

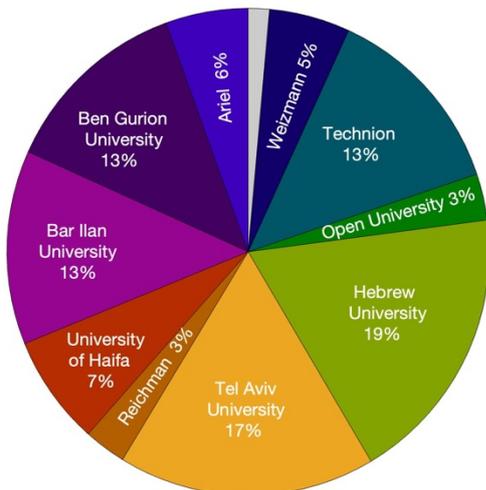
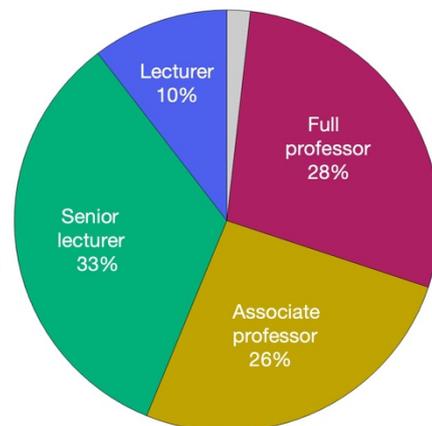
The Potential Effects of the Political Crisis in Israel on Human Capital in Academic Institutions

March 2023

In the past few weeks, following the legislative changes being promoted by Israel's government, concerns have been raised regarding infringement on academic freedom and a brain drain from Israel. Other voices claim that these concerns are baseless and unrealistic. In order to obtain a clear picture of the situation, based on empirical data, the Israel Young Academy conducted a survey of this issue among faculty members at Israeli universities. A short survey was sent to the rectors of all the universities throughout Israel, who disseminated it themselves or via their deans to faculty members. The responses were collected over a ten-day period (March 6–14, 2023), and the results are presented in this document.

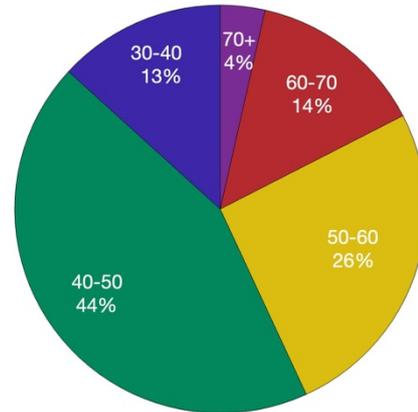
Demographic data

1,948 respondents participated in the survey, of whom 1,916 were senior faculty, including 199 lecturers, 641 senior lecturers, 499 associate professors, 543 full professors, and 34 who defined themselves as "other" (grey in the diagrams), such as emeritus professors. All of the following data relate to the 1,916 senior faculty respondents.



The respondents from the ten Israeli universities at which the survey was distributed by the rectors include 362 from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 335 from Tel Aviv University, 251 from Bar Ilan University, 250 from the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology, 248 from Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 140 from the University of Haifa, 110 from Ariel University, 108 from the Weizmann Institute of Science, 54 from Reichman University and 60 from the Open University. Grey indicates answers received from other institutions.

1,199 of the respondents are men, 647 are women, and 60 preferred not to self-identify. They fall into the following age groups: 30–40 – 250 respondents; 40–50 – 821; 50–60 – 584; 60–70 – 262; 70 or older – 67.



The brain drain danger: Have faculty members changed their attitudes with regard to leaving the country?

