring of their ideological borders. The logic that guides them is that the less categorical and definitive a party's ideology, the greater the number of its potential supporters.[88] The "catch-all party" aspires to broaden its ideological platform as far as possible and does not address a specific target audience. Otto Kirchheimer points to five stages in the process of turning any large party into a catch-all party. The first is to lower the ideological baggage by changing the party's platform; the second is to emphasize the party's leader rather than the party itself; the third is to lower the importance of active party members; the fourth is to abandon the specific target audience and turn to the broad public; the fifth is to create and strengthen ties with a large number of pressure groups. All these stages attest to the ideological weakening of the party system.[89]

But this process has already evoked counter-reactions: in some industrialized democracies, an ideological realignment of the party system is already evident. The weakening of party systems and the ideological decline have been followed by the rise of ideological parties, focusing on issues that had previously found no room in the party system, such as the green (ecological) parties.[90]

In Israel, the assessment of this issue is controversial. Some hold that centrist parties, such as Shinui in 2003 and Kadima in 2006, are not examples of ideological parties, despite slogans such as "Yes to Shinui means no to Shas," or "Kadima, strong leadership for peace." The test of an ideological party, states this claim, is more stringent, and demands a consistent and comprehensive world view. According to this view, Mapai and Herut are instances of ideological parties. Others, however, claim that the traditional parties have long ago lost their ideological character, as evident in the inconsistencies between the party platform and the policies instituted by its leaders after attaining power.

Notwithstanding this dispute, the Israeli public still upholds the centrality of ideology and claims it is a decisive factor in its vote on election day. This datum has remained stable over many years, despite the steady criticism hurled at political parties for their failure to preserve their ideological purity.

---

88   Anthony Downs, "The Statistics and the Dynamics of Party Ideologies" [Hebrew], in *Variations in Political Science*, ed. Baruch Zisser (Tel Aviv: Open University, 1993), pp. 382-406.

89   Otto Kirchheimer, "The Catch-All Party," in *The West European Party System*, ed. Peter Mair (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 50-60.

90   Gayil Talshir, *The Political Ideology of Green Parties* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

1. The Main Factor Influencing Knesset Voting

Participants in the survey were asked: "Various factors lead people to vote for a specific party. What is the main factor that influenced your vote for a specific party?" About half of the respondents answered that the ideological factor (the party's stance on specific issues) was the most influential (Figure 53). No significant changes were recorded over time concerning the most influential factor when voting in elections. The trend, however, points toward a decline in the identification with the party as an influence on the vote: in the 1980s, about

30% said that the most influential factor in their voting was identification with the party, whereas only 25% said so in 2006. As for the influence of identification with a candidate – we have no evidence of a clear, significant trend. Nevertheless, a gradual rise in the number of people declaring that identification with a candidate is the most influential factor has been evident since 1999, and a claim that this issue is mostly affected by the candidate the parties places at its head at election time appears as a plausible assumption.

Another question concerning reasons for the vote is: "For some people, the main thing is to

Figure 53

The Most Influential Factor in Voting for a Specific Party, 1969-2006

"Various factors lead people to vote for a specific party.
What is the main factor that influenced your vote for a specific party?"*
(Jewish sample only; percentages)

