



**Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem
(ARIJ)**

The Demographic Distribution of the Political Pattern of the 2021 Israeli Elections

June 2021



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Preface

There are several figures for the actual number of Israeli settlers in the illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank. According to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS) statistics of 2017, the yearly growth rate of the settlers' population (excluding occupied East Jerusalem) is 1.75 times more than that of Israel's population, 3.5 percent in Israeli settlements in the West Bank vs. 2% in Israel.

According to the latest edition (January 2021) of the "West Bank Jewish Population Stats Report commissioned annually by the former Knesset member, "Yaakov Ketzaleh (Katz), the population of Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank reached 475,48 by 2021; a 2.62% growth in 2020, and a 17% growth in the past five years. The figures exclude the 350,000 Israeli settlers in occupied East Jerusalem, which makes the total population of settlers 825,481. ¹

Data derived from Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics - "Statistical Abstract of Israel 2019" showed that the population of Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank (excluding those living in settlements in occupied East Jerusalem) is found to be 551,679, which makes the total number of settlers' population 876,679².

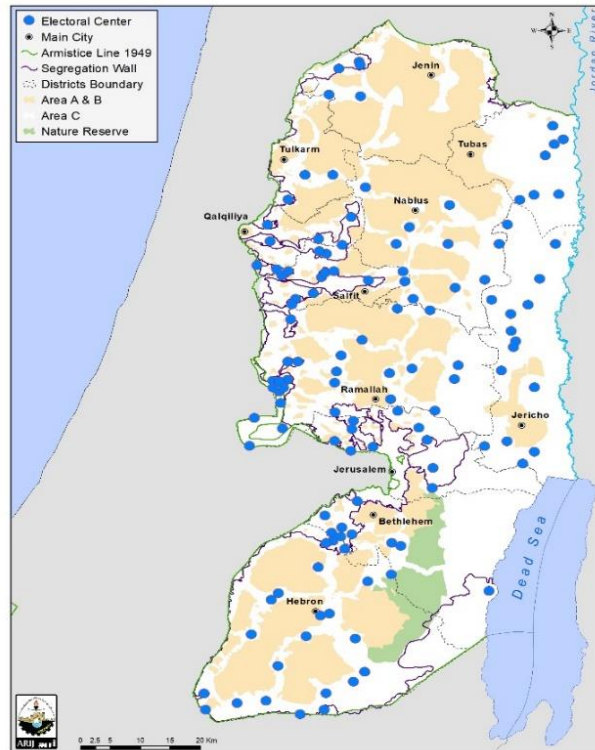
In order to calculate the number of Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank by utilizing the latest Israeli election results (of March 2021) , ARIJ used the number of Israeli settlers who were eligible to vote (337,752) (18+), adding to it 212,527 (settlers' population under 18 years old) and Jerusalem's settlers' population (Katz, 2021) , the result was 875,279. These estimations show that the population of Israeli settlers are close to a million.

The use of election data to reveal the true number of Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank underscores Israel's ongoing efforts to conceal this figure. Israel's fast rising settler population and continued expansion of settlements had a severe influence on Palestinians' living conditions, resulting in the loss of property and means of income, access to services restrictions, and a variety of physical security risks. Israel also uses this growing settler population number as a justification to keep control of huge settlement blocs and push for land swaps with Palestinians rather than demolishing settlements in the occupied West Bank.

¹Yaakov "Ketzaleh" Katz, West Bank Jewish Population Stats 2021 <http://westbankjewishpopulationstats.com/>

² Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS), 2019

The results of the latest Israeli elections (March 2021) showed that out of 12,195 electoral centers, 1367 electoral centers were in 128 Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including settlements in Jerusalem. Polling stations in the 18 Israeli settlements in occupied East Jerusalem were not included because they were listed under the heading "Jerusalem" with no specific location, and were thus not included in the analysis.