Probabilities of leaving

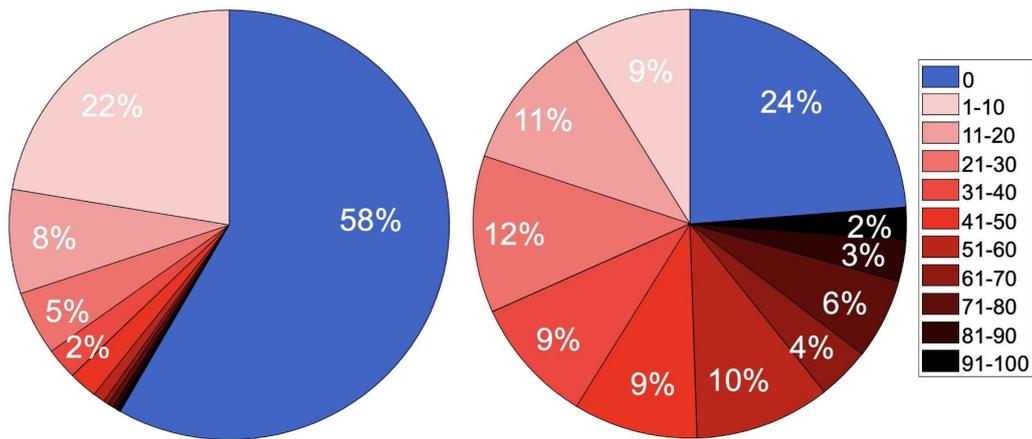
The main question in the survey concerned the probability that the respondents would leave Israel. The respondents were asked to estimate the probability that they would leave Israel due to the current situation (“What are the chances – in percentage points – that you will leave Israel in light of the situation?”). The responses reflect a subjective assessment only, as of when the respondents filled in the questionnaire – the week of March 6–14. At this point in time, 24.1% – 470 respondents – stated that they would not leave Israel; of the remaining 75.9% of the respondents, 31.8% estimated their chances of leaving as 1–30%, 28.6% indicated that they were between 31% and 60%, and the remaining 15.5% estimated the probability of their leaving as greater than 60%.

For the sake of comparison, the respondents were asked to estimate the probability that they would have considered leaving Israel a year ago (“If you had been asked a year ago about the probability of your leaving Israel, what – in percentage points – would your response have been?”). As with the previous question, the responses to this question reflect the respondents’ subjective assessment, and this time in retrospect, in view of the current situation. This is, of course, a limitation of the current survey, but in the absence of previous data on the subject, this question provides information on the respondents’ feelings about the change in their attitude toward leaving Israel.

In response to this question, 58.4% – 1,138 respondents – indicated that, had they been asked a year ago, they would have answered that there was no chance of their leaving Israel. 33.8% estimated that probability a year ago as 1–30%, and the remainder – 7.8% – answered that the chances would have been greater than 30%.

