

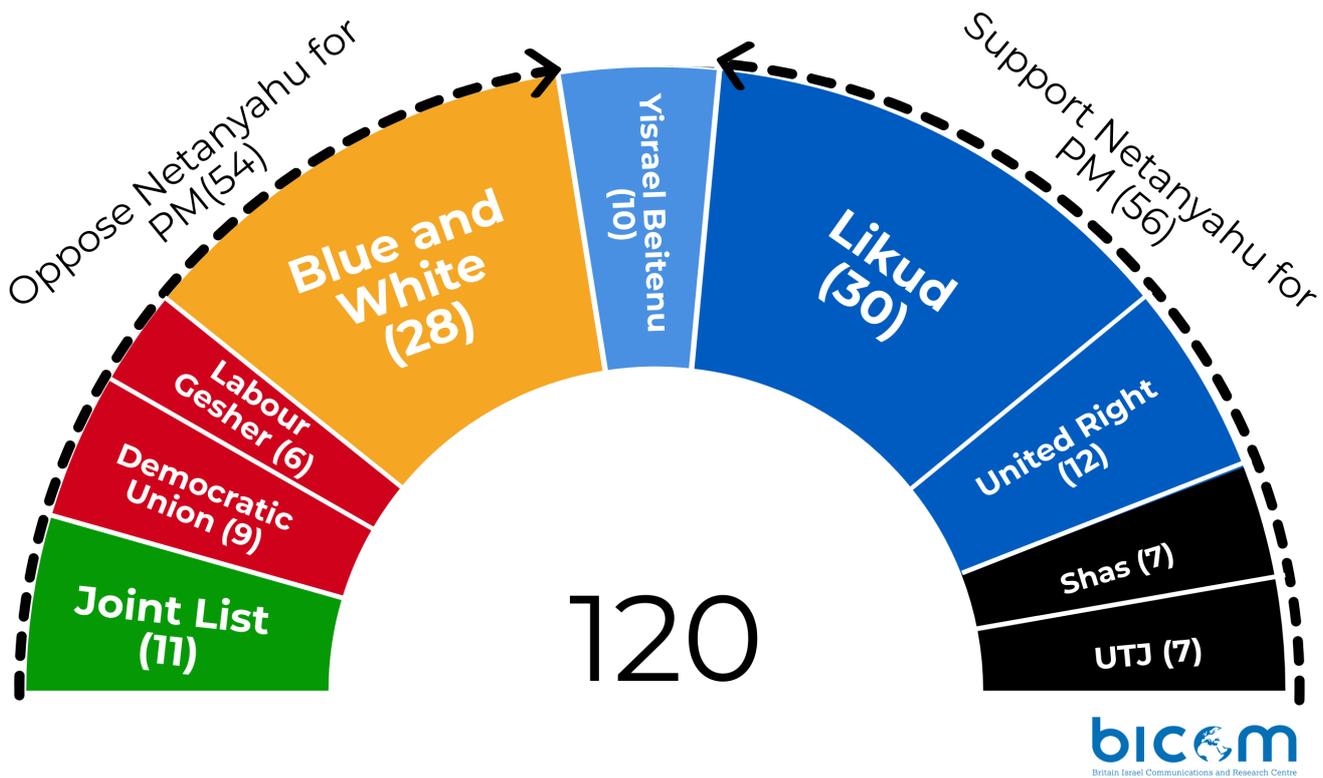
Israeli Elections Bulletin | August 2

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

BICOM will be producing regular election bulletins with everything you need to know. 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.

