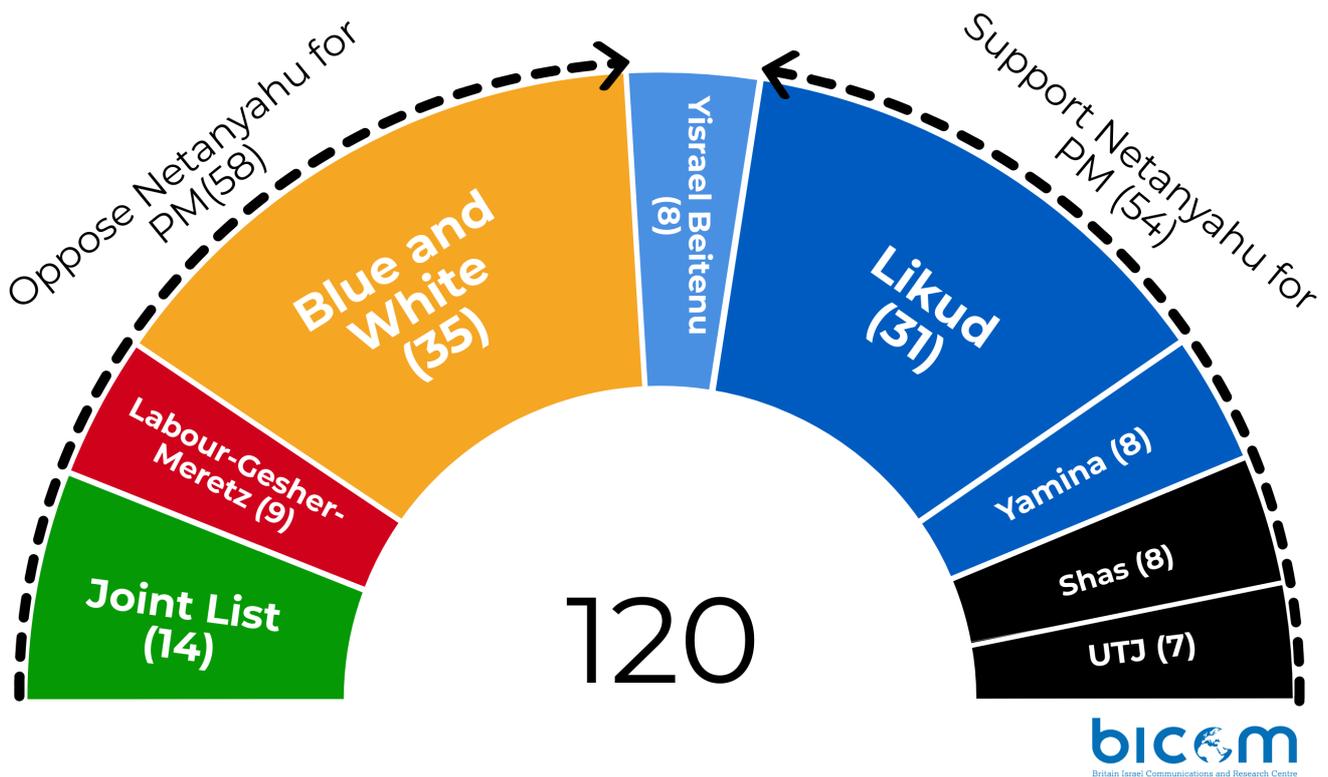


Israeli Elections Bulletin | January 24

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.

