



The 2019 Israeli Foreign Policy Index of the Mitvim Institute

**In cooperation with
the Rafi Smith Institute
and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung**

November 2019



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Findings of the Mitvim Institute Poll

The seventh annual public opinion poll of the Mitvim Institute on Israel's foreign policy was conducted in September 2019. It was carried out by the Rafi Smith Institute and in cooperation with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, among a representative sample of Israel's adult population (700 men and women, Jews and Arabs) and with a margin of error of 3.5%. This report presents the poll's key findings, grouped under four categories: Israel's foreign relations, Israel's Foreign Service, Israel and its surrounding regions, and Israel and the Palestinians.

Key Findings

A. Israel's Foreign Relations

- Israelis rank their country's **global standing** at 6.10 out of 10. This ranking has improved every year since 2015.
- Israelis rank the state of **Israel-US relations** at 7.75 out of 10. This ranking is similar to that of 2018 and is higher than in previous years.
- Israelis see Russia as **the most important country** for Israel besides the US, followed by Germany, Great Britain, China, France and Egypt.
- 30% of the public thinks that if **Benny Gantz will serve as prime minister**, Israel's foreign relations will deteriorate. 25% think they will improve, and 27% do not expect any change.
- Israelis **want their next government** to strengthen the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA; ranking of 7.41 out of 10), and then improve ties with the EU (7.26), improve ties with Arab countries (7.12), improve ties with Mediterranean countries (6.96) and advance peace with the Palestinians (6.18).
- Israelis are split on what is more important for Israel to do ahead of **next year's US presidential elections** – draw even closer to Trump and the Republican party (36%) or fix the crisis in its relations with the Democratic Party (34%).
- Israelis are split on whether Israel should prioritize building **ties with democratic countries** (40%) or should not consider regime type as a factor (40%).

B. Israel's Foreign Service

- Israelis rank their **government's handling of foreign policy** at 5.99 out of 10. This ranking has improved every year since 2015.
- Israelis rank the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA) fulfillment of its mission** at 5.58 out of 10. This ranking has improved every year since 2015. The **status of the MFA** is ranked at 5.37.
- 39% of the public thinks that the **main thing an Israeli diplomat does** is advancing diplomatic relations (39%), followed by explaining Israel's positions (18%), representing Israel at events (15%), advancing economic relations (7%), and assisting Israelis in distress abroad (4%).

- 50% of Israelis think that Israel should take into account, to a moderate or large extent, the impact of its policy decisions on **Diaspora Jews**. 35% think this should be taken into account to a limited extent, or none at all.
- In light of the global demonstrations regarding the **climate crisis**, 43% of Israelis think Israel should focus on solving its own problems. 35% think it should play a more active role in solving global problems.

C. Israel and its Surrounding Regions

- The Israeli public is divided as to whether **Israel belongs** more to the Middle East (32%), Europe (27%), or the Mediterranean Basin (21%).
- A vast majority of Israelis (68%) think that **regional cooperation** between Israel and Middle Eastern countries is possible. 20% think it is not.
- Saudi Arabia (25%) and Egypt (19%) are the Arab countries with which Israelis see the **most importance in cooperating**. Jordan is ranked next, with 3%, and 34% think that Israel should not try to develop cooperation with any Arab country.
- A vast majority of Israelis (71%) think that the **peace with Jordan** was and still is a strategic asset for Israel. Only 16% think it is less important for Israel today than it was in the past.
- 45% of Israelis think that **the EU** is currently more of a foe to Israel than a friend (27%). In 2018, 55% thought the EU was a foe, while 18% regarded it as a friend.
- The **EU's image in Israel** can be most improved through statements by European politicians on the importance of ties with Israel (32%) and by disseminating more information on existing cooperation between Israel and the EU (31%).
- A majority of Israelis (53% vs. 32%) think that Israel should try to improve its **relations with Turkey**.

