The Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI)

Diane and Guilford Glazer Information and Consulting Center

Israeli Society Index, April 2024

Arab Israelis: Six Months into the Gaza War

JPPI's Monthly Israeli Society Index for April 2024 focuses on the attitudes of Arab Israelis six months into the Israel-Hamas war. A very small percentage of Israel's Arab citizens (4%) support the continuation of Hamas rule in Gaza. A third say that since the start of the war they have been more careful not to stand out in the company of Jews, while a significant percentage estimates that riots have not broken out in the Arab sector due to "fear of taking to the streets in the difficult atmosphere that has developed."

The report has three main parts. Part 1 deals with Arab reactions to the war, Part 2 with Arab relations with the state and the Jewish sector, and Part 3 (the shortest) with Arab attitudes in relation to the Temple Mount (Haram al-Sharif).

Main Findings

- A quarter of Arab Israelis support Palestinian Authority (PA) rule in Gaza, and a significant proportion favor an international force led by Arab countries.
- Arab Israelis report mainly feeling "fear" and "concern" following the October 7 attacks, and "sorrow" over Israel's counteroffensive in Gaza.
- Most Arab Israelis oppose the expulsion of students who express support for Hamas on social media, or of Jewish students who express controversial positions.
- Most Arab Israelis feel that Israel wants to "keep Muslims away from Haram al-Sharif" (the Temple Mount). Only 10% agree that "there was a Jewish temple" on the Mount.
- For Arab Israelis, addressing crime in the Arab sector is a top priority, but they express very low levels of trust in the police and fairly low levels of trust in the justice system.
- Only 10% of Arabs feel that Jewish-Arab relations in Israel will improve once the war ends; 40% feel that they will worsen.
- Only half of Arab Israelis believe their children or grandchildren should live in Israel. Most Christians feel that it would be better for their children to live in the United States or Europe.

Arab Israeli Reactions to the War

Will Israel win?

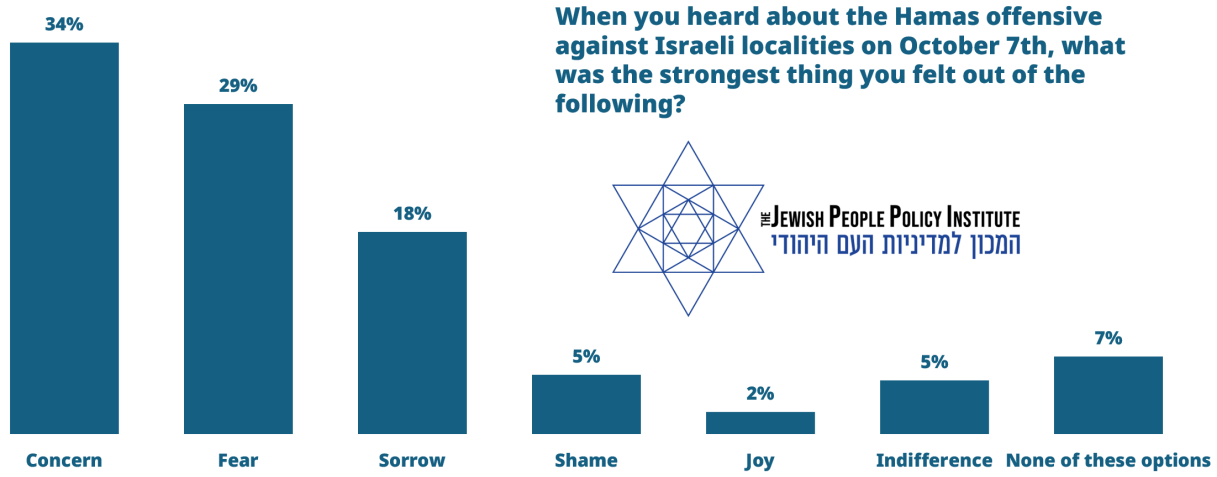
Throughout the six months of the war, Arab Israeli confidence in an Israeli victory has been significantly lower than that of Jews. The data for April show that 29% of Arab Israelis believe with high confidence that Israel will win (4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5). However, among the Arab sector's Christians and Druze, confidence in an Israeli victory is high – 70% of Druze respondents and 65% of Christian respondents put their confidence ratings at the highest levels. It should be noted that the number of Christian and Druze respondents in the survey sample is relatively small, in accordance with the size of these groups within the Arab population as a whole. Therefore, findings for these groups should be treated with some caution.

How confident are you that Israel will win the war?

