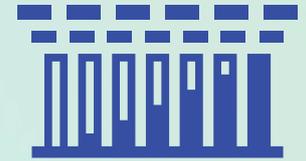




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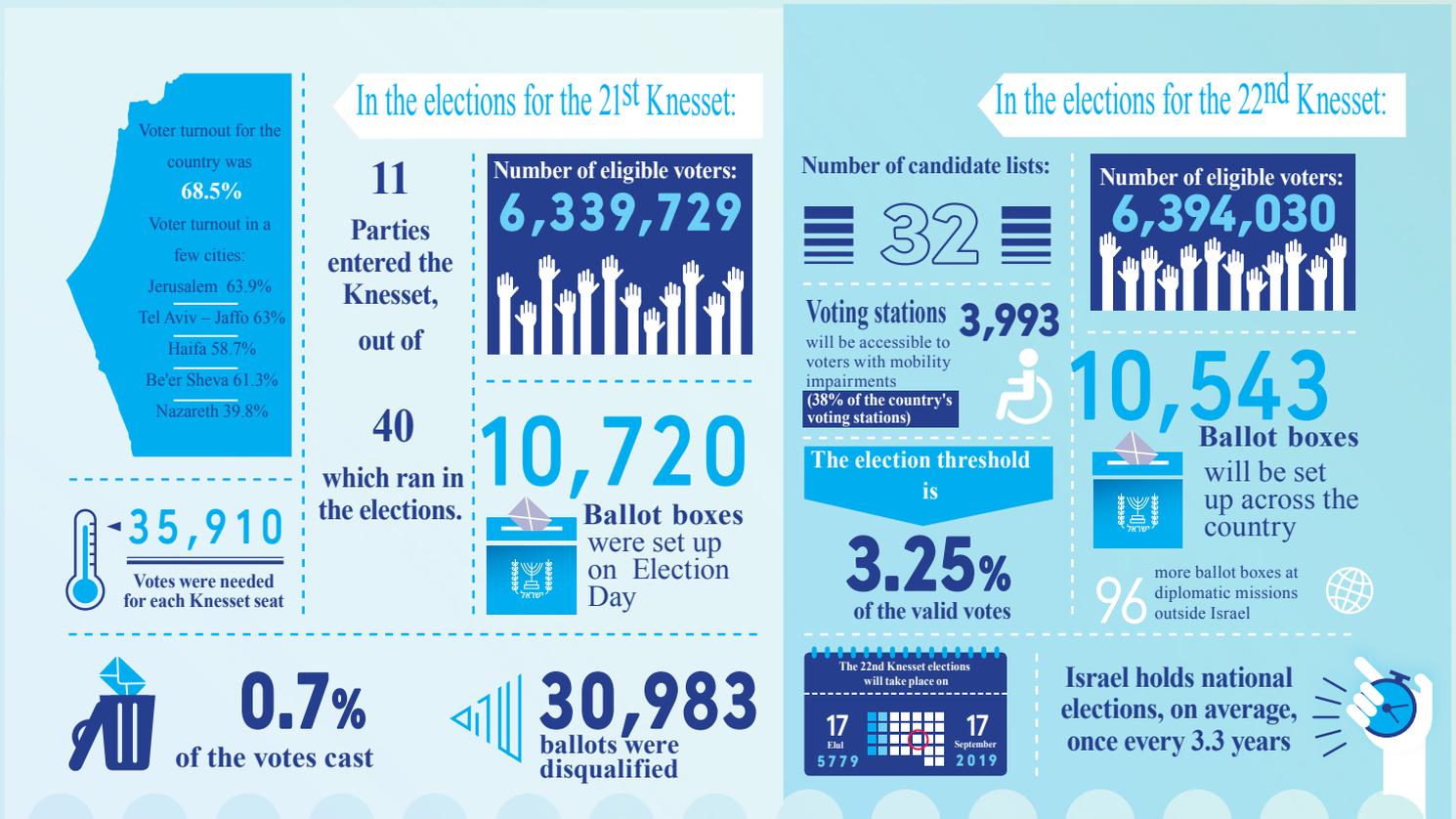


The Knesset  
Research and  
Information Center



## Spotlight on Elections in Israel In preparation for the 22nd Knesset Elections

The Knesset is elected in general, national, direct, equal, confidential and proportional elections



### WHEN ARE ELECTIONS HELD?

Elections for Knesset are held once every 4 years. However, under the following circumstances, elections will be held at other times:

1. The Knesset passes a law to dissolve itself before the term is over.
2. The Knesset is dissolved because the government did not pass the budget within the first three months of the fiscal year.
3. The Prime Minister dissolved the Knesset because most Members of Knesset opposed the government, and a replacement government was not formed.
4. The Knesset was dissolved (following elections) because a new (coalition) government was not formed.
5. A vote of No Confidence passed, and the proposed nominee was unable to form a (coalition) government.



