
Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation

December 6, 2020

A survey of Israel's Arab community reveals severe economic distress as a result of the Corona crisis; a desire to see the creation of a new Arab-Jewish party; divisions of opinion with regard to the performance of the MKs in the Joint Arab List; a fairly low voter participation rate (55.6%) expected in the next elections; a high degree of satisfaction with the result of the US presidential election; and support for the normalization agreements between Israel and the Arab countries

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Main findings

- The idea of creating an Arab-Jewish party prior to the next elections for the Knesset has a relatively high level of support (64.8%) among the Arab community. The rate of voter participation in the Arab community in the next elections is not expected to be high (55.6%) due to the divided opinions over the performance of the MKs in the Joint Arab List: 51.6% of the respondents feel they are performing well, while 45.4% feel they are not.
- Most of the Arab community (61.8%) supports the normalization agreements signed between Israel and the Arab countries: the UAE, Bahrein and Sudan. On the other hand, 35.5% oppose the agreements, primarily because they are at the expense of the solution of the Palestinian problem.
- A large majority of the Arab community (73.9%) are satisfied with the result of the US presidential elections. Almost one-quarter (24.6%) feel that the involvement of the US in the Middle East is now likely to reinforce stability in the region. Following the US are Turkey (20.0%), the EU (11.0%) and the Gulf Arab states (8.9%).
- The economic situation of most of the Arab community (61.6%) has deteriorated in the last year as a result of the Corona crisis. There was a moderate level of satisfaction with how the following senior figures dealt with the Corona crisis: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Minister of Health Yuli Edelstein, ex-Corona project manager Professor Ronny Gamzu and the Corona project manager in the Arab community Ayman Saif.
- The most important issues for Arab citizens are the eradication of crime and violence (51.9%) and trailing far behind that: improving the economic situation and dealing with poverty and unemployment (13.4%), regulation of planning and building in Arab localities (13.3%), reducing the level of Corona morbidity in the Arab community (6.2%) and integration of young Arabs into the workforce and institutions of higher education (5.4%).
- 54.4% of the Arab community feel that the grassroots protest of last summer does not represent Arab citizens. On the other hand, a large majority (75.7%) feel that Arab citizens should express their support for these movements.

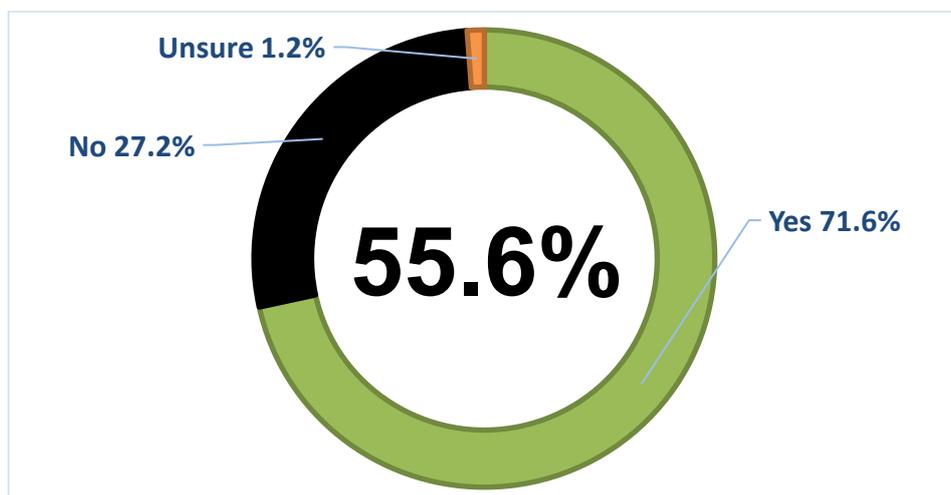
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Politics and Elections

The elections for the Knesset—the fourth in two years—seems to be a highly likely scenario at the moment. The respondents were asked what the chance is that they will participate in the next elections and the majority (71.6%) responded that they indeed intend to vote.

According to this finding and the weighting of the actual voter participation rate in the recent elections (for the 23rd Knesset) of 64.8%, the rate of voter participation in the next elections (for the 24th Knesset) is expected to be only 55.6%.

Do you intend to vote in the next Knesset elections?



It is important to emphasize that these findings are correct as of the time of the survey, when early elections had not yet been declared and essentially the election campaign had not yet begun.

In recent weeks, there has been increasing talk about the creation of a new Arab-Jewish party whose leadership will be equitably divided between Arabs and Jews and which will run in the next elections. Most of the respondents (68.6%) expressed support for the idea. The main arguments in favor are the fundamental belief in a joint Arab and Jewish political struggle (30.1%) and the hope that such a party will help increase the impact of Arab citizens in the political arena (20.3%).