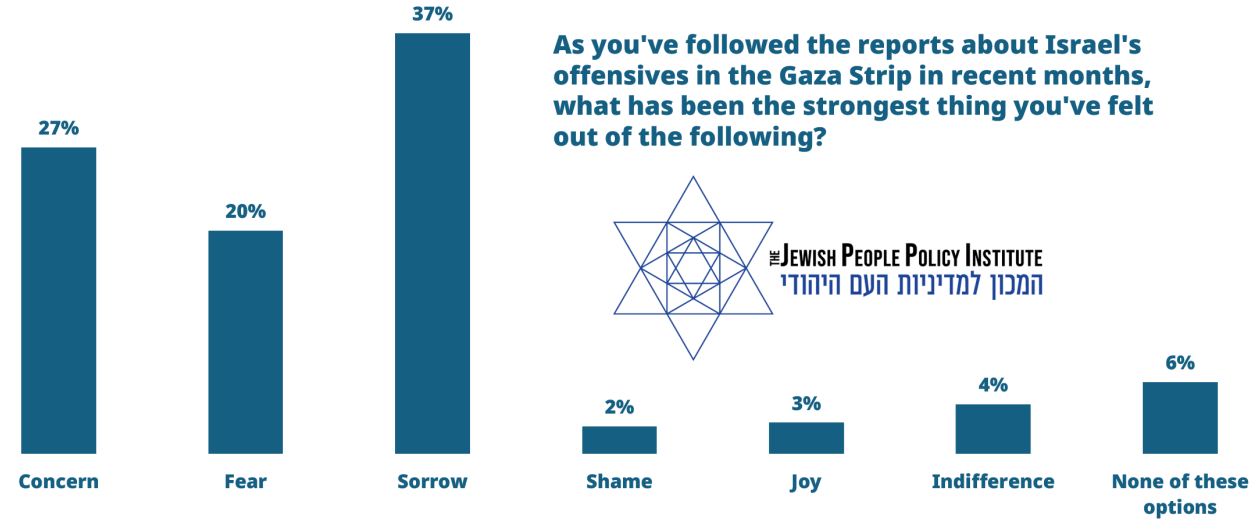
	February	March	April
Not confident at all – 1	27%	31%	23%
2	17%	16%	17%
3	28%	25%	31%
4	9%	12%	11%
Completely confident – 5	19%	16%	18%

What do they feel?

The survey queried their emotional response to Hamas's October 7 offensive, and their emotional reaction to Israel's counteroffensive in Gaza. Respondents were asked to choose one option from the six offered for "the strongest thing you felt." The two dominant reactions to the Hamas raid were "concern" (a third of all respondents) and "fear" (nearly 30%). The responses of Christians and Druze differed slightly; among Christians, "fear" was the main feeling (35%), with a quarter choosing "sorrow." "Sorrow" was the strongest for 30% of Druze respondents, but for them, too, "fear" was the dominant emotion (34%).



The same range of emotions was also presented with regard to "Israel's attacks in the Gaza Strip." In this case, the dominant feeling was "sorrow," though there was an age gap in this regard: a third of young people up to age 34 chose "sorrow" (32%), while among older respondents "sorrow" was the option selected by over 40%. Among the Druze, a much lower share chose "sorrow" (19%), while "concern" was the option most often chosen (23%), immediately followed by "joy" (19%).



