

JEWISH PEOPLE POLICY INSTITUTE
המכון למדיניות העם היהודי

Geopolitics

Cohesion

Demography

Resources

Identity

Annual Assessment The Situation and Dynamics of the Jewish People 5783 | 2023

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Table of Contents

Foreword – Stuart E. Eizenstat and Dennis Ross	5
Key Recommendations	9
Trends	
Five Dimensions of Jewish Well-Being	13
Geopolitics Gauge	17
Cohesion Gauge	21
Material Resources Gauge	25
Identity and Identification Gauge	29
Demography Gauge	33
Selected Indicators of World Jewry	37
IN-DEPTH ANALYSES	
The Geopolitical Arena: Challenges in the Face of an Internal Crisis	41
Trends Within the Jewish People	59
INDICES	
Israeli Society Index	83
Integrated Three-Dimensional Antisemitism Index	95
Israel – Diaspora Index: Attitudes and Behaviors	105
Demography Index: Fertility and Population Density in Israel	117
CULTURAL CURRENCY	
Flags, Handmaids, and Polarized TV	129
Religion, Culture, Sociology and History in 5783 (2023)	137

1

Foreword

The Jewish People Policy Institute's *Annual Assessment* plays both a summing-up and a forward-looking role. On the one hand, each year it examines events and developments that had an impact on the State of Israel and on the Jewish world. On the other hand, it monitors important trends to influence their direction, in order to improve the situation of Israel and of Jewish communities around the world.

The pace of events is reflected in the *Annual Assessments'* areas of emphasis from year to year. Two years ago, the focus was on the coronavirus pandemic, and its impact on Israel and the Jewish world. Last year, we emphasized the impact of the war in Ukraine, including on its Jewish community and elderly Ukrainian Holocaust survivors, some of whom live in the areas of most intense conflict and are in need of protection and evacuation,

many to Israel and to Germany. This year, the focus is on Israel. The social and political polarization that greatly intensified in Israel this year is a major development whose long-term impact on Israel and on the Jewish world cannot, as yet, be fully predicted. But it is clearly affecting the strength and cohesion of Israeli society, as well as Israel's relations with the rest of the Jewish world, and potentially with the United States.

The main emotion Jews around the world express is anxiety about Israel's future – not just due to threats by outside enemies, but also because of an internal dispute that threatens the cohesion and unity of the country. This particular anxiety, which is reflected in the data presented in this report, is compounded by alarm over the rise of antisemitism in many countries around the world, including the United States. The resurgence of antisemitism

is not a new development. However, in past years one could try to explain it in terms of unique events (social tensions, the pandemic, a military operation in Gaza), this year it is hard to do so. High levels of antisemitic activity were registered in 2022, despite the absence of easily identifiable causal factors. This underscores the possibility that the rise in Jew-hatred is being driven not by temporary but rather by long-term factors, casting doubt on optimistic forecasts of improvement in the near term. They have required Jewish communities to take additional measures to bolster the security of Jews, for the first time especially in the United States, where synagogues and Jewish institutions routinely have to hire security guards and develop evacuation plans in case of terrorist attack.

In addition, the Biden administration has issued the nation's first Strategy to Counter Antisemitism, which includes proposals for funds to protect the Jewish community, but also broader actions to combat the rise of antisemitism, including through social media.

Israel's internal crisis is taking place at a time when other parallel processes are underway that pose a challenge to Israel's security and to the Jewish people's resilience. These threats require cohesion and a focusing of resources that are eroding due to the internal crisis. On the international level, big power competition is intensifying with China and Russia, as the war in Ukraine continues. As the inter-power conflict deepens, Israel's efforts to maneuver between them become

more complex, given Russia's role in Syria, where Iran seeks a military presence that threatens Israel. Moreover, Israel's economic and technological relationship with a rising and aggressive China puts pressure on Israel's relationship with the United States.

In the Middle East, Iran, in addition to its military foothold in Syria, continues to advance its nuclear weapons program, reaching higher levels of uranium enrichment, with more sophisticated centrifuges, longer range missile capability, and the hardening of its nuclear infrastructure. This combination of increasing size, sophistication, and reduced vulnerability of the Iranian nuclear infrastructure, if not stopped or reversed, could mean that at a certain point Israel could actually lose its military option. Further, Iran has eased its isolation in the region even as it continues to provide weapons to its proxies in Iraq and seeks to produce precision guidance capabilities for tens of thousands of Hezbollah rockets. It is pouring money and arms to the Palestinians at a time when Israel faces a disaffected Palestinian population with no sense of possibility – fertile ground for producing increased Palestinian terrorism.

In addition to these challenges, questions have arisen about the strength of the strategic triangular relationship between Jerusalem, Washington, and American Jewry, and about U.S. policy in areas that affect Israel's resilience. Israel is being negatively affected by the erosion of its image as a nation that enjoys social and political stability. This

erosion may deter investors, and has already led to dire warnings on the part of senior economists around the world, including the credit rating agencies.

Notwithstanding these complex challenges, as Israel celebrates its 75th anniversary as an independent country, the Third Jewish Commonwealth in history, it is important to recognize the remarkable progress Israel has made economically, militarily, and politically. Israel is a regional power with a robust economy – a nation with which quite a few neighboring countries want to cooperate. The Abraham Accords with the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan have profoundly improved Israel's standing in the Middle East. The efforts by the U.S. administration to promote normalization between Saudi Arabia and Israel reflects how the region has changed and the potential to transform it in a more far-reaching way. For the moment, the current crisis in Israel is affecting what some of the Abraham Accord countries are prepared to do, even as they are not walking away from their deals with Israel. Still, to reach their full potential, defusing the growing tensions with the Palestinians and demonstrating the payoffs of these accords will be necessary.

The data presented by the JPPI attest to a prevailing consensus in Israeli society that Israel is currently experiencing a “crisis,” but there is a significant gap between the how its severity is perceived by the government's supporters and its opponents. This creates a


gap in expectations regarding how the crisis should be addressed. Our position is that, as Rosh Hashanah approaches and a new year is ushered in, we should be less concerned with backward-looking questions such as “Who is to blame?” and “Why did this happen?” and more inclined to look toward the future.

The *Annual Assessment* also provides a few scenarios for the design of that future. We believe that the best option will be the one that leads to reconciliation. The crisis underway in Israel shows, among other things, that there is a fundamental weakness in the arrangements that ensure social and political stability. It also indicates an urgent need to formulate “rules of the game” for managing disputes. We will soon embark on a project to explore the elements of a constitution Israel is sorely lacking. Even if they do not immediately resolve essential differences over the state's identity and vision, at least they may allow these issues to be discussed in a clearly defined framework that is accepted by most segments of the society. The Jewish People Policy Institute has undertaken to assist in shaping a consensus on these rules.


Stuart E. Eizenstat and Dennis Ross

2


Key Recommendations




Efforts should be made to quickly **end the sociopolitical crisis** that is eroding Israel's status in the international arena as well as the country's economy and cohesion (see pp. 17-19).




The end of the crisis should be used as a lever for formulating **permanent "rules of the game"** that will make it possible to discuss fundamental issues pertaining to Israel's identity and vision without drawing the state into frequent cycles of social and constitutional crisis see pp. 21-23).



Israel and Jewish organizations in the Diaspora should engage in focused diplomatic efforts to realize a **peace agreement with Saudi Arabia** (see pp. 17-19).



Israel should make a continuous, determined, and ambitious effort to **expand its circle of highly productive** workforce members and to retain those already in that circle (see pp. 25-27).



Global-Jewish cooperation must be increased to **fight the normalization of antisemitic discourse**, with a view toward consensus on definitional parameters, measurement, legislation, and action. (see pp. 21-23).

TRENDS

This year, JPPI experts were assisted in assessing the developments and setting the gauges for five dimensions of Jewish well-being by advisory teams of well-regarded professionals in each field. Their recommendations and comments were taken into account during the analysis and the formulation of the recommendations, but the responsibility for the final wording rests with the Institute staff alone.

Geopolitical Gauge

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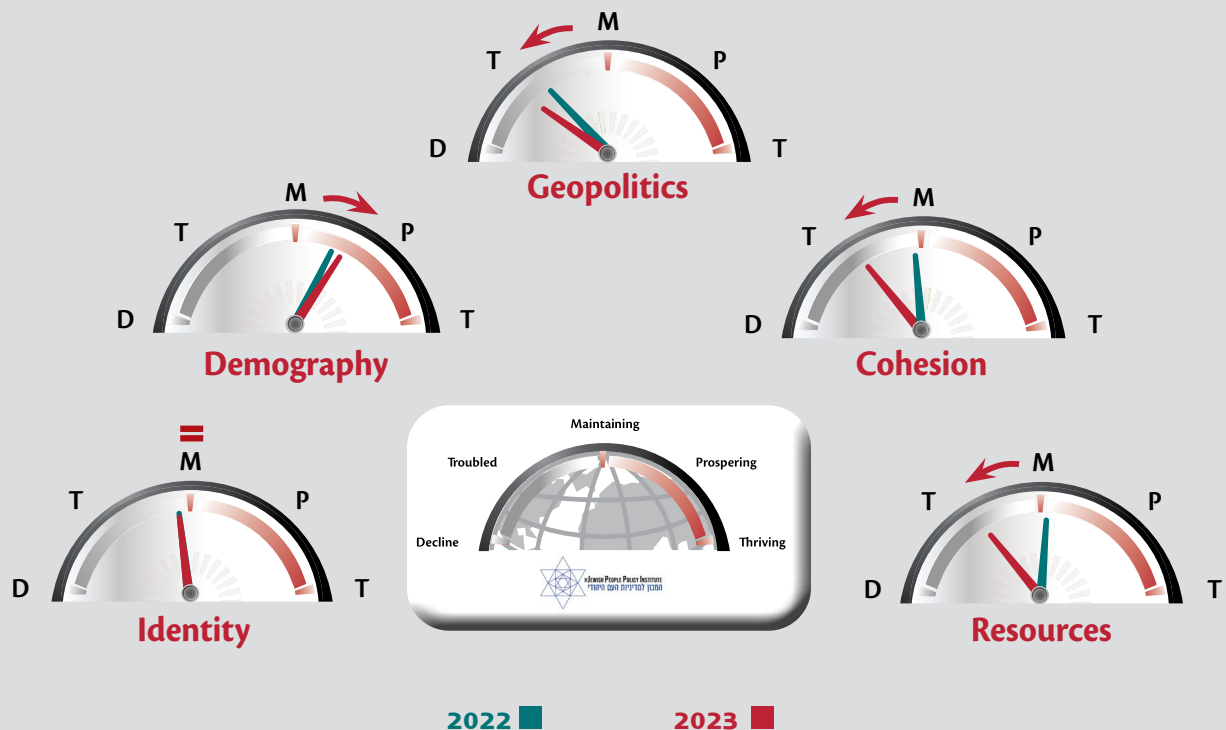
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3

Integrated Net Assessment: JPPI's Five Dimensions of Jewish Well-Being

Key Drivers Affecting the Jewish People in 2022-2023



The sociopolitical crisis in Israel was this year's dominant development in terms of its impact on the Jewish people. This crisis has had ramifications for Israel's internal situation and for its relations with other countries and Diaspora Jewry.

Crisis in Israel

After the elections and the formation of a new coalition, and the subsequent announcement of a comprehensive judicial reform plan, Israel became embroiled in a major sociopolitical crisis. As the data presented later in this report show, and regardless of whether the proposed reform (and the small part of it that has been enacted thus far) is necessary or not – this crisis has been a negative development on many levels, including for security, foreign relations, and economic resilience.

Society

The most notable impact of the current crisis has been the harm it has done to Israeli cohesion (with an emphasis on the Jewish sector), but it has also had ramifications for Israel-Diaspora relations. In Israel, there has been an intensification of the disturbing trend of decreased public trust in the state institutions and the erosion of confidence in the country's future. A corresponding anxiety regarding Israel's future is felt among Diaspora Jews. These major tensions translate for many Israelis into an overwhelming

concern for what awaits Israel in the wake of demographic developments that are changing its character. This concern is fueling opposing sectoral outlooks and rising levels of suspicion between different identity groups in Israeli society. It has led to a polarizing discourse on the desire for “separation” between different sectors and, among a not-insignificant minority, about the possibility of emigrating to other countries.

Geopolitics

Israel is considered a regional power with a strong economy, whose neighbors are disposed to rely on it and to cooperate with it. However, the current crisis is undermining Israel's deterrence due, among other things, to its erosion of the willingness for voluntary IDF service. The danger of violence erupting in Judea and Samaria and on the northern border has increased, and Iran continues to advance its nuclear project while improving its diplomatic bargaining position. Along with other sources of discord, the crisis has also harmed Israel's relations with the current U.S. administration, which has chosen to take an oppositional stance to the government's actions. Apart from these issues, a highly positive development for Israel may materialize if and when the effort to reach a peace treaty with Saudi Arabia proves successful. Such an agreement would be a historic turning-point in Israel's relations with the countries of the region and with the Islamic nations as a group.

Antisemitism

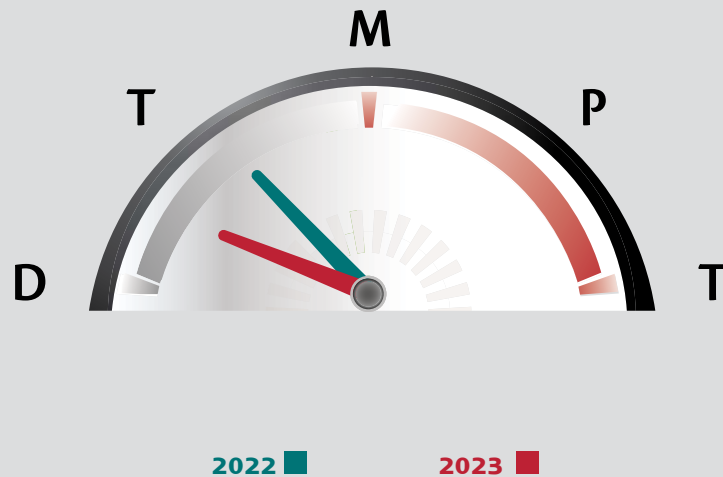
In the past year the growing normalization of antisemitism manifested in several ways. The strengthening of the far right in Europe drove numerous expressions of antisemitism in the political sphere; the normalization of antisemitic discourse in the United States hit an inflection point when a former president hosted an antisemitic rapper and a Holocaust denier; and a torrent of antisemitic incidents were reported in the U.S., with the Pittsburgh synagogue terrorist who murdered 11 Jews being sentenced to death for his crimes.

Demography

The war in Ukraine has led to a large wave of Jewish emigration from Ukraine (to Israel and other countries, mainly in Europe), and has also increased the rate of immigration to Israel from Russia and, to a certain extent, from Belarus. These trends are accelerating the contraction of what, two centuries ago, were the largest Jewish population centers in the world, and intensifying the present concentration of Jews into two main countries: Israel and the United States.

4

Geopolitics Gauge



The internal discord that erupted in Israel following the government's announcement of its plan to overhaul the judicial system has had a negative impact on Israel's international status, its relations with the United States, its economy, its deterrence, and its relations with Diaspora Jewry.

The dispute is raging at a time when processes are underway globally and in the Middle East that challenge Israel's security and the Jewish people's resilience. These threats require cohesion and a focusing of resources that have eroded due to the internal crisis.

Alongside the crisis, the opportunity for a positive historical turning-point has arisen in Israel this year – an initiative to promote a peace agreement with Saudi Arabia. The agreement, which the U.S. is working to advance, would anchor Israel's acceptance as a country of normal status in a region that had denied its very existence, and would also provide legitimacy for other Arab and Muslim countries to normalize their relations with Israel. The cooperation that will be required between Washington and Jerusalem for this agreement to be finalized would also herald a positive development in Israel's relations with the U.S., which in recent months have been rife with tension.

In the regional arena, there has been a trend toward pragmatic reconciliation between longtime adversaries (such as Saudi Arabia and Iran); at the same time, Iran is proceeding with its nuclear weapons project and improving its geopolitical standing. Israel faces the danger of a multi-front security deterioration (frequent Hezbollah provocations on the northern border intensify the danger), while also having to cope with Palestinian terrorism (strikingly demonstrated by the decision to launch Operation Shield and Arrow against the Islamic Jihad faction). Despite these looming shadows, it should be stressed that Israel is still considered a regional power its neighbors wish to rely upon and with which they want to cooperate (the stability of the Abraham Accords testifies to this trend).

Trends and Recommendations

Substantial effort should be invested in ending Israel's sociopolitical crisis with a compromise, due (among other reasons) to its negative impact on Israel's geopolitical resilience.

Explanation: The constitutional crisis is eroding Israel's strength, international standing, and economy, but more than anything else it highlights the weight of intra-Israeli solidarity in the strategic-resilience equation. It is therefore urgent that the process currently dividing Israeli society be halted.

When decisions are being made on domestic matters, the government should be furnished with a careful analysis of those decisions' impact on Israel's geopolitical stability.

Explanation: As with the previous recommendation, the past few months have shown us that decisions on domestic issues have complex strategic and international costs. This fact sometimes surprises decision makers who are not aware of the full scope of implications their decisions carry. An effort should therefore be made to upgrade preparatory work so that the relevant information will be provided to ministers in government discussions.

Efforts should be focused on reaching a peace agreement with Saudi Arabia.

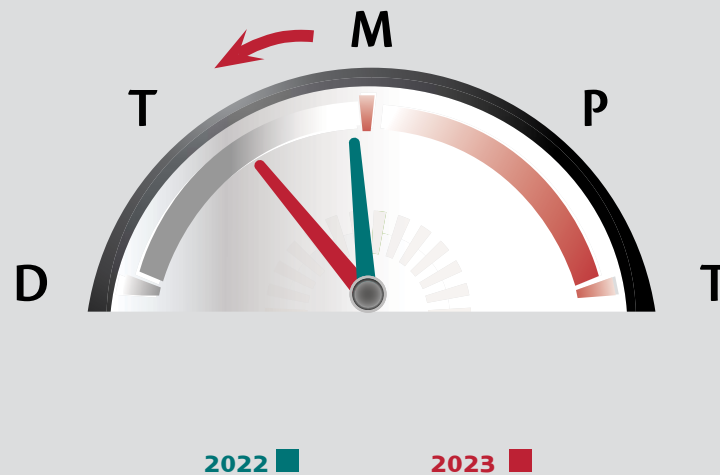
Explanation: A peace agreement with the oil power that is home to the two holiest sites in Islam would constitute a historic turning point for Israel's standing in the Arab and Islamic world. The agreement would hold the power to weaken and isolate Iran, and help heal the rifts that have arisen in Jerusalem-Washington relations.

Israeli Interference, or even the appearance of interference, in the 2024 U.S. elections must be avoided.

Explanation: The issue of Israel-U.S. relations may come up in the American elections as a bone of contention between the parties. The temptation to voice positions that could be interpreted as support for one side or the other may be great, but Israel must adhere to the fundamental principle that has been at the foundation of its special relationship with the U.S. – namely, that it must cultivate bipartisan sympathy.

5

Cohesion Gauge



The Cohesion Gauge (known as the Community Bonds Gauge in previous assessments) was recalibrated this year in a significantly negative direction, mainly due to the impact judicial overhaul legislative efforts have had on sociopolitical polarization in Israel, the attitudes of Diaspora Jews regarding Israel, and on relations between politically polarized communities within the Jewish world. As the data show, there is a public perception that

the social situation is “bad” (a majority of the Jewish public feels this way), and many Israelis think that the state is embroiled in one of the most serious crises, or in *the* most serious crisis, of its history (in March, 66% of respondents, in July ... of respondents). This situation also affects Jews elsewhere in the world. For some, it manifests in internal debates that echo Israel’s internal political dispute. For others, it creates a sense of

alienation from Israel, either because they believe that Israel is going through a process they find ideologically unacceptable, or because they have the impression that Israel itself is unstable, and they are starting to have doubts about the country's long-term stability.

Other factors that have affected the Jewish people's cohesion this year: growing legitimization of antisemitism (which strengthens the identity of Jews who are connected to the community, and alienates others), cast in sharp relief by the Kanye West affair (for more on this, see the chapter on Jewish people trends 2023, page 59); the intensified security threat to Israel, mainly connected to the advancement of Iran's nuclear project (which is sparking concern among Jews regarding Israel's ultimate fate); Jewish attacks on Palestinians in Judea and Samaria, which affect how Diaspora Jews perceive Israel's morality and its status as a country that adheres to the rule of law; the tense relations between the Israeli government/prime minister and the current U.S. administration (which most American Jews support); the ongoing war in Ukraine, which has consequences for the fate of Jewish communities in Ukraine and Russia; growing emphasis on the ultra-Orthodox challenge, both in Israel (budget debates the expiration of the Conscription Law, etc.) and in the Diaspora (core studies in ultra-Orthodox schools in New York).

Trends and Recommendations

Beyond a solution to the fundamental issues concerning the structure of the political system and to the rule of law, an effort should be made to end Israel's sociopolitical crisis with a compromise, due to its dramatic impact on the cohesion of the Jewish people.

Explanation: The Israeli government seeks to change some of the customary arrangements currently in force regarding the balance of power between the judiciary and the other two branches of government. These changes are a matter of fierce dispute. Some see them as necessary measures that will enable the Israeli government to better control and implement policy; for others, they represent Israel's deterioration into a state of dubious democracy. The issue of these governmental arrangements is of great importance, but no less important is the issue of social cohesion. Israel faces many challenges, external and internal, and a weakening of its social cohesion endangers its ability to cope with them. At the same time, it makes it harder for Jews in the rest of the world to identify with Israel, and to feel confident about its future. When both the decision-makers and their opponents formulate their positions on the judicial-political issue, they must consider not only those outcomes that directly pertain to Israel's political structure, but also, and perhaps primarily, the consequences the political tension for social cohesion.

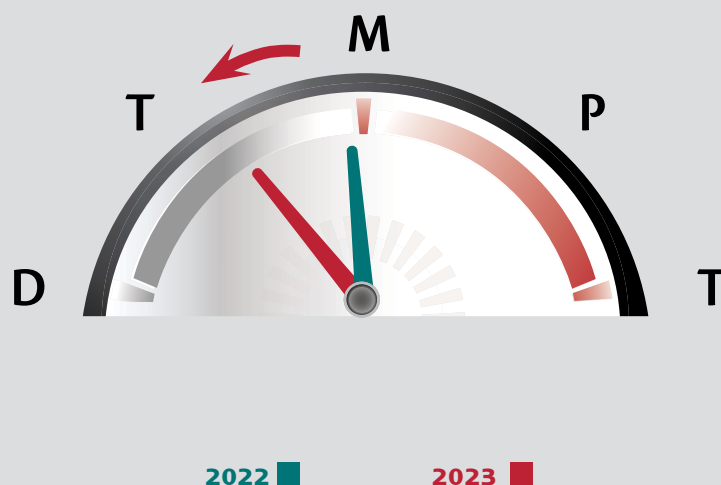
Global-Jewish cooperation must be increased to fight the normalization of antisemitic discourse, with a view toward consensus on definitional parameters, measurement, legislation, and action.

Explanation: This year, as in recent years, a significant number of antisemitic incidents were recorded, and there has been an evident normalization of antisemitic discourse on social media and in the public arena. Jewish organizations, and the government of Israel, must recognize that, after a decades-long post-Holocaust respite, antisemitism has once again become a major challenge that must be addressed in a continuous and

systematic way. Meeting the challenge effectively, requires the broadest possible consensus on what antisemitism is, which elements are perpetrating and encouraging it, and how it should be opposed. It is not easy to achieve such consensus in an era of polarized discourse, but it must be strived for even if it entails concessions on certain matters of principle: disagreements between Jews on this issue undermine their ability to fight together and has an encouraging effect on those who want to spread antisemitism. Disagreements erode cohesion on an issue of paramount importance for the survival of the entire Jewish people.

6

Material Resources Gauge



2022 was a good year for Israel's economy. The country recovered from the Covid crisis, unemployment was low, wages rose, poverty and economic disparities contracted. In early 2023, however, a number of factors cast a shadow over the nation's economy: global inflationary trends, rising interest rates, declining investment in the tech sector – and, in particular, Israel's current sociopolitical crisis, which, though not an economic development in and of itself, is nevertheless having an evident impact on the economy.

Israel has entered an economically challenging period. The decline in high tech investment is especially important as the country's economy is largely driven by this sector. At the same time, the crisis appears to be weakening the shekel and is dissuading foreign concerns from investing in Israeli companies. Additional shock waves may be felt if a decision is made to downgrade Israel's credit rating. To these may be added a disturbing social trend: a discourse of emigration among highly productive individuals and groups, due to

fear of the immediate results of legislation initiated by the government, or concerns regarding the sociodemographic path Israel seems to be walking.

The government, which enjoys a stable Knesset majority, passed a state budget with relative speed and ease compared to recent years (in some of which no state budget was passed at all). However, the budget has sparked critical claims by government ministry professionals that large allocations of resources have been made for the sake of maintaining coalition stability.

Trends

Diaspora Jews are observing the crisis in Israel from afar and are exposed to its impact, both in terms of whether to invest in Israel and whether to donate to Israel. This year, several foundations and wealthy individuals have stepped up their philanthropic involvement in an effort to influence Israeli affairs. However, the doubts being raised about Israel's future are also reaching these circles, which could cause some of the parties in question to redirect their philanthropic efforts to other fronts.

Under these circumstances, and considering the critical importance of Israeli prosperity for the safety and well-being of the Jewish people, we have moved the Material Resources gauge in a negative direction, into the "troubled" area.

Trends and Recommendations

Resources must be channeled urgently to address chronic problems that will make it difficult for Israel's continued economic prosperity.

Explanation: The opinion of most experts is that the last governmental budget, and many of those preceding it, have not truly addressed the problems arising from the growth, composition, and educational level of Israel's population – and these problems will make it difficult for Israel to maintain economic prosperity in the long term (within the coming years, it is projected that Israel will become the most densely populated of all developed countries). Israel's unemployment rate is lower than the average for the OECD, the EU, and the U.S. The director of the Budgets Division in the Ministry of Finance, Yogev Gradus, noted the challenge facing Israel: present labor productivity levels and labor market participation rates indicate that within just a few decades Israel's average standard of living "will be similar to those of Eastern European countries: Latvia, Romania, and Hungary." Whether Israel, which, of course, is not in Europe but rather in the Middle East, will be able to meet its other anticipated challenges (including the heavy economic burden of its security needs) is a question of that should be top of mind for the country's decision-makers. Hence:

Israel must maintain a continuous, determined, and ambitious effort to expand the circle of educated and highly productive members of its workforce.

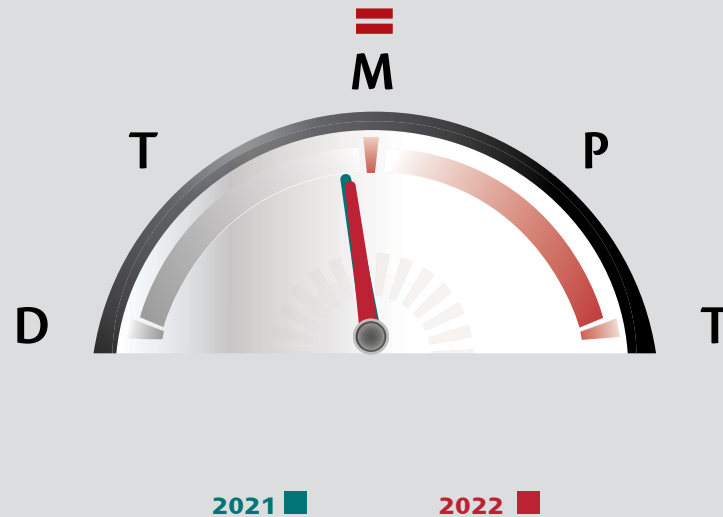
Explanation: Again, quoting the Budgets Division director: “The combination of high fertility and low labor productivity” has “fatal economic consequences.” For this reason, enhancing the skill level of sectors whose productivity is not currently commensurate with their population share is essential. If efforts to achieve this are realized, it would be “a main engine for securing a higher standard of living for us all,” according to Gradus. This effort necessitates reducing the funds channeled to purposes not conducive to growth, and comprehensively addressing the low level of the education system.

Israel should focus on investing in the retention of quality personnel

Explanation: Until Israel manages to enlarge its pool of highly productive workforce participants, its prosperity will depend on an exceedingly small group of people who bring to the labor market special skills in knowledge-intensive fields. This year, more than usual, some in this group engaged in a disturbing emigration discourse. It is, of course, possible that this discourse is merely background noise arising from the political crisis, and that it will subside once the crisis passes. However, data we present later in this report indicate that the possibility of a gradual exodus from Israel of entrepreneurs, academics, scientists, physicians, and engineers should not be taken lightly. Professions in these fields are in demand elsewhere, and an erosion of their numbers could have a real impact on the standard of living and on the quality of life of Israelis. Israel must make an urgent effort to forestall such a trend.

7

Identity and Identification Gauge



Long-term trends of Jewish identity erosion continued this year. At the same time, events in Israel sharpened the sense of vigilance and curiosity (and anxiety). These feelings evince a desire for engagement and contact with Israel, as well as a desire for involvement in the discussion of issues around contemporary Jewish identity. Due to these bidirectional effects, the identity gauge remains **unchanged** this year.

In the modern era, Jewish identity is challenged in several ways typical of the period. The first of these is **the possibility of choice**. In Diaspora communities, all Jews have the choice to remain Jewish or not. In addition, withdrawal from the community does not necessarily entail religious conversion. The second challenge is that of **intermarriage** with non-Jews. Forty-two percent of married Diaspora Jews have

non-Jewish spouses. The third challenge is the rise of **Jews of no religion**. These Jews self-identify as Jews in terms of family background, ethnicity, or culture, but state that they have no religion. Although this group has a declared Jewish identity, its members show, on a practical level, little involvement in the activities of the Jewish community. The proportion of Jews of no religion is on the rise. Some 27% of all American Jews define themselves as Jews of no religion, as do 40% of Jews under the age of 30.

