

Cooperation between Israel and the Arab world

Public opinion findings; July 2016

Israelis see high importance in advancing cooperation with Egypt, while cooperation with the Palestinian Authority is of low priority.

This is the main finding from a public opinion poll conducted for the Mitvim Institute on July 13, 2016 by the Rafi Smith Institute and in cooperation with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. It sampled 500 men and women, as a representative sample of the Israeli adult population (aged 18 and older, from both the Jewish and Arab sectors).

The findings were first presented on July 20, 2016, at a conference held by the Knesset Caucus for Regional Cooperation (led by MKs Merav Michaeli, Yaakov Peri, and Dr. Michael Oren), in cooperation with the Mitvim Institute. The following are the poll's findings.¹

With whom in the Arab world is it most important for Israel to try and advance cooperation? (Average ranking, the most important to the least important)

1. **Egypt** (ranked most important by 37%)
2. **Jordan** (ranked most important by 12%)
3. **Saudi Arabia** (ranked most important by 16%)
4. **The Palestinian Authority** (ranked most important by 26%)
5. **Morocco** (ranked most important by 9%)

Almost 70% of respondents ranked Egypt in the first or second place, 44% ranked Jordan in the first or second place, and only 19% ranked Morocco in the first or second place (compared to 66% who ranked it in the fourth or last place). 54% ranked the Palestinian Authority in the last two places.

On average, the Arab respondents ranked the entities differently: The Palestinian Authority in first place, followed by Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco.

¹ For the full data file, in Hebrew, see: [http://mitvim.org.il/images/Hebrew -
Public opinion findings on cooperation with Arab countries - July 2016.pdf](http://mitvim.org.il/images/Hebrew_-_Public_opinion_findings_on_cooperation_with_Arab_countries_-_July_2016.pdf)

Egypt	<p>Ranked in the first place by voters of all parties except Meretz and the Joint List (which ranked it second).</p> <p>Its average ranking was the highest among Yisrael Beiteinu and Zionist Union voters.</p> <p>Its average ranking was higher among adults over the age of 50, and lower among young people up to the age of 29 (but it was ranked as most important by all age groups).</p>
Jordan	<p>Its average ranking was higher among Yisrael Beiteinu and Jewish Home voters (ranked second), and lower among Meretz (ranked third) and the Joint List (ranked fourth) voters.</p> <p>There were no statistically significant differences in Jordan's ranking according to voting pattern, age, and level of religiosity.</p>
Saudi Arabia	<p>Ranked second only by Yesh Atid voters (all others ranked it third).</p> <p>Ranked as more important than Jordan by Yesh Atid and the Joint List voters.</p> <p>There were no statistically significant differences in Saudi Arabia's ranking according to voting pattern, age, and level of religiosity.</p>
Palestinian Authority	<p>Ranked first by Meretz and the Joint List voters.</p> <p>Ranked third by Zionist Union and Yisrael Beiteinu voters.</p> <p>Ranked fourth by Kulanu, Yesh Atid, and Shas voters.</p> <p>Ranked last by Likud and Jewish Home voters.</p> <p>Its average ranking was higher among those who are secular (fourth), and lower among the religious and ultra-Orthodox (last).</p>
Morocco	<p>Its average ranking was higher among Shas voters (third), and lower among Zionist Union voters (last).</p> <p>Its average ranking was higher among young people up to the age of 29 and lower among adults over the age of 50 (though it is ranked as the least important by all age groups).</p> <p>Its average ranking was higher among the religious and ultra-Orthodox (fourth), and lower among seculars (last).</p>

According to Prof. Elie Podeh, a board member of the Mitvim Institute: “The results of the poll teach us, not surprisingly, that the Israeli public mainly supports cooperation with Egypt. The bad news, however, is that more than half of the public attaches little importance, if at all, to cooperation with the Palestinian Authority. This completely ignores the fact that open and continual cooperation between Israel and Arab countries, particularly the Gulf States, will be possible only when real progress is made toward the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority.”

According to Dr. Nimrod Goren, the Head of the Mitvim Institute: “There is now an opportunity for a breakthrough in relations between Israel and the region, but its realization requires progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. In the absence of such progress, cooperation with Arab countries is expected to remain limited and largely secretive, and much of the regional opportunity might be missed. We need an Israeli regional initiative that includes Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and not one that tries to avoid them and bypass the Palestinian issue. An Israeli regional initiative should not stand in contrast to other international initiatives currently being discussed. It should complement them.”

