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Conspiratorial Thinking in Israel

An Overview

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Conspiratorial Thinking in Israel

An Institute for Liberty and Responsibility analysis of five surveys (2022-2023) examines conspiracy thinking tendencies among 7,800 Israelis using the Conspiracy Thinking Scale. The data show Israelis have significant conspiracy thinking levels, similar to or exceeding Americans, with minimal differences across political and social groups. Conspiracy thinking strongly correlates with distrust in political institutions, negative evaluation of democratic functioning, feelings of political underrepresentation, and populist attitudes. This tendency appears as a distinct dimension separate from traditional political-ideological divisions, suggesting important implications for Israeli democracy.

Abstract

"Conspiracy thinking" is the tendency to believe in conspiracy theories. This tendency is quite common in various democracies, and it predicts, among other things, distrust toward various public institutions and a negative attitude toward the political system. However, in Israel, this tendency has received almost no significant academic research. This overview presents the first systematic examination of the tendency for conspiracy thinking, based on five representative surveys conducted in Israel in 2022 and 2023, with approximately 7,800 respondents in total. Several findings emerge from these surveys: First, citizens in Israel have a significant tendency towards conspiracy thinking. Second, there is almost no difference in the tendency towards conspiracy thinking among major political and social groups in Israel. Finally, the tendency towards conspiracy thinking correlates with distrust in many public institutions, negative attitudes towards the political system, and populist views. This research therefore suggests that Israelis' tendency towards conspiracy thinking has significant political and social importance.

(1) Introduction

Conspiracy theories are common in many countries worldwide, and they are claimed to have numerous negative implications for politics and society. Research focusing on conspiracy theories and the tendency to believe in conspiracy theories has gained momentum during the last two decades, and today there are hundreds of studies from various countries dealing with these topics. However, in Israel, this field has barely been studied empirically. Additionally, recent academic research concerning conspiracy theories places great importance on examining the tendency towards "conspiracy thinking," which is the extent to which an individual tends to believe in conspiracy theories. This tendency has also barely been examined in the Israeli context.

In light of this, this overview presents the first systematic examination of the tendency towards conspiracy thinking in Israel, focusing on an index that examines the tendency to believe in conspiracy theories, this is the "Conspiracy Thinking Scale" which will be presented below. The overview has three main objectives: (1) to examine the extent of the tendency towards conspiracy thinking in Israel, (2) to examine which socio-demographic and political variables predict the tendency towards conspiracy thinking in Israel, (3) and to examine whether the tendency towards conspiracy thinking predicts attitudes towards the political establishment and public institutions in Israel, and predicts various attitudes among Israelis, such as support for populist views.

To examine these questions, we at the Institute for Liberty and Responsibility at Reichman University, conducted five representative online surveys in Israel in 2022 and 2023, with approximately 7,800 respondents in total. Analysis of the surveys reveals several findings:

First, Israelis have a significant tendency towards "conspiracy thinking," and this tendency is similar to or even greater than that of citizens in the United States. Second, a limited number of socio-demographic and political variables predict the tendency towards "conspiracy thinking." This tendency is quite prevalent among different major political and social groups in Israel, and there are almost no differences between different groups, such as groups based on left-right ideology variables or degree of religiosity, in their tendency towards conspiracy thinking. Finally, even when controlling for a range of socio-demographic and political variables, the tendency towards conspiracy thinking correlates negatively and significantly with trust in all examined political and public institutions (the Knesset, the government, the Supreme Court, the Attorney General, the media, political parties, the President, the police, the State Attorney's Office, the IDF,

and the mayor) and with various measures of satisfaction with government performance, functioning of Israeli democracy, and sense of representation by the political system; additionally, the tendency towards conspiracy thinking correlates positively and significantly with populist attitudes.

The remainder of the overview is as follows: After detailing the literature dealing with conspiracy theories and the tendency towards conspiracy thinking, there is a methodology section, which details the various surveys and different variables, with emphasis on the scale of the tendency towards conspiracy thinking. The results section appears afterward, where after detailing the prevalence of conspiracy thinking tendency in the different surveys, statistical analyses are presented examining both the variables that predict the scale for conspiracy thinking, and the variables that this scale helps predict. The summary section appears afterward and references the potential importance of the findings.

(2) Conspiracy Theories and "Conspiracy Thinking"

In this section, we will elaborate on conspiracy theories, with a brief reference to conspiracy theories in Israel, and then elaborate on the tendency towards "conspiracy thinking" which is the focus of this overview.

(2.1) Conspiracy Theories

A "conspiracy" is a secret plan or organization of a small group of people (two or more) whose goal is typically to increase their political power or economic status, usually maliciously and at the expense of the broader public interest. For example, the break-in at the Democratic Party headquarters at the Watergate Hotel in 1972 was part of a conspiracy. In contrast, a "conspiracy theory" is a proposed explanation for some event(s) as having been caused by a conspiracy of people who acted secretly and maliciously to promote their goals, against the interest of the broader public. For example, the claim that various governments or pharmaceutical companies are maliciously behind the COVID-19 pandemic is a conspiracy theory.¹

¹ These definitions are based on the definitions in the articles of Uscinski et al. 2016, Douglas et al. 2019, and Douglas and Sutton 2023.

As researchers Douglas and Sutton explain,² there are five main characteristics of conspiracy theories: (1) The factual claims that make up the theory are contrary to the public's accepted perception of how events occurred; (2) They describe forbidden and/or malicious actions; (3) They attribute "agency" to individuals and groups who (allegedly) conspired consciously against the public to promote their goals – while simultaneously ignoring possible effects of systemic and impersonal forces; (4) They are "epistemically risky" in the sense that while they are not necessarily wrong or completely unreasonable, they tend to be incorrect;³ and (5) They are spread by individuals and groups for various social and political reasons, and are intended not only to describe reality but also to lead to a change in the current state of affairs.⁴

Generally, it seems that in recent years conspiracy theories have increasingly seeped into politics.⁵ And while these theories can have positive social and political implications,⁶ there are many negative social and political implications to conspiracy theories. Belief in conspiracy theories correlates with, among other things, suboptimal decisions about health (for example, avoiding vaccinations); opposition to science and hostility towards scientists; non-normative social behavior such as support for violence; antisemitism and prejudice against various groups; distrust in various public institutions; and a tendency towards lower political involvement and abstention from voting in elections.⁷

² See Douglas and Sutton 2023, pp. 281-287.

³ This is because inherently there is less evidence for conspiracies, which were supposedly woven in secret, and because conspiracy theories relate to issues and topics that are important from a public perspective - so the public should have been aware of them - but, for some reason, they are not aware of them. In most cases, it is very difficult to provide conclusive evidence that indeed a conspiracy with important public implications took place. Additionally, those who believe in various conspiracy theories usually bring only circumstantial evidence to support their claims, when in many cases these events have non-conspiratorial explanations.

For example, the fact that many Jews were absent from work on September 11, 2001, was (and is being) used by those who claim that Jews and Israel are behind the September 11 attacks, while in fact on this date many Jews were absent because they were saying Selichot prayers during the morning prayer service near the Jewish New Year.

⁴ In this context, see also Marie and Petersen 2022. It should be noted that due to the negative connotation of the term, people tend to deny that their conspiratorial claims constitute conspiracy theories. People also tend to refer to claims they disagree with as conspiracy theories more than claims they agree with (for example, Douglas et al. 2019, pp. 4-5).

⁵ See Sutton and Douglas 2020, p. 188.

⁶ For example, they can lead to increased transparency among governments, and they highlight various issues that usually don't receive widespread public attention, see Douglas et al. 2019, p. 17.

⁷ For more information regarding the implications of conspiracy theories, see the overviews of Douglas et al. 2019 and Douglas and Sutton 2023.

What predicts belief in conspiracy theories? In recent years, research has proposed numerous explanations, typically categorized into psychological, socio-demographic, and political factors.⁸ Psychologically, key factors include epistemic motivations—people's desire to make sense of complex, threatening, and confusing events, especially after major catastrophes. Existential motivations also play a role, where feelings of existential anxiety and lack of control or power, particularly following significant events, drive conspiracy beliefs. Social motivations are another factor, emphasizing an individual's desire to maintain a positive image of their group, especially when they belong to a lower socio-economic status. Additionally, personality traits like narcissism and authoritarianism, among other tendencies, contribute to the susceptibility to conspiracy theories (see below). Regarding socio-demographic factors, men, unmarried people, those with low education, low income, unemployed, members of ethnic minority groups, and people with limited social connections are more likely to believe in conspiracy theories. And regarding political factors, people belonging to the political group that is not in power are more likely to believe in conspiracy theories. Additionally, members of different political groups are less likely to believe in conspiracy theories where the conspirators are members of their own group, and conversely, are more likely to believe in conspiracy theories where the conspirators belong to a rival political group. Messages about conspiracies from politicians and political elites can also increase belief in conspiracy theories. Additionally, there is also evidence (not unequivocal) that the ideologically extreme are more likely to believe in conspiracy theories than those who are ideologically moderate.

What about conspiracy theories in Israel? There is almost no academic writing about conspiracy theories in Israel,⁹ but there have been several prominent conspiracy theories in Israel in recent decades, including that the Shin Bet, not Yigal Amir, assassinated Yitzhak Rabin; that Benjamin Netanyahu signed a secret contract with his wife Sara Netanyahu, under which she is granted various governmental powers, and conversely, that an elite opposing Benjamin Netanyahu led to his indictment in a series of offenses; and recently, that COVID-19 is a conspiracy of

⁸ It is not possible to detail in this document the dozens of factors and various explanations for belief in conspiracy theories that appear in the research literature. For a concise explanation, the details in this section are based on the review articles by Douglas et al. 2019 and Douglas and Sutton 2023, which present comprehensive reviews - albeit not complete ones - regarding the factors contributing to belief in conspiracy theories.

