

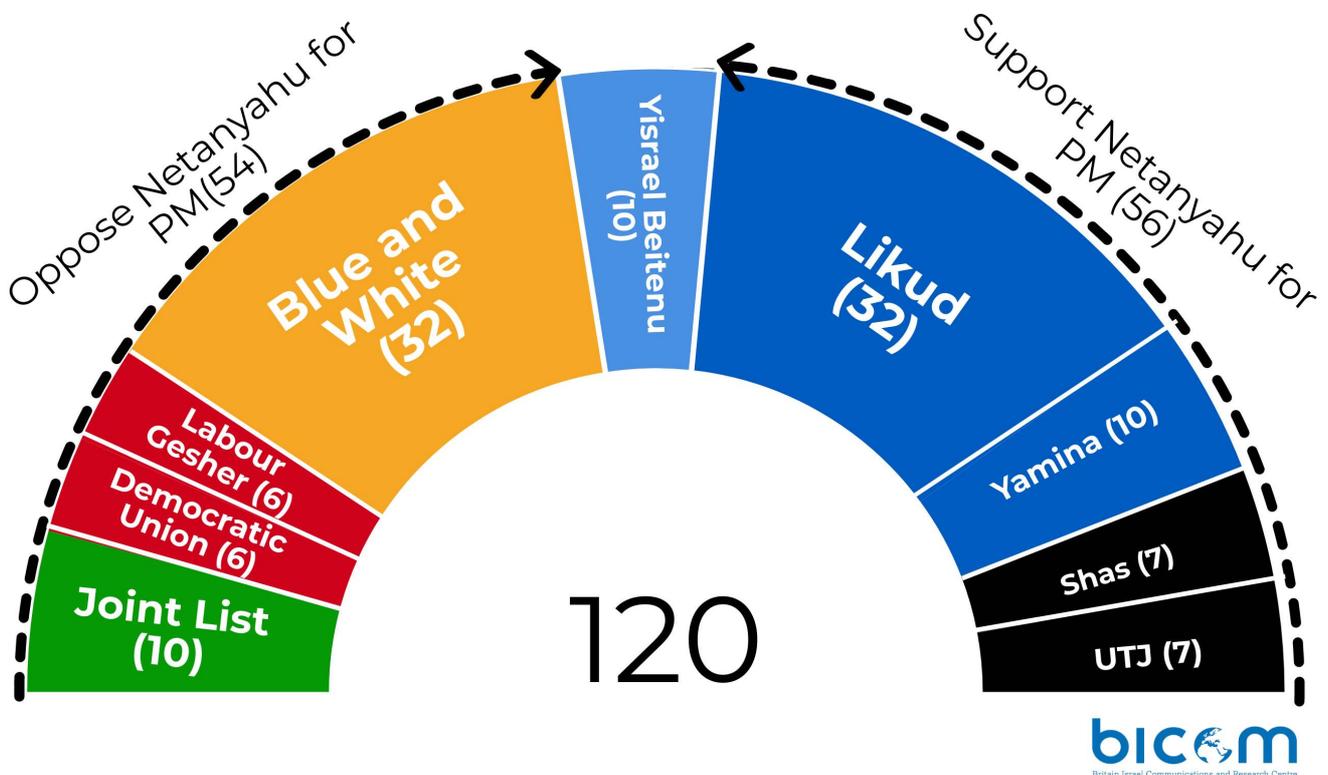
Israeli Elections Bulletin | September 13

On 17 September Israelis will vote for the second time in five months. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu failed to form a government after the initial April ballot, triggering this repeat election. Nothing is now being taken for granted: not the initial results after next Tuesday, nor the identity of the man asked by the president to form a government, and certainly not the outcome of the tortuous coalition negotiations. A third of likely voters are still undecided, and that’s before taking into account the impact (or not) on turnout of holding two elections in such a short period of time, unprecedented in Israeli history.