D. Israel and the Palestinians

- A majority of the Israeli public (55% vs. 24%) think that **Israel's Arab citizens should play a more central role** in advancing peace with the Palestinians. However, only 37% think that Israel's Arab citizens should play a more central role in the formulation of Israel's foreign policy. 45% think they should not.
- A majority of the public (61%) think that **Palestinian President Abbas is not a partner** for peace negotiations with Israel. 20% think he is.
- Apart from the US, Israelis would most like to see (26%) the Arab Quartet (Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE) **mediate in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process**, followed by Russia (13%), the EU (12%), the UN (9%) and China (4%).
- 46% of Israelis think that **peace between Israel and Gulf states** can be reached even without progress in the **Israeli-Palestinian peace process**. 32% think that it can be reached only after progress is made in the peace process.
- Israelis are divided on how to **prevent another war in Gaza**. 24% think it can be done through strengthening Israeli deterrence, 17% believe it can be done through Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and 14% believe it can be done through international mediation. 32% believe that another war in Gaza is unavoidable.
- 55% of the public stated that their **image of the UN** did not change following the efforts conducted by the UN envoy to the Middle East to prevent war between Israel and Hamas. 13% stated their image changed for the worse and 12% for the better.

Trends over Time

Average rankings on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high)

	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Israel's global standing	6.10	5.82	5.49	5.01	3.96	5.12
The government's performance on foreign policy	5.99	5.22	5.05	4.55	4.00	5.29
The MFA's fulfillment of its mission	5.58	5.01	4.81	4.31	4.03	4.80
The current state of Israel-US relations	7.75	7.75	6.88	5.56	5.01	6.09

Sample Breakdown

Sample size: 700

50% **Male**; 50% **Female**

84% **Jews**; 16% **Arabs**

16% **Russian immigrants** (within the Jewish sample)

Age	Total
18-29	24%
30-49	42%
50+	34%

Level of Religiosity (within the Jewish sample)	Total
Religious	21%
Traditional	30%
Secular	49%

Political Point of View (within the Jewish sample)	Total
Right & Far Right	44%
Center-Right	23%
Center	21%
Center-Left	7%
Left & Far Left	5%

Level of Education	Total
High school or below	33%
High school graduate	23%
Academic degree	44%

Level of Income	Total
Below average	34%
Average	43%
Above average	23%

* Among 89% who responded

A. Israel's Foreign Relations

1. What is your general feeling about Israel's standing in the world today?

On a scale of 1 to 10; 1 is bad, 10 is very good

	Total
1 - Bad	5%
2	2%
3	6%
4	8%
5	16%
6	16%
7	19%
8	18%
9	6%
10 - Very good	4%
Average	6.10
Percentage who responded	98%

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Poor (1-3)	13%	10%	28%
Rather poor (4-5)	24%	24%	23%
Rather good (6-7)	35%	37%	26%
Good (8-10)	28%	29%	23%
Average	6.10	6.23	5.31

* Among 98% who responded

Trends over time:

	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Average	6.10	5.82	5.49	5.01	3.96	5.12

2. What is your assessment of the current relations between Israel and the US?

On a scale of 1-10; 1 is bad, 10 is very good

	Total
1 - Bad	1%
2	1%
3	3%
4	4%
5	5%
6	7%
7	15%
8	21%
9	20%
10 - Very good	23%
Average	7.75
Percentage who responded	97%

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Poor (1-3)	5%	4%	13%
Rather poor (4-5)	9%	7%	18%
Rather good (6-7)	22%	22%	20%
Good (8-10)	64%	67%	49%
Average	7.75	7.89	6.84

* Among 97% who responded

Trends over time:

	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Average	7.75	7.75	6.88	5.56	5.01	6.09

3. The relations with which countries (not including the US) are the most important to Israel today?

The columns exceed 100% as respondents were asked to provide three answers. The table only includes countries receiving 5% and more

	2019			2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
	Total	Jews	Arabs	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
Russia	48%	52%	25%	42%	51%	45%	41%	33%
Germany	28%	31%	11%	34%	34%	32%	31%	32%
Great Britain	26%	27%	18%	29%	26%	30%	19%	27%
China	24%	27%	7%	23%	25%	21%	20%	20%
France	17%	18%	14%	22%	20%	25%	14%	16%
Egypt	16%	16%	17%	12%	12%	18%	21%	27%
Jordan	8%	8%	4%	6%	7%	5%	10%	3%
India	7%	6%	11%	5%	8%	2%	5%	2%

4. Should Benny Gantz serve as prime minister, Israel's foreign relations:

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Will improve	25%	21%	44%
Will deteriorate	30%	34%	8%
Will not change	27%	30%	16%
No opinion	18%	15%	32%
<i>The gap between "will improve" and "will deteriorate"</i>	-5%	-13%	+36%

5. How important is it for Israel's next government to:

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Strengthen Israel's MFA	7.41	7.66	6.00
Improve relations with the EU	7.26	7.46	6.17
Improve relations with Arab countries	7.12	7.21	6.62
Improve relations with countries in the Mediterranean	6.96	7.07	6.32
Advance peace with the Palestinians	6.18	6.06	6.82