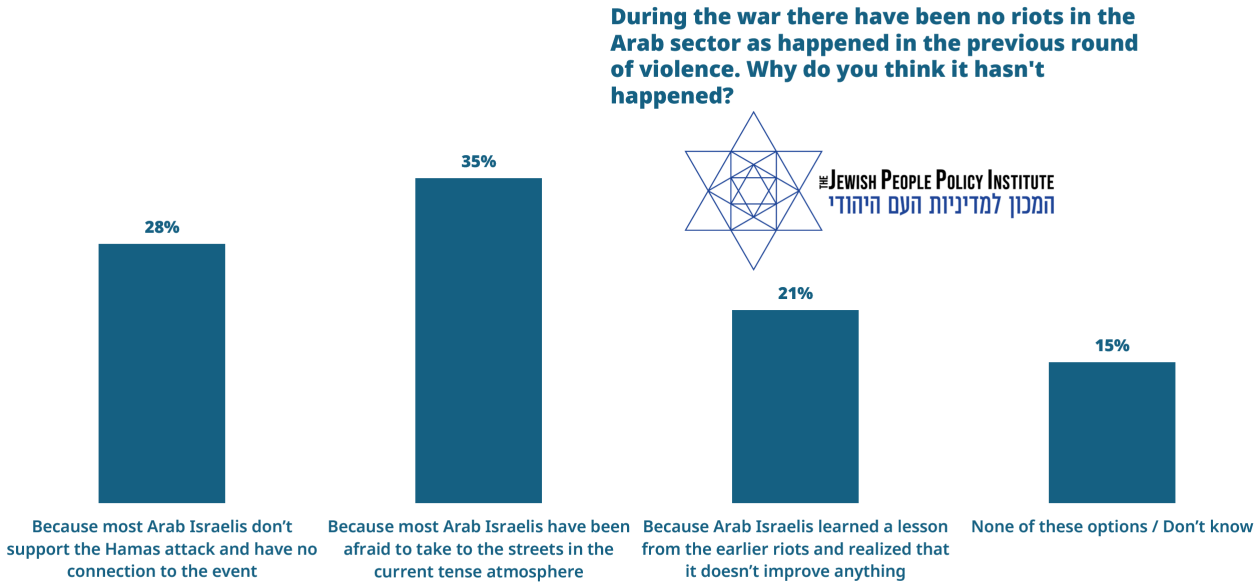
In a similar context, the survey also asked "During this war, have you been behaving normally, or are you more careful in settings where there are Jews?" A majority of respondents (and a very large majority among Druze respondents, 81%) said that they have been behaving normally during the war. However, a sizeable share of more than a third (35%) said they are "a little" or "much more" careful not to stand out when they are in Jewish settings.

Behave normally	59%
A little more careful not to stand out when I'm in a Jewish setting	17%
Much more careful not to stand out when I'm in a Jewish setting	18%
Actually call attention to the fact that I'm Arab when I'm in a Jewish setting	2%
Don't know	3%

Why have there been no riots?

Concerns early in the war that Arab Israelis would join the circle of violence in a manner similar to May 2021 proved unfounded. Opinions are divided as to why Arab Israelis chose not to take to the streets this time around. In an earlier JPPI survey, Jewish respondents were asked to express their opinion on this issue, with nearly half (46%) stating that the reason was that Arab Israelis do not identify with Hamas, while almost the same percentage (42%) said the reason was "fear of joining in" (even though the Arabs "identify with Hamas," according to these same Jewish respondents).

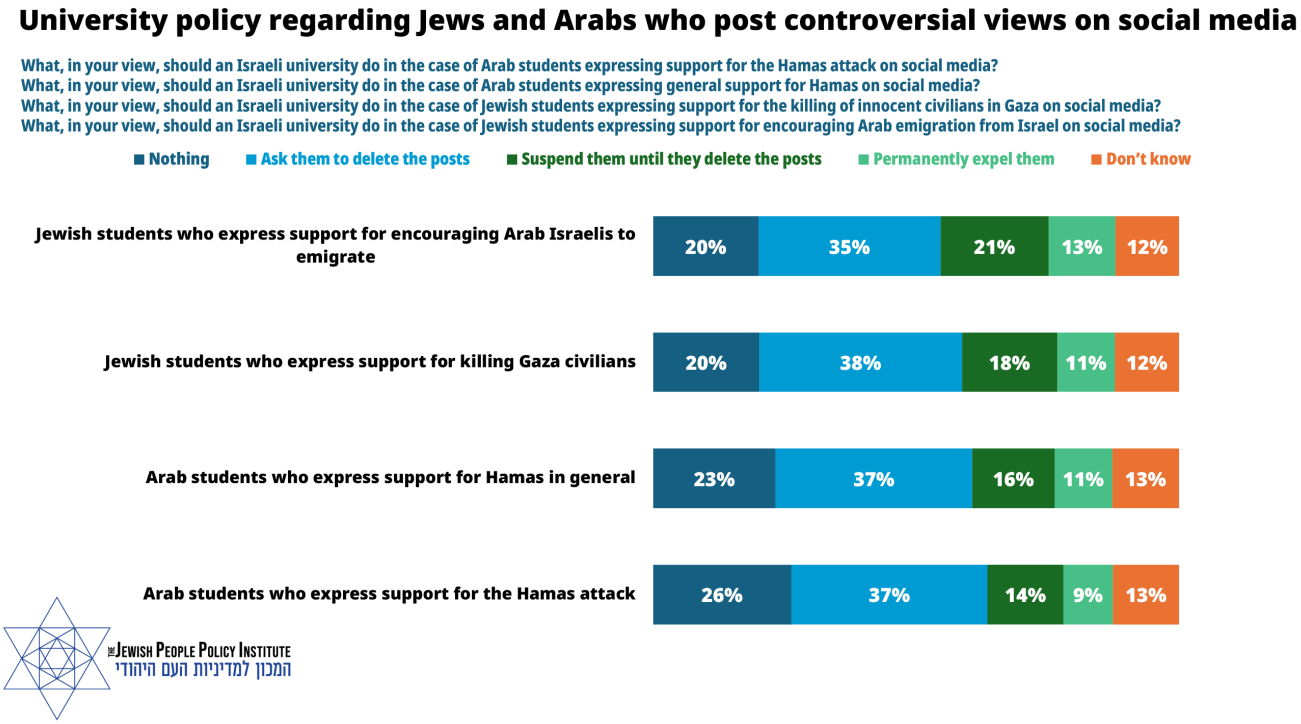
The questionnaire administered to Arab Israelis contained three explanatory options: a lack of support for Hamas; the belief that violence during a tense period serves no purpose (a lesson learned from the May 2021 episode); and fear of taking to the streets in the current tense atmosphere, chosen by a third of respondents (35%) overall and 47% of those aged 55 and over. Among Christians, the explanation chosen by an especially large share (60%) was that "most Israeli Arabs don't support the Hamas attack and have no connection to the event"; this explanation was chosen by a much smaller share of Muslim respondents (24%).