BICOM's poll of polls

Aggregate polling, July 25 - August 2



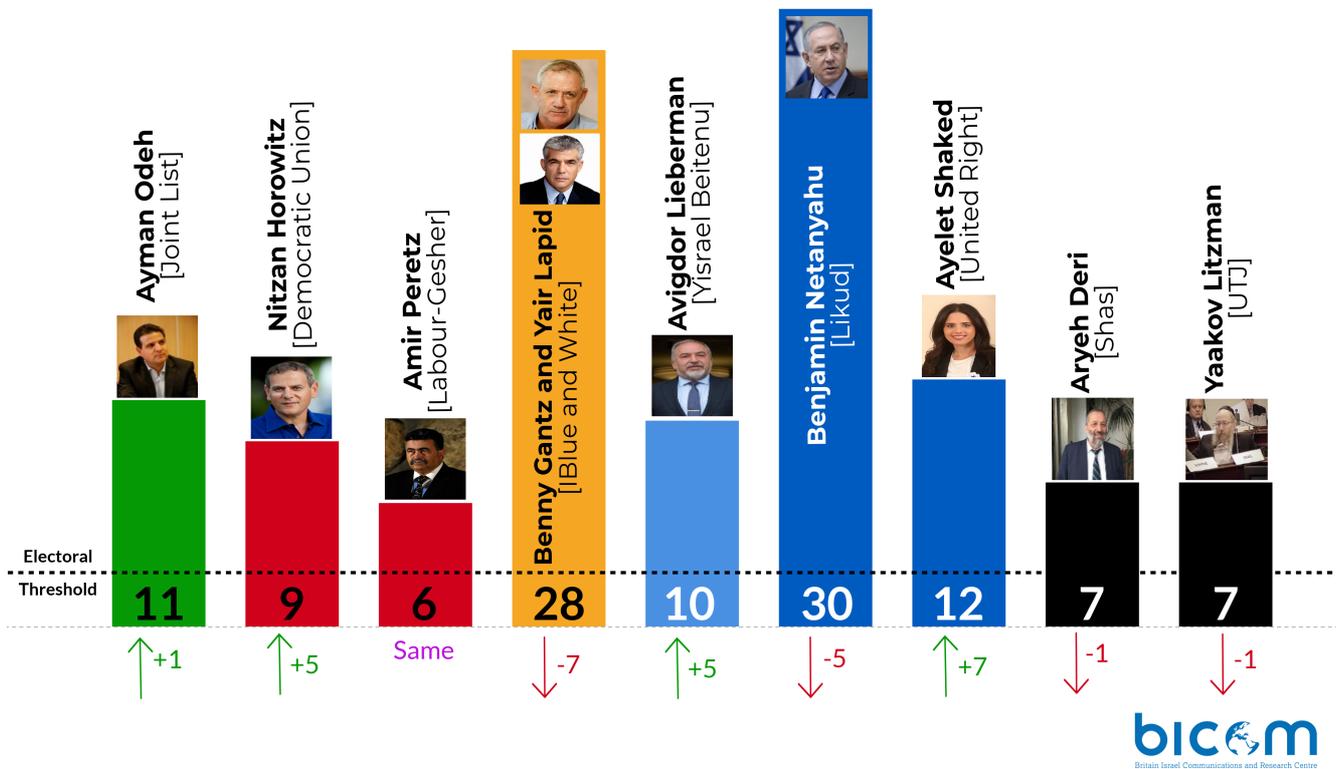
61 is the magic number

Current polls suggest that neither Netanyahu or Blue and White leader Benny Gantz will have enough seats and allies to form a 61-seat majority. Gantz says he would consider forming a national unity government with Likud, but only if Netanyahu were no longer leader because he refuses to serve with him if he is facing a corruption trial.

The right-wing / ultra-Orthodox alliance supporting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was broken up by the disagreement over ultra-Orthodox conscription. Yisrael Beiteinu leader Avigdor Lieberman has vowed to support a 'national-liberal' unity government after the elections involving the Likud and Blue and White but without the ultra-Orthodox parties.