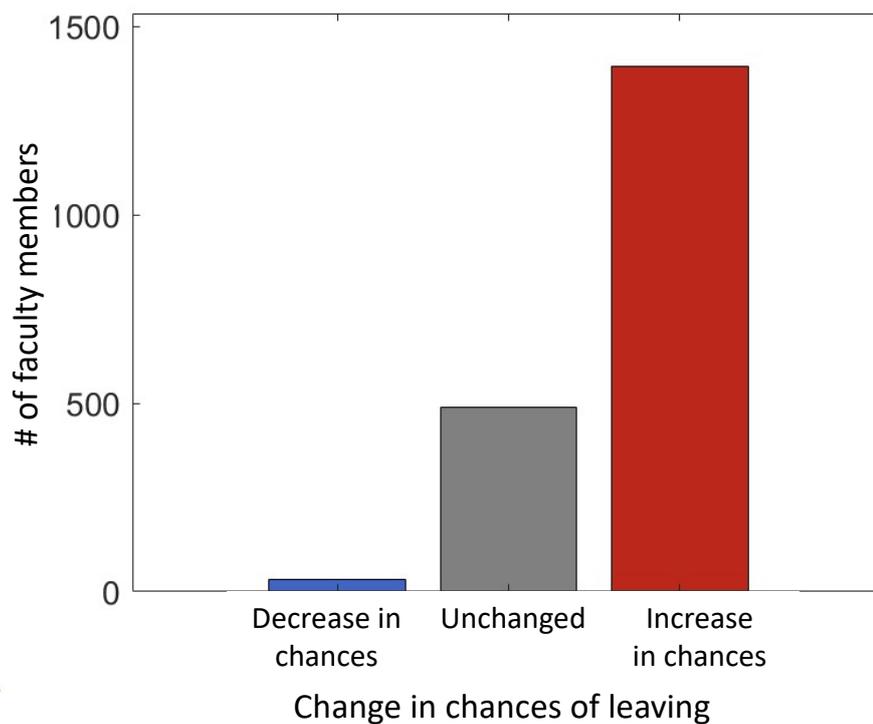
Estimated chances of leaving a year ago

Estimated chances of leaving Israel today

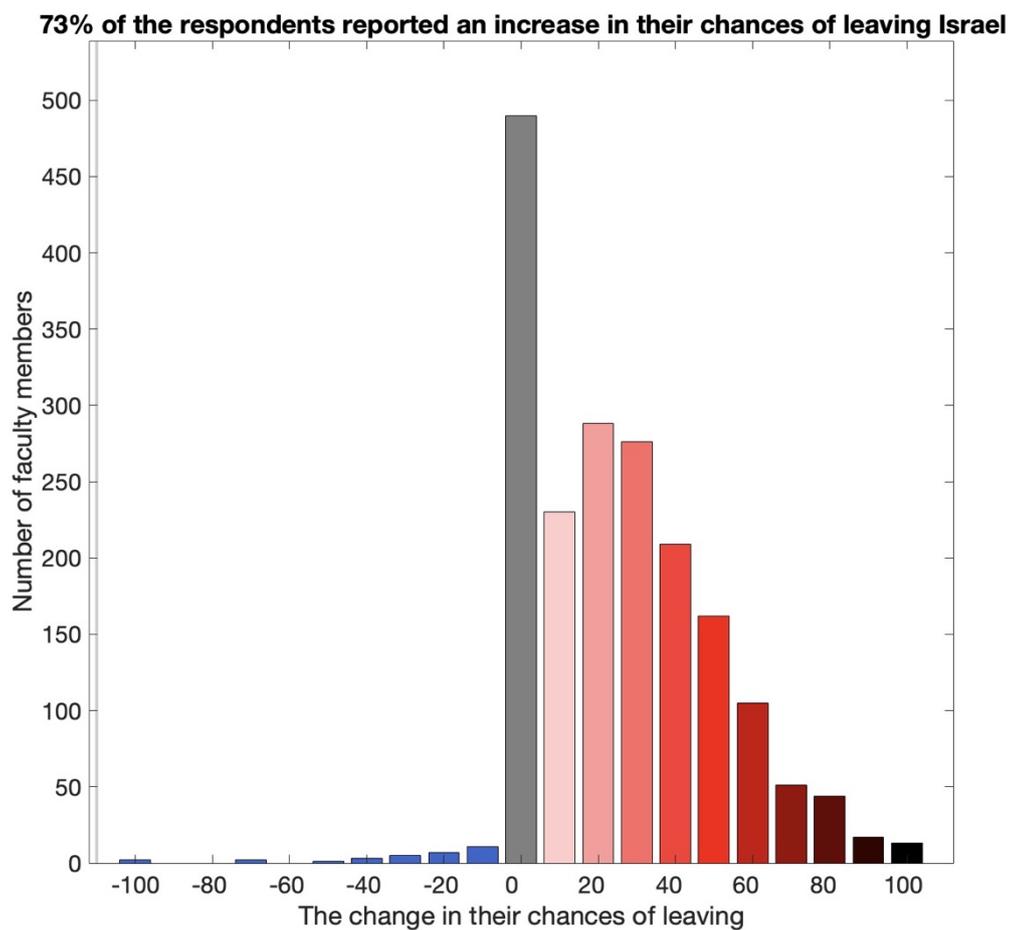


In order to assess the extent of the change per-person, the differences between the respondents' answers were calculated within individual. 73% of the faculty members reported an increase in the chances they would leave Israel, compared to the chances a year ago. On average, the respondents indicated a 35% increase in the probability they would leave. Just 3% of the faculty members reported a decline in the chances that they would leave, while the remainder (24%) reported no change.