Identification with a candidate   Identification with a party   Party's position on specific issues
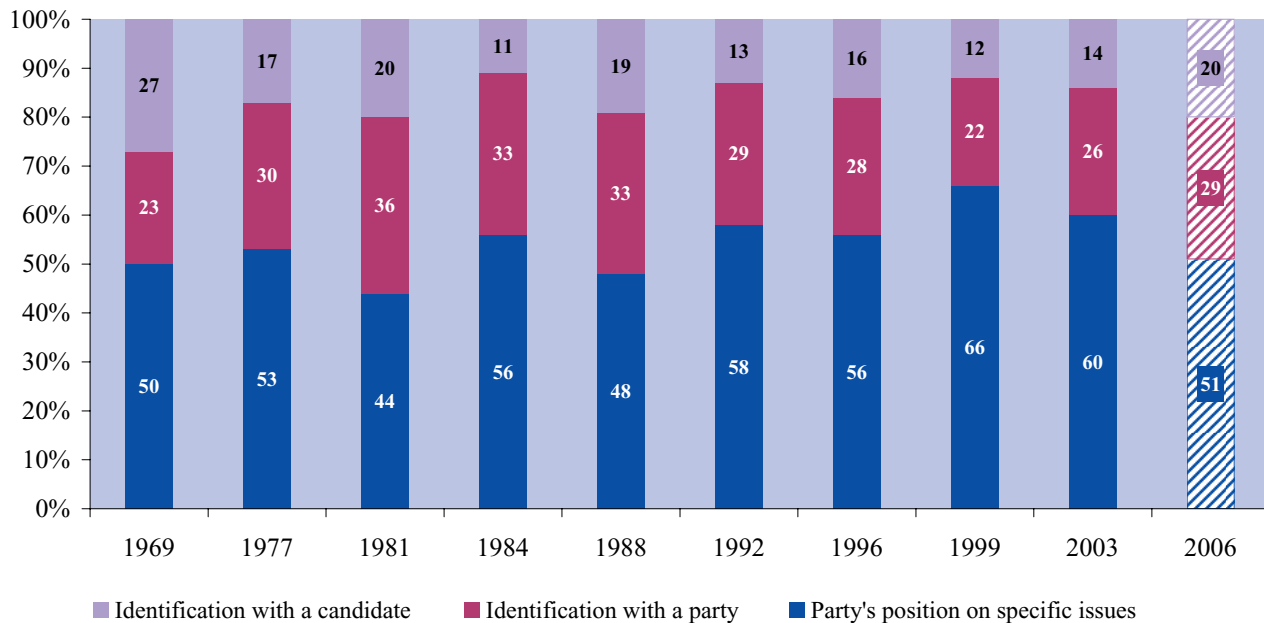
* Five possible answers were presented to this question: (1) Identification with the party; (2) The party's candidate for Prime Minister; (3) The party's stance on specific issues; (4) The party's place in the government or in the opposition; (5) None/all to the same extent. The figure presents the data collected regarding the first three answers. The minimum total of answers was 87%. The three answers presented in the figure were weighted proportionately to reach 100%.

vote and the party they vote for is less important, while for other people, the main thing is the party they vote for. To which position do you feel closer?" 71% answered that the main thing for them was the party they vote for, and only 29% answered that the main thing for them was the voting per se. Despite the downward trend in the identification with the parties, most of the public still chooses to vote not only because it is an important democratic principle, but also because of the party they are interested in promoting.

2. Ideological Differences between the Large Parties

The assumption is that as ideological gaps between the parties narrow, the parties lose one of their most essential roles: serving as their voters' ideological home. Two main questions sought to assess public perception of the ideological gaps between the parties: "In your opinion, are there differences between Israel's large political parties concerning the economy?" and "In your opinion, are there differences between Israel's large political parties concerning territorial compromises?" The data that appears in Figure 54 attests that, according to the public, significant differences still prevail between the large parties on these issues. Nevertheless, the number of those holding that ideological differences between the parties are small has increased considerably. In 1992, 22% of the respondents answered that the differences between the parties on economic issues are negligible, whereas in 2006, this figure increased to 34%. Concerning territorial compromises and matters of defense and foreign affairs, the data is far more extreme: in 1992, 13% held that the differences between

the parties are small or even negligible, whereas in 2006, 36% held this view.

As evident from Figure 53, despite the shrinking ideological gaps between the large parties, the most influential factor on the vote is "the party's stance on specific issues," namely, its ideology. In 2006 as well, 45% of the respondents chose ideology as the most influential factor in their voting. Nevertheless, the rate of people who view ideology as the most influential factor on their voting has gradually declined since 1999.