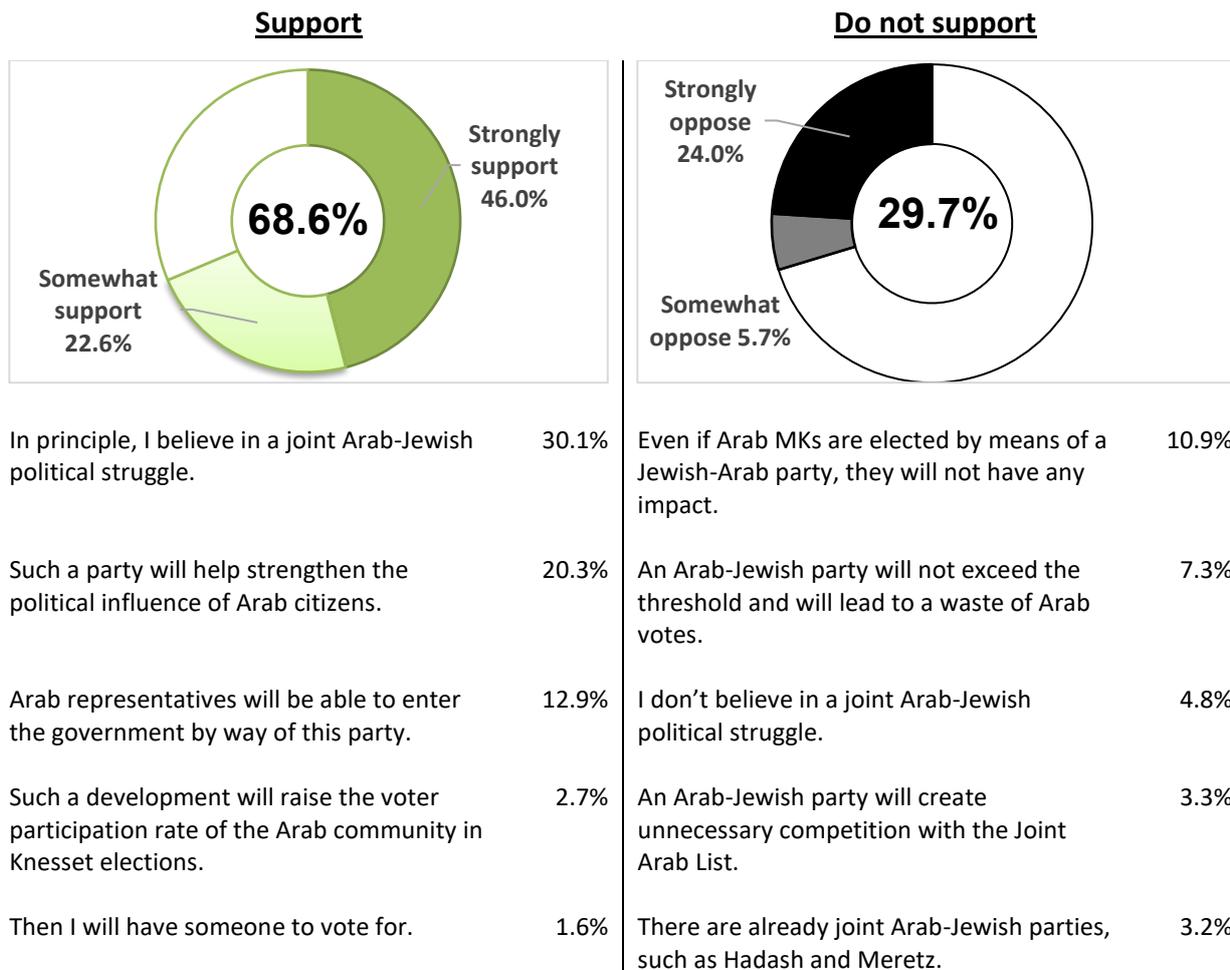
A minority (29.7%) who expressed reservations with the idea claimed that even if Arab MKs are elected as part of such a party, they will not have any influence (10.9%). In addition, a concern was expressed that if such a party runs in the election, it will not pass the threshold and will lead to a waste of Arab votes (7.3%).

