



# Israel

## State of Israel



## Key Facts



**World Freedom Press Global Index Ranking (Overall):** Ranked 88 (30.80)

**Head of State / Head of Government:** President Reuben RIVLIN (since 27 July 2014) & Prime Minister Binyamin NETANYAHU (since 31 March 2009, most recently reformed on 15 May 2015)

**Capital city:** Jerusalem

**Population:** 8,424,904 (July 2017 est.)

**Official Language(s):** Hebrew

**Ethnic Groups:** Jewish 74.4% (of which Israel-born 76.9%, Europe/America/Oceania-born 15.9%, Africa-born 4.6%, Asia-born 2.6%), Arab 20.9%, other 4.7% (2018 est.)

**Currency:** Israeli new shekel

**Gross domestic product (PPP):** 350.9 billion USD (2017)

**Internet penetration:** 79.8% (July 2016 est.)

**Most trusted medium of information:** N/A

**Legal System:** mixed legal system of English common law, British Mandate regulations, and Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious laws.

**Political system:** parliamentary democracy

**Journalists Killed/Imprisoned:**

**Media Environment:** state broadcasting network, operated by the Israel Broadcasting Authority (IBA), broadcasts on 2 channels, one in Hebrew and the other in Arabic; 5 commercial channels including a

channel broadcasting in Russian, a channel broadcasting Knesset proceedings, and a music channel supervised by a public body; multi-channel satellite and cable TV packages provide access to foreign channels; IBA broadcasts on 8 radio networks with multiple repeaters and Israel Defense Forces Radio broadcasts over multiple stations; about 15 privately owned radio stations; overall more than 100 stations and repeater stations.

**Media Issues:** The Israeli media are free to be outspoken, which is rare in the Middle East. Nonetheless, despite the existence of independent media, journalists are subjected to “military censorship,” orders banning coverage of certain subjects, private-sector lawsuits designed to gag them, and open hostility from members of the government. The Israeli parliament has begun considering a proposed amendment under which recording or disseminating photos or videos of serving Israeli soldiers with the demonstrable aim of “undermining the spirit of IDF soldiers and residents of Israel” or “intending to harm state security” would be punishable by 5 to 10 years in prison. Because of self-censorship, there is little or no coverage of the reality of life in the Palestinian territories. Foreign freelancers often have difficulties in obtaining or renewing accreditation. The Israel Defense Forces often violate the rights of Palestinian journalists, especially when they are covering demonstrations in the West Bank or Gaza Strip. Two Palestinian journalists were killed by IDF snipers and dozens were wounded while covering the “March of Return” protests in the Gaza Strip in 2018. Under Israel’s system of administrative detention, Palestinian journalists can be held indefinitely without formal charge and without notification of a lawyer, on the grounds that they are inciting violence or cooperating with terrorist organizations. The IDF have harassed or closed many Palestinian media outlets in recent years for allegedly inciting violence.

## **Popular Forms of Media Consumption**

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**Print:** Israelis are active news consumers. Mainstream Hebrew newspapers garner an estimated one million daily readers out of a population of less than eight million. The pluralistic makeup of Israeli society is reflected in the press landscape, which includes more than a dozen daily newspapers and a wide range of weeklies and news websites serving readers from various religious, ethnic, and linguistic groups. The major newspapers are privately owned, and some freely criticize government policies and aggressively pursue cases of official corruption.

**Television:** A diverse selection of broadcast media is available in Israel, although ownership concentration among private stations is a growing concern. Most Israelis subscribe to cable, satellite, or digital terrestrial television services that provide access to international stations. Cellcom TV, a competing service providing multichannel television over the internet. The prominence of the state-run Israel Broadcasting Authority (IBA) in the television market has declined significantly in recent years due to competition from private television and radio outlets, continuing political interference in the content of IBA programming, and poor management.

**Social Networks/Digital Media:** Israel has one of the region’s highest rates of internet usage, at 79 percent as of 2015. More than half of all internet users take active part in social-media sites, and a number of online news and information websites have sprung up in recent years. The government generally does not restrict internet access, although blocking of certain data on applications like Google Maps, as well as surveillance of internet service providers and telecommunications services, is carried out, ostensibly for security purposes.