
Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation

March 14, 2021

A comprehensive survey of the Arab community ahead of the Knesset elections:

Expected Arab voter turnout – 59.7% • The Joint List (Hadash-Balad-Ta'al) will receive 8.3 seats from the Arab community while the United Arab List (Ra'am) will receive 4 and the Likud will receive 1.6 • The most qualified candidate for prime minister is Benjamin Netanyahu (24.9%) followed by Ahmad Tibi (14.3%), Yair Lapid (13.9%) and Ayman Odeh (11.7%) • Half of the Arab voters (46%) support the participation of an Arab party in any government that forms after the elections.

Dr. Arik Rudnitzky

Highlights

- The rate of voter turnout in the Arab community in the approaching 24th Knesset elections is expected to be 59.7%, which is somewhat lower than in the 23rd Knesset elections (64.8%), which were held a year ago.
- The Arab voters are expected to award 8.3 seats to the Joint List (Hadash-Balad-Ta'al) led by Ayman Odeh, 4 to the United Arab List (Ra'am) led by Mansour Abbas and 1.6 to the Likud led by Benjamin Netanyahu. Meretz, Yesh Atid and Ma'an-Yahad (led by Mohammad Darawshe) are expected to get about one-half of a seat each.
- The most qualified candidate for prime minister is Benjamin Netanyahu (24.9% of the survey respondents) followed by Ahmad Tibi (14.3%), Yair Lapid (13.9%) and Ayman Odeh (11.7%). Other candidates include Mansour Abbas (4.7%), Gideon Sa'ar (4.6%) and Benny Gantz (2.4%). At the same time, 10% currently feel that there is no candidate worthy of being prime minister.
- About one-half (46%) of the respondents feel that in order to achieve benefits for the Arab community, an Arab party should join any coalition that emerges after the elections; 18.0% condition their agreement on the coalition being from the Center-Left. About 21.3% of the respondents are in favor of an Arab party supporting the government from outside (to block no-confidence motions) in exchange for benefits for the Arab community. Only 13.0% feel that there are no conditions under which an Arab party should join the government or support it from the outside.
- The most important issue for the Arab members of Knesset (MKs) to focus on following the elections is the implementation of the government plan to combat violence in Arab society (58.6% of the respondents), which provides the background for the low level of confidence (1.9

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on a scale of 1 to 5) that the government will indeed implement the plan that it announced last month. Other important issues include the amendment of discriminatory laws such as the Nation-State Law and the Kamenitz Law (16.9%), a new program for the economic development of Arab towns (8.8%) and the integration of young Arab NEETS (“not in education, employment or training”) within the labor market and in higher education (7.4%).

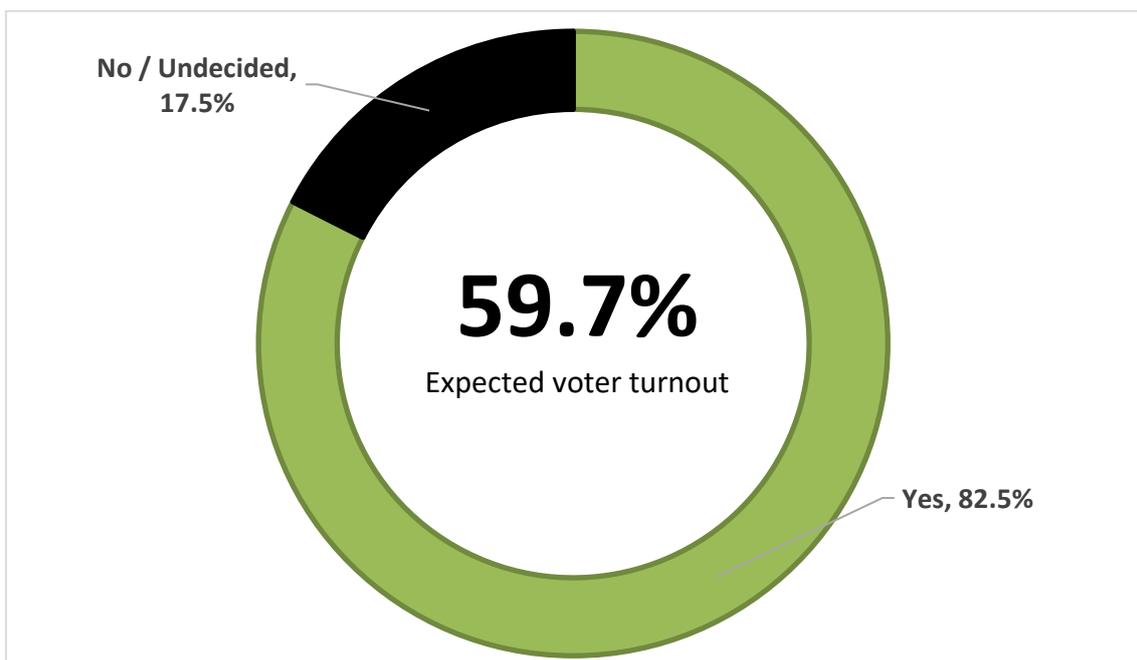
- One-half of the Arab community (48.5%) are convinced that increasing the number of Arab parties running in the elections, in addition to the Joint List, will not contribute to Arab politics. In contrast, 24.1% are convinced that the dispersion in the map of Arab parties contributes to Arab politics.
- A large majority (82.5%) of the respondents are in favor of Arab women playing a central role in the political arena.

Voter turnout and voter considerations in the Arab community

According to the survey, 82.5% of the respondents have decided to vote in the elections, as opposed to 17.5% who do not intend to vote or have still not decided whether to vote.

By weighting the survey findings based on past experience, which includes among other things the voting patterns of respondents in previous Knesset elections, the rate of voter turnout among Arab voters in the 24th Knesset elections is expected to be 59.7%.

Do you intend to vote in the upcoming Knesset elections?