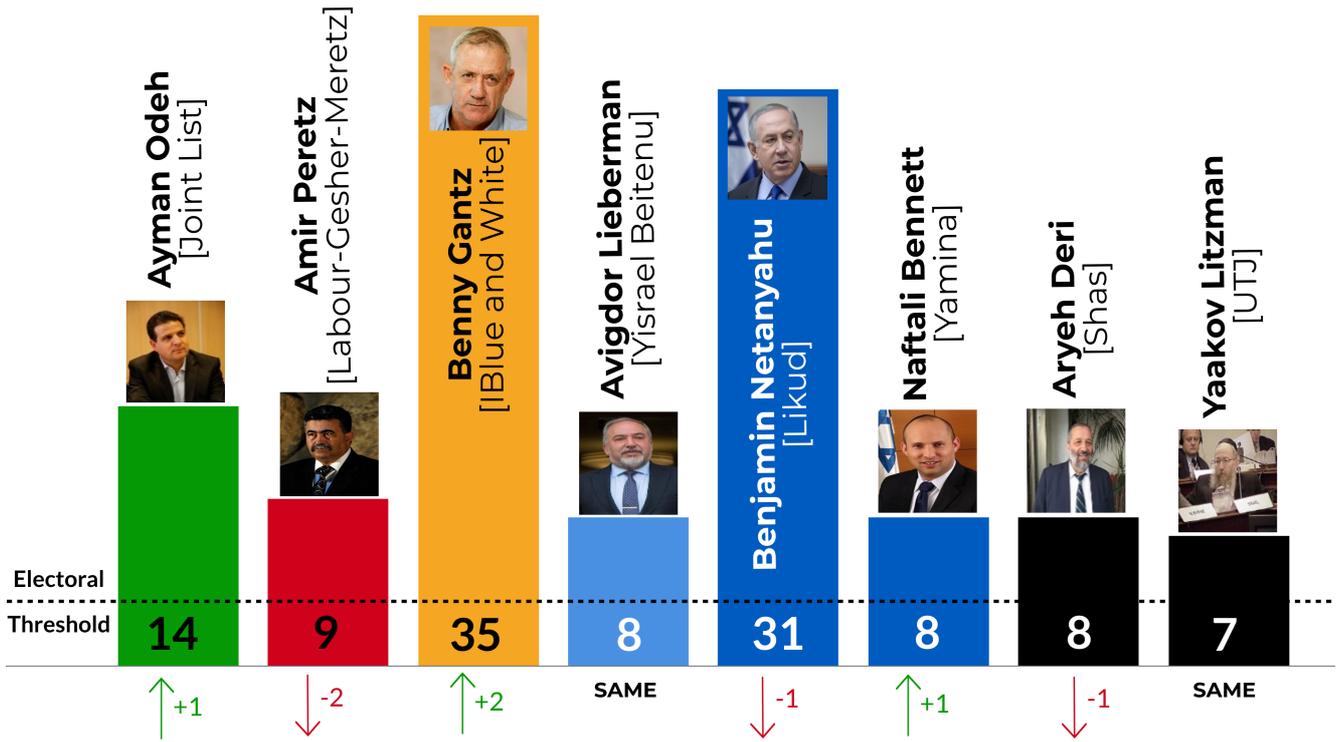
BICOM's poll of polls

Aggregate polling, January 16



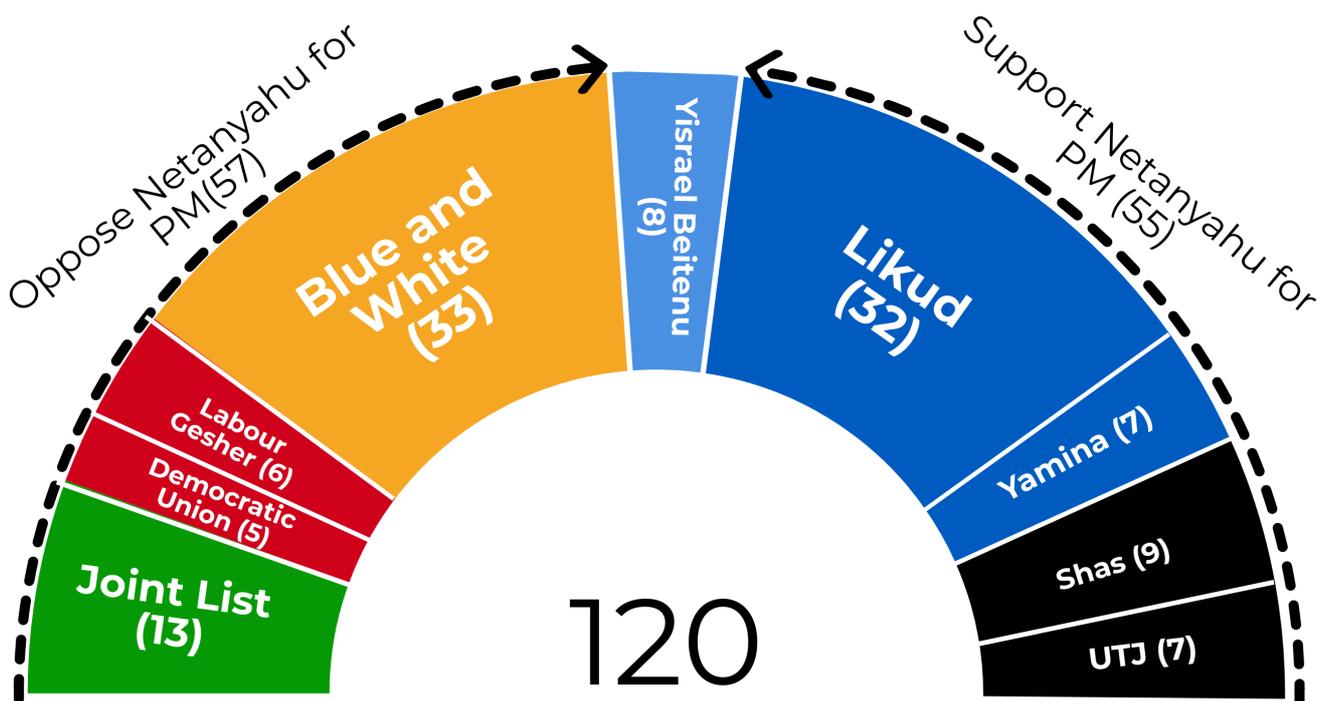
*The far right Otzma Yehudit / Jewish Power party has polled above the electoral threshold with 4 seats in one poll. This would boost the strength of Netanyahu's potential coalition, but polls suggest he would still struggle to get 61 seats without Yisrael Beiteinu.