3. Centrist Parties

One feature pointing to the ideological change affecting the party system is the rise of centrist parties. In 1977, the DMC conquered the center of the political map after gaining 15 Knesset seats. Shinui repeated this success in 2003, and in 2006, Kadima captured 29 seats in the 2006 elections to the 17th Knesset. Another new party – the pensioners – gained 7 seats. This party does not have a clear direction on political and defense issues, and its banner is to protect the civil rights of the elderly in Israel. Hence, it cannot be defined as either a leftist or rightist party. Figure 52 shows that 29% of the 2006 respondents placed themselves in the middle of the left-right political continuum, the highest rate for the center in all the years reviewed. The common denominator of center parties is that they attract moderate leaders, from right and left, who call for "new politics" and "clean politics." But their historical course deserves attention: the DCM, which raised great enthusiasm in the 1977 elections, split up after about a year and its heir, Shinui, gained only two seats in

the 1981 elections. The Center Party headed by Yitzhak Mordechai, which contended in the 1999 elections, ultimately captured only 6 seats; its members abandoned it, and the party sank into oblivion. Shinui the surprise of the 2003 elections, also split up after internal elections in the party council on the eve of the 2006 elections.

Finally, despite the ideological convergence of the large parties and the blurring of the gaps between them, the Israeli public still finds differences between their ideological platforms,

albeit smaller than in the past. The creation of the Kadima party, five months before the elections, highlights the issue of ideological blurring, particularly since its list includes senior figures from both ends of the political spectrum. The question is whether a pragmatic party located at the center can possibly be an ideological party. The pragmatism of centrist parties could be said to be their ideology, and if we judge by the recent years of Israeli politics, these questions will still be on the public agenda for many years to come.

Figure 54

Ideological Differences between the Parties, 1969-2006

"In your opinion, are there differences between Israel's large political parties concerning the economy and concerning foreign affairs and defense issues/territorial compromises?"*
Small differences and no differences at all (Jewish sample only; percentages)

■ Economy   ■ Foreign affairs and security/territorial compromises
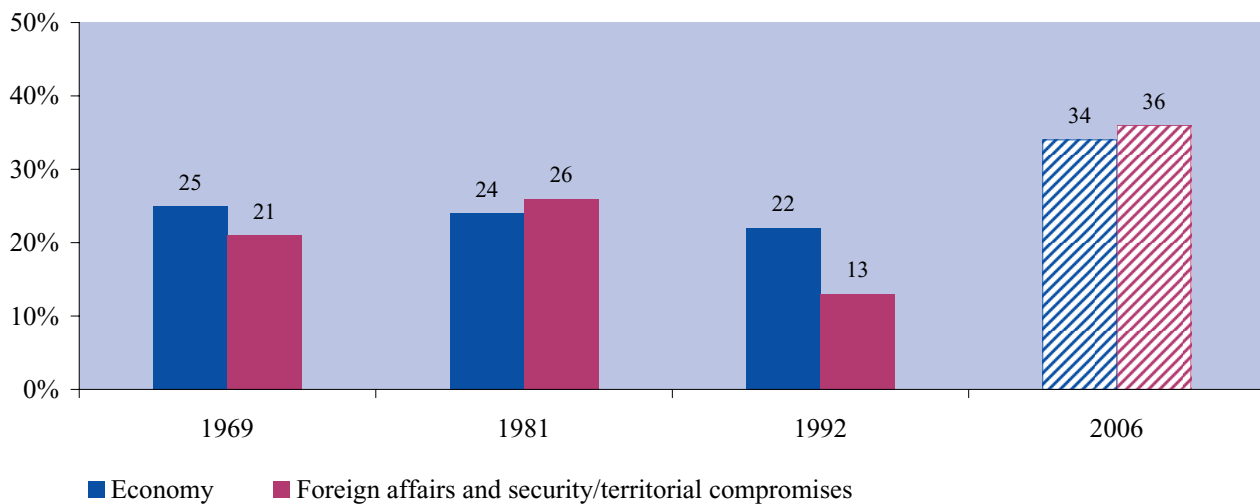
*   The figure presents the data collected in two separate questions.

G. Epilogue

The Democracy Index is devoted to assessing the quality of democracy in Israel from a comparative perspective – historical and international. Through the many comparisons we presented here we sought to draw a map, that is, to trace the parameters and the course of various paths, and to identify the important landmarks. The research tools that served us in this task are the Democracy Indices – which helped to assess the actual functioning of Israeli democracy – and a public opinion survey – which reflected the public's attitudes.

Israeli democracy, as it is reflected in the ratings, is mainly a formal democracy that has yet to show successful endorsement of the features characterizing an essential democracy. Some ratings do show improvement in the assessment of Israel during the last year, but others show no change or even deterioration. Nevertheless, neither Israeli democracy nor the parties are on trial here. It was not our intention to criticize, to censor, or to praise, but to evaluate the situation of Israeli democracy and the situation of the parties in Israel. We tried to reflect the existing reality.

