

Peace Index, April 2017

Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Prof. Tamar Hermann

With Israel's 69th Independence Day approaching, most of this month's Peace Index focused on the public's perception of the state of the country in the present and the future, and on its opinions about Israel's achievements in key areas. We also looked into how the interviewees view their personal situation, how proud they are to be Israeli, and whether they feel that they are part of the country and its problems. Since we are in a period of national holidays, we presented separate questions about the treatment of Holocaust survivors and about the role of bereaved families in the security discourse. In addition, amid the recent events on the Israeli-Syrian front, we gauged what the public thinks about Israel's policy toward Syria.

The general state of the country and of the individual: Unlike the gloomy situation assessments that are often made by professionals and in the media, 44% of the Jewish public views Israel's situation as very good (12%) or good (32%), 39% see it as medium ("so-so"), and only 16% regard its situation as bad (10%) or very bad (6%). That is, the public's assessment clearly tends more to the positive than the negative, though it could not be called euphoric.

An even rosier picture emerges for the personal sphere: 74% of the Jewish interviewees describe their situation as very good (24%) or good (50%), 24% as medium, and only 2% as bad or very bad. In other words, as in several recent Democracy indices, respondents rank their personal situation considerably higher than they rank the national situation in general. A segmentation by the Jewish

interviewees' voting in the 2015 Knesset elections revealed that the rate of those defining the state of the country positively was highest among Habayit Hayehudi voters (69%) and lowest among Meretz voters (5%). Regarding personal situation, again Habayit Hayehudi voters defined it as good or very good at the highest rate (86%) and Kulanu voters at the lowest rate, though still with a clear positive majority (65%).

Among the Arab interviewees, we found a higher rate than among the Jews of those viewing the state of the country as good or very good (66%) but a lower rate of those viewing their personal situation that way (57%).

Proud and optimistic: Likewise, and even more decisively, a very large majority (86%) of the Jews are proud of being Israeli, and a similar rate (82%) also feel that they are part of the country and its problems. A segmentation by voting for the Knesset revealed that the rate of those who are proud of their Israeliness is highest among Habayit Hayehudi voters (100%) and lowest among Meretz voters (40%).

Moreover, the Jewish public as a whole is optimistic (73%) about the state of the country in the future. Here the rate of optimists about Israel's future was highest among Shas voters (95%) and lowest among Meretz voters (40%).

The rate of Arabs who are proud of Israeliness is much lower, though still amounting to a small majority (51%). The same is true for optimists, who also constitute a majority but a considerably smaller one than among the Jews (61%).

Israel's achievements: On this issue the interviewees were presented with six areas and asked to assess the country's achievements in each of them. In the areas of maintaining the country's security, medicine and health, maintaining economic

stability, and education and science, a clear majority of the Jewish interviewees define the country's achievements as very good or moderately good (respectively: 83%, 65%, 60%, 59%). However, in the other two areas—attentiveness to what the citizens want and reducing the social gaps—only a small minority sees the country's achievements as moderately or very good (respectively: 22%, 19%). Thus, from the public's viewpoint, there is a stark contrast between, on the one hand, Israel's success in maintaining its security and maintaining a stable economy, and, on the other, its failure—in the eyes of the public—in reducing the social gaps and being attentive to what its citizens want.

The Arab interviewees' evaluation of the country's achievements was higher than that of the Jews in all those areas (except for the security issue where the rate of those defining Israel's achievements positively was lower—75%).

This survey explored the question of attentiveness to the citizens and the social gaps with two questions that were more concrete and directly related to the period of the national holidays. The first question was asked in the context of the Knesset debate on the state comptroller's report concerning the decision-makers' performance in Operation Protective Edge, the second in the context of Holocaust Remembrance Day.

The right of bereaved families to express an opinion on security and military issues: Somewhat surprisingly, a majority of the Jewish public (57%) thinks that a family whose son or daughter has died in military service has no more right than other citizens to express an opinion on security and military issues. Nevertheless, the large majority (68%) agree that Members of Knesset David Bitan and Miki Zohar should have restrained themselves and not responded to the harsh criticisms

leveled by the bereaved families during the Knesset debate even if the criticism was unjustified.

The state's treatment of Holocaust survivors: Against the backdrop of the extensive public debate that was held in conjunction with Holocaust Remembrance Day and the prime minister's promise to set up a committee of ministers, headed by him, on the treatment of Holocaust survivors, we asked how well the state authorities had treated them over the years. On this question a clear-cut distribution of opinions emerged: 80% of the Jewish interviewees describe the treatment as not so good or not good at all.

From there, as mentioned, we moved on to the issue of Israeli-Syrian relations, which seem to have undergone a change lately.

Participating in an international military intervention: We asked: "If Western states intervene militarily in Syria in an attempt to bring the war there to an end, should Israel, in your opinion, join such a campaign?" The Jewish public's positions on this question are pronounced; more than two-thirds (76%) think or are sure that Israel should not intervene. A majority of the Arab interviewees, too (54%), think Israel should not join a military intervention in Syria.