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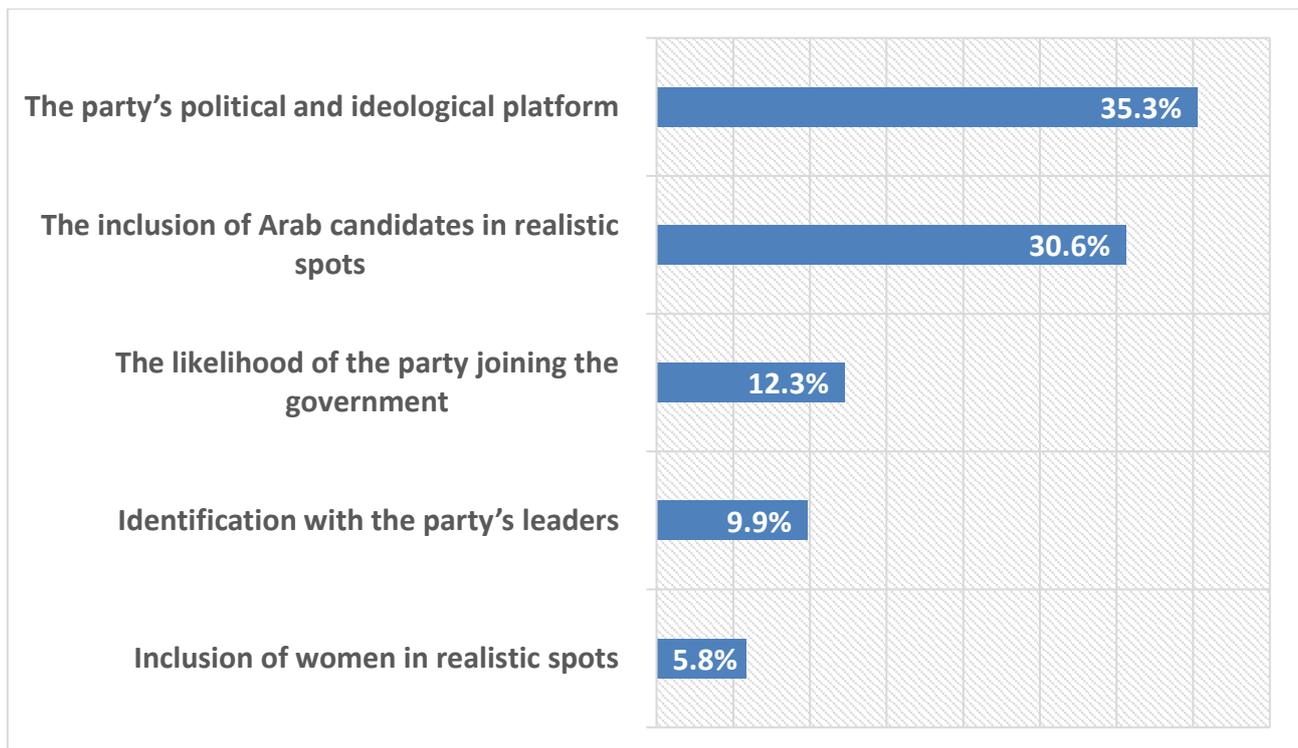
The expected voter turnout according to the survey is somewhat lower than in the 23rd Knesset elections held in March 2020 (64.8%) and is similar to that in the 22nd Knesset elections held in September 2019 (59.2%).

The expected rate of voter turnout is significantly higher than that predicted prior to the election campaign (55.6% according to [the survey carried out last November](#) using an identical methodology). This increase apparently indicates that as election day approaches there is growing intention on the Arab street to participate in the elections.

What are the considerations of the Arab voter? There is a mix of ideological and pragmatic considerations at play in the approaching elections. About 35.3% of the respondents stated that their main consideration in choosing a party is its political and ideological platform. In contrast, a significant percentage stated that they are motivated by pragmatic considerations: 30.6% said that the most important consideration is the inclusion of Arab candidates in realistic spots on the party list and 12.3% stated that it is the party’s likelihood of joining the coalition.

Populistic considerations related to the extent to which the Arab voter identifies with the party’s leaders are only secondary in this election campaign (9.9%). Only 5.8% of the respondents stated that the inclusion of women—not necessarily Arab women—in realistic spots on a party’s list is the most important consideration in their choice of party.

What is the most important consideration in your choice of which party to vote for?



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The survey also examined voting considerations according to whether the voter intends to vote. The main consideration of respondents who intend to vote in the coming elections is that the fundamental right to vote should be exercised (41.2%). Other considerations include the feeling that voting provides hope for a better future (19.8%), an expression of confidence in the voter's representatives (16.4%), the belief that voting has an influence on the political situation (14.6%) and the fear that if the number of Arab citizens who vote declines the Arab parties will not reach the minimal threshold (8.0%).

In contrast, the respondents who stated that they do not intend to vote or have not yet decided whether to vote gave two main reasons for doing so: the crisis in the Joint List which led to the withdrawal of Ra'am (35.8%) and the feeling that the Arab MKs in any case will not be able to further the interests of the Arab community (34.4%). Other reasons include the feeling that there is no party or candidate that represents the Arab voter (14.9%), a lack of interest in the elections (12.4%) and a fundamental opposition to participating in elections for the Knesset (2.5%).

Voter considerations according to whether the respondent intends to vote

What is the main reason that you intend to vote in the elections? (N = 415)		What is the main reason that you do not intend to vote in the elections or have not yet decided? (N = 88)	
Voting is a basic right and I want to take advantage of it.	41.2%	The crisis in the Joint List and the withdrawal of Ra'am from the party.	35.8%
Voting gives me hope for a better future.	19.8%	In any case, the Arab MKs are not able to further the interests of the Arab community.	34.4%
Voting is a way to express confidence in those that represent me in the Knesset.	16.4%	There is no party or candidate that represents me.	14.9%
Voting allows me to influence what is going on the State.	14.6%	The elections do not interest me.	12.4%
If less Arab citizens vote the Arab parties will not reach the minimal threshold.	8.0%	I fundamentally oppose Arab participation in the Knesset elections.	2.5%

