

# North Wind

## Local Patriotism and National Crisis

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# Executive Summary

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This report presents the findings of a survey conducted among residents of the north of Israel who were evacuated from their homes following the events of October 7 and the war that broke out in its wake.

The evacuation of the northern residents is a unique and unprecedented event in the history of Israeli society.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced from their homes and are living in hotels and other evacuation centers. The survey was conducted by the Samuel Neaman Institute's survey system, headed by Golan Tamir.

Gil Rebivo helped anchor some of the answers on the map. Dr. Yaron Yavelberg led the writing of the survey together with Prof. Aharon Gutman. Prof. Ron Kenett analyzed the findings alongside Dr. Yavelberg.

The survey is a collaboration with 'Lobby 1701' and was distributed via a link to an online questionnaire.

Lobby 1701 is a group of residents of the north, including a variety of localities and different political positions, established to raise awareness of the situation in the north and demand a change in the security situation on the northern border, subject to UN Resolution 1701 at the end of the Second Lebanon War, which requires Hezbollah to withdraw beyond the Litani Line. The forum's group of leaders received the draft survey and made comments. After about 20 evacuees responded, we improved and shortened the survey. 340 evacuees responded to the survey.

## Key Findings

### **Perception of the events and the evacuation:**

Despite the past experience of the northern residents in the security field, over 60% of them were not very concerned about the issue of security as an existential threat. The scenario of October 7th surprised many of them. Most of them did not think they would have to leave their homes, and once the evacuation began, 91% of the respondents thought they would return home after three months at the latest.

77% of the respondents never thought they would be evacuated from their homes, and 88% did not think the evacuation would be so long. 73% of the respondents strongly agree or agree that the population of the North will decrease in the coming years. Only 36% trust the local leadership to rehabilitate the communities. 63% of the respondents do not think the communities will return to a better state, and a similar percentage do not trust the state to make

any effort to bring the residents back. Only 32% are convinced that the crisis will pass and things will return to normal.

### **The evacuation disrupted the community structure:**

The majority of the respondents are scattered throughout the centre of the country and the coastal plain. A small concentration of respondents went as far as Eilat. The median distance they evacuated to is about 50 km. Further analysis shows that the more children there are, the greater the evacuation distance. This may be related to the ability of existing education systems to absorb a large number of additional students.

### **Three "Galilean types" were identified:**

A. Committed to the Galilee

B. "The Concerned" (Residents committed to the Galilee but worried about the security situation)

C. Dissatisfied with life in the Galilee

Latent Cluster Analysis (LCA), based on clustering according to high correlations between answers to the same questions, identified three main groups of respondents. 56% of the respondents belong to the group committed to the Galilee, 36% belong to the concerned group, and only 8% belong to the "dissatisfied" group. Each of the groups sees the future of themselves and their children in the region differently.

55% of the respondents want their children to live in the North. An additional 28% would like to do so but only if certain conditions are met related to the issues raised here - security, services, infrastructure, employment opportunities and the like. 17% of the respondents do not want their children to live in the North.

### **Status at the time of the evacuation:**

The response to work is diverse, but over 50% have already registered their children in a new education system. 22% of the respondents are unemployed with benefits (unemployment or unpaid leave), 14% are unemployed without benefits, a total of 36% of the respondents are not working. 34% work remotely and 16% are looking for work in the new location. In other words, most of the workers are waiting to return to work in their old place. 13% found work in the area of the evacuation.

The children of 53% of the respondents attend educational frameworks in the new location. 27% of the children attend educational frameworks in the hotels' educational centers. Together, these are the children of 80% of the respondents who are in frameworks.

### **Mental Resilience:**

About a fifth of the respondents have started psychological treatment since the evacuation. A relatively low percentage (13%) started using medication, and a similar percentage (16%) started drinking alcohol following the evacuation. In contrast, a quarter of the respondents started

smoking or increased their cigarette consumption since the evacuation. 23% of the respondents reported a deterioration in their relationships with their partners, and a similar percentage (23%) reported an improvement in their relationships. Similarly, a quarter of the respondents reported a deterioration in family relationships, and the same percentage reported an improvement in relationships. 26% of the respondents started engaging in a hobby following the evacuation.

### **Conditions Under Which Return Will Be Possible:**

74% of the respondents believe that a large-scale, ongoing IDF presence and/or Hezbollah's retreat (past the 1701 line) as a result of IDF activity is a prerequisite for their return.

64% of the respondents strongly agree that massive protection of the communities is a sufficient condition for their return.

59% see the establishment of fully equipped emergency response teams as a sufficient condition.

**Trust levels** in the country are very low, in local authorities they are average, and in civil society they are very high.

The highest levels of trust (70% at the high-very high level) are directed towards residents' organizations, such as Lobby 1701. 56% of respondents trust the local leadership (heads of authorities) and the same percentage trust civil society. Only 35% of respondents feel high trust and above in the political leadership.

### **Priorities for Future Development:**

According to the respondents, the areas that need improvement are (in descending order):

- Health services and employment opportunities (75%)
- Cultural and leisure activities (68%)
- Public transportation (60%)
- Physical infrastructure (57%)
- Community life (56%)

This survey was conducted in a situation that most of us, including the majority of respondents, did not think was possible - Five months of evacuating tens of thousands of northern residents, with no systemic solutions and no horizon for return.

The survey reflects a bleak picture, but not one of despair. The bright spots are the connection that most respondents feel to the Galilee and the North, the relative resilience they show in the face of the evacuation challenges, and their trust in themselves and in organizations such as Lobby 1701, which will lead to change. The pessimistic points are first and foremost the solution to the security situation. It is clear to everyone that this is the basis of the evacuees' pyramid of

needs, and without thorough and in-depth treatment of this issue - there is no point in talking about rebuilding. Assuming that this problem will eventually be solved in one way or another, there are a number of challenges that the state and the authorities will have to face - first and foremost, the trust of the residents in the state that has been significantly damaged, then, dealing with the generation of youth who experience ongoing trauma and will have to build their lives and the next generation of leadership.