The following graph presents the breakdown of the respondents with respect to the extent of the change in their probability of leaving Israel. Those who reported a decline in their chances of leaving are indicated in blue, those who reported an increase – in red, and those who reported no change – in grey.



A more detailed picture is presented in the following graph, showing the extent of the change in the estimates of individual respondents of their chances of leaving Israel. The x axis shows the extent of the change, with the 0 value representing no change, the values to the right representing reported increases in the respondents' probability of leaving Israel, relative to a year ago, and the values to the left representing declines in those chances. The y axis indicates the number of respondents for each degree of change. As the graph shows, 73% of the respondents reported an increase in their chances of leaving Israel, with the increase averaging 35%.

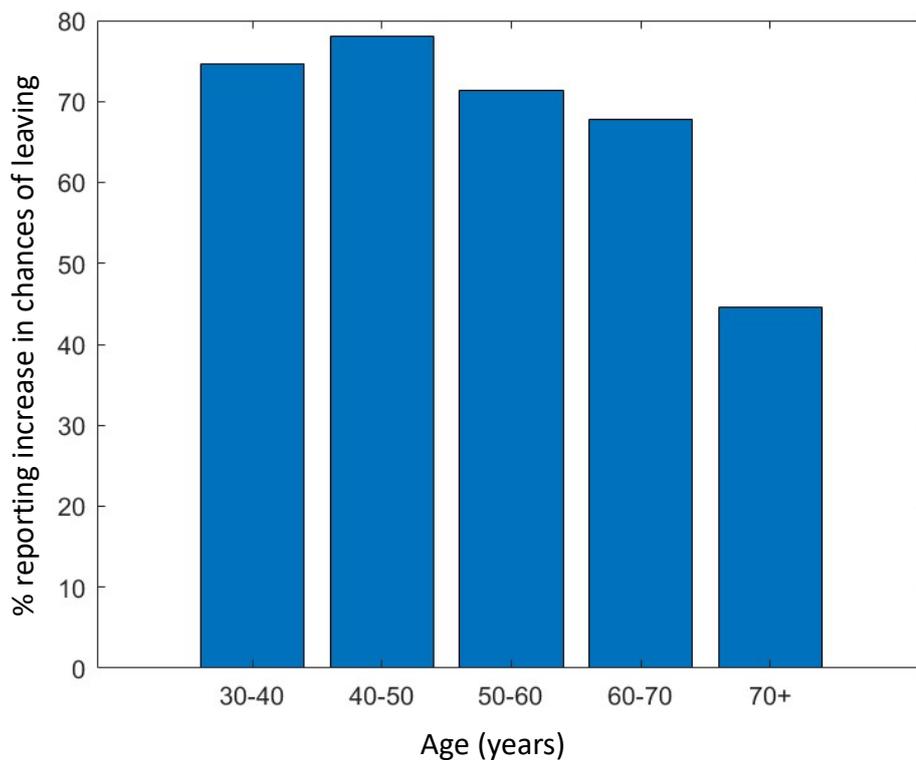


Causes for the changes in faculty members' assessment of their chances of leaving Israel, and breakdown by population groups

Among the faculty members who reported an increased chance of their leaving, 76% reported that the reason for it is the judicial legislation promoted in recent months. The younger scholars, in the 30–50 age range, reported the highest level of increase in their chances of leaving (up to 78%), but the

increase is significant across all the age groups. A clear negative correlation was found between the average age of the respondents' children and the increase in their chances of leaving: 77% of the parents of children under 5 reported increased chances of leaving, compared to 65% of the parents of children aged 15 or older.

The breakdown of the results by age group shows an increase in all the age groups in the respondents' chances of leaving, but it is more pronounced among the younger faculty members.

