

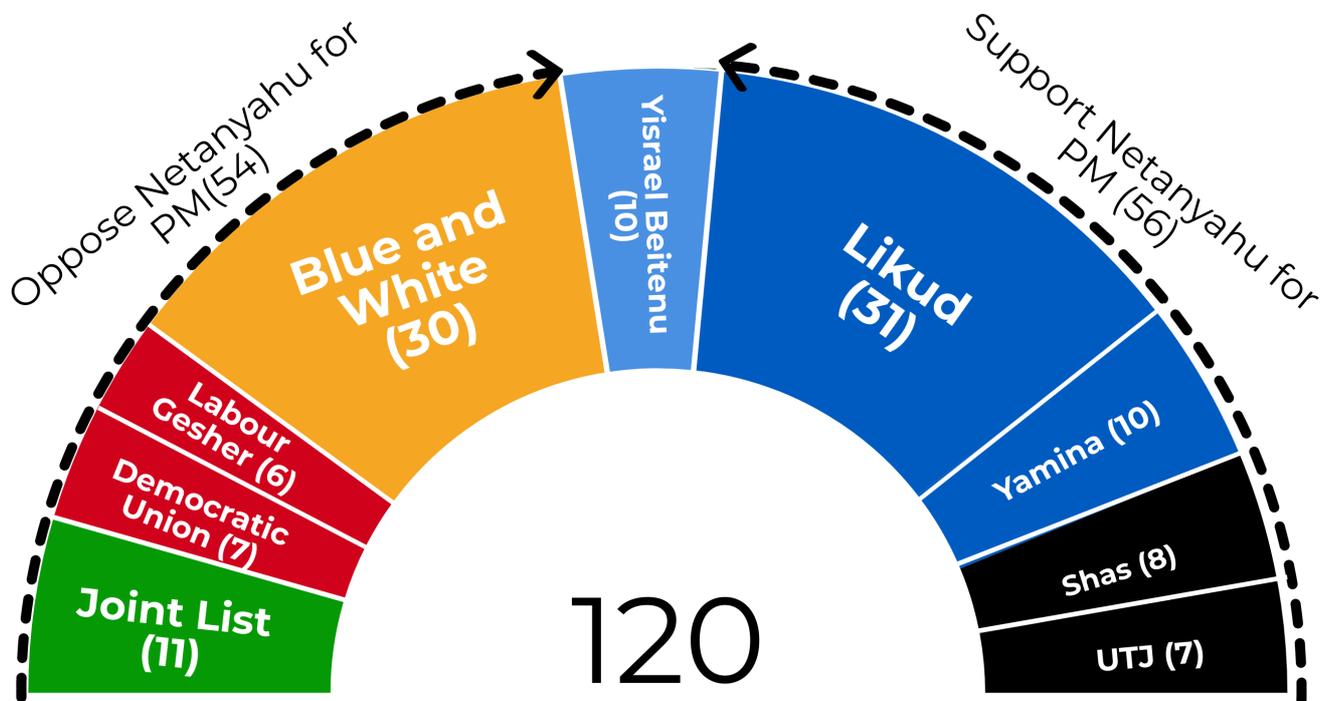
Israeli Elections Bulletin | August 29

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, August 15 -28



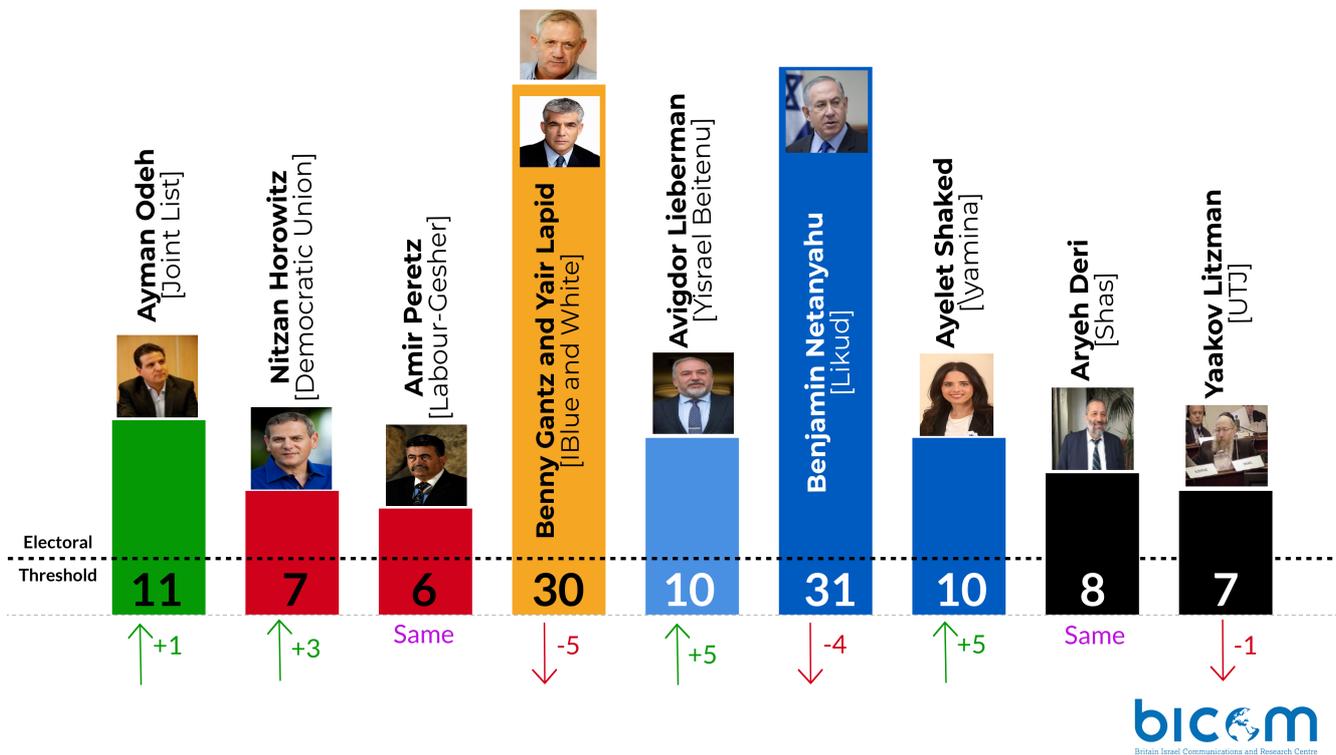
61 is the magic number

Current polls suggest that neither Netanyahu nor 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. Netanyahu has rejected the idea outright, likely knowing that he – and not the Likud at large – is the main stumbling bloc. For his part, Yisrael Beiteinu leader Avigdor Lieberman, still positioned as the ultimate kingmaker for any future governing coalition, has indicated he will only countenance a national unity government and current polls predict his party will win ten seats.

Since the party mergers at the start of the month the polls have remained fairly stable with no real movement between the right and left blocs. Likud and Blue and White remain the clear frontrunners in each bloc, respectively, and seem to be retaining their position. The smaller satellite parties are treading water, with Yamina (on the right) and Democratic Union and Labor-Gesher (on the left) holding relatively stable.

