



The Israeli Democracy Index 2011

Tamar Hermann

Nir Atmor, Karmit Haber, Ella Heller, Dror Walter,
Raphael Ventura, Yuval Lebel

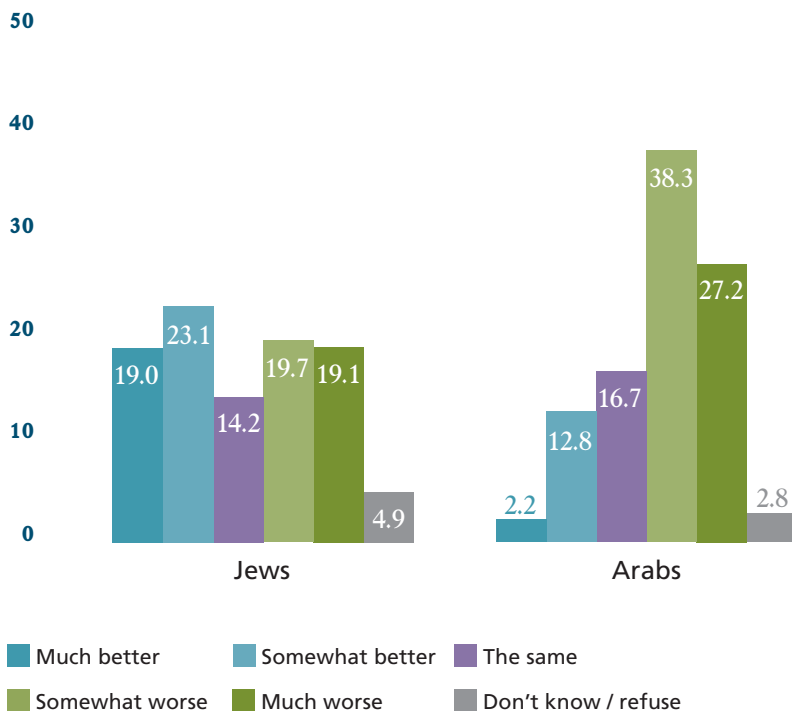
The Israeli Democracy Index 2011, the product of research conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute's Guttman Center, sketches a detailed, up-to-date, theoretical and practical portrait of opinions held by the population of Israel regarding preferred form of government, functioning of the political system, behavior and performance of elected officials and key democratic values. The data were gathered in March 2011 by the Dahaf Institute headed by Dr. Mina Zemach, from a nationwide representative sample of 1,200 adult Israeli citizens (aged 18 and up).

Principal Findings

- **National Solidarity:** 82.3% of Israel's citizens report that they are proud to be Israeli (including more than half the Arab citizens interviewed); 69.5% feel that they are part of the State of Israel and its problems.
- **Quality of Democratic Performance:** 52.3% believe that Israeli democracy works well. We discovered pockets of dissatisfaction among young adults, the ultra-Orthodox and Arabs. 71.5% are dissatisfied with the government's handling of state problems.
- **Preferred Form of Government:** 32.4% of the population declared that the best form of government is a strong leader; 82.9% consider representative democracy to be best.
- **Elected Officials and Their Constituents:** Only a third agrees that most Knesset members are doing a good job.
- **National Goals:** The Jewish population maintains that narrowing of socioeconomic gaps should be the State of Israel's primary goal, immediately followed by strengthening Israel's military capability. The Arab population accords achieving peace with the Palestinians top priority, followed by improving relations between Arab and Jewish citizens.
- **"Jewish and Democratic":** Among the Jewish population, 46.1% prefer this combined definition of the State of Israel; 29.5% emphasize the "Jewish" component and only 22% the "democratic" one.
- **Halakha (Jewish religious law) vs. Democracy:** In the event of a conflict between the two, 49.7% of the Jewish population believes that preference should be given to upholding democratic principles, while 21% prefer observing the tenets of Jewish law and 26.5% say that each issue should be judged separately.

- **Relations between Jews and Arabs:** Only about two thirds of the Jewish population considers Arab citizens to be “Israelis.” 77.9% of Jews support excluding the Arab population from critical decision-making processes—not only concerning peace and security but also on issues related to the economy and governance (69.5%).
- **Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom:** 50.8% of Israel’s population agrees with the statement that speakers should be prohibited from harshly criticizing the State of Israel in public; a majority of the Jewish population (57.8%) believes that university lecturers should not be permitted to publicly express political opinions and 62.9% even maintains that the state should oversee the content of university courses.
- **Foreign Workers:** A majority (56.9%) believes that foreign workers should not be considered Israelis, but 53.5% do consider their children who grew up here to be Israeli. A third blames foreign workers for problems of unemployment and a lack of reasonably priced housing.
- **Israel Compared with Other Countries:** Israel ranks at or near the middle of the scale for most international democracy indexes this year, standing out positively for its place on the Political Participation Index and negatively for its place on the Electoral Process and Pluralism Index, Civil Rights Index, Freedom of Religion Index and especially the Religious Fractionalization and Ethnic/Linguistic Fractionalization Indexes.

Young people's chances of establishing themselves professionally in Israel in comparison with their parents' generation (By nationality; percent)



The Israel Democracy Institute (R.A.)

Tel: +972-2-5300888; Fax: +972-2-5300880

email: orders@idi.org.il

IDI website: www.idi.org.il

The Israel Democracy Institute, POB 4702, Jerusalem 91046