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## WHAT IS A PARTY / CANDIDATE LIST / FACTION?

A **Party** is a group of people who have come together on the basis of shared political and social goals. A single Party or more than one Party can comprise a **Candidate List**, which will run for Knesset. Any **Candidate List** which secures a seat (or more) in the Knesset becomes a **Faction** when the Knesset begins its term.

The 22nd Knesset Elections will be the first Knesset Elections in Israel's history to be held because the previous Knesset was dissolved without a government having been formed. **For this reason, the 22nd Knesset Elections are taking place only 5 months after the previous elections.**

## WHO CAN VOTE AND WHO CAN BE ELECTED?

Any Israeli citizen who reaches 18 years of age by Election Day, and is registered in the Interior Ministry's Election Registry, **is entitled to vote.**

Any Israeli citizen who reaches 21 years of age, and does not serve in a senior position in the public sector or high rank in the Israeli Defense Forces, **is entitled to be elected**, excepting those described in the Restrictions section below.

## RESTRICTIONS ON POTENTIAL CANDIDATES:

The following people and lists may not run for Knesset:

- Anyone who was sentenced to prison for a term of more than 3 months, and 7 years have not yet passed since his / her term ended, unless the Central Elections Committee chairperson determines that the crime for which the person was sentenced is a non-moral offence.
- Any person or party which, in words or action, rejects the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic State.
- Any person or party which, in words or actions, incites to bigotry and racism.
- Any person or party which, in words or action, supports enemy countries' and / or terror organizations' armed opposition to the State of Israel.

## WHY DOES THE KNESSET HAVE 120 SEATS?

The Knesset is named for the historic Knesset Gedola, The Great Assembly, which was the supreme council and legislative body, formed in Jerusalem by returning Zionist leaders Ezra and Nehemia during the Second Temple period. The Knesset Gedola served during the years 410 to 310 BCE, and was comprised of 70 to 120 members.

It is forbidden to identify voters with identification cards which do not include a photograph, unless the identification card is signed by the Interior Ministry as a card without a photograph. This authorization is rare, and is only given to Muslim women who cover their faces with a veil.



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## ELECTION CAMPAIGN FINANCING FOR PARTIES

The campaign expenses are funded by the National Treasury as follows:

### **For parties which had seats in the outgoing Knesset:**

One Funding Unit + average between (Number of MKs in outgoing Knesset + Number of MKs in newly elected Knesset) x Funding Unit

### **For parties which were not represented in the outgoing Knesset:**

One Funding Unit + Number of MKs in newly elected Knesset x Funding Unit

**Funding Unit:** At this time, a Funding Unit is approximately 1,384,000 Sheqel. In the 21st Knesset Elections, the total government funding for parties running in the elections was 196,500,000 Sheqel.

The Central Elections Committee will print the number of ballots (voting slips) for each party to match the number of eligible voters plus an additional 30%. In some of the voting stations in Arab communities, the ballots will have two languages printed on them – Hebrew and Arabic.

## THE CENTRAL ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

The CEC is responsible for the following:

- Authorizing Candidate Lists, their names and representative letters
- Instructing the public
- Overseeing party campaign propaganda
- Logistical administration of the elections
- Recruitment and training of voting station staff (committee members and secretaries)
- Coordinating the counting of the votes and the calculation of Knesset seats
- Legal clarification of any act or oversight connected to the elections

The Chairman of the CEC is a Supreme Court justice. In the current elections, Vice President of the Supreme Court, Justice Hanan Melcer, is serving in this role. All other members of the Committee are representatives of the factions, in proportion to their size in the outgoing Knesset.

