Israeli Election Factsheet

Elections in Israel will be held on April 9, 2018.

The upcoming elections will produce the 21st Knesset (Parliament) of Israel, which will lead to the formation of Israel’s 35th government.

With early elections announced, this will be the 13th time (of 21) that elections will be held before the date initially set. An additional election campaign, for the 8th Knesset in 1973, was delayed because of the Yom Kippur War. The last elections held on time were in 1988 (12th Knesset, 23rd government).

Israel’s electoral system is based on country-wide, direct, proportional representation. The principle of the generality of the elections ensures the active right of every Israeli citizen, who is at least 18 years old, to vote and the right of every Israeli citizen, who is at least 21 years old, to be elected. [1]

Each party runs a list of candidates, with the number of seats each party receives in the 120-seat Knesset (Parliament) proportional to the number of votes it receives on election day.

Entry into the Knesset is limited to parties that achieve at least 3.25% of the total vote – equivalent to approximately 2.7 seats. Votes for parties that do not reach this threshold are distributed through the Bader-Offer mechanism, in which parties enter surplus-vote “pairing” agreements with like-minded lists.

After the election results become clear, the president (Reuven Rivlin) calls on all parties to hold discussions on the formation of the next government. He then tasks the leader of the party likeliest to be able to form a government to begin negotiations to put together a 61+ seat majority in the 120-member Knesset. The president may provide him or her with 45 days, followed by a further two weeks if necessary, to do so. Negotiations are often prolonged, and it can take some time before a government is declared and approved by a majority of the new (21st) Knesset.

Who can run:

Candidates belonging to a party or an alignment of parties registered with the Party Registrar. The following lists may not run: A list which acts directly or indirectly against the existence of the state as the state of the Jewish people or against its democratic nature; a list which incites racism; a list which supports the armed struggle of an enemy state or a terrorist organization against the State of Israel. [2]

[1] Israeli expats do not have the right to vote. Only Israeli diplomats and sailors can vote abroad.
Important dates:

- 47 days prior to elections – Party candidate lists are submitted for approval by the Central Election Committee (CEC). The CEC comprises representatives of the various political parties and is chaired by a Supreme Court justice.
- 30 days prior to elections – Party lists are finalized and can no longer be changed.

Facts and Figures:

- Population of Israel in December 2017 = 8.793 million (Jews 74.6%, Arabs 20.9%, Others 4.5%)\(^2\)
- The number of eligible voters for the election of the 20\(^{th}\) (current) Knesset was 5,881,696. This number is expected to rise along with the population increase. The number of eligible voters when the local municipal elections were held in October 2018 was 6,653,808.
- The 2015 election produced a voter turnout of 71.8%, the highest in Israel since 1999.

Current Knesset:

- # of parties upon inauguration = 10
- # of women = 34; # of men = 86
- # of non-Jewish MKs = 17

Results of previous elections