

Poll: Israelis Overwhelmingly Proud of Their Country

Israelis are prouder of their collective identity and still overwhelmingly view their country as a good place to live their lives in, a new poll reveals.

According to the survey, conducted by New Wave Research and commissioned by Israel Hayom ahead of Independence Day using a representative sample of 500 Israeli Jews who are 18 or older, 74.6 percent of Israel's Jewish population are "very proud" to be Israeli; this figure represents a 5 percentage point increase compared with a similar poll last year, a difference that is statistically significant (the sampling error is +/- 4.5 percent).

The poll shows that the proportion of those who are not proud of being Israeli has also gone up, from 5.1 percent to 6.2 percent. Overall, almost 92 percent of respondents said they were very proud or somewhat proud to be Israeli – an impressive figure by all accounts. Women respondents expressed more pride in their national identity than men did (77.2 percent versus 71.9 percent), and the younger generation is the proudest, with 90.5 percent of those between 18 to 24 saying they are "very proud" to be Israeli.

Responses among high income earners and those with average salaries were virtually identical when it comes to their level of pride (about 80 percent in both groups considered themselves proud to be Israelis); even when broken down according to geography, the responses did not deviate by any significant amount.

As was the case last year, more than 74 percent think that the State of Israel is a good place to live in, although there has been a slight uptick in the percentage of people who disagree.

Jewish Israelis' sense of national pride is reinforced by a strong sentiment in favor of having the Israeli flag decorate their porch or car—83 percent said they plan to put the blue and white flag on display this year, a figure that is identical to last year's poll numbers for this question. Unsurprisingly, an overwhelming number of ultra-Orthodox Jews said they would not publicly display the Israeli national flag. Only 22.4 percent of haredi Jews said they would do so, compared with 73.1 percent who said they would not. This is consistent with the fact that haredim respondents comprised the largest proportion of those who said they were not proud to be Israeli (21.1 percent said they were "not proud at all," 9.5 percent said they were "not too proud"). This sentiment extends to the haredim's responses on the question of whether Israel is a good place to live in. Some 44.1 percent of haredi respondents said Israel is not a good place to live in, compared with the 20.1 percent of secular respondents who said so. The most recent elections, which produced a haredi-free coalition, may have influenced the haredim's responses.

In the other respondent groups—those who define themselves as secular, traditional or religious—only a handful of respondents said they were not proud to be Israeli. Israelis are also more in favor of living in Israel than moving abroad. 81.3 percent say they prefer living in Israel (compared with 81 percent last year), while 8.9 percent say they would like to try their luck outside the Jewish state (compared with 9.3 percent last year).

The ratio of optimistic vs. pessimistic Israelis is virtually one to one, although the latter group is slightly larger: 19.7 percent said they were more optimistic this year than they were last year, compared with 20.1 percent who said they were less so. Some 57.5 percent of respondents said they were just as optimistic as they were last year.

After drilling down further, the data shows that men are more optimistic than women, and that respondents between the age of

18 to 24 are both the most optimistic and the most pessimistic. The optimism level is directly related to the economic situation: among those who said they earn “well above average,” a plurality said they were optimistic (35.3 percent), whereas among those who said they were not part of that group, 30.9 percent said they had a pessimistic outlook when it comes to Israel’s future, also a plurality.

Tel Avivians are less optimistic than their neighbors in the coastal suburbs to the north, in the Sharon area (14.5 percent vs. 25.3 percent).

Who is an Israeli?

Despite the haredim’s negative views on the state, an overwhelming majority of ultra-Orthodox Jews—91 percent—said they prefer living in Israel than anywhere else. Secular Jews have the highest proportion of respondents who want to live abroad (12 percent). Among those aged 35 to 44 this figure stands at 15.4 percent; among academics, it is 12.3 percent; it climbs to 16.1 percent among residents of the Sharon region and to 22.3 percent among low-income earners.

A clear majority, almost 65 percent of respondents, answered affirmatively on the question of “Do you consider yourself first a Jew and only then an Israeli?” The response to this question is a carbon copy of last year’s poll numbers on this question. However, the percentage of respondents who said they “felt a bond” with the Jewish Diaspora dropped from 82 percent to 77 percent this year.

Despite that drop, the number of respondents who said they feel no bond did not spike, staying at 11.7 percent. On the other hand, the number of respondents who answered “I don’t know” surged from 6.5 percent to 11.7 percent. Perhaps this has something to do with the criticism leveled against Israel on the world stage.

The events of the past year, especially the growing violence

among Israelis (including Israeli drivers), have had a clear impact. When asked, "What troubles you most?" 21.5 percent of those participating in the survey said "personal security." The second-most worrisome development, as far as Israeli Jews are concerned, is the rising global anti-Semitism. Some 16.1 percent of Israelis cited that problem as their chief concern, compared to 12.1 percent last year.

Number three on the list is the economy (15.7 percent), followed by car accidents (15 percent). The Iranian nuclear program and the situation on Israel's borders are a distant 5th and 6th, respectively.

Respondents said the most quintessential Israeli traits are lending a helping hand, whining, complaining about current events and barbecuing.

Respondents were evenly divided when it comes to their plans for Independence Day. A third said they would attend a barbecue, another third said they would travel and a third said they planned to stay at home. Some 47.2 percent cited the torch-lighting ceremony on the eve of Independence Day as the most important event of the holiday. Watching the Israel Air Force flyover and navy's special flotilla were cited by 20.1 percent, compared with 13.4 percent last year (a significant increase).

On Sunday, Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics published its annual report on Israel's population. According to the latest figures, there are 8,018,000 people who are considered Israeli residents, including 6,042,000 Jews (75 percent). There are 1,658,000 Arabs living inside Israel (20.7 percent). Non-Arab Christians, members of other faiths and those who are listed by the Interior Ministry as having no religion comprise 318,000 residents (4 percent). These figures do not include the foreign workers who are here on a temporary basis or undocumented immigrants.

The number of Israeli residents has increased by 138,000 (4.8 percent) since last year's Independence Day. Some 19,500 immigrants made Aliyah over the past 12 months.

Among the Jewish populace, more than 70 percent were born in Israel (data on this figure is current for late 2011 only). That ratio stood at 35 percent at the state's founding.

Happy Independence Day.

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