An interesting finding is that only a negligible proportion of the respondents (3.3%) justified their opposition to the idea based on the competition that would arise between the new party and the Joint Arab List. The conclusion is that the Arab community does not oppose diversification of the Arab parties, perhaps because

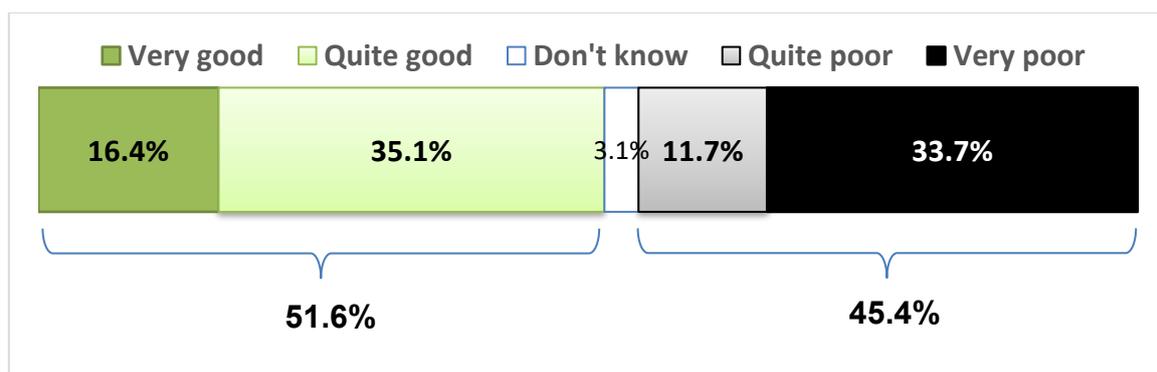
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its opinions are divided with respect to the performance of the MKs from the Joint Arab List during the past year: 51.6% believe they performed well while 45.4% believe they did not.

Do you support the creation of a new Jewish-Arab party?



Assessment of the performance of the MKs from the Joint Arab List during the past year

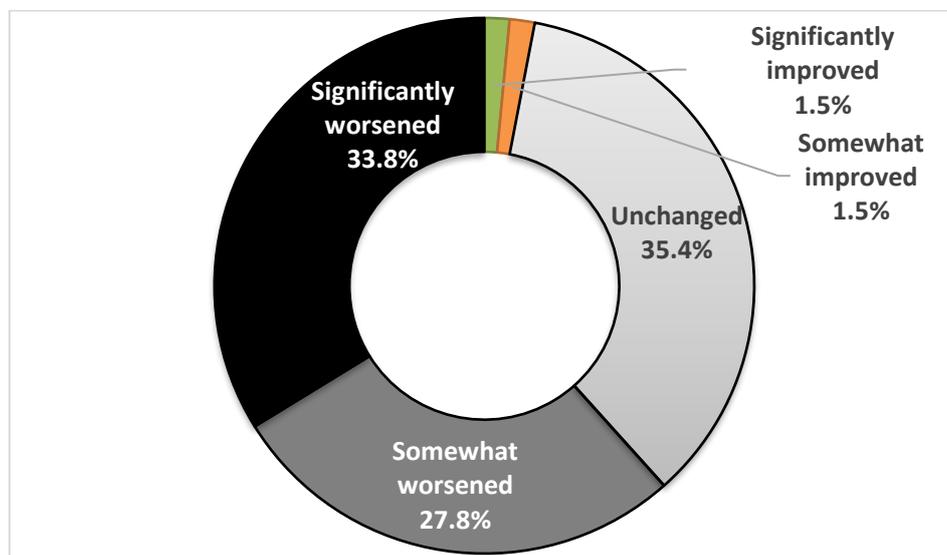


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The Arab community and the Corona crisis

The Arab community has been experiencing a serious economic crisis as a result of the Corona pandemic in Israel. Most of the respondents (61.6%) stated that their economic situation has worsened, and one-third even claimed that they were in dire economic straits. At the same time, 35.4% stated that their economic situation has remained almost unchanged.

How has your economic situation changed during the last year as a result of the Corona crisis?