Trends

The development that has had the most acute impact on Jewish identity this year is the sociopolitical crisis in Israel, which at the time of this writing (September 2003) was still underway. The community's reaction to the crisis has been complex (see pp. 83-93). On one hand, the crisis undermined Diaspora Jews' confidence in Israel as a central and stabilizing force of community and Jewish identity. On the other hand (as emerged during discussions in 15 focus groups of Jews around the world^{1*}), the crisis sparked renewed interest in what is happening in Israel, and in certain groups it also generated an impulse to action among leaders and engaged Jews. A majority of discussion-group participants said that the crisis had caused them to feel more strongly attached to Israel (57%), and many of them said that the crisis was increasing the likelihood that they would visit Israel. Seventy percent of the

participants said that the crisis had caused them to discuss Israel more frequently, and most said that they were interested in taking part in such discussions. The above is also true of many Israelis living abroad who reconnected to Israel through the crisis in a context of vigilance and activism; the crisis may also have the positive effect of renewing interest in living in Israel (once the crisis abates).

Trends and recommendations

Synagogues and communal organizations should conduct educational activities and discussions about the crisis in Israel.

Explanation: First, a careful effort to make information about the crisis and its causes available to Diaspora Jews would likely help soften the harsh impression the crisis creates when divorced from its complex contexts. Second, discussions about the crisis, which has made media headlines international and has entered the general consciousness, may serve as an impetus for renewed interest among Jews in what is happening in Israel. Judicious use should be made of the fact that the crisis, beyond its political causes, also touches on fundamental questions of modern Jewish identity and its meanings, and provides an opportunity to air these questions.

Non-Orthodox synagogues and organizations should seek new ways of attracting Jews.

Explanation: Once the Covid pandemic ended, Jews returned to synagogue. However, questions pertaining to synagogue attendance and the readily available, sometimes permanent alternatives created, in the form of online/remote religious services, justifies a reexamination of the existing models of active participation and a quest for ways of updating those models for a generation that, at least for a time, grew accustomed to not physically attending synagogue services. During the pandemic, the advantages of online interaction became evident, but so did its disadvantages. We recommend that the Jewish community ensure that the return to normal include a return to in-person human encounters, in synagogues and other Jewish institutions and organizations.

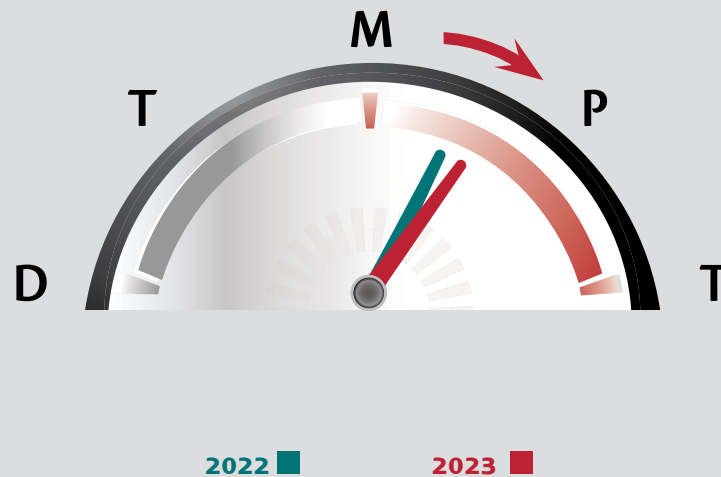
Ways should be sought to deepen the meaning of Jewish identity for the children of mixed marriages who identify as Jews.

Explanation: In the large North American community, 61% of Jews who have married since 2010 have married non-Jews. Such marriages have a considerable impact on Jewish identity. They strengthen social and familial ties with non-Jews, but the loosening of the Jewish social network has often led to thinner Jewish activity and engagement. However, a majority (62%) of the children of intermarriages grow up as Jews, though this identity turns out to evince low levels of involvement and attachment. This large group of Jews is becoming numerically and socially significant within the broader Jewish community, and specific frameworks should be created for the examination of its complex identity and of ways to deepen the Jewish identity of the children of mixed marriages.

1 * The focus groups were convened as part of JPPI's Jewish World Dialogue project.

8

Demography Gauge



The Demographic Gauge has been adjusted in a positive direction this year, thanks to a return to earlier demographic patterns as the Covid pandemic waned. The global Jewish population is growing, as indicated by data published in 2022 based on population censuses conducted in 2021 in Australia,¹ the UK,² and Canada.³ The mortality rate has declined and may even remain lower than usual due to excess mortality during the pandemic, especially among the elderly and those with comorbidities.

In Israel, the data do not indicate a drop in the fertility rate. It is more difficult to assess fertility trends for Diaspora Jews – due both to a lack of data and to the difficulty of estimating the actual fertility rate, which depends not only on the number of births, but also on the chance that the children will continue to identify as Jews in adulthood. Data from the United States indicate that most Jews with one Jewish parent do identify as Jews,⁴ which makes a certain degree of Jewish population growth possible despite low fertility levels.

In 2022, there was a sharp increase in the number of immigrants to Israel, which continued in the first six months of 2023, mainly due to the war in Ukraine as migration from Western countries fell back slightly. The most significant wave of Jewish migration (to Israel and other countries, mostly in Europe) was indeed from Ukraine. The war also increased the rate of immigration to Israel from Russia and, to some extent, from Belarus. These trends are accelerating the reduction of what were, two hundred years ago, the largest concentrations of the global Jewish population, and reinforce the phenomenon of Jewish concentration in two main countries: Israel and the United States.

Trends and recommendations

An effort should be made to assist CIS Jews in distress.

Explanation: The war in Ukraine caused a large migration wave to Israel from Ukraine and Russia and, to some extent, from Belarus. Ukrainian olim in particular are in financial straits and need state assistance. Two-thirds of them are women,⁵ a quarter are under 18, and another fifth are over 65⁶ – a mix that is the result of many families deciding to split up (men of army age remained in Ukraine to fight). The longer the war goes on, the better the refugees, especially the children among them, will acclimate to their new surroundings, and their extended stay here will lower the likelihood of them deciding to return to Ukraine once the war ends. Accordingly, Israel should plan its policy on post-war family reunification.

At the same time, the war and the waves of emigration have greatly weakened the Jewish communities in the CIS. Emigration to Israel is perceived by many young Russians as a way to evade the military draft, and this is not only causing the country's Jewish community to shrink, it is also driving a growing exodus of young people, leaving behind an aging population. Older Jews remaining in Russia, who needed assistance even before the war, are now suffering from the impact of the international sanctions on Russia, which have worsened the country's economic situation and are making it hard for Jewish aid organizations to help them.

A policy for addressing the growing number of Israelis who identify as Jews but are not recognized as such must be formulated.

Explanation: The challenge posed by Israelis who identify as Jews but are not recognized as Jews per religious law is growing more urgent. The size of Israel's population of "others," which consists mainly of CIS immigrants and their descendants who are not halachically recognized as Jews, passed the half-million mark at the end of 2022.⁷ Most of the growth of this population is the result of increased Aliyah due to the war in Ukraine, and its consequences extend beyond the familiar difficulties involved in the economic and cultural absorption of immigrants; there are also legal issues pertaining to citizenship, housing, personal status, and an array of bureaucratic challenges.

Endnote

- 1 Peter Kohn. [Record number of Jews](#). *The Australian Jewish News* (June 30, 2022)
- 2 David Graham & Jonathan Boyd. [Jews in Britain in 2021: First results from the census of England and Wales](#). JPR: Institute for Jewish Policy Research
- 3 Robert Brym. [What the 2021 census reveals about Canada's Jewish community – as examined by sociology professor Robert Brym](#). *The Canadian Jewish News* (December 6, 2022)
- 4 Pew Research Center. [Jewish Americans in 2020](#) (May 11, 2021)
- 5 Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. Media Release. [Immigration to Israel 2021 and Immigration to Israel Due to the War in Ukraine in 2022](#) (10.8.2022). [Hebrew]
- 6 Ayala Eliyahu. [Data on Immigration to Israel from Ukraine and Russia in 2022](#). *Knesset Research and Information Center* (12.12.2022). [Hebrew]
- 7 Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. Media Release. [Population of Israel on the Eve of 2023](#). (29.12.2022). [Hebrew]



Selected Indicators of World Jewry

Country/ Region	Core Jewish population		GDP per capita, PPP, US \$	Index of Human Devel- opment – World Rank	Recent out-mar- riage rate (%)	Aliya
	1970	2021	2020	2020		2020
World	12,633,000	16,472,000	-	-	-	19,676
Israel	2,582,000	6,870,000	39,489.3	19	2	-
North America	5,686,000	7,694,000	-	-	-	2,532
United States	5,400,000	7,300,000	63,206.5	17	61	2,296
Canada	286,000	394,000	46,572.1	16	25	236
Europe (non-FSU)	1,331,000	1,092,000	-	-	-	3,431
France	530,000	446,000	46,991.2	26	>30	2,407
UK	390,000	292,000	46,482.9	13	26	459
Germany	30,000	118,000	54,844.5	6	45-55	80
Hungary	70,000	47,000	33,075.9	40	>50	27
Netherlands	30,000	30,000	59,266.9	8	>50	46
Other	281,000	159,000	-	-	-	412
Latin America	514,000	376,000	-	-	-	1,588
Argentina	282,000	175,000	20,770.7	46	25-35	551
Brazil	90,000	92,000	14,835.4	84	25-35	512
Mexico	35,000	40,000	18,444.1	74	<5	174
Other countries	107,000	69,000	-	-	-	351
FSU	2,151,000	227,000	-	-		11,011
Russian Federa- tion	808,000	150,000	29,812.2	52	>70	6,644
Ukraine	777,000	43,000	13,054.8	74	>75	2,937
Rest FSU	566,000	34,000	-	-	-	1,430
Asia (rest)	104,000	33,000	-	-	-	223
Oceania	70,000	126,000	-	-	-	83
Australia	65,000	119,000	53,316.9	8	33	82
Other countries	5,000	7,000	-	-	-	1
Africa	195,000	54,000	-	-	-	348
South Africa	118,000	52,000	13,360.6	114	19	269
Other countries	77,000	2,000	-	-	-	79

IN-DEPTH ANALYSES

10

The Geopolitical Arena: Challenges in the Face of an Internal Crisis

The past year in Israel has been overcast by the shadow of the country's domestic crisis, which began when the government presented its plans to make changes to the judicial system in January 2023. This led to protests that are ongoing and have heightened political and social divides in Israel. The warning by army reservists from special forces units and all the more so by hundreds of air force pilots that they would no longer volunteer to serve if the government went ahead with implementation of the reform package poses a threat to the IDF's operational readiness. The dire dispute has had a negative effect on Israel's international standing, its relations with the United States, its ties with Diaspora Jewry, the Israeli economy, and its deterrence. (For more on the sociopolitical crisis in Israel see page 83).

The internal crisis is roiling at a time when processes are taking place in external arenas that challenge Israel's security and the resilience of the Jewish people. Responding to these threats requires solidarity and the focused use of resources, but these are being eroded by the internal crisis. At the same time, Israel has been negatively impacted by the global economic slow-down and by doubts over the stability of its judicial system and society, which could push away investors, and which have already led to dire warnings by senior economic figures around the world, including financial rating companies.

Alongside an internal crisis that could lead to long-term strategic damage, this year Israel has been handed an opportunity for a historic turnaround in its regional status in the potential signing of a peace agreement

with Saudi Arabia. The agreement, which the United States is working to advance, will showcase Israel's acceptance in a region that had denied its very existence and will create legitimacy for other Arab and Muslim countries to normalize relations with the Jewish state. The political, economic, and security opportunities that would result from a deal are significant. America standing firmly behind Saudi Arabia (Riyadh is demanding a defense agreement with the United States as part of the deal) will contribute to Iran's isolation and help reverse the phenomenon in which Washington sees the Middle East as less important to its interests. It would also help fill the strategic vacuum that has enabled elements unsympathetic to Israel to gain a foothold in the region. The cooperation required between Washington and Jerusalem (including preparations to circumvent Iranian attempts to sabotage the agreement) will mark a positive turnaround in relations between the countries, which have experienced some grating tensions in recent months. (Tehran recently expressed its concern about an Israeli-Saudi agreement, with Iran's Foreign Ministry saying that the agreement would "harm peace and stability in the region.") It is noteworthy that in view of the Saudi demands, security sources in Israel have expressed concern that Israel's qualitative military edge vis-à-vis the Arab states could be weakened, and that the civil nuclear project the Saudis are demanding as part of the deal could be converted into a military program in the future and may lead

other countries in the region to seek nuclear power.

In the international arena we are seeing an escalation of the great power rivalry, the war in Ukraine continues unabated, and the possibility of a global economic crisis continues to cast its shadow. The deeper the conflict between the powers becomes, the more complex it is for Israel to maneuver in its relations with them. To these challenges, we must add questions about the strength of the strategic triangle: Jerusalem-Washington-American Jewry, and about American policy in areas that impact Israel's resilience. The government's conduct and the constitutional crisis that has ensued are eroding Israeli international standing. Different countries are adopting various measures to express their discomfort with events in Israel and have taken a position on the country's internal disputes. The fact that U.S. President Joe Biden has yet to extend the traditional invitation for a White House visit to an elected Israeli prime minister is one glaring example.

In the regional arena, we can see a trend in which veteran rivals are adopting pragmatic approaches, and at the same time Iran is continuing to advance its nuclear weapons project and its efforts to improve its geopolitical standing. Israel meanwhile is forced to continue allocating resources for dealing with Palestinian terrorism, as we saw with the launch of Operation Shield and Arrow against Islamic Jihad (May 2023) and

Operation Bayit Vagan against the terrorist infrastructure in Jenin (July 2023).

Despite these clouds, we should emphasize that Israel is still perceived as a regional power with a strong economy (Intel is expected to invest \$25 billion in setting up a new facility in Kiryat Gat), and its neighbors seek to collaborate with it. The perception is that the declining regional involvement of the U.S. emphasizes Israel's importance as a country that can be relied on and which has the potential to offer new opportunities, inter alia because Washington increasingly sees Israel as an ally capable of protecting American interests in the region. The Abraham Accords, even though they have cooled somewhat, remain stable, and this shows that the Arab states have an interest in maintaining their ties with Israel.

The Abraham Accords countries are purchasing around a quarter of Israeli defense exports, which have increased by some 50% in the past three years and totaled \$12.5 billion in 2022. Israel's gas fields continue to have a positive economic impact and enable it to fulfil a key role in the Middle East Gas Forum, contribute to deepening strategic ties with Greece and Cyprus, and has an anchoring effect on its peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan. Israel has also seen new horizons for gas exports to Europe in view of its understanding that it cannot rely on gas imports from Russia. (In June 2023, Israel officially announced the discovery of a new offshore gas field, Katlan.)

Israel and the great power rivalry

The global arena is characterized by growing great power competition, which has strategic implications for Israel. The West, led by the United States, sees itself as standing up for a liberal-democratic world order. Autocratic rivals, led by China and Russia, claim that Western rhetoric is a guise for colonialism and offer the countries of the world liberation from what they claim to be the West's cynical exploitation. China portrays itself as proof that refutes the West's claim that economic prosperity requires a liberal regime, and has undertaken a series of global economic, security, and cultural initiatives. The war in Ukraine, tensions over Taiwan's sovereignty, continued development of Iran's nuclear program, and other areas of contention are bringing the great power rivalry back to Cold War levels and raise fears of deterioration into hot conflict.

Less than a year ago, President Biden called the threat of nuclear doomsday the most acute since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. "He [Putin] is not joking when he talks about potential use of tactical nuclear weapons or biological or chemical weapons." After Russia placed nuclear warheads in Belarus, Biden repeated his warning (June 2023). Europe is currently digesting the fact that it must devote more resources to its security and free itself from its energy dependence on Russia. These tensions have led to further

expansion of NATO. Finland and Sweden, which in the past had decided not to join NATO so as not to outrage Russia, are now joining the organization.

Growing global tensions are expressed in a wide range of areas, from Russia's decision to suspend its participation in the New START treaty that caps the number of intercontinental-range nuclear weapons that Russia and the U.S. can deploy (February 2023), through worsening of the trade war between the powers to the U.S. decision to supply cluster bombs to Ukraine. This great

The great power competition undermines the world's ability to deal with challenges that require broad mobilization

power competition undermines the world's ability to deal with challenges that require broad mobilization: climate change and droughts, nuclear proliferation, regulation of the safe use of Artificial Intelligence, and more.

Israel, which is highly dependent on the United States, has no real possibility of maneuvering between the powers in the way that countries such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and others do through influencing the policy of one great power by "threatening" to move closer to a rival power. The United States is putting pressure on Israel to moderate China's involvement in building infrastructure in the country and to limit the transfer of Israeli technologies to Beijing. In fact, this year, as in previous years, Israel

faces a strategic dilemma: What leeway does it have to maintain the support of the U.S. while not harming the benefit it derives from its relations with Washington's rivals.

There is no end in sight to the war in Ukraine, a central arena in which these complexities play out. The Ukrainians complain that Israel has not agreed to supply it with air defense systems and has not allowed the U.S. to transfer its Israeli-made Iron Dome batteries to the country. Washington is pressuring Israel to supply armaments to Kyiv, but at the same time Moscow is warning Israel not to acquiesce to this demand. On top of this strategic dilemma, there are also moral deliberations: How much weight should Israel's foreign policy give to moral considerations when there is a security or economic price to be paid.

The United States – The basic strategic documents published at the end of 2022 by the White House and the Pentagon put China at the focus of American foreign policy. Russia is given a lower threat ranking, while the Middle East no longer occupies the place of importance it held in the past. The U.S. wishes to draw down its level of involvement in the Middle East and to replace it with a reliance on countries in the region to maintain stability. While American spokespeople declare the U.S. commitment to the countries of the region, these countries are far from being convinced.

The U.S. maintains a large military force in the Middle East (35,000 troops) but is hesitant to deploy that force even when its soldiers

are targeted by hostile actors. Russian and China, which demonstrate determination in their quest for greater involvement in shaping the world order, sense the strategic vacuum left by the United States. Russia is not loosening its grip on Syria, and China's actions go far beyond the economic activity that characterized its modus operandi in the region in the past. In July 2022, CENTCOM Commander General Michael E. Kurilla defined the Middle East as "the region at the center of America's strategic competition with Russia and China." An open question is to what extent this diagnosis will lead to increased American involvement in the region, and whether Israel has the ability to influence the U.S. in this direction. Declining U.S. involvement in the Middle East does not serve Israel's security interests and erodes its ability to project deterrence.

Russia – Despite the considerable resources required to manage the war in Ukraine and the sanctions imposed by Western countries on Moscow, the Russian economy has not collapsed. Major countries, including China, India, Brazil, and others, continue to trade with Russia and do not comply with the sanctions regime against it. In the long run, Russia may sustain heavy damages as the result of the departure of some 1,000 international companies, loss of markets, brain drain, severe damage to the prestige of Russian weapons systems, and more. At the moment, however, Moscow appears to have sufficient resources to continue waging the war. In the

Middle East arena, Putin is tightening his relations with Tehran, cooperating with it to evade the sanctions regimes against both countries, and purchasing its drones.

China – China's leader, Xi Jinping, has secured a third term as president (March 2023) and continues to lead a vigorous foreign policy that challenges the United States and the world order shaped by the West. China's military power is constantly growing, and it is developing the ability to wage war in space and in cyberspace. China is not deterred from operating global intelligence operations, as evidenced by the downing of a Chinese spy balloon over U.S. skies (February 2023). In terms of GDP, China is the second largest economy in the world. It imposes its will on Hong Kong, provokes its neighbors in the South and East China Seas, threatens Taiwan, violates human rights, and mistreats its Muslim minority.

China is also steadily consolidating its penetration into the Middle East, which constitutes a developing market for its products, a transit station for European markets, and above all – an energy source (Saudi Arabia is the source of a fifth of China's oil and gas imports). More than 20 Arab countries are part of China's Belt and Road initiative. Over the past decade, Beijing has signed significant strategic agreements and

Declining U.S. involvement in the Middle East does not serve Israel's security interests

contracts with most of them for infrastructure construction and energy supply. China is the top trading partner of the Arab countries (a combined trade volume of \$330 billion) and is also the largest foreign investor in the Middle East. Its regional involvement climbed to new heights over the past year when it helped Saudi Arabia and Iran to reach an agreement on the resumption diplomatic relations (March 2023). In April 2023, it offered to mediate in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well.

The rivalry with the United States motivates Beijing to strengthen its ties with Iran and Russia and to extricate them from the sanctions imposed on them by the West. China does not want to see a Russian defeat in Ukraine, which would strengthen the standing of the United States, and of course it does not want to see a pro-Western leader take Putin's seat in the Kremlin.

The Iranian threat

The severe sanctions, the difficult economic situation, and covert activities, some of which are attributed to Israel, have not halted the progress of the nuclear project. Despite the significant achievements of the "war between the wars," Iran is persisting in its efforts to build offensive capabilities on Syrian soil for use against Israel, and it continues to supply Hezbollah with advanced weaponry. Iran continues to employ regional subversion and to act through local proxy militias

against the American presence in the region. Iran further boasts that it has established armies under its authority throughout the region: Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, militias in Iraq and Syria, and Palestinian organizations sympathetic to Tehran (especially Palestinian Islamic Jihad). Indeed, over the past year Iran has registered several achievements: its continued progress toward obtaining nuclear weapons, strengthening relations with Russia and China, and, with the help of these two countries, Tehran is finding ways to circumvent the sanctions imposed on it (Iran supplied Russia with hundreds of UAVs and in return was promised military aid, including Sukhoi-35 fighter jets and possibly S-400 air defense systems; when it comes to China, Iran sells oil to Beijing, with sales tripling over the past three years). A joint statement by the leaders of Iran and China also called for Israel to "place its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards;" At the same time, Iran's relations with Arab countries, are thawing while it continues to cultivate a regional infrastructure directed against Israel and to plan attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets around the world. Defense Minister Yoav Gallant revealed (July 2023) that over the past year-and-a-half, Israel has foiled around 50 such attempted Iranian attacks.

Tehran develops and operates advanced centrifuges and enriches uranium to 60% (nuclear weapons require 90% enrichment). IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi stated (May

2023) that over the past year, Iran has made more progress in enriching uranium than ever before. Gallant said that Iran has accumulated enough fissile material to produce five nuclear bombs (May 2023). According to intelligence assessments, if Iran makes the political decision to go ahead, it will take it about two weeks to enrich the uranium it has accumulated to military grade. Opinions differ on how long it would take Iran to build a detonation mechanism for a bomb and adapt it to the warhead of a ballistic missile. Although Israel estimates that it will take Iran about two years, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley told Congress (March 2023) that Iran would need only “several months.” In this context, one cannot ignore Iran’s announcement (May 2023) that it had conducted a successful test launch of a ballistic missile capable of reaching a range of 2,000 kilometers.

Contrary to Israeli hopes, the United States is not leading an initiative aimed at winning the confrontation with Iran but aims instead to contain it. Increasingly, it seems that the United States is striving for a less-for-less agreement, under which Iran will not enrich uranium beyond 60%, will halt installation of advanced centrifuges, and will cooperate with the IAEA. In return, billions of dollars in Iranian assets will be unfrozen, and sanctions against it will not be tightened. Israel has stated that if such agreements are reached, they would not obligate Israel and it would continue to act against Iran’s nuclear program.

In that vein, preparing for a possible attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities is a top IDF priority. According to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (June 2023), the attempt to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons through diplomacy has failed: “I don’t think that diplomacy by itself will work. I think diplomacy can only work if it’s coupled with a credible military threat or the willingness to apply the military option if deterrence fails.”

Israel believes that a limited agreement would not prevent Iran from secretly advancing toward the manufacture of nuclear weapons, from fortifying nuclear sites, developing ballistic missiles; nor would it curb its regional subversion, and would instead provide it with considerable resources to step up its aggression. A limited agreement would likely exacerbate the tension between Jerusalem and Washington. The U.S. is reluctant to be dragged into a military confrontation with Iran, even though Washington emphatically reiterates its absolute commitment to Israel’s security, boasts of its extensive military exercises in the region in cooperation with Israel, and says that it will not allow Iran to possess nuclear weapons.

National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan declared (May 2023) that Washington recognizes Israel’s right to freedom of action vis-à-vis Iran. It seems that both countries agree that Iran must be prevented from enriching uranium to the 90% level, and that at this stage Iran is deterred from taking this step. However, President Biden’s remarked

(July 2022) that he would use force as a “last resort” leave open a critical question as this phrase is subject to different interpretations.

The Middle East: Threats and opportunities

Over the past year, two contradictory trends in the Middle East have challenged Israel. On one hand, pragmatic compromise processes between countries with a tradition of bitter and long-standing rivalry; on the other hand, the continued force buildup of Iran, which is approaching nuclear threshold state status. The countries of the region are led in part by young and ambitious leaders who seek to lead their nations to prosperity and modernization and understand that violent confrontations will sabotage their plans. Such confrontations also expose poor Arab countries to the risk of instability.

The countries of the region feel that they cannot rely on the United State and are working to ensure their security through new regional alliances and by maneuvering skillfully between superpowers. Regional moves toward reconciliation are aimed at achieving stability even if ancient rivalries are not erased, and of course they do not provide a response to all the flashpoints of violence

in the region (in Sudan, this year brought the eruption of an internal “war-of-the-generals” that has worsened the human tragedy in a country that already suffers from poverty and malnutrition). Saudi Arabia, which seeks an end to the war in Yemen, has reached an understanding with Iran; Syrian President Bashar Assad has been welcomed back into the Arab League; Egypt has improved relations with Tehran; and Ankara and Qatar have reconciled with the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Contrary to the regional trend of thawing ties, Israel remains in danger of deteriorating into a violent confrontation with Iran, Hezbollah, Syria, and the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. The level of volatility is evidenced by Operation Shield and Arrow (May 2023), in which Israel killed senior Islamic Jihad figures in Gaza. Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar, who reported (April 2023) that since the beginning of the year his organization had thwarted more than 200 significant attacks, said: “We are in a challenging time. Both at home and abroad. The source is Iranian, Shi’ite, Hamas, Jihadi, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Salafi and many other local phenomena.” A Hezbollah attack near Megiddo (March 2023) was perceived as an escalation in Iranian and Hezbollah activity deep inside Israel. The IDF’s Intelligence Directorate published an assessment (April 2023) predicting an increased likelihood of war in light of rising tensions with Iran and the Palestinians, the erosion in the image

of Israel's power due to the domestic crisis, and the perceived U.S. abandonment of the region. Senior defense officials have warned the government and the Knesset that Israel's enemies identify the internal crisis as a "historic weak point," and Air Force Commander Maj. Gen. Tomer Bar warned (July 2023), "It is possible that at a time like this, they will try to test our boundaries, our cohesion, and our vigilance."

As noted, the regional arena poses threats, but also opportunities. Declining U.S. involvement and fatigue vis-à-vis the Palestinian issue are pushing the Arab and Muslim world to cooperate with Israel. Azerbaijan, feeling threatened by Iran, opened an embassy in Israel (November 2022) and hosted Israeli President Isaac Herzog (May 2023). Saudi Arabia has allowed overflight of Israeli carriers (February 2023) and the King of Morocco invited Prime Minister Netanyahu to visit following Israel's recognition of his country's sovereignty over Western Sahara (July 2023). Israel continues to export gas to Egypt and Jordan, and overall trade with countries in the region has doubled in the past two years (trade with the UAE increased 14-fold in those two years, reaching \$2.5 billion).

Below follow some other developments in the Middle East that affect Israel's resilience:

Syria – President Bashar Assad's participation in the May 2003 Arab League summit in Saudi Arabia (he had been expelled from it in 2011 due to the civil war in Syria) symbolizes his

add a space between symbolizes and his continued reign – Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Syria (May 2023) was exploited to project the victory of the "Axis of Resistance."

Assad now controls about two-thirds of the country, which Iran uses to train local militias and transfer weapons to Hezbollah in Lebanon. Israel is waging an ongoing battle against this Iranian activity, but the escalation of the great power competition may lead Russia to take decisions that will make it difficult for the

Israeli Air Force to operate in Syrian skies.

The Arab states, most of which supported the rebel forces, have

The Arab states have been forced to accept Assad's victory

been forced to accept Assad's victory. Some of these countries expect economic gains in the event that international resources are directed to the rehabilitation of Syria (\$400 billion is needed), the repatriation of refugees who found sanctuary on their soil (mainly Jordan and Turkey), and the curbing of the spread of captagon (fenethylline), a synthetic amphetamine known as the "poor man's cocaine," which is illicitly manufactured in Syria and in great demand in the region.

Lebanon – The country is facing a major economic collapse. Since the outbreak of the crisis in 2019, the local currency has lost 98% of its value. Lebanon suffers from shortages of food, medicine, fuel, and electricity. Many citizens cannot withdraw their funds from

failing banks, and the government finds it difficult to implement reforms, a precondition for International Monetary Fund (IMF) assistance. Lebanon, in desperate needs of revenue, wants to begin developing its offshore gas fields, and to this end it allowed the U.S. to help reach an agreement with Israel to determine the maritime border between the countries (October 2022).