6. What do you think is more important for Israel to do ahead of next year's US presidential elections?

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Draw even closer to Trump and the Republican Party	36%	38%	21%
Fix the crisis in its relations with the Democratic Party	34%	35%	34%
No opinion	30%	27%	45%

7. With which of the following statements do you agree the most:

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Israel should prioritize building relations with democratic countries	40%	40%	42%
Israel should not consider regime type as a factor when building its foreign relations	40%	43%	24%
No opinion	20%	17%	34%

B. Israel's Foreign Service

8. To what extent are you satisfied with the Israeli government's conduct in the realm of foreign policy?

On a scale of 1 to 10; 1 is not at all satisfied, 10 is very satisfied

	Total
1 - Not at all satisfied	11%
2	5%
3	5%
4	7%
5	12%
6	11%
7	14%
8	17%
9	7%
10 - Very satisfied	11%
Average	5.99
Percentage who responded	97%

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Not satisfied (1-3)	21%	18%	34%
Not very satisfied (4-5)	19%	18%	29%
Moderately satisfied (6-7)	25%	26%	18%
Satisfied (8-10)	35%	38%	19%
Average	5.99	6.22	4.63

* Among 97% who responded

Trends over time:

	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Average	5.99	5.22	5.05	4.55	4.00	5.29

9. To what extent are you satisfied with the way in which the Israeli MFA is currently fulfilling its mission?

On a scale of 1 to 10; 1 is not at all satisfied, 10 is very satisfied

	Total
1 - Not at all satisfied	10%
2	5%
3	7%
4	10%
5	15%
6	12%
7	16%
8	12%
9	7%
10 - Very satisfied	6%
Average	5.58
Percentage who responded	94%

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Not satisfied (1-3)	22%	20%	34%
Not very satisfied (4-5)	25%	26%	19%
Moderately satisfied (6-7)	28%	28%	29%
Satisfied (8-10)	25%	26%	18%
Average	5.58	5.70	4.85

* Among 94% who responded

Trends over time:

	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Average	5.58	5.01	4.81	4.31	4.03	4.80

10. What is your assessment of the current status of Israel's MFA?

On a scale of 1-10; 1 is bad, 10 is very good

	Total
1 - Bad	10%
2	4%
3	11%
4	9%
5	16%
6	14%

7	15%
8	12%
9	3%
10 - Very good	6%
Average	5.37
Percentage who responded	83%

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Poor (1-3)	25%	25%	28%
Rather poor (4-5)	25%	24%	28%
Rather good (6-7)	29%	30%	24%
Good (8-10)	21%	21%	20%
Average	5.37	5.41	5.21

* Among 83% who responded

**This question was asked separately, on October 2019

11. What is the main thing that an Israeli diplomat does?

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Advances diplomatic relations	39%	43%	18%
Explains Israel's positions (<i>Hasbara</i>)	18%	19%	17%
Represents Israel at events	15%	14%	16%
Advances economic relations	7%	7%	6%
Assists Israelis in distress abroad	4%	3%	10%
No opinion	17%	14%	33%

12. To what extent should the Israeli government take into account the implications of its decisions on Diaspora Jewry?

	Total		Jews	Arabs	2018
To a large extent	14%	50%	52%	37%	47%
To a moderate extent	36%				
To a small extent	29%	35%	37%	25%	38%
Not at all	6%				
No opinion	15%	15%	11%	38%	15%

13. Recently, massive demonstrations took place around the globe regarding the climate crisis, but not in Israel. In your opinion, should Israel:

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Focus on solving its own problems	35%	34%	35%
Play a more active role in solving global problems	43%	47%	23%
No opinion	22%	19%	42%

C. Israel and its Surrounding Regions

14. Where do you think Israel belongs?

	2019	Jews	Arabs	2018
More in the Middle East	32%	31%	35%	28%
More in Europe	27%	27%	27%	23%
More in the Mediterranean Basin	21%	22%	11%	22%
None of the above	7%	6%	10%	10%
No opinion	13%	14%	17%	17%

15. Do you believe that regional cooperation between Israel and other countries in the Middle East is possible?

	2019			2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
	Total	Jews	Arabs	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
Yes, it is possible	68%	69%	61%	69%	70%	64%	59%	69%
No, it is not possible	20%	22%	13%	19%	23%	26%	36%	28%
No opinion	12%	9%	26%	12%	7%	10%	5%	3%
<i>The gap between "yes" and "no"</i>	+48%	+47%	+48%	+50%	+47%	+38%	+23%	+41%

16. With which Arab country do you think it is the most important for Israel to try to develop cooperation in various fields?