Besides the review of the data, the current Index was devoted to a discussion of the dealignment and realignment of Israel's party system. A comparison of the responses to the Democracy Survey, together with the international comparisons we presented, show that the party system in Israel has undergone many changes. Particularly evident is a trend denoting a weakening of the party system and a further drop in the already low levels of public support for the parties. Studies that tried to understand the reasons for this trend suggested many explanations:[91] some argued that the causes for the parties' decline are not in the parties themselves but rather reflect changes in the beliefs and values of the masses.[92] Indeed, modernization processes, the rise in educational standards, and the changes in values accelerated the slackening of the party system. Other studies claim that the cause for the decline in the parties' status in the public's perception is their inability to adapt themselves to the social and cultural changes and to meet the public's demands and expectations.[93] Whether the cause of the parties' weakening lies in the voters or in the parties themselves, the two prominent conclusions are: first, we are not speaking of a temporary drop in the public's satisfaction with the parties, but of a steady and prolonged trend; second, political parties in Israel are not what they used to be: they have changed their roles and their mode of functioning.

Drawing away from the parties and the continued and extensive decline in their centrality, in

91   Richard Gunther, Jose R. Montero, and Juan Linz, eds., *Political Parties: Old Concepts and New Challenges* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

92   Juan Linz, "Parties in Contemporary Democracies: Problems and Paradoxes," ibid., pp. 291-317.

93   Inglehart, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy* (note 83 above).

their roles, and in the esteem of the public for them, mark the challenges awaiting democratic regimes in the near future. The weakening of the ties between the parties and their supporters, the voters' high volatility, and the erosion of the party organizations – all these are problems that the central political parties in Israel and in the entire world will have to face. The entry of new players into the political arena, among them the media and the courts, the growth of new and sectarian parties, and the increasing personalization of politics – all will change the face of modern democracies as industrialization and urbanization had changed them in the past.

After the 2006 elections, no clear realignment of the party system is discernible. Despite the changes, including the rise of new parties (Kadima and the pensioners) and the disappearance of a centrist party (Shinui), we see no significant changes in the identification with the parties, nor do we see the rise of a new

topical rift around which most voters converge. Quite the contrary: the outcome of the election suggests that the dealignment of the party system continues, that many citizens changed their vote, and that election results were hard to predict.

Yet, despite talk of the "death" or "fall" of political parties,[94] they continue to exist and take up center stage in the country's decision-making processes. In daily public discourse the political parties are used as a punching bag and are submitted to ceaseless criticism, but, at the same time, the parties are used succeed in recruiting supporters as well as leading and managing the political system. No regime can be sustained without party representatives, and despite the many changes taking place in them – both within each specific party and in the party system as a whole – they will probably continue to be the main protagonists in the political life of democratic countries.

94　Korn, Dani, *The Demise of Parties in Israel*, Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1998.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Summary of the Democracy Indices, 2003-2006*

1. The Institutional Aspect					
Rating	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**The change compared to 2005**
1. **Vertical responsibility** 1-3 (1 = unregulated elections)	3	–	3	–	–
2. **Horizontal responsibility** 0-6 (0 = high military involvement in politics)	3	3	2.5	2.5	=
3. **Voice and accountability** 0-100 (100 = high accountability)	–	60.2	–	–	–
4. **Disproportionality** 0-100 (0 = perfect proportionality)	2.55	–	–	2.72	↓
5. **Party dominance** 100 [100 x number of seats in the lower house] (100 = high dominance, low representativeness)	300	315	324	413.8	↑
6. **Constraints on the executive in policy implementation** 1-7 (1 = unlimited authority)	7	–	7	–	–
7. **Constraints on the executive to change policy** 0-1 (0 = no limitations)	0.7864	–	–	–	–
8. **Voter turnout in national elections.** 0-100 (100% = full turnout)	67.8%	–	–	63.2%	↓
9. **Voter turnout out of registered voters** 0-100 (100% = full turnout)	74.4%	–	–	70.8%	↓
10. **Voter turnout in local elections** 0-100 (100% = full voting)	57.4%	50%	–	–	–
11. **Corruption Perceptions Index (TI)** 0-10 (0 = high level of corruption)	7.3	7	6.4	6.3	↓
12. **Corruption Index (ICRG)** 0-6 (0 = high level of corruption)	3	4	3	3	=

