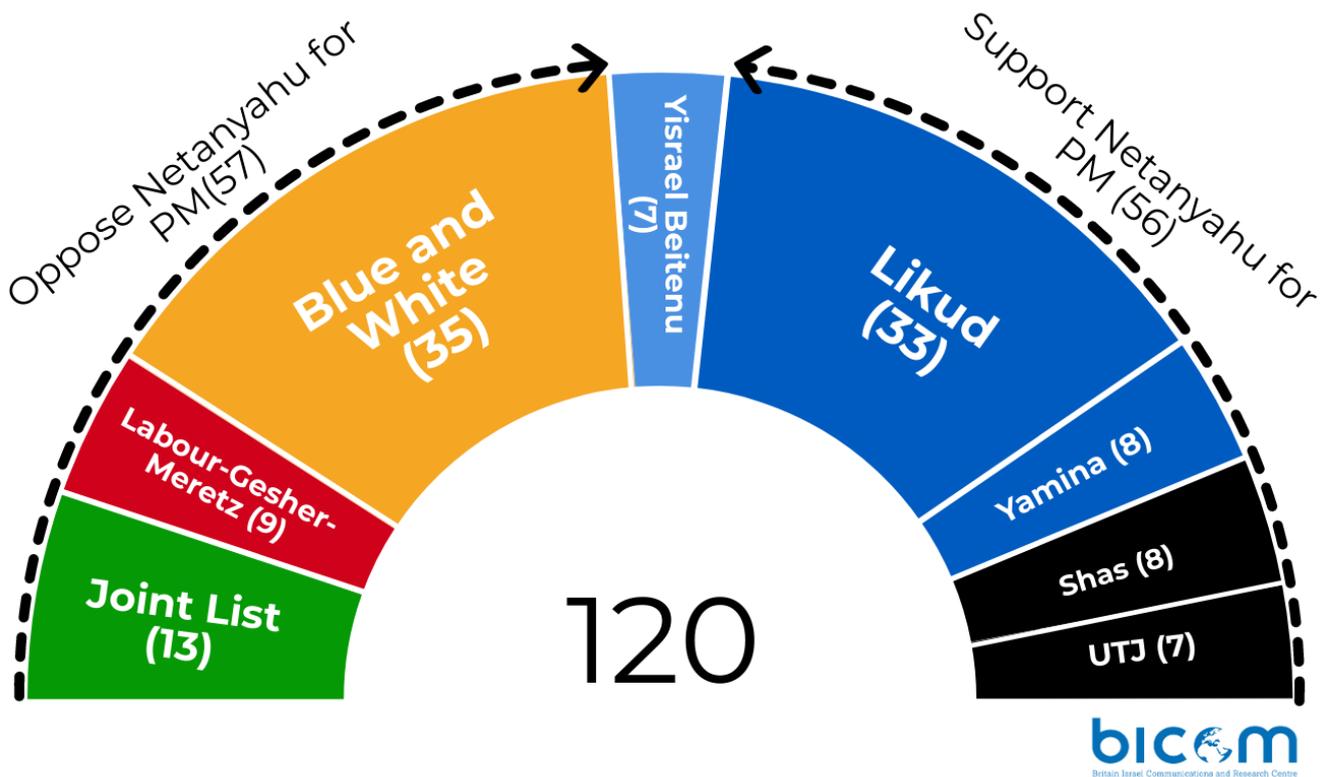


Israeli Elections Bulletin | February 13

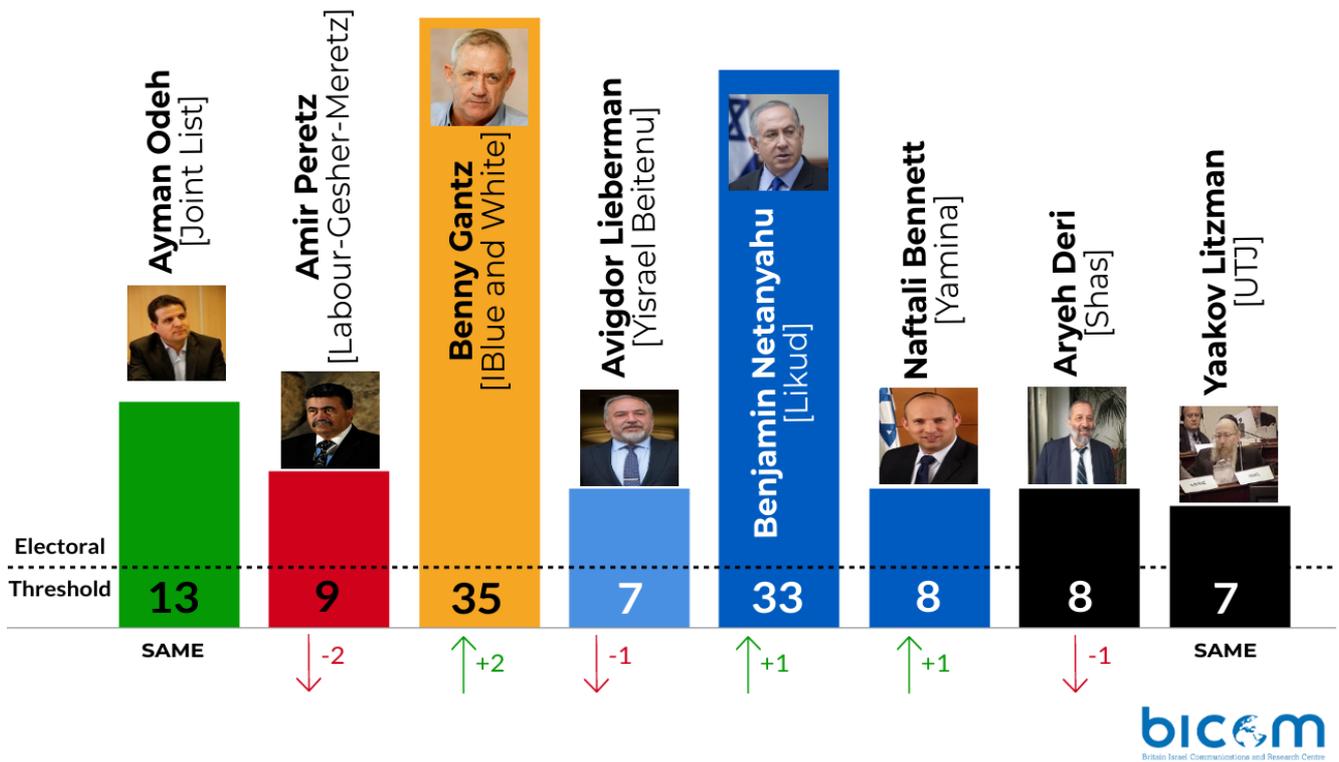
Ahead of Israel's 2 March election, BICOM will be producing regular election bulletins with everything you need to know. Be sure to listen to our [weekly podcast](#) and to follow our [election page](#) featuring our regularly updated poll of polls, campaign updates and analysis of the parties and politicians.