How to treat those who identify with Hamas?

The survey examined Arab Israeli attitudes regarding actions that should or should not be taken against students in a variety of situations involving the expression of controversial views. This set of questions follows reports of several instances of Arab students being subjected to disciplinary action or expelled from their studies after posting messages of support for Hamas or condemnation of the IDF on social media. To determine the consistency of responses regarding these incidents, respondents were presented with four scenarios – two dealing with the expression of controversial views by Arabs and two with the expression of controversial views by Jews. As the graph below shows, respondents tended to demand harsher punishment for Jews than for Arabs, though it should be noted that this tendency could certainly also be due to the differing example views the questions attributed to Jewish and Arab "students."

Overall, a significant majority of Arab Israelis believe that no action should be taken against students who express controversial views, beyond requesting that they delete their social media posts. However, a third feel that a Jewish student who calls for the encouragement of Arab emigration from Israel should be expelled. A slightly lower percentage feel that a Jewish student who expresses support for killing Gaza civilians should be expelled, while a quarter feel that students who express support for Hamas or for the Hamas offensive against Israel should be expelled.



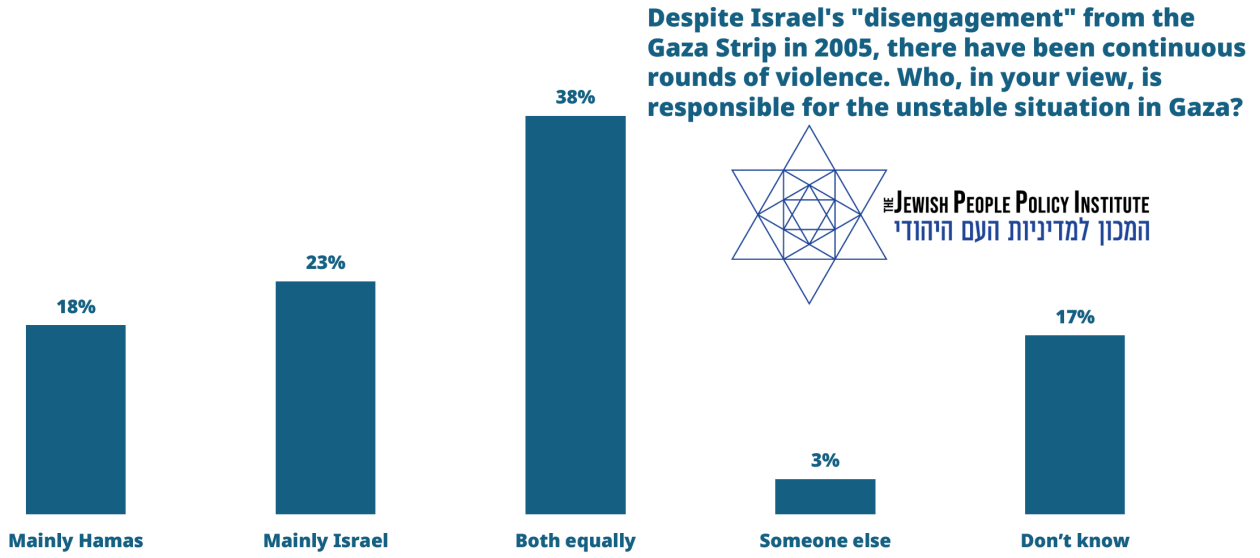
On these questions there is a significant and consistent disparity between Muslims and Christians/Druze.