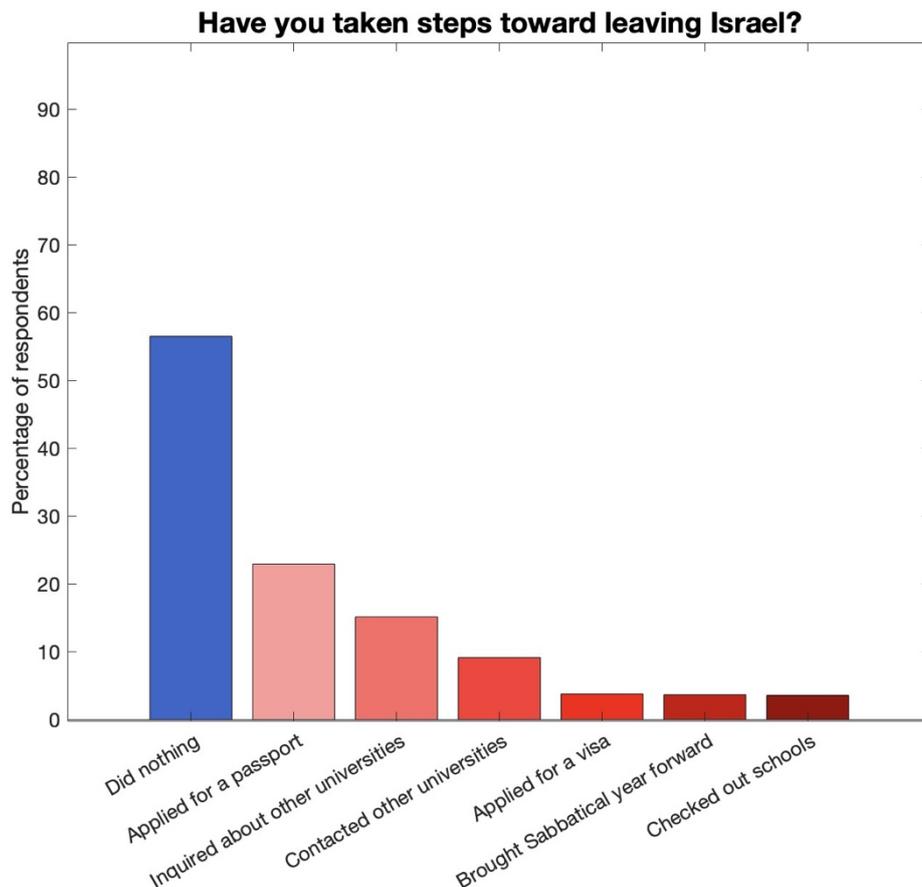


A high percentage of faculty members from all the universities reported an increase in their chances of leaving the country. At most of the universities, the percentage of respondents who reported increased chances of leaving was between 62% and 81%. At Ariel University the figure is 39%. No significant differences were recorded among the various fields of study, with the increase ranging from 67% to 78%.

Concrete steps toward leaving

The survey also probed whether faculty members who reported increased chances of leaving have already taken action in that direction. We first asked how many of the respondents had discussed the possibility of relocating with