BICOM's poll of polls

Aggregate polling, January 23 - February 9

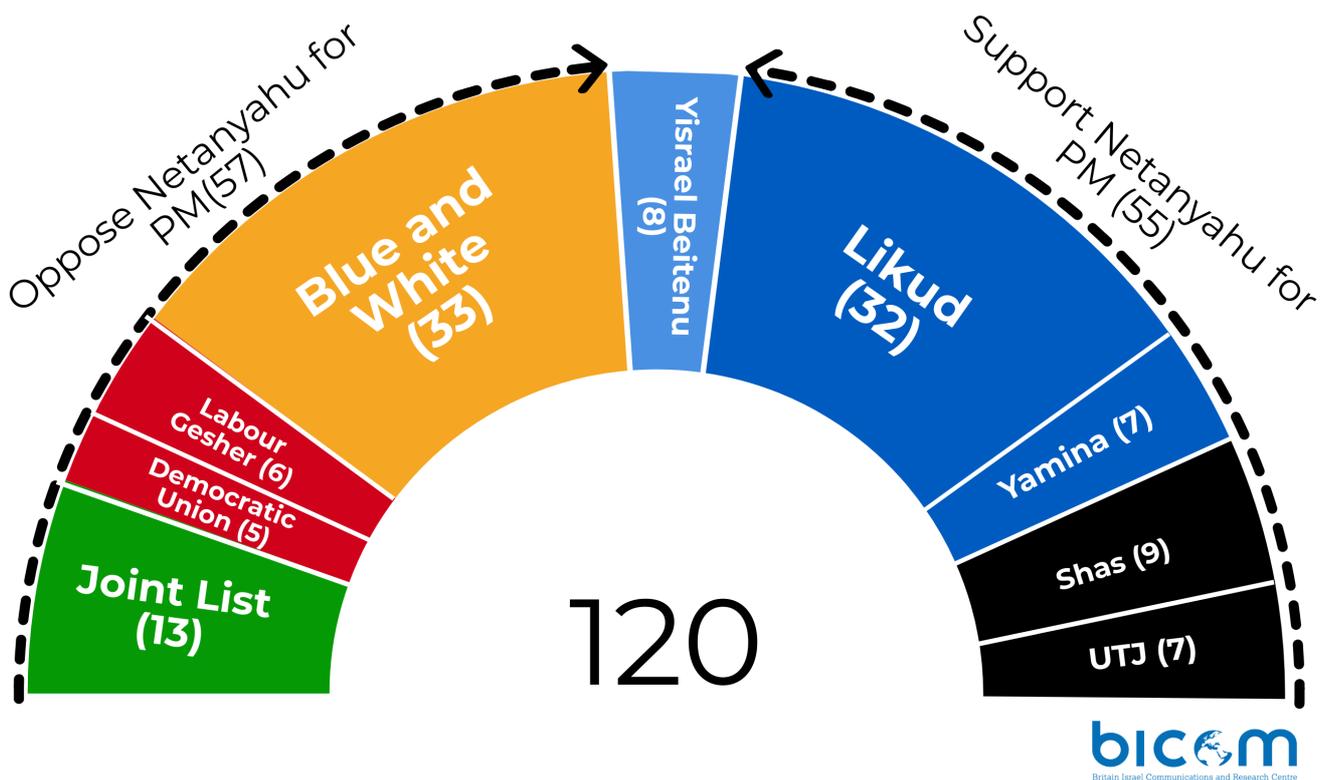


How the parties are shaping up

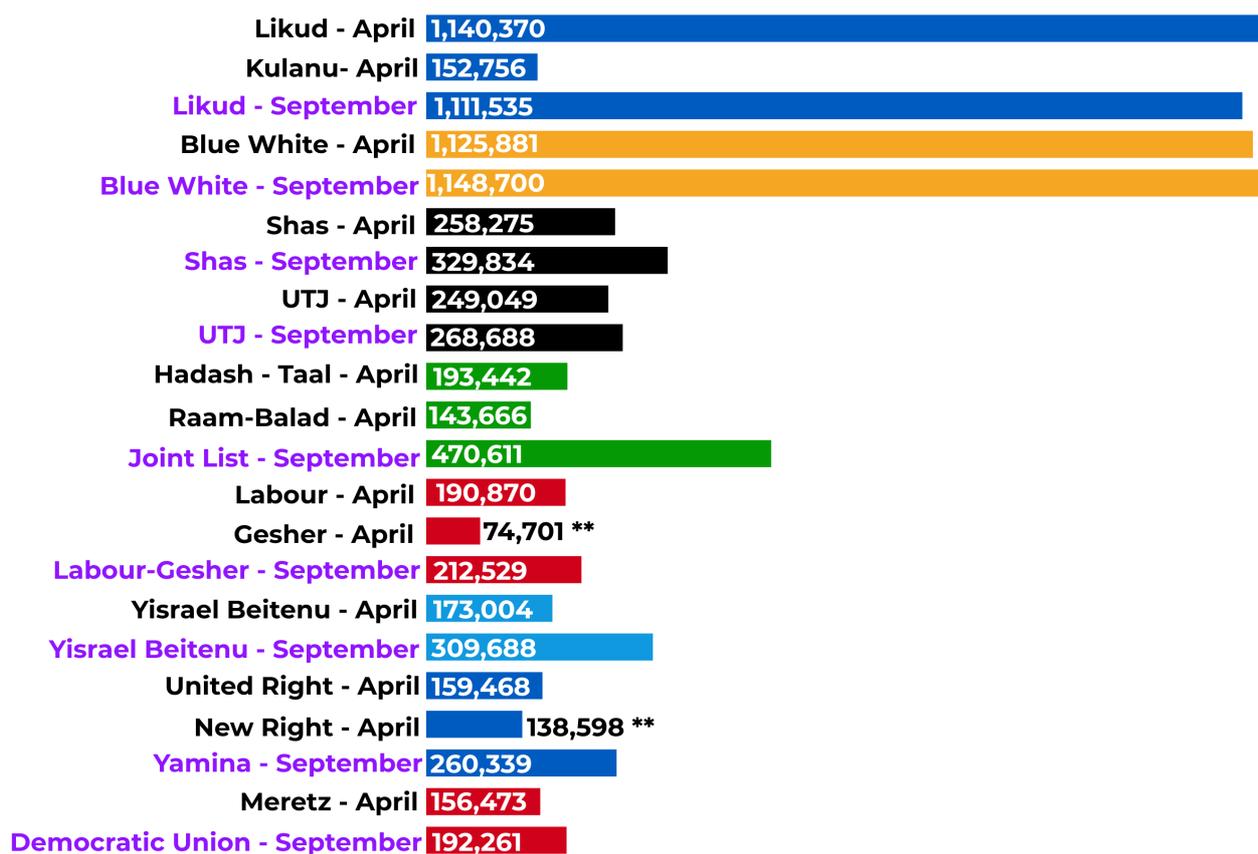


Aggregate polling, January 23 - February | compared to September 2019 election results

Final September 2019 Election Results



Total votes per party - April 2019 vs September 2019



**New Right and Gesher did not pass the electoral threshold in April

The Subdued Final Stretch

With just over two weeks until election day on 2 March, Israel's third election in 11 months has engendered one emotion from the Israeli public: apathy. There is little professed interest in the various campaigns, with pundits openly wondering whether another stalemate – and a fourth election – is in the offing. At present all polling indicates roughly similar results to last September's ballot, with neither Likud (and its right-wing 'bloc' of parties) nor Blue and White (and its centre/left-wing 'bloc') able to form a 61 seat governing coalition.

For their part, the various campaigns have decreased their public profile compared to the previous two elections, likely taking into account the decreased interest from voters. Instead, politicians from all parties have scheduled smaller-scale campaign stops where they interface directly with potential voters – especially Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has (relatively) lessened his reliance on social media and opted for a more grassroots approach.

Over the last two weeks, Netanyahu's re-election bid has been assisted by developments on the international stage. US President Donald Trump finally unveiled his long-delayed plan for Israel and the Palestinians in late February, inviting both Netanyahu and Blue and White leader Benny Gantz to the White House. Immediately after, Netanyahu travelled to Moscow for a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin and to secure the release of a jailed Israeli backpacker. The following week, in Uganda, the Israeli premier met with Sudan's interim leader in a move that may lead to a normalisation of ties. However, the US demand that Israel not take any immediate steps to apply Israeli sovereignty to West Bank settlements in the West Bank until after the election has likely hurt Netanyahu among his right-wing base (he had promised to apply Israeli sovereignty 'within days' of the White House visit).

