

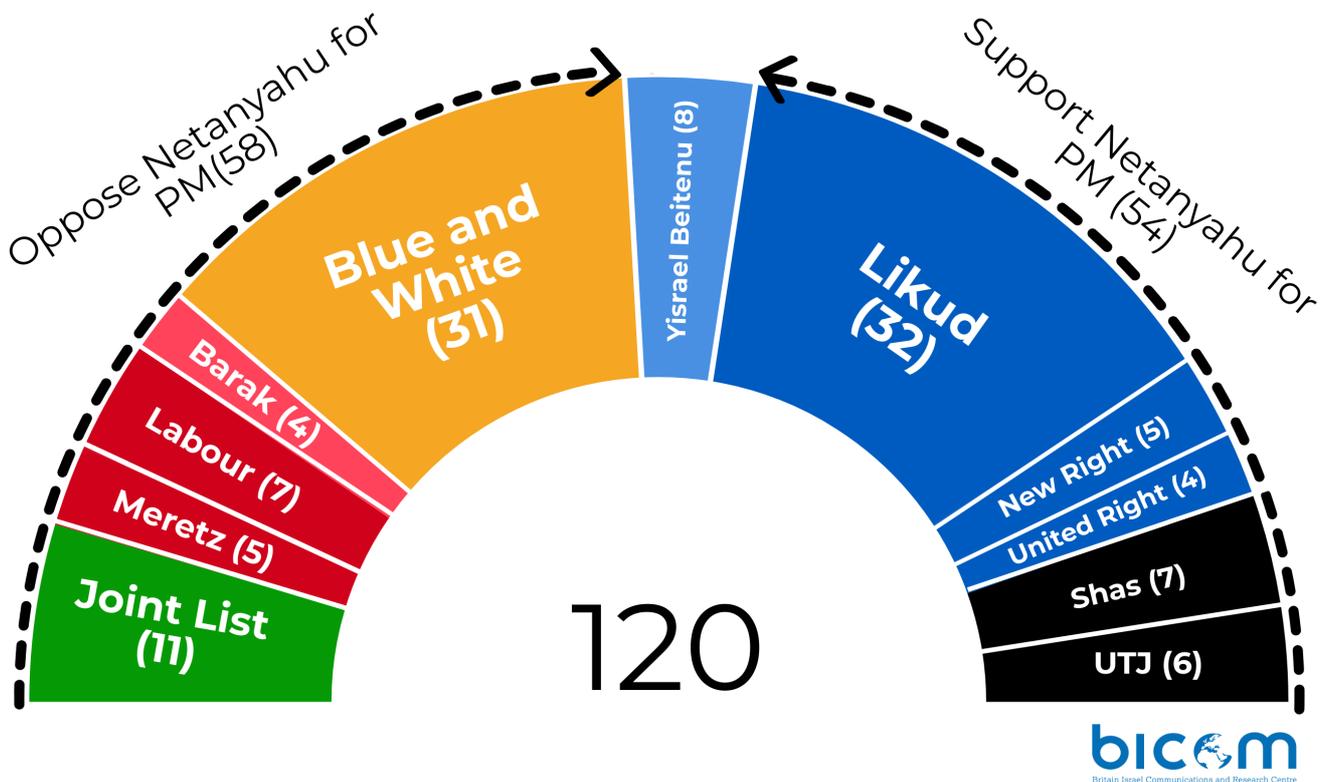
## Israeli Elections Bulletin | July 4

On May 29, the Israeli Knesset voted to dissolve itself, triggering a new election after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu failed to form a governing coalition. Elections will take place on September 17, less than six months after the April 9 elections.

BICOM will be producing regular Election Bulletins with everything you need to know leading up to the September 17 election. Be sure to listen to our [weekly podcast](#) and to follow our [election page](#) featuring our regularly updated poll of polls, campaign updates and analysis of the parties and politicians.