What, in your view, should an Israeli university do in the case of Arab students expressing support on social media for the Hamas attack?

	Muslims	Christians	Druze
Nothing	30%	14%	2%
Ask them to delete the posts	40%	33%	17%
Suspend them until they delete the	11%	32%	25%
Expel them permanently	5%	9%	53%
Don't know	14%	12%	4%

What should be done the day after the war?

Arab Israelis tend to blame both Hamas and Israel for the continued rounds of fighting in Gaza since the 2005 disengagement. Most Christians and Druze mainly blame Hamas, but among the Muslim majority 43% blame both sides equally, a quarter (24%) mostly blame Israel, and less than a tenth (9%) mainly blame Hamas.



When presented with possible arrangements in Gaza for the "day after" the war, nearly a third of the respondents chose administration by an international Arab force (30%). Only 4% supported continued Hamas rule. Nearly half of Christian (46%) and Druze (43%) respondents chose Israeli administration, with a similar percentage of both groups choosing administration by an international force (43%).

Which of the following solutions do you think should be implemented in the Gaza Strip when the war ends?	
Israeli administration	19%
Hamas administration	4%
Palestinian Authority administration	24%
Administration by local Gazan leadership	23%
Administration by an international Arab force	30%

On Relations with Jews, Identity, and Priorities

Trust in leaders

Arab Israeli trust in the government is quite low, as it has been in previous months. This month, less than a quarter of respondents expressed a high degree of trust, while nearly all the rest expressed low degrees of trust, including very low trust among nearly half the respondents (43%). Changes in the data have been detected from month to month, largely stemming from sample size differences. Nevertheless, the overall picture remains quite similar: a small percentage of Arabs place high trust in the government, a situation countered by the Christian minority's relatively high degree of trust in the government (59% of Christians place fairly high or very high trust in the government).

Trust in the government: Arab Israelis

	January	February	March	April
Very high	4%	7%	2%	8%
Fairly high	22%	9%	13%	14%
Fairly low	35%	29%	43%	29%
Very low	27%	49%	34%	43%
Don't know	11%	6%	7%	6%

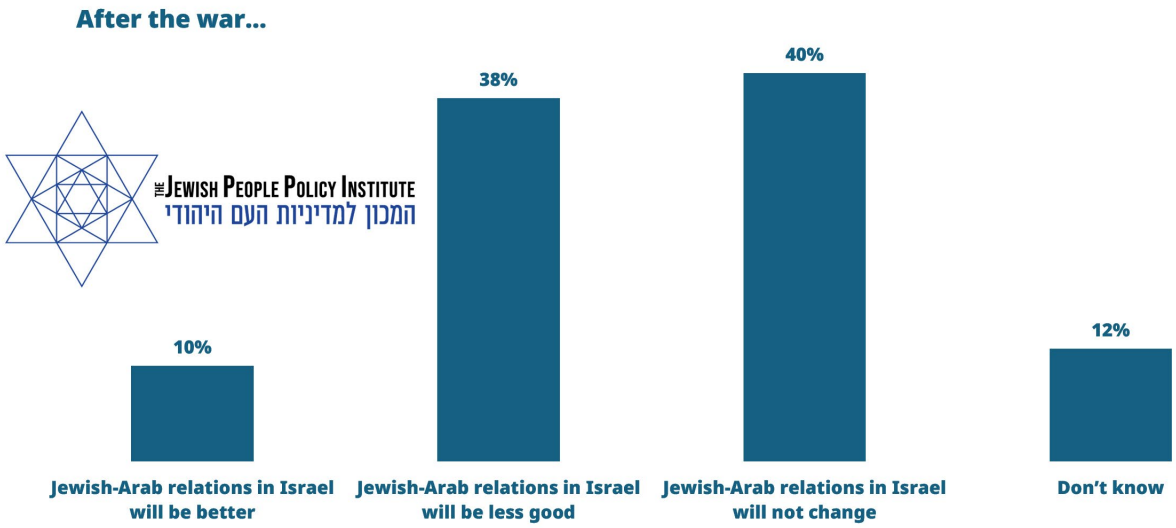
April's data set is based on a sample of 600 respondents, earlier months' data on a sample of 200

Arab Israeli trust in Israel's prime minister is even lower. Fifteen percent place fairly high or very high trust in Netanyahu, 79% place fairly low or very low trust in him. As one can see, there has been no substantial change for this parameter over the past few months.

