

The International MA Program in Conflict Resolution and Mediation

The Gershon H. Gordon
Faculty of Social Sciences
Tel Aviv University

Peace Index- March 2020

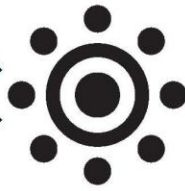
- **With regard to the corona crisis, most of the Israeli public believe that the State of Israel has dealt with the crisis effectively, although this opinion is more common among Arabs and among rightwing Jewish voters.**
- **Most of the Israeli public expressed trust in the strong steps that have been taken in dealing with the crisis, including the prohibition to leave their homes, the closing of workplaces and the courts, and digital tracking by the security services of those ill with corona.**
- **While the Health Ministry has received the trust of the general public in dealing with the corona crisis, trust in Netanyahu and Ganz is divided in terms of political positions. The Ministry of Finance has also received trust, although it is lower among Jews and among center and leftwing voters.**
- **Most of the general Israeli public support the proposed law to prevent those accused of criminal activity from serving as prime minister, and the proposal to limit the number of terms that a prime minister can serve to two.**
- **The possibility of a national unity government is the one preferred by most of the public, and that was before Ganz expressed willingness to join a unity government with Netanyahu.**
- **Considering the attitudes of “desirable versus possible” regarding the conflict with the Palestinians, there are almost no attitudinal changes among the Israeli public since the last Peace Index, which appeared five months ago. The solution of two nations is preferred to the other presented alternatives, while the status-quo is regarded as the expected solution with the greatest frequency.**

Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Dr. Nimrod Rosler

The issue which received the greatest attention, and still does, among the Israeli public in recent weeks is the spread of the coronavirus, and naturally, this has received the most attention and discussion in the Peace Index. In addition, we investigated public attitudes towards two legislative proposals which have been raised recently – a law to prevent someone accused of criminal activity from serving as prime minister and a law limiting a serving prime minister to two terms. Finally, we reinvestigated the main issues regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

How the state has been dealing with the coronavirus crisis

We asked, “Do you agree or disagree that the State of Israel has been dealing effectively with the spread of the coronavirus?” Sixty percent of the Jewish public responded that they greatly agreed (17.5%) or agreed to a certain extent (42.5%), while 35% responded that they disagreed to a certain extent (22%) or completely disagreed (13%). Five percent did not know. This means that most of the public believes that national conduct regarding the virus has been effective, although



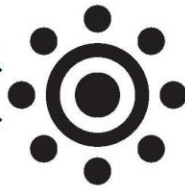
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a substantial minority feels that the opposite is true. **Almost identical answers were received from the Arab Israeli public (62% and 30% respectively).** When investigating the distribution of responses among the Jewish public according to voter preference, significant differences become evident: Among those who voted for the rightwing, 72% felt that Israel has been dealing effectively with the corona crisis, while only 41% of center voters and 34% of leftwing voters felt this way. In contrast, 63% of leftwing voters do not agree with the statement that Israel has been dealing effectively with the crisis, while 57% of center voters and 20% of rightwing voters feel this way. In addition, there are quite considerable differences among various age groups, as 64% of young people up to the age of 35 think that Israel has been dealing with the crisis effectively, 61% of middle aged people, 35-54 years old, believe so, and only 51% of people older than 55 agree. In other words, in addition to the complete lack of trust among present-day opposition party voters in evaluating government conduct during the crisis, there is also a certain level of lack of trust among the age-group who are at the greatest risk of being harmed by the virus.