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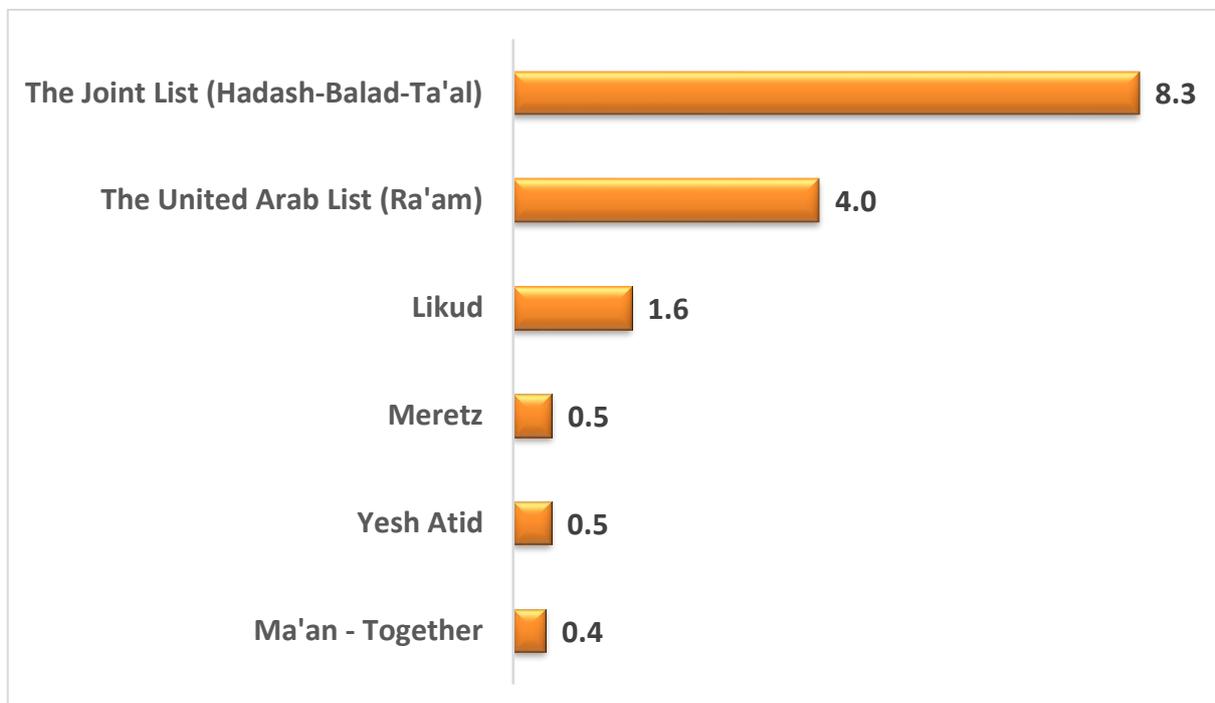
Who will Arab voters vote for?

The following open-ended question was presented to the respondents: Which list or party do you intend to vote for in the coming Knesset elections? About 42.9% of the respondents stated that they will vote for the Joint List (Hadash-Balad-Ta'al), 21.0% for the United Arab List (Ra'am) and 8.1% for the Likud.

Other parties that also have Arab support include Meretz (2.7%), Yesh Atid (2.6%) and the new Arab party headed by Mohammad Darawshe, "Ma'an – Together for a New Future" (2.2%). The support for other Jewish parties, such as Yisrael Beitenu, Labor, Tikvah Hadasha (New Hope) and Blue-White, is negligible (less than 1 percent for each).

According to a weighting of the survey results and the expected rate of voter turnout in the Arab community, the Joint List is likely to win 8.3 seats from Arab voters, Ra'am will win 4 and the Likud will win 1.6. Meretz, Yesh Atid and "Ma'an – Together" are expected to receive one-half of a seat each.

Forecasted support of the parties from the Arab community (in number of seats)



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Who is the most qualified candidate for prime minister?

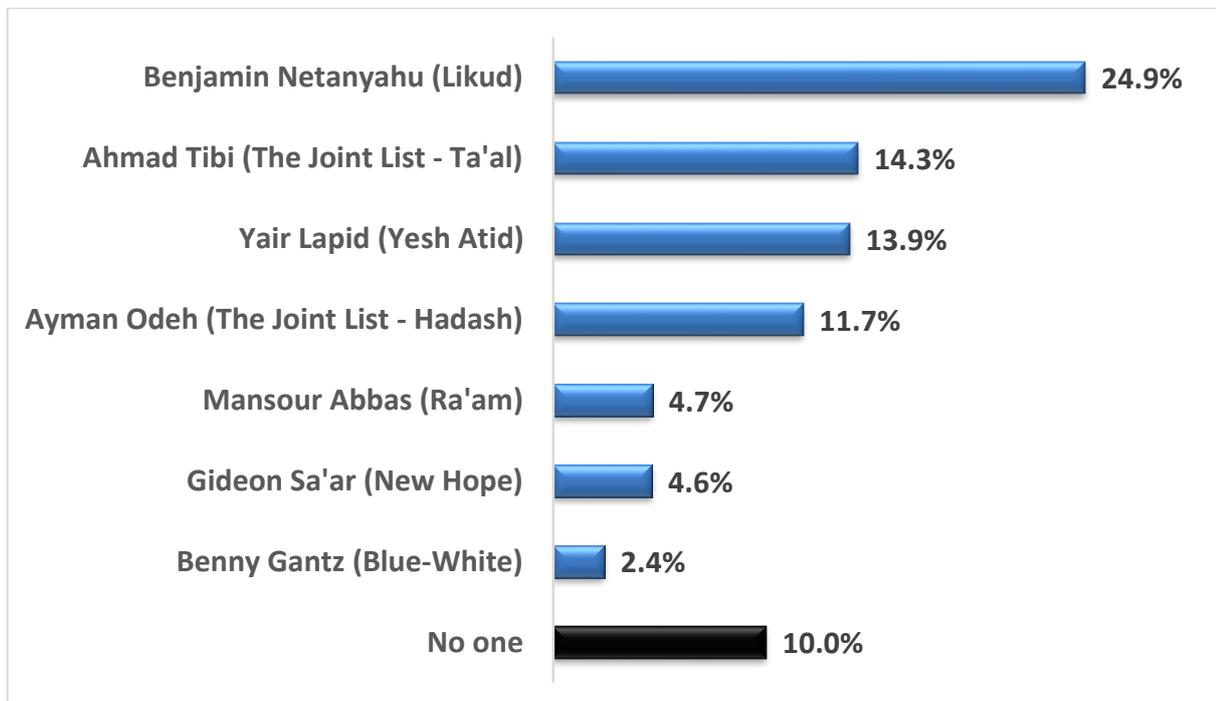
The respondents, whether or not they will be voting, were presented with the following open-ended question: Which politician—Arab or Jewish, whether or not currently in the Knesset and whether or not you support him—is the most qualified to be prime minister?