Our last bulletin before next week's election has 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 28 - September 12*



*The far right Otzma Yehudit / Jewish Power party has polled above the electoral threshold with 4 seats in some polls. This would boost the strength of Netanyahu's potential coalition, but polls suggest he would still struggle to get 61 seats without Yisrael Beiteinu.

The Final Countdown

The last polls of the campaign show that Netanyahu's Likud and the Blue and White party, led by Benny Gantz, are running at a near dead heat, with neither the left- nor right-wing bloc of parties able to cobble together a 61-seat parliamentary majority without the support of Avigdor Liberman's Yisrael Beiteinu party. To this end, both frontrunners have shifted strategies in the last two weeks to rally their respective bases.

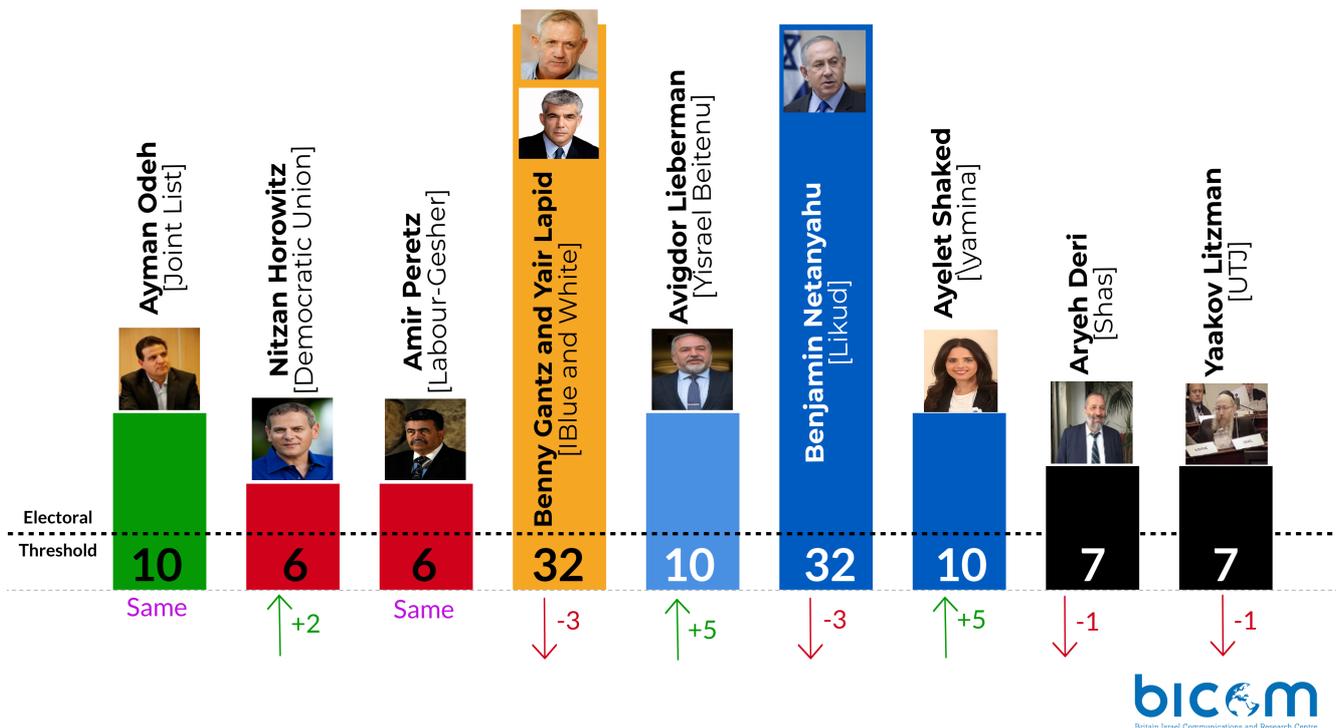
Netanyahu launched an aggressive campaign to siphon votes from the various parties running to his right. The Likud tried to push through a measure allowing cameras in polling stations, claiming such a step would combat widespread voter fraud among the Arab-Israeli electorate. Israel's legal authorities rejected the move and dismissed claims of voting irregularities, yet Netanyahu persisted, alleging that the Israeli Left (with Arab support) was trying to "steal" the election from the Likud.

