
Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation

June 25, 2023

Findings of an in-depth survey among the Arab public:

Most of the Arab public (about 76%) approve of the grassroots protest against the judicial reform • About 62% report that their personal security is threatened by the numerous incidents of violence in Arab society. • A large majority (about 84%) fear a repeat of the violence between Arabs and Jews that occurred during the May 2021 events. • Most of the Arab public (about 64%) are in favor of an Arab party joining a coalition after the next elections. • About 54% think that overall Ra'am's participation in the previous government was successful.

Dr. Arik Rudnitzky

Main Findings

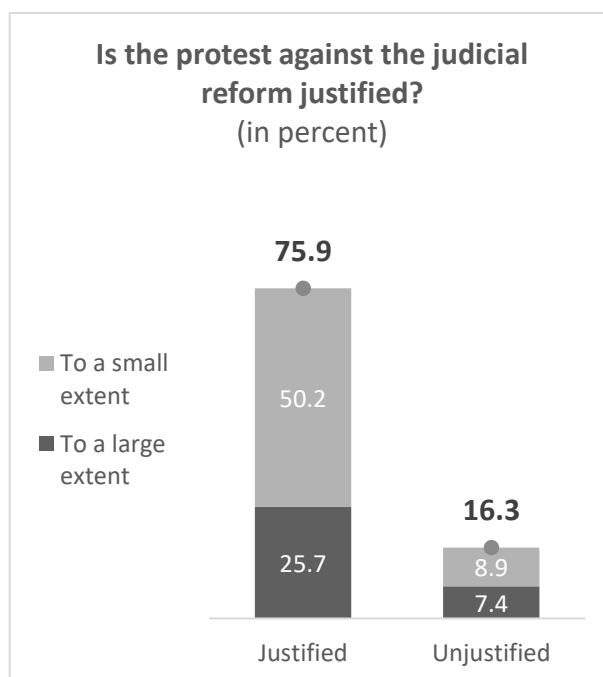
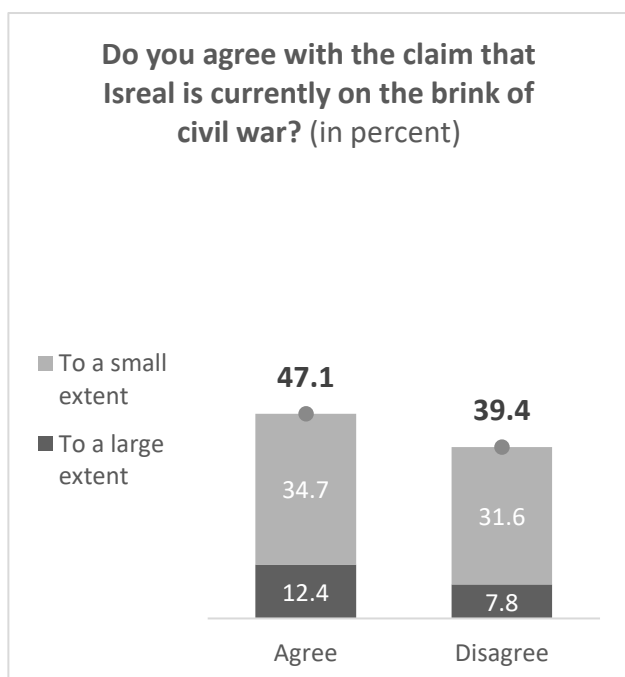
- A large majority of the Arab public (75.9%) approve of the grassroots protest against the government's judicial reform. A large proportion even think that Arab citizens should play a more active role in the protest; however, opinions are divided on the question of whether the subject of the protest, namely the debate over the status of the judicial system in Israel, is directly relevant to them: 47.9% feel it is while 43.9% feel it is not.
- A large majority of Arab citizens (70.2%) claim that a constitution for Israel that is based on the values of the Declaration of Independence would not be acceptable to them.
- A majority of Arab citizens (61.7%) feel that their personal security and that of their family is threatened by the frequent incidents of violence in Arab society.
- Who is capable of dealing with the problem of violence and crime in Arab society? 41% feel that the government or the police are capable of doing so, while 29.7% feel that it must be taken care of internally by respected figures, heads of households and Arab society as a whole.
- A large majority of Arab society (84.4%) are concerned that events involving violence between Arabs and Jews, like those in May 2021, are liable to reoccur in the future.
- About one-half of the Arab public (55.6%) think that the current government will not last longer than two years and a majority (63.6%) would like to see an Arab party in the government coalition after the next elections. About one-half (53.6%) feel that in retrospect Ra'am's participation in the previous government (Bennett-Lapid) was successful overall.
- Thirty years after the signing of the Oslo Accords, 58.3% of the respondents feel that the agreement was a negative development in the relations between Israel and the Palestinians and 49% feel that it did not benefit Arab citizens. Furthermore, about one-half of the Arab public (55.6%) feel that there is no solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and that the situation will remain unchanged; only 17.2% think that the conflict will be resolved by a two-state solution.

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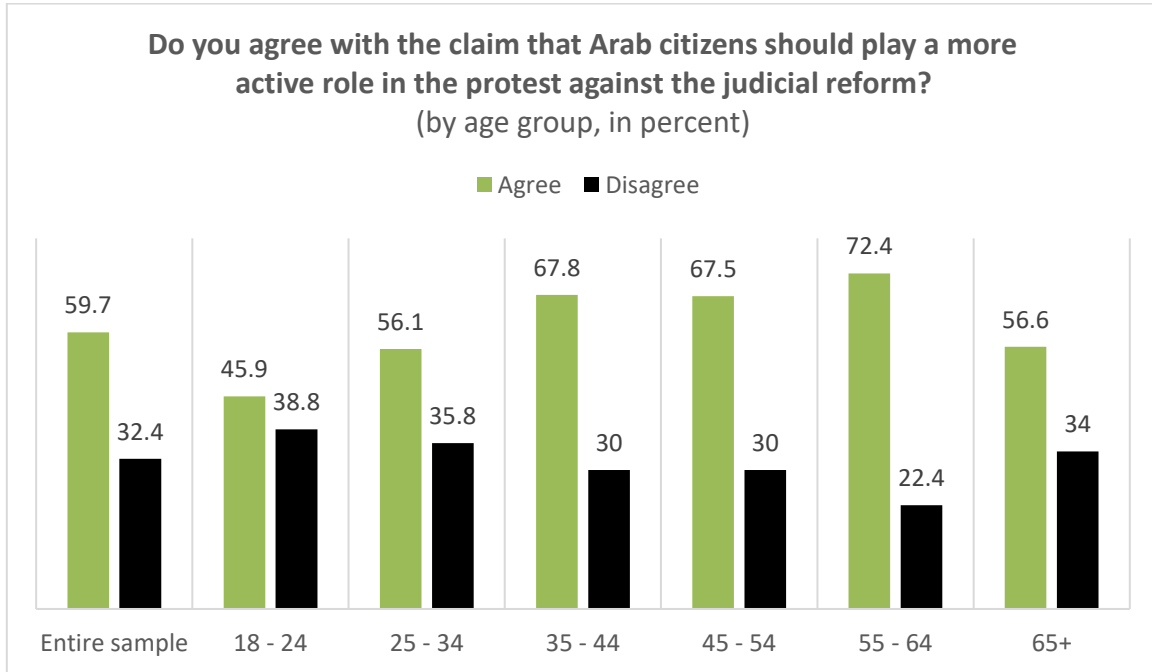
Opinions regarding the grassroots protest against the government’s judicial reform

There is a division of opinion among the Arab public on the question of whether the State of Israel is currently on the brink of civil war. Almost one-half of Arab citizens (47.1%) believe that the State of Israel is indeed on the brink of civil war, while 39.4% do not believe so. Nonetheless, a large majority of the Arab public (75.9%) feel that the grassroots protest against the government’s judicial reform is justified; 25.7% of them believe that it is justified to a great extent.