2. The Rights Aspect					
Rating	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**The change compared to 2005**
13. **Competitiveness in participation** 1-5 (1 = suppress opposition activities)	5	–	5	–	–
14. **Press freedom** 0-100 (0 = full freedom)	30	27	28	28	=
15. **Human rights violations** 1-5 (1 = protection of human rights)	4	–	–	–	–
16. **Prisoners per 100,000 population** 0-100,000 (0 = few prisoners)	132	143	172	180	↓
17. **Prisoners per 100,000 population, including security prisoners** 0-100,000 (0 = few prisoners)	173	189	252	265	↓
18. **Law and order** 0-6 (0 = low respect for law and order)	5	5	5	5	=
19. **Freedom of religion** 1-7 (1 = total freedom)	3	–	–	–	–
20. **GINI rating of available income** 0-1 (0 = full equality)	0.357	0.3738	–	–	–
21. **GINI rating of income distribution** 0-1 (0 = full equality)	0.528	0.5320	–	–	–
22. **Economic freedom index** 1-5 (1 = broad economic freedom)	2.45	2.36	2.36	2.36	=
23. **Gender Development Rating** 0-1 (0 = lack of equality)	0.891	–	–	0.911	↑
24. **Gender Empowerment Rating** 0-1 (0 = lack of equality)	0.596	–	–	0.622	↑
25. **Political discrimination of minorities** 0-4 (0 = no discrimination)	3	–	3.5	–	–
26. **Economic discrimination of minorities** 0-4 (0 = no discrimination)	3	–	3.5	–	–
27. **Cultural discrimination of minorities** 0-12 (0 = no discrimination)	1	–	0	–	–

3. The Stability Aspect					
Rating	2003	2004	2005	2006	The change compared to 2005
28. **Government changes** Number of government changes 1996-2006.	5	–	5	4	↑
29. **Incomplete term of office** 0-100 (100% = full term)	77.42%	–	–	82.22%	↑
30. **Weighted political conflict index** 0-infinity (0 = no conflict)	3,100	–	10,462	–	–
31. **Religious tensions** 0-6 (0 = high tension)	2	3	2.5	2.5	–
32. **National/ethnic/linguistic tensions** 0-6 (0 = high tension)	2	2	2	2	–

* The measures updated this year are the measures where arrows or equal signs appear.

Appendix 2: The Democracy Index Survey February 2006 Compared to the Democracy Indices 2003, 2004, and 2005

1. The Institutional Aspect					
Characteristic in the Index	**The questions in the Survey**	**General 2003**	**General 2004**	**General 2005**	**General 2006**
A. Implementing the accountability principle: perceptions					
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**
B. Political participation					
1. Level of political participation:					
Interest in politics	To what extent do you take an interest in politics? (take an interest)	76	67	71	**73**
Staing 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**
Talking about politics	To what extent do you tend to talk with your friends and family about political issues? (talk)	69	64	65	**67**
Involvement in institutionalized action	Are you a supporter of or actively involved in any political party? (party member or more)	7	7	5	**6**
2. Implementing the value of political participation perceptions:					
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**
Sense of impact	To what extent can you or your friends influence government policy? (can)	20	18	31	**27**
C. Representativeness					
	To what extent does the balance of powers in the Knesset express, in your opinion, the distribution of views in the larger public? (express)	67	-	61	**61**
D. Integrity in government					
Stance concerning corruption of VIPs in government	In general, do you think the people running the country are looking out for their own private interests, or are they acting for the general good? (general good)	15	15	11	**10**
Evaluating the 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**