How the parties are shaping up

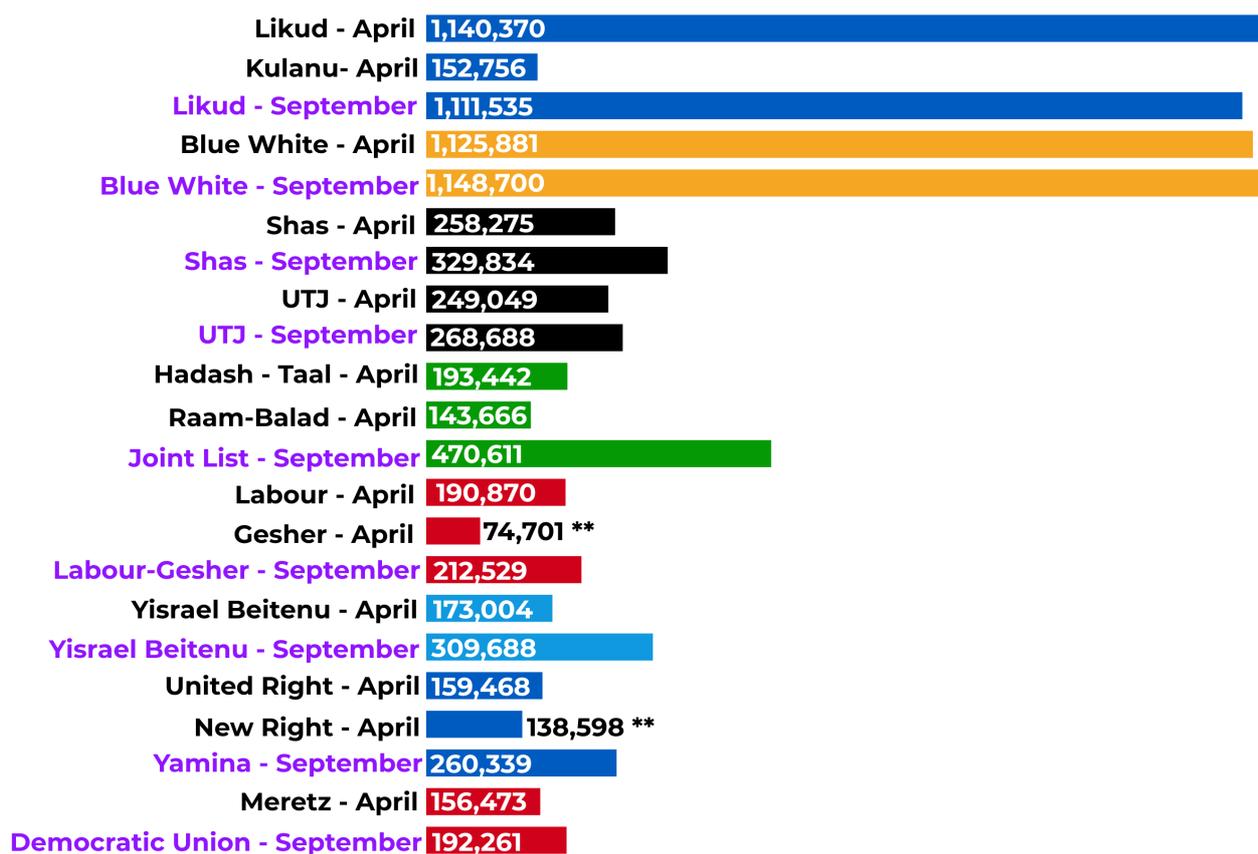


Aggregate polling, January 16 | compared to September 2019 election results

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

Third Time Lucky?

Israelis will vote for the third time in less than a year on 2 March. A second consecutive election had never happened before in Israeli history, let alone a third – yet the deadlock continues between Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud (and the right wing 'bloc' of parties) and his main challenger, Blue and White leader Benny Gantz (and his centre-left 'bloc'). The latest polls predict that yet again, neither of them will be able to form a 61 seat majority in the 120 member Knesset.

Netanyahu is fighting this election as a sitting Prime Minister formally indicted by the Attorney General, Avichai Mandelblit, for [bribery, fraud and breach of trust](#). But Netanyahu's right wing allies and his Likud party have remained loyal. He won December's Likud leadership primary with 72 per cent of the vote, his rival Gideon Sa'ar received 27 per cent. Netanyahu has asked the Israeli Parliament to grant him immunity from prosecution and this is likely to be rejected by a Knesset committee when it is formed shortly. That rejection will mean the charges against Netanyahu can be filed in court and the next step is a criminal trial, unless he agrees a plea bargain.