### Latest polling

Aggregate polling, June 27 - July 3

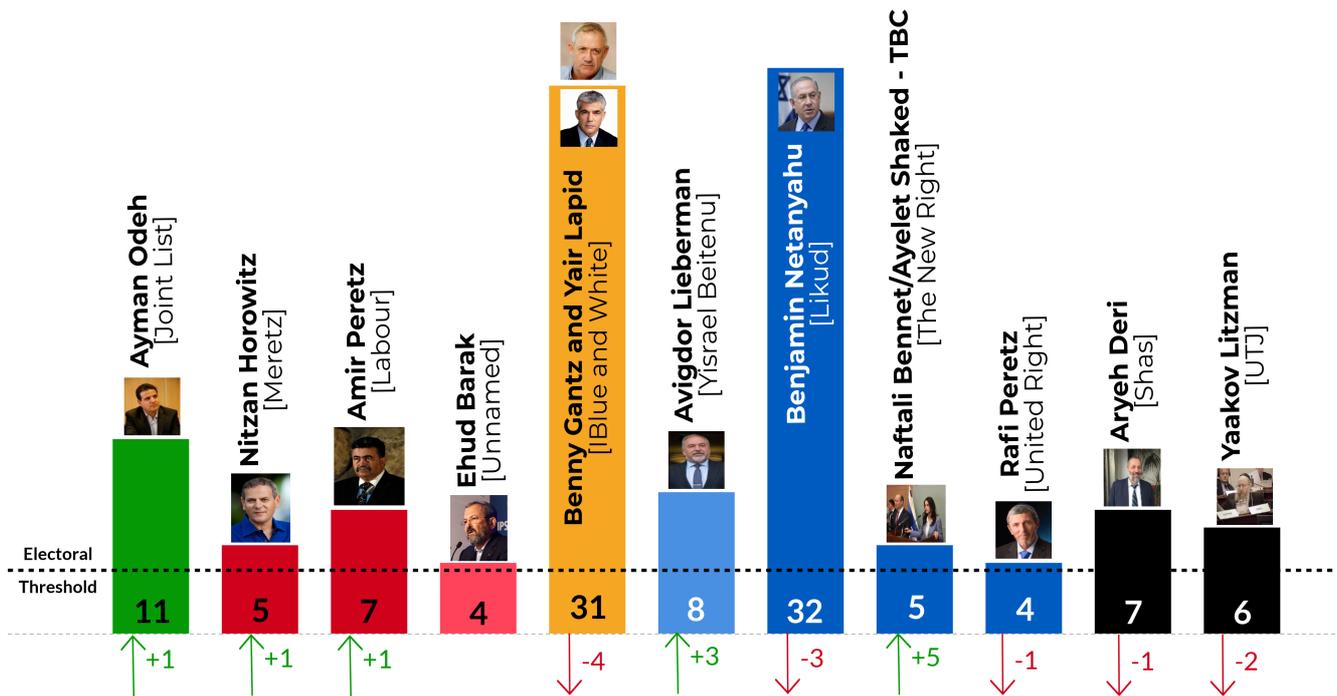


Note: In one of the polls, Barak's party fails to pass the 3.25% threshold and aggregate polls put Zehut, the right wing libertarian party, close to but under the threshold

### Can Netanyahu win?

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu forged a strong alliance with right wing and ultra-Orthodox parties in 2015. But the row over military conscription from the ultra-Orthodox community poisoned the relationship between Netanyahu and Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu and shattered the right-wing/ultra-Orthodox alliance. Early polls suggest that Netanyahu may struggle to find enough allies to form a 61-seat coalition. While traditionally part of the right-wing bloc, Lieberman won't say who he prefers as Prime Minister in a future Government, opting instead for a 'national-liberal' unity government with both Likud and the Blue and White party. Benny Gantz, co-leader of Blue and White, has consistently refused to serve in a Netanyahu Government, so this scenario is unlikely to happen as long as Netanyahu remains Likud leader.

## How the parties and their leaders are shaping up



**bicom**  
British Israel Communications and Research Centre

Aggregate polling, June 27 - July 3

## Are Likud voters fed up?

Netanyahu's Likud received 1.14 million votes in April winning an impressive 35 seats. September's elections could hinge on how many of those voters are disappointed by Netanyahu's perceived prioritising of his personal interests, such as proposing a law to grant him immunity from prosecution – which he specifically promised he wouldn't do. In addition, general frustration with a second election (that will cost the economy billions of shekels) as well as a number of recent actions by Netanyahu – such as compromises with the ultra-Orthodox parties and alleged offers of various senior ministerial posts to Labour in a last-minute attempt to create a coalition – may siphon off Likud voters to other parties. Indeed, early internal polling shows Likud losing 4 seats to Yisrael Beiteinu. Another issue – which may affect both Likud and Blue and White – would be low turnout, which traditionally hurts the larger parties at the expense of the smaller parties.

A further problem for Likud is the merger with Moshe Kahlon's Kulanu party which may ultimately equal less than the sum of their parts. Kahlon's support shrank from 315,000 in 2015 to 152,000 in 2019 and his merger with Likud was a lifeboat to secure a future Knesset seat. Pollsters predict that the merger won't boost support for the Likud by anything close to Kulanu's 152,000 votes in April.

## Unity and division on the right, left and in the Arab sector

Parties on the right such as Jewish Home, National Union, Jewish Power, Zehut and the New Right are discussing a possible joint list in the September elections. More than 250,000 votes (the equivalent of 6-7 seats) for right wing parties were 'lost' as the New Right and Zehut failed to win the minimum 3.25 per cent of votes to get into the Knesset – a joint ticket could address this problem. But there is significant disagreement as to who might lead the joint list, and Jewish Power have already announced they are ending their alliance with Jewish Home over what the party says are unkept promises. Ayelet Shaked – who is very popular in right wing circles including inside the Likud – is yet to make a decision over whether she will join a party or run with the New Right as in April, although this time as number one on the list.