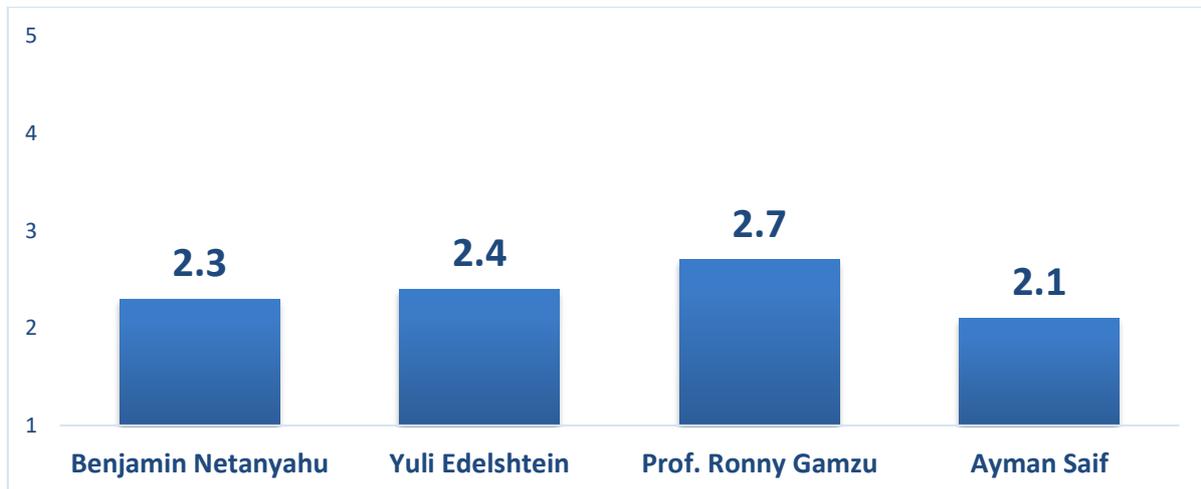


The respondents were asked to rank the performance of the following senior figures in dealing with the Corona crisis on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest): Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Minister of Health Yuli Edelstein, ex-Corona project manager Professor Ronny Gamzu and the Corona project manager in the Arab community Ayman Saif.

The Arab community gives these officials only moderate scores. Professor Ronny Gamzu won the highest score. In fact, Ayman Saif, who personally dealt with the concentrations of infection in the Arab population received a relatively low score.

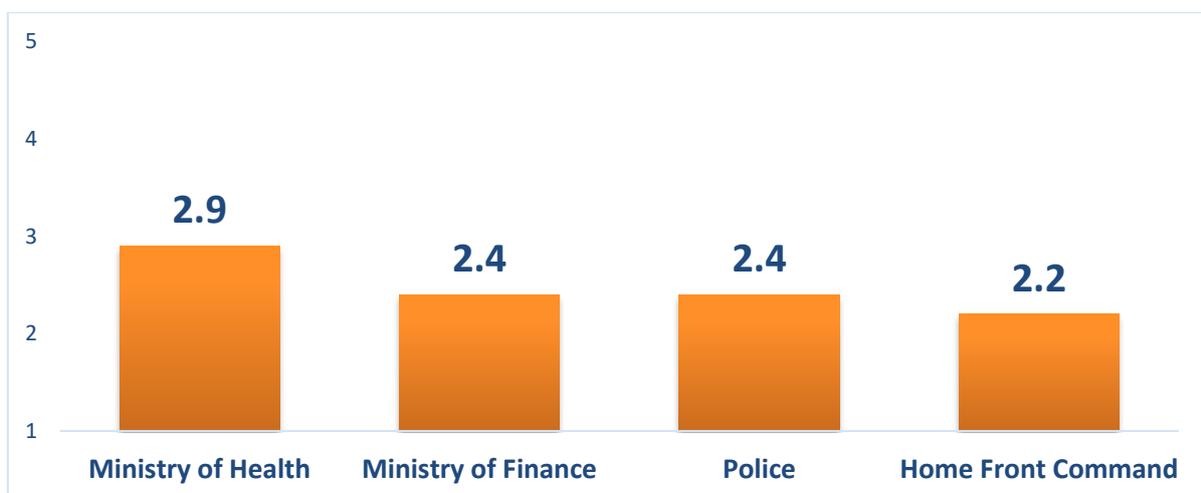
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How do you rank the response of these officials to the Corona crisis in Israel (from 1 to 5)?



The respondents were asked for their opinion regarding the response of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Finance, as well as the authorities enforcing the Corona restrictions (the police and the Home Front Command), to the Corona crisis in the Arab community. Again, the Arab community gave only moderate scores. The Ministry of Health was given the highest score and the Home front Command the lowest.

How do you rank the response of these entities to the Corona crisis in the Arab community (from 1 to 5)?



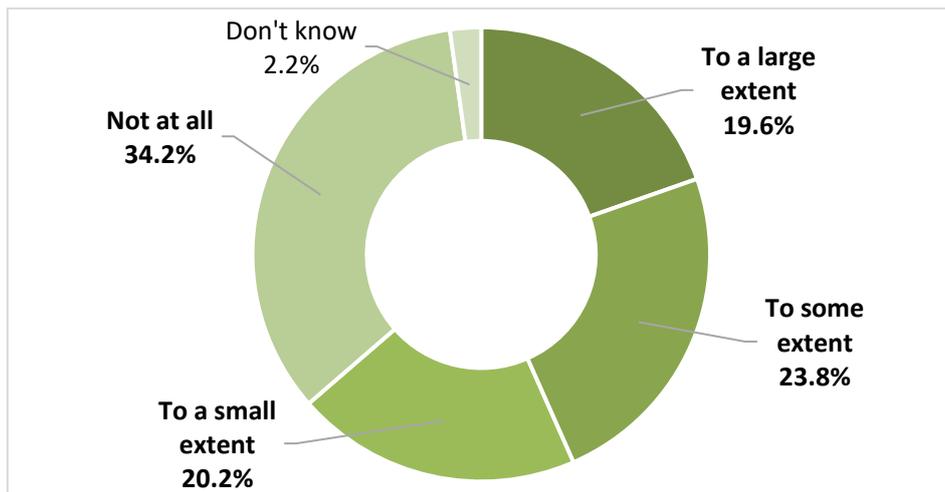
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Social Issues

