



Israeli Elections Appear to Be More of the Same — No Clear Winner

With 97 percent of the vote now counted in the fourth general election in Israel in the last two years, the results seemingly echo the past three elections. Current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party has received the most votes; however, he appears to lack the necessary votes to create a ruling majority in the Knesset, Israel's parliament.

The full vote is expected to be completely tallied by Friday.

The anti-Netanyahu bloc, a disparate group of left-wing and centrist parties whose message seems to be only, "not Netanyahu," also appears short of the 61 seats needed to form a ruling majority.

Without a clear winner, the State of Israel might have to head to a fifth general election in just over two years.

Netanyahu declared victory in a speech at 2:30 a.m. local time and vowed to do everything in his power to avoid an unprecedented fifth general election. Netanyahu vowed to work with anyone willing to form a new government. "We cannot be dragged to a fifth election," Netanyahu said. "I reach out my hand to all of my colleagues who agree with me. I do not reject anyone who agrees with these principles."

"I don't disqualify anyone from sitting with me," he said. "Because the State of Israel demands a stable government."

Netanyahu touted his actions on COVID-19, in particular his work on vaccines. "Israel is the world champion of vaccines," he said. "We brought millions of vaccines for everyone just like we made peace deals for everyone."

Likud looks to have won 30 seats. Natural allies, the ultra orthodox Shas and United Torah Judaism won 9 and 7 seats respectively. The Religious Zionist Party, which shuns the LGBT agenda and has aligned with Netanyahu appears to have won 6 seats. Assuming Yamina — a right wing party that has not yet aligned with Netanyahu but appears to be a good fit — adds its 7 seats, the coalition would have 59 votes, just two short of a governing majority.

The Blue and White Party, with whom Netanyahu hammered out a "unity government," which ultimately failed, won just 8 seats.

The second place Yesh Atid Party, which is more centrist and very anti-Netanyahu garnered 17 votes. The party's leader Yair Lapid took his place as the new leader of the Netanyahu opposition. "Three months ago we brought down the government. We were the fourth largest party in Israel and now we're the second largest and leading the change bloc," Lapid said.



Photo: Anton Litvintsev / iStock / Getty Images Plus



Written by [James Murphy](#) on March 24, 2021

“At the moment, Netanyahu doesn’t have 61 seats but the change bloc does.” We’ll wait for the final results but as it stands there won’t be a government based on the votes of the racists and homophobes,” Lapin said in an obvious shot to the Religious Zionist Party.

Lapin further vowed that his party would “do everything to create a sane government.”

Lapid may believe that he can somehow get to the 61 vote majority, though that seems unlikely. His center-left coalition would have to lure the right-wing Yamina Party to his side in order to gain a majority.

And even if Lapid could convince Yamina to join him, the most Knesset votes any Yesh Atid led coalition looks to be able to muster would be 56 — five votes short of a majority.

Oddly, enough in the Jewish state, the Islamist Ra’am Party, who won 5 seats, may hold the keys to forming a new government.

Both sides have elements within them that say they won’t sit with a government containing an Arab party — something that has never happened in Israel. But the Islamic party’s leader, Mansour Abbas, has previously said he is open to working with Netanyahu to address the needs of Israel’s Arab population. Abbas has not ruled out working with either coalition. “We are not in anyone’s pocket,” Abbas said on Wednesday. “We are prepared to engage with both sides.”

The inconclusive election results present once again the extreme divide in Israeli politics. With all of the many parties representing various religions and secular elements, one has to wonder how they will ever form a new government.

“It’s not getting any better. It’s getting worse — and everyone is so tired,” Rachel Azaria, a centrist lawyer lamented to the *New York Times*. “The entire country is going crazy.”



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