In non-election years, the Committee maintains a skeleton staff. During election periods, for three months, the Committee headquarters and subcommittees employ approximately 1,000 people, and on Election Day, approximately 150,000 people.

In each voting station, there is a Voting Station Secretary, who is employed by the relevant Regional Elections



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Committee. Three representatives of contending Candidate Lists serve as the Voting Station Committee. Parties currently in the Knesset, as well as new contenders, are allowed to send observers to voting stations in which they do not have representation on the Voting Station Committee.



(Hebrew) Code: To read the study by the Knesset Research and Information Center on election funding for parties how do not pass the elections threshold.

## PROPAGANDA

The CEC Chairman determines the times that elections campaign ads are broadcast on public television and radio. The Chairman has the authority to issue injunctions, in order to prevent any breach of the Elections Propaganda Law.

**60 days before Election Day:** The law forbids any campaigning on television or the radio.

**14 days before Election Day:** Campaign broadcasts are allowed on public television and radio according to the following calculations of time:

- On TV: each candidate list receives 7 minutes of air time, plus an additional 2 minutes per elected MK in the outgoing Knesset.
- On radio: each candidate list receives 15 minutes of air time, plus an additional 4 minutes per elected MK in the outgoing Knesset.

**From 7:00pm on the day before Election Day, and through Election Day:** No campaign propaganda may be broadcast on TV or radio.

### The following are forbidden in elections propaganda:

- Use of public buildings
- Use of the IDF, in any manner that implies support of the army for a specific candidate / candidate list / political party
- Use of the name or image of a victim of terror without the express permission of the injured / family of the victim
- Use of entertainment, performances by artists, music, showing of movies or torch-bearing. It is also forbidden to give gifts or serve voters alcoholic beverages.



(Hebrew) Code: To read the study by the Knesset Research and Information Center on disinformation and cyber-attacks in order to affect the elections.



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At present, the majority of the restrictions on elections propaganda apply only to traditional media and not the internet. A committee headed by former President of the Supreme Court, Justice Dorit Beinisch, studied the issue. In 2017, this committee recommended, among other items, to apply the legal injunctions also on the internet and social media. The committee's recommendations have not yet been adopted into legislation, and therefore the restrictions do not apply to the internet or social media for the upcoming 22nd Knesset elections.

### **ELECTION DAY**

- Election Day is a statutory holiday, yet the Central Elections Committee has determined that the following services will work as usual: emergency services, food shops (until 12:00 noon), public transportation, the media, restaurants, hotels, burial services, parking lots and gas stations.
- Any voter who is located 20 kilometers or more from the jurisdiction of his / her voting station is entitled to public transportation to his / her voting station, paid for by the state.
- Voting stations are open from 7:00am until 10:00pm. In small communities, prisons and hospitals, voting stations operate from 8:00am until 8:00pm. A voting station can be closed earlier only if every person who is eligible to vote there has voted.
- Identification of voters in front of the Voting Station Secretary may be done using an Israeli Tduat Zehut (identification card), valid Israeli passport, valid driver's license or Knesset Member card.

According to Basic Law: The Knesset, elections take place on Tuesdays. This is in order to prevent any desecration of the Jewish Sabbath.

### **Voting outside of one's regular Voting Station:**

- Soldiers, emissaries of the Foreign Ministry, civil servants working for the state outside Israel's borders, delegates of the Zionist institutions, hospitalized patients, women residing in shelters, prisoners and detainees, and citizens with disabilities who are living in institutions, are entitled to vote through special arrangements, using double envelopes.
- Citizens whose mobility is impaired are entitled to vote in Special Accessible Voting Stations, with special arrangements to enable them to vote according to their needs.
- Votes cast in special ballot boxes use double envelopes, and the ballots are counted in the Knesset building.
- Police officers are entitled to vote in any voting station, but they must appear in uniform (unless they have special authorization from the Israeli Police Department to vote out of uniform), and they must present a police badge or other identification, and a special voting card.