Trust in specific steps taken by the government to deal with the coronavirus crisis:

1. The prohibition to leave one's home except for necessary cases: A great majority (85%) among the Jews believe that this step was necessary, while a small minority (12%) do not believe so. **Opinions among the Arab public** on this question are identical to those of the Jewish public (83%). Among the Jewish public there are almost no differences between rightwing and center voters (89% vs. 85%), while support among leftwing voters is lower (59%), as against 9%, 12% and 41% respectively, who do not express trust for this step.
2. **Security services following corona sufferers via their mobile telephones:** Among the Jewish public, those who support this step – 74%; those who do not support this step – 22%. **Among the Arab public**, 80% support this step, while only 22% do not. In other words, the Arab public is a bit more supportive of the use of the security services to follow those ill with the coronavirus than the Jewish public. Among the Jewish public, there are significantly clear differences according to political ideology: 90% of rightwing voters believe that this step was necessary while 58% of center voters and only 38% of leftwing voters support this step; this is in contrast to 7%, 37% and 63% respectively of those who do not believe that this step was necessary.
3. The closing of businesses and workplaces except for those considered essential: Jewish public: support – 83%; do not support – 14%. Among the Arab public: 85% and 7% respectively. Among the Jewish public, there are clear differences according to political ideology, as 89% of rightwing voters support the necessity of this step, in contrast to 79% of center voters and 63% of leftwing voters. (5, 18% and 38% respectively do not support this step.)
4. Closing the courts except for emergencies: The Jewish public: support or support to a certain extent – 61%; do not support or do not support to a certain extent – 35%. **Among the Arab public**, 74% and 17% respectively. The level of support for this step among the Jewish public reflects political tendencies to a great extent, as 81% of rightwing voters expressed



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support while 38% of center voters and only 17% of leftwing voters supported this step. (15%, 60% and 88% respectively did not support the closing of the courts.)

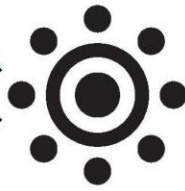
Thus, it is clear that closing of the courts, decided upon by the Justice Minister, is perceived differently than the other steps we asked about and was politically divisive, with level of support resulting directly from political considerations rather than public health considerations. An additional indicator is the differences among age groups: Although the other three steps earned support among most of the respondents in all age groups, the closing of the courts did not gain similar support. While 67% of respondents up to the age of 55 expressed support for this step, only 41% among respondents over the age of 55 expressed support (contrasted to 28% and 56% respectively who did not express support).

Trust in people and institutions, considering whether they are functioning professionally and without irrelevant considerations during this period.

1. **Benjamin Netanyahu: Jews:** 60% trust, 35% do not trust and 5% do not know. **Arabs:** 33% trust, 51% do not trust, 16% do not know.
2. **Benny Ganz: Jews:** 38% trust, 52% do not trust and 10% do not know. **Arabs:** 53% trust, 25% do not trust, 22% do not know.
3. **Health Ministry: Jews:** 83% trust, 13% do not trust, 4% do not know. **Arabs:** 76% trust, 14% do not trust, 11% do not know.
4. **Finance Ministry: Jews:** 69% trust, 25% do not trust, 6% do not know. **Arabs:** 58% trust, 29% do not trust, 13% do not know.

As expected, responses about level of trust in Netanyahu and Ganz are divided according to political ideology in the Jewish public, as 88% among rightwing voters trust Netanyahu as opposed to 26% of center voters and 9% of leftwing voters. Only 15% of rightwing voters trust Ganz in contrast to 70% of center and leftwing voters. The Health Ministry garnered the trust of the general public, while the Finance Ministry gained the trust of 80% of rightwing voters, but only 55% of center and leftwing voters.

Which type of government should be formed at present: Although most of the public tends to be satisfied with the way the state is dealing with the coronavirus, it is clearly divided as to the type of government that should be formed at present. The most preferred government is a national unity government under the leadership of Netanyahu, but the level of support for this government is only 33%, while two other alternatives are divided identically (18% for each) between a national unity government under Ganz and a rightwing-ultra-orthodox government under Netanyahu with the support of Yisrael Beitenu; and close to these, a national unity government with rotation (16%). There is a larger gap following these alternatives, in support of a center-left government under Ganz, with the support of Yisrael Beitenu and the Joint List (10%). In all, about 50% prefer a government under Netanyahu, 28% prefer a government under Ganz, 16% prefer a national unity government with rotation, and 6% do not know. **As expected,**



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preferences among the Arab public are completely different, as a clear majority (54%) prefer a center-left government under Ganz and with the support of Yisrael Beiteinu and the Joint List. In addition, 14% prefer a national unity government under Ganz. Other alternatives receive minimal support.