Benny Gantz, for his part, shifted tack as well, declaring his intention to form a "liberal, secular national unity government" if he emerges victorious. Gantz had previously made overtures to the ultra-Orthodox parties with an eye to bringing them into any future coalition. Yet the move away from them, and back towards his center-left and secular base of support, was aimed at undermining Avigdor Liberman's inroads into this demographic. Liberman has, since the start, ran on an anti-religious platform and demanded a national unity government between himself, Likud, and Blue and White.

Ultimately, the election will most likely be determined by the strength of the smallest parties. Key questions remain. Will the far-right Kahanist Jewish Power (Otzma Yehudit) win enough votes to pass the 3.25 percent electoral threshold? Will the Labour party, lagging in the polls, win any seats? And will Arab-Israeli voters come out in greater numbers than their historically low turnout (49 per cent) in April? The answers to these questions will determine the respective strength of each bloc, and with that, the make-up of the next Israeli government.

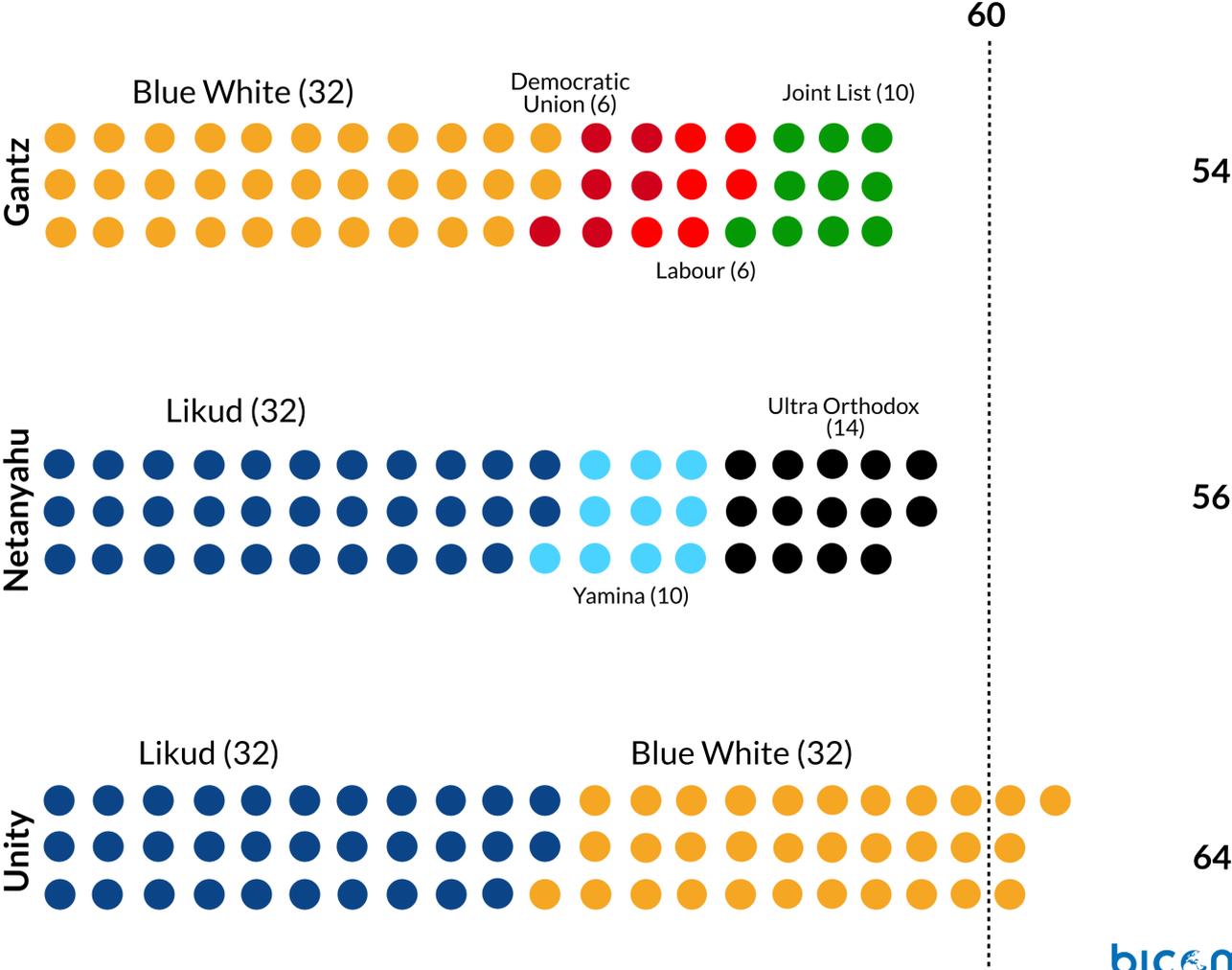
How the parties are shaping up

Aggregate polling, August 28 - September 12 | compared to April 2019 election results