On the left, there are calls for Labour and Meretz to merge. Meretz only just succeeded in winning 3.25 per cent of the vote and got only four seats. The party may believe that merging with Labour will guarantee their survival.

The four Arab parties – who in April ran as two separate lists – Hadash-Taal (6 seats) and Raam-Balad (4 seats) are also discussing recreating the Joint List, which won 13 seats in 2015. The Arab parties were the only members of the opposition to vote in favour of dissolving the Knesset in May, in the belief that they could increase their electoral strength. Their main priority will be to significantly increase turnout among Arab voters, which sank from 63 per cent in 2015 to 50 per cent in April 2019.

Another important question will be the direction Ehud Barak's new party. Barak said he is looking for alliances and may seek to join with Labour. Some believe that Barak's aggressive criticism of Netanyahu will weaken the Prime Minister. Others believe that if Barak ultimately takes votes away from Blue and White, it will result in Likud being the largest party and in pole position to form a governing coalition.

---

### New leaders for Labour and Meretz



The Israeli Labour Party elected former Defence Minister MK Amir Peretz as their new leader after Avi Gabbay announced that he was not standing again for party leader. The Labour party suffered a historic blow in the 9 April election, winning just 6 seats, down from the 24 it won – as part of the Zionist Union alongside Tzipi Livni's Hatnua party – in the 2015 election. Peretz received 47 per cent of the vote, comfortably beating his two younger rivals Stav Shaffir and Itzik Shmuli. Just under 30,000 voted, representing only 46 per cent of party members.

Meretz chose journalist and former MK Nitzan Horowitz as its new party leader to replace Tamar Zandberg who led the party for just a year. In his victory speech, Horowitz called on everyone who had left Meretz in the last election for the centrist Blue and White party to return. He added: "Meretz is prepared for talks and cooperation based on our values. We are proud leftists. We need to form alliances with new groups and the heads of Arab and Druze society. Our way and values are the reason for our existence as a party. We have a historic responsibility to create a strong left. If we need be, we will be a combative opposition that they [a right-wing government] will not forget." Horowitz becomes the first openly gay leader of a political party in Israel.





## [Our latest podcast](#)

### [Episode 58 | Lieberman the kingmaker?](#)

James Sorene talks to journalist and Bibi biographer Anshel Pfeffer about the vital role of Yisrael Beitenu leader Avigdor Lieberman in the next election campaign and why Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will be fighting on two fronts as he seeks an election victory on 17 September.

---

## How we got here | news stories from BICOM

Amir Peretz elected Labour leader | [3 July](#)  
Meretz chooses new leader for September election | [28 June](#)  
Ehud Barak launches new party | [27 June](#)  
Lieberman backs unity government | [June 17](#)  
Attorney General refuses to delay Netanyahu hearing | [June 7](#)  
Stav Shaffir to run for Labour leader | [June 7](#)  
Ultra-Orthodox party sought segregation in public places | [June 4](#)  
Netanyahu sacks Bennett and Shaked | [June 3](#)  
Netanyahu says Liberman 'drunk with power' | [May 31](#)  
Netanyahu fails to form government | [May 30](#)  
Kulanu to join Likud for early election | [May 29](#)  
Knesset votes for new elections | [May 28](#)  
Coalition talks deadlocked over conscription bill | [May 24](#)

---

## Selected campaign videos: Yisrael Beitenu



In a [video](#) from June 23, Lieberman claims that a vote for Bibi is a vote for a religious government with ultra-Orthodox while a vote for Blue and White will lead to a government with both ultra-Orthodox and Arab parties. A vote for Yisrael Beitenu however will lead to a national liberal unity government.

A campaign [video](#) from July 1 shows Netanyahu in side locks surrounded by far right and ultra-Orthodox politicians, with the argument that rather than representing a 'strong right', Netanyahu is promoting a 'strongly religious right.'



## Best cartoons



This [Haaretz](#) cartoon from May shows Yisrael Beiteinu leader Avigdor Lieberman sitting calmly as Netanyahu leads his coalition partners off a cliff to vote for a second election.

This [Maariv](#) cartoon from June shows Netanyahu the painter in front of a colourful canvas with contradictory messages (elections now, cancel election, rotation etc) with the artist explaining 'everyone sees what they want to see'.



This [Maariv](#) cartoon suggests that Ehud Barak is leading his supporters off a cliff, perhaps based on the argument that taking votes away from Blue and White and boost Likud and Benjamin Netanyahu.

This [Haaretz](#) cartoon shows Yair Lapid promising to make the government's life miserable, but his partners in the Blue and White party seem unimpressed - 'but not today' says leader Benny Gantz. Some have criticised Blue and White for the absence of an aggressive strategy against Netanyahu and Likud.