Should Arab citizens play a more active role in the protest against the judicial reform? Most of the respondents (59.7%) think that they should while one-third (32.4%) did not think so. On this question, there were clear differences of opinion by age group. The younger generation (18–34 years old) maintains an ambivalent and more conservative approach on this question while the older generation (35–64 years old) is more convinced that the Arab public should play a more active role in the protest. The proportion of the older generation (35–64 years old) who are very convinced on this question was threefold larger than the proportion of the younger generation who are very convinced: 31.6% vs 11.8%.



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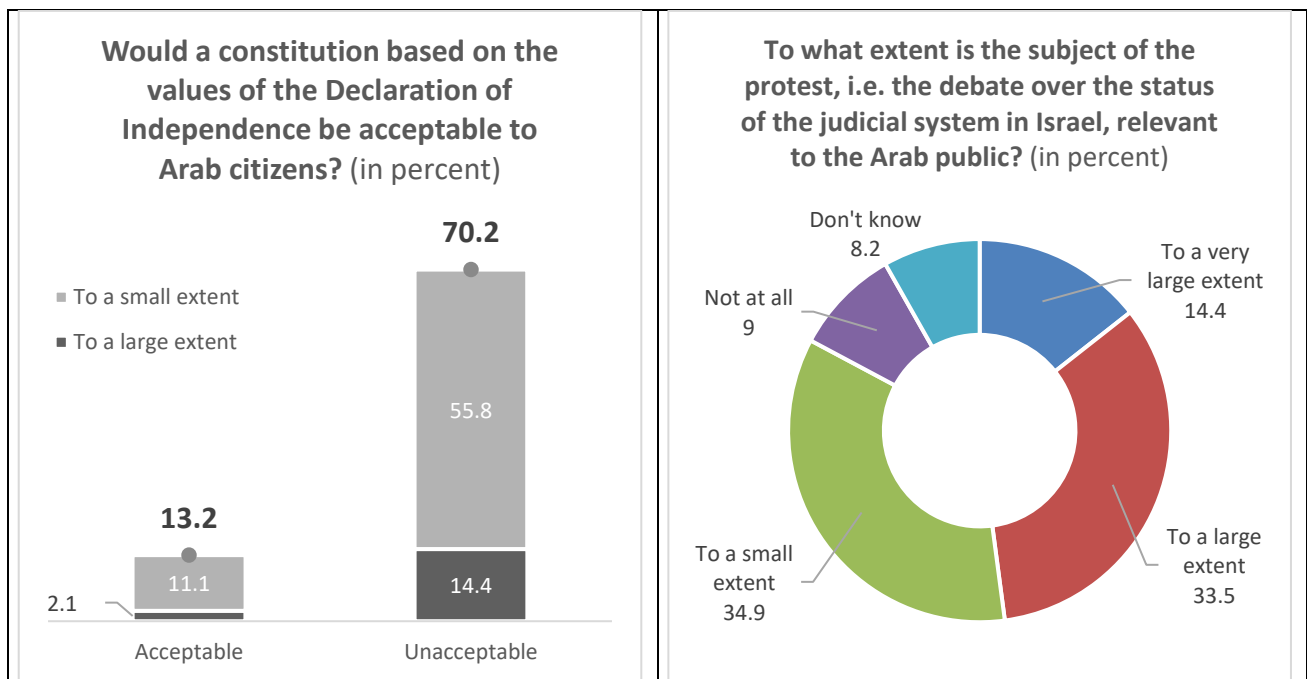
In answer to this question, there were differences between respondents who voted in the last Knesset elections and those who did not. The overall proportion of those who agreed with the claim that Arab citizens should play a more active role in the grassroots protest among those who voted in the last elections (“voters”) was 62.4% while the proportion of those who did not vote in the last elections (“non-voters”) was 51.1%. The proportion of those who disagreed with the claim among voters was 31.2% while among non-voters it was slightly higher – 36.6%. Although these are not statistically significant differences, there is nonetheless a difference between the two groups: The voters show greater willingness to play an active role also in the extra-parliamentary arena.

There is a difference of opinion within the Arab public also with respect to whether the subject of the protest, that is, the debate over the status of the judicial system in Israel, is relevant to them. One-half of the respondents (47.9%) feel that the subject of the protest is highly relevant to the Arab public while the other half (43.9%) feel that it is almost or totally irrelevant. The Arab public is divided also on the question of how their situation will be affected if the government ultimately passes the judicial reform in the Knesset. A large proportion of the respondents (41%) feel that the situation of Arab citizens will be worsened as a result while 34.8% believe that it will remain unchanged. Only 12.4% believe that the legal reform—if it is approved by the Knesset—will in fact lead to an improvement in the situation of Arab citizens. 11.8% of the respondents did not have an opinion on the matter.

As a result of the waves of grassroots protest, there have recently been calls by the Jewish public to write a constitution for Israel that will be based on the values of the Declaration of Independence. According to the survey, a large majority of the Arab public (70.2%) feel that such a constitution would not be acceptable to them. Only a small proportion (13.2%) said that such a constitution would