According to the survey results, the most qualified candidate for prime minister is Benjamin Netanyahu (24.9% of the respondents) followed by MK Ahmad Tibi, the chairman of the Ta'al party within the Joint List (14.3%); MK Yair Lapid, the chairman of the Yesh Atid party (13.9%); and MK Ayman Odeh, the leader of the Hadash party within the Joint List (11.7%).

Other candidates who received relatively low levels of support were MK Mansour Abbas, the chairman of the United Arab List (4.7%); MK Gideon Sa'ar, the chairman of the Tikvah Hadasha (New Hope) party (4.6%); and MK Benny Gantz, the chairman of the Blue-White party (2.4%).

Meanwhile, 10 percent of the respondents feel that there is no MK or other politician who is suited for the position of prime minister.

Who is the most qualified candidate to be prime minister?



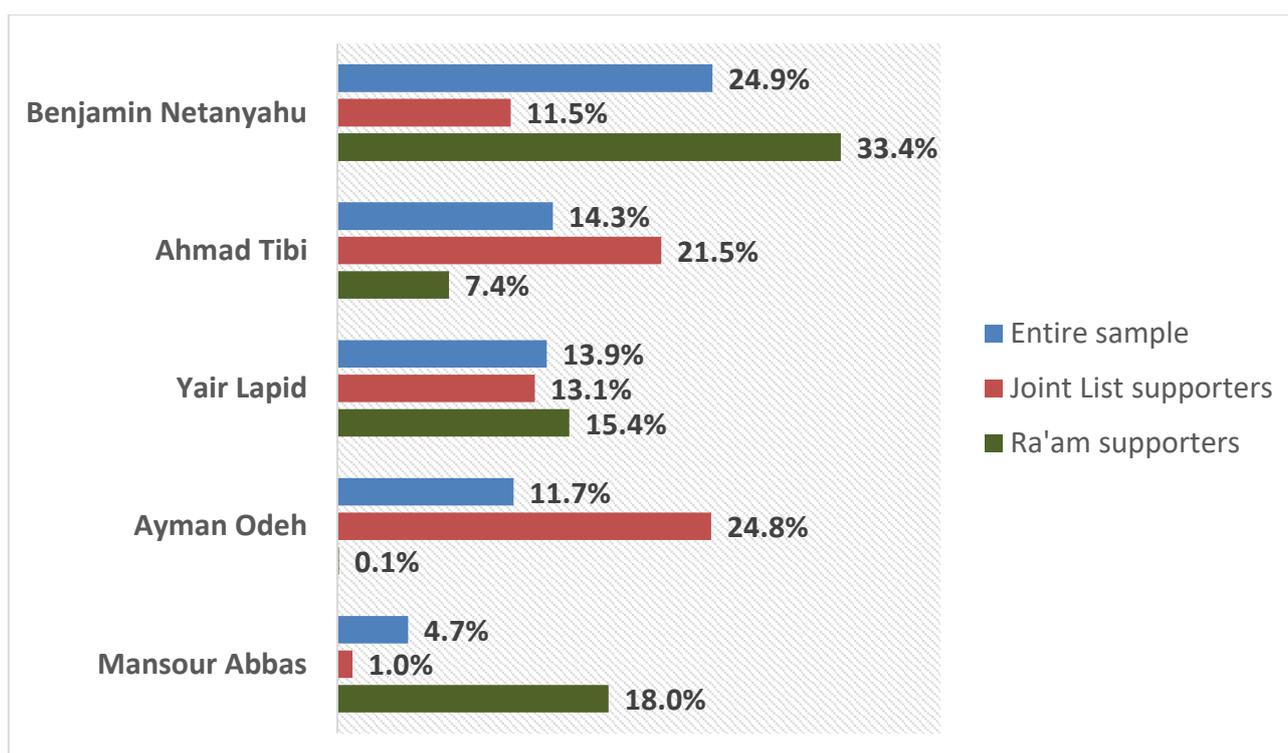
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On this question, there were significant differences between the views of respondents who intend to vote for the Joint List and those who intend to vote for Ra'am.

The best candidate in the opinion of Joint List supporters is Ayman Odeh (24.8%) followed closely by Ahmad Tibi (21.5%). Far behind them are Yair Lapid (13.1%) and Benjamin Netanyahu (11.5%). In contrast, Ra'am supporters ranked Netanyahu in first place (33.4%) following by Mansour Abbas, the leader of the Ra'am list (18.0%), Yair Lapid (15.4%) and Ahmad Tibi (7.4%).

Who is the most suitable candidate to be prime minister?

(according to which party the respondent intends to vote for)



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The issue of joining the government

Surveys carried out among the Arab community during the last two years indicate growing support for Arab parties to join the government coalition. The current survey also presented this question, without taking into account whether the respondent was intending to vote: In the current circumstances, is it desirable for an Arab party to be part of the government coalition in order to achieve benefits for the Arab community ?

About one-half of the respondents (46.0%) expressed support for seeing an Arab party join any government to be formed after the elections while 18.0% stated that they would only support joining a Center-Left coalition. Overall, most of the respondents (64%) are interested in seeing an Arab party join the government coalition.

In contrast, 21.3% did not support having an Arab party in the coalition, although they were in favor of an Arab party supporting the government from the outside (to block no-confidence motions) in exchange for benefits for the Arab community. Only 13.0% of the respondents answered that they would not support an Arab party joining the government or supporting it from the outside under any circumstances.

Is it desirable for an Arab party to be part of the coalition in order to achieve benefits for the Arab community?

Yes	64.0%	Any government	46.0%
		Only a Center-Left government	18.0%
No	34.3%	Under the right circumstances and in exchange for benefits, an Arab party can support the government from the outside (to block no-confidence motions)	21.3%
		An Arab party should not join the government or support it from the outside under any circumstances	13.0%
Don't know	1.7%		

The survey findings point to a new trend among the Arab community: while in the past most of the community had reservations about joining the government, there is currently growing support for joining any government, even one that is not from the Center-Left or by means of supporting the government from the outside.