Hezbollah continues to strengthen its military power and, with Iran's help, is focused on improving the precision of its missile arsenal. Ostensibly, the organization has no interest in another war with Israel, but in a situation where Lebanon is crumbling, an unplanned escalation may occur. The constitutional crisis in Israel contributes to Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah's smugness, and he has repeatedly threatened Israel. Hezbollah staged a well-publicized military exercise in southern Lebanon simulating the occupation of a village inside Israel; its operatives set up tents on the Israeli side of the border at Har Dov (April 2023). In the event of war, Israel will face a trained army with some 140,000 missiles and rockets, some of which are precision missiles. The IDF is preparing for the possibility of a flare-up and is also preparing to deploy ground forces deep in Lebanese territory. In a war exercise, the IDF drilled a scenario in which 1,500 rockets and missiles are fired at Israel each day of a conflict with Hezbollah.

Jordan – The Jordanian economy is faltering and adversely affecting the stability of the regime. From time to time, demonstrations

break out in the country, some of them violent. The more than one million Syrian refugees who fled to Jordan add to the economic burden. The kingdom, which relies on external aid, received \$845 million from the United States last year.

Israel has an interest in Jordan's stability and the countries cooperate in the security and economic fields (Israel supplies Jordan with water and gas). Both fear the kingdom will become a target of Iranian subversion. However, relations remain sensitive to upheavals caused whenever there are rising tensions over the Palestinian issue (more than half of Jordan's population is of Palestinian origin). The weakness of the Palestinian Authority and the approaching end to the era of its long-time President Mahmoud Abbas increase fears that violent succession battles may seep across the river and destabilize the kingdom. Amman also fears that the Israeli government will take advantage of the situation to advance annexation in the West Bank, encourage Palestinians to move to Jordan, and act to realize the vision of "Jordan is Palestine." Jordan is also concerned that the Israeli government's conduct in this context, as well as its attitude toward the Temple Mount issue, will spark political and religious riots in the kingdom.

Saudi Arabia – Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), is determined to lead his country into an era of modernization and prepare it for the time when its oil reserves are depleted. In

this context, he is leading a national identity revolution whose main goal is to strengthen identification with the royal family while pushing out extremist religious clerics. The powers of the religious police have been curbed, women in the kingdom are permitted to drive and work, and cultural life is flourishing. Bin Salman is skeptical of Washington's willingness to come to his country's defense if the time comes. The 2019 Iranian attack on Aramco oil facilities taught him a lesson about Iran's destructive potential and America's hesitancy to act against Tehran. Therefore, he is in no hurry to tie himself to the United States, has not acceded to President Biden's request to increase oil production, and has chosen to coordinate his oil output policy with Moscow. Riyadh also has no intention of damaging its relations with China, which purchases a quarter of Saudi oil production. With China's mediation, Saudi Arabia reached a reconciliation agreement with Iran, hoping it would bring an end to the war in Yemen, after Riyadh despaired of subduing Iranian-allied Houthi rebels in the country.

Despite the reconciliation agreement, Saudi Arabia has no illusions about Iran. It is building a modern army and was ranked fifth in the world in 2022 in military investments. Bin Salman's pragmatic approach raised the possibility that Saudi Arabia would normalize its relations with Israel, and in effect abandon the terms of the Arab peace initiative it had shaped in the past. Saudi Arabia has given the

U.S. a set of demands in return for normalizing relations with Israel. These include formal security guarantees, high-quality weaponry, allowing the Saudis to develop a civil nuclear program, and progress on the Palestinian issue. If the U.S. government wants to accede to these demands, it will need Israel's help to persuade Congress to accept them. Such sensitive coordination may prove problematic in a situation in which Jerusalem's relations with Washington are troubled, and also in light of the composition of the current Israeli government and the difficulties it may have in reaching agreements with Saudi Arabia on the Palestinian issue.

Egypt—The Egyptian economy is in crisis. It has been hurt by the war in Ukraine and by rising oil and grain prices, which in turn contribute to across-the-board price increases (in June 2023, the annual inflation rate was 36.8%). The government provides subsidized bread to 80% of the country's 112 million people, a third of whom live on a budget of less than \$2 a day. Investors are increasingly taking their money out of Egypt, whose economy relies on foreign loans and where half of government revenues are used to repay loans and make interest payments. Egypt's lender countries and financial institutions face an ongoing dilemma: if they stop providing loans, the Egyptian economy could collapse and may lead to waves of migration, civil disobedience, and the overthrow of a regime that cooperates with the West. On the other hand, continued provision of loans without

significant economic reforms (including an end to the army's massive involvement in the economy) perpetuates the corrupt management of the Egyptian economy and disrupts the functioning of an efficient and competitive free market. The Gulf states have despaired of Egypt's conduct and are paring down their donations to the country.

As far as Israel is concerned, Egypt under President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi is an effective partner in security cooperation and plays a

El-Sisi is an effective partner in security cooperation

role in calming the Gaza Strip (including in the last round of conflict against Islamic Jihad in early May 2023).

Turkey – President Erdogan's election victory (May 2023) raises the question of whether he will continue the relatively conciliatory line he took in his foreign policy over the past year. Erdogan modified his conduct against the backdrop of serious domestic challenges: an economic crisis with inflation at around 80%, the reconstruction following the earthquake that claimed the lives of some 50,000 civilians, and the presence of 3.6 million Syrian refugees who place a heavy burden on the country's resources. Erdogan continues to maneuver between the West and Russia. He gave his approval of Finland and Sweden joining NATO after demanding and receiving fitting compensation, including an end to the American embargo on the sale of F-16 aircraft to the Turkish military (the embargo was

imposed after Turkey purchased anti-aircraft systems from Russia).

The fact that President Assad successfully survived the civil war in Syria has led to renewed Turkish demands that the Syrian refugees return to their country. At the same time, the de facto Kurdish autonomy in northern Syria continues to exist and Erdogan regards it as a terrorist threat. Erdogan's conciliatory attitude toward Israel was expressed in his recent invitation to Prime Minister Netanyahu to visit Ankara (July 2023). Trade between Israel and Turkey will likely expand in view of improved ties, but even in a time of diplomatic tensions between the countries trade blossomed (trade stood at \$5.7 billion last year, an increase of 63% in two years).

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The Israeli-Palestinian issue is characterized by many instability factors. Adding to them now is a right-wing Israeli government that seems intent on not presenting a political initiative or a horizon for a solution to the plight of the Palestinians. Government moves and declarations by its ministers in this context have drawn strong criticism in the international arena and raised concerns in various capitals that Israel is proceeding with annexation in Judea and Samaria, contrary to the commitments of previous governments. In the absence of progress toward a political

solution, Israel risks sliding into a bi-national reality that would threaten its Jewish character. This was reflected in the words of Muhammad Dahlan (March 2023), one of the contenders to replace the 88-year-old Mahmoud Abbas as PA president, who said of the two-state solution: “Instead of nurturing illusions that will never be fulfilled, we should start internalizing the notion of one state for two peoples, and demand full rights for the Palestinians.”

The PA is perceived by the Palestinian public as a corrupt and failed government. Accordingly, the PA finds it increasingly difficult to impose its authority over the population, and this year there has been an increase in incidents of violence and lawlessness. Outbreaks of violence on the Temple Mount and a series of terrorist attacks in the past year attest to the escalation potential in the Palestinian arena. Revenge attacks by settlers (primarily a violent riot with severe damage to property in the village of Hawara in February 2023) have exacerbated tensions. While the United States is no longer focusing its efforts on dealing with the Palestinian issue and does not see sufficient ripeness for a permanent settlement, it fears a violent deterioration. This year, other international bodies have promoted several initiatives on the Palestinian front. The UN General Assembly asked the International Court of Justice in the Hague to provide an advisory opinion on the legality of the ongoing Israeli occupation (December 2022). The European Parliament passed

a resolution calling on the International Criminal Court in the Hague to investigate allegations of war crimes committed by Israel in the occupied territories (July 2023). In response to the criticism, and also out of concerns that the territories will deteriorate into chaos, the cabinet passed a resolution (July 2023) according to which “Israel will act to prevent the collapse of the Palestinian Authority.”

In the Gaza Strip, the situation remains dire: lack of infrastructure, water, and electricity shortages, 45% unemployment, and severe poverty. The demonstrations that broke out recently (July 2023), in which slogans were voiced against Hamas leaders, attest to the gravity of the situation. Allowing Palestinian workers into Israel and increasing the quota to 20,000 a day is intended to provide relief and incentive to maintain quiet. Another source of reprieve may be an Israeli decision to approve the development of the Gaza Marine natural gas field, off the shore of Khan Yunis, which could improve the situation of Gaza residents – provided the forecasted revenues of billions of dollars will indeed be directed to serve the pressing needs of the poor masses. Hamas, under Egyptian pressure, generally maintains the ceasefire with Israel and did not participate in the fighting when Israel launched Operation Shield and Arrow against Islamic Jihad (May

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2023). However, Hamas leaders openly incite acts of violence and terrorism in the West Bank, and the organization, which continues to build its power, is cultivating a Lebanese wing under the auspices of Hezbollah.

The Jerusalem-Washington-American Jewry triangle

The current government's performance has not benefited the triangular relationship: Jerusalem – Washington – American Jewry. In recent months, significant disagreements between Jerusalem and the U.S. administration have arisen (constitutional reform, dealing with the Iranian threat, the Palestinian issue, aid to Ukraine). The Israeli government's policies on these and other issues (religion and state, the status of non-orthodox Jewish streams, human rights) has also highlighted trends of alienation from Israel among American Jews. These trends are not new, of course, and they have arisen for a variety of reasons (see Israel-Diaspora Index, p. 105). Most American Jews (some 70%) back the Democratic Party and to varying degrees are critical of the government's moves to change Israel's legal system.

The tension between the countries was clearly reflected in President Biden's sharp criticism of legislation initiated by the Israeli government (the judicial reform), and in the fact that Prime Minister Netanyahu has yet to be invited to the White House. The American president openly supports the Israeli camp

that opposes its government (the U.S. Embassy did not invite Ministers Ben-Gvir and Smotrich to its American Independence Day reception).

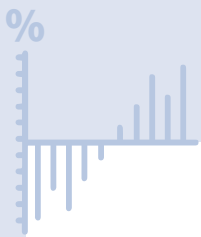
At the same time, Israel's conduct in the West Bank (especially settler attacks on Palestinians) is seen by the American administration as a moral deterioration that goes hand in hand with the misbegotten (in the eyes of the administration) judicial reform package. The language used by administration spokespeople this year often reflected not only the freedom the administration takes to critically intervene in Israel's internal affairs, but also a patronizing approach. For example, U.S. Ambassador Tom Nides said (February 2023): "We're telling the prime minister – as I tell my kids – pump the brakes, slow down, try to get a consensus, bring the parties together."

The Biden administration has sharpened tensions with Israel by criticizing the decisions and actions of the Israeli government over the past year – sometimes bluntly. This is not the place to list all the cases (which were more numerous than in previous years), but two instances that stood out were criticism voiced following the decision to allow a settler presence in Homesh (a community that was evacuated during the 2005 disengagement), and also the American response to Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich's statement following a lethal terrorist attack that "the village of Hawara must be erased" (Smotrich

later clarified that he did not intend a situation in which Jewish settlers would take the law into their own hands, as happened when Jewish settlers rampaged in the village in the wake of a terror attack). In addition to the administration's reservations about the Israeli government, there has also been an erosion in the Democratic Party support for Israel. A March 2023 poll reflected a turnaround: the Palestinians side garnered greater sympathy than the Israelis (49% vs. 38%). There is concern in Israel that the critical trend in the progressive wing of the Democratic Party – still a vocal minority – will penetrate the mainstream. However, it is important to emphasize that alongside the harsh criticism, administration officials continue to reiterate the United States' "unshakeable commitment" to Israel's security. The administration received President Herzog with demonstrable respect, and he received rousing applause in his speech to Congress (July 2023).

Summary

The Israeli government's desire to promote legal reform, without broad consensus, has triggered an unprecedented social crisis. Thus, beyond the external strategic threats to Israel – which we have reviewed on an annual basis – in the past year, a new and significant threat of strategic significance has emerged from within Israeli society. Its immediate effects are already being felt, but its long-term ramifications must also be considered, especially with regard to the cohesion of Israeli society. We believe that Israeli society will know how to unite in times of future security crisis, but the societal fissures may serve as a motivating factor for Israel's enemies to act against it.



Strength of Attachment to Israel and Attitude Toward the Israeli Government

As part of the Voice of the People project, the Jewish People Policy Institute's new platform for tracking public opinion throughout the Jewish world, we looked at the attitudes of North American Jews toward the current Israeli government. In Israel, the current government is in office because a majority of voters elected it and gave it a mandate in the Knesset. In North America, a large majority of Jews who responded to a recent questionnaire expressed concern, for all kinds of reasons, about the composition of the current coalition and government. When we examined the relationship between the strength of attachment of Jews to Israel and their reaction to the coalition, a few interesting findings emerged.

Even among those whose attachment to Israel is strongest ("completely agree"), only a small number expressed explicit satisfaction with the government's composition (slightly more than 10%). They do not appear in the following table because, due to sampling considerations, we included only those items that were supported by more than a fifth of the respondents. As can be seen, more than half of the respondents who "completely agree" (that connection to Israel is important) are concerned about the Israeli government's composition for various reasons that were noted (too right-wing, too religious, anti-democratic, and the like).

However, among the group most strongly attached to Israel ("completely agree"), there is a fairly large subgroup (a fifth) who say that their opinion is unimportant because they "respect the choice of Israelis." Here it should be noted that, in many instances, the strength of attachment to Israel among American Jews is indicative of less-critical views regarding right-wing and center-right Israeli governments.

What do you think about the new Israeli government?

Connection to Israel is important	Israel has a good government	My opinion is not important, because I respect the choice of Israelis	I'm concerned about the government (all reasons)
Completely agree	Fewer than 20%	21%	53%
Agree	Fewer than 20%	Fewer than 20%	80%
Somewhat disagree	Fewer than 20%	Fewer than 20%	89%
Completely disagree	Fewer than 20%	Fewer than 20%	26%

Main points:

- Polarization deepened in Israel this year due to a severe sociopolitical crisis that has yet to be resolved.
- Many Israelis feel that this crisis is the worst in the history of the state.
- Israeli discord echoes within Diaspora Jewry; some Diaspora Jews oppose the actions of the Israeli government.
- The political crisis is having a corrosive effect on the desire of Israelis to continuing living in Israel.
- There is a significant potential that tensions between non-Haredi and Haredi Jews will worsen in the coming year.
- American synagogue activity is returning to pre-pandemic levels.

The sociopolitical polarization in Israel, which has intensified considerably this year, is a highly significant development whose long-term impact on the state and world Jewry cannot, as yet, be foreseen. Assessments of that potential impact span a wide range of possibilities. At the optimistic end, it is regarded as a passing storm, while the more pessimistic view is that the past year's events may herald a real change in Israel's character as a Jewish and democratic state. A large part of this chapter will be devoted to an analysis of these events and their impact on the Jewish people.

This year the Diaspora communities have focused on fighting antisemitism and on trying to understand its implications. An in-depth discussion of this issue can be found in the Integrated Antisemitism Index (p. 95).

Overview of events

In the fall of 2022 elections were held in Israel – the “fifth round” of elections since 2018, when Israel entered a period of political instability; election cycles rapidly succeeded each other and governments rose and fell after brief stints in office, or altogether failed to form. The fall 2022 elections had a decisive outcome: the parties that joined to form a governing coalition enjoy a stable majority of 64 Knesset members. Likud is the cornerstone of the coalition, along with the two Haredi

The coalition’s principal argument: “a need for correction”

(ultra-Orthodox) parties, United Torah Judaism and Shas, and two right-wing parties that joined to form a single list, the Religious Zionism party and Otzma Yehudit.

This is a coalition whose composition is relatively coherent, with an agenda marked by nationalist-right-wing positions in the diplomatic arena (particularly with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as broadly understood), and by traditional religious views regarding religion-state arrangements, the public sphere, education, and other areas.

Although the coalition that emerged generally self-describes as “conservative,” in every practical sense it is a coalition that aimed from the outset to significantly change the character of Israel’s political system and longstanding social arrangements. Among

other things, the coalition aspires to alter the balance of power between the elected authorities (the Knesset, the government) and the courts/ justice system (the attorney general, the legal advisers in government ministries). The coalition also aims to introduce arrangements of far-reaching ideological importance, as with the intention, thus far unrealized, to enact a Basic Law: Torah Study that would enshrine a total exemption from military service for *avrechim* (married yeshiva students), or the intention – (currently abandoned in practical terms but not in principle) to modify the immigration criteria currently embedded in the Law of Return.

The coalition’s principal argument in favor of advancing this agenda is a “need for correction.” On the judicial level, the aim is to rectify a balance of power that became distorted, as the coalition sees it, through an ongoing and cumulative process of High Court adjudication and the conferral of excess power to the legal advisers. The claim is that these measures eroded the government’s and the Knesset’s ability to realize the will of the electorate. On the social level, the aim is to give greater power to population groups that (again per the coalition’s view) have been excluded from the centers of power and governance – the courts, the universities, the media, the business world, and so forth. All of the measures undertaken by the coalition can, in effect, be seen as a package whose fundamental purpose is to rearrange the

power balance of Israeli public life to the advantage of the sectors that won a Knesset majority (to grossly generalize: the political right, residents of the periphery, Mizrahim, Haredim, religious, settlers, people without academic degrees, Masortim), and to erode the power of those sectors that many coalition supporters identify as “hegemonic” (to grossly generalize: residents of Israel’s central cities, academic degree holders, Ashkenazim, the secular, the political center and left).

The elected coalition’s intention of making major changes in certain areas of life became evident just a short time after the coalition formed, and rapidly led to a crisis that large swaths of the public, as well as a majority of those opposed to the new government, are calling “the most severe in the history of the state.” The main catalyst for the crisis was the unveiling of a comprehensive plan to reform the judicial system (a plan its opponents refer to as a “judicial coup”), which includes the cancellation of current arrangements pertaining to the selection process for Supreme Court justices, judicial review, the authority of legal advisers, and more. This is not the place for a comprehensive overview of the proposals, the reasoning behind them, or the arguments mounted against them. We will merely note that the proposals shook the Israeli public and caused a crisis to emerge, to which additional layers of meaning were later added. A broad front of organizations and activists coalesced in opposition to

the reform proposals, and a large protest movement took to the streets in an attempt to block the proposals.

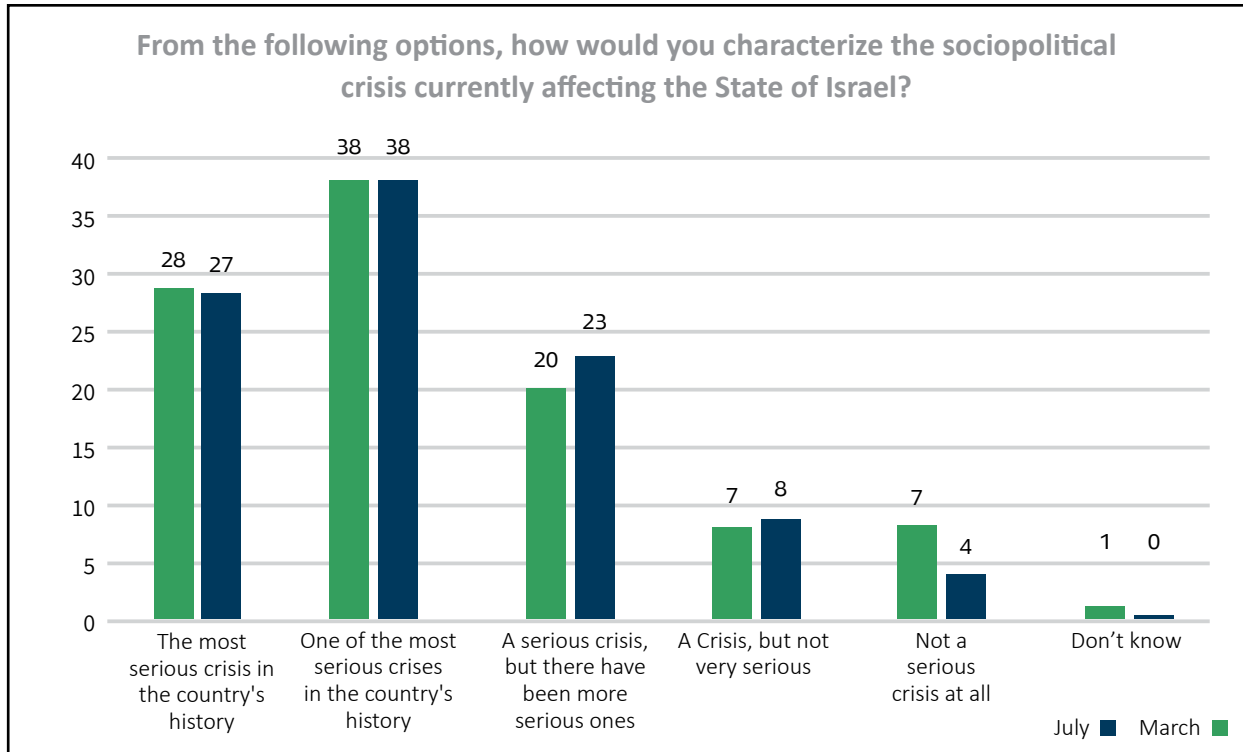
The first “peak” of the crisis, which was followed by a temporary lull, came in March, after Prime Minister Netanyahu announced the dismissal (later rescinded) of Defense Minister Yoav Galant. Galant had warned that the protest movement’s expansion – such as warnings from reserve soldiers, including IAF pilots, that they would not report for their voluntary reserve duty if the judicial reform proposals were passed by the Knesset – could harm Israel’s security. Immediately upon the announcement of his dismissal, hundreds of thousands of Israelis took to the streets, blocking major thoroughfares. The next day, the Histadrut, Israel’s national labor union, also announced that it would call a strike if the dismissal and the legislation were not halted. Prime Minister Netanyahu announced a suspension of the reform effort, and representatives of the coalition and opposition parties began a round of talks under the auspices of the President’s House (Beit HaNassi), in an attempt to reach an agreement on reforms that would be acceptable to both sides.

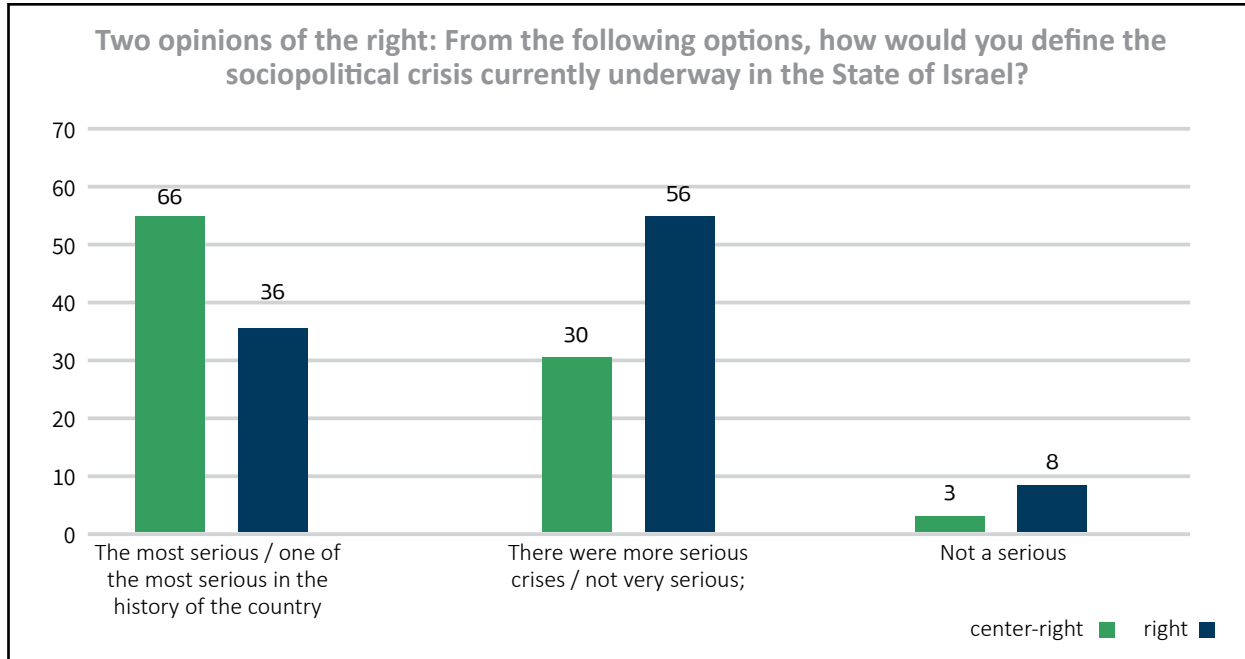
These compromise talks did not yield the desired outcome and were terminated due to a crisis of confidence (after the coalition refrained from choosing a representative to the Judicial Selection Committee). At the same time, unilateral efforts got underway to advance elements of the original reform plan.

The first of these was the revocation of the reasonableness standard that enables the courts to assess the reasoning of decision-makers. These measures sharpened the tone and deepened the intensity of the anti-government demonstrations (which had not stopped at any point), and led to renewed threats of “civil disobedience,” expressed in a variety of ways. In turn, the government also sharpened its tone against the protesters, demanding that law enforcement authorities take a heavier hand toward those who violated the law by blocking roads, disturbing the order at the airport, calling for service refusal, and other acts.

Toward the end of July, just before the Knesset adjourned for recess, the coalition majority in the Knesset passed the law revoking the reasonableness standard. The immediate reactions to this were severe: a not-inconsiderable number of reserve soldiers (the exact number is unknown to the public, and also depends on who is counted, and when the counting is done) announced their intention to not report for duty, and credit rating agencies and financial institutions of various kinds around the world warned against investing in Israel. Petitions were filed with the Supreme Court to repeal the law.

Israel's Worst Crisis, March 2023 versus July 2023 (in percentages)





The background to the events, and their meaning

In Israel, it is widely assumed that the demonstrations against the judicial reform, and the crisis that developed over the reform, are taking place against the background of weighty matters that go far beyond any dispute over the meaning of this or that clause of a given law. According to this view, the present situation reflects a principled ideological struggle between groups whose “visions” for Israel differ – even if, on many practical matters pertaining to policy, the groups do not strongly disagree. This is a struggle involving “identity groups” with certain general characteristics that are trying to anchor their values and their place in

society with respect to identity groups of a different profile and character. All of this is happening in a dynamic demographic reality that is strengthening the traditional religious faction vis-à-vis the secular-traditionalist faction, and in an era when blunt, strident, and aggressive discourse yields evident political gain, and when trust in state institutions and the national common good is eroding.

Any firm representation of the various groups’ motivations and of the reasoning behind the arrangements they wish to establish in Israel will immediately be suspected of reflecting identification with one of the sides in the dispute. As noted, the coalition and its supporters complain that the decisive power in Israel does not lie with the “public,” as it ought to in a democratic country. Instead,

they maintain, it is held by “elites” of various kinds, in the economic and political spheres, in academia, in the nation’s cultural institutions, and the like. According to this argument, all the government is trying to do is to rearrange the mechanisms of government so that the will of the majority that won the elections can be realized. Those who oppose the government’s measures argue that the government wants to arrogate to itself unbridled power so that it can silence criticism, erode the rights of minority groups, and, later, transform Israel’s liberal-democratic character and turn it into a country whose regime is conservative-authoritarian.

The leadership underestimated the intensity of the opposition

Both sides accuse their adversaries of concealing their “true”

motives. The coalition supporters claim that the reform’s opponents want to achieve their real goal – the government’s dissolution – because they do not accept the outcome of the elections. The opposition maintains that the government’s declared goal of correcting the balance of power merely camouflages its desire to establish an undemocratic regime in Israel, or even to enable Prime Minister Netanyahu to avoid conviction in the legal proceedings underway against him. Each side evinces low levels of trust in the other side’s good intentions, and high degrees of willingness to attribute malicious intent to the opposing camp. This fuels a highly incendiary discourse hinting at violence

repressed, semi-repressed, or on the verge of eruption.

Of course, an alternative and far less troubling description of the current situation can be offered. According to this alternative view, the government entered into a less-than-perfectly-planned process from which Israel is now having trouble extricating itself. Due to various political reasons – i.e., a system that gives significant influence to minority groups – the leadership underestimated the intensity of the opposition its actions would spark, found itself advancing an agenda that the populace could not tolerate, and fell into a political vortex from which it could not escape without seeming to have capitulated to opposition pressure (bolstered by threats from the military echelon the government regards as illegitimate and fundamentally antidemocratic). This kind of “swept-into-a-vortex” framing rests on an assumption, with which some scholars concur, that Israelis are not, fundamentally, deeply divided, and that on most of the important issues there is a broad consensus spanning the farthest reaches of the center-right to the farthest reaches of the center-left. Israelis (Jews) who fall within these political categories largely agree on the implications of the Israeli-Arab conflict, on the need for a compromise arrangement on matters of religion and state, on the need to develop the country economically, on the aspiration, in principle, to an equal sharing of the burden, and much more.