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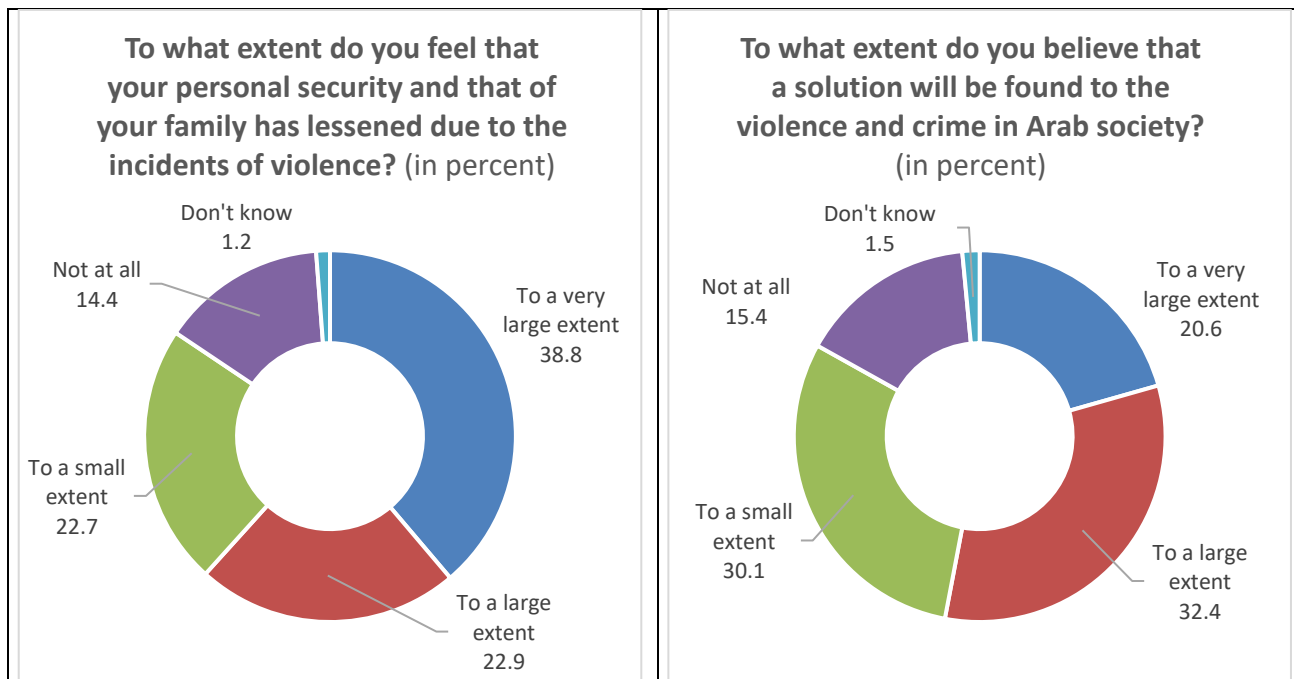
be acceptable to them while 16.6% had no opinion on the matter. It should be mentioned that on this question there was no difference between voters and non-voters. A large majority of both groups (69.6% of voters and 59.5% of non-voters) do not agree that the values of the Declaration of Independence should serve as the basis for an Israeli constitution.



The problem of violence and crime in the Arab sector

In recent months, there has been a significant increase in incidents of violence in Arab society relative to the same period last year. The concern that there is an upward trend is clearly reflected in the survey's findings: Most of the respondents (61.7%) feel that their personal security and that of their family has lessened as a result of the violence; 38.8% feel that their personal security has lessened to a great extent. Nonetheless, about one-half (53%) are convinced that ultimately a solution will be found; 20.6% are convinced of this to a great extent while only 15.4% do not believe a solution will be found.

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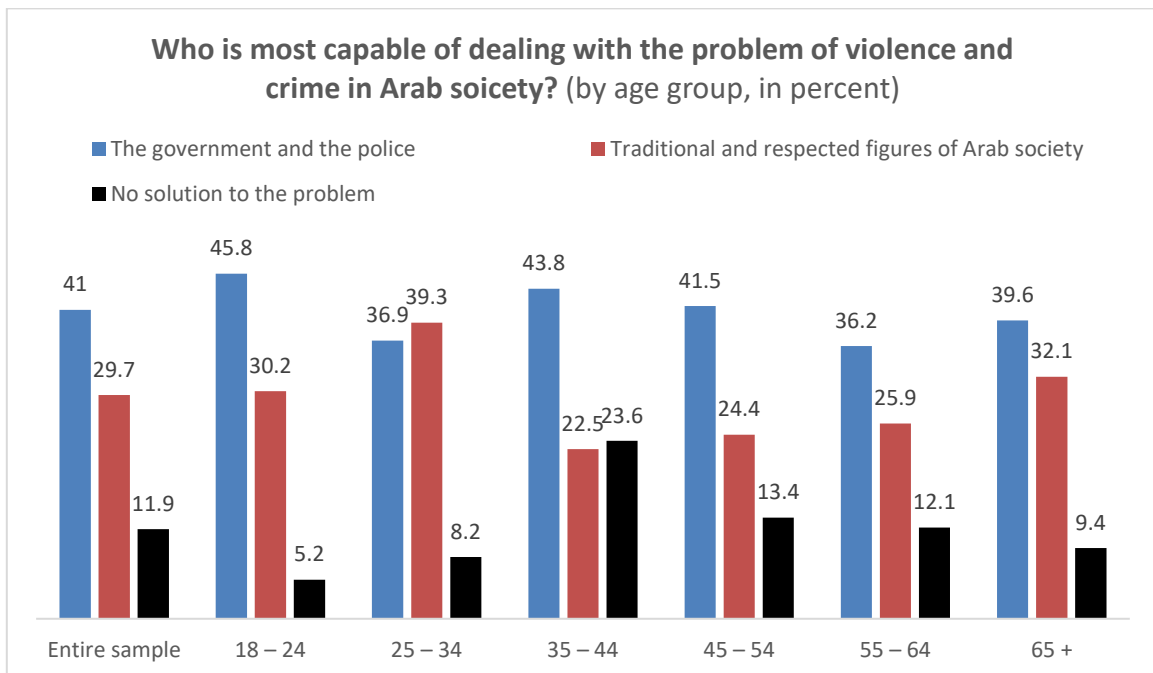
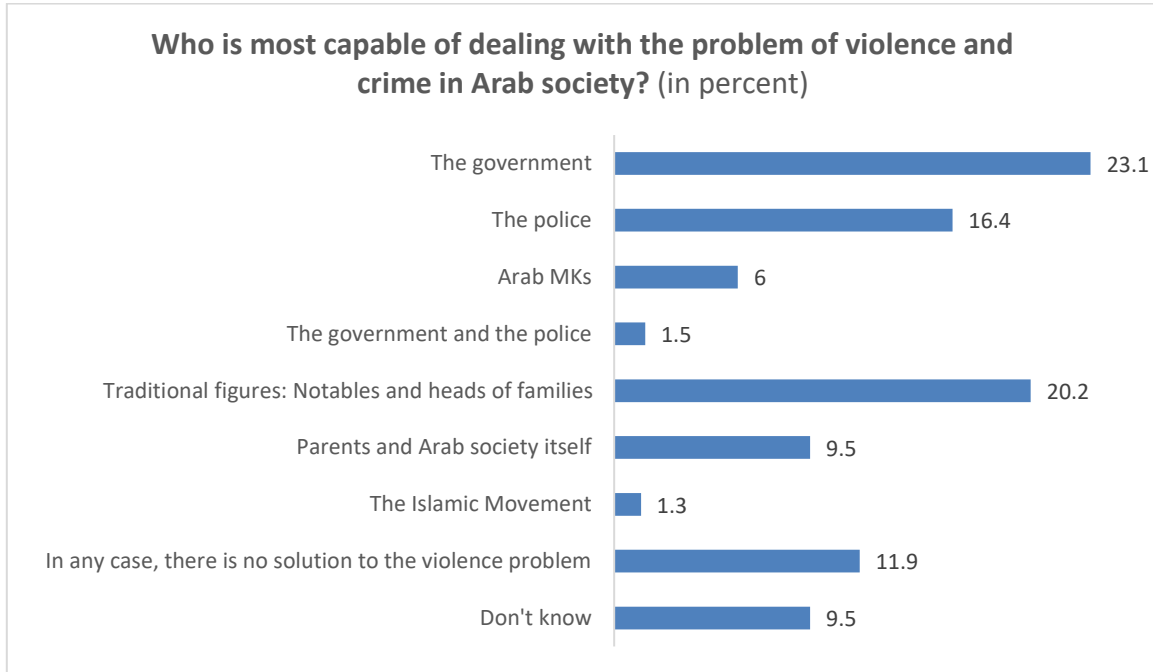


The respondents were asked who in their opinion is capable of dealing with the problem of violence and crime in Arab society. 41% feel that the government or the police are capable of doing so. On the other hand, 29.7% feel that traditional components of Arab society, such as respected figures, heads of households or parents, can deal with the problem. Only a negligible proportion (6%) think that the Arab Knesset members are capable of dealing with the problem. A negligible proportion (not statistically significant) feel that the Islamic Movement or the Supreme Monitoring Committee (1.3% and 0.6% respectively) are capable of dealing with the problem. In sum, the Arab public is divided on the question of whether the problem of violence is the responsibility of the State or the social and traditional institutions within Arab society itself.