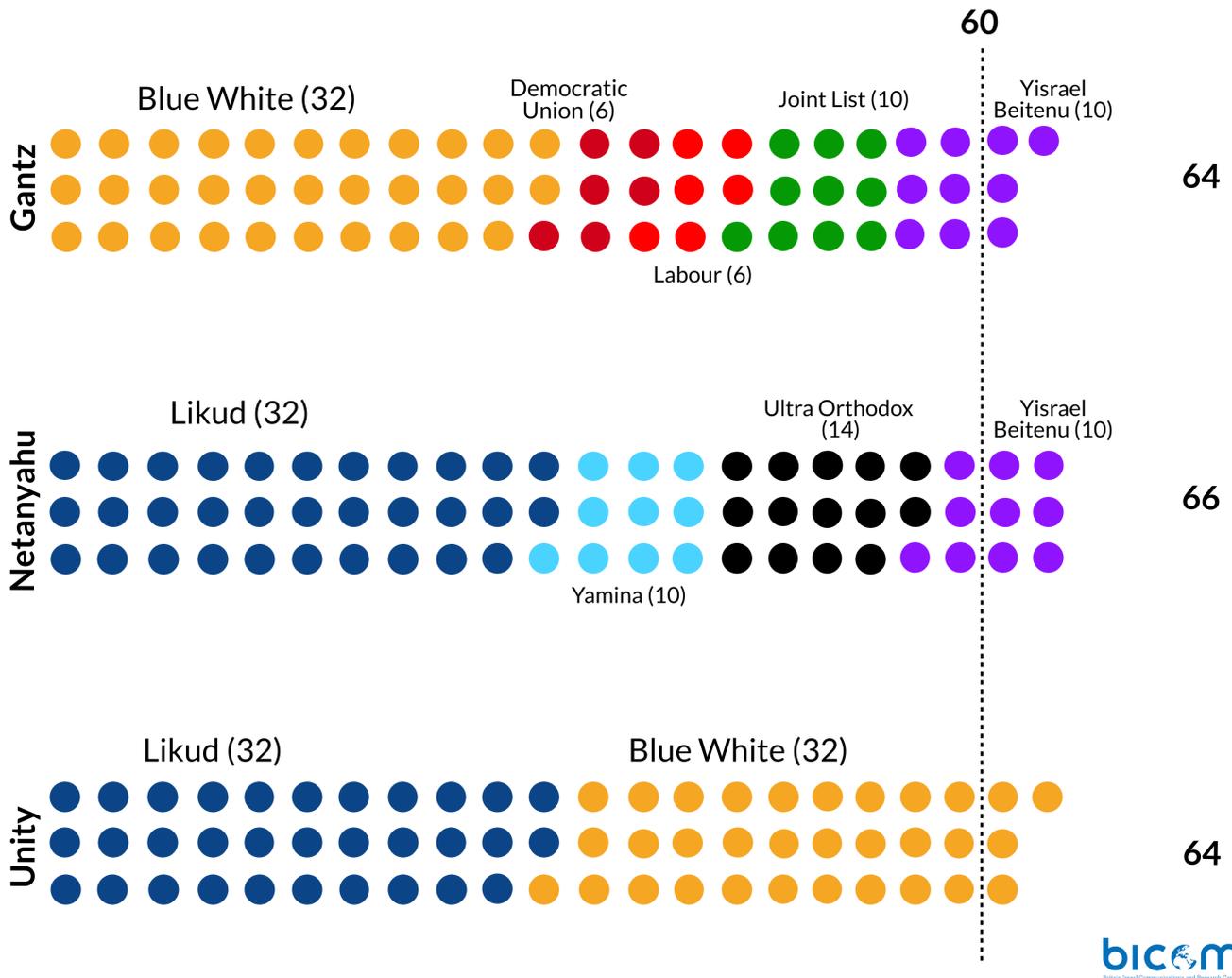


Getting to 61 - Possible Coalitions

According to current polls, both Blue White and Likud would struggle to form a governing coalition with their potential partners without Avigdor Liberman's Yisrael Beitenu party (below). If Netanyahu were to resign a unity government could become a more likely scenario.

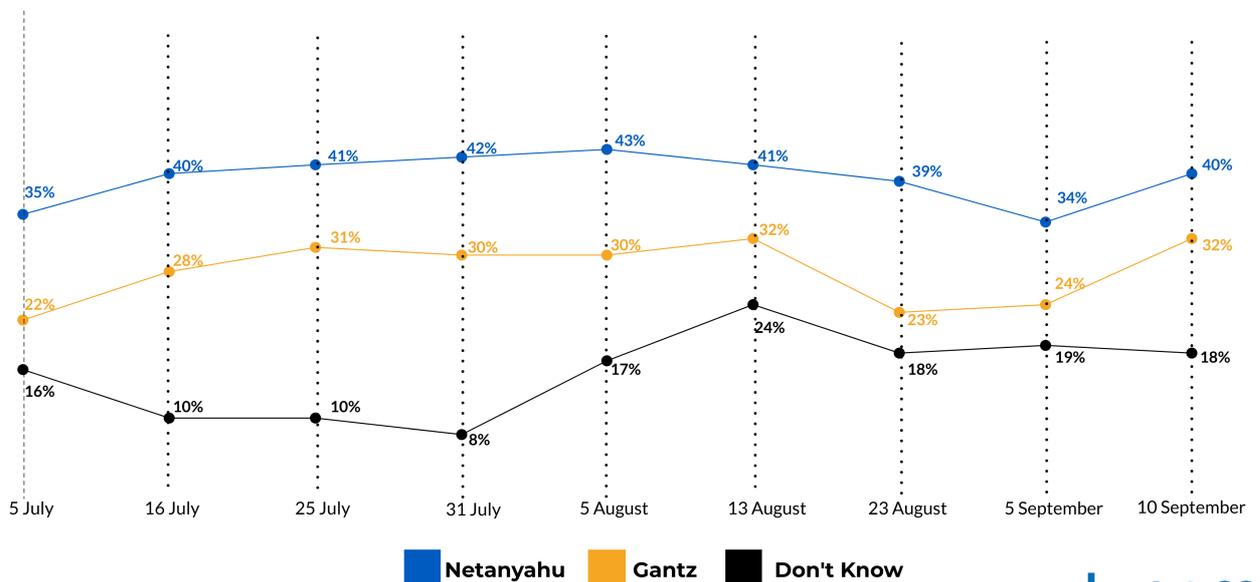


With Yisrael Beitenu both Blue and White and Likud would have enough seats to form a coalition government (below).