There is a considerable body of evidence that

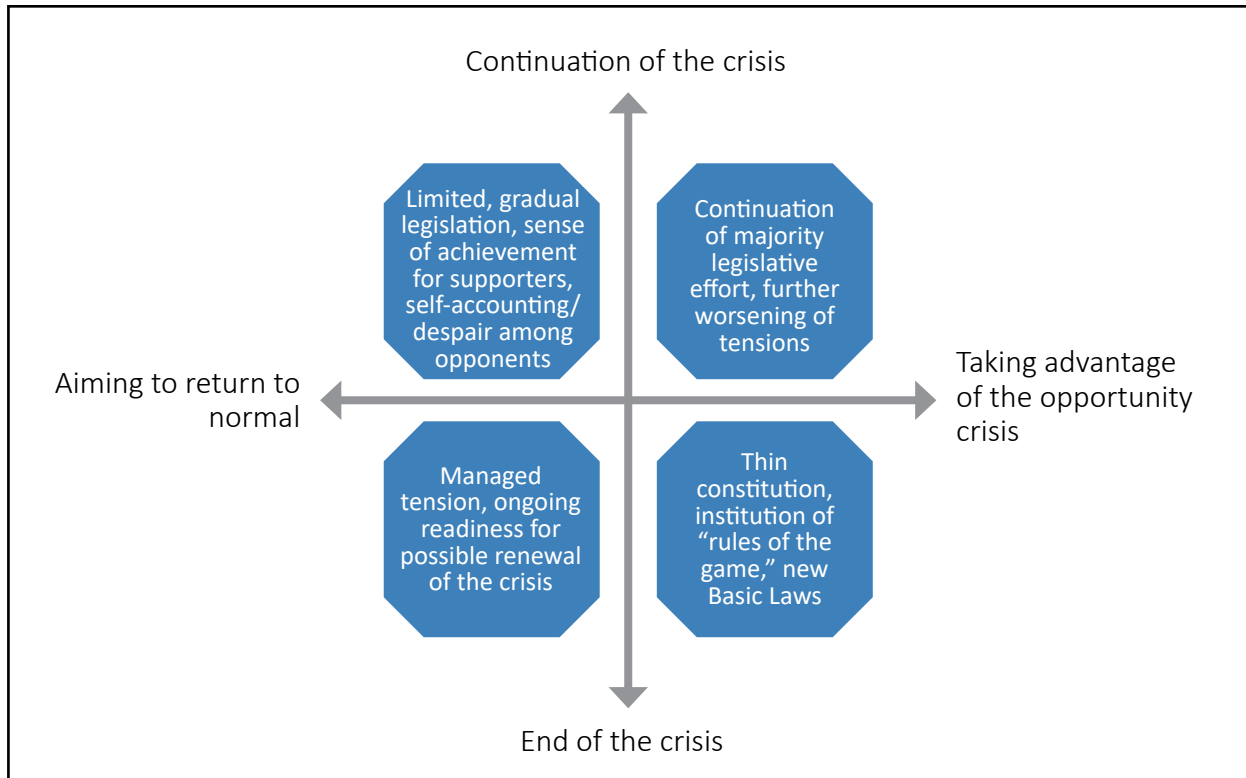
factually supports this alternative narrative of the past year, in addition to opinion polls from which data on areas of broad Israeli consensus can be extracted. One piece of evidence is the proven ability of groups of jurists and intellectuals of differing views to reach reasonable agreements about necessary and appropriate changes to the legal-political balance of power. In this narrative, it is not Israeli society that entered a crisis state, but rather the Israeli political system that is in crisis. And not only that, but the political system is drawing Israeli society as a whole after it, even though the crisis actually revolves around something in which Israeli society has no interest, certainly not at the high social price now being exacted.

One way or another, the past few months of unrest have intensified social polarization, reflected both in opinion polls and in actions on the ground. Since the start of the crisis there have been threatened public boycotts of businesses due to their owners' political views (or their actions, such as strikes or participation in demonstrations), numerous reports of boycotting at individual encounters between Israelis (such as refusing to enter taxis whose drivers support the reform), and documented threats of violence, violent incidents, and heated verbal exchanges in the public space.

As noted, at the time of this writing (beginning of August 2023), the crisis has not been resolved; all that could be done was to sketch possible scenarios for its continuation

and its impact on Israel's future. The matrix presented here describes four general scenarios along two axes. One relates to the immediate choice faced by the coalition: whether to take advantage of the current political opportunity (a broad coalition) and continue advancing legislation that would prolong the crisis, or to try to bring the crisis to an end (i.e., halt the legislative effort). The other axis relates to what might happen in the aftermath of whichever choice the government makes. One possibility is a return to normal but with explosive potential, whether due to fear of a renewed legislative effort and protests, or a sense of despair and loss of trust on the losing side. The other possibility is an attempt to grasp the crisis by the tail – to promote a change in constitutional arrangements that would prevent similar crises in the future (this possibility is being advanced by, among others, Professor Yedidia Stern, President of the Jewish People Policy Institute).

A change in constitutional arrangements would prevent similar crises in the future



World Jewry and the crisis

The basic, self-evident preference of Diaspora Jews is for Israel to function as a cohesive society. When Israel is divided, the discord also affects Jews in other places, who typically react in one of three ways: 1) Distancing and indifference, out of a sense that the dispute is not theirs, that they have no right to intervene in it, or that engagement with a divided Israel does not contribute to their everyday peace of mind; 2) Choosing and supporting one of the competing views in Israel, i.e., some will side with the government and others with the government's critics. The breakdown will usually be in accordance with religious

and political identification (politically conservative and Orthodox Jews will support the government's position at much higher levels than Jews of other affiliations); and 3) Taking a critical stance toward Israeli society as a whole, with a tendency to see the intra-Israeli controversy as proof that something is fundamentally wrong with Israeli society, the Israeli political system, the Israeli ethos, and so forth.

These three responses have also been observed over the past few months. In many cases they were typical reactions for the various Jewish subgroups, quite similar to their reactions in earlier instances of intra-

Israeli discord. However, this year there were also reactions indicative of a pattern that has not been seen for several decades: real anxiety for Israel's future, along with greater doubt regarding the country's ability to cope with its challenges and to serve as a flourishing center for the Jewish people for generations to come.

Demographic growth, military strength, economic prosperity, and cultural development have made Israel the Jewish people's strongest community. Extensive empirical data attest to this, as do JPPI studies. Israeli Jews in particular, but also a great many non-Israeli Jews, agree that "Israel is the center of the Jewish people." But even those for whom attachment to Israel is not a major identity element know that Israel has organizational strength beyond that of any other community, by virtue of being a successful sovereign political entity. Along with the inherent difficulties of running a state – maintaining and defending it – Israel enjoys a relative cultural cohesion that spares it many challenges that Diaspora Jews have to face – such as the difficulty of sustaining a communal identity in a universalist world, eroding attachment to a religious community in a world that is growing more secular, or the change in consciousness that arises from increased involvement with general society.

Many of these advantages that Israel enjoys in its relations with Diaspora Jewry have been called into question this year. Many Israelis have expressed doubts (in articles,

interviews, and surveys) about Israel's future as a democratic state. Israeli cultural cohesion is being sorely tested by polarization. Diaspora Jews encounter two dilemmas with regard to the crisis in Israel: 1) Is it still possible to embrace a policy that makes Israel the cornerstone of Jewish identity, Jewish peoplehood, and Jewish identification; and 2) Do Diaspora Jews have the right, or the ability, to influence what is happening in Israel so as to ensure an outcome that leaves intact Israel's status as the Jewish people's core sovereign entity?

Politically, there is no question that most Diaspora Jews identify with opponents of the current government and are protesting the judicial reform. A March 2023 survey of American Jews found that most of them consider "the future of democracy" to be one of the two major issues determining their political stance.

An overwhelming majority (69%) of them view the Democratic Party in the U.S. as a better protector of democracy than the Republican Party. A similar majority (62%, with a composition almost completely overlapping that of the previous question) express a lack of confidence in Israel's sitting prime minister. A nearly identical majority (61%) said that the measures proposed by the government (in March, when the envisioned reforms were broader in scope) would weaken Israeli democracy. The exceptions in this case were Republican voters (a quarter of whom feel that the measures would weaken

Israeli democracy) and Orthodox Jews (two-thirds of whom feel that the measures would strengthen Israeli democracy).

In other words, the attitudes of American Jews regarding the proposed Israeli judicial reform reflect the views of Israeli Jews. The main existing gap stems from differences in population composition: a large majority of American Jews are non-Orthodox and vote for a party located within the left-center space. Accordingly, most American Jews prioritize the “future of democracy” as the deciding issue and feel that the measures taken by the Israeli government will “weaken democracy.” This reflection of Israeli views is transforming Israel from a unifying symbol into a point of controversy for American Jewry. And as discord in Israel intensifies, so will it intensify among Diaspora Jews as well.

Israelis in search of a passport

Israel’s status as a vibrant center of Jewish life solidified once it became clear that the country’s demographic weight within the Jewish people was rising and that Israel is a magnet for Jews. In recent decades, there has been a steady positive migration pattern in Israel (the number of arrivals exceeds the number of departures), and this is evidence of economic and cultural strength. Such trends naturally do not change within a short period of time (except in cases of sudden

catastrophe), but this year there were some worrying indications that the sociopolitical polarization has caused a significant number of Israelis to seriously consider whether they want to continue living in Israel.

Data collection on the movement of Israelis out of Israel and back to it is inherently difficult, not only this year but for all years. However, a few developments observed this year warrant attention: growing social-media discussion of options for leaving the country or “relocating,” including groups organized for that purpose in the wake of the social crisis (in July the director-general of the Health Ministry held a discussion with a “relocation” group of around a thousand physicians); a proliferation of articles and items in the press and on television about Israelis who have left or are leaving Israel (a phenomenon that either describes or creates a certain “atmosphere,” while attesting to a negative trend in both cases); evidence of a rising number of applications by Israelis for foreign passports; the creation of additional options for obtaining foreign citizenship (German and Austrian); data indicating that many Israelis are “thinking” about the possibility of leaving Israel.

A survey conducted in March found that nearly a third of Israeli Jews “have considered leaving or recommending to their children that they leave” Israel; 6% of them have also “taken action along those lines.” A survey conducted in July also found that a third of Israeli citizens “are considering

leaving the country.” Of course, there is a big difference between statements such as “I’m considering” and taking actual steps to leave Israel. Also, as noted, data on who is leaving now will not be clearly and officially tabulated for some time. Even so, the recent survey findings point to a changing trend, at least regarding questions of this kind. A 2007 survey, for instance, looked at preferences regarding residence in Israel or elsewhere, and found that 13% would prefer to relocate. A 2018 survey on the same topic yielded similar findings. The wording of the questions is not identical, and a comparison of those who say they would “prefer to relocate” and those who say they are “considering relocation” would not be precise. Nevertheless, an increase in talk of relocating, especially among highly educated and high-income populations, does not attest to social resilience or cohesion.

The feasibility of leaving Israel – i.e., whether and how many Israelis can seriously consider moving to other countries – is, of course, another key to understanding the trend. Precise data are not published on the share of foreign-passport holders within the entire Israeli population (and it is unclear whether, or how, such data might be maintained by the state institutions themselves). Various unofficial estimates published in the past have placed the number of Israelis with foreign passports between half a million and one and a half million. But two surveys conducted recently yielded quite similar findings, and this makes it possible to estimate the share of

foreign-passport holders among Israeli Jews as one-fifth. An Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) survey put the share at nearly 20%, versus 23% in a JPPI survey (July 2022). Both surveys indicate that 60% of Israel’s Jewish citizens have no foreign passports and are uninterested, or not engaged, in efforts to obtain them. Six percent have acted to obtain a foreign passport and are in the process of doing so, half of them before the most recent elections and half of them after. According to the JPPI survey, another tenth of this population has thought about the possibility but not taken action (the IDI survey puts the share at 16%).

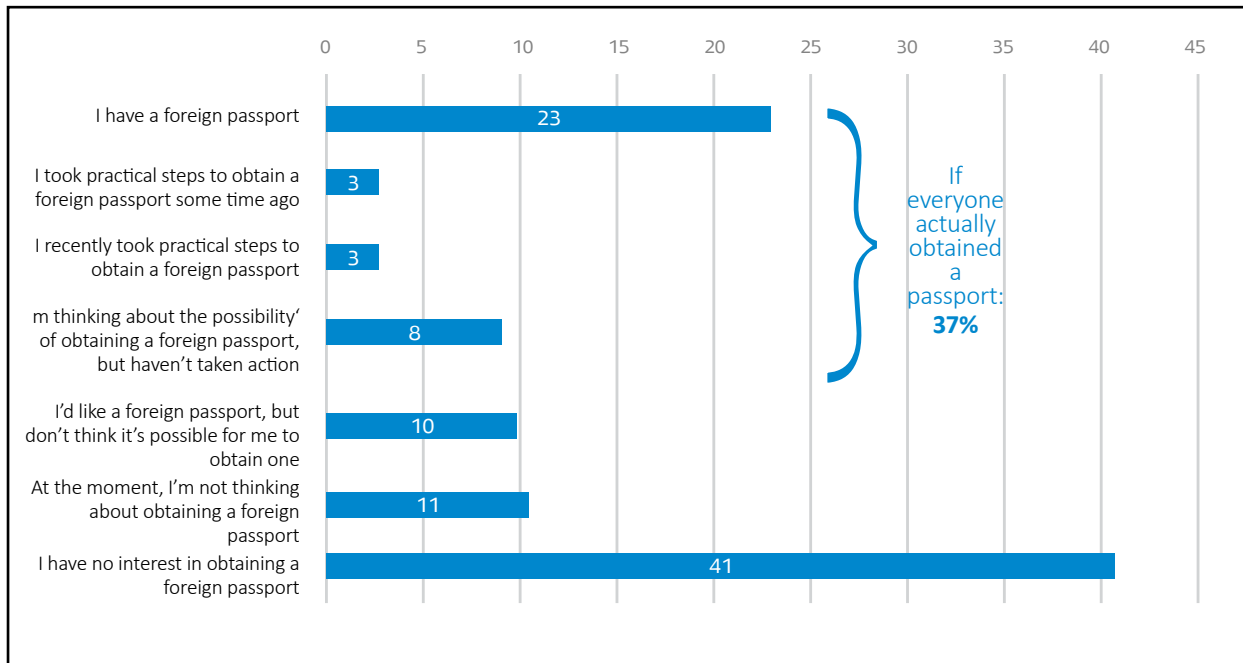
Combined, the data indicate that about a third of all Israelis hold foreign passports, are working to obtain foreign passports, or are thinking about doing so. These findings, of course, vary somewhat between population groups, though not always significantly. The decision to start the process of obtaining a foreign passport after the announcement of judicial reform efforts has an especially high incidence among the center-left (12%). And again, one must carefully distinguish between several stages, each of which has a different meaning. A statement such as “I’m considering” is not the same as “I’ve started the process,” nor does starting the process,

About a third of Israelis hold foreign passports, are working to obtain one, or are thinking about doing so.

or even the fact of having obtained a foreign passport, necessarily denote an intention of leaving, but rather a desire to ensure that the option exists if and when there is such

an intention. Nevertheless, it does seem appropriate this year to warn of a trend that could have serious consequences for Israeli society – its strength and its cohesion.

Israel's Worst Crisis, February 2023 versus July 2023 (in percentages)



A “Haredi” Knesset session

Looking ahead to the coming months, Israel is entering a period with the potential to deepen already-serious tensions between the Haredi public and the non-Haredi public. The Haredi parties are important partners in the coalition, and are therefore regarded by the government's critics as directly responsible for the sociopolitical crisis that is roiling Israel. However, for a considerable portion of the crisis period Haredi public figures expressed

reservations about the coalition efforts and warned that tensions could worsen. After the legislation canceling the reasonableness standard was passed, both the Haredi press and some members of the Haredi leadership called for a halt to further legislation and a restoration of calm.

The Haredi leadership has an obvious parliamentary interest in the tensions being defused. The coalition's focus on judicial reform pushed aside a number of issues high on the

Haredi parties' agenda. The state budget, once passed, did reflect accomplishments on the part of the Haredi elected officials, in the form of budget increases in various areas, including a large increase in outlays for *avrechim* (which the Haredim view as offsetting attrition). However, the public as a whole (including a fair number on the right) exhibits growing reservations about budget increases for the institutions and objectives of the Haredi sector. The political package deal, of course, requires that the coalition partners take Haredi priorities into consideration, so as to ensure the government's stability. However, in the past year there has been a certain decline in the willingness of non-Haredi subgroups to maintain the economic and social status quo between the state and the Haredim. Before the state budget was passed, an official document published by the head of the Budget Department in the Ministry of Finance expressed strong opposition to the fact that the budget he himself had helped draw up, under the guidance of the political echelon, did not address the challenge of integrating the Haredi community into Israel's economy.¹ The budget failed to incorporate incentives for raising the share of employed Haredi men or for the introduction of core studies into Haredi educational institutions.²

The Knesset's winter session, which starts after the High Holy Days of September-October 2023, is expected to focus much of its attention on issues relating to the Haredi sector, in particular that of the draft. The Conscription

Law that provided for the military-service exemption of young Haredi males studying in yeshiva has expired, and the Knesset must pass a new law, which the Haredi representatives want to be anchored in such a way as to end all discussion of the exemption issue (apparently through the addition of an override clause that would make the Court unable to strike down the law).

In the present public atmosphere, and especially given the fact that many of the opposition's actions are driven by protest groups made up of reserve soldiers and other Israelis for whom IDF service is a significant identity element (*Achim L'Neshek* – "Brothers in Arms"), the enshrinement of a Haredi conscription exemption could prove explosive in the social arena. Some opposition protesters have already warned that legislation to enact the exemption would yet more greatly intensify a dangerous trend of politicizing military service, i.e., it would cause even more reserve soldiers to stop volunteering, and perhaps even erode motivation for service among young people. There is already concern in the IDF about a possible erosion of the conscription model and of the "people's army" ethos, in light of demographic forecasts of an inevitable

**should read:
Enshrinement
of a Haredi
conscription
exemption
could prove
explosive in
the social
arena**

decline in the percentage of potential recruits (Israelis who are not Haredim or Arabs).³

Given the above, engagement with the issues of Haredi conscription, budgeting of Haredi institutions, and Haredi influence in the Israeli public sphere could cause a number of situations to develop that would significantly impact the national agenda over the coming months: the coalition could have trouble making good on its promises to the Haredi parties, which would undermine its cohesion; protest measures against the government could intensify, and the protests could shift

**Americans
are attending
religious
services
slightly less
frequently
post-pandemic**

their focus to the Haredi sector and its representatives; public attitudes, and the attitudes of specific population groups, toward the Haredim could change; Haredi lawmakers could

decide to take conciliatory measures vis-à-vis the opposition, to avoid being the primary target of criticism and protest activities; and there could be attempts to arrive at a mutually-agreeable package deal regarding the conscription dilemma that would also address other issues (e.g., a draft exemption in exchange for core studies).

Prayer, post-Covid

The pandemic exited the public consciousness almost as quickly as it had entered. The disease is still contagious, but its impact on everyday life seems to have evaporated, except for certain social phenomena that developed in the course of the pandemic and remain detectable. The activity patterns of Jews changed during the pandemic, and it was unclear whether they would prove temporary or permanent. One such pattern worth reexamining now that the pandemic has passed relates to the participation of Jews in communal prayer – an issue earlier *Annual Assessments* took up in depth.⁴

The public response, and in particular the Jewish response, to the pandemic manifested in significantly altered prayer practices. Jews who steadfastly continued to engage in communal prayer (nearly all Orthodox Jews) modified their practice in one of two ways: holding prayer services outside of the synagogue, in the open air, or praying in smaller groups (to lower the risk of contagion). Many other Jews changed their approach in one of two other ways: either they stopped taking part in communal prayer altogether, or they switched to online worship. Several studies appeared this year that examined the degree and pace of return to normal in American houses of worship, Jewish and non-Jewish. Their findings show that the pandemic left a medium-term, and perhaps a long-term, mark on

religious institutions (similar to its impact on workplaces and employees, who became accustomed to working remotely).

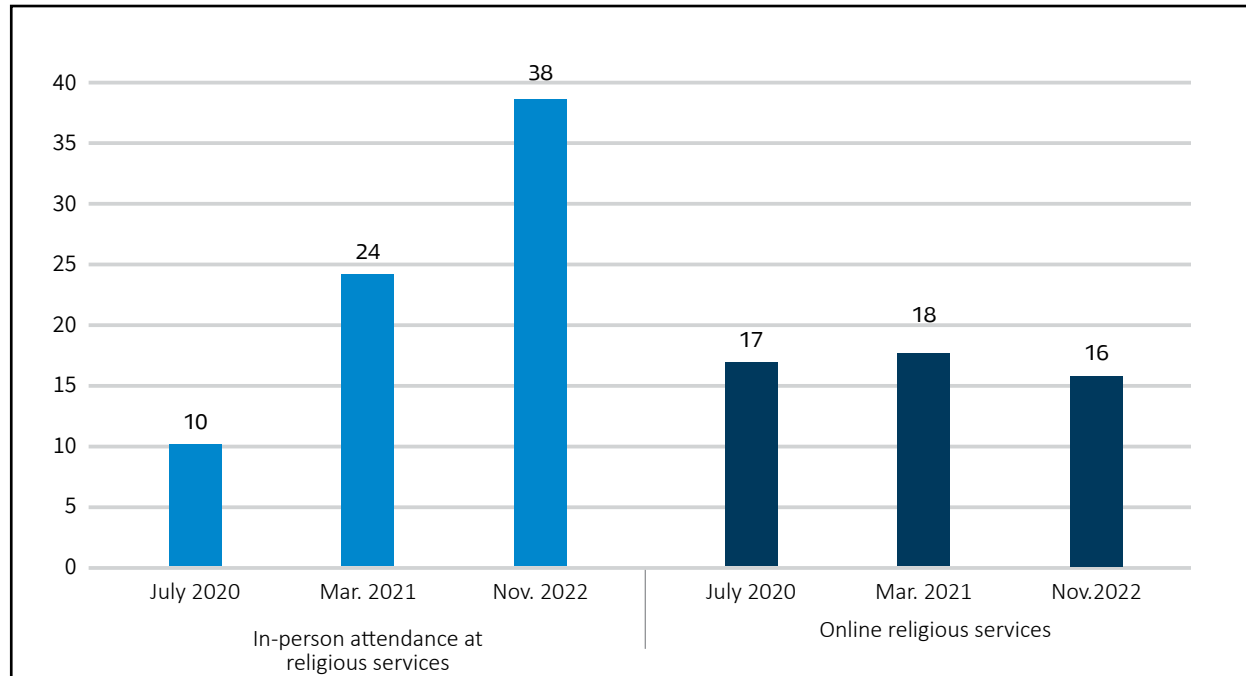
In general, Americans are attending religious services slightly less frequently in the post-Covid period than before.⁵ At the same time, there has been a slight increase in the percentage of participation in online religious services. The start of the pandemic brought a steep decline in church, mosque, and synagogue attendance, along with a rise (in some cases), in online attendance. This dramatic change was followed equally quickly by a return to something approaching normal among those whose practice it had been to attend synagogue services. However, online prayer participation has remained at its new higher level. The share of Jews who continued to attend online (remote) prayer services in 2022 was very similar to the share recorded in the summer of 2020.

Studies of post-pandemic prayer habits also enable us to form a picture of American Jews' synagogue attendance. A majority (slightly more than half) of U.S. Jews do not attend synagogue at all, or almost never do so. This is what surveys conducted before the pandemic found,⁶ and as did surveys conducted after it. A 2020 Pew survey of Jewish Americans found that 52% of these Jews do not attend synagogue at all. A 2023 Pew survey found that 56% of American Jews had not participated in religious services in the "past month" (in person or online). In a June 2023 Pew survey, 55% of

U.S. Jews said they "do not attend religious services in person or watch virtually." There are small differences between the findings, but the results are consistent overall; clearly, between 50% and 60% of American Jews do not attend synagogue services.

The share of American Jews who regularly attend synagogue services is between a fifth and a third, depending on what counts as "regular." A large majority of regular synagogue worshippers resumed their in-person synagogue attendance. A quarter of U.S. Jews say they participate in religious services only in synagogue settings (not online); only 6% participate online only, while 10% do both. In general, American Jews do not make large-scale use of technology for religious purposes, compared with other groups in the U.S. Only a tenth could be categorized as "heavy users" of religious technology. More Jews employ technology to read the Bible or for study purposes (15%) than for prayer purposes (6%). Fifteen percent of U.S. Jews say they use technology to follow or keep track of their religious leaders, while a third (33%) say they use the internet to find information about Jewish tradition.

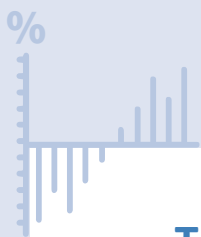
Prayer practice of U.S. Jews during and after the pandemic (Pew data) (in percentages)



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The Impact of the Sociopolitical Crisis on Israelis

As part of the Jewish People Policy Institute's Cohesion and Pluralism Survey, respondents are asked each year about the degree to which they feel "comfortable being themselves in Israel." This recurring question provides indications of year-to-year change in how Israelis from different sectors and subgroups are affected by social and political developments. This year, for the first time, we decided to ask the question twice: once in the regular survey administered in February 2023, when the crisis was already underway but still relatively new, and again six months later, in mid-July, in the days just before legislation limiting the use of the reasonableness standard in judicial review was passed. During this period there was an increase in the intensity and passion of debate for and against the legislative changes proposed for the judicial system.

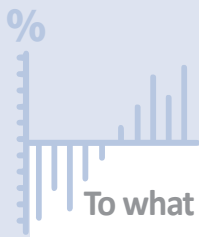
The same terms were used in both surveys. But not only that, both were administered to the same respondents (in the Jewish sector). Posing the same question twice to the same people made it possible to measure fluctuations at the individual respondent level between the first and the second surveys.

Several important findings emerged from the surveys. It is, of course, impossible to definitively identify cause and effect, or to say why changes in the comfort level of Israelis occurred. Nevertheless, it appears that this year, perhaps more than in past years, the ability to connect events to emotional outcomes is stronger than usual.

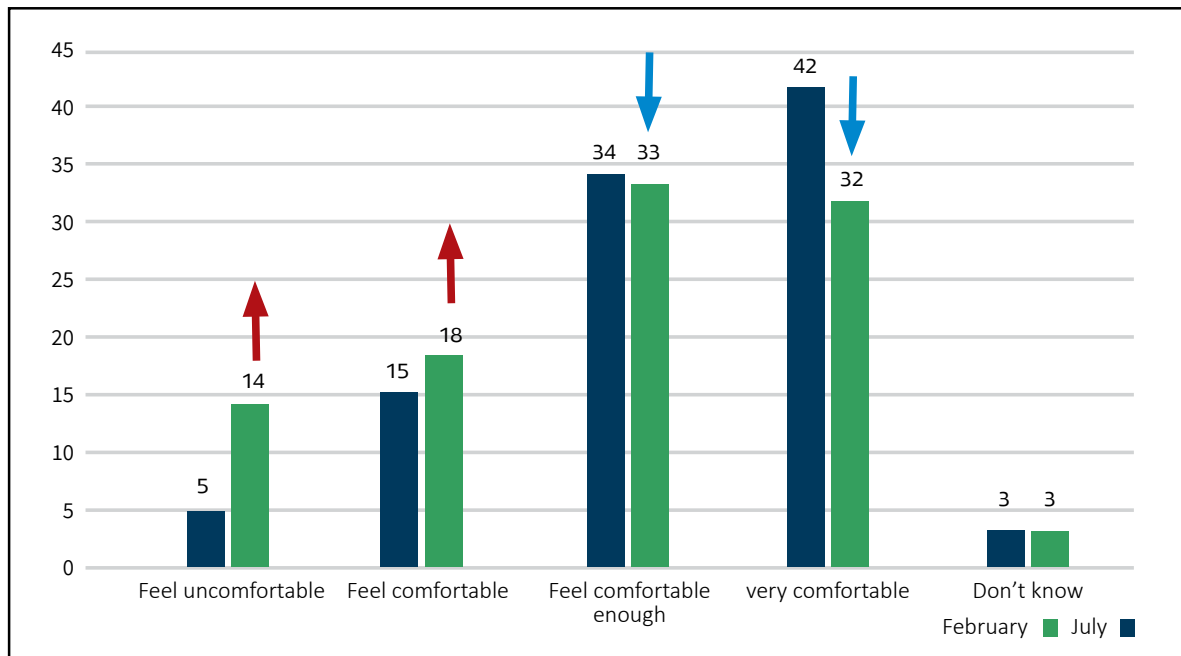
Finding 1: Not surprisingly, Israelis' sense of comfort being themselves in Israel eroded significantly over the six-month interval. The fluctuations recorded during that period were greater than the average year-on-year fluctuations. For instance, the share of those who felt uncomfortable ("somewhat" or "very") rose from 20% to 32%, while the share of those who felt comfortable ("somewhat" or "very") dropped from 76% to 65%.

Finding 2: When the results were broken down by political affiliation, a decline in the sense of comfort was found for all groups. That is, there was a drop in comfort level among both supporters of the right (the share of those who feel “very comfortable” fell from 55% in February to 43% in July) and centrists/leftists. The steepest decline was found among those who identify as centrist or as center-left.