2. The Rights Aspect					
Characteristic in the Index	The questions in the Survey	General 2003	General 2004	General 2005	General 2006
A. Political and civil rights					
Attitudes toward political and civil rights					
	All must have the same rights before the law regardless of political outlook (agree)	83	-	79	**86**
	Individuals or groups in a minority should be allowed to act to obtain majority support for their positions (agree)	70	-	68	**64**
Freedom of religion	Every couple in Israel should be allowed to marry in any way they wish (agree)	63	60	64	**61**
Implementing rights in Israel in a comparative perspective: perceptions	In your opinion, is there more or less protection of human rights in Israel than in other countries? (less)	27	40	33	**39**
	And freedom of expression? (less)	15	17	24	**19**
B. Social and economic rights					
Support for social-economic policy	Concerning the structure of economic life in Israel, do you favor a more socialist or capitalist approach? (socialist)	54	60	58	**59**
Implementing social and economic rights: perceptions	Social and economic equality in Israel is inadequate (agree)	82	88	80	**84**
C. Equality for minorities					
Readiness to have equal rights between Jews and Arabs	To what extent do you support or oppose each one of the following: adding Arab parties to the government, including Arab ministers? (support)	38	45	44	**41**
	Full equality of rights between Jewish and Arab Israeli citizens (support)	53	64	59	**60**
	Agreement of a Jewish majority is required on decisions fateful to the country, such as returning territories (opposed)	26	23	34	**29**
	The government should encourage Arab emigration from the country (opposed) [Jews only]	43	41	50	**38**
The actual implementation of equality perceptions	Israeli Arabs suffer from discrimination as opposed to Jewish citizens (agree)	55	64	56	**54**

3. The Stability and Cohesiveness Aspects					
Characteristic in the Index	The questions in the Survey	General 2003	General 2004	General 2005	General 2006
A. Satisfaction with the government	What do you think is Israel's position in general? (not good)	63	54	35	**40**
	What is your opinion about the way the government deals with the country's problems today? (not good)	78	78	67	**74**
B. Assessing stability in Israel					
	In your opinion and compared to other democratic countries, is the political system in Israel stable or unstable? (unstable)	63	-	46	**53**
C. Protest and opposition					
Opposition to violence	Using violence to attain political aims is never justified (agree)	82	78	82	**82**
	If the government and the Knesset were to adopt a decision opposed to your view concerning the territories and security, which of the following actions would you take? (obey or demonstrate legally)	93	92	92	**89**
Opposition to refusal to serve in the army	We know that a soldier must refuse to obey a patently illegal order. But what about a soldier who refuses to obey an order because of personal morality or ideology – can a soldier, for instance, refuse to obey an order to evacuate settlers? (forbidden)	73	75	70	**58**
	And what about a soldier who refuses to serve in the territories because of Israel's policy toward the Palestinians – is a soldier permitted to refuse to serve in the territories? (forbidden)	72	71	71	**63**
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**
	The Prime Minister (have trust)	53	45	48	**43**
	The media (have trust)	49	51	50	**44**
	The State Attorney (have trust)	58	66	60	**51**

	The Supreme Court (have trust)	70	79	72	**68**
	The police (have trust)	66	66	57	**44**
	The President (have trust)	68	73	65	**67**
	The Knesset (have trust)	52	46	40	**33**
	The IDF (have trust)	84	86	78	**79**
	Government ministers (have trust)	55	41	42	**39**
The institution that best protects Israeli democracy	Who best protects Israeli democracy – the Prime Minister, the Supreme Court, the Knesset, or the media?				
	The Prime Minister	18	9	15	**15**
	The Supreme Court	42	47	48	**47**
	The Knesset	14	14	13	**13**
	The media	26	30	24	**25**
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**
F. Social rifts	In your opinion, are the relationships between religious and secular Jews good or not good? (good) [Jews only]	24	28	31	**26**
	And the relationships between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews? (good) [Jews only]	43	53	51	**47**
	And between Israeli Arabs and Jews? (good)	11	16	11	**14**
	And between new immigrants and old-timers? (good) [Jews only]	49	40	37	**40**
	And between the rich and the poor? (good)	25	24	19	**20**
Assessing the levels 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**
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**
Desire to remain in Israel	Do you want to remain in Israel in the long term, or not? (do want)	88	87	89	**90**
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? (feel part)	79	73	77	**69**

