



Peace Index, June 2019

- **More than half of the Jewish public in Israel prefer that, following the coming elections, the government will be formed by the Likud. More than half also prefer a government that includes the Likud and the Blue-White parties, or a government that does not include the ultra-Orthodox parties. However, in the opinion of the Jewish public, the government that has the best chances of being formed is a right-wing government, led by the Likud and including the ultra-Orthodox parties. Most of the Arab public support a left-wing government but agree with the opinion that the right-wing has the best chances of forming the government.**
- **If the Likud wins the elections, the Jewish public is split between preference for Netanyahu and preference for another Likud Knesset member to head the government. Among Likud voters, there is sweeping support for Netanyahu.**
- **Among the Jewish public, a large majority feel that Netanyahu should have returned his mandate to the president and not have called for new elections, in contrast to the opposite opinion among the Arab public. The personal rivalry between Netanyahu and Lieberman is perceived as the main reason that a government was not formed after the last elections.**
- **More of the public believe that the decision of the attorney general to postpone Netanyahu's hearing stemmed from diversion tactics and pressure and not from professional considerations. A clear majority oppose legislation that would enable Netanyahu to avoid going to trial while serving as prime minister.**
- **The public is divided between those who support Netanyahu's policy of avoiding a wide-ranging military operation in Gaza and those who oppose this the policy and prefer a decision to conduct such an operation, and those who are interested in a long-term agreement with Hamas.**
- **A two-state solution still gains more support than the other existing possibilities, although the general estimation is that the existing situation will continue, despite the opposition of the great majority. Similar percentages are expressed by the Jewish public for both the possibility of the two-state solution and for annexation.**



Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Dr. Nimrod Rosler

The peace index for June is devoted to four topics that are at the center of public discourse: the desired composition of the expected government following the coming elections, Netanyahu's failure to form a government after the recent elections, Netanyahu's legal status, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Elections

Which government is preferred after the general elections? Against the backdrop of the new elections, we presented interviewees with a list of six possible governments and we asked which of them they preferred and which had a greater chance of being formed. The answers we received from Jewish respondents indicate a wide distribution among preferences, so that none of the governments presented gained a significant advantage. The order was as follows: a right-wing government headed by the Likud with participation of ultra-Orthodox parties received 22% support; a government headed by the Likud with the Blue-White party but without the ultra-Orthodox parties received 18%; a government headed by the Blue-White party with the Likud but without the ultra-Orthodox parties received 17%; a center-left government headed by the Blue-White party without the ultra-Orthodox parties – 16%; a government headed by the Likud, with the Blue-White party and with the ultra-Orthodox parties – 15%; a government headed by the Blue-White party with the Likud and the ultra-Orthodox parties – 3%.

The general preferential trends may be summarized as follows:

- a. Governments headed by the Likud with various accompanying parties are preferred most by the Jewish public (55%), while governments headed by the Blue-White party with various accompanying parties gained only 36% of support. However, governments headed by the Likud or by Blue-White with the participation of the party second in votes gained the support of 53%, that is, almost at an equal level of support for governments headed by the Likud.
- b. Preference for governments including the ultra-Orthodox parties stand at 40%, while 51% prefer governments without the ultra-Orthodox parties.



Interestingly, almost half of Likud voters (48%) prefer a government together with the Blue-White party, while 38.5% prefer a right-wing government without Blue-White. The Arab public have a clear preference for a center-left government headed by Blue-White (53.5%).

Which government has the best chances of being formed? In contrast to the question about preferred governments, the percentage of responses to the question about which government has the greatest chances of being formed among the entire Israeli public point to one possible government – a government headed by the Likud with the ultra-Orthodox parties (43.5%), much higher than any other possible composition. This reply is most common among supporters of both sides of the political spectrum. The chances of all the other possibilities are deemed much lower, without salient differences among them. A government headed by the Likud with Blue-White and the ultra-Orthodox parties was in second place with 11%, while the government rated lowest (the center-left government headed by Blue-White without the ultra-Orthodox) received 5%.

Who should stand at the head of a Likud government after the coming elections? Referring to a situation in which the Likud is the largest party in the coming elections, the replies indicate that the Jewish public is divided on this question almost equally, as 47% chose Netanyahu and 44% prefer another Likud Knesset member. Likud voters comprehensively prefer Netanyahu (83.5%) while voters for Blue-White overwhelmingly prefer another Likud Knesset member (85%). The Arab public also prefer another Likud Knesset member (61%).

Why didn't Netanyahu succeed in forming a government after the last elections and what should he have done after he had failed? We asked: "What, in your opinion, is the main reason that Netanyahu was unable to form a coalition after the recent elections?" From the three possible reasons that we presented, it was found that, among the Jewish public, 45% think that the main reason was the personal rivalry between Lieberman and Netanyahu, 37% attribute the failure to disagreements between Lieberman and the ultra-Orthodox parties around the Draft Law, and 28% blame the center parties for refusing to negotiate with Netanyahu due to his legal status.