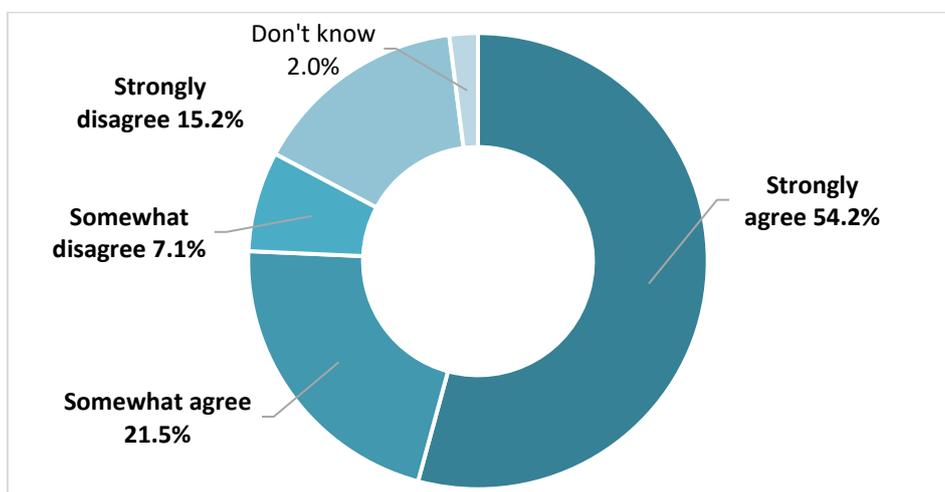
In recent months, several grassroots movements have arisen in Israel to protest government policy – the “Black Flags”, “Ein Matsav”, “Crime Minister”, “Wake up, Israel” and “The Democrats”. Some of the movements are calling for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to resign. The respondents were asked to what extent these protest movements represent Arab citizens.

The opinions were divided. 54.4% of the respondents answered that the grassroots protest movements do not represent Arab citizens while 43.4% answered that they do. In contrast, a large majority of the respondents (75.7%) feel that Arab citizens should identify with or support the grassroots protest movements.

To what extent do the grassroots protest movements represent Arab citizens?



Arab citizens should identify with or support the grassroots protest movements



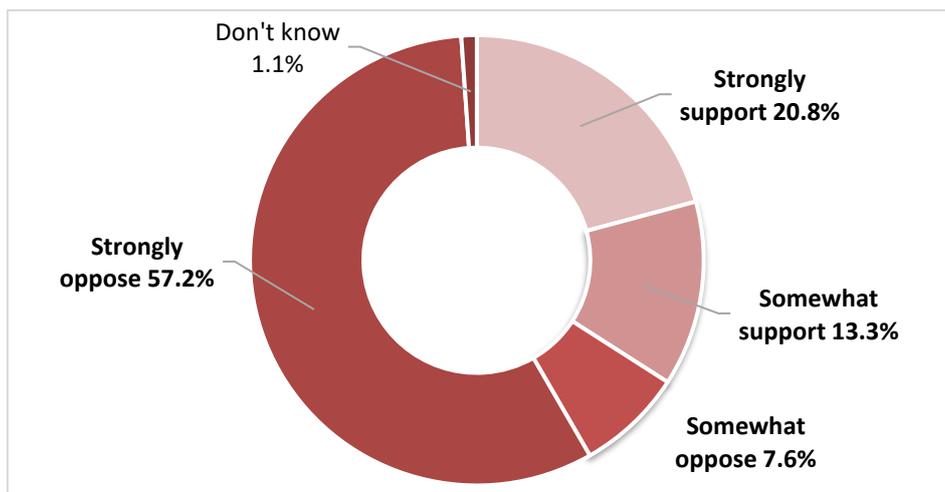
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During the past summer, the question of the gay community (LGBT) was the source of differences of opinion in the Arab community’s discourse. The debate could be most clearly seen in the votes of Joint Arab List members on the issue of the “Conversion Law” in the Knesset: Hadash (communists) supported the law, Ra’am (Islamists) opposed it and Balad and Taal abstained.

The respondents were presented with a general question on recognizing the rights of members of the gay community in Arab society, without specifying which rights, since the core of the issue is the recognition of the very existence of the gay community within Arab society.

Most of the respondents (64.8%) expressed opposition to recognizing the rights of members of the gay community. On the other hand, one-third of the respondents (34.1%) in fact supported recognizing their rights. This level of support is not insignificant, given that it is a sensitive social issue.