Was Trump right to fire the missiles? A majority of the Jewish respondents (79%) think President Trump acted rightly when he altered the policy of his predecessor, President Obama, and ordered U.S. forces to mount a missile attack on the Syrian airbase from which the planes that carried out the chemical attack on civilians in the city of Idlib had taken off. In other words, in the eyes of the Israeli Jewish public, it is preferable that the work be done by others. Among the Arab

interviewees, we found a majority who think Trump was not right to launch the missiles at the Syrian base (61%).

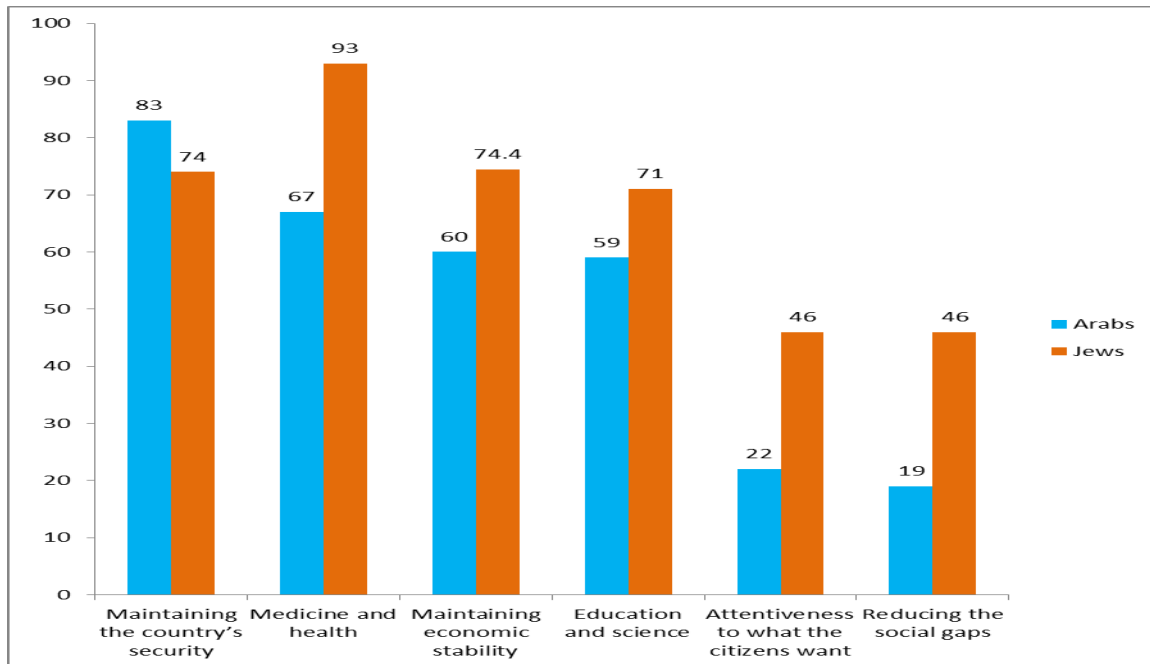
The Syrian refugees and wounded: In light of the overwhelming opposition to Israel joining a military campaign against Syria, it is surprising to find that a considerable majority of the Jewish public (62%) is in favor of admitting wounded Syrians to Israeli hospitals. The rate among the Arab respondents is even higher (75%). A segmentation of the Jewish interviewees' responses by religiosity shows that a majority of all categories favor admitting wounded Syrians to Israeli hospitals except the ultra-Orthodox (ultra-Orthodox—29%, religious—52%, religious traditional—60%, nonreligious traditional—65.5%, secular—72%).

When we asked whether Israel should set up facilities near the border, within its territory, where refugees can stay under decent conditions until the fighting ends, we found the opinions among the Jewish public to be more divided, with a tendency to respond negatively: 52% said Israel should not do so, perhaps out of fear that the temporary stay will become permanent, while 41% thought the opposite, that is, that such facilities should be established. A segmentation of the Jewish interviewees' responses by religiosity clearly indicated that a rise in level of religiosity correlates with a decrease in willingness for such facilities to be set up: ultra-Orthodox—22%, religious—33%, religious traditional—31%, nonreligious traditional—41%, secular—52%).

In the Arab public, the majority (61%) is in favor of establishing facilities for the protection of refugees from the war in Syria in Israeli territory near the border.

Negotiations Index: 46.2 (Jews 43.7)

**Graph of the month: Assessment of Israel's Achievements in Different Fields
 (% , achievements very good or moderately good, Jews and Arabs)**



The Peace Index is a project of the Evens Program for Mediation and Conflict Resolution at Tel Aviv University and the Guttman Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research of the Israel Democracy Institute. This month's survey was conducted by telephone and Internet on April 25-26, 2017, by the Midgam Research Institute. The survey included 600 respondents (500 Jews and 100 Arabs), who constitute a representative national sample of the adult population of Israel aged 18 and over. The maximum measurement error for the entire sample is $\pm 4.1\%$ at a confidence level of 95%. Statistical processing was done by Ms. Yasmin Alkalay. <http://www.peaceindex.org>