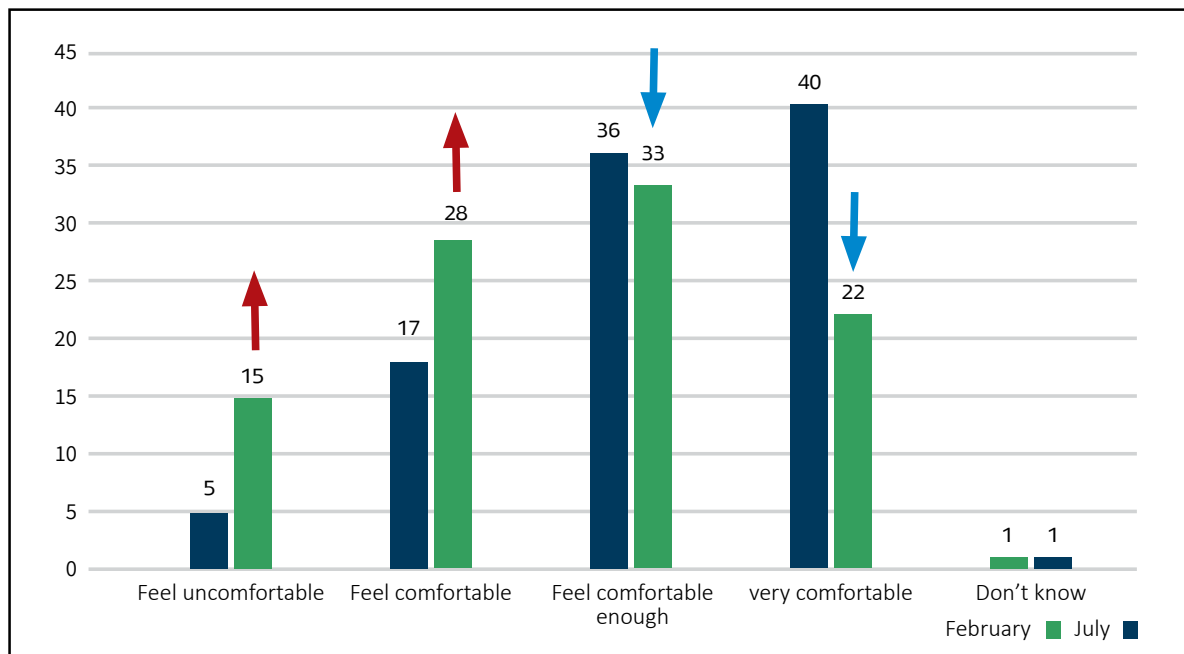
Finding 3: The decline in the sense of comfort over the six months between February 2023 and July 2023 is the most dramatic recorded since the question was first posed in 2016. A certain downward trend has been evident since 2020, perhaps in response to the frequent election cycles, or to the Covid crisis, or both. However, the total Jewish comfort rate of 65% in July 2023 represents a 10% drop compared with February 2023 and a 20% drop since 2020.

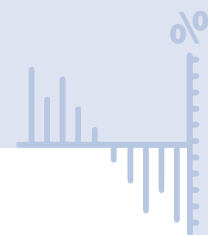


To what extent do you feel comfortable living in Israel as who you are? (in percentages)



Centrists only: To what extent do you feel comfortable living in Israel as who you are? (in percentages)





Partially Jewish: A Valid Category

Is it possible to be “partially Jewish”? For methodological and principled reasons, the 2013 Pew Research Center survey of Jewish Americans included a “partially Jewish” category, but the organization’s 2021 survey omitted it. This does not, of course, mean that there are no longer Jews who identify themselves, or the way they were raised, as “partially Jewish.”

In the following table from JPPI’s Voice of the People platform, which surveys public opinion in the Jewish world, we can see that a substantial number of Jews have an answer to the question of whether they grew up “partially Jewish.” Furthermore, most Jews who grew up in homes with one Jewish parent, as opposed to two Jewish parents, identify the homes they grew up in as “partially Jewish” or “non-Jewish.” We emphasize that the sample panel currently includes Jews of different streams and various perspectives, yet compared with the general U.S. Jewish population this is still a population that is connected to the community. That is, it can be assumed that in the present reality of American Jewry as a whole, the data on mixed families will lean toward the “partially Jewish” or “non-Jewish” classifications even more than the numbers presented here indicate (the data shown here do not include Orthodox Jews).

How were you raised?

Parents	As a Jew	Partially Jewish	As a non-Jew
Both parents are Jews	96%	3%	1%
Jewish mother	42%	23%	35%
Jewish father	32%	41%	27%
Both parents are non-Jews	2%	6%	92%

INDICES

12

Israeli Society Index

Main points

- Since the beginning of the year there has been a **significant** rise in the level of “**disappointment**” and “**anger**” felt by the government’s proponents toward the government’s opponents
- **Overwhelming support** on the part of Jews and Arabs for a **democratic state**; **support** on the part of Jews for a **Jewish state**
- In all population groups, the majority feel that a democratic state means both **elections** and **human rights**
- Supporters of the right feel (wrongly) that supporters of the center-left are less interested in Israel as a **Jewish** state
- Supporters of the left feel (wrongly) that supporters of the right are less interested in Israel as a **democratic** state
- **Very strong** agreement among the entire Jewish public with the major principles of Israel’s **Declaration of Independence**

This chapter is based on JPPI’s annual Cohesion and Pluralism index, which for the past nine years has been based on a comprehensive public opinion survey. As in earlier years, this year’s survey included Jewish and non-Jewish respondents. In the Jewish sector the survey was conducted by THEMADAD.COM and included a relatively large respondent sample (1,700); of these, nearly 600 respondents completed the questionnaire both this year and last year, facilitating reliable and individual comparison of changing views among the same respondents from different groups. This year another survey was conducted in July, which included 600 of the respondents who had completed the January-February survey, also making it possible to perform an individualized comparison of changes in views during the first half of 2023. This year’s survey (like those of previous years) was supervised by Professor Camil Fuchs of Tel Aviv University.

What the dispute is about

The surveys mentioned in this chapter were conducted under particular political and social conditions and against the background of developments that any analysis of their findings must take into account. In the first half of 2023, the bitter sociopolitical controversy over the government's efforts to reform the judicial system was the main development impacting the data (for more on this controversy, see page 59). After its victory in last November's elections, a new governing coalition set out to implement a set of reforms to Israel's political system, which resulted in a major national crisis and prompted President Isaac Herzog to warn, in an impassioned mid-February speech, that the country was "on the brink of constitutional and social collapse," and "moments away before a violent clash."

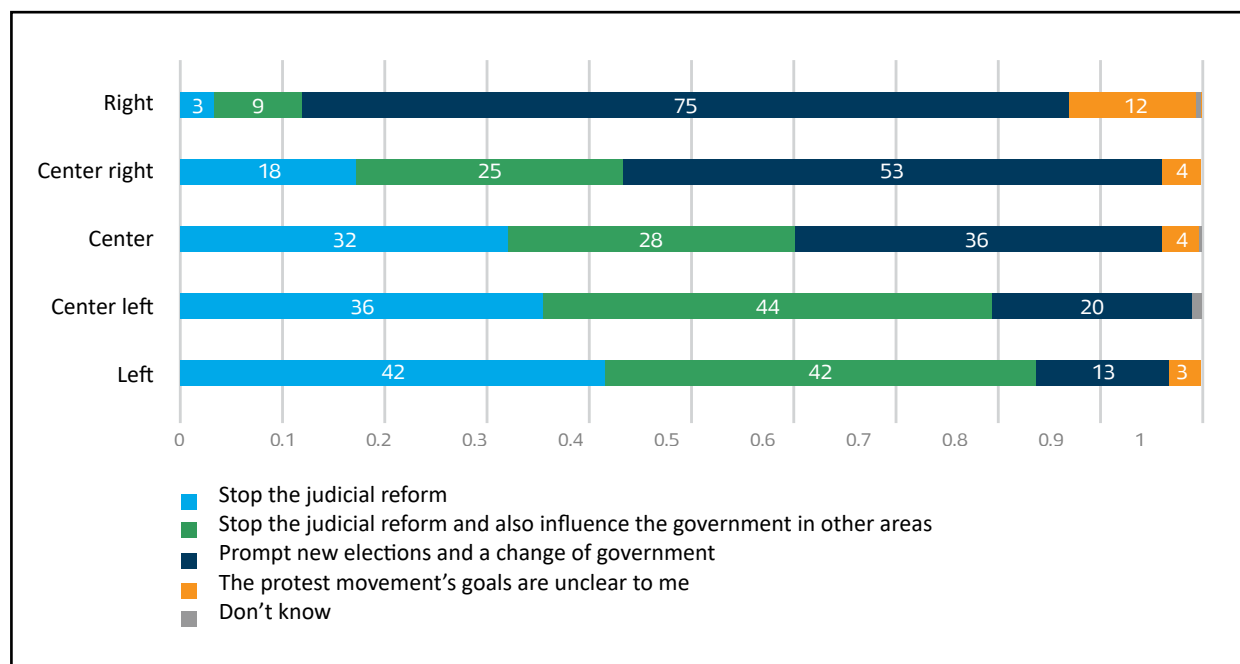
The obvious dominance of judicial reform controversy in Israeli discourse should not obscure the effects of other developments represented in the data presented here. The elections were won by the right-wing bloc, the left-wing bloc shrank (with one veteran party, Meretz, dropping below the electoral threshold), and the Arab parties returned to their all-but-permanent place in the opposition (after Ra'am spent a brief term in the previous coalition). After the inauguration of a government based on votes for Likud, the Religious Zionist party and the two ultra-Orthodox parties, Shas and

United Torah Judaism, tensions also erupted on "religion and state" issues (such as the enactment of the "Chametz Law" prohibiting the entry of leavened foods into hospitals during Passover).

One significant issue that makes it hard for Israel to extricate itself from the present crisis is the lack of a basic consensus between the camps on what exactly sparked the confrontation. According to a JPPI survey conducted in July, coalition voters (in particular those who voted "right," but also those who voted "center-right") feel that the anti-government protests, though ostensibly meant to express disapproval of the judicial reform, are in reality an attempt by the opposition to topple a legally elected government by fomenting chaos.

Half of all Israeli Jews (49%) and a large majority (70%) of those who support the right – Israel's largest political subgroup – feel that the goal of the protests is "to prompt new elections and replace the government." By contrast, those who support the groups to which anti-government protesters belong (mainly center-left and left) think the goal is to protest a specific policy, and not an attempt to undermine the results of an election just a short time after it took place. This dispute is just one of many examples of the distrust that divides Israelis and affects how one "reads" reality and intensifies reactions to it.

To the best of your understanding, which statement best describes the goals of the current protest movement? (in percentages)



What is democracy?

Another reading-of-reality gap found by the JPPI survey relates to whether and to what extent the Israeli public is interested in “democracy,” and which “democracy” it wants. Judicial reform proponents in the government and the general public feel that a recalibration of the balance of power between the legislature and the judiciary would strengthen Israeli democracy, by giving more authoritative weight to the views of the public. Opponents of the reform, those who chant “Democracy!” at the demonstrations, feel that the change proposed by the government would weaken democracy by

opening the door to a tyranny of the majority, and to corruption. Such rhetoric might lead one to expect a significant gap in the desire of citizens to uphold a democratic system and in their understanding of the nature of such a system. However, at least where fundamental principles are concerned, it is hard to find such a disparity.

Israeli citizens are sometimes tested on the basis of one of the two following questions: Do they support Israel as a Jewish-democratic state (or as a Jewish and democratic state)?; and Do they consider one a higher priority than the other? Without entering into a theoretical discussion on the meaning of

“Jewish and democratic” – a combination whose nature remains unclear – we decided this year to ask the Israeli public a question that embodies no tacit assumptions about competition between the two components. Rather, our questionnaire offered the opportunity to express a completely separate opinion regarding each one. We asked, separately, about the level of support for Israel as a Jewish state, and about the

level of support for Israel as a democratic state. The results are altogether clear: a large majority of Jews want Israel to be Jewish, and a very large majority want it to be democratic. A framework encompassing both components is undesirable only to the Arab minority, which expresses very broad support for Israel as a democratic state, but significant reservations about Israel as a Jewish state.

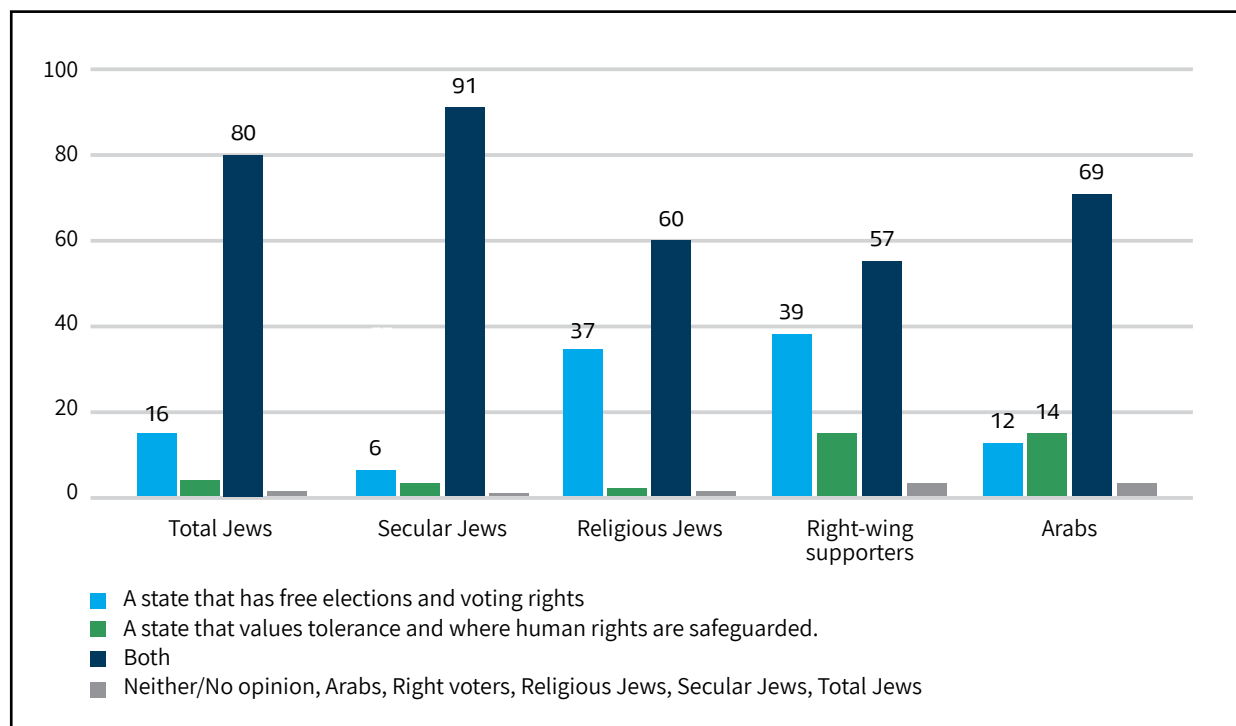
Views of Israeli Jews (in percentages)

It is very important to me that Israel be a democratic state	88	66	It is very important to me that Israel be a Jewish state
It is somewhat important to me that Israel be a democratic state	01	72	It is somewhat important to me that Israel be a Jewish state
It is not important to me that Israel be a democratic state	1	6	It is not important to me that Israel be a Jewish state
It is important to me that Israel not be a democratic state	0	1	It is important to me that Israel not be a Jewish state
Don't know	1	0	Don't know

What is a democratic state? On this as well there is no deep fundamental disagreement. Among all population groups, Jewish and Arab, there is a majority who think that the state’s democratic component refers to two subcomponents: “free elections and voting rights” and “tolerance and the safeguarding of human rights.” However, a third of Israeli Jews who define themselves as “Datim” (non-Haredi religious) or as “Haredim”

(ultra-Orthodox) chose only one of the two components – “elections and voting rights” – as characteristic of a democratic state, as do 39% of right-wing voters (this is, of course, the same population, identified via a different scale of definitions). Here it should be clarified that the question posed only two possible definitions of what a democratic state is (as well as third option, chosen by a majority: both components together). One

When you say “a democratic state,” to what are you mainly referring? (in percentages)



may assume that a question that included other options would have made it possible to identify additional interpretive disputes about the term’s applicability to the State of Israel; in particular had we included options central to the public controversies swirling at the time the survey was conducted, such as the independence of the judiciary, governmental transparency, or separation of powers.

Contrary to what is often claimed, **it is actually the Jewish-state component, not the democratic-state component, that is subject to the greater degree of challenge.** Israeli Arabs support democracy, but many

of them oppose Israel as a Jewish state, and among Jews the rate of support for Israel as a democratic state is significantly higher than the rate of support for Israel as a Jewish state. While 88% of Jews say it is very important to them that Israel be democratic, the share of Jews who say this about Israel as a Jewish state is 66%. This is a substantial disparity. In other words, although support for the democratic component is unequal, the gaps between the groups are not very large. Regarding the Jewish component, by contrast, we find great disparities: among the secular, the share of those to whom the Jewish component is very important

collapses to a much lower share than among the other segments of the Jewish population.

Of course, we must be precise here: even the secular express overwhelming support for Israel as a Jewish state, but half of this group say the state's Jewishness is "somewhat," rather than "very," important to them (45%, very important; 42%, somewhat important). A number of conjectures can be made about why this is so, not excluding the constellation of political circumstances at the time of the survey – a time of bitter conflict between the more traditional groups (which support the coalition) and those of more secular tendencies. A partial or full identification of the state's Jewishness with the government's agenda may be driving the eroding support of secular Jews for the state's Jewish component. Here we should note that a high percentage of the secular feel that there is "religious coercion" in Israel (58% rated the religious coercion level at 8-10 on a scale of 1-10); religious coercion is also identified with pressure from groups that emphasize the state's Jewishness.

What do the others think?

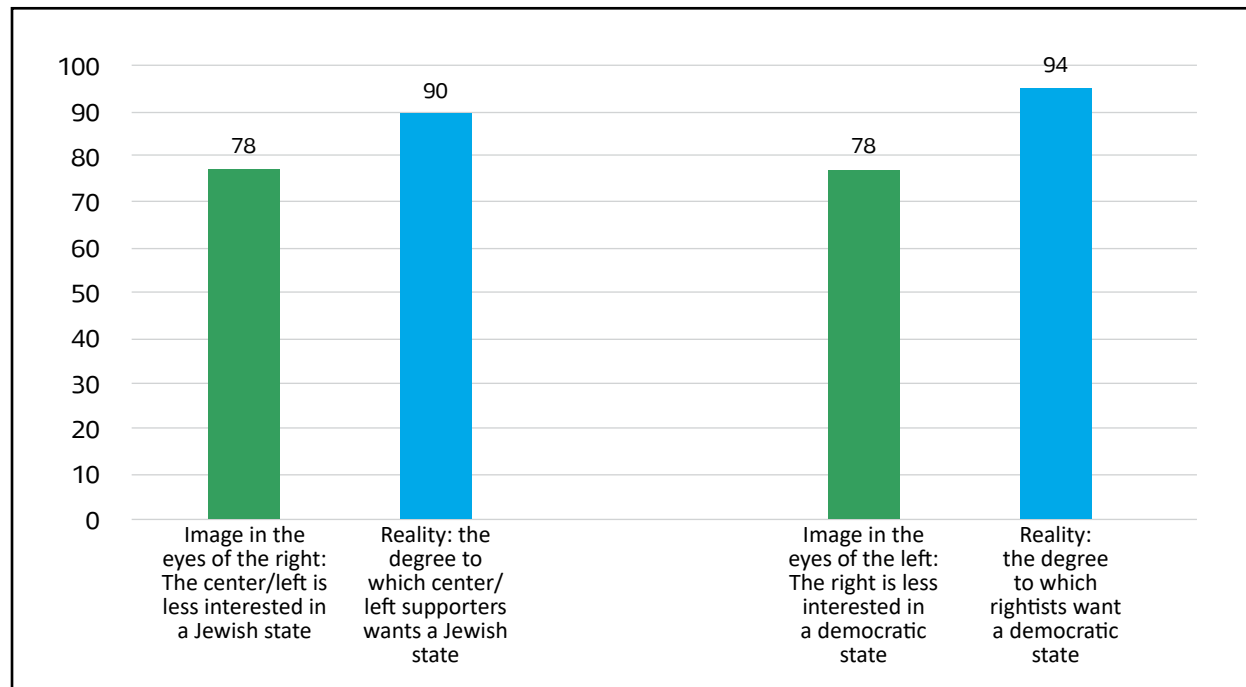
The fundamental points of agreement are significant, but something makes it difficult to reach consensus on policy issues – a factor that emerges when we look at the image of different social subgroups through eyes of other groups. Simply put: Does the right (in the Jewish sector)

understand that the left also wants a Jewish Israel? And conversely: Does the left realize that the right also wants a democratic Israel?

Our examination of the subgroup images was performed as follows: center and left respondents (who oppose the government) were asked: "It is sometimes claimed that, for supporters of the right in Israel, it is less important that Israel be a democratic state. To what extent do you agree with this claim?" Right-wing respondents (who support the government) were asked: "It is sometimes claimed that, for center and left supporters in Israel, it is less important that Israel be a Jewish state. To what extent do you agree with this claim?" The findings indicate the extent to which, on both ends of the political spectrum, the true wishes of the rival camp are misjudged. Among right-wing respondents, nearly 80% agreed (strongly or somewhat) that it is less important for center and left proponents that Israel be a Jewish state. And, likewise, nearly 80% of left-wing respondents agreed (strongly or somewhat) that it is less important to the right that Israel be a democratic state. As noted, there is truth to the claim that right-wing support for a "democratic Israel" is slightly lower than left-wing support, and there is truth to the claim that support among the left for a "Jewish Israel" is lower than it is among the right. However, in light of the very high levels of support for both components within Jewish society as a whole, it appears that the image each side has of the other is far from accurate.

Image versus reality: the right's view of the left, and the left's view of the right

(in percentages)



Emotional attitudes toward adversaries

We assessed the attitudes of Israelis from different camps toward each other with another question, one pertaining to the feelings that government supporters and opponents have toward one another. The assessment was conducted twice. The first time was in January 2023, when the conflict over the judicial system was already present in the public arena. At the time of the survey, the largest subgroup of opposition supporters chose the phrase “disappointed in them” to describe their feelings about coalition voters (45%), while among coalition voters

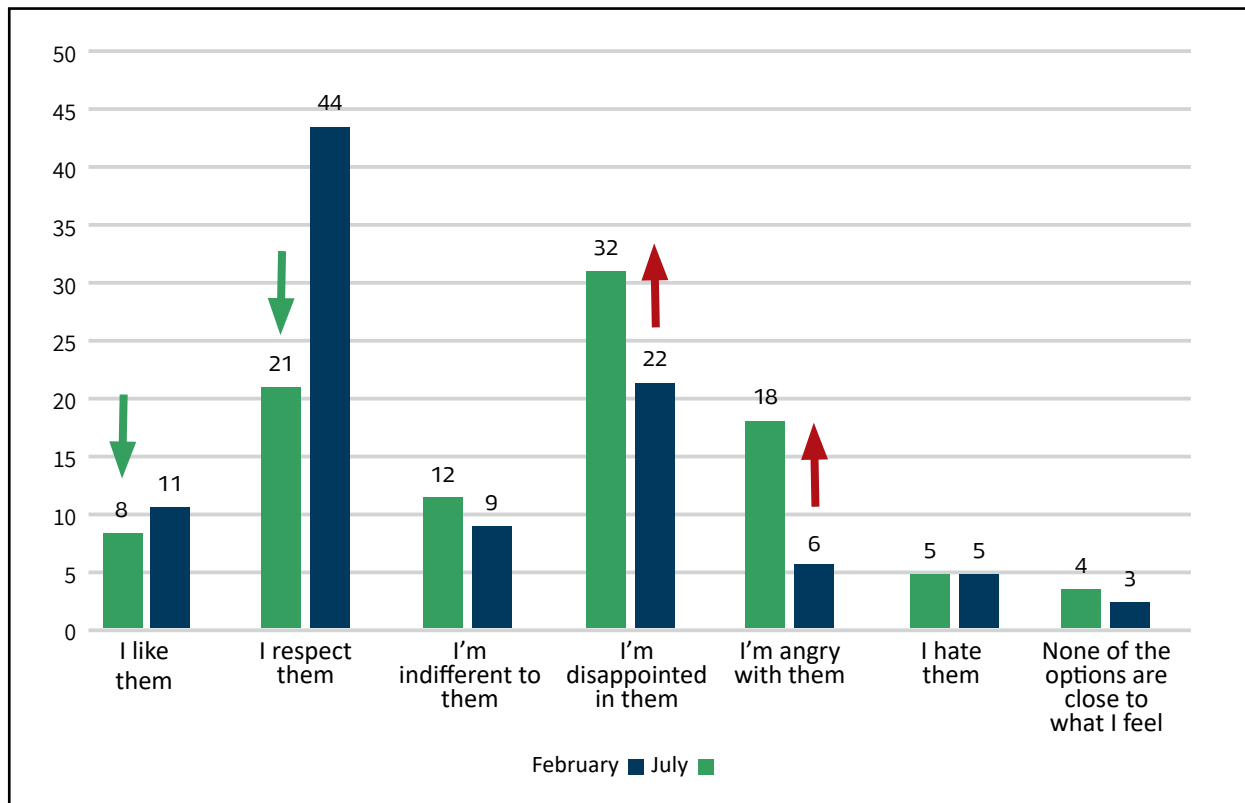
the phrase “respect them” was frequently chosen (41%).

In July, six months later, we posed the same question again. The disparity is evident on both sides, but mainly in the coalition-supporters’ view of opposition supporters. That is, both camps exhibited a shift from positive statements such as “love them” or “respect them” to less-positive statements such as “disappointed in them” or “angry with them.” But the most dramatic change was documented regarding the attitude of government proponents toward government opponents. It may be supposed that the opposition supporters

had formulated their view about the rival political camp in January, not long after the sociopolitical crisis over the judicial reform erupted. By contrast, the coalition supporters, who in January had not yet developed a strong emotional response,

underwent a “hardening” with regard to the other camp, perhaps the cumulative result of protest measures, which included road blockings, harsh rhetoric, threats of “civil disobedience,” and the like.

Supporters of the government: How do you feel about supporters of the opposition? (in percentages)



Inter-group relations

Each year, JPPI monitors an array of indicators pertaining to inter-group relations in Israel. Several of these indicators recur each year, or every few years, making longitudinal comparison possible.

This year, after a five-year hiatus, we twice repeated (in January and July) a question about the level of religious or secular coercion in Israel, as perceived by Jews of different sectors. It must be emphasized again that the question was posed this year against the background of Israel's current

sociopolitical tensions, and the fact that differences in religiosity levels between the political camps are more discernable now than in the past. Many of the constituent subgroups in Israel's present governing coalition are religious and Haredi; by contrast, a substantial majority of opposition supporters are secular or traditionalist-not-religious. However, impressions and feelings with regard to religious or secular coercion in Israel are nothing new. In 2018, a very strong sense of religious coercion was detected, which intensified with level of secularity; a certain (less-strong) sense of secular coercion was found as well, which intensified as one moved toward the more religious end of the spectrum.

We found no major change this year with regard to religious coercion. The percentage

of secular respondents who feel that there is religious coercion in Israel is very high; on a scale of 1 (no coercion at all) to 10 (very high level of coercion), the average rating given by secular respondents was over 7. However, a certain increase over what we saw five years ago was found for the mirror image – the claim by the Haredi and Dati public that secular coercion exists. As in the questionnaire of half a decade ago, this year as well the secular-coercion picture corresponds to, and is the opposite of, the religious-coercion picture. However, this year the sense of secular coercion expressed by the Dati-Haredi camp was nearly as intense as the secular camp's sense of religious coercion. In fact, nearly two-thirds of Haredim rated the degree of secular coercion at over 7 (out of 10), as did more than half of the Dati respondents.

To what degree is there secular/religious coercion, on a scale of 1 (no coercion at all) to 10 (very high level of coercion)? (in percentages)

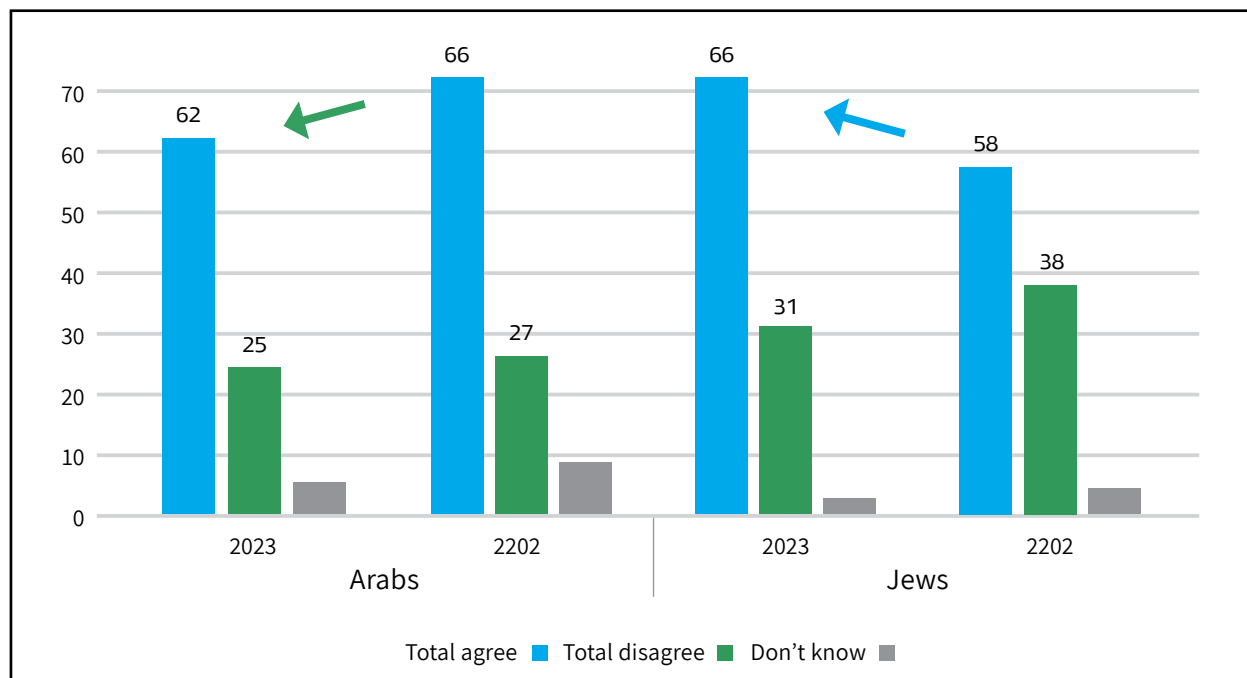
Secular respondents' ratings of religious coercion		Cohesion intensity	Religious respondents' ratings of secular coercion	
February	July		February	July
5	5	2	4	5
1	3	3	4	5
3	5	4	6	7
3	4	5	5	8
5	5	6	12	11
7	3	7	8	8
21	19	8	12	17
24	30	9	21	8
16	12	10	15	14
14	13		14	19

What these findings mean is that here as well, with regard to the sense of coercion felt by both camps, Israel is in a state of polarization with opposing “readings” of reality. The feelings detected at both ends of the spectrum are of coercion “against us,” with little acknowledgment of the claim that “we ourselves” coerce others. As in the previous examples, regardless of who is factually right (a question that is not easy to answer), it is clear that a dispute over the facts is raging in Israel, and that makes it very difficult to reach satisfactory civil arrangements. When each side assumes that it is suffering from coercion while not, in turn, subjecting the other side to coercion, little willingness for compromise on religion-and-state arrangements can be expected.