Trust in the Prime Minister: Arab Israelis

	January	April
Very high	4%	6%
Fairly high	8%	9%
Fairly low	21%	21%
Very low	55%	58%
Don't know	11%	5%

A significant share of Arab Israelis (four out of ten) believe that Jewish-Arab relations will worsen after the war; a tenth believe relations will improve; and 40% believe there will be no change.

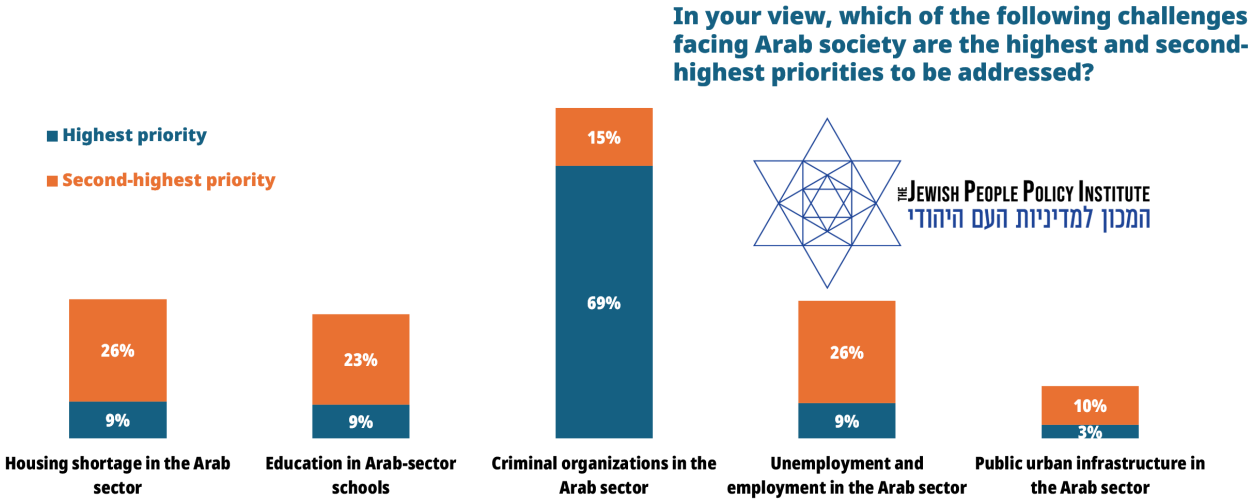


A very high percentage of Israeli Arabs rate the handling of the crime problem in the Arab sector as their top priority versus other options presented to them, such as improving the education system or addressing urban infrastructure. This finding is concomitant with very low trust in the criminal justice system – especially in the police, for which 76% of Arabs expressed (fairly or very) low trust, but also in the judiciary, for which 56% expressed low trust.

	Trust in the police	Trust in the justice system
Very high	8%	11%
Fairly high	14%	26%
Fairly low	31%	32%
Very low	45%	24%
Don't know	3%	

Eighty-five percent of Arab Israelis rated the handling of "criminal organizations in the Arab society" as the highest priority (60%) or the second-highest priority (15%) out of all