Map 1: Electoral centers in Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank

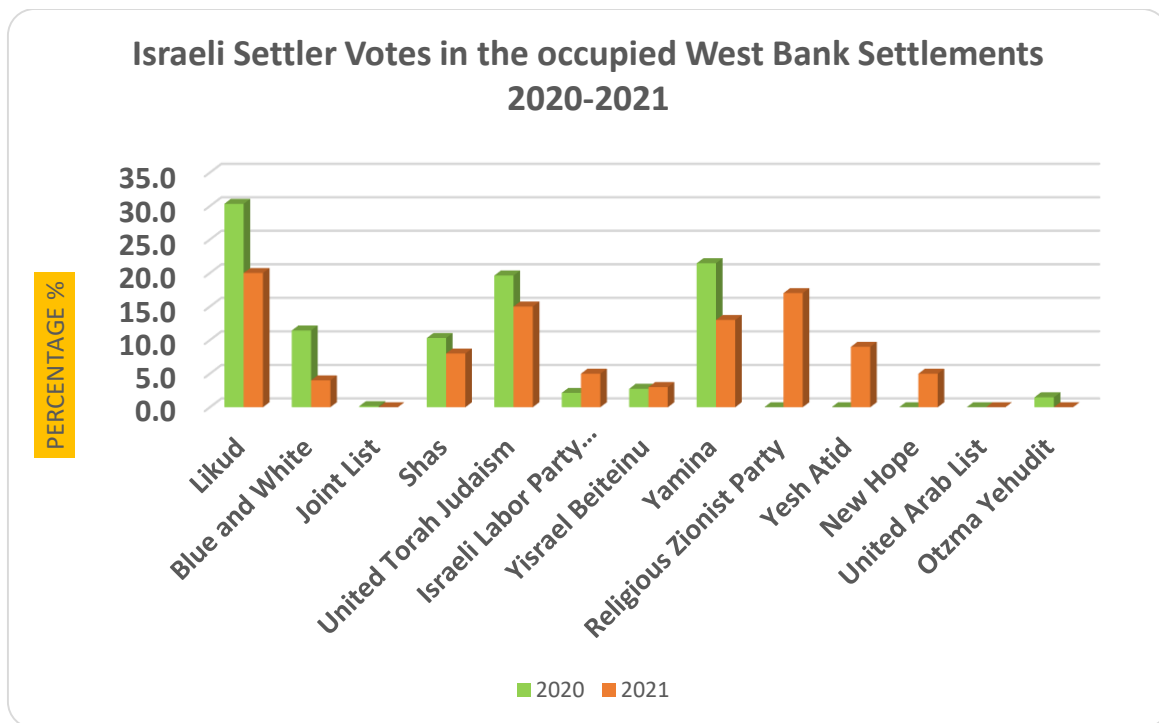
337,752 Israeli settlers, 71% of the total Israeli settlers' population in the oPt (excluding those in occupied East Jerusalem) were eligible to vote. A total of 249,939 votes were cast, representing a 74% voter turnout (compared to 67.4% in Israel).

In Israel, all eligible voters were 6,578,084³ out of the total population of 9,070,289⁴, which translates to 72.5% of the whole population; including 337,752 settlers (a 71% of the total settler population) living in the oWB⁵ who were eligible to vote. Graph 1

³ (24th Knesset elections website 2021)

⁴ (ICB 2019)

⁵ This number excludes Israeli settlers living in Israeli settlements in occupied East Jerusalem



Graph 1: Comparison between Israeli settlers' votes in the occupied West Bank Settlements - by political party (2020- 2021)