How the parties are shaping up

Aggregate polling, July 25 - August 2 | compared to April 2019 election results

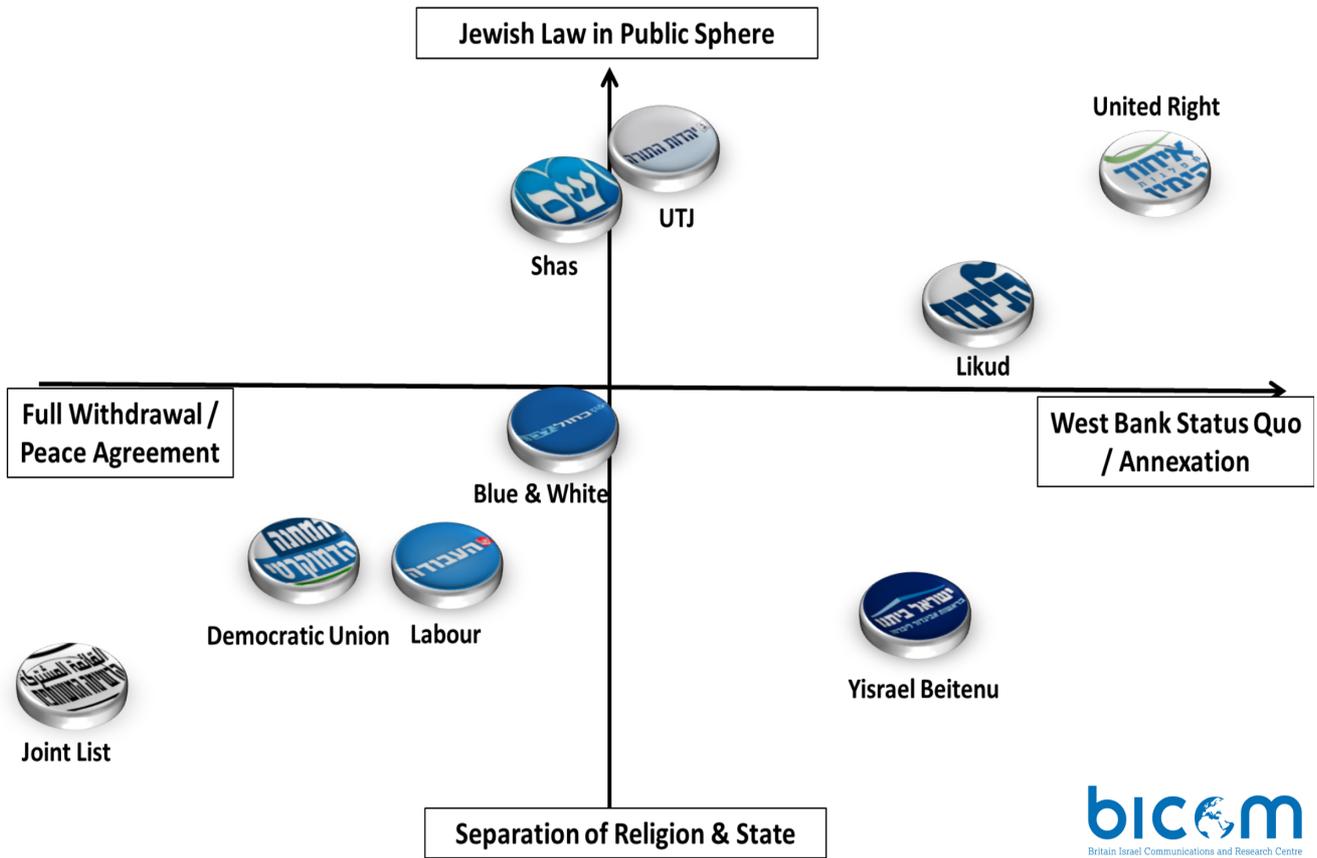


Mergers and Acquisitions

The lesson from the April election for the small parties was merge or fail. On the left, Ehud Barak's Israel Democratic party merged with Meretz and former Labour MK Stav Shaffir to form the 'Democratic Union'. Amir Peretz's Labour party joined forces with Orly Levy-Abekasis's Gesher party. A former MK with Yisrael Beiteinu, Levy's Gesher failed to win any seats in April. Many on the left have criticised Peretz's decision to unite with Gesher, rather than what they see as natural allies like Meretz and Ehud Barak. They fear the party may lose support to Blue and White and the Democratic Union and win less seats than their disastrous six seats in April. Peretz believes he can attract right wing voters by focusing on socio-economic issues.

On the right, Ayelet Shaked was named leader of the New Right party. The party, previously led by Naftali Bennett, failed to win any seat in April, missing out by just 1,500 votes. Days after Shaked became leader, Rafi Peretz's Jewish Home and Betzael Smotrich's National Union agreed to merge with Shaked and, because of her popularity, give her the top spot on the party list. Not included in the merger was the extremist Jewish Power party whose leaders are devotees of the late Meir Kahane and his racist views. Netanyahu – and his wife Sara – reportedly intervened in the merger negotiations because of their dislike of Shaked and Bennett. Israeli media reported that they tried to bring about a merger between Jewish Home, National Union and Jewish Power rather than with Shaked's New Right. When this didn't happen, they reportedly tried to encourage Jewish Power to be included in the New Right/Jewish Home/National Union merger.

