

Data Snapshot: Israel's Children and Youth at Risk

April 2016

(All data current to 2014, except where indicated. Sources are noted in parentheses.)

There are 2,740,000 children ages 0-17 in Israel, representing 33% of the total population. (1)

- ◆ 71% are Jewish (1,945,000 children), 26% are Arab (713,000 children), and 3% (82,000 children) are from other groups. (1)
- ◆ 8% (212,000 children) live in single-parent families. (1)
- ◆ An estimated 9% (237,000 children) have some form of physical, cognitive, emotional, or learning disability. (2)
- ◆ 17% of households with children up to age 17 have four or more children. 8% have five or more children. Large families are common among Haredi, Arab, and Ethiopian-Israeli families. (3)
- ◆ 35% of all children (895,000 children) live in households with four or five children in the household (4)
- ◆ 9% of the children (242,000 children) are immigrants or were born in Israel to parents who have immigrated since 1990. (5)

Children and Youth in Families Living Below the Poverty Line

- ◆ In 2014, 780,000 children and youth lived in poverty **after** taxes and transfers. The 31% poverty rate was down from a high of 36.3% in 2009, but up from 22% in 1998. (6)
- ◆ The 2014 child poverty rate (**after** taxes and transfers) was 67% for Haredi children and 63% for Arab children, well above the rates of other Israeli children. (7)

Education

Difficulties in School and School Dropouts

- ◆ **Elementary and Junior High:** According to assessments by elementary school teachers, 22% of their students struggle with learning difficulties or school behavior difficulties. The percentage jumps to 30% among junior high students. (8)
- ◆ **High School:** 16% of fifteen-year-olds reported signs of being disengaged from school in at least two of the following dimensions: irregular attendance, the feeling of not belonging to school, and the feeling of not benefiting from school studies. (9)
- ◆ **Dropouts:** In 2013/14, 7.5% of 17-year-olds were no longer in school, a dropout rate that has declined from 10.4% in 2001/02. The dropout rates for Arab students declined even more significantly in this period, from 24.4% in 2001/02 to 12.9% in 2013/14. One implication of the decline in dropout rates is that students with learning difficulties or school behavior difficulties are remaining in school and, thus, more children require supports within the school. (10)

High School Matriculation

- ◆ In 2013/14, 66% of all 12th-grade students received a general matriculation certificate. 54% of all 12th-grade students received a university-level matriculation certificate. (11)
- ◆ In 2013/14, 59% of Arab 12th-grade students received a general matriculation certificate, compared with 68% of Jewish 12th-grade students (including Haredim). (12)
 - The gap is much larger in the percentage receiving a university-level matriculation certificate – 44% compared with 57%. (13)
- ◆ Among Ethiopian-Israeli 12th-grade students, 31% received a university-level matriculation certificate in 2013/14. (13)

Gaps are significant between students from different socio-economic backgrounds

- ◆ In 2013/14, 79% of Jewish students in high socio-economic communities received a general matriculation certificate, compared with 36% of students in the lowest socio-economic communities. For a university-level matriculation certificate, the rate is 72% compared with 27%. (14)

Children and Youth at Risk

- ◆ The National Program for Children and Youth at Risk has identified 240,000 children and youth at risk in 170 communities across Israel (about 16-17% of all children and youth). (15)
- ◆ The National Program uses a standardized definition of “at risk” as children and youth characterized by at least one of the following: live in situations that endanger them within their families and environment, engage in risk behaviors, have low educational achievements, emotional or social problems, are in danger of physical harm (from others or self-inflicted), or live in threatening, non-supportive family environments.
- ◆ About 50,000 suspected cases of abuse or neglect against children were reported to the social services in 2014. (16)
- ◆ In January 2015, 366,000 children and youth at risk (up to age 17) were registered with the municipal social service departments. (17)

Alcohol and Drug Use

- ◆ In 2014, 29% of 15-year-old boys reported using alcohol once a week, almost three times the rate of 15-year-old girls (11%). (18)
- ◆ 15% of 15-year-old boys reported being drunk at least twice in their life, compared with 5% of 15-year-old girls. The rates are higher among immigrant youth from the former Soviet Union and second-generation Ethiopian-Israelis (25% in 2012). (19)
- ◆ In 2014, 11% of 15-year-old boys and 3% of 15-year-old girls reported having used cannabis at least once in their life. These rates are relatively low when compared to other countries. (18)

Violence and Criminal Behavior

- ◆ In 2010, 10% of 12-16 year olds were involved in frequent acts of violence in school (3+ times in the previous two months). (20)
- ◆ 26,000 youth criminal files were opened in 2014, a decline of 28% since 2003. (21)

Sources

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