Another data comparison vis-à-vis last year was performed with regard to the sense of partnership between Jews and Arabs in Israel. This assessment appeared necessary due to a significant change in circumstances: last year, Israel had a governing coalition that included an Arab party, but this year the coalition includes several factions that explicitly reject partnership with Arab parties. Despite these changes, no very large gaps were found in terms of attitudes among Jews or Arabs toward a common future for both populations – there was a small increase in Jewish recognition of a common future, and a slight decrease in Arab recognition.

The respondent group that showed the greatest change was Jewish supporters of the political center, which showed a rise in “strongly agree” responses to the idea that all Israelis have a common future – from 33% to 47%. However, this increase is not unique to centrist voters; rather, it was detected among all groups (per a political breakdown) at various levels. Of methodological interest here is that these differences were evident when we compared this year’s survey data with last year’s, and when we performed individual comparisons of those who participated in both surveys (nearly 600 respondents). That is, the Israelis who answered the questionnaire in 2022 and again in 2023 changed their minds. The sole exception in this regard were the Haredi respondents – their responses this year overlap almost completely with their responses last year.

All Israelis, Jews and Arabs, have a common future (in percentages)



Conclusion

The findings presented here, which were collected during a particularly stormy period in Israel, require cautious examination and further monitoring – among other things so that, in the coming years, we can determine whether the processes currently underway in Israel are reinforcing or eroding values held by the various segments of Israeli

society. Of great importance is the fact that, as yet, there has been no detected erosion of the basic desire for a truly democratic system. However, the major gaps in trust and in readings of reality are making it difficult to return Israeli society to a path of calm dialogue and the aspiration for broad consensus.

13

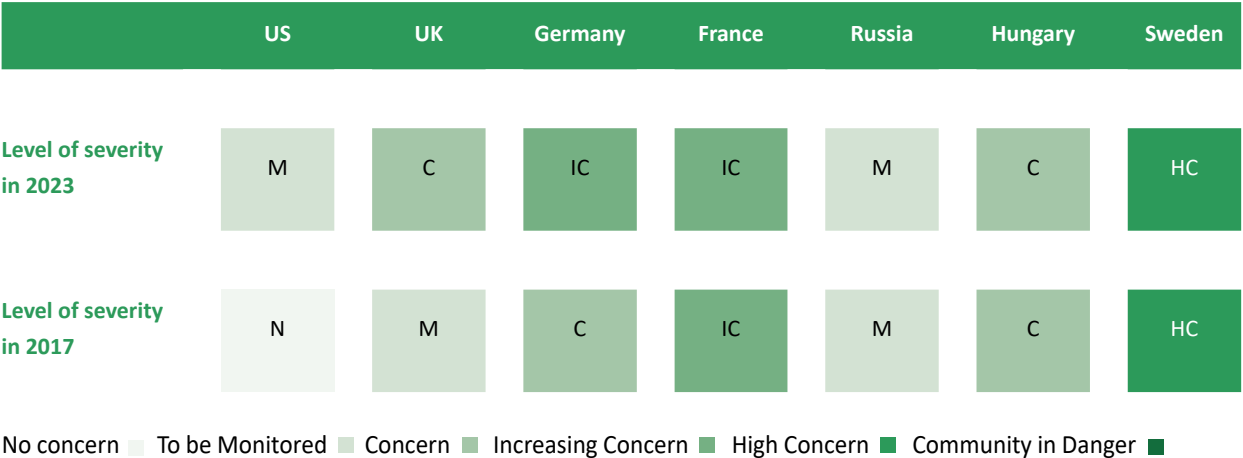
2023 Integrated Three-Dimensional Antisemitism Index

In 2021, there was a significant spike in manifestations of antisemitism, with the prevailing belief being that it was driven by escalated social tensions during the Covid-19 pandemic and the military conflict in Gaza. But even in 2022, when these factors were absent, a high level of antisemitism persisted. This rise suggests that the reasons behind the increase in Jew hatred are not transient but rather long-term, casting doubt on optimistic expectations of imminent improvement.

Considering this reality, Jewish communities must acknowledge that the hostility will not disappear on its own. In coordination with local authorities, they need to take proactive measures to enhance the security of Jews. This involves pressing governments to develop strategic plans to combat antisemitism, advocating for robust anti-hatred laws and their effective enforcement, exerting influence on online platforms, actively combating Holocaust denial, and promoting educational initiatives to foster tolerance and acceptance of others.

LEVEL OF ANTISEMITISM IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

(BASED ON PERCEIVED DISCOMFORT AMONG JEWS)



Over the past year there have been three main developments worthy of note in this review that demonstrate the expanding normalization of antisemitism.

The strengthening of the extreme right in Europe: The spread of expressions of antisemitism is evident throughout all the political spectrum, but a concrete threat to Jewish thriving in Europe may come because of the rise to power of extreme right-wing parties in France and Germany. The continued strengthening of the extreme right in France and the electoral success of the extreme right party "Alternative to Germany" in the June 2023 municipal elections are phenomena that require vigilant monitoring.

Normalization of antisemitic discourse in the United States: In December 2022, former U.S. President Donald Trump hosted the rapper

Kanye West and Nick Fuentes, a supporter of white supremacy and a Holocaust denier, at his Florida residence. This event, which provoked sharp criticism, represents a change of direction that would have seemed impossible just a decade ago. Other events that reflect the normalization of antisemitic discourse were the appearance in Germany of Roger Waters in an SS uniform and Elon Musk’s tweet attacking George Soros, which was replete with antisemitic innuendo.

Disturbing Surge in Antisemitic Incidents in the U.S. – The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) recently revealed an alarming trend: a significant upsurge in antisemitic incidents across the United States. According to their report, the number of such incidents has skyrocketed by an astonishing 500% over the past ten years, escalating from 751 cases in 2013 to 3,697 cases in 2022.

In the ensuing paragraphs, some of the data describing the increase in antisemitism will be presented, followed by an analysis of four actions taken as part of the fight against antisemitism: the dramatic verdict in the synagogue in Pittsburgh, the adoption of the Digital Services Act (DSA) by the European Union, the implementation of the First-ever U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism, and the Israeli government's decision to combine units against Antisemitism and BDS at the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs.

Snapshot of Selected Figures for Policy Makers

The JPPI integrated index encompasses three interconnected dimensions: attitudes toward Jews, antisemitic incidents, and perceptions among Jews. By examining these complementary indicators, it offers a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and aids in identifying effective intervention strategies.

France: 20% of French Jews have experienced physical assault; 37% say they feel insecure “often” or “occasionally.” 45% of Jewish parents in France ask their children not to disclose their religion.”¹

Britain: Jewish communities perceive a lack of support in combating antisemitic phenomena, particularly within progressive left circles. British Jews grapple with a frequently imposed framing of Jews in

progressive discourse. This framing is an obstacle to fighting antisemitism and contributes significantly to failures to recognize and stand against antisemitism among the broader left. Overall, 18% of British Jews reported feeling somewhat or very unwelcome in the UK.²

Germany: Between 2020 and 2021, there was a significant surge in German antisemitic internet posts, a 13-fold increase. It is concerning to note that every fifth antisemitic incident has a conspiracy-based background.³ 40% of Jews reported having been disadvantaged, marginalized, or threatened in one way or another over the past year.⁴ Jews living in Germany often feel they are held accountable for Israeli policy vis-à-vis the Palestinians, and that the conceptualization of Israel as the “collective Jew” has become the identificational basis for regarding and judging all Jews.

United States: Significant surges in incidents include high volume increases in organized white supremacist propaganda activity (102% increase to 852 incidents), K-12 schools (49% increase to 494 incidents) and college campuses (41% increase to 219 incidents), as well as a troubling increase in attacks on Orthodox Jews (69% increase to 59 incidents), and bomb threats against Jewish institutions (an increase from 8 to 91 incidents).

Antisemitism in Western Europe and the United States

Data Point	Trend	US	France	UK	Germany
(%) Hold antisemitic views	–	10 ^a (9)	15 ^a (17)	10 ^a (11)	12 ^a (15)
Antisemitic Behavior					
Violent assaults	↑	111 ^a (+26%)	60 ^e (+36%)	176 ^d (+76%)	88 ^e (+40%)
Total incidents (extreme violence, assaults, damage, desecration, threats)	↑	3,697 ^b [2,717]	436 ^e [589]	1,652 ^d [2,255]	2,639 ^e [3,028]
Change from 2021	↑	+36%	-26%	-27%	-13%
Rate of incidents per 10,000 Jews	↑	6.2	9.9	57	22.4
(%) Antisemitism as Perceived by Jews					
Antisemitism is a very serious or fairly serious problem	↑	90 ^b (76)	95 ^c (86)	92 ^d (80)	90 ^e (80)
Over the past 12 months, have been, themselves, the target of an antisemitic remark in person	↑	24 ^b	68 ^c (53)	24 ^d	24 ^e
Avoid displaying visible signs of their Judaism in public	↑	22 ^b	61 ^c (41)	46 ^d (40)	40 ^e
Considered emigrating because they do not feel safe in their countries	↑	N/A	46 ^b (44)	33 ^d (29)	44 ^f (25)
Avoid places in their neighborhood because they do not feel safe there as Jews	↑	17 ^a (8)	66 ^b (45)	68 ^d (37)	651 ^f (33)

Notes:

- Numbers without parentheses are for the year 2022. Numbers in square brackets are from 2021, while those in parentheses are the most recent prior figures available. 'N/A' = not available.
- The decrease in antisemitic incidents in Germany, France, and the UK may be misleading since the average monthly total in 2022 was somewhat higher than the corresponding ten months in 2021 that were not impacted by the conflict-related spike in antisemitism that occurred during that year.
- The reason why Britain has the highest number of incidents per Jewish inhabitant is due to the more effective reporting process in the country compared to others.
- a. The ADL Global 100: An Index of Antisemitism, 2023.
- b. Audit of antisemitic Incidents in the USA 2022, ADL.
- c. An analysis of antisemitism in France, AJC-Fondapol, March 2022.
- d. Antisemitism Barometer 2022, Campaign Against Antisemitism, UK.
- e. Antisemitism Worldwide Report 2022, Tel Aviv University, April 2023.
- f. Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU, EU Agency for Fundamental Rights' (FRA), December 2018.

New data on the image of the Jews

This year, two noteworthy surveys have been published that offer valuable insights into the first dimension of the JPPI Index, which investigates attitudes toward Jews. These surveys warrant inclusion in this report, as they shed light on important findings. One survey focuses on Europe, while the other concentrates on the United States.

Attitudes toward Jews in Europe

The *ADL Global 100 survey* (Anti-Defamation League), which has been assessing attitudes toward Jews in over 100 countries since 2014, presents compelling evidence of persistent harmful stereotypes and prejudices against Jews in Europe in 2023. Approximately one in four individuals still holds deeply ingrained classical antisemitic beliefs.⁵ In Western Europe, a prevalent antisemitic trope centers around the notion of dual loyalty with Israel. It is essential to recognize that antisemitism traverses the entire political spectrum in Europe, though it tends to be more pronounced on the right-wing side of the political map.

In Eastern Europe, antisemitic attitudes are even more deeply entrenched. Although minor declines have been observed in certain surveyed countries, Hungary (37%), Poland (35%), and Russia (26%) continue to exhibit alarmingly high levels of antisemitic beliefs. Additionally, Holocaust denial is particularly

pervasive in Eastern Europe. In Hungary and Ukraine, 19% of respondents either agree with the notion that "the Holocaust is a myth and did not happen" or assert that the number of Jewish victims has been greatly exaggerated. In Russia and Poland, the percentages of individuals denying the Holocaust stand at 17% and 15%, respectively.

However, amid these disconcerting findings, the survey also highlights encouraging news. Holocaust awareness is nearly universal in Western Europe, and outright denial of the Holocaust is exceedingly rare. Germany and the Netherlands have the lowest levels of Holocaust denial, with only 5% and 4% of the population respectively espousing such views. While several Western European countries exhibit greater sympathy toward Palestinians than Israelis, support for boycotting Israel remains minimal.

Attitudes toward Jews in the United States

An in-depth research study published in January 2023, revealed disturbingly high levels of anti-Jewish sentiment among American adults.⁶ The study indicated that, on average, Americans agreed with 4.2 out of the 14 statements included in the anti-Jewish question battery. More concerning, however, was the finding that a fifth of Americans agreed with six or more of the original 11 statements, marking the highest level of antisemitic attitudes observed in decades of using the same set of questions.

The research sheds light on specific perceptions held by a significant proportion of Americans regarding Jews. For instance:

- 70% of Americans see Jews as clannish outsiders, believing that Jews tend to stick together more than others.
- 53% of Americans believe that Jews go out of their way to hire other Jews.
- 39% of Americans perceive Jews as having dual loyalty, with a greater allegiance to Israel than the United States.
- 38% of Americans believe that Jews always like to be at the forefront of things.
- 26% of Americans think that Jews have excessive power in business.
- 20% of Americans believe that Jews have too much power in the United States today.

The researchers aimed to assess both attitudes toward Jews and attitudes toward Israel. The results revealed an intriguing trend where the boundaries between antisemitism and anti-Zionism are becoming increasingly blurred. The study revealed, for instance, that negative sentiments toward Israel, including anti-Israel views rooted in antisemitic conspiracy theories, were held by a significant portion of the American population. The findings include:

- Approximately 40% of Americans agree that Israel treats Palestinians similarly to how the Nazis treated Jews.

- Around 24% of Americans believe that Israel does not make a positive contribution to the world, and that Israel and its supporters have a detrimental influence on American democracy.
- Around 18% of Americans express discomfort spending time with individuals who support Israel.

Based on these findings, researchers have delved into various topics to gain a better understanding of the factors associated with holding a higher number of anti-Jewish and anti-Israel attitudes. The study overall reveals that individuals who endorse a greater number of anti-Jewish stereotypes tend to: 1) possess limited knowledge about Jews, Judaism, and Jewish history; 2) lack personal relationships with Jewish individuals and/or describe their past interactions with Jews negatively; 3) underestimate the hostility and dangers faced by Jews in the United States today; 4) exhibit a general inclination toward conspiracy theory thinking.

The researchers found that the more positive one's past experiences with Jews, the more comfortable they were spending time with supporters of Israel, and the more they thought Israel makes a positive contribution to the world.

Significant Intervention Efforts

Pursuing Justice: Verdict in Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting

The Tree of Life synagogue shooting, the deadliest antisemitic attack in U.S. history, resulted in the tragic loss of 11 lives in Pittsburgh in 2018. In a recent development, the perpetrator, Robert Bowers, was found guilty on all charges, including hate crimes. Bowers was sentenced to death by a federal jury, the first federal death penalty sentence under the Biden administration, which has also imposed a moratorium on capital punishment.

There is hope that this verdict will serve as a deterrent against future acts of antisemitic violence. The community emphasizes the importance of sending a clear message that hate crimes will not be tolerated and will be met with severe consequences.

Given the insurmountable difficulties faced by European Jews in seeking justice for convicted antisemitic killers, as illustrated by the tragic murder cases of Sarah Halimi and Mireille Knoll in Paris, this penalty holds a two-fold meaning. The enforcement of laws against antisemitic crimes remains remarkably low in Europe: less than 20% of antisemitic incidents are reported to authorities, and in France, only a quarter of reported violent assaults that meet the criteria of antisemitic crimes result in punishment.⁷

Europe: Adoption of the Digital Services Act (DSA)

Social network operators have failed to adequately address the problem of antisemitic content. EU experts have found that manipulative algorithms are exploiting online platforms to spread false information and enable harmful activity. In response, the Council of the European Union passed the Digital Services Act (DSA) in July 2022.⁸ By 2024, the DSA will hold platform operators accountable for combating fake news and the propagation of hatred. If the effort succeeds, a reduction in prevalence of antisemitic discourse online may occur.

For this effort to be most effective, it must be implemented worldwide. However, in the United States, where freedom of speech is an enshrined constitutional right, similar initiatives face additional hurdles.

U.S.: First-ever National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism Unveiled

In May 2023, the Biden administration introduced the United States' first National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism. This comprehensive plan includes over 200 policy proposals inspired by successful European strategies. It focuses on four key pillars: raising awareness about antisemitism's threat to American democracy, safeguarding Jewish communities, challenging the normalization of antisemitism, and fostering solidarity across communities. The strategy emphasizes that antisemitism affects society

as a whole and that the U.S. aims to combat all forms of hatred.

The national strategy has been positively received by prominent American Jewish organizations, which recognize it as a groundbreaking initiative that considers antisemitism a matter of national security. Their involvement in its development is seen as a significant achievement. However, this initiative has also fallen victim to political polarization and has been criticized by some conservative and right-wing organizations.

Opponents argue that the initiative primarily addresses whiteness and supremacy while neglecting anti-Zionists in the progressive camp. Some claim that the plan lacks a clear definition of antisemitism, leading to confusion. The U.S. administration decided not to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) widely endorsed definition of antisemitism and relies instead on the Nexus Document and the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA), which do not recognize the delegitimization of the State of Israel and the denial of the right of the Jewish people to sovereignty as manifestations of antisemitism. Critics maintain that in this way the program enables the continuation of antisemitism. Additionally, the plan is accused of downplaying the severity of antisemitism by grouping it with other forms of hatred, despite Jews being disproportionately targeted.

Israeli Government Merges Units against Antisemitism and BDS at Ministry of Diaspora Affairs

The Israeli government's decision to consolidate the units responsible for combating antisemitism and the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) movement at the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs appears to be a logical step in improving effectiveness and coordination. This move acknowledges that many BDS activists hold antisemitic views and aligns with the ongoing Israeli effort to encourage the adoption of the IHRA's definition of antisemitism. However, this merger may have unintended consequences. The consolidation of these departments under one roof may hinder cooperation with progressive international actors, both Jewish and non-Jewish, who actively fight against racism and discrimination and speak out for religious freedom but harbor reservations about Zionism and Israel's political strength.

Policy recommendations:

Strategic Plans: The Israeli government and Jewish organizations must encourage the design and implementation of comprehensive plans against antisemitism at the governmental level, which include independent audit units and the allocation of adequate resources. International cooperation between peer teams from different countries, as well as adoption of uniform definitions and reporting protocols, should be encouraged.

Physical Security: The security of ultra-orthodox neighborhoods, which are major targets for violence against Jews, must be prioritized. It is recommended to concentrate on enhancing security in urban areas with visibly identifiable Jewish populations. The security of communities, supported by state aid, is contingent upon political will. Leaders of Jewish communities must establish strong ties with local political leadership to ensure proper security measures.

Enforcement: Complaints about antisemitic attacks must be taken seriously and heavy punishments must be imposed on perpetrators. Clear, practical, and measurable goals must be set to curb attacks.

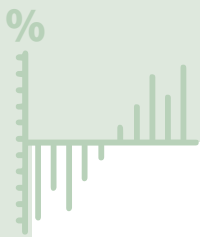
Online Antisemitism: Public, political, and legal pressure must be exerted on the owners of online platforms so that they act to prevent the spread of antisemitic propaganda (as well as the spread of disinformation and hateful messages).

Adoption of IHRA Definition: Despite any reservations, the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which has gained critical mass and is regarded as the most effective definition in the fight against it, should be adopted globally.

Dissemination of Information and Promoting Encounters: It is important to share information about Judaism with non-Jews and to encourage positive interactions between Jews and non-Jews. Research indicates that such exposure and understanding can improve attitudes towards Jews and Israel.

Endnotes

- 1 An analysis of antisemitism in France, AJC-Fondapol, March 2022.
- 2 Antisemitism Barometer 2021, Campaign Against Antisemitism, UK.
- 3 Kirsten Grieshaber, "Germany saw 2,480 antisemitic incidents in 2022, monitoring group says," *The Associated Press*, June 27, 2023. [Germany saw 2,480 antisemitic incidents in 2022, monitoring group says | AP News](#).
- 4 Study by the Forsa polling institute on behalf of the Central Council of Jews in Germany; "AfD-Anhänger stimmen antisemitischen Aussagen besonders oft zu," *Jüdische Allgemeine*, November 16, 2021.
- 5 Among the questions asked of respondents, 11 questions measuring general acceptance of various negative Jewish stereotypes were used to compile an index that has served as a benchmark for ADL polling around the world since 1964. Survey respondents who said at least six out of the 11 statements are "probably true" are considered to harbor extensive antisemitic attitudes. The ADL Global 100: An Index of Antisemitism, Update 2023. [The ADL GLOBAL 100: An Index of Antisemitism](#)
- 6 Antisemitic Attitudes in America: Conspiracy Theories, Holocaust Education and Other Predictors of Antisemitic Belief. Center for Antisemitism Research, March 2023. [Antisemitic Attitudes in America: Conspiracy Theories, Holocaust Education and Other Predictors of Antisemitic Belief | ADL](#)
- 7 SPCJ: Les chiffres de l'antisémitisme en France en 2022 <https://www.spcj.org/les-chiffres-de-l-antis%C3%A9mitisme-2022-a>
- 8 The Digital Services Act (DSA). <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-services-act-package>



Causes of Antisemitism and Attitudes Toward the Israeli Government

An analysis of data from the Jewish People Policy Institute’s “Voice of the People” platform allows us to identify a clear correlation between attitudes regarding the current Israeli government and attitudes regarding antisemitism in the United States.

In general, the subgroup of American Jews (by far the smallest) that identifies far-left groups as the “most significant cause” of antisemitism also tends to support the current Israeli government (27%) or feels that their opinion of the Israeli government is irrelevant (“respect the choice of Israelis”). In fact, half of those who see the extreme left as the main driver of antisemitism in the United States are not critical of the Israeli government. This is a very high percentage compared with the average percentage for the American Jewish community as a whole, most of which is “concerned” about the composition of the government. By contrast, among most Jews who regard the far right as the most significant cause of antisemitism in the United States, a significant majority are concerned, for various reasons, about the composition of Israel’s current government.

Most significant cause of antisemitism	Israel has a good government	Respect the choice of the Israelis	Concerned, because the Israeli government is right-wing / religious / undemocratic
Far left	27%	29%	36%
Far right	2%	8%	86%

14

Israel – Diaspora Index: Attitudes and Behaviors

The strength of the connection between Israel and Diaspora Jews can be gauged in two ways: one, through surveys examining the attitudes of Jews in Israel and the Diaspora; and the other, by analyzing their behaviors. At the end of this short chapter, we will present an example of such a behavioral analysis, which reflects the strength of the relationship, from on a comprehensive work of the Jewish People Policy Institute that is currently underway and will be presented in stages in the coming months.

Attitudes: Diaspora

In 2022, a number of surveys were conducted in Jewish communities in the United States, which examined, among other things, the strength of the connection between Diaspora Jews and Israel. The results of the surveys indicated, in general, a strong connection.

A survey conducted of the Jewish community in Long Beach, California found that Israel plays an important role in the Jewish identity of many Jews there.¹ Most of the Jews in the

Long Beach area are emotionally connected to Israel (18% are very connected, and 42% to some extent), half of them have been to Israel at least once, and almost two-thirds follow the news about Israel (23% follow very closely, and 39% to some extent). These data are similar to the data found among all American Jews in a survey conducted in 2020.²

A survey of Jews in northern New Jersey found that the feeling of connection to Israel and support for it is very strong³. A large majority of the respondents (87%) answered that they are connected to Israel (to a great extent or some extent), have traveled to Israel (87%),

and feel (to a great extent or some extent) that they have something in common with the Jews in Israel (85%). The majority of respondents also agreed strongly with the claim that Israel is essential to the future of the Jewish people (79%), feel proud of Israel (72%), and believe that concern for Israel is an essential part of being Jewish (59%). However, the majority of respondents (58%) stated that they feel uncomfortable with some of the Israeli government's policies. The survey also shows that ties with Israel are relatively weaker among members of the Reform community and younger respondents (Charts 1 and 2).

Figure 1. Connection to Israel by Religious Stream, Northern New Jersey, 2022

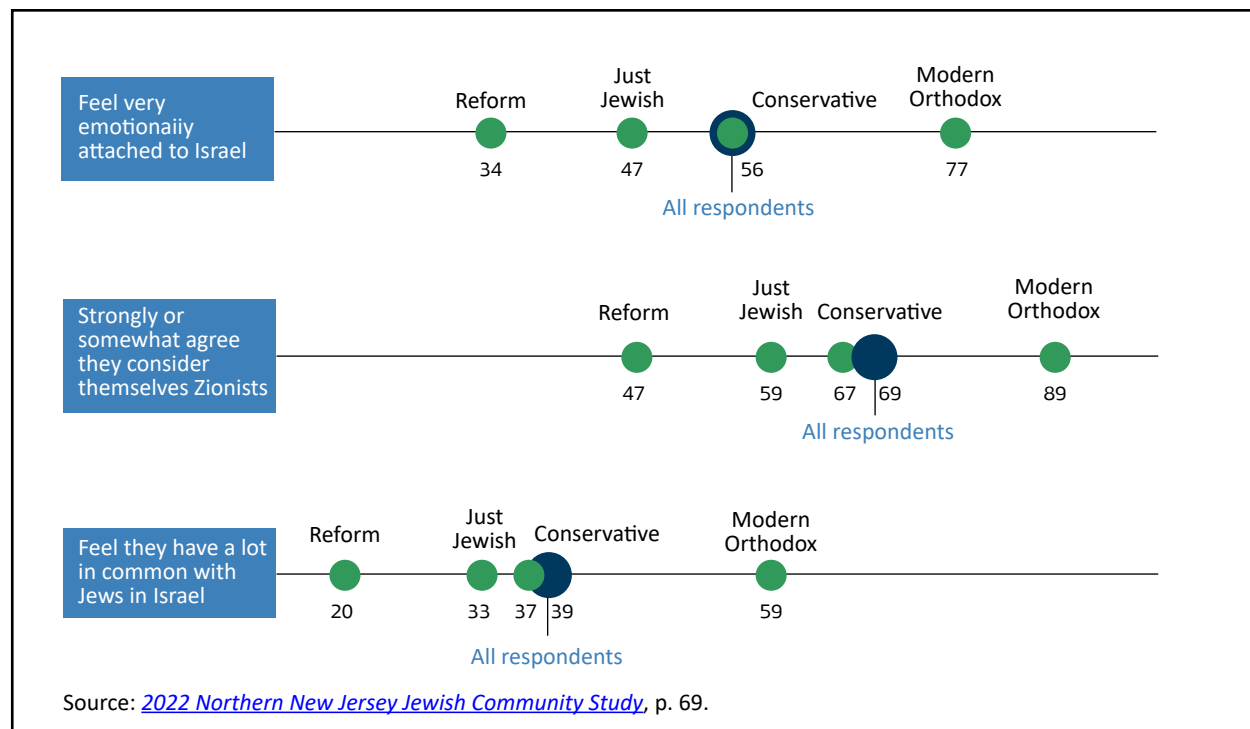
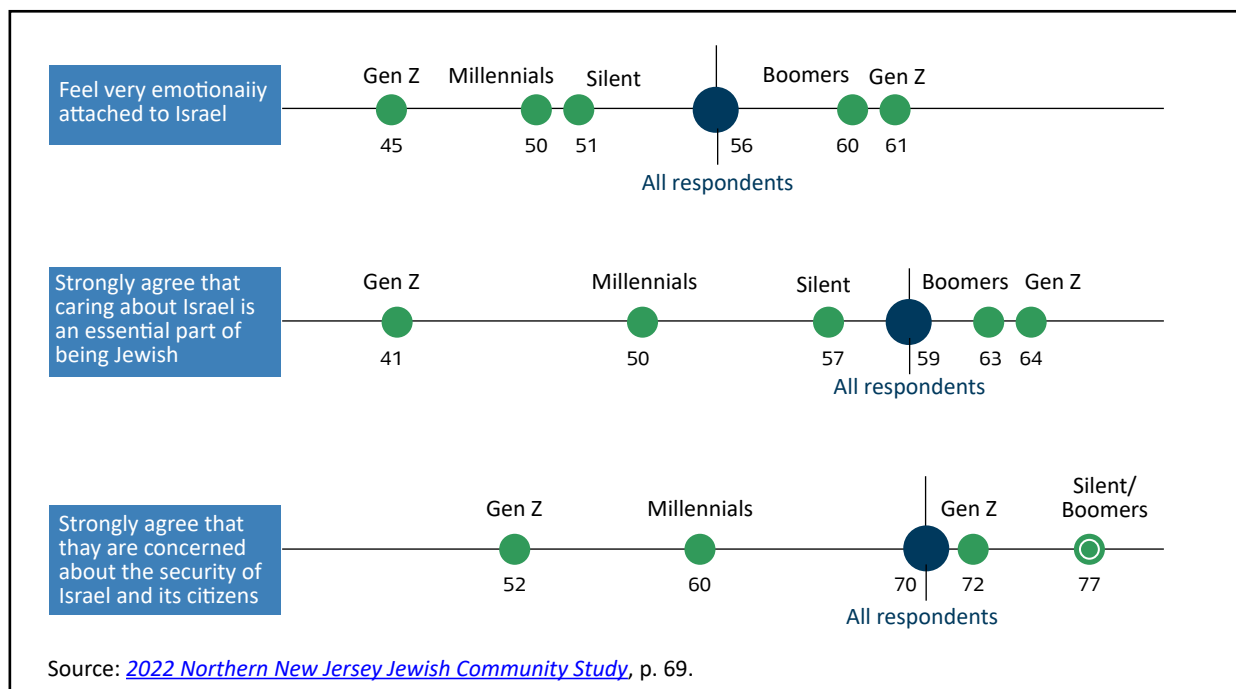


Figure 2. Connection to Israel by generational affiliation, Northern New Jersey, 2022



The surveys mentioned above were conducted before the change of government in Israel at the end of 2022, which may have had an impact on the strength of the connection. So far, only two polls have been conducted after the change of government. As these surveys were conducted in non-representative communities, it is difficult to draw general conclusions based upon them.