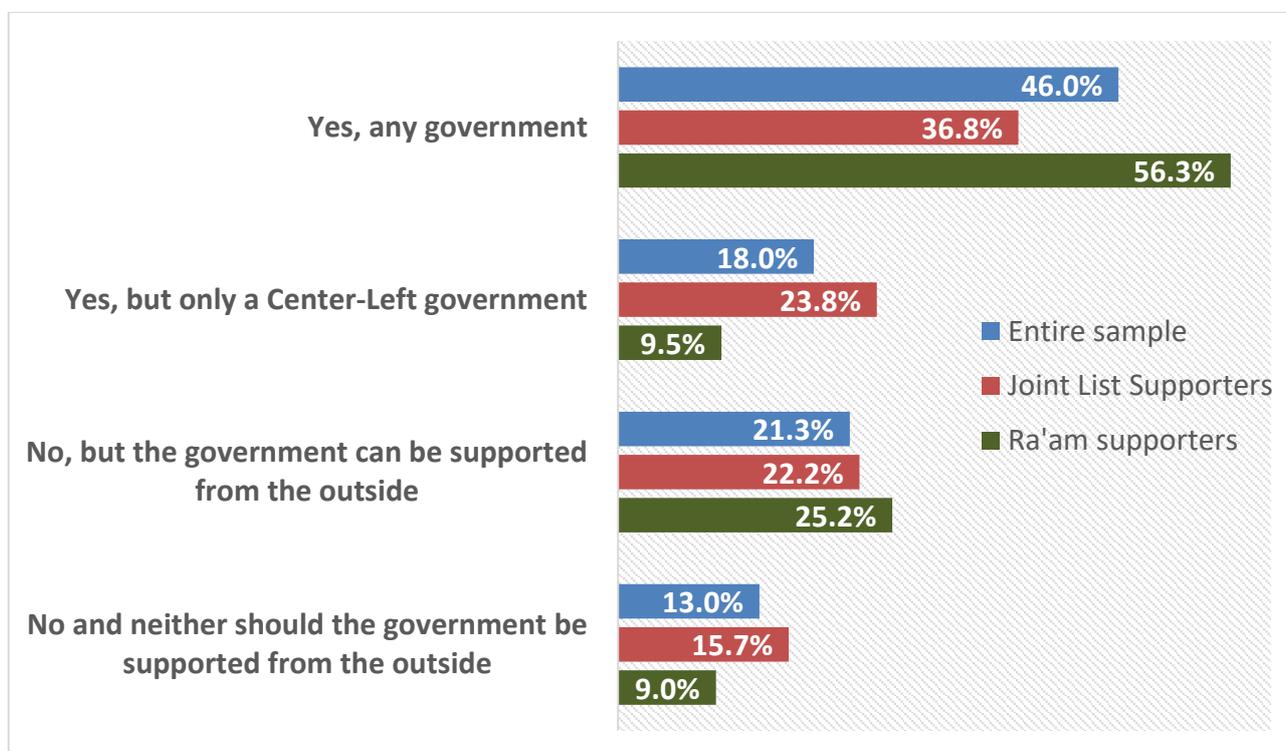
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The change has occurred gradually as a result of a number of political developments: Ayman Odeh’s public declaration in the summer of 2019 (following the recreation of the Joint List) of his willingness to join a Center-Left government headed by Blue-White; the explicit cooperation of Mansour Abbas with the Netanyahu government in recent months; and the public declarations by Yair Lapid, the Chairman of Yesh Atid, of his willingness to establish a coalitional partnership with the Arab parties following the upcoming elections. All of these factors have reinforced the willingness among the Arab community for an Arab party to join the government.

Nonetheless, there are significant differences on this issue between the views of respondents who intend to vote for the Joint List and those who intend to vote for Ra’am. More than half of the respondents who intend to vote for Ra’am (56.3%) feel that an Arab party should join any government that is formed after the elections. This level of support is significantly higher than among respondents who intend to vote for the Joint List (36.8%), which is nonetheless a high level of support in view of the position of the Joint List’s leaders, which rules out joining a coalition with the Likud under Netanyahu.

Is it desirable for an Arab party to be part of the coalition?

(according to the party that the respondent intends to vote for)



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Positions on selected political issues

The respondents were asked about their degree of agreement with respect to various political issues and developments. One of the more controversial issues that has emerged prior to the elections is the decision of the United Arab List (Ra'am) to withdraw from the Joint List (which now includes only three parties: Hadash, Balad and Ta'al) and to run independently. In addition, a new Arab party called "Ma'an – Together for a Better Future" headed by Mohammad Darawshe has been formed and it is also running in the elections.