⁹ Two recent articles examined belief in conspiracy theories in Israel, as part of comparative studies that included dozens of countries: Imhoff et al. 2022 and Hebel-sela et al. 2022.

governments and pharmaceutical companies.¹⁰ To date, it is unclear what percentage of the Israeli population believes in each of these conspiracy theories (see below). However, it seems that one can say that there are fewer conspiracy theories in Israeli public discourse than in other countries such as the United States.¹¹

(2.2) Conspiracy Thinking

During the last decade, various researchers began to examine the tendency to believe in conspiracy theories, a tendency that some call "conspiracy thinking."¹² Conspiracy thinking is defined as an individual's tendency or inclination to interpret various events and circumstances as being caused by a conspiracy of powerful and malicious forces.¹³ In other words, a pattern of thinking according to which powerful and evil forces are constantly working "behind the scenes" against the public.¹⁴ Additionally, researchers explain that the tendency towards conspiracy thinking is part of a broader anti-establishment perspective, together with populist and Manichean views.¹⁵

In the research literature, there are several ways to measure the tendency toward conspiracy thinking. In this overview, this tendency was measured using the "Conspiracy Thinking Scale," which is an index created by researchers Uscinski and Parent, and which has been validated in several studies.¹⁶ The index consists of four questions which will be presented in the next section, the methodology section.¹⁷

According to the research literature, the tendency towards conspiracy thinking is relatively stable, both at the individual level and at the societal level as a whole, in a way that resembles established tendencies and attitudes like ideology or attitudes towards important political and social issues. The tendency towards conspiracy thinking is heavily influenced by socialization at

¹⁰ See for example [here](#).

¹¹ For details on the tens of conspiracy theories in the United States, see for example Uscinski et. al 2022.

¹² Researchers refer to this tendency by several different names, including conspiracy mindset, conspiracy ideation, conspiracy mentality, and conspiratorial predispositions. See for example Bruder et al. 2013; Sutton and Douglas 2020; Enders et al. 2022a; Imhoff et al. 2022.

¹³ See for example Uscinski et al. 2016, 2022; Enders et al. 2022a.

¹⁴ See Imhoff et al. 2022, p. 394.

¹⁵ See Enders and Uscinski 2021; Uscinski et al. 2021.

¹⁶ See for example Uscinski et al. 2016, 2022. For other measures of the tendency to believe in conspiracy theories, see, for example, Bruder et al. 2013.

¹⁷ For the English version of the four questions that make up the index, see Uscinski et al. 2016, 2022; Enders et al. 2022a.

a young age as well as various personality traits, and once it develops, it usually doesn't change significantly, certainly not within a short time. However, prominent political and social events (for example, a global pandemic, defeat in war, or unexpected loss in elections), as well as messages from politicians and political elites about the influence of mysterious and malicious forces, can also somewhat affect the tendency towards conspiracy thinking.¹⁸ Moreover, in a 2022 study, Uscinski and colleagues showed that the same variables that predict belief in specific conspiracy theories also predict the tendency towards conspiracy thinking.¹⁹

Research conducted in the United States has found that the Conspiracy Thinking Scale, even when accounting for numerous variables, positively correlates with the belief in a wide range of conspiracy theories. These theories span those clearly linked to political-partisan entities as well as those unrelated to political entities or politicians. Furthermore, higher scores on this scale are associated with populist attitudes, support for political violence, prejudice and negative sentiments towards minority groups, the spread of false information, and a marked distrust in government and various political and public institutions.²⁰

To date, the tendency towards conspiracy thinking has not been systematically studied in Israel.²¹ This overview will present for the first time a systematic analysis of this tendency, an analysis that includes reference to various socio-demographic and political variables that predict this tendency in Israel, as well as various variables that the Conspiracy Thinking Scale predicts, with emphasis on trust in various political and public institutions, assessment of Israeli democracy's functioning, and populist attitudes.

We will now move to the methodology section of the overview, where we will present the Conspiracy Thinking Scale as well as the various variables that we will use in the different analyses. In the following section, the various statistical analyses will be presented.

¹⁸ See for example Uscinski et al. 2016, 2022; Enders et al. 2022a.

¹⁹ See Uscinski et al. 2022.

²⁰ For details of these findings, see, among others, Enders et al. 2021; Edelson et al. 2017; Uscinski et al. 2016, 2021, 2022; Armaly and Enders 2022a, 2022b; Han et al. 2022.

²¹ To the best of our knowledge, to date the only measurement of this index in Israel took place among a sample of 440 Israeli respondents, as part of the research by Imhoff et al. 2022.

(3) Methodology

To examine the prevalence of the tendency towards conspiracy thinking in Israel, as well as what socio-demographic and political variables predict this tendency, along with what variables the tendency towards conspiracy thinking predicts, we conducted five public opinion surveys in Israel. The surveys were conducted online in April, September, October, and December 2022, and in February 2023. These surveys were conducted among representative samples of the Israeli population, with each survey including between 1,500 to approximately 1,670 respondents (7,792 respondents in total). For additional details about the surveys and the characteristics of respondents in the different surveys, see Tables 2-3 in the appendix at the end of the document.

(3.1) The Conspiracy Thinking Scale

As mentioned above, the first goal of this overview is to assess the prevalence of conspiracy thinking in Israel. To achieve this, we utilized the "Conspiracy Thinking Scale," originally developed by researchers Uscinski and Parent.²² Specifically, in each of the surveys, we asked respondents to what extent they agreed with the following statements:²³

1. Even though we live in a democratic country, in the end, a small number of people always run things
2. The people who really run the country are not known to the public
3. Significant events like wars, economic crises, and election results are controlled by small groups of people working secretly against most citizens
4. Many aspects of our lives are controlled by conspiracies hatched in secret places

Table 1 shows the percentage of Israelis who agreed – answered "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree" – with each of the four statements that make up the index, in the different surveys.²⁴ It is

²² See Uscinski and Parent 2014.

²³ The response options ranged on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Somewhat disagree; 3 - Neither agree nor disagree; 4 - Somewhat agree; 5 - Strongly agree). Each question also included a sixth option of "Don't know," and these responses were excluded from the analysis.

²⁴ In the latest survey (February 2023), we made a slight change, where instead of the response options "Somewhat disagree" and "Somewhat agree," the response options were changed to "Disagree" and "Agree." This was done to

evident that many Israelis exhibit a tendency towards conspiracy thinking. For example, about two-thirds of Israelis consistently agree that although they live in a democratic country, in the end, a small number of people always run things, and between 40 to 50 percent of Israelis consistently agree that many aspects of their lives are controlled by conspiracies hatched in secret places.

Table 1. Percentage of Agreement with Each of the Four Questions - Israel and the United States

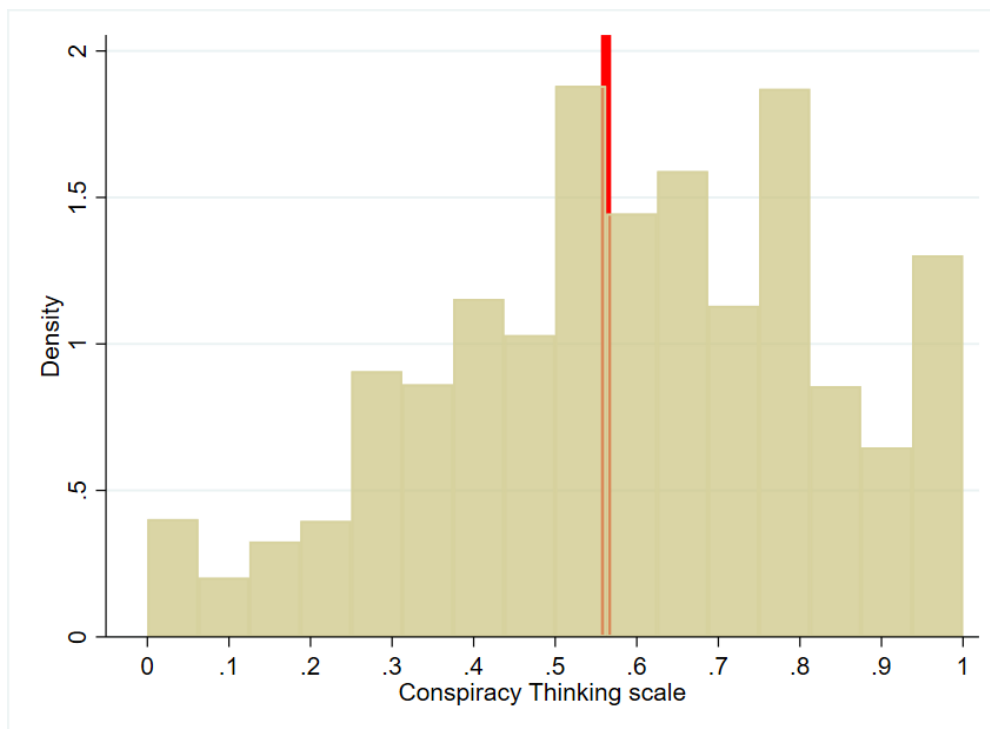
	Data from Israel					Data from the US				
	April 2022	Sept. 2022	Oct. 2022	Dec. 2022	Feb. 2023	Aug. 2019	Mar. 2020	Oct. 2020	April-May 2021	Mean US
(1) Even though we live in a democratic country, eventually a small number of people always run things anyway	63%	72%	69%	64%	65%	58%	61%	63%	61%	61%
(2) The people who really run the country are not known to the public	41%	46%	44%	41%	39%	42%	46%	44%	43%	44%
(3) Significant events like wars, economic crises, and the results of elections are controlled by small groups of people who are working in secret against most citizens	37%	38%	36%	36%	31%	27%	33%	30%	31%	30%
(4) Many aspects of our lives are being controlled by conspiracies hatched in secret places	46%	50%	49%	43%	38%	26%	32%	31%	31%	30%
Mean Conspiracy Thinking scale	0.56	0.58	0.58	0.55	0.55	0.53	0.55	-	0.53	0.53