The table only includes countries receiving 3% and more

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2018
Saudi Arabia	25%	26%	18%	23%
Egypt	19%	21%	9%	24%
Jordan	3%	2%	7%	8%
No Arab country	34%	31%	48%	28%
No opinion	3%	3%	1%	4%

17. 25 years after the signing of the Israel-Jordan peace treaty:

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Peace with Jordan was and still is a strategic asset for Israel	71%	74%	56%
Peace with Jordan is less important for Israel today than it was in the past	16%	15%	18%
No opinion	13%	11%	26%

18. Do you think that the EU is currently more of a friend or a foe to Israel?

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2018
More of a friend	27%	24%	48%	18%
More of a foe	45%	51%	14%	55%
No opinion	28%	25%	38%	27%
<i>The gap between "friend" and "foe"</i>	-18%	-27%	+34%	-37%

19. How can the EU's image in Israel be most improved?

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Through statements by European politicians on the importance of ties with Israel	32%	36%	11%
By disseminating more information on existing cooperation between Israel and the EU	31%	32%	25%
Through statements by Israeli politicians on the importance of ties with the EU	8%	6%	20%
By providing Israelis more opportunities for meetings and conversations with Europeans	6%	5%	7%
No opinion	23%	21%	37%

20. Do you think that Israel should or should not try to improve its relations with Turkey?

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2018
Should try to improve relations	53%	50%	68%	42%
Should not try to improve relations	32%	37%	10%	45%
No opinion	15%	13%	22%	13%
<i>The gap between "should" and "should not"</i>	+21%	+13%	+58%	-3%

D. Israel and the Palestinians**21. Do you agree with the following statement: "The Arab citizens of Israel should have a more central role in efforts to promote peace between Israel and the Palestinians"?**

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2017	2016
Agree	55%	54%	63%	59%	64%
Disagree	24%	26%	11%	26%	24%
No opinion	21%	20%	26%	15%	12%
<i>The gap between "agree" and "disagree"</i>	+31%	+28%	+52%	+33%	+40%

22. Do you agree with the following statement: “The Arab citizens of Israel should have a more central role in the formulation of Israel’s foreign policy”?

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Agree	37%	28%	74%
Disagree	45%	52%	15%
No opinion	18%	20%	11%
<i>The gap between “agree” and “disagree”</i>	-8%	-24%	+59%

* This question was asked separately, on October 2018

23. Is Palestinian President Abbas a partner for peace negotiations with Israel?

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Yes, Abbas is a partner	20%	17%	32%
No, Abbas is not a partner	61%	67%	30%
No opinion	19%	16%	38%
<i>The gap between “yes” and “no”</i>	-41%	-50%	+2%

24. Various international actors seek to play a role in advancing the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Not including the US, who would you most like to mediate in the peace process?

	Total	Jews	Arabs
The Arab Quartet (Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates)	26%	27%	15%
Russia	13%	13%	15%
The EU	12%	11%	17%
The UN	9%	7%	16%
China	4%	3%	8%
No one / No opinion	36%	39%	29%

25. Israel’s Foreign Minister Katz recently stated that his goal is to sign peace agreements between Israel and Gulf states. In your opinion:

	Total	Jews	Arabs
This can be done even without making progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process	46%	51%	23%
This can be done only after progress has been made in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process	32%	28%	48%
No opinion	22%	21%	29%
<i>The gap between “without progress” and “after progress”</i>	+14%	+23%	-25%

26. Is another war between Israel and Gaza inevitable or avoidable?

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Inevitable	32%	35%	13%
Avoidable, via strengthening Israel's deterrence	24%	28%	3%
Avoidable, via Israeli-Palestinian negotiations	17%	14%	31%
Avoidable, via international mediation	14%	11%	31%
No opinion	13%	12%	22%

27. During the last few years, the UN envoy to the Middle East has been working to prevent a war between Israel and Hamas. Following this, did your opinion about the UN:

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Change for the better	12%	8%	32%
Change for the worse	13%	14%	11%
Did not change	55%	63%	14%
No opinion	20%	15%	43%
<i>The gap between "better" and "worse"</i>	-1%	-6%	+21%

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