Israeli Elections' Results - 2020 VS 2021

Looking back to the year 2020, Netanyahu won 30.3% of the settlers' votes, while Yamina Party leader, Naftali Bennett, came in second with 21.5%. However, Netanyahu's percentage fell to 20% this year (2021), receiving 50,185 votes which translates to 1.4 seat⁶. Smotrich, who was running for the first time as a party leader for the Religious Zionist, obtained 17% of the settlers' votes (42,604 votes), which translates to 1.2 seat. Followed by Yaakov Litzman, the head of the United Torah Judaism party (UTJ), with 15% of the votes (36,668 votes), which makes 1 seat. The UTJ collaborated with Shas party, and focused significantly on ultra-Orthodox voters in the West Bank settlements of Modi'in Illit and Beitar Illit, which are the two largest. UTJ party received 19,309 votes in the settlement of Modi'in Illit (West Ramallah Governorate), while Shas party received 4,289 votes. UTJ received 12,752 votes in Beitar Illit settlement (in the so-called Gush Etzion Bloc in Bethlehem Governorate), while Shas party received 5,734 votes. The Yamina party, came in fourth place, with 13% of the votes (31,232 votes), 0.9 seat and the votes were mostly notable in the so-called Gush Etzion settlement bloc.

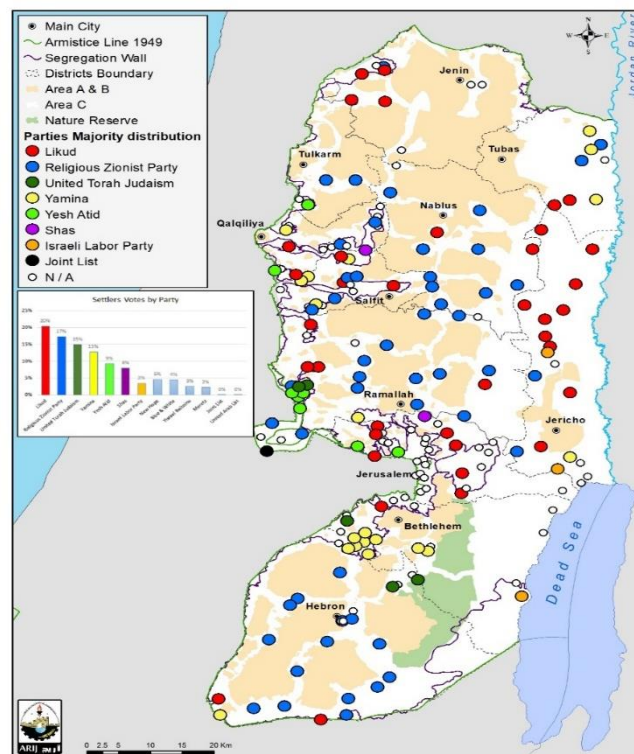
81% of Israeli settlers' votes (excluding those in oEJ) leaned towards the right-wing parties (Likud party, Religious Zionist party, United Torah Judaism party, Yamina party, Yesh Atid party, New Hope party, and Shas party) while 18% leaned towards the center.

⁶ Votes per seat = 36,210 (Israeli Knesset website, 2021)

The number of votes gained by the right wing parties is 214,371, which translates to roughly six seats out of the 82 seats won by right wing parties in Israel as a whole. However, Israeli Center parties gained 31,330 votes from settlers, which translates to only 0.86 seats out the total 34 seats gained by the center in Israel. In general, Settlers gained 6.9 seats out of the total 120 Israeli seats.

This year's elections were characterized by the dominance of the Religious Zionist party to more polling stations than those for the Likud party. According to ARIJ analysis, Religious Zionist party dominated 51 out of the 128 Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank with a percentage of 40, while Likud only led 37 of the settlements, which makes 29%.