When investigating preferences in the Jewish public according to political voting behavior, about half of rightwing voters prefer a unity government under Netanyahu (52%), and half of the center voters would like to see a national unity government under Ganz (48%), while a clear majority of leftwing voters prefer a center-left government under Ganz (69%).

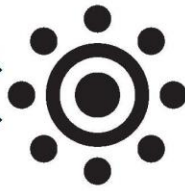
Attitudes towards two proposals for laws relating to the terms of prime ministers.

1. **A law that will prevent a person accused of criminal activity from serving as prime minister:** **Jews:** In favor – 62%; opposed – 25%; do not know – 13%. **Arabs:** In favor – 74%; opposed – 8%; do not know – 18%. It is interesting to note that, among Jews, rightwing voters are divided almost equally between supporters of the bill (39%) and those who oppose it (41%).
2. **A law that will limit serving prime ministers to two terms of office (8 years in all):** **Jews:** In favor – 63%; opposed – 29%; do not know – 21%. **Arabs:** In favor – 61%; opposed – 18%; do not know – 21%. Regarding this law as well, there is a sizable minority (41%) among rightwing voting Jews who support the bill, in contrast to 49% who oppose it.

The Israeli Palestinian Conflict

Negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority: Just as we have consistently found in the past, most of the Jewish public (54%) supports negotiations for peace between Israel and the Palestinians, while only a small minority (26%) believe that it will lead to peace between the two sides in the coming years.

Attitudes towards possible solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: As in the past, none of the solutions presented gained the support of a full majority of the Jewish public, as the most accepted solution – the establishment of an independent Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel, garnered the support of 45% (again, as in the past), and following that, in descending order, continuing the existing situation (31%), and annexation of the territories in one state under Israeli control with limited rights for the Palestinians (12%). As expected, among the Arab public, the list of priorities is completely different, as the preferred solution is the establishment of an independent Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel with the support of 60%, and with little difference (56%), the establishment of a binational state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea with fully equal rights for Jews and Palestinians. In other words, these two solutions gain the support of a clear majority among the Arab public. There is a clear gap in the level of support for the next two possible solutions, namely, continuing the existing situation



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(18%) and annexation of the territories establishing one state under Israeli control with limited rights to the Palestinians (27%).

Which of these solutions do you believe has the highest chance of being realized in the foreseeable future? Jews: Almost half (47%) believe that the existing situation will continue, and following that, with a considerable gap are the following solutions: the establishment of an independent Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel – 21%, annexation of the territories with limited rights for the Palestinians – 15%; and the establishment of a binational state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea with full and equal rights for the Palestinians – 3%; do not know – 14%. **Arabs:** Continuing the existing situation – 28%, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel – 24.5%, the establishment of a binational state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea with fully equal rights for the Palestinians – 14%, annexation of the territories and the establishment of one state under Israeli rule with limited rights for the Palestinians (5%), do not know – 28%.

These findings indicate a considerable difference between the attitudes of the Jewish and Arab publics as, among the Jewish public, the percentage of those who believe that the existing situation will continue (close to half) is considerably higher than other solutions, while among the Arab public, there is relatively great dispersal among opinions about the solutions that may be achieved in the foreseeable future. In addition, the rate of “do not know/ refuse to answer” among the Arabs (28%) is two times higher than the parallel rate among the Jews. In other words, among the Arab public, there is great uncertainty about the future of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

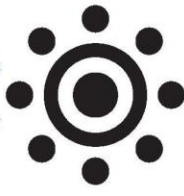
Negotiation Index:

General sample: 46.6 (an increase of 1.1 points from the previous index)

Jewish sample: 42.8 (an increase of 0.3 points from the previous 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 International Program in Conflict Resolution and Mediation at Tel Aviv University. The survey was conducted on the internet by iPanel on 19-22 March 2020, among 605 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%.



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The Diagram of the Month: Do you agree or disagree that the State of Israel has been dealing with the corona crisis effectively?