The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University conducted a survey in Portland, Oregon, between October 2022 and January 2023.⁴ It was published in June 2023, and its results indicate that only a minority of Portland Jews are emotionally attached

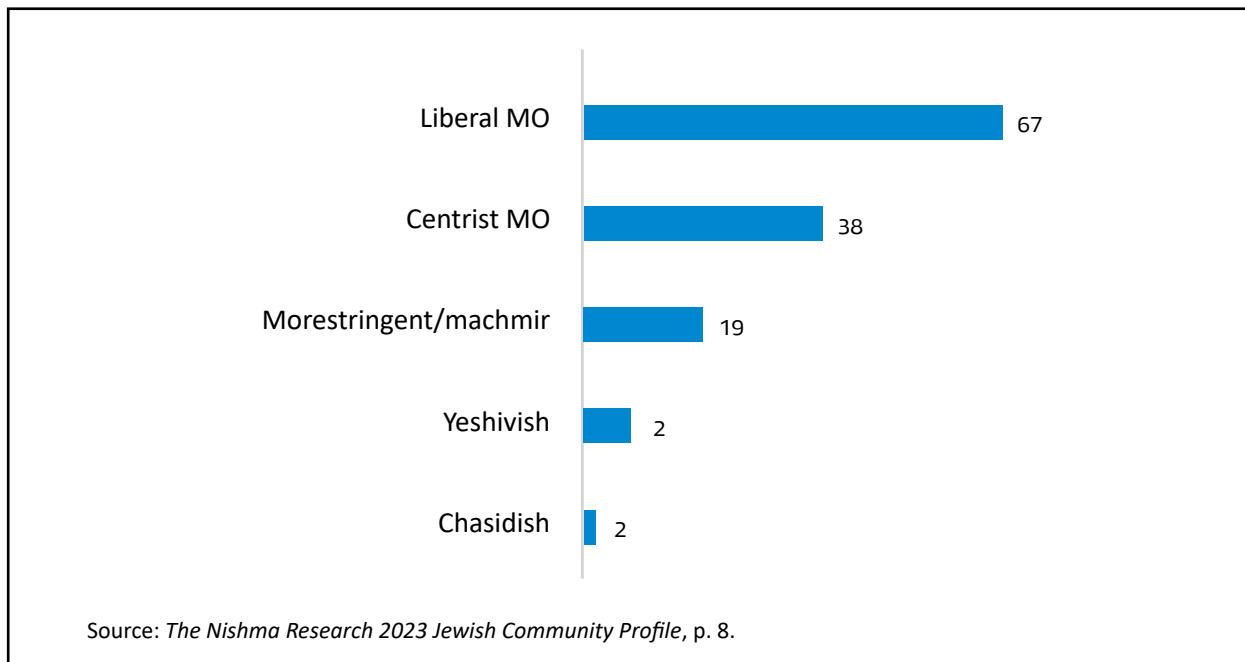
to Israel (18% are very attached and, 28% somewhat). These are relatively low rates – perhaps due to the change of government in Israel, and perhaps because the Jewish community in Portland is relatively liberal. Seventy-seven percent of adult Jews in Portland identify politically as very liberal or liberal, compared to 50% among all American Jews.⁵ In the past, many studies have shown that Jews with a liberal position tend to be less connected to Israel.⁶

Another survey published in March 2023 by Nishma Research examined the attitudes of Modern Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox American Jews.⁷ According to this survey,

88% of Orthodox Jews feel an emotional connection to Israel (65% to a great extent, and 23% to some extent), 54% of all Orthodox Jews visit Israel often (65% to a great extent, and 23% to some extent), and 78 % keep updated on the news in Israel (52% to a great extent, and 26% to some extent). The survey provides another interesting statistic about the connection of the Orthodox Jewish community in the United States to Israel: 7% of the respondents said that there is a high chance that they will immigrate to Israel in the next five years, and 14% said that it is certain that they will do so.

When respondents were asked about their attitudes toward the new government in Israel, 42% of all Orthodox Jews answered that they were satisfied with the government; 18% said they were concerned about its policy. Attitudes toward the government are related to affiliation group: among the ultra-Orthodox, the rate of dissatisfaction is about 50%, and among the Modern Orthodox, the rate ranges from 42% in the conservative wing to 11% in the liberal wing. The rate of concerned about the new government among the Orthodox according to affiliation group is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. The proportion of those concerned about the new government among the Orthodox, according to self-association group, March 2023



Prof. Chaim Waxman, in an article he published last year that reviewed the attitudes of U.S. Jews toward Israel from 1967 to the present day, stated that according to the data there is no weakening of the bond between the Jews of the United States and Israel, and that the bond has been strong and stable for many years.⁸ Although the self-definition of American Jews in religious terms has weakened over the years (today 32% of them do not identify with any religious movement, and 53% say that religion is not a significant element in their lives), they continue to identify as ethnic Jews. As such, their identification is with Jewish culture, a component of which is affinity with Israel. Waxman also explains why, contrary to the data he presents, there is a feeling among many that the connection between Israel and Diaspora Jews is in crisis.⁹

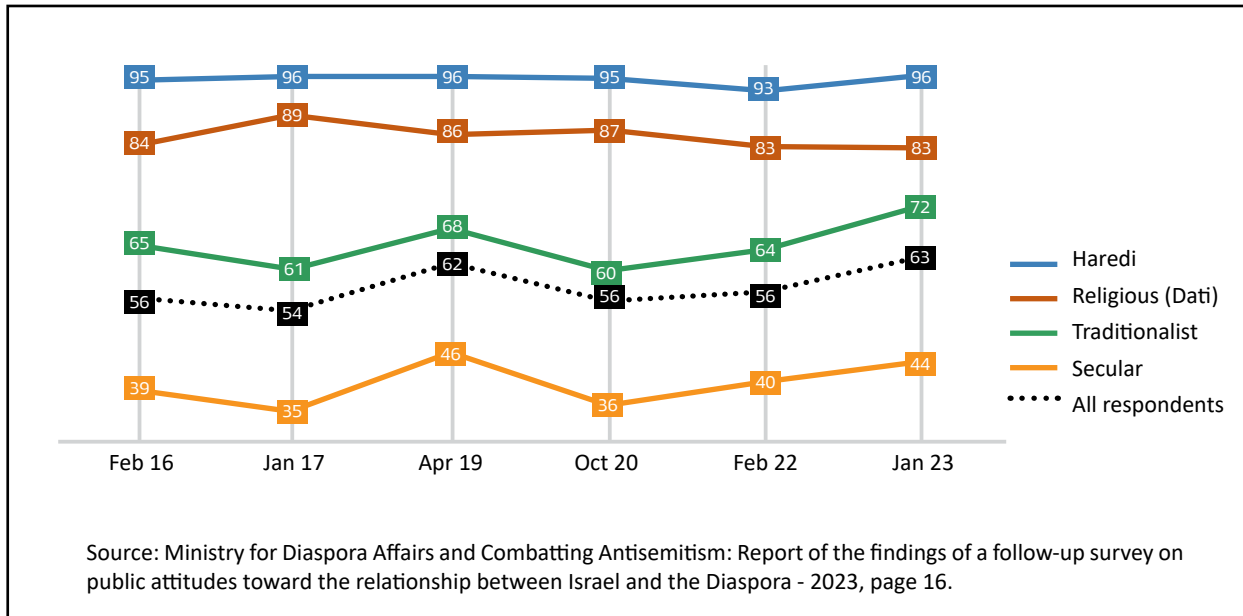
Attitudes: Israel

A survey conducted by the Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combatting Antisemitism in January 2023, following Israel's change of government, examined the attitudes of Jews living in Israel toward Diaspora Jewry in several parameters.¹⁰ The survey findings paint a positive picture of the sense of brotherhood that Jews in Israel feel toward Diaspora Jews: 63% of respondents largely agreed with the statement "I feel that Diaspora Jews are my brothers," and 69% said that "Diaspora Jews and Jews in Israel

have a common destiny even though they live in different countries." The survey also examined the sense of brotherhood through the reactions of Jews in Israel to antisemitism abroad: an absolute majority of respondents (81%) answered that they are bothered by antisemitic attacks against Diaspora Jews.

Similar to what surveys have shown for many years, this survey indicates a negative correlation between belonging to a particular religious group in Israel and the sense of closeness felt to the Jews of the Diaspora. Orthodox and religious Jews overwhelmingly tended to express greater solidarity with Diaspora Jewry than traditionalist or secular respondents. However, in the statements that concerned the consideration of Diaspora Jews in matters of religion and state, this correlation did not exist. In other words, ultra-Orthodox and religious respondents were not interested in considering the positions of Diaspora Jews on these issues.

Figure 4. Rate of those who largely agree with the statement: “I feel that Diaspora Jews are my brothers,” according to religiosity, January 2023



Behaviors

Along with measuring the strength of connection between Israel and the Diaspora, we would also like to examine various studies on the practices of Jews. This year, JPPI has devoted time and resources to investigating empirical data that reflect patterns of behavior.

One of the criteria that makes it possible to examine the strength of connection is the extent of donations to Israel. The research literature indicates that, in general, the contributions of diasporas are a means of expressing support for the country of origin, as well as a vehicle for connecting with it.¹¹

Thus, the donations of Diaspora Jewry are a vehicle for preserving and strengthening the connection between Diaspora Jewry and the State of Israel. Further, an examination of the number and size of donations may reveal whether there has been a change in attitude among Diaspora Jewry toward Israel (increasing or decreasing extent of donations).

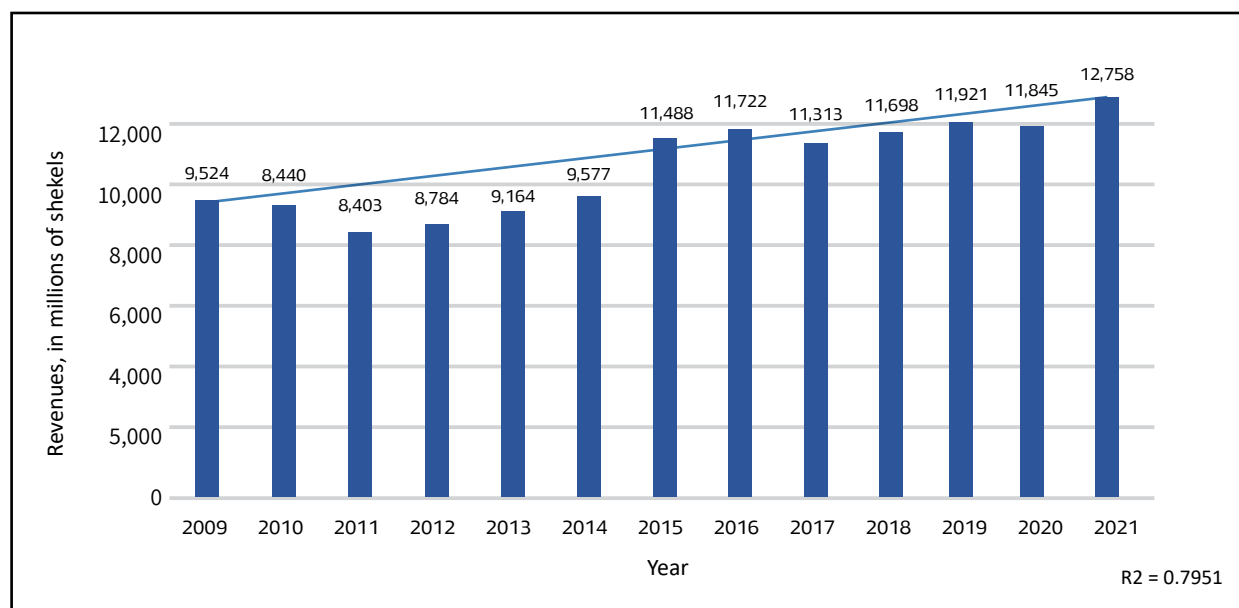
The data we have examined with respect to donations are taken from a survey of income and expenses of nonprofit organizations and institutions in Israel carried out by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS).¹² The survey encompasses all nonprofits in Israel and its data are obtained from an analysis

of financial statements of a representative sample of active nonprofits in Israel.

Donations from abroad are a source of funding for nonprofits (along with current transfers from the government, the sale of services, interest income, and donations from Israeli households). The contributions from abroad, as they are presented in the report, include current transfers received from individuals, businesses, and nonprofits abroad. Although the CBS data does not include donations from Jews only, it can be assumed with considerable probability that in most cases contributions from Jewish sources constitute the bulk of all donations.¹³

Figure 5 shows that the volume of foreign donations to Israeli nonprofits has increased, in real terms, from approximately NIS 9 billion in 2009-2013 to NIS 12.8 billion in 2021, the last year for which there is CBS data. Hence, as to the behaviors of Diaspora Jewry, at least as indicated by the pattern of donations, the connection to Israel is strong. And yet this conclusion must be qualified: the donations shown here reflect the amount of money, but not the number of donors. It is possible that fewer donors are contributing more funds, a situation that would not necessarily reflect a general strengthening of connection, but rather a strengthening of the connection of a few large donors.

Figure 5. Income of nonprofit organizations from donations from abroad, 2009-2021 (in millions of NIS, adjusted for inflation)



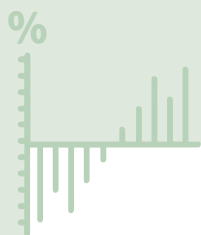
Summary

The existing data indicate a strong connection between the Jews of Israel and the Jews of the Diaspora, although it is clear that the connection is weaker among the Reform Jews in the United States and the secular Jews in Israel. Based on the above data, it is difficult to identify a real change in these connections over the last year, although it is possible that the effect of the change in Israeli government, and the social tension that resulted from it, are not yet reflected in the few surveys that have been conducted in recent months.

Endnotes

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2. Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020," <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/jewish-americans-in-2020/>. In the same survey it was found that the majority of Jews in the USA are emotionally connected to Israel (25% very connected and 32% to some extent), 45% have been to Israel at least once, and 57% follow news about Israel (14% follow very much, and 43% somewhat).
3. <https://www.jewishdatabank.org/databank/search-results/study/1206>.
4. <https://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/portland-report.html>.
5. Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020," <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/jewish-americans-in-2020/>, page 161.
6. For example, the AJC 2021 Annual Survey of American Jews found that 86% of respondents who identified as Republicans believed that a connection to Israel was important to their Jewish identity, but only 52% of respondents who identified as Democrats believed so.
7. <https://www.jewishdatabank.org/databank/search-results/study/1196>
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13. Nonprofit Income and Expenditure Survey 2009-2021, Central Bureau of Statistics, Table C. <https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/mediarelease/pages/2022>
14. As mentioned, the CBS data includes current transfers received from individuals, businesses and nonprofits abroad. They do not include government transfers to nonprofits. The data includes donations from Christian associations, but a study conducted on donations from the US to Israeli associations found that donations from Christian associations accounted for 3% of all funds raised by Israeli associations through foreign donations. Jamie Levine Daniel, Galia Feit, and Osnat Hazan. "Who Gives, Who Gets, and How Do We Know? The promises and limitations of administrative data for cross-border philanthropy tracking," VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organization 34: 91-99 (2023).



American Jews and the Crisis in Israel

In the table below from JPPI’s Voice of the People platform, one can see how strong the tendency is among American Jews to respond to events in Israel with anxiety. All the other options presented to the survey respondents were chosen at significantly lower rates than “anxiety.” Moreover, one can see that this is the response that represents the most widely felt emotion, regardless of denominational affiliation (or non-affiliation). The table also shows the second- and third-most-chosen emotional responses for each group.

From the following list, what is the emotion that best describes your feeling regarding the social-political crisis in Israel?

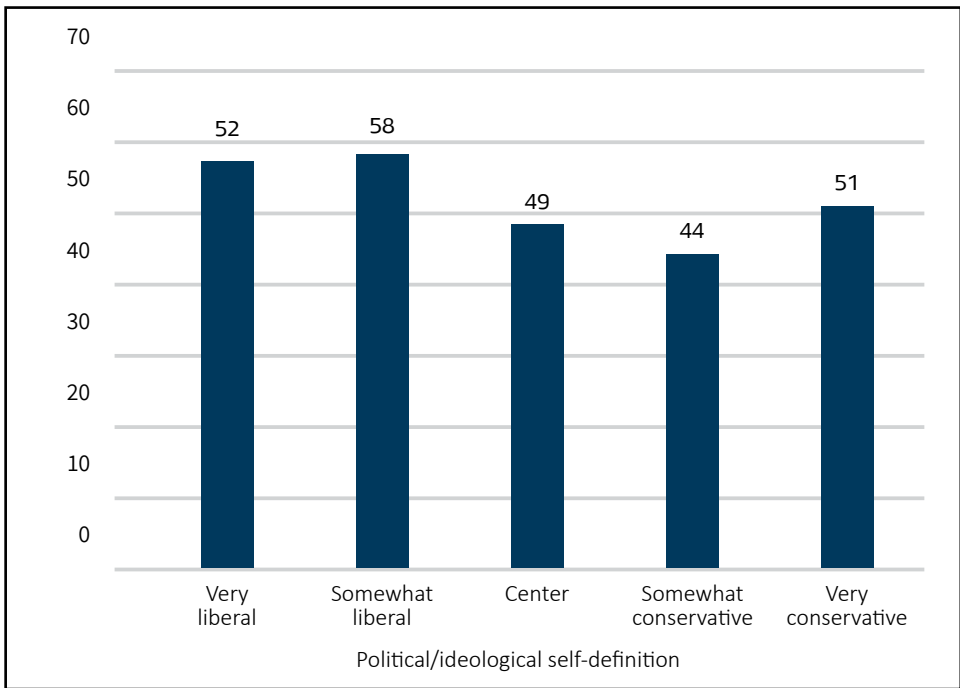
	Distanc- ing	An- ger	Anxi- ety	Close- ness	Disgust	Indiffer- ence	Astonish- ment	Pride
Non-affiliated	3%	8%	59%	5%	7%		13%	5%
Reform	7%	11%	48%	2%	13%	1%	6%	11%
Conservative	5%	13%	55%	4%	10%	1%	7%	5%
Orthodox (Modern, non- Haredi)	2%	9%	44%	5%	14%	5%	15%	8%

The following graph indicates that “anxiety” was the dominant response even when U.S. Jews were categorized on an ideological/political scale. Both liberals and conservatives chose this option at higher rates than any other option presented. Additional options chosen at significant levels were “disgust,” selected by those who self-define as “very liberal” (19% of respondents chose “disgust”), and “astonishment,” selected by those who self-define as “centrist” (21% chose “astonishment”).



In response to the question of how the events in Israel would affect the respondents’ attitudes toward Israel, the dominant answer among Orthodox and Conservative Jews was that there would be no change, while the dominant response among Reform and non-affiliated Jews was “it depends on the outcome” (a third of Conservative Jews and a quarter of Orthodox Jews also chose “it depends on the outcome”).

Percentage of those who chose “Anxiety” as a primary emotional response to events in Israel, by ideological camp



The data are based on the responses of 600 American Jews registered for the Voice of the People panel as of late July 2023. The data provide an indication of the feelings of American Jews, but the registrants do not constitute a representative sample of American Jewry as a whole.

15

Demography Index: Fertility and Population Density in Israel

Israel has an unusually high level of fertility, well above the replacement rate of 2.1. Although fertility is highest among the most religious, even among secular Israelis the average number of children per woman is high relative to other economically developed countries. Unlike other countries, where fertility rates have declined, aggregate fertility rates in Israel have remained stable over

the past 40 years, despite marked declines in some population sectors. The reason for the stability of national fertility rates over the last several decades, despite changes within some subgroups, is due to the shifting composition of the population. Population projections suggest continued population growth well into the future, leading to increased population density.

Fertility in Israel

Israel has a relatively high fertility rate of 2.9 children per woman on average as of 2020.¹ In fact, Israel has the 63rd highest fertility rate in the world.² The countries with the highest fertility rates are overwhelmingly concentrated in Africa. Israel's fertility rate is similar to that found in neighboring Egypt. However, when Israel is compared with Western and economically developed nations, its fertility rate stands out. For example, the average for OECD member states is only 1.61 children per woman.³ Even if we were to include OECD affiliate and partner nations, Israel has the highest fertility rate. This is not the result of increasing fertility in Israel, but rather of declining fertility elsewhere (Israel only surpassed Saudi Arabia in terms of birth rates in 2010, when it became the OECD country, broadly defined, with the highest fertility rate). In fact, despite minor fluctuations, Israel's total fertility rate (TFR), a measure of the average number of children per woman, has stood at around three children per woman for the last 40 years.⁴ Prior to the last four decades of stable birth rates in Israel, there had been a TFR decline in the 1970s. Large waves of migration from North Africa, and to a lesser extent, Asia, pushed up average fertility rates in Israel in the 1960s. However, immigrants from those regions, soon adjusted their fertility downward to match that of the local Israeli population, leading

to a fall in overall Israeli fertility rates.⁵

Israel is unusual in the OECD context for its high fertility and because that fertility has remained so stable over the past four decades. In 1980, Israel's TFR was 3.14, sixth highest out of 38 current OECD member states. Also in 1980, Israel's TFR was lower than those of Mexico, Turkey, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Ireland. In the last four decades, as Israel's fertility rate has remained essentially unchanged, the fertility rates of those five countries have all declined, most dramatically in Mexico, which has declined from 4.84 to 2.10 (children per woman). Thus, without any significant shift in Israel's own fertility rate, its relative position compared to other current OECD member states has grown higher.⁶

Demographic Transitions

Demographic developments are very similar across the world, although they differ greatly in terms of timing. Historically speaking, the first major demographic change in the modern era was the decline in infant mortality. Jews tended to experience these transitions earlier than non-Jews in the same region. Central and Western European Jews were the first to experience rapid population growth due to decreasing mortality, followed by Jews in Eastern Europe, with Jews in Asia and Africa experiencing the same phenomenon much later.⁷

The second demographic transition is marked by declining fertility and is still underway in many countries. In Europe, where demographic transitions occurred earlier, fertility rates in most countries are now below replacement level (2.1 children per woman). The second demographic transition is characterized by other features such as postponement of parenthood, a decline in the importance of marriage and the increase in adoption of non-traditional living arrangements, with a rise in the number of children born outside of marriage. The underlying cause of these shifts is generally considered to be a transition toward postmodern norms that emphasize self-actualization and individuality.⁸ On all counts, Israel remains something of an outlier, at least in the context of Western and economically developed nations. Israel's demographic patterns are in many ways similar to those of other countries in the region.⁹

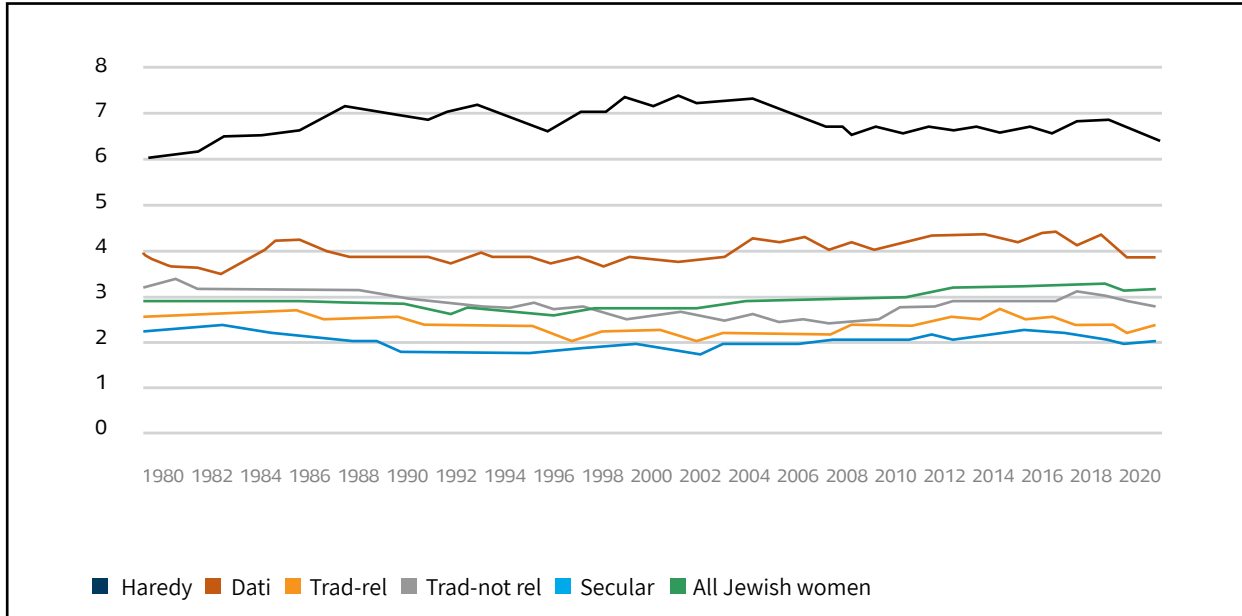
Fertility Rates by Religion and Religiosity in Israel

Despite stability in the aggregate fertility level, in Israel there is evidence to suggest that different population sectors are exhibiting wildly divergent fertility patterns.¹⁰ There is some variation in fertility rates across a range of sociodemographic characteristics such as income and education.¹¹ However,

religion seems to be one of the most important factors at play. Religious families have significantly higher fertility rates.

Non-Jewish Israelis have fertility patterns that differ significantly from those of the Israeli Jewish population. Since the 1960s, Arab Israelis have reduced their fertility markedly, from 4.7 to 2.1 among Christians, 7.3 to 2.3 for the Druze population, and from 9.2 to 3.3 among Muslims.¹² By contrast, over the past 40 years fertility rates among Jewish Israelis have remained relatively high and stable. Among Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) women, TFR has fluctuated between 6.0 and 7.3 over the past 40 years and is currently 6.45, for Dati (religious) women, it has remained within a narrower range, between 3.7 and 4.3, and is now 3.88. Traditional-religious women's TFR has remained within the 2.5 to 3.3 range and now stands at 2.82, for traditional-not-so-religious women, fluctuations have occurred between 2.1 and 2.6, with a current value of 2.34, and for secular women, the TFR ranged from 1.8 to 2.3 over the last four decades and is now exactly two children per woman. There is only one OECD country, Mexico, where the fertility rate is higher than two children per woman, which represents the (low in the Israeli context) fertility rate of secular Israeli Jewish women.¹³

Total Fertility Rate, Israeli Jewish Women by Religiosity



Given the declining fertility of the Arab sector, combined with relatively unchanging fertility among Jews, one might have expected overall fertility rates to decline. However, changes in the population structure, that is in the proportion of each sector in the population, prevent this decline. Arab Muslims historically have had very high fertility rates. As a result, the Arab Muslim population in Israel is very young, with two-thirds of Israeli Muslims under the age of 18.¹⁴ Although current fertility levels among this group are much lower than in the past, they are still above average and will push aggregate fertility rates up, especially as they constitute an increasing percentage of the cohorts that are already in, or entering, their childbearing years. A similar pattern can be

discerned in the Haredi population. They, too, represent an ever-larger proportion of each cohort and have a much higher TFR than non-Haredi women. Therefore, even though their fertility rates are essentially unchanged, their greater weight in the population leads over time to an increase in the total TFR of the entire population, offsetting the decline in fertility among Israeli Arabs.

Fertility and Population Density

The combination of an ever-increasing population, dwindling finite resources, and increasing population density have led to calls for a reduction in fertility. However, in some

countries, below replacement level fertility rates bring other concerns, particularly in relation to a lack of manpower in the labor force, the burden of an aging population, and broader concern over economic decline. While governments have succeeded in reducing fertility using draconian measures, notably in China, gentler methods of encouraging shifts in fertility, for example attempts to raise fertility by providing generous benefits and cheap childcare, have been less successful.