The most interesting finding in this context is that the response “parents and Arab society itself”, which was given by 9.5% of the respondents, did not appear in the questionnaire. The fact that the respondents came up with this response on their own—and that it is clearly statistically significant—is evidence that the Arab public increasingly believes that Arab society itself is capable of dealing with the problem, whether out of a feeling of self-efficacy or a feeling that the mechanisms of the State are not currently active enough in solving the problem.

The responses to this question revealed statistically significant differences according to age group. According to the survey, the younger generation in Arab society (18–34 years old) attributes greater weight than the older generation to the ability of the traditional and social mechanisms of Arab society to solve the problem of violence and crime. In contrast, the feeling that there is no solution on the horizon is stronger among the older generation (35–64 years old).

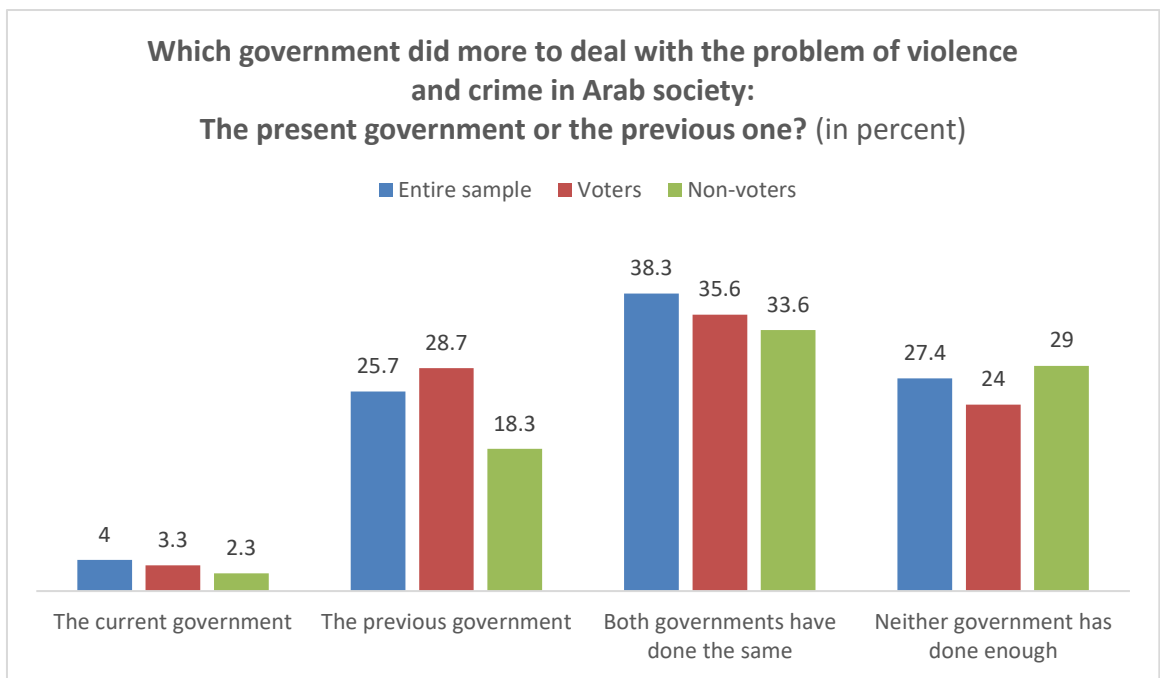
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When respondents were asked to compare the handling of the problem of violence by the current government to that of the previous one, 25.7% feel that the previous government did more to deal with the problem while only 4%—a negligible proportion that is not statistically significant—thought that the present government is doing more. A relatively large proportion (38.3%) feel that the two governments (the current one and the previous one) put in the same amount of effort; a fairly large proportion (27.4%) feel that neither government has done enough to solve the problem.

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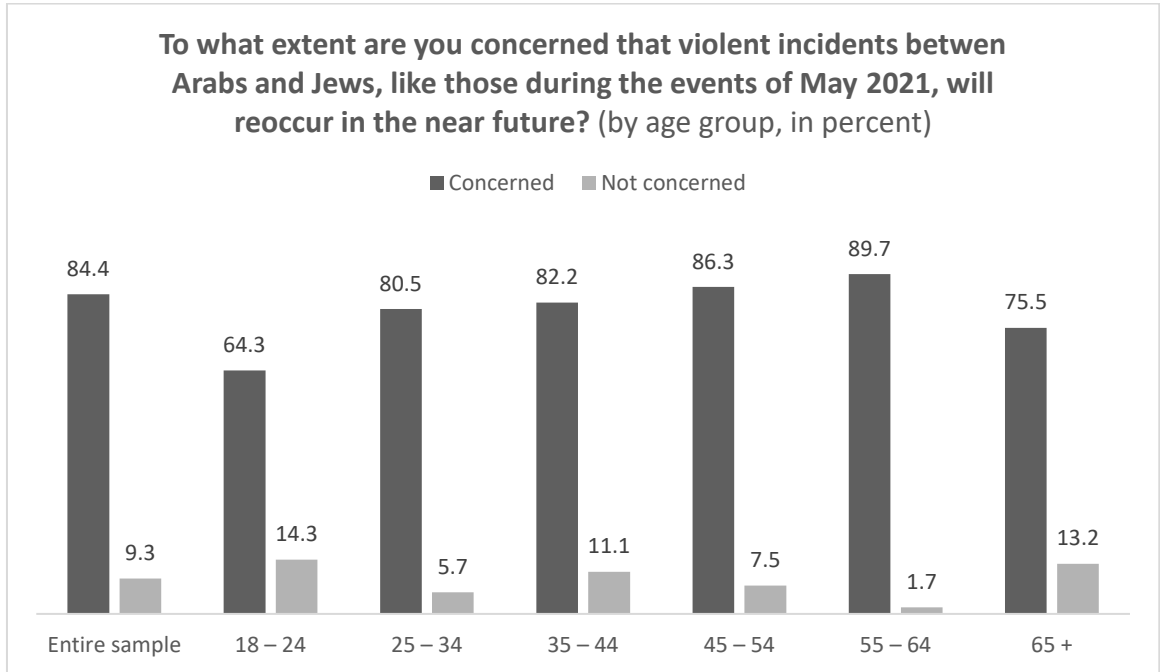
In this context, differences were found between the respondents who voted in the elections and those who did not. The proportion of voters who feel that the previous government did more to deal with violence was higher than that of non-voters (28.7% vs 18.3%). In contrast, the proportion of non-voters who felt that neither government had done enough to solve the problem was higher than that of voters (29% vs 24%).