Do you support the recognition of the rights of the gay community (LGBT) within Arab society?



Regional Policy Issues

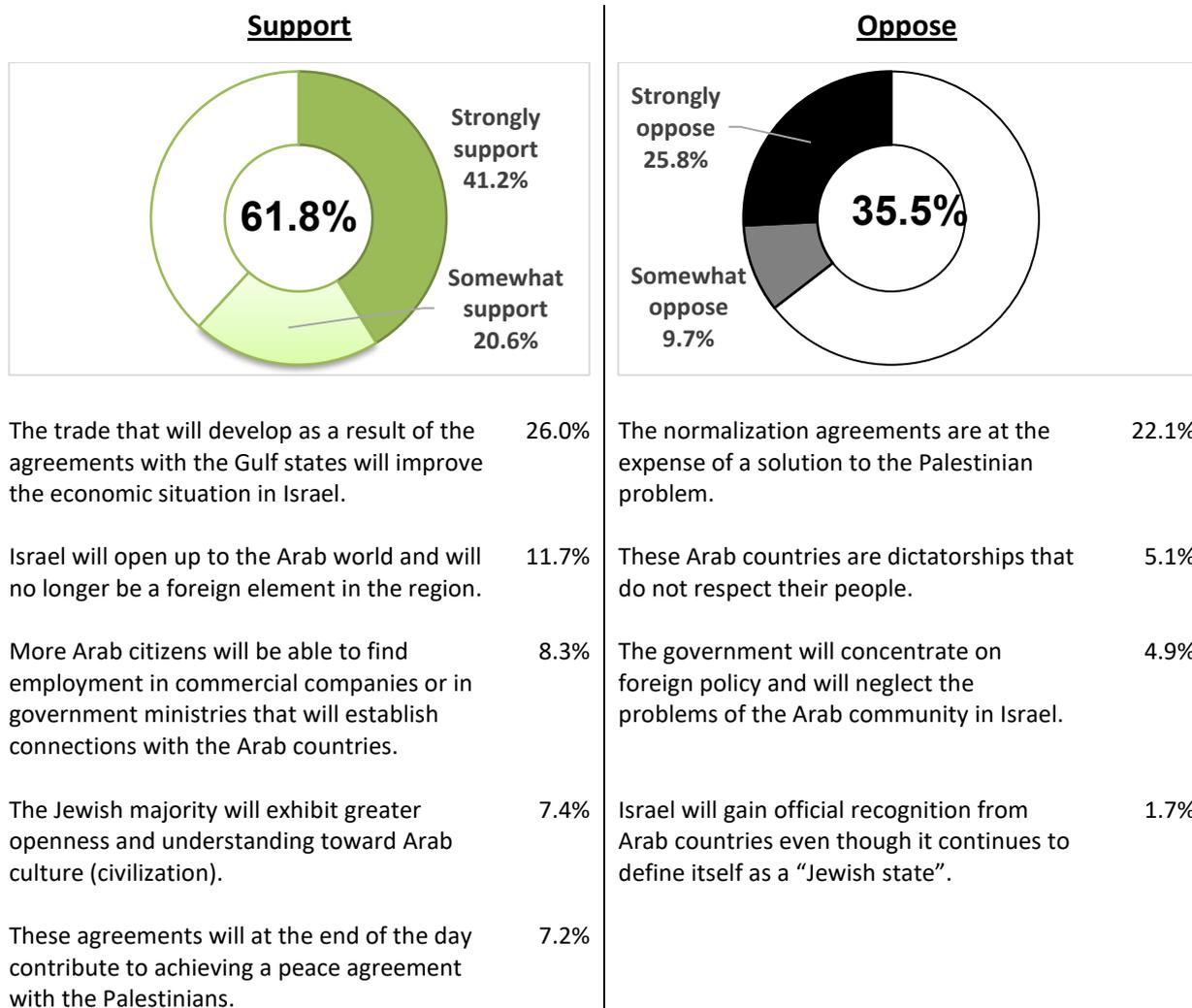
Last autumn, the State of Israel signed normalization agreements with three Arab countries: the United Arab Emirates, Bahrein and Sudan. The agreements were approved by the Knesset with a large majority. The only opposition was from the MKs of the Joint Arab List who argued that the agreements ignore the Palestinian issue.

It appears that in contrast to the official position of the Joint Arab List, most of the Arab community (61.8%) in fact support the normalization agreements. The main argument in support of the agreements are economic (26%), alongside the hope that Israel will no longer be a foreign element in the region (11.7%) and

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that the Jewish majority in Israel will demonstrate greater understanding of Arab culture and civilization (7.4%). On the other hand, one-third (35.5%) of the Arab community expressed opposition to the normalization agreements, primarily because in their opinion they come at the expense of a solution to the Palestinian problem (22.1%).