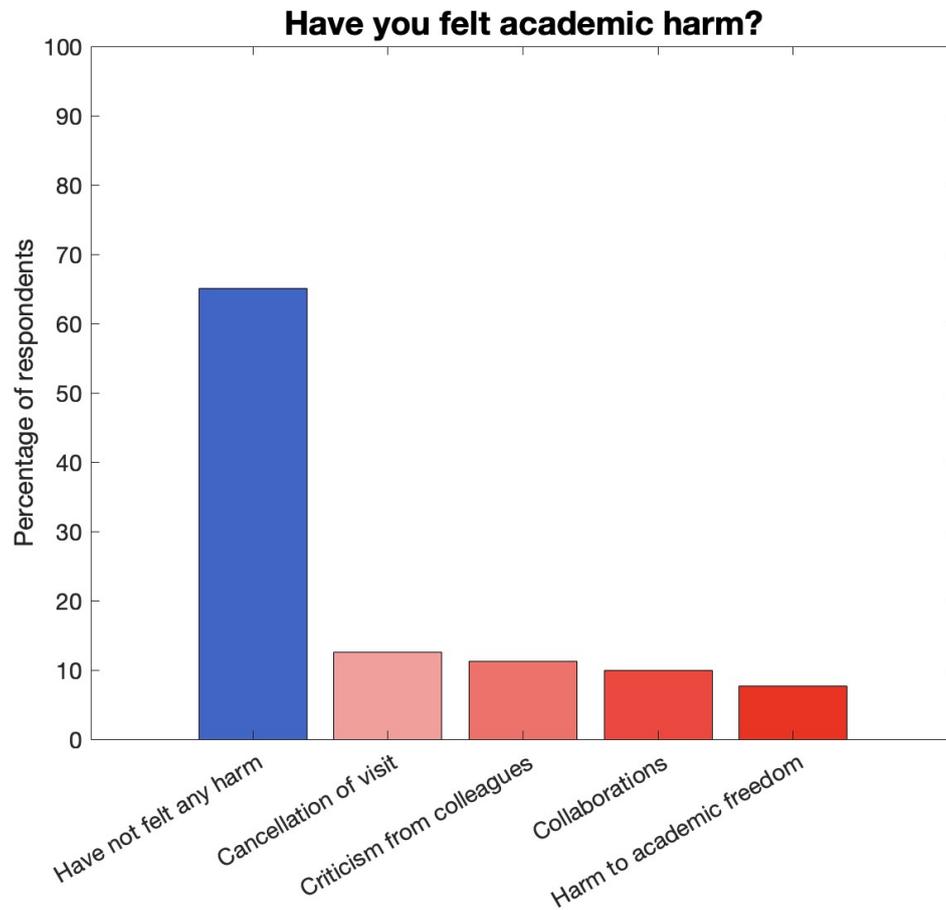
their spouses or close friends, as a more concrete indication of their thoughts about leaving. 95.7% of those who responded that there was some chance of their leaving Israel (i.e., those who did not check 0) reported that they had discussed this with a person close to them. We also asked about actual steps toward moving. 56.5% (1,101) of the respondents had not taken any such steps, but 22.9% (446) had checked into obtaining a passport; 15.1% (294) had begun checking out other universities to consider the possibility of moving, and 9.1% (177) had already contacted other universities. 3.7% (72) had obtained a visa, 3.6% (70) had brought forward their Sabbatical years, and 3.5% (69) had checked out schools for their children.