Netanyahu's vs Gantz

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



[Our latest podcast](#)

[Episode 68 | The election endgame](#)

For the first time ever, the BICOM podcast was recorded on a moving train as James Sorene talked to polling expert Dahlia Scheindlin and journalist and Bibi biographer Anshel Pfeffer on the 21:15 from Manchester Piccadilly to London Euston. They discussed the final phase of the Israeli election campaign and how voter turnout and Avigdor Lieberman's quest to bring Bibi down will decide who wins on 17 September.



bicom's podcast

Fathoming the 2019 Israeli Election: The Sequel

[Tal Schneider](#) discusses key issues related to the upcoming election. [Avi Weiss](#) discusses the strengths and weaknesses of Israel's economy and warns that the economic potential of Israeli high-tech is being squandered. [Yisrael Medad](#) argues that the Left is now viewed, in the eyes of the majority of the public, as outside the Jewish political consensus in Israel. [Hamutal Gouri](#) argues from a feminist perspective for an awakening of the Israeli public which she reproaches as too willing to vote against its own political interests. [Doron Matza](#) argues that Benjamin Netanyahu's broadly pragmatic diplomatic, security and economic policies enjoy widespread consensus, and this 'paradigm' will continue for the foreseeable future, regardless of who wins the election. [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



This *Bakehila* [cartoon](#) shows an average Israeli clothed in traditional garb (sandals, shorts, tembel hat) in a prison cell happily counting down the time until election day, throwing various voting slips into the air.

This *Israel Hayom* [cartoon](#) shows (from right to left) Labor leader Amir Peretz, Blue and White leader Benny Gantz, and Democratic Union leader Ehud Barak each drinking from a cup with the other's party name and emblem. The implication is that each of these centrist/leftist parties is siphoning votes – or “drinking mandates,” in Hebrew political slang – from the same voting demographic.



This *Maariv* [cartoon](#), evoking Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, shows Moshe Feiglin passing what appears to be a marijuana cigarette to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu while saying “You’ll start taking care of this now?” Netanyahu responds “Yes. Yes. Sure.” Feiglin heads the far-right/libertarian Zehut party and has long championed marijuana legalization. A deal struck between Netanyahu and Feiglin on August 29 saw Zehut pull out of the election and throw its support behind Netanyahu's Likud, in return for a future ministerial post for Feiglin and other policy promises.

This *Haaretz* [cartoon](#) shows US President Donald Trump moving to hug Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, with an unbelieving Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu standing to the side. Trump is saying “I’ve put him in the friend zone.” The cartoon is an allusion to Trump's recent willingness to meet with Rouhani, despite Netanyahu's opposition.



Selected campaign videos

In this [music video](#) for the Sephardic ultra-Orthodox Shas party, various Israelis of all ages and sexes are shown in the predawn hours getting ready for their day, set against a catchy song incorporating both traditional religious lyrics and a modern “Mizrachi/Middle Eastern” melody. The Israelis all eventually arrive at synagogue for morning prayers. The video concludes with Shas’ late spiritual leader, Rabbi Ovadiya Yosef, imploring people to “take the Shas slip and put it in the ballot box.”



In this Likud [campaign video](#), two lost hikers come across Prime Minister Netanyahu on the trail. “I’ve come to make sure you’re on the right path,” Netanyahu tells them. “My path is a lot more secure and stable, it’s challenging, but only on it do you reach the summit.” Just as the two hikers ask what lies in the other direction, to the left, a horde of screaming hikers run towards them. “Don’t go that way,” one tells them. “No one there knows where we’re going.”

The top half of this Blue and White [campaign video](#) shows Netanyahu in southern Israel in 2009 vowing “to topple the terror regime of Hamas” in the Gaza Strip if he were elected Prime Minister. The lower half of the video shows Netanyahu in September 2019 being hustled off stage by his security detail at a campaign rally in Ashdod after rockets were fired from Gaza at the southern Israeli city.



How we got here | news stories from BICOM

Facebook suspends Netanyahu's chat page | [13 September](#)
Netanyahu would extend Israeli sovereignty to Jordan Valley | [11 September](#)
Israeli cabinet approves law to allow cameras in polling stations | [9 September](#)
Netanyahu flies to London for last minute visit | [5 September](#)
Israel and US could sign new defence pact | [4 September](#)
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](#)