Legend: The Conspiracy Thinking Scale ranges from 0 to 1, where higher values in the index mean a greater tendency towards conspiracy thinking. The estimates from Israel include minor corrections for deviation from a representative sample using weights for the proportion of Arabs, Ultra-Orthodox, National-Religious, Traditional, and Secular Jews. The omission of these weights has almost no effect on the estimates in this table. The U.S. data from August 2019 and March 2020 are taken from Uscinski et al. 2021, those from October 2020 are taken from Enders and Uscinski 2021, and those from April-May 2021 are taken from Uscinski et al. 2022.

create complete compatibility with the measurement method of the scale. The change had a slight effect on the level of agreement with some of the different statements that make up the index, but the average is quite similar.

The Conspiracy Thinking Scale was created by summing and averaging the four questions.²⁵ To facilitate understanding of the findings, the values of this variable were changed to range between 0 and 1, where higher values (closer to 1) mean a greater tendency towards conspiracy thinking while lower values (closer to 0) mean a lesser tendency towards conspiracy thinking. At the bottom of Table 1 appear the averages of the Conspiracy Thinking Scale in the different surveys. The data shows that among the Israeli population there were only minor changes at the aggregate level in the Conspiracy Thinking Scale during the ten months in which the surveys were conducted, with the average conspiracy thinking ranging between 0.55 and 0.58 – above the scale midpoint of 0.5. In general, among all respondents in all five surveys (N = 7,792), the average on the index is 0.56 with a standard deviation of 0.24. The distribution among all respondents in all five surveys is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Distribution of the Conspiratorial Thinking Index Across All Surveys



Legend: The vertical line represents the cumulative average across all five surveys ($M=0.56$).

²⁵ In each of the five surveys, the measure's reliability was high, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging between 0.81-0.84. Additionally, exploratory factor analysis showed that in each of the surveys there was only one factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1, where the percentage of variance explained by that factor ranged between 0.9 to 0.97.

However, it should be noted that several recent studies have shown that the COVID-19 pandemic that broke out in 2020 increased conspiratorial and anti-establishment perceptions in various countries.²⁶ In light of this, it's possible that the estimates of conspiratorial thinking in Israel from 2022 and 2023 are relatively high compared to the past, and that in the future the level of conspiratorial thinking will decrease to some extent.

To compare the findings among Israelis to citizens of another country, the left side of Table 1 shows the percentage of Americans who agreed – answered "agree" or "strongly agree" – with each of the four statements comprising the index, as well as the average conspiratorial thinking scale, in four surveys conducted among representative samples between 2019 and 2021. The comparison with the United States was made because it is a nation that has seen numerous conspiracy theories in recent decades, many of which are believed by more than a third of the American public.²⁷ One might have anticipated that the inclination towards conspiratorial thinking in Israel would be less prevalent than in the United States. However, Table 1 shows that the tendency toward conspiratorial thinking is not less prevalent in Israel compared to the United States, and in many cases it is even slightly more prevalent.

(3.2) Socio-demographic and Political Variables - Predictor Variables

The second goal of this overview is to examine which political and socio-demographic variables predict the conspiratorial thinking index, if different political and social groups in Israel are more inclined towards conspiratorial thinking than others, and to assess whether the trends observed in Israel align with those in other countries.

First, due to the significant political importance of voting for parties that support the 'Change Bloc' or 'Netanyahu Bloc',²⁸ we created a categorical (nominal) variable of reported voting in the last elections, including the categories of: (1) those who voted for parties belonging to the 'Netanyahu Bloc'; (2) those who voted for parties belonging to the 'Change Bloc'; (3) those who voted for the Joint List, or Hadash-Ta'al or Balad after November 2022 elections; (4) those who voted for other parties; and (5) those who did not vote in the elections or answered 'don't know' to the voting question. This variable allows us to examine whether reported voting for one of these

²⁶ See for example Bartusevičius et al. 2021; Jørgensen et al. 2022.

²⁷ See Uscinski et al. 2022; Enders et al. 2022a.

²⁸ See for example Graham and Yair 2023.

groups or 'categories' predicts conspiratorial thinking. Second, due to the political and research importance of self-definition on the ideological right-left axis,²⁹ we created a categorical variable of ideological self-definition, including the categories of ideological right supporter ('rightist'), ideological center supporter, and ideological left supporter ('leftist'). Finally, we also used other prominent socio-demographic variables in the analysis: age, gender, college education, nationality (Jewish/Arab), and level of religiosity, with the last two variables consistently considered important in predicting political attitudes (and voting) in Israel.³⁰ For additional details about the variables and how they were created, see the methodological appendix.

(3.3) Dependent Variables - Belief in Specific Conspiracy Theories, Trust in Institutions, and Various Attitudes

The third goal of this overview is to examine which variables the conspiratorial thinking scale predicts. First, to conduct a kind of validation of this scale, we examined whether it predicts belief in five conspiracy theories in Israel, which will be presented below in the results section. Additionally, we examined whether the conspiratorial thinking index predicts trust in various political and public institutions: the Knesset, the government, the Supreme Court, the President of the State, the police, the Attorney General, the media, political parties, mayors and city heads, the IDF, and the State Attorney's Office. We then also examined whether this index predicts attitudes toward the political system and Israeli democracy, with emphasis on evaluating the extent to which the State of Israel is a democratic state, assessment of satisfaction with the functioning of Israeli democracy, and sense of representation by the political system. Finally, we also examined whether the conspiratorial thinking scale correlates positively with populist attitudes. Details about the wording of these questions are presented later.

(3.4) A Clarification Regarding Causality

We clarify that the analyses presented here are correlational, as these analyses certainly suffer from endogeneity, particularly emphasizing omitted variables, and possibly reverse causality as well. As such, these findings should be treated with caution, as preliminary findings that future analyses, with more advanced research designs and a richer array of control variables,

²⁹ See for example Enos and Gidron 2018; Yair and Sulitzeanu-Kenan 2018; Oshri et al. 2022.

³⁰ See for example Shamir and Arian 1999; Enos and Gidron 2018.

will be needed to strengthen them. However, we believe that the findings we will present now certainly suggest that the tendency toward conspiratorial thinking can be of great importance in explaining many attitudes in the Israeli public.

(4) Results

We will begin by detailing the variables that predict the conspiratorial thinking scale, and then detail the variables that this scale predicts. We note that all statistical analyses include weights for the proportion of Arabs, Ultra-Orthodox, National-Religious, Traditional, and Secular individuals, in order to compensate for slight deviations in some surveys in the proportion of respondents from these groups relative to their proportion in the population. However, omitting these weights does not affect the results of the various analyses.

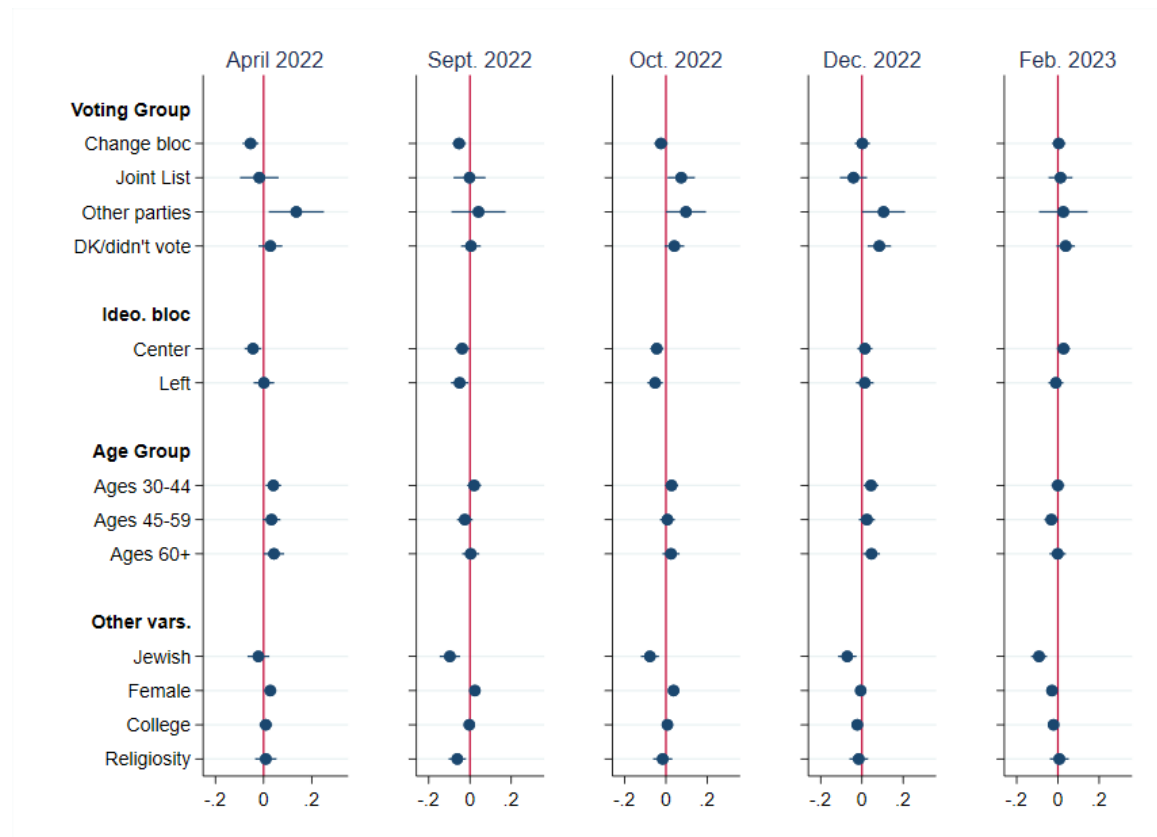
(4.1) What Predicts the Conspiratorial Thinking Index?