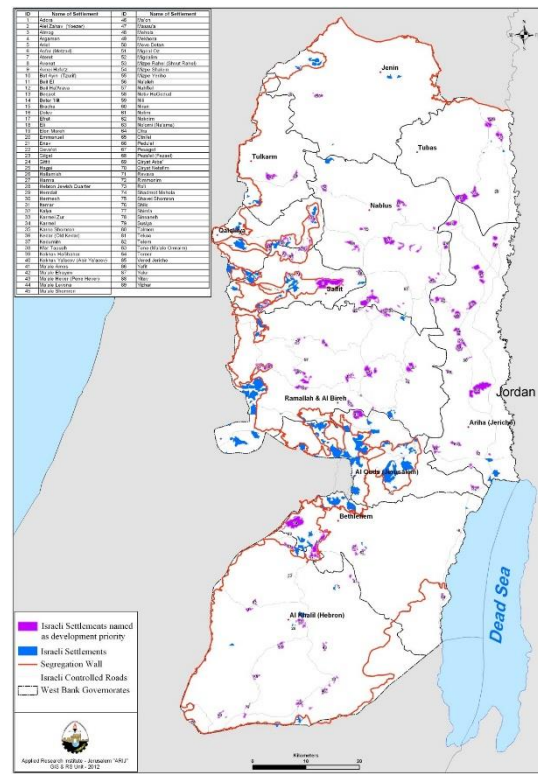
Analysis also showed that the Likud party, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, dominated the Jordan Valley Settlements, while the Religious Zionists dominated the Central Heights Settlements (Which are located in the governorates of Nablus, Ramallah, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron).



Map 2: Israeli settlers' votes by party in the occupied West Bank

The domination of the Likud party in the Jordan Valley settlements may be attributed to the incentives given to them by the government. Settlements in the Jordan Valley area benefited widely from its classification as one of the "National Priority Areas", which is a project aimed to give a series of benefits and financial allocations to the designated areas by which all 39 Jordan Valley settlements were included. Regarding that, the head of the council of the illegal Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley, David Lahiani said that no other government since

former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's has done as much for the Jordan Valley as Netanyahu's government.⁷

