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Public confidence in government bodies rises, drops for MKs

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Israelis showed increased confidence in the performance of the various public institutions last year, but not Knesset members or the cabinet, according to the latest Public Sector Performance Index.

According to the survey, some 65 percent of the public lacks confidence in its MKs, with only 13 percent expressing confidence in them. Some 64 percent have no confidence in the ministers, compared to only 15% who believe in them. Sixty-eight percent of the public lacks faith in the political parties.

The index, which has been published since 2001, measures the performance of government bodies from Israelis' perspective.

The survey on which the index is based is conducted by Prof. Eran Vigoda-Gadot, who heads the Center for Public Management and Policy at the University of Haifa, alongside Prof. Shlomo Mizrahi from the Department of Public Police and Administration at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

Confidence in politicians has fluctuated over recent years. In 2012, on a scale of 1 to 5, the Knesset rated 1.94 on the index, while the political parties came in at 1.79. In 2013, however, confidence soared, with the Knesset receiving a 2.45 rating and the parties 2.29. This faith waned in 2014, with the Knesset rating 2.32 and the parties 2.12.

Vigoda-Gadot explains the high level of confidence in elected officials in 2013 as reflecting hope and expectations of the new government formed that year. This confidence eroded as 2014 wore on. In general, elected officials in Israel always rank low in public opinion, along with the banks.

The security services, however, consistently rank high on the confidence scale. Confidence in the Israel Defense Forces rose in 2014 – to 4.15 for IDF soldiers; 4.09 for officers and commanders; and 3.56 for the IDF Spokesman's Office. Members of the Shin Bet security service get a 4.15 rating, also a rise from the previous year.

The lowest-ranking members of the security services are the police, whose rating rose in 2014 – but only to 2.95 – while the highest scoring are those who serve in the Mossad, with a grade of 4.21. The Shin Bet as an institution got a 4.1 rating, while the IDF scored 3.94.

The index also measures the public's satisfaction with public services. Between the years 2009-2012, there was a downtrend in public satisfaction. But over the past two years, the trend seems to have reversed, although in general satisfaction is still low to middling.

The biggest drop in satisfaction was registered by the Israel Post postal service, which plunged from a 3.72 rating in 2012 to 3.11 in 2014 – its lowest rating since the research began in 2001. The Israel Electric Corporation's rating rose from 3.09 in 2013 to 3.34 last year.

Topping the public satisfaction ratings was the Israel Airports Authority, with 3.64.

The survey also gauged public attitudes toward the public sector. The feeling that public administration seeks to balance budgets at the expense of proper consideration for the weaker sectors got a slightly higher rating in 2013, 3.10, compared to 3.00 in 2013. However, the public also thought the public sector was doing a bit more in terms of helping the weak – rating this opinion at 2.52 in 2014, compared to 2.35 in 2013.