Do you support or oppose the normalization agreements between Israel and the Arab countries?

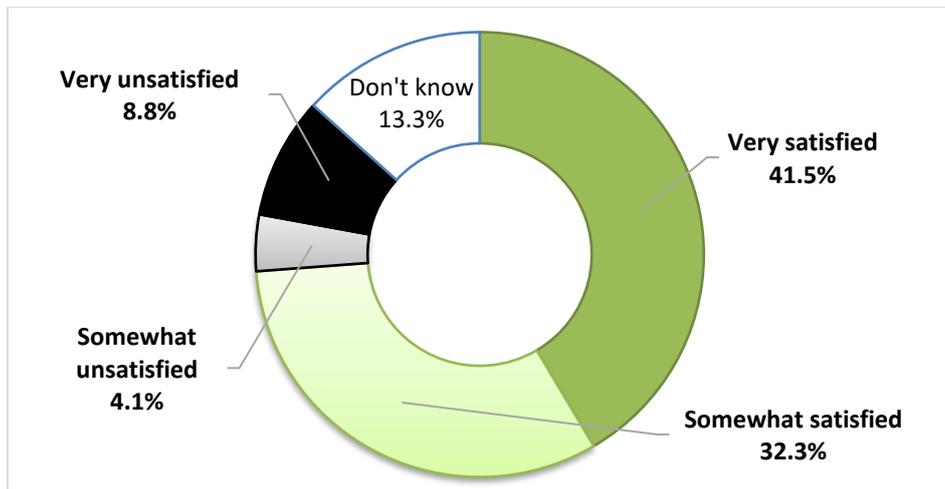


A large majority of the Arab community (73.9%) is satisfied with the result of the US presidential elections and the election of the Democratic candidate, Joe Biden, as President.

The findings are not surprising. The term of Donald Trump as President has been etched on the Arab community's consciousness as a period that did not bring them any benefit. In particular, they remember the "Deal of the Century" which was announced on January 28th of this year. It included a proposal to annex the Triangle region—all of whose Arab residents have Israeli citizenship—to the future Palestinian state, in exchange for the annexation of Jewish settlement areas in the West Bank to Israel.

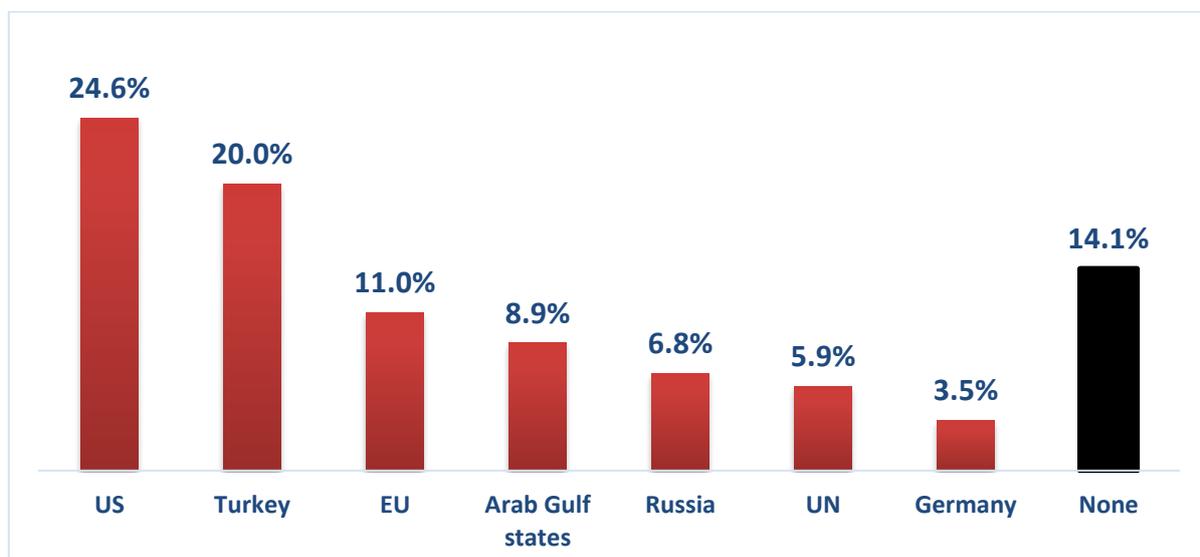
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Are you satisfied or unsatisfied with the result of the US presidential elections?



Apparently, the result of the US presidential election has given the Arab community hope of constructive US involvement in the region. According to the result of the survey, almost one-quarter (24.6%) of the Arab community now feel that the US involvement in the Middle East will likely increase stability in the region. Another possible candidate for this mission is Turkey (20%) whose president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has long been supported by the Arab community. Other possible players whose intervention could benefit the region are the EU (11.0%), the Arab countries in the Gulf (8.9%), Russia (6.8%) and the UN (5.9%).