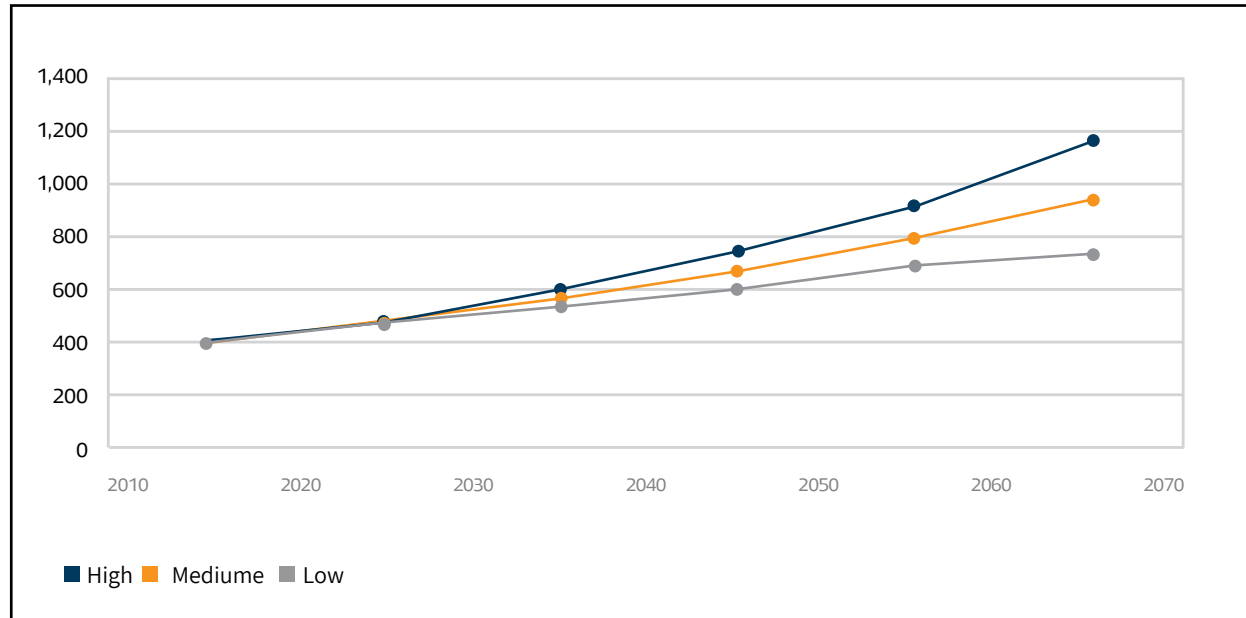
One of the main impacts of fertility is on population size and density. Israel is a small country with a total land area of 21,671 square kilometers,¹⁵ ranking 153rd out of 234 countries and territories in terms of size.¹⁶ However, in terms of population density it is ranked 34th, with 418 people per square kilometer.¹⁷ Israel is currently a little more densely populated than Belgium, but less so than the Netherlands, which is the most densely populated European country. Concerns about overpopulation are more acute given that a significant portion of the territory of Israel is classified as desert, so that the population is not spread evenly, but concentrated in the central coastal plain and Jerusalem.¹⁷ Moreover, Israel's population has grown by between 1.6% and 2.4% per year and is projected to continue growing on this scale in the coming years with a concomitant rise in population density.

Population Projections

The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS) calculates population projections, from which it is possible to estimate future population density rates. As it is almost impossible to accurately project precise population size decades into the future, the ICBS issues population projections based on three different models (high, medium, and low estimates for fertility and life expectancy). Only one estimate for migration is used as it is very difficult to predict. For instance, the major recent wave of immigration has been caused by the war in Ukraine, something that it would have been impossible for demographers working on population projections several decades ago to foresee.

The projections are calculated by splitting Israeli society into three distinct groups, each with its own fertility and mortality patterns: Jews and others excluding Haredim, Haredim, and Arabs. Although there are distinctions within these groups, such as the aforementioned differences between Christians, Muslims, and Druze within the Arab population, in order to calculate projections for small population groups, it is generally necessary to aggregate some groups together. Projection calculations are run separately for each of the three groups and then integrated to create an estimate of the future total population of Israel.

Projected Population Density



The graph above shows projected population density based on projections made by the ICBS. It indicates that even according to the most conservative estimate of population growth in Israel over the next four decades, the population density will rise dramatically to 531 people per square kilometer in 2035, rising further to 721 in 2065. The population density in 2065 according to this estimate will be higher than the current population density of Taiwan, but lower than that currently found in the Palestinian Territories. The scenario that predicts the greatest population growth indicates that population density will reach around 1,150 people per square kilometer in 2065, a level similar to current population density levels in Bangladesh. Of course,

population density in many other countries is also projected to rise; even so, Israel is expected to rise to somewhere between the 10th and the 16th most densely populated country by 2050 (depending on which model is used)¹⁹ second only to Malta in Europe in terms of population density.

Fertility and Higher Education

In Israel, the highest fertility rates are found among Haredi women, although future trends are hard to predict. In many countries, when women's education levels risen, fertility has declined. It is not yet clear whether the pursuit of further education by Haredi women in

Israel will have a similar effect. According to data from recent rounds of the Social Survey,²⁰ there does not appear to be a correlation between educational attainment and family size among Haredi women (at least up to seven children, as the ICBS does not release detailed data when a respondent has more than seven children).

Of course, it is possible that the increase in educational attainment among Haredi women, which is a relatively recent phenomenon, has not yet impacted fertility patterns, although it may do so in the future. Most Haredi women who pursue higher educational attainment are still young, so their current fertility level is still relatively low. If they decide to limit their family size and have fewer children than is presently the norm in Haredi society, it would represent a significant shift, indicating that education levels among Haredi women follow the patterns found in other societies. On the other hand, it may be that the main effect of education in reducing fertility is to be found in elementary and secondary education, therefore the pursuit of higher education among Haredi women would not have such an effect.

However, there is a relationship between labor force participation and number of children among Haredi women. The more children a Haredi woman has, the less likely she is to work or to be part of the labor force (i.e., actively seeking work, although not currently employed). This may be a result of an economic cost benefit analysis (low

wages and the costs of working outside the home), or simply that wealthier families can afford both having more children and for the mother to stay at home.

Endnote

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More Jewish Parents, More Jewish Friends

About a third of Jews in the United States report that all or most of their friends are Jewish. Having Jewish friends generally indicates a Jewish identity that has practical meaning, such as celebrating Jewish holidays or visiting Israel. American Orthodox Jews have a very high proportion of Jewish friends (88%, per 2021 Pew Research Center data). The share drops when segmented by denominational affiliation or by age cohort (younger Jews have a lower proportion of Jewish friends).

An analysis of data from JPPI’s Voice of the People platform shows a correlation between the identity of parents and the proportion of Jewish friends their children have. Half of those who grew up in families where both parents were Jewish have a majority of Jewish friends. By contrast, those who grew up with one Jewish parent (father or mother) usually have fewer Jewish friends. The circle of community in the Jewish framework is, of course, a complete circle. That is, those whose friends are mostly Jews have a greater chance of building a relationship with a Jewish partner, and the same is true in other areas of life.

My Friends

Parents	Mostly non-Jews	Half are Jews	Mostly Jews
Two Jewish parents	14%	39%	47%
Jewish mother only	38%	48%	13%
Jewish father only	41%	49%	10%
Both parents non-Jews	44%	45%	11%

CULTURAL CURRENCY

16

Flags, Handmaids, and Polarized TV

Literature, Television, Film, Theater, Art

The emotional response of Israelis to the present sociopolitical crisis is complex and multidimensional. Three manifestations of that response in the artistic and media spheres will be at center of this chapter. The heated struggle over the judicial reform made it necessary for both opponents and supporters of the government to mobilize resources and energy to maximize public visibility, attract media attention, and the transmission of clear, strong, and catchy messages. Acute political struggles invite acrimony rather than nuance, as depicted visually in protest posters featuring raised fists, in processions by women in red robes, known as the “Handmaid’s marches,” and in the sight of large crowds waving or draped in Israeli flags. The acrimony has also manifested rhetorically, particularly in broadcasts by the television channel that became a major player in the media arena – Channel 14.

My flag

JPPI’s Israeli Judaism study identified the flag as a significant element in the outward expression of connection to the state. The majority of Israeli Jews said that they “wave the Israeli flag” on Independence Day (60%). However, certain disparities were evident in rates of Israeli flag use; Israelis who hold “rightist” views, especially those belonging to the Masorti (traditionalist) and Dati (religious but not ultra-Orthodox) identity groups were more likely to say that they wave the Israeli flag. Seventy-five percent of Datiim said they wave the flag, versus half of those who self-defined as “totally secular.” In various contexts, the Israeli flag has been identified with right-wing public displays, such as the traditional Flag Parade on Jerusalem Day; by contrast, in anti-government protests of earlier years, flags other than the Israeli flag

have been used (as in the anti-Netanyahu Black Flag protests).

The decision by the organizers of the current anti-government protests to employ the Israeli flag as the main component in its visual branding should be regarded as a political-cultural act of great importance. It essentially constitutes a dual statement on the part of the protesters from both ends of the political spectrum to the opposing camp.

The message being sent by the center and the left to their right-wing counterparts is: “Though we may be protesting the government’s policies, and though most of the demonstrators are people of the center and the left, you can’t accuse or suspect us of a lack of patriotism.” In this sense, the flag is a protective shield against the prevailing view among the right that, on the other side of the political divide, there are Israelis who have a less distinct interest in the existence of Israel as a Jewish-Zionist state (for relevant data from JPPI surveys, see the Israeli Society Index, pp. 83-93). This view has been used in various political campaigns, including the current confrontation, to chastise the center and the left. The flag’s dominant presence cannot dispel this perception, but it unquestionably helped the protesters in muting it somewhat, at least in the earlier stages of the confrontation.

The statement directed to the left is similar, but with a different emphasis: it is a signal to the group setting the boundaries and

the tone of the protest movement not to allow the demonstrations to be hijacked for goals outside of those motivating most of the participants. Tensions between factions participating in the demonstrations surfaced on occasion, due mainly to the presence of groups whose primary interest relates to the Israeli government’s occupation in Judea and Samaria, the settlements, and Palestinian rights. These tensions were exemplified by a single violent incident that made the headlines: some protesters from a group calling itself Achim L’Neshek (“Brothers in Arms”) wanted to eject from the center of a demonstration a group of activists who were waving Palestinian flags and anti-settlement signs.¹

This iconography of the flag, and a similar highlighting of the Declaration of Independence, a far less meaningful symbol in the public sphere in recent decades, reflect a trend in Israel over the past year that cannot be ignored. The seemingly deep Israeli polarization might have manifested in a polarized choice of symbols – for and against. But in reality, what has been happening in Israel is not a splitting of symbols but a struggle for symbols agreed upon by all. “Mistakenly or deliberately, during the past few months some appear to have been trying to appropriate Israel’s national symbols – the flag and the Declaration of Independence – for the anti-judicial-reform protests, just as they are trying to appropriate democracy for themselves,” a columnist wrote in the right-

wing newspaper *Makor Rishon*.² That is, not only is the flag no longer the exclusive symbol of the right, to which the center-left responds with black flags, but suddenly there is a danger of the flag being “owned” by the rival camp – a clearly undesirable development in the eyes of the government’s supporters.

If we try to find a potentially positive aspect of the crisis in this development, we can again look to JPPI survey findings of the past year. One survey found that, among both government supporters and opponents, a significant emotional reaction to the crisis is the sense that it “encourages” citizens to “fight for the Israel’s image.” Thirty-eight percent of the Jewish public chose this answer over other options – a higher percentage than that garnered by any other response (the second-most-chosen option, one that should not go unmentioned and that was especially prevalent among the government’s opponents, was “The crisis is causing me despair over what awaits Israel”). Despair is, of course, a state of mind that can lead to languid resignation, whereas the decision to “fight for Israel’s image” is one that motivates for action.

The waving of the Israeli flag reflects the fact that, although a sizeable segment of the anti-government protesters are willing to relinquish state symbols and to set precedents that undermine the sense of Israeli partnership (relatively high support for “alternative Independence Day ceremonies,” “interrupting government representatives at

Yom HaZikaron ceremonies,” as well as the decision by reserve army officers to halt their voluntary service) – there is also an aspiration to use the state symbols to signal that the protesters’ aim is not to dismantle the state, but rather to preserve it and its symbols.

My anxieties

Is the status of Israeli women in peril? Among the government’s supporters, this is a question that has elicited bewilderment. Among the government’s opponents, it is a question that is being answered emphatically in the affirmative. In fact, a central motivation behind the anti-government protest activity is the assumption that the current government and the forces supporting intend to significantly change the status of women in Israel – by reducing their influence, imposing limits on their freedom, curbing their professional and economic advancement, and more.

Those who fear that the status of women will be undermined cite various examples to prove that the government is already working in this direction. For example, it has been noted that even during the coalition-formation negotiations two parties, the Religious Zionist Party and United Torah Judaism, demanded that the possibility of separating men and women at public events be enshrined in law, without it being regarded as discrimination. Prime Minister Yair Lapid hastened to respond: “This isn’t Iran.”

The debate over gender segregation has been going on for many years in Israel, and an attempt to summarize it in terms of two extreme positions – “feminist Israel” versus “Iranian Israel” does injustice to both positions. Regardless of whether one favors or opposes gender separation, the demand by the religious parties, which has also been expressed in government actions (such as the Ministry of Environmental Protection’s effort to designate gender-separate days at nature reserves³) does not *require* segregation, but rather *permits* segregation.

Atwood herself responded enthusiastically to the Israeli handmaids

This is a meaningful difference. In the first instance, the basic assumption is that there will be gender separation at every event. In the second case, the assumption

is that separation is allowed; some events will have gender separation without it being considered a violation of law.

The question of whether it is appropriate or inappropriate to permit gender separation at events for populations that want it is a complex one on which people are divided. Some believe that any separation is wrong, as it constitutes prohibited discrimination. Some believe that the option of gender separation shows consideration for populations that hold gender-separate events only. Two values are in conflict here: the value of equality between men and women, for those who

think that upholding it entails prohibiting separation; and the value of tolerance, for those who think that upholding it entails permitting separation.

In times of pronounced social tension, however, public discourse does not accommodate nuance. The growing fear among center-left secular (as well as liberal-religious) women that a traditional religious government will act to restrict them sparked one of the protest movement’s most visually striking expressions: the “Handmaids’ marches.” These marches draw their inspiration from the Canadian author Margaret Atwood’s novel *The Handmaid’s Tale* and, particularly where the visual dimension is concerned, from its adaptation for television. The book and the series depict a dystopian reality in which women are subjugated by men and have essentially been stripped of their humanity (Atwood herself responded enthusiastically to the Israeli “handmaids”).

At various times, women’s protests around the world have featured dimensions of dress and undress, in response to (male, conservative, religious) modesty demands. Polish women in black garb protested planned legislation that would make abortion difficult or illegal.⁴ Iranian women removed their hijabs to protest the country’s modesty rules, and riots broke out after the death of a young woman while in custody for not wearing the hijab, led to a major violent backlash in which, it is estimated, hundreds of anti-regime

protesters were killed.⁵ Liberian women wore white to protest violence.⁶ TikTok was the site of this year's Burn Bra Challenge against Nike (due to the company's use of a transgender influencer to advertise a sports bra).⁷ This latter protest of course echoes the 1960s-era feminist protests in the United States and elsewhere, in which women burned bras as a symbol of liberation from male tyranny.

The extensively photographed women-in-red marches did not, of course, go unnoticed. The marches, with their effective visual impact, were applauded by some but interpreted by others as expressions of a baseless anxiety at best, and at worst an attempt to delegitimize the views and lifestyles of other Israelis. Women who counter-protested with provocative signs bearing the slogan "We're daughters of a king, you're the slaves" also received widespread coverage. They objected to what they called "this crazy demonization of the right-wing camp, which has been going on for years and decades, as if we – as women – would vote for a party that wants to imprison us. It's like they're telling us we can't think for ourselves. It's ridiculous."⁸ "I feel that this crisis is based on fantasies," said Rav Shmuel Eliyahu, the Chief Rabbi of Safed. The right-wing columnist Irit Linur wrote that only "those who think Haredi women are handmaids and fertility machines – maybe they, like Atwood, would imagine the worst about a society they're unfamiliar with."⁹

Anxiety on the one hand, and superficial familiarity on the other; this is the stuff from which dystopian visions are created. The women in red really do believe that if they don't halt the government's policy initiative, they will end up like the women of Atwood's Gilead. Those who look at them from the other side of Israel's social divide truly believe that the women in red have lost contact with reality.

My channel

Marshall McLuhan's idea of the medium having a greater impact than the message is well-worn but still relevant to Israel today. McLuhan maintained that seminal historical events are not the births of religions or the emergence of movements such as feminism, but rather revolutions in the dissemination of knowledge: the printing revolution, the invention of the radio, the introduction of television sets into living rooms – and later (after McLuhan's time), life on the internet. The medium, according to McLuhan, is not merely the vehicle for the message's transmission, but rather what shapes the message itself. In Israel, amid the social upheaval, a new vehicle of this kind emerged: Channel Now 14.

Channel 14 had been in operation for several years, but gained a new momentum this year. It garnered higher ratings,¹⁰ but even more than that, it entered Israeli discursive space as a phenomenon that could no longer be

ignored. Now 14, owned by Jewish Israeli Channel Ltd., is a news and commentary channel associated with the political right, and many of its chief announcers and commentators openly support Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Various government moves were meant to strengthen the channel, financially and in terms of programming. This is the only channel on which the prime minister is interviewed routinely, and new legislative initiatives are intended to aid it in a competitive market.¹¹ The model from which the channel draws inspiration is “the great revolution launched by the Fox network in the United States when it offered a conservative alternative to the flood of American left-liberal media.”¹² The basic contention of the channel’s leadership is that Israel’s establishment media support the agenda of the center and left-wing parties. Channel 14 – like the judicial reform itself – is, in the view of its originators and managers, an attempt to recalibrate Israeli discourse so that it better correlates with the Israeli media-consuming public.

As with Fox News in the U.S., so in Israel is there no clear way to know which came first: the chicken of social tension or the golden egg of Now 14. But it is hard not to notice the close connection that emerged between Israel’s rising polarization and tension levels, and the channel’s growing dominance. In the days when the protests entered Israeli homes via television, Now 14 was the only channel whose coverage of them was conspicuously

critical and hostile, and sympathetic of the government’s reform initiative. The channel attracted viewers who had felt alienated by the other channels’ reporting, and it began to set a journalistic tone that also had an influence on the right-wing parties.

Several of Now 14’s stars also have a social-media presence and impact; they have become major and influential voices among the social groups that are close to them ideologically. Like similar channels around the world, Now 14 takes a blunt and aggressive tone, and from time to time becomes caught up in “scandals” due to the outrageous statements of its presenters. These statements fuel debate, which in turn fuels interest in the channel and bolsters its status as a forum for what it claims is Israel’s silent majority. “For those in the national camp and most of the Israeli people, it may be the only place on television where their voice can be heard.”¹³ Now 14 is not, in fact, as dominant in the ratings as one might expect a channel that reflects the “majority” view to be, among other things because it is devoted almost exclusively to current events and is not a full-service broadcaster. Nevertheless, viewer surveys show that, as in the U.S.,¹⁴ one can now detect in Israel a viewership split between channels according to ideological outlook. Other channels responded to the rise of Channel 14 in a number of ways, including attempts to offer a different kind of journalistic balance – the prominent inclusion of speakers aligned with

Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.mekomit.co.il/-/בעיני-אחים-לנשק-הגוש-נגד-הכיבוש-צריך-ל/>
- 2 <https://www.haaretz.co.il/opinions/2023-07-03/ty-article-opinion/.premium/00000189-1c3a-d145-a1e9-1f7eac130000>
- 3 <https://www.israelhayom.co.il/news/politics/article/14449526>
- 4 <https://www.haaretz.co.il/literature/study/2016-10-23/ty-article/.premium/0000017f-e2d5-d568-ad7f-f3ff9dcd0000>
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- 10 <https://b.walla.co.il/item/3565346>
- 11 <https://www.the7eye.org.il/487194>
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17

Religion, Culture, Sociology and History in 5783 (2023)

This chapter surveys trends in traditional and religious culture, in Israel and the Diaspora. The developments presented describe how Jews relate to religious and cultural meaning as well as to the implications that stem from the basic conditions of Jewish life. This year's chapter focuses on studies and works that deal with Hasidism.

Hasidism in Context

Satmar in New York

Interest in Hasidism, the Jewish spiritual and communal movement founded by R. Israel Baal Shem Tov in the mid-18th century, has increased over the last 50 years, ever since it became apparent that despite the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Hasidim in the Holocaust and the eradication of their communities, flourishing Hasidic communities have re-established themselves in Brooklyn, Jerusalem, Bnei Brak, and elsewhere. Such interest of course, mainly focused upon the Hasidic communities themselves, their beliefs and practices as well as their internal organization, both in the community and the family level. There

has been, in the past year or two, a new level of interest in the relationship of Hasidism to their non-Hasidic environments. This in the widest sense possible – their geographic, political and social environments, but also their religious and cultural ones – especially among non-Hasidic Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews. This interest is apparent in scholarly books, artful photographic essays (both discussed below) and even popular TV series. It seems that Hasidism has become normalized. One need not dwell only on the exotic beliefs and practices of these communities but could also ask how they fit into today's multi-cultural and multi-ethnic world. How do they manage in the modern city, and how do they build insular communities outside of the city in rural and suburban spaces?

Precisely these questions are asked in two books about the large and powerful but decidedly insular Satmar Hasidic community. Founded in the 20th century in the Romanian city of Satu Maru, they never participated in traditional shtetl life. From the start they were an ideological group opposed to Zionism and modernity and they used modern urban life to achieve their ends. One book describes and analyzes the urban Satmar community of Williamsburg, Brooklyn while the other focuses on Kiryas

The American ideals of private property and religious freedom made Kiryas Joel possible

Joel, the exclusively Satmar township up the Hudson River. Both books claim that despite its seeming strangeness vis-à-vis American values and the American way of life, the Satmar communities fit

remarkably well into both the New York and general American environment. The first book, *A Fortress in Brooklyn: Race, Real Estate and the Making of Hasidic Williamsburg*, by Nathaniel Deutsch and Michael Casper (Yale University Press, 2021) details the urban savvy of the Satmar Hasidic community, while at the same time portraying their different points of view regarding urban populations and space. Thus, they welcomed the replacement of Williamsburg's non-Hasidic Jews with low-income blacks and Puerto Ricans, believing

that the cultural and social gap between the groups would keep at bay the temptation of young Hasidim to leave their community. The Satmar, poor and with large families, were the only white group to live in New York City public housing in the 1950s, and they were able to work the system to become recognized as a "disadvantaged minority group," making them one of the largest recipients of federal and state aid.

If Satmar Williamsburg presents a "classic New York City story," the American liberal ideals of private property and religious liberty made possible the establishment of Kiryas Joel, an exclusively Hasidic enclave 60 miles northwest of New York City ruled by Jewish religious law. As described in *American Shtetl: The Making of Kiryas Joel, A Hasidic Village in Upstate New York*, by Nomi M. Stolzenberg and David Myers (Princeton University Press, 2022), Kiryas Joel started as a private property association in which fellow Hasidim were invited to settle. Due to the political muscle of the Hasidic voting bloc, it eventually became a municipal village with its own New York State school district, which provides public school education for special needs children, which like the Hasidic parochial schools are also separated by gender. Thus, claim its authors, because Kiryas Joel builds upon the American values of private property and the American political system, it is a "quintessentially American phenomenon."

The Satmar story resonates well with the

conclusions of the late Prof. Menachem Friedman, the founder of Haredi Studies in Israel. The Haredi learning society, he argues, is only made possible by the Israeli welfare state, whose various payments and programs support Haredi families, which are generally large and poor. It used to be supposed that modernity, especially its urban, industrial and impersonal variety, weakened religion – that as result of its influences people abandoned the traditional, religious way of life. The Satmar case shows that certain kinds of religion do well in modern, urban environments. This is especially true of ideological religion, which does not rest upon traditional customs and beliefs and the authority of the past, but rather on an active belief in competition with other ideologies (for example being committed to Christianity as opposed to communism or democracy). Such religions very often prepare one for life in the modern city by promoting systematic thinking and a disciplined life style, which enable stable family life and savings. The Evangelicals in Latin America and Pentecostals in Africa are good examples of this, as are the Haredim in Israel and the United States.

Hasidim as Guests in Poland

If the Satmar are an American and New York phenomenon, for award winning Polish photographer, Agnieszka Traczewska, Hasidism is something of a Polish or Polish-Jewish phenomenon. Traczewska documents the return of the Hasidim to Poland more than seven decades after the Holocaust. Her new photo-essay, published in the Spring 2023 issue of the Jewish Review of Books, explores the contemporary Hasidic presence in Krakow. Hasidim come there to visit the graves of famous tzadikim (leaders of Hasidic sects; literally – “righteous men”) and to pray in famous synagogues. The Hasidim are to be found in fields, cities, and forests where there are graves, synagogues, and the remnants of former communities. As in the Jewish Museum in Berlin, presence is a way of denoting absence. The increasing presence of Hasidim as visitors and tourists underscores the absence of Jews and Hasidim as an intrinsic part of Polish life, a role they had played for about 200 years.

Traczewska uses chiaroscuro effect lighting, which gives her photographs a painterly quality. With her radiant blonde hair and blue eyes, Traczewska is unmistakably Polish. But like the Puerto Ricans of Williamsburg, her goyishness is an advantage. She is allowed into spaces that no Jewish or Hasidic woman can enter. Like the novel of Nobel laureate, Olga Tokarczuk, *The Books of Jacob*, about the Frankist movement in Poland, Traczewska’s

work, through its dialectic of presence and absence, also challenges the boundaries between what is Polish and what is Jewish. Similar to the books on Satmar, it tends to deny that Hasidism – insular as it looks – is a self-contained phenomenon. Rather, it is a living, breathing thing in constant interaction with its (American, Polish, Israeli) environment.

Hillel Zeitlin and Arthur Green

The interaction and interpenetration between Hasidism and its environment extends beyond the geographical, national, and political dimensions. It also extends to the realms of religious thought, practice, and experience. Modern Western interpretation and appropriation of Hasidism, often called “Neo-Hasidism” or New Hasidism, is over a hundred years old. Famously, the founder of that movement was Martin Buber with his interpretation of Hasidism and his collected and translated Hasidic stories, *Tales of the Hasidim*, considered to be classics of religious existentialism. However, Buber’s religious outlook was entirely antinomian. He held that following religious rules interfered with the spontaneous freedom of true existential encounters with God, and with fellow human beings. Hence, there was a great gulf fixed between Buber’s antinomian Hasidically inspired religious existentialism and actual Hasidim, who, of course, kept strict Orthodox observance.

Buber and his Neo-Hasidic teachings were associated with thoroughly anti-Orthodox forces such as the Reform movement in the United States and the secular Kibbutz movement in Israel (especially Hashomer Hatzair).

Though, there might have been a perception of two radically different approaches, all this time, from the first decades of the 20th century, there were figures who occupied the middle position, that is, Neo-Hasidic writers and thinkers who were not fully Orthodox but who nevertheless were friendly toward traditional practices and, to one degree or another, committed to at least some of them. Such “middle personalities” included Abraham Joshua Heschel and Hillel Zeitlin of the early and mid-20th century, and Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Arthur Green of the second half of the 20th century and the early 21st century. It may be a sign of the times that these figures are both garnering attention and inspiring new projects. Two books have appeared recently: a new biography of Hillel Zeitlin and Arthur Green’s summary of his views on Judaism and its meaning for the world.

Hillel Zeitlin (1871 – 1942) was born into a Hasidic (Chabad) family in Poland. As a young man, he left the Hasidic fold and became a follower of literary romanticism and Nietzsche. After several years he returned to an interest in Judaism, but as a seeker of religious truth and experience. A very prolific writer and publicist, it is not

clear to what extent he committed himself to Orthodox practice. What he sought was a renewal of religious experience, “similar to what the original Hasidic movement accomplished under the leadership of the Baal Shem Tov” but in terms appropriate to the 20th century. A new Hebrew biography of Zeitlin stressing the ethical aspects of his thought was recently published by Rabbi Dr. Oz Bluman (*Ish MeShoresh Navi: HaMeimad Haeti B’bakashat HaElohim shel Hillel Zeitlin*, Idra Press, 2023 – trans. A Man Rooted as a Prophet: The Ethical Dimension of Hillel Zeitlin’s Quest for God). Zeitlin was reportedly killed in Treblinka wearing tallit and tefillin and holding a copy of the Zohar.

Green recently published a book summarizing his philosophy, *Judaism for the World: Reflections on God, Life, and Love* (Yale University Press), which appeared in Hebrew translation this year, *Arthur (Art)*. Green came from a secular background and became interested in religious Judaism through his maternal grandmother. Throughout his life, Green vacillated between religious and non-religious life styles. Today, he remains attached to some religious practices “because this is the way that Jews live,” but disavows Orthodox belief. He wrote an important biography of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, a new updated Hebrew edition of which is now being published. Green also recently edited (together with Ariel Evan Mayse) a two-volume anthology, *A New Hasidism: Roots*

and Branches (Jewish Publication Society, 2019) with selections from Hillel Zeitlin, Abraham J. Heschel, and others.

Green was also involved in two important religious initiatives which combined contemporary spirituality with aspects of religious observance, thus blurring the boundaries between Orthodox and non-religious lifestyles. The first was the founding of the first non-Orthodox New Hasidic prayer group – the Havurah of Sommerville Mass (1968). The second was the post-denominational rabbinical program at Hebrew College in Boston, established in 2003. Both initiatives demonstrate the lack of significance that conventional organizational or denominational boundaries have for many contemporary religiously engaged Jews who eclectically mix Jewish religious and non-traditional spiritual elements (Buddhism, yoga, etc.) in a search for meaningful religious rituals and experiences.

This contemporary mixing of traditional religious practices, Hasidic spiritual teachings emphasizing direct encounters with God and contemporary non-Jewish, or even non-religious, spirituality, represents a dance between the religious DNA of Judaism, which is communal and practice oriented (and not individualistic and “faith” oriented), and the contemporary liberal individualist ethos. Hasidism is a valuable resource because it emphasizes the direct encounter with God and also celebrates community and practice.

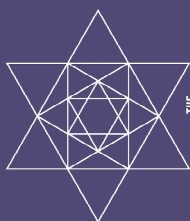
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