

# 41% of Israel's Jews favour segregation

- Poll reveals widespread anti-Arab sentiment
- Academics warn of racism 'becoming mainstream'

**Chris McGreal in Jerusalem**

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**[The Guardian](#)**

A poll of attitudes among Israel's Jews towards their country's Arab citizens has exposed widespread racism, with large numbers favouring segregation and policies to encourage Arabs to leave the country.

The poll found that more than two-thirds of Jews would refuse to live in the same building as an Arab. Nearly half would not allow an Arab in their home and 41% want segregation of entertainment facilities.

The survey also found 40% of Israel's Jews believe "the state needs to support the emigration of Arab citizens", a policy advocated by some far-right parties in the run-up to next week's general election.

The poll was conducted by a respected Israeli organisation, Geocartographia, for the Centre for the Struggle Against Racism, founded by Arab-Israeli academics. "Racism is becoming mainstream," said the centre's director, Bachar Ouda. "When people talk about transfer [removal] or about Arabs as a demographic timebomb no one raises their voice against such statements.

"This is a worrisome phenomenon. The time has arrived for the Jewish population, who experienced what racism is on its flesh, to wake up and change its way."

Among the poll's other findings was that 63% of Jewish Israelis consider their country's Arab citizens a "security and demographic threat to the state". Some 18% said they felt hatred when they heard someone speaking Arabic, and 34% agreed with the statement that "Arab culture is inferior to Israeli culture".

An Arab-Israeli member of parliament, Taleb el-Sana, said he was not surprised by the findings.

"This shows we're not talking about a few people, but rather, a worrying phenomenon that places question marks over the Zionist movement," he said.

Mr Sana said polls that show anti-Semitism in other countries are greeted in Israel with a frenzy of denunciations.

"Yet when it happens at their home, they're quiet, and that's why this is a two-fold failure - they are racist, and they're also not attempting to address their own racism," he said.

Some Israelis have explained hostile attitudes toward Arabs not as racism but as stemming from years of conflict and religious differences. But Ahmed Tibi, another Arab member of parliament, said Israeli politics fuels racism.

"Overall, it pays to be racist in Israel because you don't pay a price for it and you can always explain it away by a security need and a self-defence mechanism," he said. "Racists have a long time ago moved from the street to government benches."

Far-right parties running in next week's general election in Israel have built significant support with anti-Arab platforms.

The Yisrael Beiteinu party advocates redrawing the border to place about 500,000 Arab-Israelis inside a Palestinian state. Yisrael Beiteinu is expected to win about 10 seats in the 120-seat parliament, meaning it could hold the balance of power. Another right-wing coalition is expected to take a similar number of seats.

Haaretz newspaper reported this week that the Kadima party, favoured to win the election, decided not to include an Arab in a viable position on its election list because it would cost the party several seats.