The Blue and White party are working to ensure that Netanyahu's immunity request is rejected as soon as possible. To do this they need to deal with delaying tactics by Netanyahu supporters who want that vote to take place after the March election when Netanyahu might just have secured a majority. The Blue and White election campaign only really started this week, with a revised tagline urging the country to "move forward" coupled with a strong rhetorical appeal to "soft" right wing voters on issues primarily relating to the future of the West Bank. Blue and White are confident that this lurch to the right will not come at the expense of centre-left votes, and even more so, with the confidence that left wing votes writ large will not go to waste.

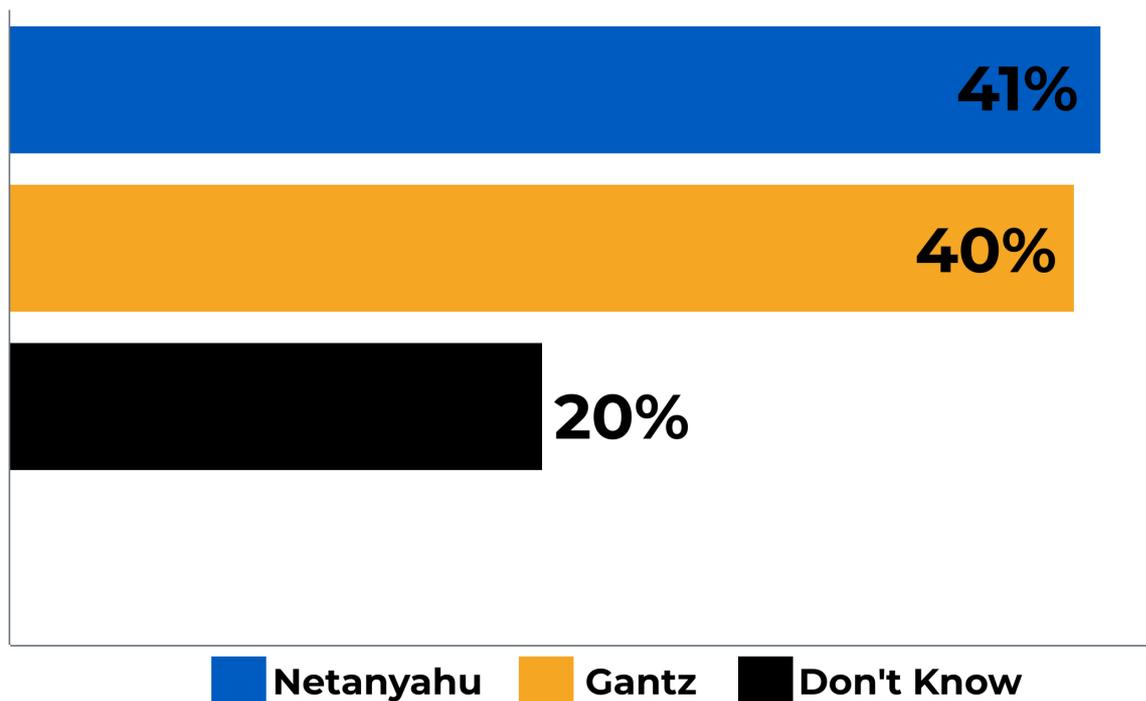
Unlike the last two elections, there is no fear that the two parties to the left of Blue and White will not pass the 3.25 per cent electoral threshold required to win seats. Meretz and Labor-Gesher merged earlier this month, creating one unified left wing list that will enter the next Knesset as the