Figure 2 presents the results of five multivariate linear regression (OLS) analyses, one in each survey, in which the conspiratorial thinking index, the dependent variable, is predicted by the various socio-demographic and political variables mentioned above (voting; ideological self-identification; age group; nationality [Jewish vs. Arab]; gender [woman vs. man]; college education; and level of religiosity). The figure presents the estimates for each of the predictor variables, along with a 95 percent confidence interval. The legend details the different reference groups for the multi-group categorical variables (voting groups; ideological groups; age groups). For example, the estimates for voting for a 'Change Bloc' party refer to the change in the value of the conspiratorial thinking index relative to voting for a 'Netanyahu Bloc' party, in each of the surveys.

Figure 2 shows that there are almost no socio-demographic and political variables that systematically predict the conspiratorial thinking index. In fact, there is only one variable that is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) in more than two of the surveys. This is the binary variable of Jewish respondent (versus Arab respondent) which is statistically significant in four of the five surveys: the tendency toward conspiratorial thinking among Jewish respondents is systematically lower compared to Arab respondents. This is a finding that corresponds with previous findings mentioned above regarding the greater tendency toward conspiratorial thinking among minority group members. Overall, the 13 socio-demographic and political variables explain only a minimal amount of variance in the conspiratorial thinking index. The percentage of explained variance (R^2)

is 0.04-0.05 in the various regression analyses, which are quite low percentages.³¹ In a sense, the tendency toward conspiratorial thinking is distinct or 'independent' relative to important socio-demographic and political variables in Israeli politics. As in the American case,³² it seems that in the Israeli political system as well, the tendency toward conspiratorial thinking should be understood as a separate dimension that is different and distinct from important political-ideological variables.

Figure 2. Variables Predicting the Conspiratorial Thinking Scale in Each of the Five Surveys



Legend: The circles are regression coefficients, alongside them a 95% confidence interval. In the Voting Group variable, the omitted group is voting for the 'Netanyahu Bloc'; in the Ideological bloc variable (Ideo. bloc), the omitted group is 'Right'; in the Age Group variable, the omitted group is ages 18-29. DK means 'Don't know'.

³¹ For comparison, in the last survey in the dataset - February 2023 - the percentage of explained variance is much larger when the dependent variable is a 'regular' political variable. Thus, the socio-demographic and political variables in Figure 2 predict the attitude towards Benjamin Netanyahu (on a scale of 0-10 from rejection to admiration), the R^2 is 0.56, and when they predict a variable of trust in the Supreme Court (on a scale of 1-4 from 'very high trust' to 'no trust at all'), the R^2 is 0.41.

³² See Uscinski et al. 2021.

(4.2) What Does the Conspiratorial Thinking Scale Predict?

We will now present the results of analyses in which we used the conspiratorial thinking scale to predict a series of variables: (1) belief in several conspiracy theories in Israel; (2) trust in various political and public institutions; (3) attitudes toward the political system and Israeli democracy; (4) populist attitudes. Overall, the conspiratorial thinking index is consistently a significant predictor of all these variables.

(4.2.1) Belief in Conspiracy Theories in Israel

In a 2022 paper, Uscinski and colleagues showed that in the United States, the conspiratorial thinking index is positively and statistically significantly correlated with 39 conspiracy theories, including those related to political-partisan aspects and those that are not.³³ In light of this, and out of a desire to establish the predictive validity of the conspiratorial thinking index, we examined whether this index predicts belief in several conspiracy theories in Israel. In a survey conducted in February 2023, we asked about belief in five conspiracy theories in Israel. Specifically, respondents in the survey were asked to what extent they agree with the following statements, which were presented in random order [in brackets appears the percentage of respondents who agreed – somewhat agree or strongly agree – with each statement]:³⁴

1. The dangers of vaccines are hidden from the public by the medical establishment and pharmaceutical companies [32%]
2. The indictments against Benjamin Netanyahu are the result of legal persecution against him by an elite that opposes him [30%]
3. Benjamin Netanyahu has signed a secret contract with his wife Sarah Netanyahu, under which she is granted governmental powers such as veto rights in senior appointments in the security system [22%]

³³ Uscinski et al. 2022.

³⁴ The response options ranged on a scale of 1 to 5: 1 - Strongly disagree 2 - Somewhat disagree 3 - Neither agree nor disagree 4 - Somewhat agree 5 - Strongly agree. In each of the questions, there was also a sixth option of 'Don't know'. For statements 1, 2, and 4, the rate of respondents answering 'Don't know' ranged between 10-15% of cases. In the fifth statement, 25% of respondents answered 'Don't know', and in the third statement, no less than 31% answered 'Don't know'. Respondents who chose this answer were excluded from the analysis.

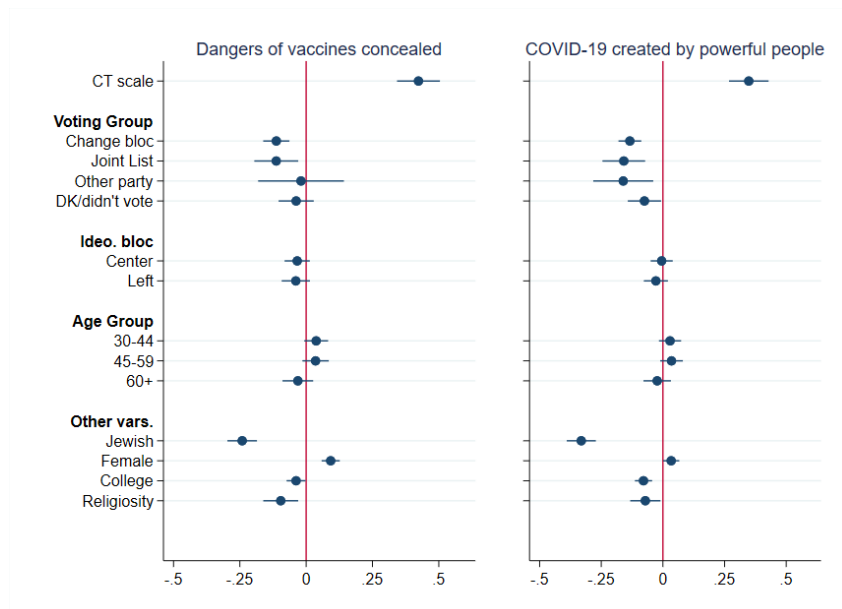
4. The coronavirus was deliberately created and spread by influential people, as part of a conspiracy [18%]
5. The Shin Bet, not Yigal Amir, is who assassinated Yitzhak Rabin [11%]

Statements 1 and 4 constitute 'non-political' conspiracy theories – those that are not related to political-partisan or political-ideological aspects – while statements 2, 3, and 5 constitute 'political' conspiracy theories – those that are clearly related to political-partisan/ideological aspects.

Figures 3 and 4 present the results of five multivariate linear regression analyses, where in Figure 3 the predicted variables are statements 1 and 4 (the 'non-political' conspiracy theories) and in Figure 4 the predicted variables are statements 2, 3, and 5 (the 'political' conspiracy theories). In all five analyses, the predictor variables include the conspiratorial thinking index along with the 13 different socio-demographic and political variables mentioned above (voting, ideological self-identification, age group, nationality, gender, academic education, and level of religiosity). As in Figure 2, Figures 3 and 4 present the estimates for each of the different predictor variables, along with a 95 percent confidence interval.

