



# Perception of Excellence During Wartime

## Opinion Surveys of the Israeli Public and High School Students

After two years of crisis and war, we wished to examine whether there have been changes in public perceptions of excellence, success, dreams, and concerns about the future. We assumed that perspectives would shift or at least be influenced by the prolonged state of emergency in the country. Prior to the war, Israelis viewed high-tech, the military, medicine, and science as fields in which Israel excels. High school students regarded mathematics and English as subjects to be taken seriously in order to realize their future dreams. Students in the five-unit track tended to believe they were capable of meeting the challenge and were on the path to success.

To explore this, we commissioned two research and survey institutes (Dialogue and IPanel) to conduct two surveys in May and August 2024. The first survey targeted a representative sample of the Israeli public, repeating questions from a 2022 survey conducted ahead of "Israeli Excellence Week." The second survey targeted a representative sample of Israeli teenagers as the 2024-2025 school year was about to begin.

### Main findings

1. According to Israelis, the fields in which Israel excels in 2024 are high-tech (80.8%), the military (67.8%), medicine (51.2%), and science (44.1%). Fields where Israel excels less include cooking (15.1%), music (10.4%), sports and politics (6.5%), and cinema (4.9%). These findings are remarkably similar to those from the 2022 "Israeli Excellence Week" survey.
2. According to the survey, what drives individuals who excel in Israel is the desire to challenge themselves (68.8%), the aspiration to be the best at what they do (61%), and to develop abilities and develop themselves (59.6%). Less significant motivations include giving of themselves to others (34.9%), enjoying the journey (16.1%), and seeking recognition and attention (14.3%).
3. When asked, "What is your dream? Where do you see yourself in 10 years?" a third of the teens (32%) responded: "High-tech professional." Surprisingly, girls aspire to high-tech careers more than boys. The next most popular responses were "Doctor" (11%), "Military officer" (11%), and "Famous artist or actor" (9%).
4. When asked, "What do you need to study today in school to achieve your dream?", high school students answered: English (61%) and mathematics (50%). Other subjects received low percentages. Students aiming for high-tech careers said mathematics was the most important subject for them (79%).
5. High school students greatly appreciate their parents, with 84% saying that their parents strongly encourage and support them in pursuing their dreams. In contrast, the majority of teens (71%) believe that the education system does not really provide them with the tools they need to succeed in life.
6. Surprisingly, most high-school students (83%) state that they believe the war will not have a significant impact on their ability to achieve their dreams.