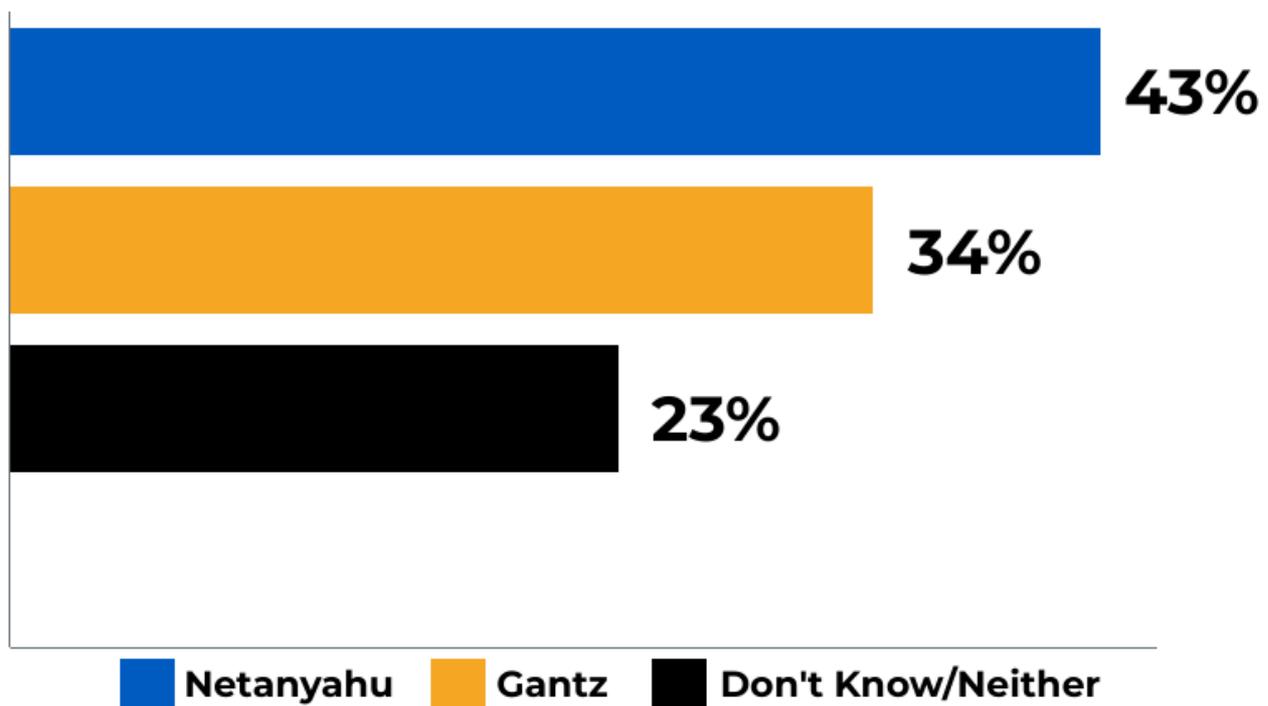
All of the above pushed the big news from last month – criminal charges filed in court against Netanyahu for bribery, fraud and breach of trust – off the top of the news agenda. Despite its best

efforts, Blue and White has been forced to respond to diplomatic developments, with uneven success. The party made a major push to attract 'soft' right-wing voters away from the Likud, yet there are known to be differences of opinion within the party regarding the utility of applying Israeli sovereignty to West Bank settlements. The Likud, for its part, has pushed the consistent line that Gantz will not be able to form a government without the support of the Joint (Arab) List.

The rest of the pack – Labor-Gesher Meretz, United Torah Judaism, Shas, and Yamina – have remained steadfast in their loyalty to their respective blocs, while Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beitenu remains the likely kingmaker in any governing coalition. With Israel's political map ossified, the voter energy of each bloc – and by extension turnout – will likely prove crucial.

Netanyahu's vs Gantz

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



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[Our latest podcast](#)

[Episode 88 | Will a third election break the deadlock](#)

James Sorene talks to polling expert Dahlia Scheindlin for a deep dive on Israel's 2 March election: has anything changed since the last election?

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bicom's podcast

Fathoming the Israeli Election

[Etan Nechin](#) argues in this overview of the history of the Israeli Left that it will only have a future if it stops aping the Right and offers a radical reimagining of the Israeli economy and society alongside a new peace plan. [Ephraim Sneh](#), examines the current state of Israeli politics, opportunities for engagement with the Palestinian Authority and the geostrategic challenges Israel faces throughout the region. [Joshua Krasna](#), a former Israeli diplomat in Jordan and Canada, argues that Israel's year of elections has had some bad consequences for Israeli foreign and security policymaking, including the loss of ambiguity concerning Israeli operations, foreign policy by 'red meat' announcements, and the further erosion of bipartisanship as the foundation of the Israel-US relationship. [Assaf Shapira](#) argues that the Israelis should embrace a minority government reliant on outside support as a way to break the political deadlock and avoid a third round of elections.