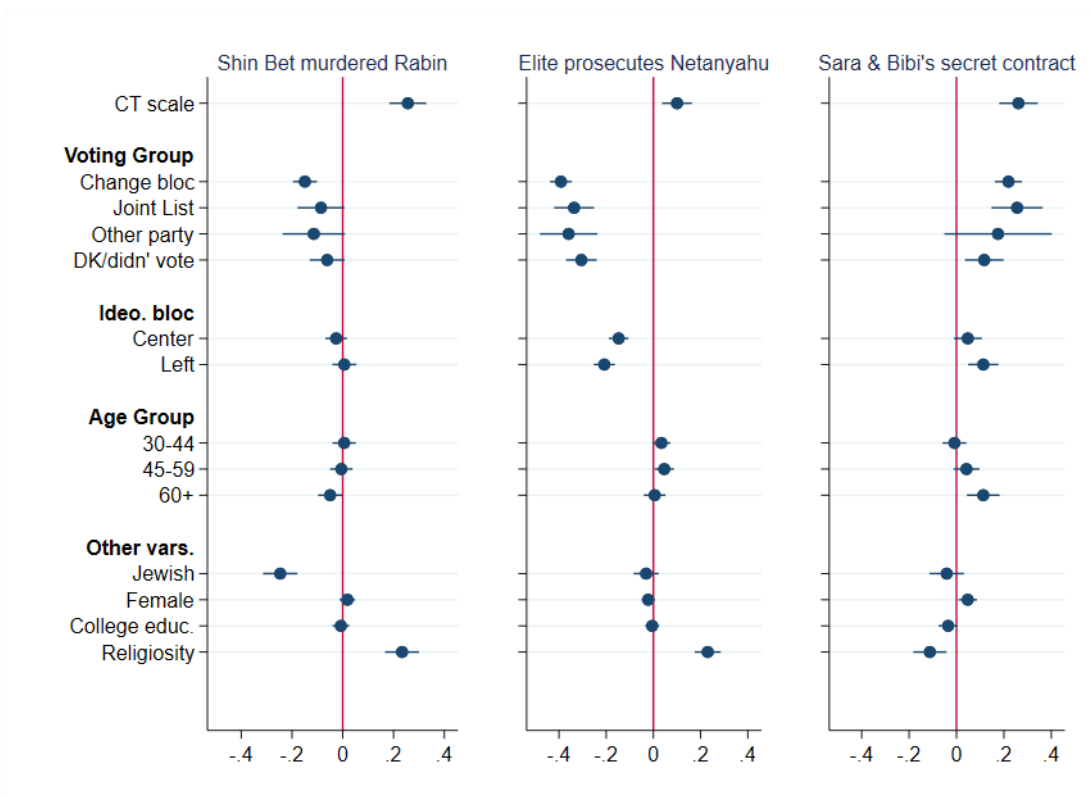
From both figures, it is evident that even when controlling for a series of important political and socio-demographic variables, the conspiratorial thinking scale (the value 'CT scale' in the different figures) positively and statistically significantly predicts all five conspiracy theories – both the 'political' and 'non-political' ones. This provides important validity to the index.

Figure 3. Variables Predicting Belief in 'Non-Political' Conspiracy Theories



Legend: CT scale is the conspiratorial thinking index. For additional details, see the legend details of Figure 2.

Figure 4. Variables Predicting Belief in 'Political' Conspiracy Theories



Legend: CT scale is the conspiratorial thinking index. For additional details, see the legend details of Figure 2.

(4.2.2) Trust in Various Political and Public Institutions

Previous studies found that the conspiratorial thinking index predicts trust in political and public institutions in various countries.³⁵ In light of this, in our various surveys, we examined whether the index predicts trust in different institutions in Israel. Specifically, respondents were asked 'To what extent do you trust each of the following institutions': the Knesset, the government, the Supreme Court (SC), the President, the police, the Attorney General (AG), the media, political parties, mayor/council head, the IDF, and the State Attorney's Office.³⁶ In total, across our five surveys, the different respondents were asked no fewer than 42 questions about trust in these various institutions. To examine the extent to which the conspiratorial thinking index predicts trust in these institutions, we performed 42 multivariate linear regressions where each time we changed the dependent variable – trust in a different institution. The predictor variables are identical to those we used in the previous subsection (predicting specific conspiracy theories in Israel): the conspiratorial thinking index along with 13 other socio-demographic and political variables.

Figure 5 below presents the 42 different regression coefficients of the conspiratorial thinking index in predicting trust in various institutions, along with a 95% confidence interval. The analyses themselves are grouped by the institution examined, from the Knesset to the State Attorney's Office, in all five surveys. It can be seen that in all 42 regressions, and even when controlling for various variables, the conspiratorial thinking index is negatively and significantly correlated with trust in various institutions, particularly the Knesset, the government, the Supreme Court (appears in the figure as 'SC'), the President, and the police. Additionally, alongside the description of the specific dependent variable and survey date, the rankings of the conspiratorial thinking index out of the 14 predictor variables in each regression are shown in parentheses, according to the standardized Beta coefficient of the index. A ranking of 1 means that in the specific regression model, this variable has the largest standardized coefficient. The figure shows that in many cases, the conspiratorial thinking index has the largest (1) or second-largest (2) standardized coefficient:

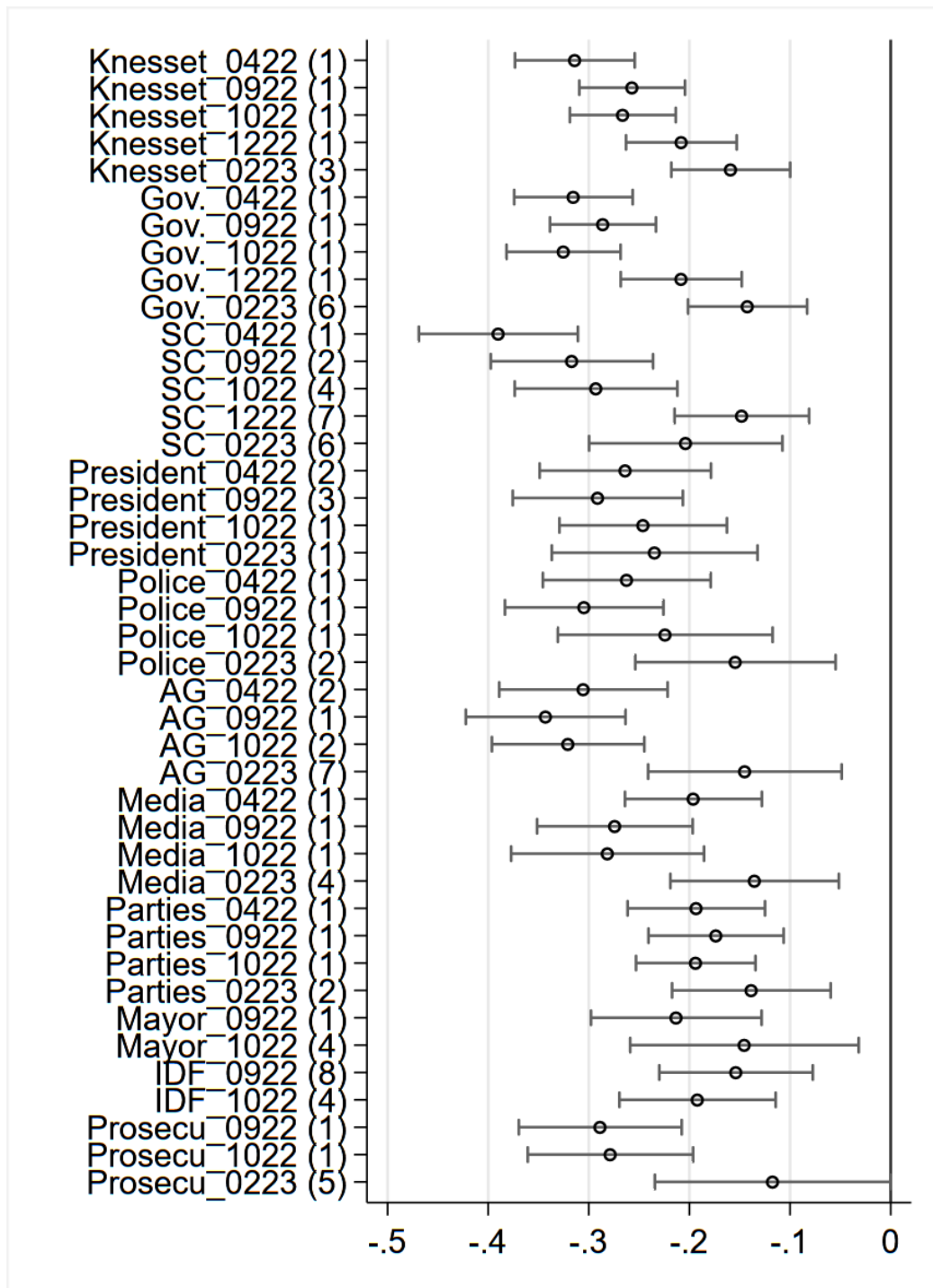
³⁵ See for example Han et al. 2022; Usckinski et al. 2022.

³⁶ The response options ranged on a scale of 1 to 4: 1 - I have very high trust 2 - I have high trust 3 - I have little trust 4 - I have no trust at all. Those who answered 'Don't know' were excluded from the analysis for each trust question. In the regression analyses, the trust questions were recoded so that higher values indicate higher levels of trust.

in 30 out of 42 regressions, the index has either the largest or second-largest standardized coefficient.

Overall, these findings indicate that the conspiratorial thinking index is an important predictor of trust in important political and public institutions in the State of Israel, even when controlling for a series of political variables – particularly voting and ideology – and socio-demographic variables – particularly level of religiosity – which also typically significantly predict trust in various institutions.

Figure 5. The Extent to Which the Conspiratorial Thinking Scale Predicts Trust in Various Institutions



Legend: The circles are regression coefficients of the conspiratorial thinking index, alongside them a 95% confidence interval, controlling for the other 13 variables in the model. In parentheses appears the ranking of the standardized regression coefficient of the conspiratorial thinking index.