Another indication of the feeling of a lack of security can be found in the responses regarding the fear of a possible recurrence of violent incidents between Arab and Jews, as occurred in May 2021. It appears that even after two years, a large majority of the Arab public (84.4%) are concerned that similar incidents are liable to occur in the future; 54% are very concerned about this scenario. 9.3% are not particularly concerned or not concerned at all, while 6.3% have no opinion on the matter.

In this context, a direct correlation was found between the intensity of concern and age group: the older generation is much more concerned about a repeat of the violent events of May 2021 than the younger generation. It is worth mentioning that there was a high level of concern among all age groups.

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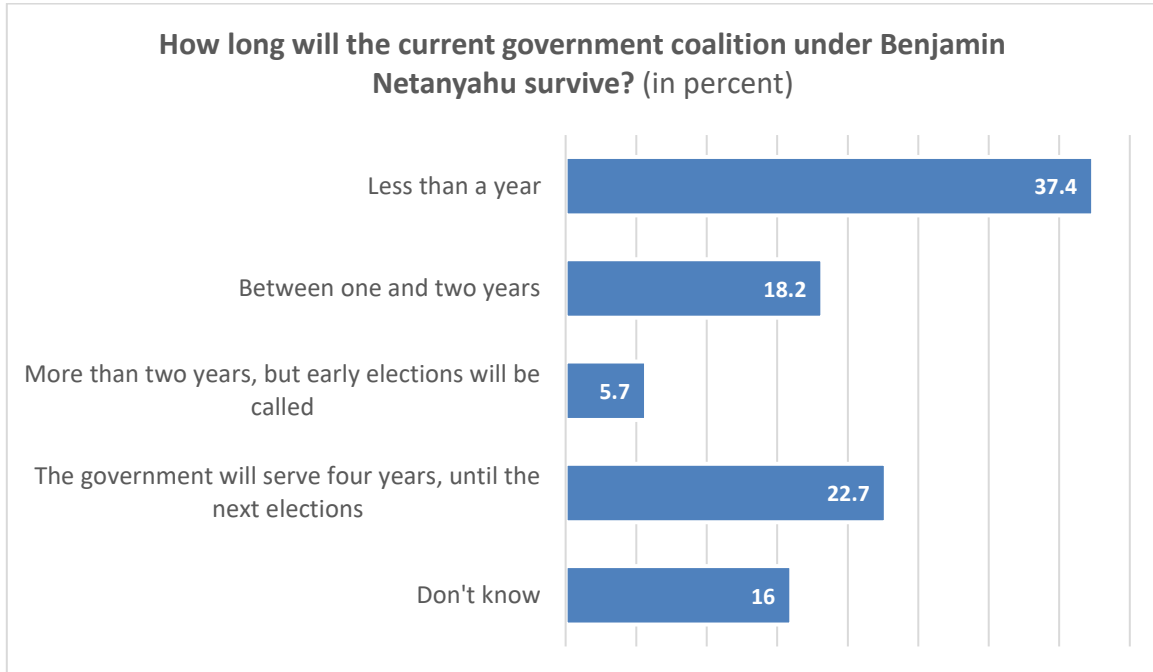
The attitude toward the government, joining the coalition and participation in Knesset elections

Arab citizens are aware of the political divisions within the government. One-half of them (55.6%) feel that the current government will not survive more than two years; 37.4% feel that it will survive less than one year. In contrast, 22.7% feel that the government will serve a full term, until the next elections.

The previous government under Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid included an Arab party — Ra’am under the leadership of Mansour Abbas. It appears that most of the Arab public (63.3%) are in favor of an Arab party joining a future coalition after the next elections. Of those, 46.6% support the idea of an Arab party joining any coalition. Only 27.3% do not support the idea of an Arab party joining the government and they are divided between those who are in favor of an Arab party supporting the government from outside the coalition in exchange for real benefits to the Arab public (13.8%; a “preventative bloc”), and those who are not in favor of an Arab party joining a coalition or supporting it from outside (13.5%).

These findings have consistently characterized the position of the Arab public in recent years, during which the Arab parties have had a growing influence on the political arena in Israel. This began with the establishment of the Joint List in 2015 and ended with the integration of the Ra’am party within the Bennett-Lapid government in 2021.

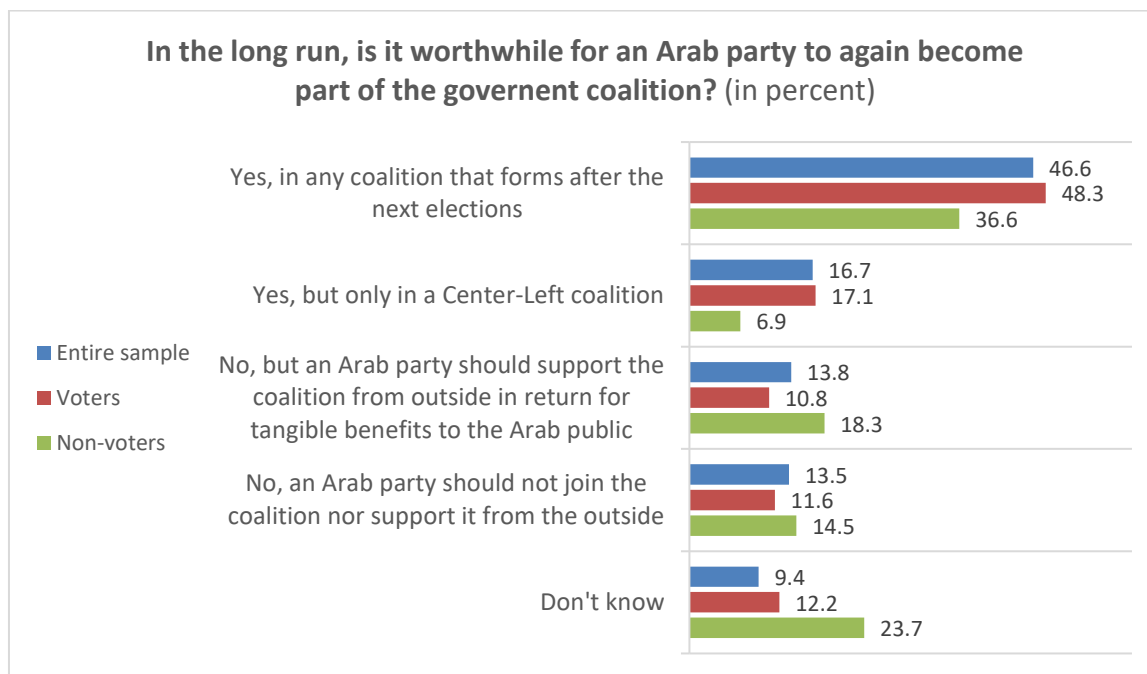
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In this context, there were significant differences between the respondents who voted in the last elections and those who did not. The proportion in favor of an Arab party joining the coalition was significantly higher among voters than among non-voters (65.5% vs 45.5%). Nonetheless, there was a fairly large proportion of respondents who were in favor of an Arab party joining any coalition that forms (not just a Left-Center coalition): 48.3% among voters and 36.6% among non-voters.

