

Changes in Israeli Public Opinion during the War in Gaza, 2023-2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Institute for Liberty and Responsibility at Reichman University conducts a recurring survey to measure Israelis' policy attitudes. This recurring survey asks respondents about their views on a variety of issues, from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the role of religion in public life. This allows us to understand Israelis' policy positions and how they change over time.

This report presents the findings of a policy-attitudes survey conducted in March 2024. We selected six key questions, which address a variety of policy issues. To identify a trend over time, we present the March 2024 results alongside the two previous surveys, conducted in September 2023 and November 2023. In combination, the three surveys allow us to assess how Israeli public opinion shifted during the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, which broke out on October 7th, 2023. The September 2023 wave of this survey was carried out one month prior to the outbreak of war. The following waves were conducted at the height of the war (November 2023), and as the war began to subside (March 2024). Overall, the cross-survey comparison provides us with a unique view into how the war in Gaza affected public opinion.

All three surveys were conducted by Geocartography using online representative samples of the Israeli population.

Survey	Total Respondents	Jewish Respondents	Arab Respondents
September 2023	1,562	1,227	335
November 2023	1,526	1,208	318
March 2024	1,526	1,266	260

2. SURVEY RESULTS

Following are the results of six key question from the three waves of the policy-attitudes survey.

1. In principle, do you support or oppose the solution of two states for two peoples?

Survey	Support	Oppose	Don't know
September 2023	36.2%	42.8%	21.1%
November 2023	33.7%	45.6%	20.7%
March 2024	32.8%	52.9%	14.3%

2. Do you support or oppose the annexation of parts of the West Bank?

Survey	Support	Oppose	Don't know
September 2023	26.3%	43.3%	30.5%
November 2023	28.2%	40.4%	31.4%
March 2024	28.5%	46.2%	25.3%

3. In principle, do you support or oppose the imposition of the death penalty on terrorists convicted for murder?

Survey	Support	Oppose	Don't know
September 2023	61.5%	22.7%	15.8%
November 2023	67.3%	15.8%	16.9%
March 2024	64.9%	19.2%	16.0%

4. Do you support or oppose the operation of public transportation on the Sabbath in Israel, except for areas with a religious majority?

Survey	Support	Oppose	Don't know
September 2023	63.9%	26.6%	9.5%
November 2023	65.1%	23.7%	11.2%
March 2024	65.9%	25.0%	9.1%

5. In some situations, a contradiction arises between Israel's Jewish character and its democratic character. In case of contradiction, which principle should prevail: Jewish country or democratic country?

Survey	Jewish	Democratic	Don't know
September 2023	32.7%	54.4%	13.0%
November 2023	34.0%	50.5%	15.5%
March 2024	32.3%	53.4%	14.3%

6. On a political continuum between left and right, where would you place yourself? Use a scale of 1-to-7, where 1 means right, 7 means left, and 4 means center.

Survey	Right (1-3)	Center (4)	Left (5-7)	Don't know
September 2023	45.9%	26.0%	18.3%	9.8%
November 2023	46.4%	23.6%	18.1%	11.9%
March 2024	48.3%	22.4%	19.7%	9.6%

3. ANALYSIS

A comparison of the three surveys reveals that, to large extent, the war in Gaza shifted Israelis' views in a more hawkish, conservative direction. This is clearly evident in the rate of

opposition to the solution of two states for two peoples. The rate of opposition increased from 43% in September 2023, prior to the war, to 53% in March 2024, five months into the war. This is a significant rise, which brought the rate of opposition to the two-states solution above 50%. Note, however, that the opposition to the annexation of parts of the West Bank has also increased – very slightly - over the same period: from 43% (September 2023) to 46% (March 2024). Overall, Israelis show little enthusiasm for both policy options. In March 2024, we recorded a support rate of 33% for the two-states solution, while support for West Bank annexation stood at 29%.

The conservative shift, toward greater emphasis on national security, is also reflected in the growing public support for the death penalty. Prior to the war, in September 2023, the Israeli public's support for the death penalty for terrorists convicted of murder stood at 62%. After the war broke out, the rate of support increased to 67% (November 2023), before decreasing slightly to 65% (March 2024).

The war also affected Israelis' ideological self-identification. In September 2023, before the war, 45.9% of Israelis self-identified as "right" on a right-left continuum. In March 2024, the rate of rightists increased to 48.3%. This increase of 2.4% is indeed meaningful. Ideological self-placement typically sees little change: people are often attached to their self-view as "right," "center," or left. A change of 2.4 percentage points is thus quite considerable, especially in the Israeli political system where the right- and center-left blocks are roughly equal in size.

At the same time, the war did not alter Israelis' view on the balance between the state's democratic character and its Jewish character. Prior to the war, in September 2023, 54% of Israelis gave precedence to democracy over the state's Jewishness. After five months of war, in March 2024, this rate stood virtually unchanged at 53%. Similarly, the rate of support for public transportation on the Sabbath – a key question of freedom of religion – was left unaffected by the war: 64% in September 2023, compared to 66% in March 2024.

Overall, our findings suggest that the war in Gaza has moved the Israeli public in a more conservative, security-minded direction, as one would expect (Carriere et al. 2022; Godefroidt 2023). At the same time, the war has not eroded the small majority of Israelis who place a higher value of Israel's democratic character than on its Jewish character.

REFERENCES

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