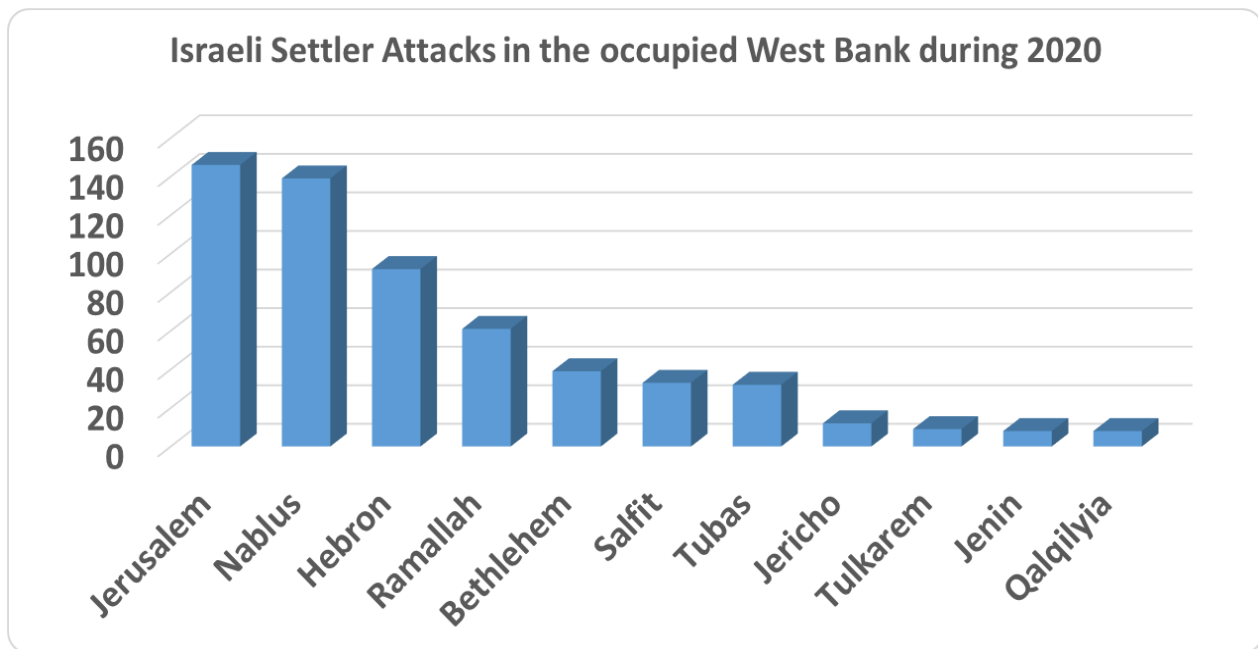


Map 3: Israeli settlements included in the National Priority Plan

Israeli Settler Attacks in the occupied West Bank

A look at the locations targeted by Israeli settlers revealed that Ultra-religious parties dominated the Central heights settlements. The governorate of Nablus continues to be the most hit by settler violence, accounting for 24% of all events in 2020, the majority of which occurred in the Palestinian communities surrounding the settlement of Yitzhar and its surrounding outposts, Shilo, Elon Moreh and Shevut Rahel. Nablus is followed by the governorates of Hebron and Ramallah, which account for 15% and 11% of all incidents, respectively. The violence is mainly represented in attacks against civilians, historical and religious sites, property assault, and trees uprooting.

⁷ 70 W. Bank settlements on national priority list. The Jerusalem Post | JPost.com. (n.d.). <https://www.jpost.com/diplomacy-and-politics/70-w-bank-settlements-on-national-priority-list>.



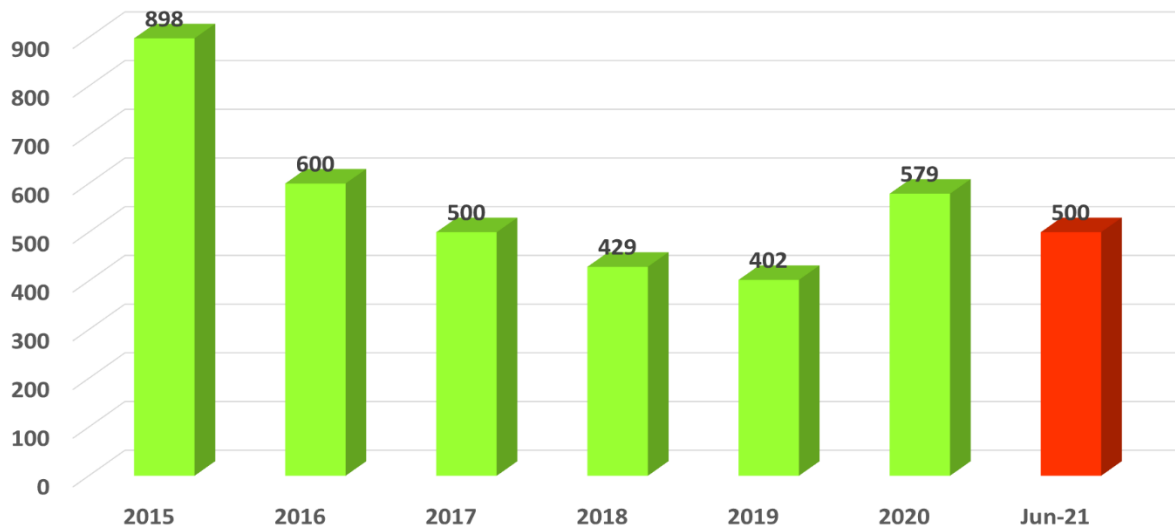
Graph 2: Israeli Settler Attacks in the occupied West Bank during 2020

Israeli Settler Attacks over the years

Fears increase as the rate of Israeli settler attacks escalates in the occupied West Bank and has become a continuous nightmare for the Palestinians, especially that these attacks are not only confined to land and property, but also targeted Palestinian civilians under the guise of the so called “Price Tag” policy. This systematic revenge policy is aimed at the Palestinian population all over the West Bank territory and to pressure the Israeli Government to not make concessions with regard to settlement building in the occupied Palestinian land. Additionally, with the absence of the Israeli deterrence of settler attacks, this price tag policy has increased year after year, and has become a matter of concern that these settler groups will control the reins and thus put pressure on the Israeli government to impose more facts on the ground.