It should be noted that in the two surveys conducted after the November 2022 elections (December 2022 and February 2023), the coefficient size of the conspiratorial thinking index relating to trust in various institutions decreased somewhat, indicating that the index's ability to predict trust in various institutions has declined since the elections. A central reason for this is that the coefficients of various predictor variables – particularly voting, ideological right-left position, and level of religiosity – increased to some extent, indicating that the "predictive power" of these variables has grown since the elections.³⁷ This seems to indicate the growing importance of these variables following the turbulent elections held in November 2022 and in light of the Netanyahu coalition's attempt to promote extensive changes in the judicial system in early 2023: these variables now play a more important role regarding attitudes toward various public institutions, and this strengthening reduces or "crowds out" possible effects of other variables. Future research may help confirm this possibility.

(4.2.3) Attitudes towards the Political System and Israeli Democracy

In our surveys, we asked several questions regarding perceptions of Israel's political system. First, in three surveys (April, September, and October 2022), we asked respondents both about the extent to which they feel "there is a party and/or politician in the country that represents you," and about the extent to which they feel "the Israeli political system represents you."³⁸ Second, in various surveys, we asked several questions about how Israelis evaluate the functioning of Israel's political system and Israeli democracy. In April 2022, we asked respondents to what extent they are satisfied "with how Israel's political system functions today,"³⁹ while in October 2022 and December 2022, as well as February 2023, we asked to what extent they are satisfied "with how

³⁷ For example, regarding the variable of trust in the Supreme Court, the standardized coefficients of the binary variable for voting for the 'Change bloc' versus voting for Netanyahu's bloc were 0.19-0.23 in pre-election surveys, compared to 0.28-0.31 in post-election surveys.

³⁸ The response options for these questions ranged on a scale of 1 to 5: 1 - To a very great extent 2 - To a great extent 3 - To some extent 4 - To a small extent 5 - Not at all

Those who answered 'Don't know' were excluded from the analysis for these questions. In the regression analyses, we reversed the scales of the questions so that higher values indicate a greater sense of representation.

³⁹ The response options for this question ranged on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means 'not at all satisfied' and 10 means 'completely satisfied'. There was also a 'Don't know' response option, and the few who chose it (1.3% of respondents) were excluded from the analysis.

Israeli democracy functions."⁴⁰ Finally, in December 2022, we asked respondents whether they think "Israeli democracy today is robust or not."⁴¹

Third, in two surveys (April and December 2022), we asked respondents to what extent they believe "Israel operates in a democratic-manner today" (April 2022) or "Israel is a democratic country" (December 2022).⁴² Finally, to examine whether the conspiratorial thinking index also predicts normative-value positions regarding Israel's desired character – as distinct from evaluating the political system's functioning – we asked in December 2022 how important it is for respondents to live in a democratic country. Specifically, respondents were asked how important it is for them "to live in a country with democratic rule."⁴³ In total, across our five surveys, we asked different respondents 14 questions dealing with attitudes toward the Israeli political system and democracy.

Figure 6 below presents the 14 regression coefficients of the conspiratorial thinking index in predicting these questions, along with a 95% confidence interval. The analyses are grouped according to the four types of questions mentioned above (representation; satisfaction with the functioning of the political system/Israeli democracy; whether Israel is a democratic country; how important it is to live in a democratic country), where in these analyses we also controlled for the same socio-demographic and political variables mentioned above.

Figure 6 shows that in the first 13 regression coefficients, there is a significant negative correlation with the conspiratorial thinking index: the more Israeli citizens tend to believe in conspiracy theories, they (1) feel that various parties and politicians, as well as the political system, do not represent them; (2) are less satisfied with the functioning of the political system and Israeli democracy; and (3) believe that the State of Israel is not a democratic country. The figure also

⁴⁰ The response options for this question ranged on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means 'very dissatisfied' and 10 means 'very satisfied'. There was also a 'Don't know' response option, and the few who chose it in the different surveys (2.9-3.3% of respondents) were excluded from the analysis.

⁴¹ The response options for this question ranged on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means 'not at all robust' and 10 means 'very robust'. There was also a 'Don't know' response option, and those who chose it (9.1% of respondents) were excluded from the analysis.

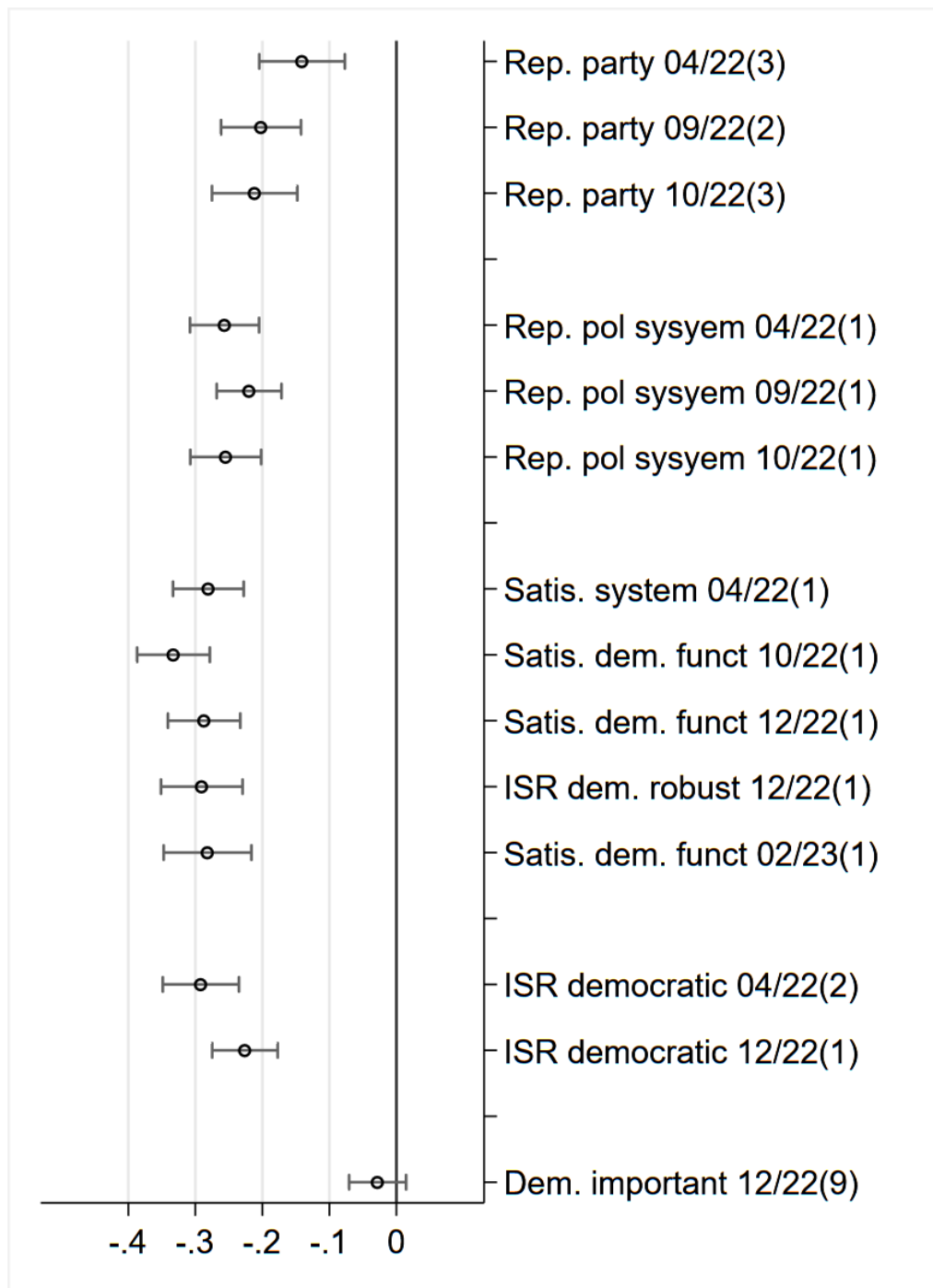
⁴² The response options for this question ranged on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means 'not at all democratic' and 10 means 'very democratic'. There was also a 'Don't know' response option, and the few who chose it (2.3-5.5%) [were excluded from the analysis].

⁴³ The response options for this question ranged on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means 'not at all important' and 10 means 'very important'. There was also a 'Don't know' response option, and the few who chose it (2.1% of respondents) were excluded from the analysis.

shows that in many cases – in 11 out of the first 13 regressions – the conspiratorial thinking index has either the largest (1) or second-largest (2) standardized coefficient.

Finally, the last coefficient, appearing at the bottom of Figure 6, indicates that the conspiratorial thinking index is not a significant predictor of how important it is for citizens to live in a democratic country. Thus, this index is a significant predictor of various performance and representation assessments, but is not correlated with normative-value preferences regarding the importance of living in a democratic state. Therefore, those with a strong tendency toward conspiratorial thinking are similar to the rest of the population in their desire to live in a democratic country, but the way they evaluate democracy's actual functioning is fundamentally different. This may be because from the outset, they have less trust in various institutions and those who work in them, so they also tend to evaluate their actions more negatively. It's also possible that their standards for performance evaluation are different. Future research on this topic could help shed light on this issue

Figure 6. The Extent to Which the Conspiratorial Thinking Scale Predicts Attitudes Toward the Political System in Israel



Legend: The circles represent the regression coefficients of the conspiratorial thinking index, alongside a 95% confidence interval, controlling for the other 13 variables in the model. In parentheses appears the ranking of the standardized regression coefficient of the conspiratorial thinking index.

(4.2.4) Support for Populist Views

"Populism" can be understood as a pattern of rhetoric according to which legitimate authority and sovereignty in the state stem from the general public or "the people" rather than from the establishment and elites, where the latter are perceived as corrupt and as not representing "the people" and their interests.⁴⁴ Accordingly, populist views emphasize the importance of the public and their desires, alongside hostility toward elites, the establishment, and experts.