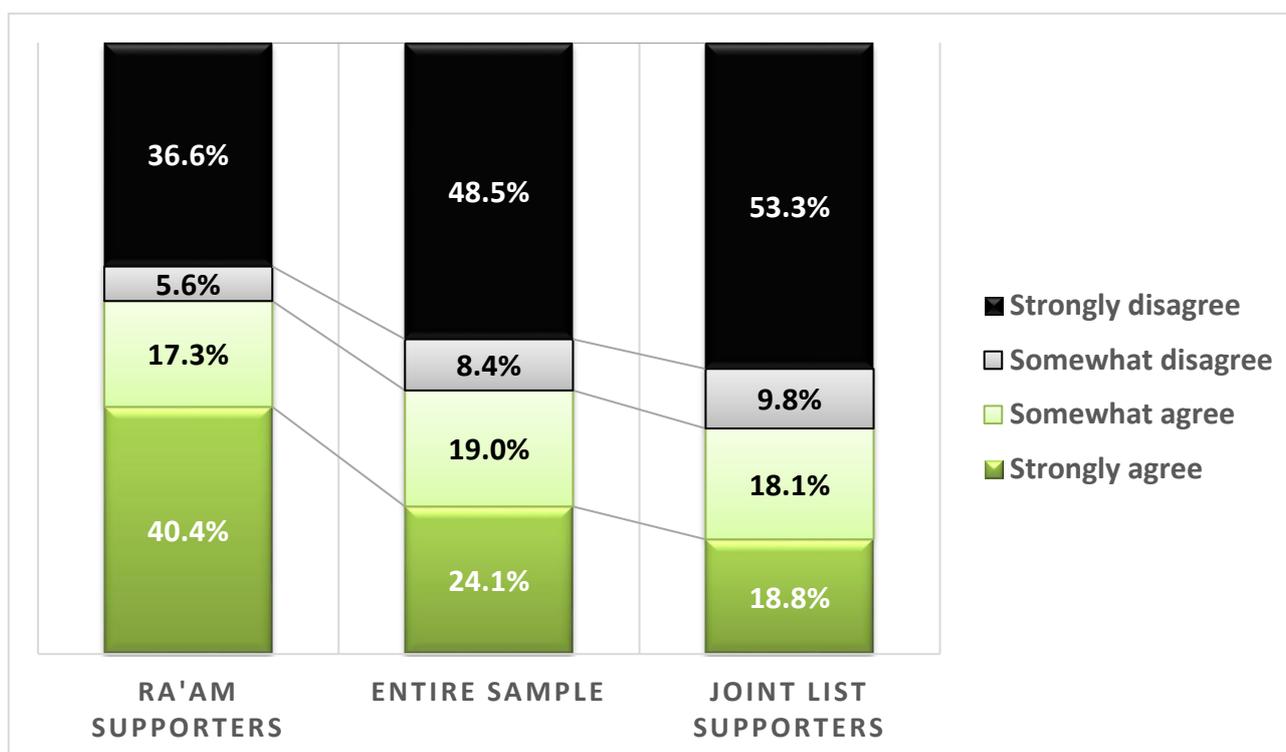
One of the commonly heard views on this issue is that the fragmentation of the Arab bloc and the multiplicity of Arab parties competing for the Arab vote is liable to result in a waste of votes that go to parties that do not reach the minimal threshold (3.25 percent of the valid ballots).

The respondents were therefore asked about their opinion on the claim that "having additional Arab parties running for the Knesset alongside the Joint List contributes to Arab politics". It appears that despite the stabilization of the map of parties running in the Knesset elections and even though the forecasted voter turnout in the Arab community is increasing as the elections approach, the opinions in the Arab community continue to be divided on this issue. About 56.9% of the respondents stated that they do not agree with the claim that the multiplicity of parties contributes to Arab politics (of which 48.5% strongly disagree) while 43.1% in fact agree with this claim (of which 24.1% strongly agree).

Unsurprisingly, the rate of agreement with the claim among those who intend to vote for Ra'am is significantly higher than among those who intend to vote for the Joint List: 57.7% vs 36.9%, respectively. In contrast, 53.3% of Joint List voters said that they strongly disagree with this claim, as opposed to only 36.6% of Ra'am voters.

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Having additional Arab parties in the elections alongside the Joint List contributes to Arab politics

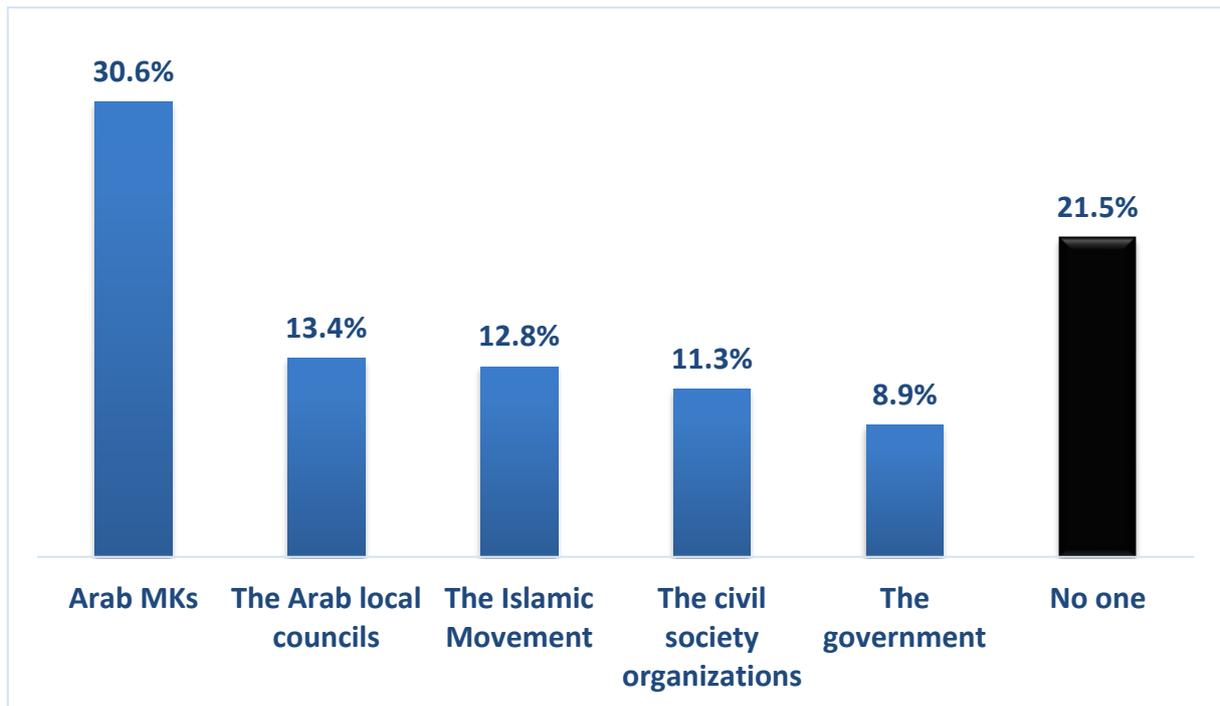


The respondents were also asked who is currently furthering the interests of the Arab community to the greatest extent. A significant proportion of the respondents (30.6%) stated that it is the Arab MKs, a not insignificant proportion given the public criticism of the behavior that led to the crisis in the Joint List. Other responses include: the Arab local councils (13.4%), the Islamic Movement (12.8%) and the civil society organizations (11.3%). Only 8.9% feel that the government is furthering the interests of the Arab community to the greatest extent.