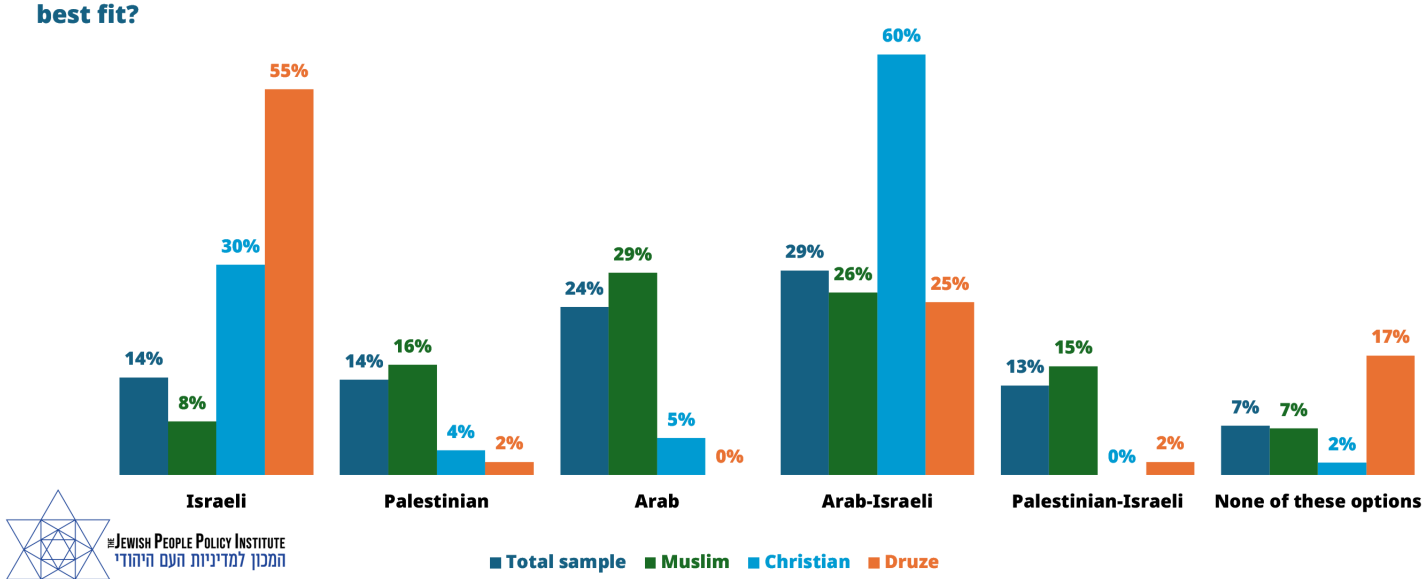
the options presented. Three other priorities – housing, education, and employment – received nearly identical ratings.



How do they define themselves?

The question of how Arab Israelis self-define has recurred in different surveys, differently worded, with substantial discrepancies in the responses received. As seen in the graph below, there are very significant self-definition differences between Christian, Druze, and Muslim Arabs. The Muslims, who constitute a large majority of Israel's Arab minority, and by a significant margin, choose the self-definitions "Arab" and "Arab-Israeli" at nearly equal levels. However, 30% self-define as "Palestinian" or "Palestinian-Israeli."

If asked to define yourself based on the following list of options, which definition is the best fit?



The Jewish People Policy Institute
המכון למדיניות העם היהודי

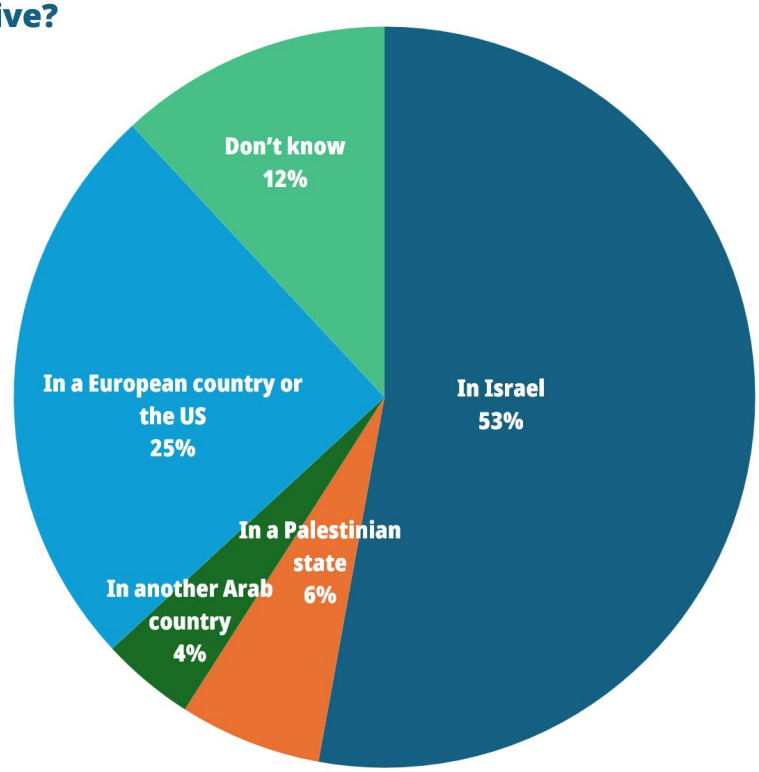
For comparison purposes, one can look at how Arabs answered a similar but not identical question in 2023 and 2021. The self-definition color scheme enables discernment of the fundamental similarity of some of the responses, and the shifts in other responses: Since last year there has been no change in the share of Arab Israelis who self-define as "Israeli" or as "Arab-Israeli." The addition of the "Palestinian-Israeli" category increased the share of respondents whose self-definition includes the "Israeli" component. The percentage of those who self-define as "Arab" dropped compared to last year's survey, while the share of those who self-define as "Palestinian" rose. The discrepancies vis-à-vis the 2021 data are much larger. But it should be noted that data that year was anomalous; even as it was published we stressed the need for follow-up to determine whether it represented a new trend or was a one-off result.