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### **ELECTIONS RESULTS:**

#### **Counting of the ballots:**

1. After all the voting stations are closed, the members of the Voting Station Committees count the voting slips, and record in a table the number of ballots each candidate list received. The total number of votes counted is compared to the number of eligible voters, and the results are tallied.
2. The counting process is done in a fully transparent manner, and there must be agreement between all members of the Voting Station committee and the observers.
3. Calculation errors are corrected by the chairman of the Regional Elections Committee or the chairman of the Central Elections Committee.
4. Notes and all paperwork are submitted to the Regional Elections Committee for review, and the results are entered into a computer which is connected to the computers of the Central Elections Committee.
5. The Central Elections Committee publishes the results of the elections and the division of the Knesset seats, and the final results are published in the registry.
6. The results are published within 8 days following the elections. Approximately a week after the results are published, the President will assign the job of creating a coalition government to an elected Member of Knesset, after consulting with heads of all elected factions.

#### **The Division of Knesset Seats Among Lists:**

1. The total number of valid votes is counted, and the Election Threshold of 3.25% of the valid votes is calculated. Any Candidate Lists who received fewer votes than the Threshold do not receive a seat in the Knesset, and those votes are discarded.
2. The remaining number of votes is divided by 120 (the number of Knesset seats). This product is used as the Gauge for the remaining calculations.
3. The number of votes that each remaining Candidate List received is divided by the Gauge, in order to determine how many Knesset seats the list attained. This calculation will still leave some seats unclaimed. Those seats are divided up using the Bader Method.

The outgoing Knesset serves until the new Knesset is convened, on the 14th day after the elections, at 4:00pm.

#### **Election Threshold**

The Election Threshold is the percentage of valid votes that a Candidate List has to receive in order to be granted a seat in the Knesset. Until the 11th Knesset Election, the threshold was 1%. From the 11th elections until the 16th, the threshold was 1.5%, and then it was raised to 2%. After the 19th elections, the threshold was raised to 3.25%, at which it stands today.

The Election Threshold in other countries which hold proportional elections is between 0.67% (Holland) and 5% (Serbia and Slovenia).



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(Hebrew) Code: Link to a report by the Knesset Research and Information Center on the topic of Elections Thresholds and the changes in the threshold over time.

**Voter Turnout for the Knesset Elections has been dropping over the years.** The 21st Knesset Elections saw a 68.5% turnout.



(Hebrew) Codes: Links to studies by the Knesset Research and Information Center on the topics of Tools to Raise Voter Turnout and Computerized Voting.

### **Voting in Elections: Right or Obligation?**

In Israel, voting is not mandatory. However, in 22 countries, including Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Turkey, Costa Rica and Greece, it is compulsory for citizens to make an appearance at the voting station.

Voting at diplomatic missions and on sea vessels takes place 12 days before the elections in Israel. Soldiers begin voting 72 hours before the civilian voting begins, and continue until all voting stations close (10pm on Election Day).

### **THE 21ST KNESSET ELECTIONS BREAKS RECORDS:**

#### **The shortest term of office:**

The longest Knesset plenum, the 3rd Knesset, served for 1,568 days. The shortest plenum was the 21st Knesset, which served for 177 days. The shortest term prior to that was the 19th Knesset, which served for 784 days. The graph measures the terms of office in months.

#### **Greatest number of contending Candidate Lists:**

- Number of Candidate Lists which ran in the Elections: 40
- Number of Candidate Lists which attained seats in the Knesset: 11

**Greatest number of wasted votes since the elections for the Constituent Assembly, in the State's earliest days.**



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## APPEALING THE ELECTIONS' RESULTS:

Appeals can be made regarding the results of the elections in the Jerusalem District Court within 14 days of their publication.

### Acceptable reasons for appeals:

- The elections as a whole, or a specific voting station, were not run properly.
- A calculation error in the division of votes between Candidate Lists.
- The Knesset seats were not divided properly.
- Votes for a specific Candidate List were procured illegally.

### The Court has the Mandate to act:

- To cancel the elections as a whole, or cancel the results of a specific voting station, and demand that there be a re-vote.
- To announce that a certain person did not receive a seat in the Knesset, but rather someone else.
- To recalculate the division of Knesset seats among the factions and announce new results.