It can be said that the non-voters have adopted a more cautious position than the voters on the question of joining the government. This conclusion becomes clear from two findings of the survey on this issue. First, the proportion of respondents who are not in favor of an Arab party joining a coalition but would be in favor of an Arab party supporting it from outside (a “preventative bloc”) among non-voters was almost double the proportion among voters (18.3% vs 10.8%). Second, the proportion of respondents without any opinion on the issue among non-voters was twice that among voters: 23.7% vs 12.2%.

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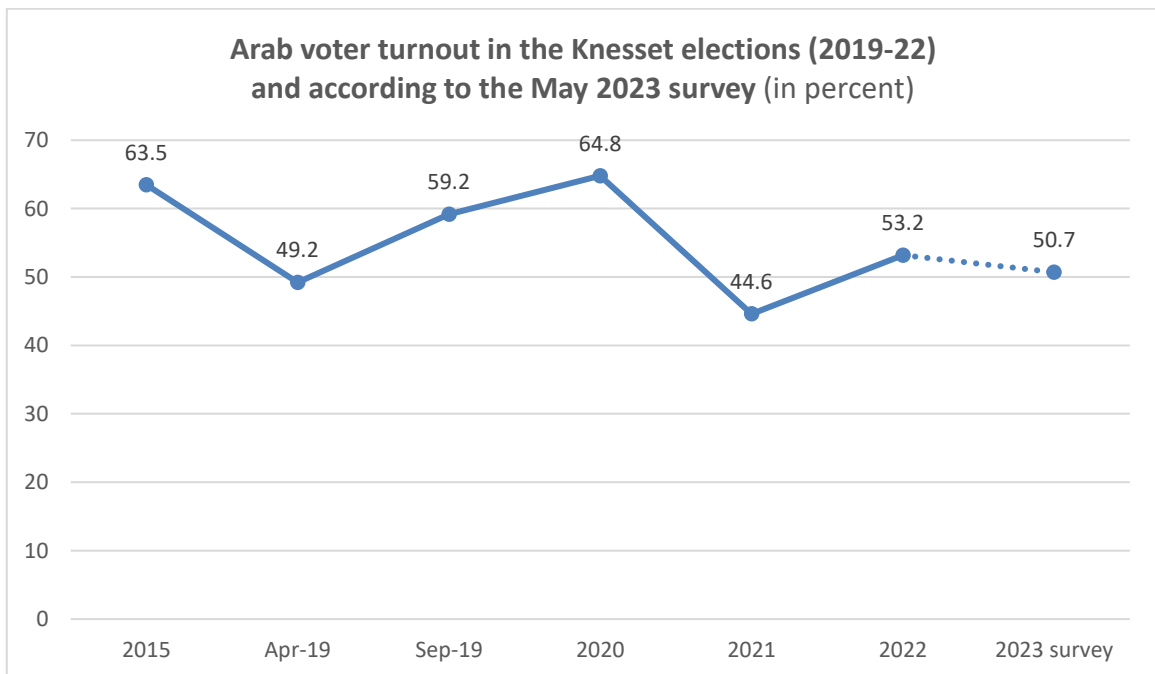
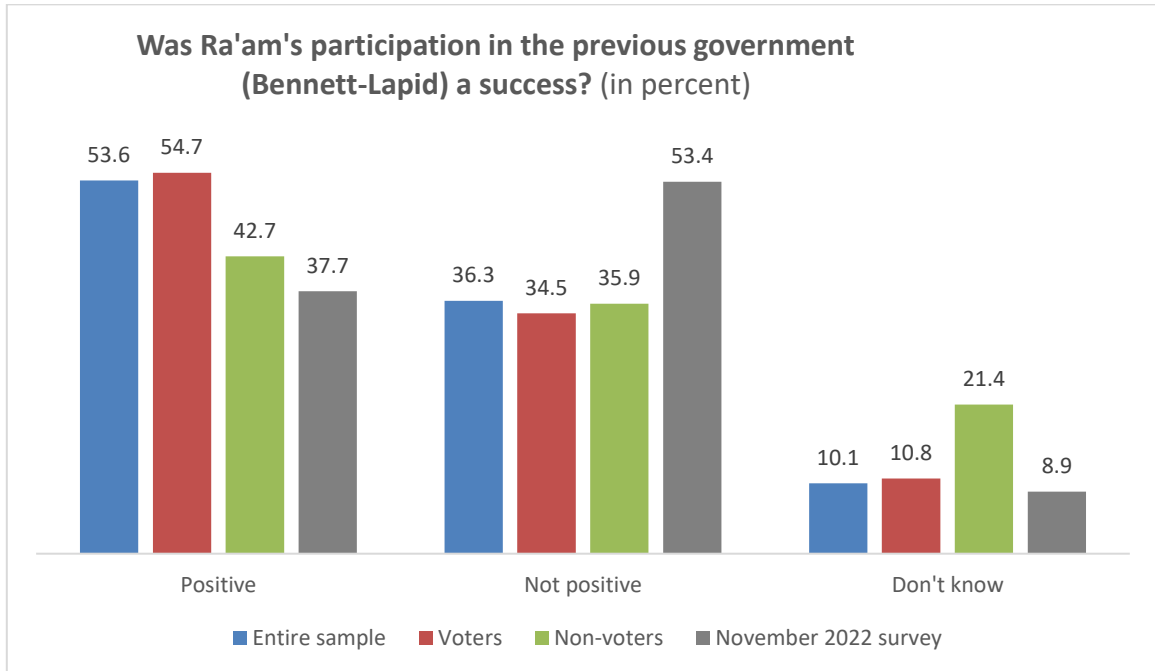
Six months have passed since the Bennett-Lapid government, which included Ra’am, an Arab party. In retrospect, about one-half of the Arab public (53.6%) currently feel that the participation of Ra’am in the previous government was successful overall, while 36.8% do not feel that way. There are two interesting points worth mentioning in this context.

First, there were no statistically significant differences found on this issue between voters and non-voters. Thus, there was a high level of agreement in both groups that Ra’am’s participation was a success: 54.7% among the voters and 42.8% among the non-voters.

Second, in a survey conducted prior to the last Knesset election (held in November 2022), which used the same methodology, the pattern of responses to this exact question was completely the opposite: 37.7% felt then that Ra’am’s participation was a success while 53.4% felt that it was not. It can be concluded that even if there is a division of opinion among the Arab public on the question of whether Ra’am’s participation was a success, those who feel—even after the fact—that Ra’am’s political initiative produced benefit are increasing in number.