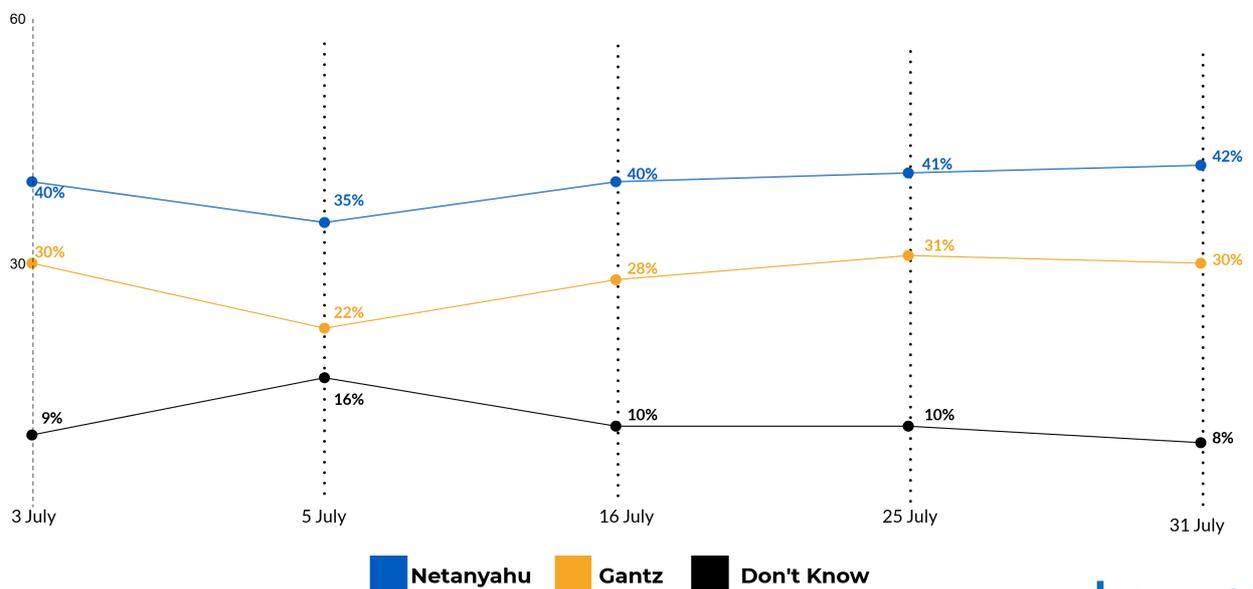
Party ideology



The deadline for parties to submit their final lists for the September election was yesterday, 1 August. Read our useful roundup of the [parties, politicians and key policy platforms](#).

Netanyahu vs Gantz

Result of poll asking "who is most suited for Prime Minister?"



Our latest podcast

Episode 62 | Bibi beats Ben-Gurion

In a special BICOM podcast to mark Benjamin Netanyahu becoming Israel's longest serving Prime Minister, Richard Pater speaks with two Israeli journalists who have studied Bibi intensively: Tal Shalev, the chief political correspondent for *Walla! News* and Anshel Pfeffer, correspondent for *Haaretz*, *The Times*, *The Economist* and author of 'Bibi: The Turbulent Life and Times of Benjamin Netanyahu'.



Political cartoons and party mergers



This *Maariv* [cartoon](#) (22/7) shows Peretz inviting Levy-Abekasis onto a tree branch he is simultaneously sawing off: "Sit next to me and we will embark on a new direction" he says

A [cartoon](#) in *Yediot Ahronot* (26/6) shows a three-way marriage between Meretz's Nitzan Horowitz, Labour's Stav Shaffir and former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, with Shaffir stamping on the glass (a tradition at a Jewish wedding) with the word 'Labour' on it.



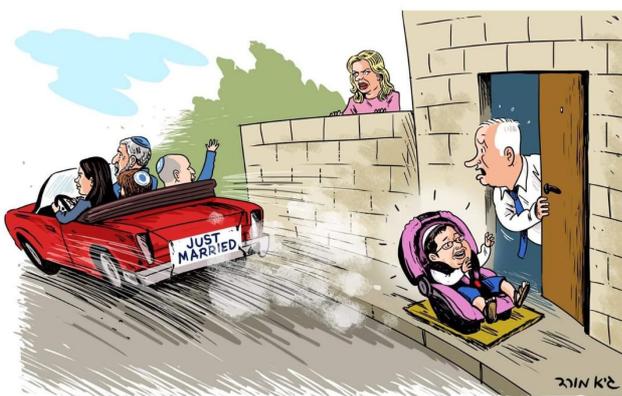
The newly formed Democratic Union also presented a stark choice to Itzik Shmuli, number 2 on the Labour list. This *Haaretz* [cartoon](#) (26/7) presents a horse cut in two with one side (bleeding profusely) including Peretz and Levy-Abekasis, and the other featuring the leaders of the Democratic Union.

A [cartoon](#) in *Yediot Ahronot* (28/7) shows celebrations of the Democratic Union annoying their downstairs neighbours – Peretz and Levy-Abekasis.