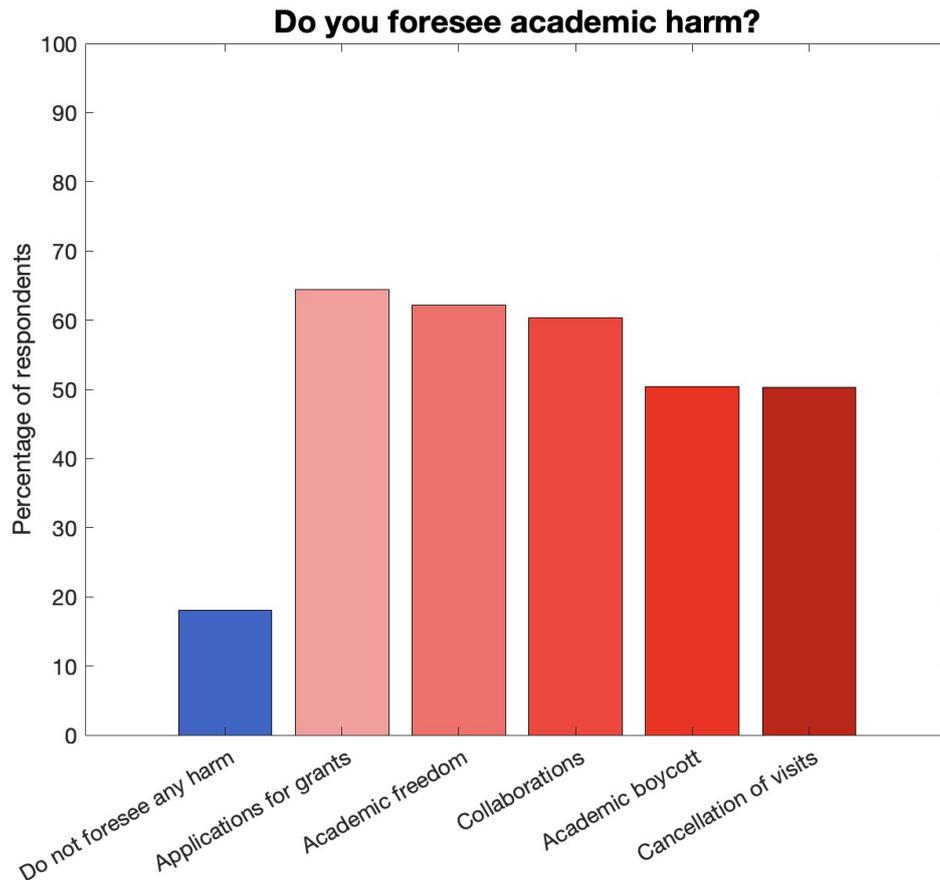
Harm to academic activity

In addition to examining their chances of leaving, we asked the faculty members whether they had felt any harm to their academic activity (“The next question mentions various types of harm to academic activity. Please indicate in which (if any) of the following academic activities you have felt harm.”). 65.1% reported they had not felt any harm; 12.6% reported the cancellation of a visit by a foreign colleague to Israel; 11.2% reported criticism from overseas colleagues; 9.9% reported damage to international collaborations; and 7.6% reported harm to their academic freedom. Smaller percentages reported

difficulty publishing, harm to research grant applications submitted to international foundations, and academic boycotts.



Most of the respondents foresee harm to their activities in the future. 64.4% anticipate deterioration in their ability to submit research proposals to international foundations; 62.6% foresee harm to their academic freedom; 60.4% anticipate a decline in international collaborations; 50.4% foresee academic boycotts; and 50.3% expect cancellations of visits by colleagues from abroad. Lower percentages reported fears of cancellations of invitations from abroad, harsher judgment by peer reviewers, and criticism from colleagues at foreign universities. 18% reported that they do not foresee any harm to their academic activities.



Conclusion

The results of this survey, which comprised 1,916 faculty members, reveal an unequivocal trend of increase in the respondents' estimates of their chances of leaving Israel (again, we stress that this is a retroactive assessment in comparison with their chances of doing so a year ago, since no such survey was conducted at that time).

According to the survey, a very high percentage (73%) of the respondents to the survey reported a significant increase (averaging 35%) in their chances of leaving Israel, and the vast majority declared that the main reason for this is the judicial legislation process in recent months.

One noteworthy finding is that the younger faculty members – the next generation of Israeli academia – reported the highest increases in their assessment of their chances of leaving.

Many faculty members have already taken initial steps toward leaving, including checking out other universities, obtaining visas and checking possibilities for their children's education. The overwhelming majority of those who reported increased chances of leaving have already discussed this possibility with their spouses.

Most of the faculty members reported that they have not so far felt harm to their academic activities; the rest reported mainly the cancellation of visits by researchers from abroad and harm to international collaborations. However, a very high percentage (82%) foresee harm to their academic activities.

On the one hand, it is difficult to disconnect the survey's results from the fierce debate being waged in Israel in recent weeks, both inside and outside of academia, and it is possible that some of the responses we received are driven by a desire to affect this debate. On the other hand, the responses we received came from all the universities in Israel and from all fields of research, and the results were similar throughout. For example, in all the universities the proportion of respondents who reported an increase in the chances that they would leave Israel was between 62% and 81%, apart from Ariel University, in which 39% of the respondents reported increased chances of leaving. The overall average, as noted above, is 73%. Similarly, in the various fields of research, the proportion of respondents who reported increased chances of leaving was between 67% and 78%. This trend thus seems to characterize of all of Israel's academic institutions and to cut across all the disciplines.

The Israel Young Academy wishes to stress the deep commitment of the country's academic faculty members to Israeli academia and its success. We call on the entire system to join forces to ensure the continuation of Israel's academic excellence and combat the brain drain phenomenon.