4. Democracy: Support and Satisfaction					
Characteristic in the Index	**The questions in the Survey**	**General 2003**	**General 2004**	**General 2005**	**General 2006**
A. Support for democracy	Democracy is a desirable regime for Israel (agree)	84	85	80	**85**
	A few strong leaders can be more useful to the country than all the discussions and the laws (disagree)	44	42	43	**40**
	Democracy is the best form of government (agree)	78	80	74	**77**
B. Democracy vs. competing values	In some situations, democracy contradicts Jewish law. In case of a contradiction, should we prefer the principles of democracy or the dictates of Jewish law? (prefer democracy)	48	45	45	**48**
	In some situations, respecting the principle of the rule of law contradicts the need to protect security interests. In case of a contradiction, should we prefer security interests or respect for the rule of law? (prefer law)	21	19	25	**20**
	If we think of potential directions for development in Israel, there are four important values that clash with one another to some extent, and they are important to different people in different degrees: a state with a Jewish majority, the Greater Land of Israel, a democratic state (equal political rights for all), and peace (low probability of war). Of these four values, which is the most important to you? (democracy first) [Jews only]	17	14	20	**26**
C. Satisfaction with Israeli democracy	In your opinion, is the State of Israel presently democratic to a suitable degree, too democratic or not democratic enough? (not democratic enough)	33	44	36	**45**
	In general, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way in which Israel's democracy functions? (dissatisfied)	49	55	51	**54**

Notes

1. All the results are expressed in percentages; 0.5 is rounded upwards.
2. The data represents the two "high" categories concerning democracy in questions in which there are four or five categories (that is, 1-2 or 3-4 or 4-5) and the high category in questions in which there are 2-3 categories (that is, 1 or 2 if the question is dichotomous and 1 or 3 if there are three categories in the question).
3. Only questions that were asked in February 2006 and at least in one more of the three other years appear.
4. When only Jews were asked the question, square brackets appear beside the question.
5. The size of the sample in 2006 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 +/‑2.9 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.
6. Questions in Hebrew use male formulations only for convenience.

Appendix 3: Distributions of the Democracy Parties Survey, February 2006
(percentages)

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

		Definitely disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Definitely agree
1.	It makes no difference who you vote for. It does not change the situation.	27	24	13	19	17
2.	Knesset members do not care what the public thinks.	7	18	21	32	22
3.	Elections are a good way of bringing governments to relate to the people's view.	7	15	22	36	20
4.	The politicians we elect try to keep the promises they made during the election campaign.	33	27	23	13	4
5.	The High Court of Justice interferes too much in decisions of the government and its ministers.	15	24	24	24	13
6.	I support freedom of speech for everyone, regardless of their views.	3	8	14	35	40
7.	In order to get to the top in politics you have to be corrupt.	12	16	23	27	22
8.	Competition between parties strengthens the political system.	8	15	25	36	16
9.	The Supreme Court's authority to annul Knesset legislation must be abrogated.	22	23	25	21	9
10.	All should have the same rights before the law, regardless of their political views.	2	4	8	33	53
11.	Individuals or groups in a minority should be allowed to act to obtain majority support for their positions.	4	7	25	38	26

12. Some people say that in these elections they will not vote for any particular party but rather against another. What about you? Do you think that in the end you will decide to vote for a particular party in order to support it or to protest against another?
    1. For the party I will vote for   69
    2. Against another party   6
    3. Both are true   11
    4. Don't know/ Have not thought of it   14

13. In your opinion, to what extent is there corruption in Israel?
    1. Not at all   1
    2. To a small extent   8
    3. To some extent   29
    4. To a large extent   62

14. Are you concerned about losing your job or your livelihood?
    1. Not at all   33
    2. To a small extent   24
    3. Very concerned   20
    4. I recently lost my job, and I am looking for work   4
    5. I do not work, and I am not looking for work   19

15. With what political trend do you identify?
    1. Left   11
    2. Moderate left   15
    3. Center   21
    4. Moderate right   17
    5. Right   23
    6. Religious   3
    7. Unidentified   10

16. To what extent will the issue of corruption affect your vote in the coming elections?
    1. To a large extent   41
    2. To some extent   26
    3. To a small extent   16
    4. Not at all   17

17. For some people, the main thing is to vote and the party they vote for is less important, while for other people, the main thing is the party they vote for. To which position do you feel closer?
    1. To the first (the main thing is to vote)   29
    2. To the second (the main thing is the party)   71

18. In your opinion, do primaries lead to a better or a worse system of government?
    1. Better   28
    2. Worse   28
    3. Makes no difference   44

19. Some people think that Knesset members should be elected in personal elections, while others hold that they should be elected according to party lists. What do you think?
    1. Personal elections are definitely preferable   32
    2. Personal elections are preferable   34
    3. Party lists are preferable   27
    4. Party lists are definitely preferable   7

20. 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?