How the parties are shaping up

Aggregate polling, August 15 -28 | compared to April 2019 election results



The Home Stretch

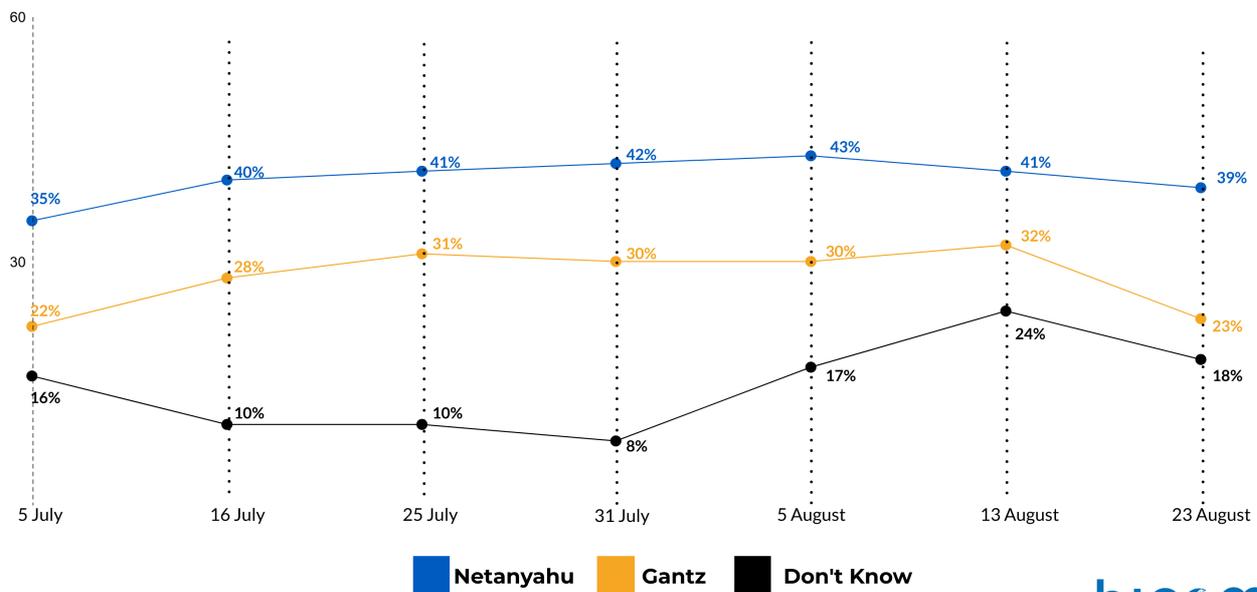
The holiday season is over and Israelis are returning to work, including paying attention to an election campaign that has yet to truly engage the public's interest. A summer campaign was always going to be difficult, and a second election in four months doesn't help. One big question is whether voter turnout will remain as robust as usual – carrying with it implications for the allocation of seats and the identity of the next government. The political parties have conserved their resources for the home stretch and are planning a media and events blitz over the next three weeks to try and win votes.

The key question in the remaining weeks is whether the larger parties can – and even want – to siphon off voters from the smaller satellite parties (Yamina, Democratic Union and Labor-Gesher) to their right and left. The two ultra-Orthodox parties – United Torah Judaism and Shas – along with Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu will likely remain immune to such machinations. But a crucial variable will be Arab-Israeli turnout and voters for the Joint (Arab) List, nominally part of the left-wing bloc.

In such a close campaign every vote will count. Prime Minister Netanyahu has almost reached a deal with Moshe Feiglin, head of the far-right Zehut party, to drop out of the race in exchange for various policy promises. Zehut is unlikely to pass the electoral threshold, so by convincing them to drop out Netanyahu would be minimising the number of "lost" right-wing votes and thereby maximising his bloc's overall numbers. Similarly, various parties have agreed vote-sharing agreements in recent weeks, as is customary: Likud with Yamina, Yisrael Beiteinu with Blue and White, and Democratic Union with Labor-Gesher. These agreements allow the larger party to receive any surplus votes from the smaller faction, potentially adding up to an additional Knesset seat. With the margins so fine, and Netanyahu essentially needing a 61-seat majority without Lieberman to ensure he retains the premiership, the real campaign has only just begun.

Netanyahu's vs Gantz

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



bicom
Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre

[Our latest podcast](#)

[Episode 65 | Israeli polls point to stalemate](#)

James Sorene talks to Richard Pater and Calev Ben Dor about the latest news from the Israeli election campaign with a focus on the potential impact of the new right-wing and left-wing party mergers.



Fathoming the 2019 Israeli Election: The Sequel

[Liam Hoare](#) writes an in-depth study on Nitzan Horowitz, leader of Meretz and co-leader of the Democratic Union, who he claims is now 'the leader of the Israeli left'. Maariv journalist Revital Amiran argues that identity politics and populism have been the largest obstacles to the revival of Zionist Left but the two left slates fighting this election are tackling both and thus laying the foundations for left renewal. David Newman of Ben-Gurion University predicts the events of 2019 will renew interest in electoral reform in Israel.