The respondents were then presented with a hypothetical question: If elections for the Knesset were held today, would you vote? 72.2% of the respondents would vote while 26% would not. After taking into account the sample data, the survey methodology and the participation patterns of the survey respondents in previous elections, the estimated voter turnout rate is 50.7%. This is somewhat lower than the rate in the last elections (i.e. 53.2%) but it is not a statistically significant difference. In other words, even though almost six months have passed since the elections and there is a subdued political atmosphere on the Arab street, the potential turnout of Arab voters is relatively high as compared to the situation prevailing last year.

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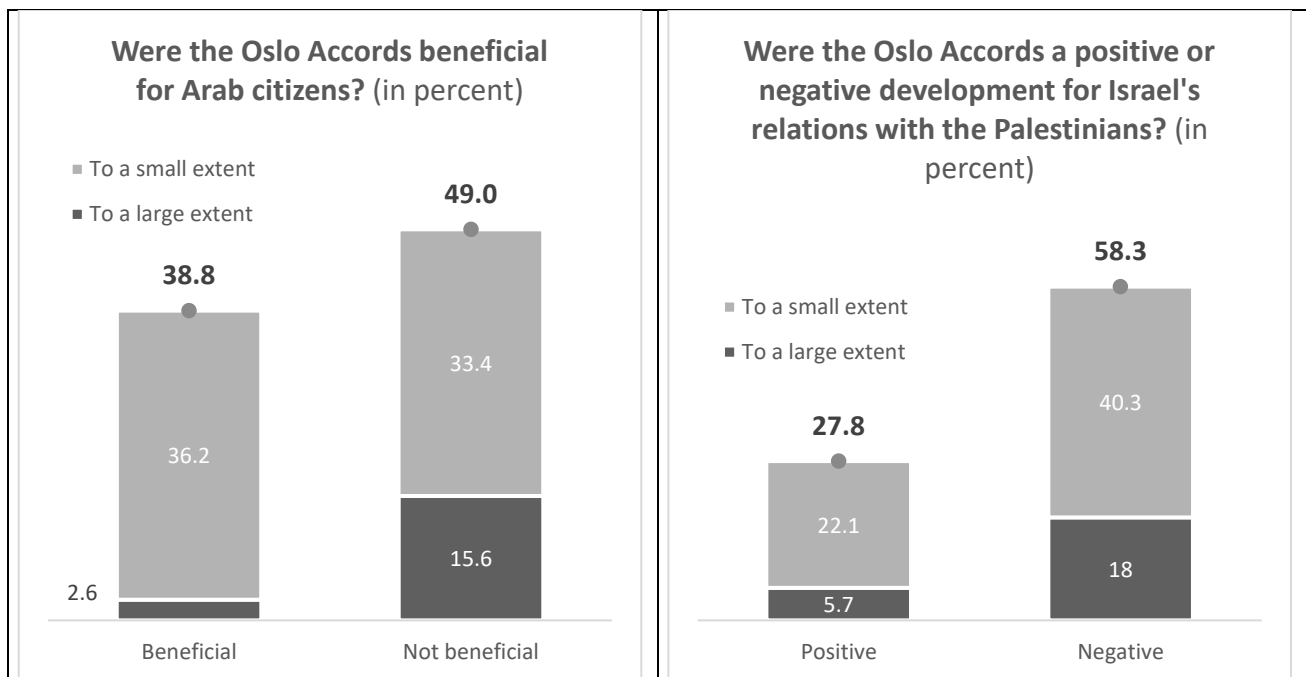


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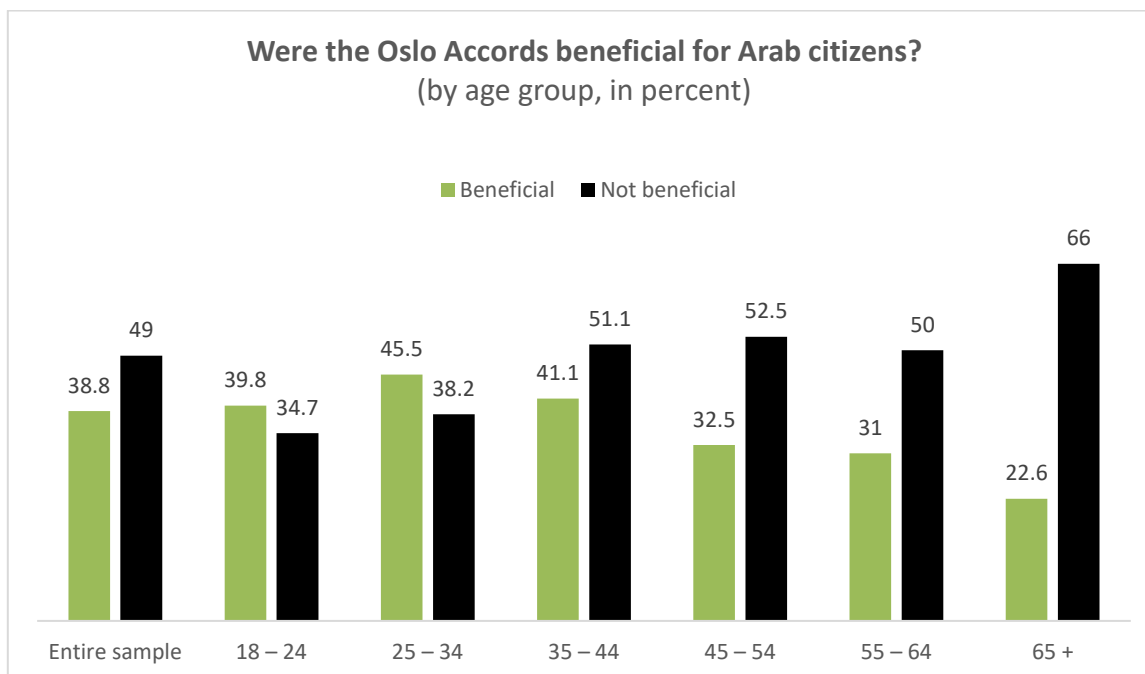
Israel and the Palestinians and the question of identity

This coming September will mark 30 years since the signing of the Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinians (September 1993). The respondents were asked to express their opinion regarding the influence of the agreement on relations between Israel and the Palestinians. The majority of the Arab public (58.3%) feel that the Oslo agreement was a negative development in relations between Israel and the Palestinians while only 27.8% feel that it was positive.

About one-half of the respondents (49%) feel that the agreement was beneficial for the Arabs in Israel while 38.8% feel that it was not. There were significant differences in the responses by age: the older generation, which personally experienced the Oslo period, have a more negative opinion of the agreement's effect on Arab citizens than the younger generation, which was born after the signing of the agreement, and the difference is statistically significant. The findings reflect the extent of disappointment with the results of the agreement among the older generation in contrast to the hope that they themselves pinned on it three decades ago.