On the other hand, there is a fairly significant proportion of the respondents (21.5%) who feel that no one is furthering the interests of the Arab community.

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Who is currently furthering the interests of the Arab community to the greatest extent?

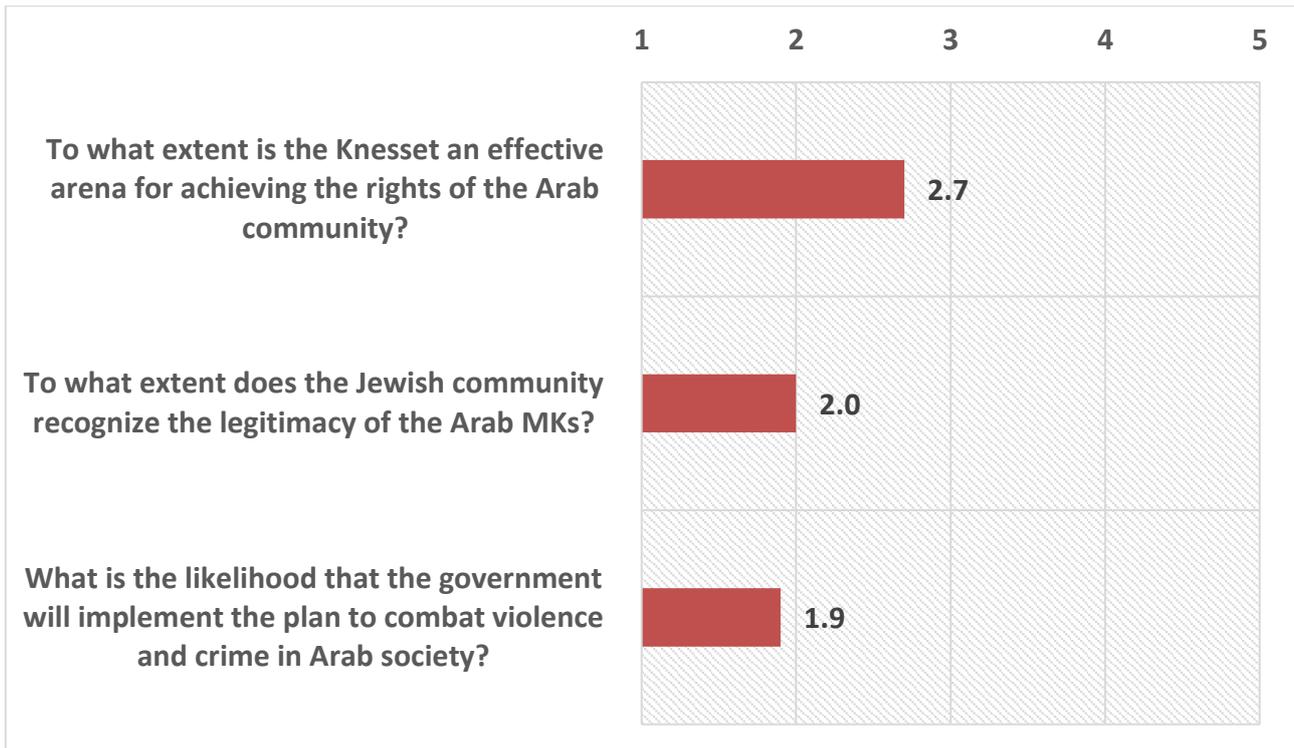


General questions on political matters were presented to the respondents and they were asked to rank their degree of agreement with the statement on a scale of 1 (the lowest score) to 5 (the highest score). According to the survey, the Knesset is not viewed by the Arab community as a particularly effective arena in which to achieve their goals (average score: 2.7 out of 5) and a large proportion feel that the Jewish community does not recognize the legitimacy of the Arab MKs (average score: 2.0 out of 5).

It is particularly worthwhile examining the position of the Arab community with respect to the government's intention to implement the plan to combat violence and crime in Arab society, which was announced by the Prime Minister at the beginning of February 2021. Overall, the respondents gave a low average score (1.9) to the government's intention to implement the plan. The fact that the survey was carried out a few days after the government had approved a budget of NIS 150 million for fighting crime in Arab society shows more than anything else the particularly low level of confidence among the Arab community with respect to the chances of the plan actually being carried out.

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Views among the Arab community on selected issues on a scale of 1 (the lowest score) to 5 (the highest score)



The political agenda after the elections

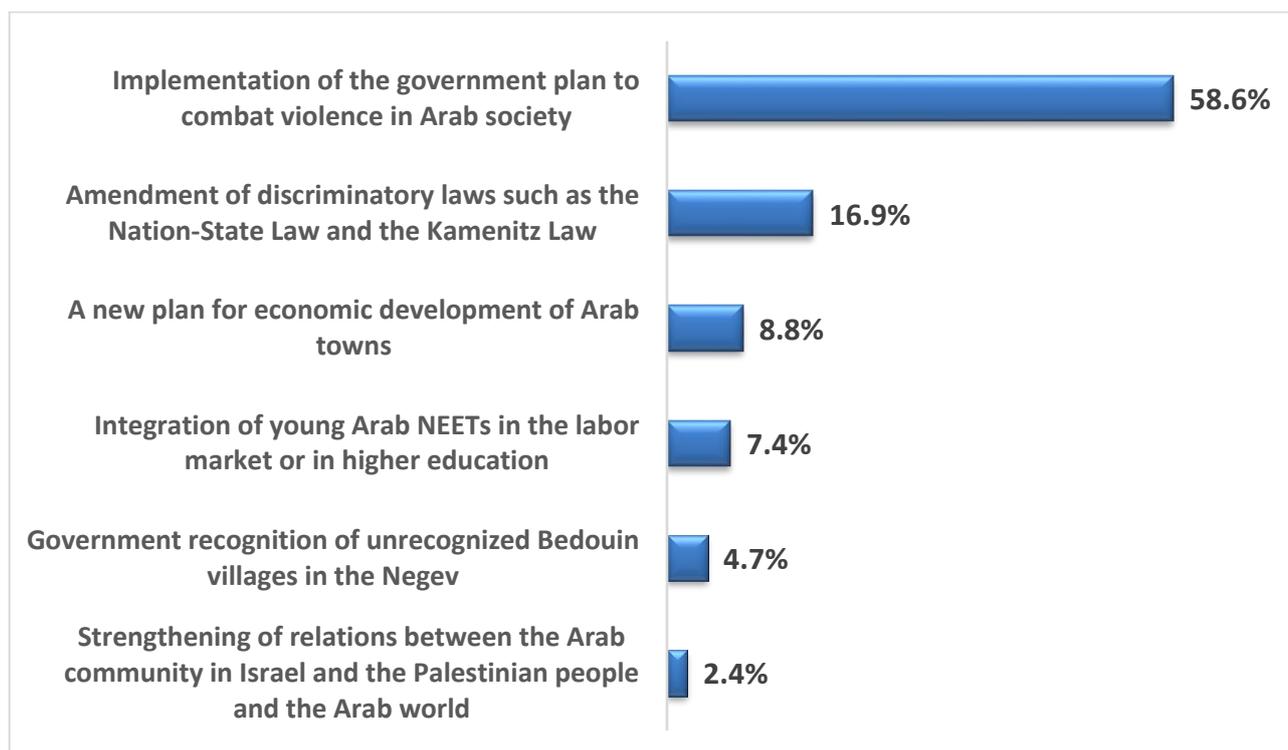
The respondents were asked what the most important issue is that Arab MKs should focus on after the elections. The majority (58.6%) stated that it is the implementation of the government's plan to combat violence in Arab society. This finding indicates that the Arab community expects its representatives to work toward the implementation of the plan, in view of its low level of confidence that the government will do so.