Political cartoons



The publication of the US plan renewed calls on the Israeli right for immediate application of Israeli sovereignty over West Bank settlements, although the US administration halted any such moves before the election. A *Maariv* cartoon has Netanyahu demanding annexation with Trump saying, "Finish these first [Deal of the Century, the US Embassy move to Jerusalem and recognition of Israeli control over the Golan Heights] and then you'll get more."

Haaretz illustrates that Trump has taken the wheels off the campaign by settler leaders to urge the Government to apply Israeli sovereignty over settlements.



Former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert met with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in New York this week. While they called each other "men of peace," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu blasted the meeting as "a low point in the history of the State of Israel." An *Israel Hayom* cartoon shows the two of them on a small boat trying to harpoon the much larger 'Deal of the Century' that threatens to engulf them.

As the public prepares to vote in national elections for the 3rd time in under a year, **Israel Hayom** suggests there is deep voter apathy. In this cartoon, a family seeks to book a cheap holiday for the 1st March forgetting the elections are the day after.



Yoaz Hendel, a senior Blue and White member (from its right-wing Telem faction) came under fire recently for comments he made which some saw as disparaging Mizrahi culture (He was quoted as saying: “People came to Israel from all sorts of places. Some of them came from the world of Viennese concerts and have this kind of mindset and others...have the mindset of the places where darbuka [Arabic style drums] is played”). Netanyahu, in this **Haaretz** cartoon, is smiling and playing the darbuka, turning the controversy to his electoral advantage by saying Blue and White look down on Mizrahi voters.

How we got here | news and analysis from BICOM

US publishes Israeli-Palestinian plan | [29 January, 2020](#)
Gantz pledges to apply sovereignty to Jordan Valley | [22 January, 2020](#)
Israeli right wing parties in new merger | [16 January, 2020](#)
Israeli right wing parties to merge for March election | [14 January, 2020](#)
Israeli Left merges as Knesset debates Netanyahu immunity | [13 January, 2020](#)
Likud leadership battle heats up | [16 December, 2019](#)
Israel heads to third election as Knesset dissolves | [12 December, 2019](#)
Israeli Parliament to dissolve | [11 December, 2019](#)
Israel heading for third election in 12 months | [6 December, 2019](#)
Israeli coalition talks stumble again | [3 December, 2019](#)
New polls shows strength of post-Netanyahu Likud | [29 November, 2019](#)
Saar challenges Netanyahu as Likud plan primary | [25 November, 2019](#)
Israeli Attorney General indicts Netanyahu | [22 November, 2019](#)
Gantz fails to form a Government | [21 November, 2019](#)
Bennett becomes defence minister, Lieberman issues ultimatum | [11 November, 2019](#)
Justice minister accuses police of extortion in Netanyahu corruption case | [7 November, 2019](#)
Lieberman denies rumours of joining right wing ultra-Orthodox Government | [5 November, 2019](#)
Israeli Coalition talks deadlocked | [31 October, 2019](#)
Israeli TV airs secret Netanyahu-Mozes call at centre of corruption case | [28 October, 2019](#)
Gantz asked to form a Government | [23 October, 2019](#)
Gantz rejects Netanyahu's latest unity offer | [18 October, 2019](#)
Lieberman announces plan for unity government | [10 October, 2019](#)
Lieberman rejects narrow coalition with Netanyahu | [8 October, 2019](#)
Netanyahu floats Likud leadership primary | [4 October, 2019](#)
Netanyahu starts pre-trial hearing | [2 October, 2019](#)
Israeli President asks Netanyahu to form a government | [26 September, 2019](#)
National unity talks continue as election results finalised | [25 September, 2019](#)
Arab parties recommend Gantz for Prime Minister | [23 September, 2019](#)
Gantz refuses Netanyahu meeting | [20 September, 2019](#)
Netanyahu calls for unity government with Gantz | [19 September, 2019](#)
Netanyahu fails to win 61 seat majority | [18 September, 2019](#)