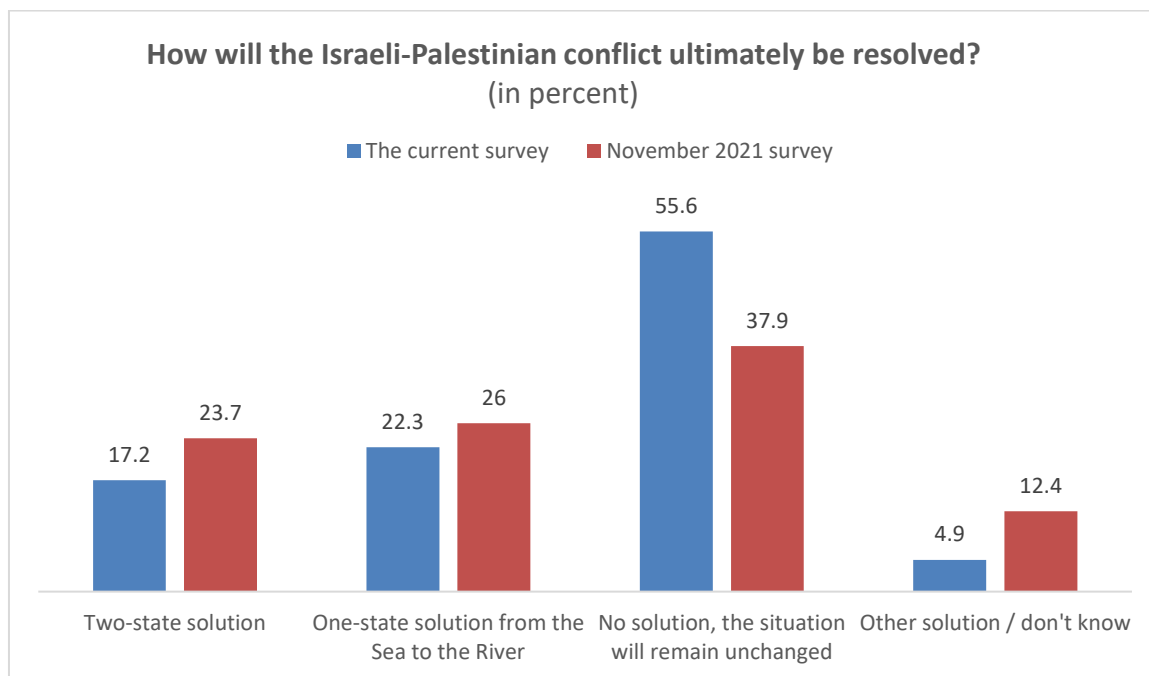
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From a long-term perspective, a majority of the Arab public do not believe that the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians will be solved in the spirit of the Oslo agreement. One-half of the respondents (55.6%) feel that there is no solution to the conflict and that the situation will remain static while 22.3% believe that there will be a one-state solution from “the Mediterranean to the Jordan”. Only 17.2% feel that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be resolved by means of a two-state solution, in the spirit of the political solution embodied in the Oslo agreement.

The belief among the Arab public that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be resolved by a two-state solution is weakening. Essentially, there is a growing feeling that the conflict will remain unresolved. In the survey carried out in November 2021 using identical methodology, it was found that 23.7% of the respondents feel that the two-state solution is a realistic plan to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The proportion who believed then that there is no solution to the conflict and that the situation will remain static was 37.9%, which is high per se but significantly lower than the finding in the current survey.

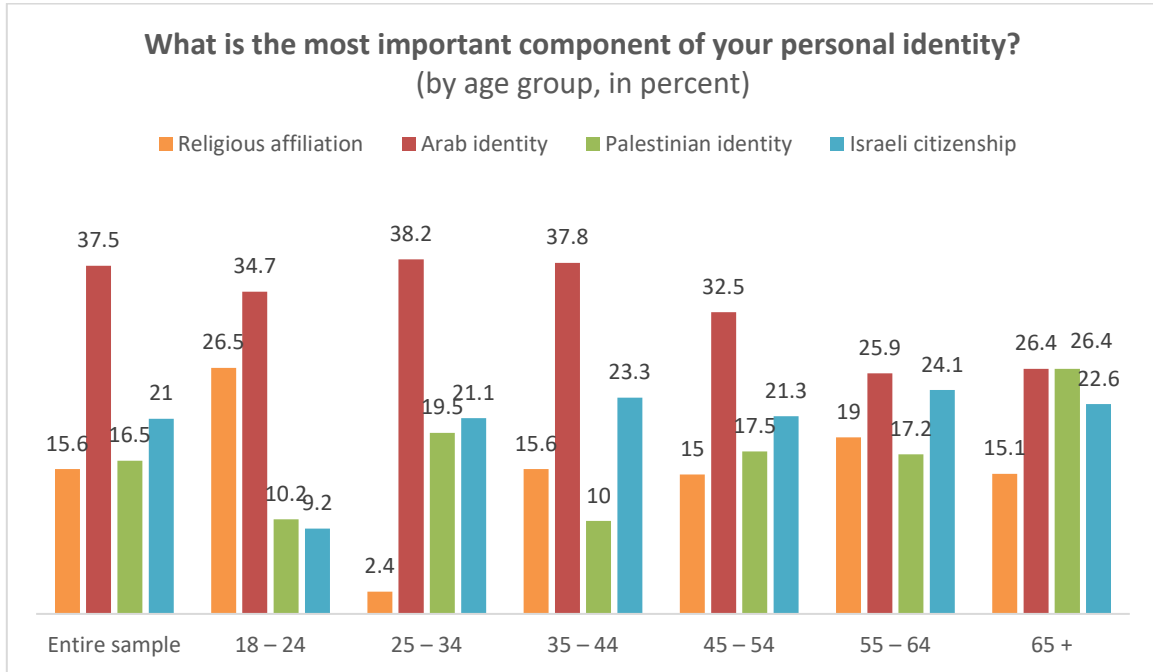
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The respondents were asked to identify the most important component of their personal identity. A large proportion (37.5%) answered that it is their Arab identity, which combines both cultural and national aspects. 16.5% responded that it is their Palestinian national identity and 15.6% responded that it is their religious affiliation. It is worth mentioning that a significant proportion (21%) responded that it is their Israeli citizenship. It is also worth noting that the respondents were asked to relate to the issue of citizenship rather than the issue of identity. In other words, the respondents were asked to evaluate the instrumental significance of the component related to Israeli citizenship rather its emotional significance.

Although Arab identity is dominant among all age groups, there were statistically significant differences according to age for the rest of the identity components: Among the younger generation (18–24 years old), religious affiliation was significantly stronger than among the other age groups. Among the elderly (65+), Palestinian identity was stronger than among the rest of the age groups and the differences were statistically significant. Another interesting finding is that both Palestinian identity and the Israeli citizenship component increase in strength with age. This process is evidence of the formation of a coherent national identity over time, alongside the acceptance of the Israeli citizenship component as an integral part of their identity.

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The survey was initiated by the Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, in cooperation with the Israel Office of the German Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

The survey was carried out by the Yafa Institute – Market Research, Surveys and Consulting, under the direction of Dr. Aas Atrash.

The data were collected during the period May 9–15, 2023 in a telephone survey carried out in Arabic among a representative sample of the adult Arab population (aged 18+).

Size of the sample: 502. Sample error: ±4.4 percent.

The main findings of the survey were presented in a panel on “Jewish-Arab Relations: Where to?” held on May 23, 2023, at the “Herzliya Conference 2023: Vision and Strategy in an Era of Uncertainty”. The panel was a joint endeavor with the Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS) of Reichman University, Herzliya.