A [cartoon](#) in *Maariv* (28/7) shows the Democratic Union as a 'mega Zord power ranger', comprised as it is of so many different parts. Ehud Barak was one of the main promoters of the union, but his unpopularity among many in the Israel public and his ties to disgraced millionaire sex-offender Jeffrey Epstein led to him choosing (or being encouraged to choose) number 10 on the list. The cartoon shows Barak – who is tucked away out of sight – saying “what a great merger I put together eh?” with everyone else telling him to “be quiet”

This *Haaretz* [cartoon](#) (26/7) shows a marriage of Shaked (New Right) and Peretz (Jewish Home) with Netanyahu trying to replace Shaked with Itamar Ben-Gvir, of Jewish Power.



This *Yediot Ahronot* [cartoon](#) (30/7) shows Shaked, Bennett, Peretz and Smotrich driving off together leaving the unwanted baby Ben-Gvir (of Jewish Power) outside Netanyahu’s door.

In a league of his own



One of Netanyahu's main campaign slogans is that he is in a 'different league' to any other Israeli leader. In a recent [campaign video](#), Netanyahu is shown having meetings with US President Donald Trump, Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi with each image featuring the same slogan: 'Netanyahu: a different league'. The video featured shots of posters (pictured above) showing Netanyahu shaking hands with Trump, Putin and Modi, which can be seen hanging outside the Likud headquarters in Tel Aviv.

The Blue and White party responded by [photoshopping the posters](#), saying Netanyahu was in a 'different league' in 'surrendering to terrorism' (pictured) and in the budget deficit.



Peace Now responded with [posters of their own](#) showing Netanyahu giving money to Hamas Leader Yahya Sinwar (pictured) - the Government of Israel allows Qatar to send \$15m a month to Gaza. Another poster shows Netanyahu with Jewish Power leader Itamar Ben-Gvir who has a photo of Baruch Goldstein on his wall at home. Goldstein murdered 29 Palestinians in Hebron in 1994

Selected campaign videos

Netanyahu recently overtook David Ben Gurion as Israel's longest serving Prime Minister. In this [campaign video](#) Netanyahu is cooking, and discusses Israel's first start up in the 1950's pettimim (Israeli couscous) created from wheat because there was a shortage of rice. He concludes that since then Israel has turned into a technological superpower "from Waze to Iron Dome"



Stav Shaffir [responded](#) to Netanyahu's cooking video asking "Why don't you tell us what you plan for the day after the elections?" Shaffir attacks Netanyahu for appointing ministers who support conversion therapy for homosexuals and apartheid in the West Bank, adding "I know its hard for you to admit that Ben -Gurion did many other things other than creating Israeli couscous." When Netanyahu mentions Waze she brings up an article on her phone that the CEO supported her in the Labour party primaries. And when Netanyahu discusses Iron Dome she says "I'm pretty sure someone else was responsible for that" (Labour leader Amir Peretz)

Avigdor Lieberman and Netanyahu continue to fight over so-called Russian votes. This [campaign video](#) 'a tale of Ali-Bibi' from Lieberman shows Netanyahu promising public housing in 2011 and saying exactly the same thing 8 years later in 2019. The video argues that Netanyahu just keeps talking, and that a vote for Lieberman's party on September 17 will mark the end of 'Bibi's tales' .



Blue and White's [campaign video](#) argues that rather than prioritising the State of Israel, Netanyahu prioritises himself. This ad shows a TV interview in which Netanyahu flatly denied he would propose new laws to grant him immunity from prosecution before showing news clips where Netanyahu allies say he planned to introduce such laws. It concludes "Netanyahu only cares about Netanyahu"

How we got here | news stories from BICOM

Gantz calls for unity government | [2 August](#)
Lieberman will only support a unity government | [31 July](#)
Israeli right unites and Arab parties recreate joint list | [29 July](#)
Shaked calls for right-wing merger | [26 July](#)
Barak merges with Meretz | [25 July](#)
Ayelet Shaked to lead New Right party | [22 July](#)
Israeli leaders meet amid merger rumours | [8 July](#)
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 | [17 June](#)
Attorney General refuses to delay Netanyahu hearing | [7 June](#)
Stav Shaffir to run for Labour leader | [June 7](#)
Ultra-Orthodox party sought segregation in public places | [4 June](#)
Netanyahu sacks Bennett and Shaked | [3 June](#)
Netanyahu says Liberman 'drunk with power' | [31 May](#)
Netanyahu fails to form government | [30 May](#)
Kulanu to join Likud for early election | [29 May](#)
Knesset votes for new elections | [28 May](#)
Coalition talks deadlocked over conscription bill | [24 May](#)