Do they want to stay in Israel?

	April 2024	2023	2021
Arab	24%	42%	15%
Israeli	14%	14%	23%
Arab-Israeli	29%	30%	51%
Palestinian-Israeli	13%	/	/
Palestinian	14%	8%	7%
None of the above / other	7%	7%	5%

The March Israeli Society Index survey included a question (for all Israelis) about "a practical possibility for emigrating." That survey found that 27% of Arab Israelis agree with the statement: "If I had a practical possibility for emigrating, I'd do it" – versus 23% of Jewish Israelis. In the April survey of the Arab sector, the emigration question was worded differently. It refers not to the respondents themselves, but to their descendants (Where do you think it would be best for your children/grandchildren to live?), and presents several options: Israel, an Arab country, a Palestinian state, Europe, or the United States. Of all the Arab respondents, only slightly more than half believe their children should live in Israel. A quarter believe that it would be best for them to live in Europe or the US, while 10% chose the Arab-country option (4%) or the Palestinian-state option (6%). About half (47%) of Christian Arab respondents said that it would be best for their children to live in the US or in a European country. A significant majority (72%) of older Arabs (over age 55) believe it would be best for their children and grandchildren to live in Israel.

In general, if all the options were open, where do you think it would be best for your children/grandchildren to live?



THE JEWISH PEOPLE POLICY INSTITUTE
המכון למדיניות העם היהודי

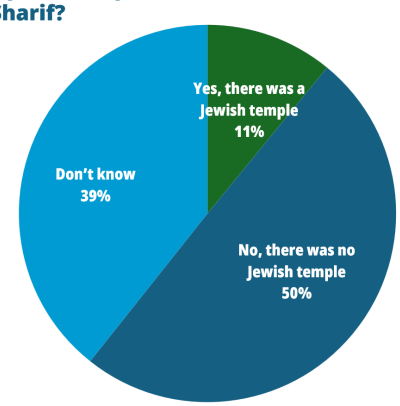
Israeli Arabs and the Temple Mount

The April survey was conducted during Ramadan, when there is always a certain degree of tension surrounding the Temple Mount and when concerns arise about prayers at the site proceeding without violence. The survey included several questions pertaining to the Temple Mount, both from a dynamic-practical perspective and from an ideological perspective. Overall, a very large share of Arab Israelis deny the fact that the Temple Mount (Haram al-Sharif) has a Jewish past. Fifty percent say there was no Jewish temple at the site, while only 11% say there was (the rest "don't know"). Accordingly, 55% of Arab Israelis (63% of Muslims) feel that Israel should forbid Jews from going up to the Temple Mount for any reason, while only 10% feel that Jews should be allowed to visit or pray at the site. The same percentage – 55% (64% of Muslims) believe that Israel's goal is to "keep the Muslims away from Haram al-Sharif." Only a fifth (21%) believe that Israel wants to allow full freedom of worship to Muslims on the Mount.

Israel wants to keep Muslims away from Haram al-Sharif	**55%**	Israel should forbid Jews from going up to Haram al-Sharif	**55%**
Israel wants to allow Muslims full freedom of worship on Haram al-Sharif	**21%**	Israel should allow Jews to go up to Haram al-Sharif to visit but not to pray	**15%**
		Israel should allow Jews to go up to Haram al-Sharif both to visit and to pray	**10%**
Don't know	**24%**	Don't know	**21%**

Among Muslims, 60% believe there was never a Jewish temple, while 6% say there was. Among Christians and Druze, a majority answered this question with "Don't know" (72% and 55%, respectively). Forty-three percent of Druze and 19% of Christians think there was a Jewish temple on the Temple Mount.

Do you think that there was once a Jewish temple in the place that is now called Haram al-Sharif?



*

This month's JPPI Israeli Society Index survey was administered to 613 respondents, constituting a representative sample of Israel's total Arab population. Sampling was carried out with gender, age, region, and religion quotas. Sampling error: +3.9%.

Data collection was executed through a combination of a digital panel and telephone interviews. The survey was conducted from March 25 to April 4, 2024. The analysis and presentation of the data was prepared by Hisham Jubran, with the aid of Noah Slepkov of the Jewish People Policy Institute. The report was written by Shmuel Rosner, who edits the JPPI Israeli Society Index.