Other important issues include the amendment of discriminatory laws such as the Nation-State Law or the Kamenitz Law (16.9%), approval of a new plan for the economic development of Arab towns (8.8%) and the integration of young Arab NEETs ("not in education, employment or training) within the labor market or in higher education (7.4).

Less important issues include government recognition of Bedouin unrecognized settlements in the Negev (4.7%) and closer relations between the Arab community in Israel on the one hand and the Palestinian people and the Arab world on the other (2.4%).

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What is the most important issue that the Arab MKs should focus on after the elections?



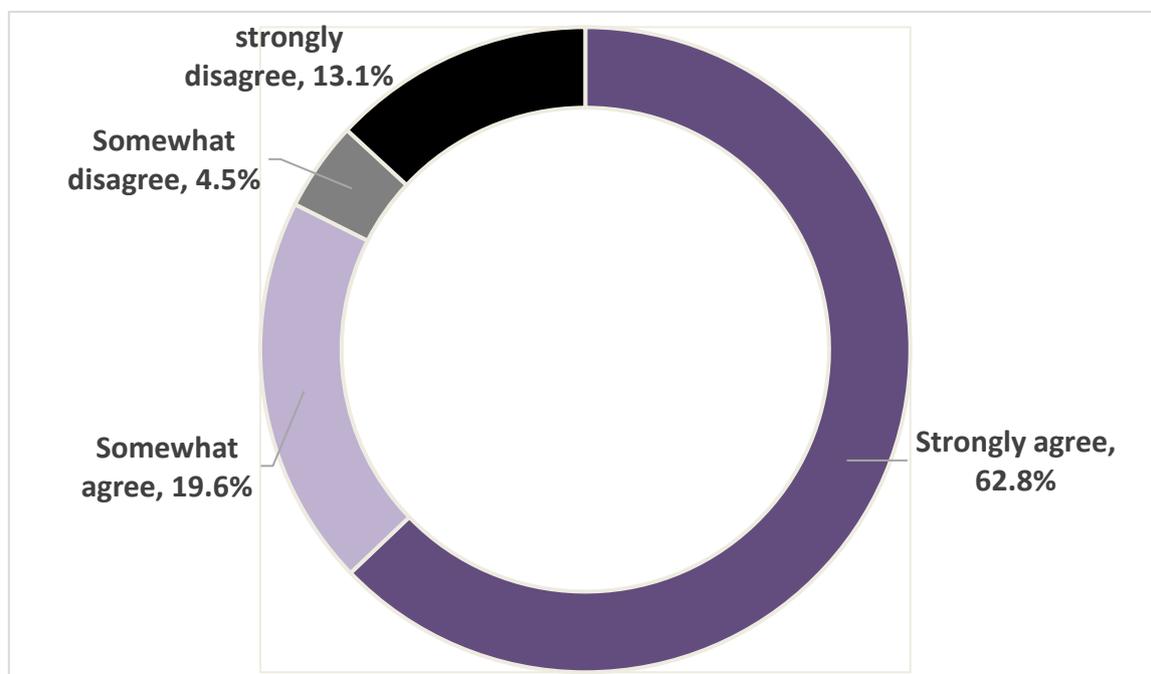
Involvement of Arab women in politics

The involvement of Arab women in politics is a frequently mentioned issue in public discourse within Arab society and it has even been discussed as part of the recent International Women’s Day events in the Arab communities. It is worth mentioning that the proportion of women in the Joint List is the highest among all of the political factions in the Knesset – four women (one from each party making up the Joint List) out of a total of 15 representatives (27 percent).

The respondents were asked to what extent they agree with the claim that “it is desirable that women in Arab society play a central role in political activity”. A decisive majority (82.4%) stated that they agree with the claim (of which 62.8% strongly agree). Only 17.6% of the respondents did not express agreement with the claim.

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It is desirable that women in Arab society play a central role in political activity



In a breakdown of the responses according to degree of religiosity, it was found that the proportion of those who strongly agree with the claim among those who define themselves as “non-religious” (74.2%) is higher than among those who define themselves as “religious” (57.5%); however, among all of the respondents that expressed agreement with the claim, there were no significant differences according to level of religiosity: 84.3% of the respondents who defined themselves as “non-religious” and 79.8% of those who define themselves as “religious” expressed overall agreement with the claim.

The survey was initiated by the Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, in cooperation with the Israel Office of the German Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

The survey was carried out by Stat-Net Research Institute under the direction of Yousef Makladeh.

The data were collected during the period March 4–6, 2021 in a telephone survey carried out in Arabic among a representative sample of the adult Arab population (aged 18+).

Size of the sample: 501. Sample error: ± 4.46 percent.

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