As mentioned above, populist views are part of a broader anti-establishment perspective, along with the tendency for conspiratorial thinking and Manichean views.⁴⁵ Indeed, a series of studies from the United States have shown that populist views are positively and strongly correlated with the tendency for conspiratorial thinking,⁴⁶ where these measures capture hostility toward elites and the establishment as part of a general perception that "good people" are in a struggle against "evil elites."⁴⁷

To our knowledge, no research has been conducted in Israel to date examining populist attitudes in Israel. As an initial examination of the issue, we asked in two of our surveys several questions taken from surveys conducted in the United States.⁴⁸ The first question below was asked in December 2022 and February 2023, and the two additional questions were asked only in February 2023 [the percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement appears in square brackets]:⁴⁹

1. The opinions of ordinary people are worth more than those of experts and politicians [26% in October, 2022 survey and 26% in February, 2023 survey]
2. The differences between the elites and the people regarding political issues are much greater than the differences within the people themselves [53% in February, 2023 survey]
3. The establishment and elites often act against the public [56% in February, 2023 survey]

⁴⁴ See for example Norris et al. 2020, p. 109.

⁴⁵ See Uscinski et al. 2021; Enders and Uscinski 2021.

⁴⁶ See for example, Aramly and Enders 2022; Enders and Uscinski 2021.

⁴⁷ See Uscinski et al. 2021; Enders and Uscinski 2021.

⁴⁸ The questions were taken from the articles Uscinski et al. 2021, 2022 and Enders and Uscinski 2021.

⁴⁹ The response options ranged on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Somewhat disagree; 3 - Neither agree nor disagree; 4 - Somewhat agree; 5 - Strongly agree). For each question, there was also a sixth option of "Don't know", and these respondents were excluded from the analysis.

Generally, a relatively low percentage of respondents agreed with the first populist statement, compared to a larger percentage – slightly over 50% – who agreed with the two additional populist statements. These agreement rates are lower than those found in recent years in US surveys.⁵⁰

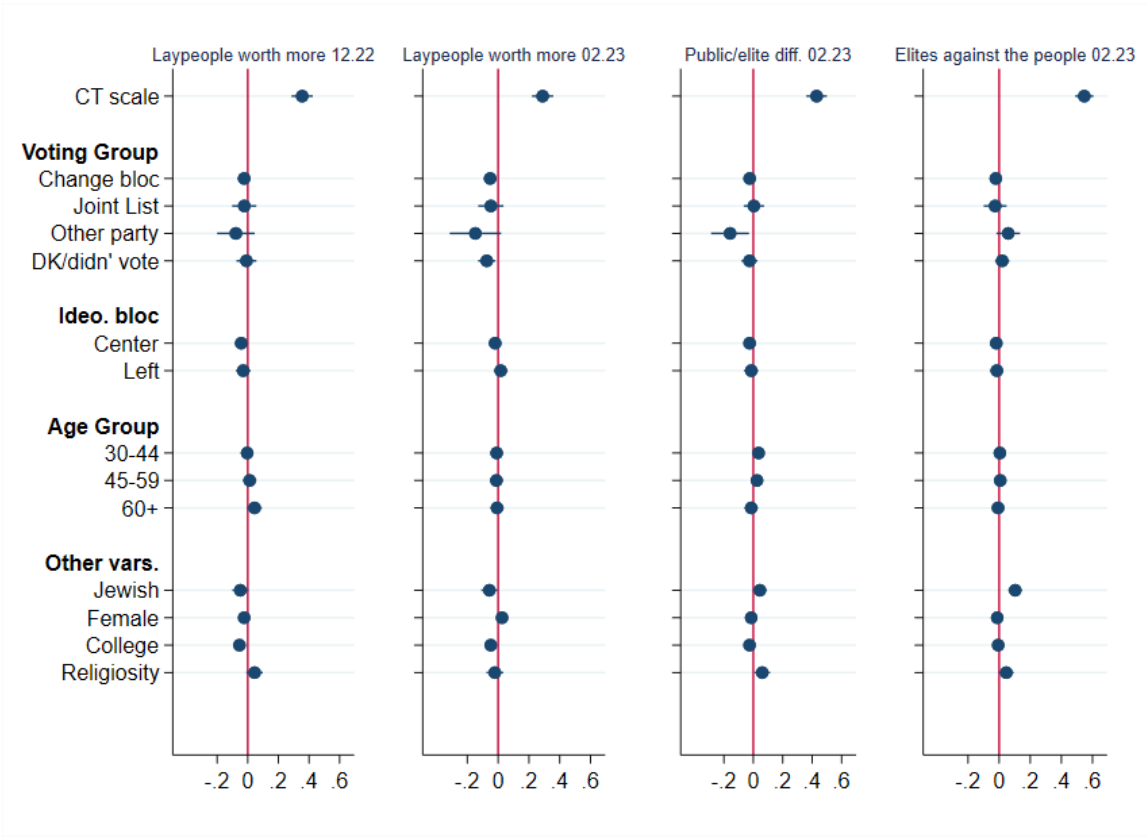
Similar to Figures 3 and 4 above, Figure 7 below presents the results of four multiple linear regression analyses, where the predicted variables are the three populist statements (the first statement was analyzed twice – in the December 2022 survey and February 2023 survey), and the predictor variables include the conspiratorial thinking index along with the 13 different socio-demographic and political variables mentioned above. The estimates for each of the predictor variables are presented together with a 95 percent confidence interval.

Figure 7 clearly shows that the conspiratorial thinking index significantly and positively predicts the various populist statements in both surveys. Moreover, the other socio-demographic and political variables barely predict the various populist statements significantly and systematically, in a way that resembles Figure 2 below, which showed that most of the different socio-demographic and political variables are not significantly and systematically correlated with the conspiratorial thinking index. And because populist attitudes and the tendency for conspiratorial thinking constitute the two main components in the tendency toward anti-establishment attitudes,⁵¹ the findings in Figures 2 and 7 indicate that these are dimensions that are largely distinct, almost orthogonal, to prominent political and ideological positions in Israel.

⁵⁰ For example, in Enders and Usinski's 2021 article (p. 54), 66% agreed with the second populist statement, and in Uscinski et al.'s 2021 article, between 37% and 55% agreed with the first statement.

⁵¹ See Uscinski et al. 2021.

Figure 7. The Extent to Which the Conspiratorial Thinking Index Predicts Populist Attitudes



Legend: CT scale is the conspiratorial thinking index. For additional details, see the explanation in the legend of Figure 2.

(5) Discussion and Summary

In this overview, we conducted, for the first time in Israel, a systematic examination of "conspiratorial thinking," which is the tendency to believe in conspiracy theories and that powerful, unknown forces are working "behind the scenes" against the public. We examined the extent of the tendency toward conspiratorial thinking in Israel, what predicts this tendency, and examined several aspects that this tendency helps predict. This was based on five representative surveys conducted in Israel in 2022 and 2023, which included nearly 8,000 respondents in total.

The overview includes three main findings: (1) Israelis have a significant tendency toward "conspiratorial thinking," with many believing that malicious forces are working behind the scenes against the Israeli public; (2) The tendency toward conspiratorial thinking exists among many populations and major political and social groups in Israel, with almost no difference in this tendency across political-ideological, gender, national, or religiosity divisions; (3) Compared to

Israelis with little tendency toward conspiratorial thinking, Israelis with a strong tendency toward conspiratorial thinking have lower trust in various political and public institutions, lower evaluation of the political system's functioning and Israeli democratic functioning, a feeling that they are not properly represented by the political system, and stronger populist, anti-establishment tendencies.

Generally, the findings of this document suggest that Israelis' tendency toward conspiratorial thinking has significant political and social importance. The strong correlations between the tendency toward conspiratorial thinking and all the various variables above, even while controlling for a range of different socio-demographic and political variables, indicate that this is distinct in relation to important dimensions in Israeli politics of ideology (right-left), nationality (Jews-Arabs), or degree of religiosity (secular-ultra-Orthodox).

However, because these are only cross-sectional analyses, we believe that the above findings should be treated with caution, and that one should be careful about making strong claims regarding causality: thus, for example, a negative correlation between the tendency toward conspiratorial thinking and trust in government or trust in the Supreme Court does not necessarily mean that a change in the tendency toward conspiratorial thinking causally affects trust in government or the Supreme Court, and it is certainly possible that the direction of causality is reversed (that is, that trust in government explains changes in the tendency toward conspiratorial thinking). Additionally, research in the United States shows that the tendency toward conspiratorial thinking correlates with additional variables that we did not control for in our data,⁵² so it is possible that analyses in this document suffer from endogeneity, particularly omitted variables. Future research, especially longitudinal panel studies, could help establish some causal claims regarding the influence of the tendency toward conspiratorial thinking on various variables.

Additional studies could also examine the correlations between the conspiratorial thinking index and a series of additional variables examined in articles in the United States,⁵³ such as support for political violence, attitudes toward different leaders or different political and social groups, or various policy preferences.

⁵² See for example Armaly and Enders 2022; Uscinski et al. 2022.

⁵³ See for example Armaly and Enders 2022.

In conclusion, this overview presents, for the first time, a review of the tendency toward conspiratorial thinking in Israel, and suggests that this tendency is prevalent among many Israelis, and it helps predict a series of variables of political and social importance. Future research regarding these issues is certainly needed to better understand the tendency toward conspiratorial thinking in Israel as well as the possible effects of this tendency.