The involvement of which of the following players can contribute to stability in the region?



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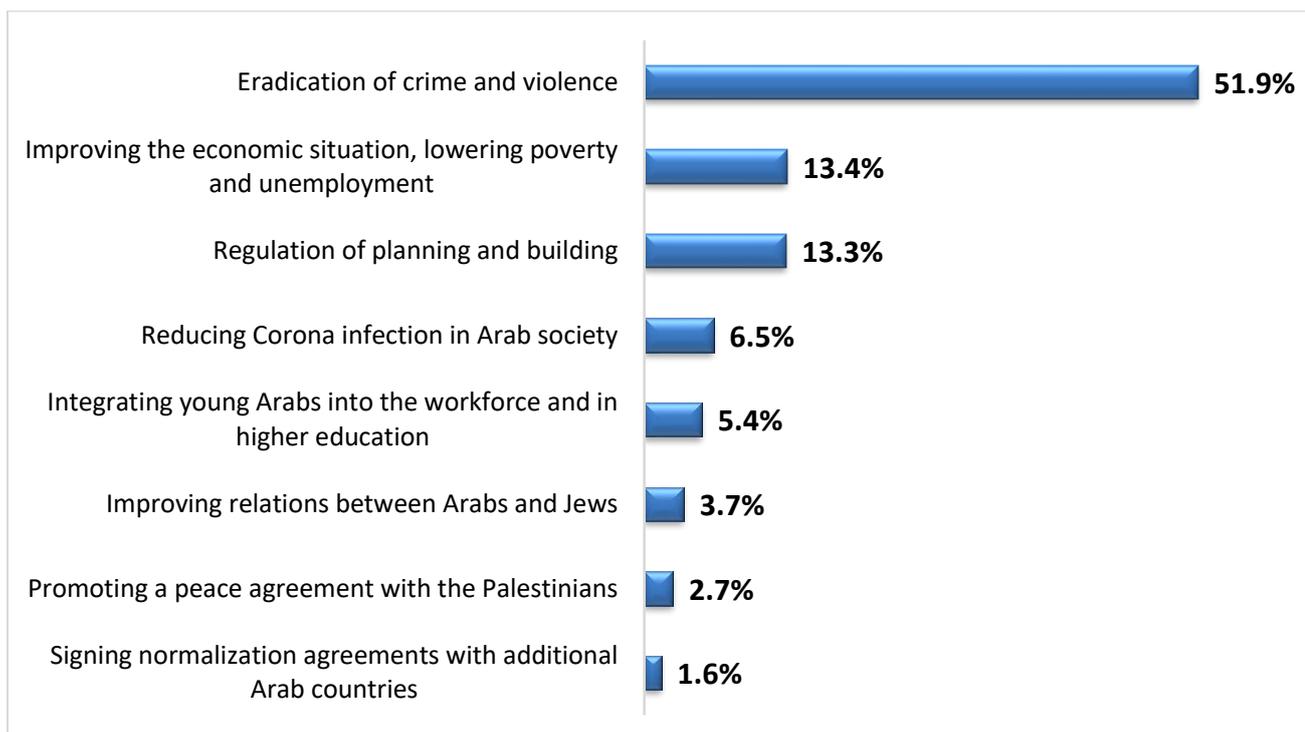
Which issues are on the Arab Community's agenda?

The respondents were presented with eight social and political issues and were asked to indicate which are the most acute for the Arab community.

The findings are unambiguous: The most important issue according to the respondents is the eradication of crime and violence in Arab society (51.9%). The fact that this issue is equal in importance to that of all the others combined shows more than anything else how acute the problem is in the eyes of the Arab community. The next two issues are improving the overall economic situation including the lowering of poverty and unemployment levels (13.4%) and the regulation of planning and building in Arab settlements (13.3%). Past experience shows that these three issues are always ranked at the top of the Arab community's agenda.

The issue of reducing the level of Corona infection in the Arab community appears only in fourth place, a fairly low ranking (6.5%) despite the significant impact of the Corona crisis on the community's economic and social situation. General policy issues, such as promoting a peace agreement with the Palestinians (2.7%) or signing normalization agreements with additional Arab countries (1.6%), are ranked at the bottom of the agenda.

What is currently the most important issue for Arab citizens?





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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 Stat-Net Research Institute under the direction of Yousef Makladeh.

The data were collected during the period November 19–26, 2020 in a telephone survey carried out in Arabic among a representative sample of the adult Arab population (aged 18+). Size of the sample: 500. Sample error: ± 4.9 percent.

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