Political cartoons and party mergers



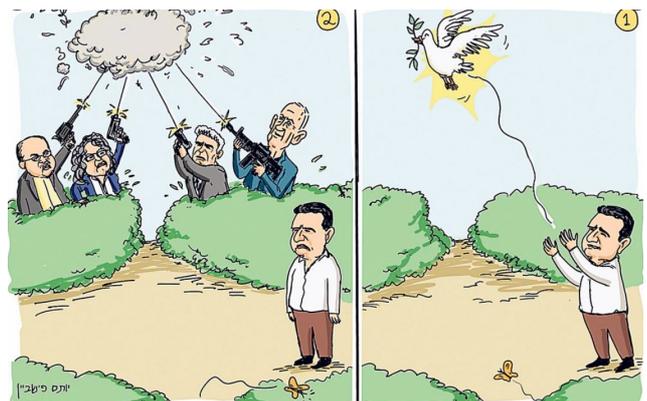
“Meanwhile, in the hole [at military headquarters].” This [Haaretz](#) cartoon shows Netanyahu tracking developments on various battle fronts: Iraq, Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, and Petach Tikva - hometown of Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit, whose image appears in the bottom left corner. Mandelblit will be holding a pretrial hearing for Netanyahu in October, after which he will decide whether to indict the prime minister on fraud, breach of trust and corruption charges.

This [Yediot Ahronot](#) cartoon shows Netanyahu on the right as he asks US President Donald Trump “So, you need intelligence on Iran?” Trump responds, “Yes, do you know if [Iranian President Hassan] Rouhani prefers chicken or meat?” while holding a piece of paper that says “Menu: USA-Iran Summit.” Some criticism was aimed at Netanyahu by his political opponents after Trump recently indicated a willingness to meet with Rouhani



This [Yisrael Hayom](#) cartoon shows Blue and White leaders Benny Gantz, Yair Lapid, Moshe “Bogie” Yaalon and Gabi Ashkenazi. Gantz, at the top, says “Nothing like cliff climbing to mould team building,” as each one tries to drag or trip up the other. Blue and White has been roiled by mixed messaging, purported infighting, and near-weekly leaks.

This [Yediot Ahronot](#) cartoon shows Joint (Arab) List leader Ayman Odeh release a white dove into the air (R). In the next image (L) fellow Joint List officials Ahmad Tibi and Aida Touma-Sliman, along with Blue and White leaders Benny Gantz and Yair Lapid fire and destroy the dove. In a recent Interview Odeh expressed a willingness for the Joint List to join a future government – a move rejected not only by Blue and White but also from within his own party.



Selected campaign videos

Even on holiday Israelis can't escape the election: Blue and White bought a massive [billboard on the road to Larnaca airport, Cyprus](#), with the image of party leader Benny Gantz and the tagline "Israel Before All" in Hebrew.



This [Likud campaign video](#) asks: "Who would you rather answer this phone call?" with the image and name of US President Donald Trump calling. The ad then goes on to pose the choice of "This man?" with an image of Blue and White number two Yair Lapid, or "Or Netanyahu?" followed by video of the Prime Minister meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Trump. "We have to stop Lapid from becoming prime minister," it says at the end, highlighting the Likud's constant attacks on what it perceives as the weak link in the Blue and White leadership.

"Democrats, We Need to Talk," [Democratic Union official Stav Shaffir](#) addresses the camera alone, in English, after the crisis surrounding Israel's ban of US congresswomen Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar. Shaffir blasts the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) movement – which Talib and Omar support – as being "against peace" and wanting "an end to Israel." Shaffir then blasts Prime Minister Netanyahu for giving a "gift" to BDS by banning the congresswomen, and calls for all "democrats" to "build an alliance, based on democracy, equality, freedom and peace."



How we got here | news stories from BICOM

Zehut party could withdraw from election after deal with Netanyahu | [28 August](#)
Netanyahu rejects national unity government | [7 August](#)
Likud candidates pledge loyalty to Netanyahu | [5 August](#)
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](#)