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(7) Methodological Appendix

Table 2 below contains general information about the five different surveys: the date the survey was run, the survey company that conducted the survey, the number of respondents in the sample, and the maximum margin of error. Additionally, Table 3 below presents the descriptive statistics of basic socio-demographic and political variables in the five surveys we conducted, alongside a comparison to data from the Israeli National Election Study from March 2021,⁵⁴ which is the most up-to-date representative probability survey that includes similar data. In most of our samples, these are fairly small deviations – single-digit percentages – in most socio-demographic and political characteristics. However, and as we noted above at the beginning of the results section, the statistical analyses in this document include the use of weights for the proportion of Arabs, ultra-Orthodox, national-religious, traditional, and secular respondents to compensate for slight deviations in some of the surveys in the proportion of respondents from these groups relative to their proportion in the population, where omitting these weights does not affect the results of the various analyses.

The pages that follow provide details about the various variables we used in the different analyses in the document, including details about how the political and socio-demographic variables were created.

⁵⁴ See in the article: <https://www.tau.ac.il/~ines>.

Table 2. Details of the Different Surveys

Survey no.	Survey data	Survey company	Total number of respondents (no. of Jewish respondents + no. of Arabs respondents)	Maximal margin of error
1	April 10-14, 2022	<u>Geocartography</u>	1,559 (1,275+284)	2.5%
2	Sept. 22-Oct. 2, 2022	<u>Geocartography</u>	1,671 (1,417+254)	2.4%
3	Oct. 24-27, 2022	<u>iPanel</u>	1,507 (1,204+308)	2.5%
4	Dec. 6-18, 2022	<u>Geocartography</u>	1,543 (1,278+265)	2.5%
5	Feb. 9-14, 2023	<u>iPanel</u>	1,512 (1,204+308)	2.5%

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics: Comparison Between the Different Surveys and a Representative Probability Survey⁵⁵

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics: Comparison Between the Different Surveys and a Representative Probability Survey¹

	April 2022	September 2022	October 2022	December 2022	February 2023	Israel National Election Survey – March 2021
Age (mean, <u>Standard deviation</u>)	40.3(<u>14.9</u>)	40.9(<u>15.3</u>)	40.4(<u>14.4</u>)	41.8(<u>15.3</u>)	40.3(<u>14.5</u>)	47.3(<u>18.0</u>)
Female (% in sample)	55.4%	53.7%	50.7%	54.2%	51.0%	52.2%
Jewish (% in sample)	81.8%	84.8%	80.0%	82.8%	79.6%	81.4%
Any academic education (% in sample)	55.4%	52.8%	50.0%	52.4%	48.5%	47.8%
Religiosity (among Jews in sample)						
Secular	49.8%	46.1%	43.7%	50.9%	43.5%	50.7%
Traditional	25.1%	25.3%	35.0%	24.7%	35.6%	26.9% ⁵⁵
Religious (Modern-Orthodox)	12.1%	13.0%	11.3%	12.4%	11.1%	12.0%
Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox)	13.0%	15.7%	10.0%	12.0%	9.9%	10.4%
Right-left ideological self-placement (% in sample)						
Right	53.1%	57.5%	50.7%	52.5%	49.9%	51.1%
Center	26.0%	23.0%	25.9%	24.6%	28.6%	22.8%
Left	20.9%	19.6%	23.4%	22.9%	21.6%	26.1%

⁵⁵ This category includes both respondents who answered that they are "traditional, religious" and respondents who answered that they are "traditional, not very religious."

Different Variables in the Analyses

The Conspiratorial Thinking Scale

1. Even though we live in a democratic country, in the end, a small number of people always run things
2. The people who really run the country are not known to the public
3. Significant events like wars, economic crises, and election results are controlled by small groups of people working secretly against most citizens
4. Many aspects of our lives are controlled by conspiracies hatched in secret places

Response options for these questions:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
6. Don't know

Questions about trust in various institutions

To what extent do you trust each of the following institutions? The Knesset

To what extent do you trust each of the following institutions? The Government

To what extent do you trust each of the following institutions? The Supreme Court

To what extent do you trust each of the following institutions? The President

To what extent do you trust each of the following institutions? The Police

To what extent do you trust each of the following institutions? The Attorney General

To what extent do you trust each of the following institutions? The Media

To what extent do you trust each of the following institutions? Political parties

To what extent do you trust each of the following institutions? Mayor/Council Head

To what extent do you trust each of the following institutions? The IDF

To what extent do you trust each of the following institutions? The State Attorney's Office

Response options for the questions on trust:

1. I have very high trust
2. I have high trust
3. I have little trust
4. I have no trust at all
5. Don't know

Questions Regarding the Political System

April 2022

In general, to what extent do you feel there is a party and/or politician in the country that represents you?

1. To a very large extent
2. To a large extent
3. To some extent
4. To a small extent
5. Not at all
6. Don't know

In general, to what extent do you feel that the Israeli political system represents you?

1. To a very large extent
2. To a large extent
3. To some extent
4. To a small extent
5. Not at all
6. Don't know

To what extent does Israel currently operate democratically? [Answer options: 0-10, where 0 - not democratic at all and 10 - completely democratic]

How satisfied are you with how the political system in Israel functions today? [Answer options: 0-10, where 0 - not satisfied at all and 10 - completely satisfied]

September 2022

In general, to what extent do you feel there is a party and/or politician in the country that represents you?

7. To a very large extent
8. To a large extent
9. To some extent
10. To a small extent
11. Not at all
12. Don't know

In general, to what extent do you feel that the Israeli political system represents you?

7. To a very large extent

- 8. To a large extent
- 9. To some extent
- 10. To a small extent
- 11. Not at all
- 12. Don't know

October 2022

In general, to what extent do you feel there is a party and/or politician in the country that represents you?

- 13. To a very large extent
- 14. To a large extent
- 15. To some extent
- 16. To a small extent
- 17. Not at all
- 18. Don't know

In general, to what extent do you feel that the Israeli political system represents you?

- 13. To a very large extent
- 14. To a large extent
- 15. To some extent
- 16. To a small extent
- 17. Not at all
- 18. Don't know

In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with how Israeli democracy functions? [Answer options: 0-10, where 0 - very dissatisfied and 10 - very satisfied; Don't know]

December 2022

To what extent do you think Israel is a democratic country? [Answer options: 0-10, where 0 - not democratic at all and 10 - very democratic; Don't know]

In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with how Israeli democracy functions? [Answer options: 0-10, where 0 - very dissatisfied and 10 - very satisfied; Don't know]

In your opinion, is Israeli democracy currently robust or not? [Answer options: 0 - not robust at all; 10 - very robust; Don't know]

How important is it to you to live in a country with democratic governance? [Answer options: 0-10, where 0 - not important at all and 10 - very important; Don't know]

February 2023

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with how Israeli democracy functions? [Answer options: 0-10, where 0 - very dissatisfied and 10 - very satisfied; Don't know]

Populist Attitude Questions

To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

1. The opinions of ordinary people are worth more than those of experts and politicians
2. The differences between the elites and the people regarding political issues are much greater than the differences between the people themselves
3. The establishment and elites often act against the public

Answer options for these questions:

1. Strongly disagree

2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
6. Don't know

Socio-demographic and Political Variables

- Voting Groups: Binary variables for respondents who voted for parties from the "Change Bloc",⁵⁶ respondents who voted for the Joint List (first three surveys) or Hadash-Ta'al or Balad (in the last two surveys); respondents who voted for any other party that received less than 1% of the votes; or respondents who indicated they don't know who they voted for or didn't vote in the last elections – compared to respondents who voted for parties from the "Netanyahu Bloc".⁵⁷
- Ideological Blocs: Binary variables for respondents with self-identified ideological affiliation of "Center", and respondents with self-identified ideological affiliation of "Left" – compared to respondents with self-identified ideological affiliation of "Right".⁵⁸
- Age Groups: Binary variables for respondents aged 30-44, respondents aged 45-59, and respondents aged 60 and above – compared to respondents aged 18-29.
- Gender: Binary variable for women compared to men
- Nationality: Binary variable for Jewish respondent compared to Arab respondent

⁵⁶ In the first three surveys - before the November 2022 elections - this refers to Yesh Atid, Blue and White, Yamina, Labor, Yisrael Beiteinu, New Hope, Meretz, and Ra'am. In the last two surveys - after the November 2022 elections - this refers to Yesh Atid, HaMachane HaMamlachti, Yisrael Beiteinu, Ra'am, Labor, Meretz, and HaBayit HaYehudi.

⁵⁷ In the first three surveys, this refers to Likud, Shas, United Torah Judaism, and Religious Zionism. In the last two surveys, this refers to Likud, Religious Zionism-Otzma Yehudit, Shas, and United Torah Judaism.

⁵⁸ The classification was based on responses to a question about self-identified ideological affiliation on a left-right ideological scale of 1 to 7 (1 - Right; 4 - Center; 7 - Left), where respondents who answered 1-3 were defined as "Right," respondents who answered 4 were defined as "Center," and respondents who answered 5-7 were defined as "Left."

- Academic Education: Binary variable for respondents with academic education compared to those without academic education
- Level of Religiosity: Continuous variable of 1- Secular, 2- Traditional, 3- Religious, and 4- Ultra-Orthodox [for Jewish respondents] or Very Religious [for non-Jewish respondents].

An Overview, May 2023

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