    Right   (1) 20   (2) 11   (3) 14   (4) 28   (5) 12   (6) 8   (7) 7   Left

21. In general, do you see yourself as close to a particular party?
    1. Yes   51
    2. No   44
    3. Don't know   5

For those who replied 'no' or 'don't know' to the previous question:
22. Do you feel yourself a bit closer to one of the parties than to the others?
    1. Yes   18
    2. No   67
    3. Don't know   15

23. How close do you feel to the party you indicated?
    1. Very close   23
    2. Quite close   54
    3. Not so close   19
    4. Don't know   4

24. In your opinion, are there differences between Israel's large political parties concerning territorial compromises?
    1. Very large differences   9
    2. Large differences   23
    3. Some differences   35
    4. Small differences   14
    5. Almost no differences   19

25. In your opinion, are there differences between Israel's large political parties concerning the economy?
    1. Very large differences   10
    2. Large differences   22
    3. Some differences   37
    4. Small differences   14
    5. Almost no differences   17

26. If the party that you support were to change its position on a topic you think is important, would you change your vote?
    1. I Would definitely change my vote   42
    2. I think I would change my vote   27
    3. I think I would not change my vote   14
    4. I would definitely not change my vote   8
    5. If the party changes its position, I would not vote at all   1
    6. I was not intending to vote in any event   2
    7. I do not support any party   6

27-29. Various factors lead people to vote for a specific party. Of the next four factors, what is the main factor that brings you to vote for a specific party? And what is the factor in second place? And in third?

	Main factor	Second	Third
1. Identification with the party	25	26	30
2. The party's candidate for Prime Minister	18	37	29
3. The party's stance on specific issues	45	26	17
4. The party's place in the government or in the opposition	4	10	23
5. None/all to the same extent	8	1	1

30. To what extent are you sure that in the future you will continue to support the same party you supported in these Knesset elections?
    1. Very sure   15
    2. Sure   29
    3. Not so sure   37
    4. Not at all sure 19

31. Are you planing to vote in the coming elections?
    1. Yes   82
    2. No   7
    3. No answer   2
    4. Don't know   9

32. In the coming elections, will you vote as you usually vote?
    1. Yes   65
    2. No   16
    3. I have not voted in the past 4
    4. Don't know   12
    5. There is no way I usually vote 3

33. Do members of your family vote for the Knesset as you do?
    1. All vote like me   41
    2. A large part votes like me   20
    3. A small part votes like me   9
    4. No one votes like me   11
    5. I don't know how they vote   19

34. In your opinion, should the government of Israel make sure that public life in the country is conducted according to Jewish religious tradition or not?
    1. The government should definitely make sure of it   34
    2. The government should perhaps make sure of it   22
    3. I don't think the government should see to it   29
    4. The government should definitely not be concerned with it. 15

35. In your opinion, to what extent is there a likelihood of a civil war in Israel as a result of the arrangements concerning the future of the territories?
    1. To a large extent   16
    2. To some extent   30
    3. To a small extent   33
    4. Not at all   21

Notes
1. All the results are expressed in percentages, out of all the Israeli public; 0.5 is rounded upwards; distributions are taken only from the valid answers.
2. The survey was conducted in February 2006, among a representative sample of Israel's adult population (18 and over), Jews and Arabs. The sample included 1,204 respondents, interviewed by phone in Hebrew, Arabic, and Russian. The fieldwork was conducted by the Mahshov Institute, directed by Rachel Israeli. The sampling error at a 95% level of confidence is +/-2.8%. When conducting the interviews, equal representation was ensured to men and women, and the required steps were also taken to ensure adequate representation of the ultra-Orthodox sector and of immigrants from the CSI.
3. When the question was asked only to Jews, we noted so in brackets beside the question.
4. Questions in Hebrew use male formulations only for convenience.