**In any appeal, the complainant must show that the problem he has discovered can have an impact on the final results of the elections.**

## KEY LEGISLATION RELATED TO THE ELECTIONS:

- Basic Law: The Knesset
- Basic Law: The Government
- Knesset Elections Law [Consolidated Version], 5729 – 1969
- Knesset Elections Regulations, 5733 – 1973
- Elections Law (Propaganda Means), 5719 -1959
- Political Party Financing Law, 5733 – 1973
- Political Parties Law, 5752 – 1992
- Knesset Law, 5754 -1994

### Counting the Votes in Double Envelopes:

The double envelopes from special voting stations are brought, still sealed, to the Knesset. There, the voters' ID numbers on the external envelopes are checked, to ensure that no one voted in their home voting station as well. The ID numbers are compared to the crossed out numbers in each local voting station registry. Voting twice is a criminal offence.



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The valid internal envelopes are then counted by a committee, as is done in any voting station.



(Hebrew) Code to the Knesset Research and Information report on voting in double envelopes.

### **DISQUALIFIED VOTES:**

In the 7th Knesset Elections, more than 60,000 votes were disqualified – 4.2% of the votes cast. Investigation shows that 60% of those were disqualified because the voter had placed 2 or more identical slips into the envelope. Pursuant to this discovery, in May, 1973, the Knesset approved an amendment to the Elections Law, stating that two identical slips in one envelope will not disqualify the vote (instead, the ballots are stapled together and counted as one ballot). In the elections following that amendment, the number of disqualified votes dropped dramatically, to 1.4%.

Until the 1992 elections, voting was done with one ballot (for a Candidate List). In 1992, an amendment was made to the Basic Law: The Government, which determined that each voter will cast two ballots, one for Knesset and one for Prime Minister. This amendment was put into practice for the first time in 1996, when each voter cast two slips. In 2001, there were elections for Prime minister only. Following those elections, voting reverted to the old system, with voters casting a single note, for Lists only.

### **The following envelope contents will be disqualified:**

- Blank Slip
- Slip with a symbol on it which is not the name or representative letters of any Candidate List
- Slip inside an envelope with something which might identify the voter
- A slip on which something is written with something other than a blue pen
- An envelope with two different ballots
- An envelope with more than 3 identical ballots
- An envelope which was not provided by the Central Elections Committee
- An envelope which does not bear the signatures of two Voting Committee members

**What is the purpose of the blank voting slip?** If the ballots for a specific Candidate List are finished, a voter can write the name or representative letters of the list on the ballot, and it will count as a valid ballot.

A revote was called only once. Following the 12th Knesset Elections, in 1988, three voting stations held new voting.

### **ELECTIONS LEXICON:**

**Bader Method:** A system for dividing the remaining Knesset seats among factions after the first round of dividing the 120 seats. The system is known as the D'Hondt Method or Hagenbach-Bischoff system, and is based upon the calculation of a "List Gauge" as follows:



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The party with the greatest "List Gauge" receives an additional seat. This calculation is repeated until all 120 Knesset seats have been assigned.

**Confidential Elections:** Every voter has the right to keep his / her vote secret. Voting is done behind a screen in an opaque envelope, in order to maintain privacy and to prevent pressure on voters.

**Direct Elections:** Voters vote for the Candidate Lists who are running for Knesset seats.

**Double Envelopes:** Envelopes used in special voting stations. Each regular voting envelope is placed inside a blue external envelope, upon which is written the voter's Israeli identification number. Votes cast in double envelopes are counted in the Knesset building.

**Elections Threshold:** The minimum number of votes a party must attain in order to be assigned seats in the Knesset. This threshold is a certain percentage of the valid votes cast. The purpose of the threshold is to minimize the number of different parties in the Knesset, and guarantee a minimum number of seats to any faction in the Knesset.

**Equal Elections:** Each voter has one vote, and all votes carry equal weight. All Candidate Lists have an equal opportunity to run.

**General Elections:** Voting may be done by anyone who appears in the Voter' Registry.

**National Elections:** The entire State of Israel is a single voting district.

**Proportional Elections:** The number of seats a faction attains in the Knesset is proportionate to the number of votes cast for that party in the elections.

**Surplus Votes Agreement:** An agreement between two Candidate Lists to unite their surplus votes (the remaining votes once the number of votes is divided by the "Gauge" of votes per Knesset seat), in order to maximize the chances to attain another SEAT. This agreement must be signed and publicized before Election Day.

**Voters Registry:** The official list of all citizens who are eligible to vote. The Interior Ministry edits and updates the registry regularly. The registry is closed 54 days prior to elections, and includes all citizens who will be 18 years of age by Election Day.



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