The graph below shows that over the past few years, settler attacks have been on the rise, most specifically during the first half of 2021 compared to previous years. From January to June 2021, there were 500 Israeli settlers’ attacks documented, which is double the number of attacks carried out by settlers throughout the whole year, last year (2020). Graph 3

Israeli Settler Violence in the occupied West Bank (2015-2021)



Graph 3: Israeli Settler Violence in the occupied West Bank per year (2015-June 2021)

The case of East Jerusalem settlements:

Although east Jerusalem settlements have been excluded from the analysis, it is worth mentioning that Israel considered Jerusalem (East and West) as one entity. Results showed that the biggest percentage of votes in Jerusalem area leaned towards the right-wing. United Torah Judaism earned the most votes in Jerusalem, with 24%, followed by Likud party (21%), Shas party (16%), Religious Zionism party (9%) and Yamina party (7%). Furthermore, the settlers' violence in Jerusalem is even more severe than in Nablus or any other Governorate in the occupied West Bank, as shown in the graph above. The analysis also showed that there were 741 electoral centers in Jerusalem, out of the 1367 electoral centers in the occupied West Bank (including Jerusalem).

The Newly elected Israeli Government's view on settlements

On June 13, 2021, the thirty-sixth government of Israel was formed, by which Yamina's Naftali Bennett was named as Prime Minister who will serve until August 27, 2023⁸, when he will hand over to Yesh Atid's Yair Lapid, who will stay until November 20, 2025⁹.

Naftali Bennett, once formerly served as the head of the Yesha Council, the main political representative group for Israeli settlers in the oWB, made annexation of the Palestinian

⁸ <https://m.jpost.com/israel-news/politics-and-diplomacy/israels-36th-govt-here-is-the-expected-list-of-new-cabinet-ministers-670894>

⁹ "Bennett to announce forming gov't coalition with Lapid". The Jerusalem Post. Retrieved 2 June 2021.

territory (WB, EJ and the Golan heights) which was occupied by Israel in 1967, a prominent part of his political agenda.¹⁰

Naftali Bennett opposes the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian issue, which calls for the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. "As long as I have any power and control, I won't hand over one centimeter of land of the Land of Israel. Period," he stated in a February 2021 interview.¹¹

Last year, Bennett, then the defense secretary, stated, as Netanyahu's government pushed to press ahead with West Bank annexation and settlement construction in the last months of Trump's presidency, "The building momentum in the country must not be stopped, even for a second."¹²

In his speech in Knesset on June 13, Naftali Bennett explained that he will "ensure the national interest in Area C" as well as his will to "strengthen the building of communities across the Land of Israel" including the settlements of the West Bank. His government will support settlement construction in all regions of the occupied West Bank, including area C, and will raise interest in this area after years of neglect.¹³

The Israeli settlers' vote in the 2021 Israeli election has proven to be of little consequence to reshape the political scene of any Israeli government. The results reflected their political influence for all political parties with 7 seats at best (5.9% of total seats-120-of the Knessett). The right and far right parties that ran the election race swept 81% of the total votes, which shed a light on a fact that the majority of the Israeli voters (not only the settlers) are turning toward the right and extreme right in their views concerning the "Two State Solution".

¹⁰ Lubell, Maayan. "Naftali Bennett: The Right-Wing Millionaire Who May End Netanyahu Era." Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 30 May 2021, www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-politics-bennett-idAFKCN2DB0EO.

¹¹ 70 W. Bank settlements on national priority list. The Jerusalem Post | JPost.com. (n.d.). <https://www.jpost.com/diplomacy-and-politics/70-w-bank-settlements-on-national-priority-list>.

¹² Lubell, M. (2021, May 30). Naftali Bennett: The right-wing millionaire who may end Netanyahu era. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/naftali-bennett-right-wing-millionaire-who-may-end-netanyahu-era-2021-05-30/>.

¹³ Bennett's full speech to Knesset - Read it here. The Jerusalem Post | JPost.com. (n.d.). <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/bennetts-full-speech-to-knesset-read-it-here-670913>.