separate parties won 11 seats in September. Similarly, three out of the four pro-settler parties to the right of Likud – Jewish Home, National Union, and The New Right -- also joined forces and re-created the Yamina (“Rightward”) party that won 7 seats in September, led by Defence Minister Naftali Bennett. The far-right/Kahanist Jewish Power party was left out of the union by Bennett; it is the only small party in danger of not passing the electoral threshold as it won just 83,000 votes in September, putting an estimated two Knesset seats at risk for the overall right wing bloc. The predominantly Arab-Israeli parties are running together again as the Joint List and will seek to improve on their strong showing last September when they won 13 seats.

With the consolidation of the blocs, Avigdor Lieberman’s Yisrael Beiteinu remains the swing party in coalition talks. Yet Liberman has shown no inclination to back down from his prior demands relating to issues of religion and state – angering the ultra-Orthodox Shas and United Torah Judaism parties, who remain stalwart allies of Netanyahu. Another deadlock is looming on 2 March. The big question is whether the campaigns can do enough to attract new voters and break the stalemate. There are also possible events beyond their control – a military escalation in Gaza or with Iran, or the publication of the Trump Administration’s plan for Israeli-Palestinian talks – that could shake up the election debate.

Netanyahu's vs Gantz

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



[Our latest podcast](#)

[Episode 81 | Israel's election addiction](#)

As Israel heads for an unprecedented third election in less than 12 months, Ronie Gazit speaks to journalist and Bibi biographer Anshel Pfeffer about how this happened and whether a third election will actually break the political deadlock.

Listen on [iTunes](#), [Spotify](#) and our [website](#)



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



This *Maariv* cartoon shows a smelly brew of the small right wing parties that the witch says is ready. This relates to efforts by Prime Minister Netanyahu and others to force a merger increasing their electoral prospects.

Calcalist shows New Right leader Naftali Bennett drawing an (allegedly clear) line excluding extremists which has Kahane supporter Itamar Ben Gvir outside but other right wing leaders who have made derogatory comments about Arabs and the LGBT community inside. Bennett had originally hoped to appeal to a secular right wing public and its unclear to what extent teaming up with these leaders will help or hinder him.



Calcalist is critical of the decision to give Meretz (Arab) lawmaker Issawi Frej a slot on the party list that makes it unlikely he will win a seat, showing him being left behind as the leaders of the Labour-Gesher-Meretz alliance stride off together

Yediot Ahronot focus on Stav Shaffir being left out of the Labour-Gesher-Meretz alliance, showing the other leaders driving off without her



Maariv shows the tension between Netanyahu and speaker of the Knesset Yuli Edelstein. Edelstein allowed Blue and White (and others) to move ahead with parliamentary procedures to vote on Netanyahu's request for immunity. The cartoon shows Netanyahu as Caesar saying 'et tu Yuli', with Edelstein surrounded by purported Netanyahu enemies (former Likud MK Benny Begin, current Likud MK Gideon Saar, Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit, and former Police Chief Roni Alsheich).

Haaretz also touches on the criticism of Edelstein, showing the Speaker of the Knesset waking up with a horse head in his bed, an allusion to *The Godfather* film and the heavy-handed ways of the mafia.



How we got here | news and analysis from BICOM

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](#)