We also asked, "After Netanyahu did not succeed in forming a government, what, in your opinion, was the right thing for him to do?" From the two possibilities we presented – calling for new elections or returning the mandate to form a new government to the president so that he could seek another candidate to attempt to form a government – 61% preferred the second



alternative in contrast to 30% who chose the first. In other words, a large majority of the Jewish public did not support dispersing the Knesset. Most supporters of the left-wing (91%), the center (84%) and the moderate right (57%) thought that Netanyahu should have returned his mandate to the president, while supporters of the right-wing are the only Jewish sector who supported Netanyahu's action slightly more than the other alternative (47%). Interestingly, among the Arab public, almost two-thirds (64.5%) supported dispersing the Knesset, perhaps due to the lower gains of the Arab parties in comparison to the former elections.

Netanyahu's Legal Status

Netanyahu versus the attorney general: Considering the decision by Attorney General Mandelblit to postpone Netanyahu's hearing by three months in response to Netanyahu's request, we asked, "In your opinion, was this decision a professional one, and not due to diversionary tactics or did it stem from diversions and pressures?" Responses indicate that 48% feel that the decision stemmed from diversions and pressures, while 31% think the opposite, and the others do not know. In light of the fact that 72% of left-wing supporters and 66% of centrists feel that the decision was a result of diversions and pressures, they are apparently referring to pressure by Netanyahu and his supporters. In contrast, supporters of the moderate right and right-wing supporters were divided equally between those who thought that the decision was professional (37% and 40% respectively) and those who considered that it was due to diversions and pressures (36% and 37%, respectively), and additionally, close to a quarter did not reply to that question. Among the Arab public, 45% thought that the decision was biased and 37% believed that it was professional.

The initiative for legislation that would prevent putting a serving prime minister on trial: Considering that, after the hearing, the attorney general decides whether to have Netanyahu stand trial, we asked to what extent the public would support or oppose legislative steps to prevent putting a prime minister on trial for as long as he continues to serve in that capacity. The replies showed that, among the Jewish public, 60% oppose such an initiative while 30% support such legislation. In comparison to right-wing supporters who are split between support (44%) and opposition (42%) to this initiative, there is clear opposition among the moderate right (55%), the center (79%) and the left (87%). The Arab public is extremely opposed (68%) to this type of



legislation. In other words, a clear majority of the Israeli public are unwilling to support a change in the rules of the democratic game in order to bail Netanyahu out of having to stand trial.

The Israeli- Palestinian Conflict

Solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: As in the past, this month we again investigated the level of public support or opposition to four possible solutions to the conflict with the Palestinians and the chances of each of them to be put into practice. Findings among the Jewish public indicate that the two-state solution remains the most popular with 40% supporters (moderately support or very much support) in comparison to 51.5% who oppose this solution (moderately oppose or very much oppose). The next solutions in descending order of support are annexation of the territories (32% support versus 60% opposition), continuing the existing situation (26% support versus 64% opposition), and a bi-national state (16.5% support versus 73% opposition). These findings show that, like previous peace index surveys, no solution gains support from most of the Jewish respondents. Among the Arab public, there is similar support for a two-state solution (66%) and a bi-national state (65%).

A different picture emerges in reply to the question, "Which of the solutions do you believe has a chance of being achieved in the visible future?" Among the Jewish public, 46% replied that a continuation of the present situation has the best chance of being realized, and only 4% believed that a bi-national state could be established in the near future. Continuing the well-known trend among the Jewish public since we have been asking this question from March 2019, this is the first time that the percentage of respondents believing that annexation of the territories is a visible possibility (18%) is not only similar to the percentage who believe that the establishment of a Palestinian state is possible (17%), but is even slightly higher. Among the Arab public, an even clearer majority (60%) believes that the present situation will continue.

The policy towards the Gaza Strip: We checked the level of support or opposition to Netanyahu's policy vis-à-vis the Gaza Strip of avoiding a wide-ranging military operation. The replies indicate that 30% support this policy, while 32% oppose his policy and support a wide-ranging military operation, and 22% of those who oppose his policy, support a long-term arrangement with Hamas. It should be noted that a relatively high percentage (16%) do not know or refused to answer. Netanyahu gained much greater support for his policy among moderate rightists (38%), in comparison to right-wing supporters (28%), centrists (28%) and left-wing

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supporters (21%). Among the Arab public, most support a long-term arrangement with Hamas (57%), while an identical percentage (11%) support his policy or oppose it and support a military operation.

Negotiation Index:

General sample: 43.7 (A decrease of 0.4 points in comparison to last month).

Jewish sample: 42.7 (An increase of 0.3 points in comparison with last month).

The negotiation index is calculated by a weighing two questions: Level of support for negotiation with the Palestinian Authority, and level of trust that negotiation with the Authority will lead to peace in the coming years.

The Peace Index is conducted by the Evens Program in Mediation and Conflict Management at Tel Aviv University and the Midgam Consulting and Research Institute. The survey was conducted by telephone and internet on 25-30 June 2019, among 600 respondents, a representative sample of the entire adult population (ages 18 and over) in Israel. Maximum margin of error for the entire sample is +/-4.1% at a confidence level of 95%. Statistical analysis: Ms. Yasmin Alkalay.



Diagram of the month: After it became clear that Netanyahu could not form a government, what, in your opinion, was the right thing to do?

