

Israel's Children and Youth at Risk – Facts and Figures July 2017

All data refers to 2015, except where indicated otherwise. Source citations are listed at the conclusion of this document.

There are 2,768,000 children ages 0-17 in Israel, representing 33% of the total population. (1)

- ◆ 71% are Jewish (1,945,000 children), 26% are Arab (715,000 children), and 3% (82,000 children) are from other groups. (1)
- ◆ 8% (210,000 children) live in single-parent families. (2)
- ◆ An estimated 9% (246,000 children) have some form of physical, intellectual, mental health, or learning disability. (3)
- ◆ 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 ultra-Orthodox, Arab, and Ethiopian families. (4)
- ◆ 35% (913,000 children) live in households with four or five children. (5)
- ◆ 9% (247,000 children) are immigrants or were born in Israel to parents who have immigrated since 1990. (6)

Children and Youth Living in Poverty

- ◆ 764,000 children and youth lived in poverty (after taxes and transfers). This 30% poverty rate was down from a high of 36% in 2009, but up from 22% in 1998. (7)
- ◆ The child poverty rate (after taxes and transfers) was 66% for Arab children and 62% for ultra-Orthodox children. (7)

Education

Difficulties in School and School Dropouts

- ◆ **Elementary and Junior High:** In 2013/14, 22% of elementary students struggled with learning or school behavior difficulties. The percentage jumped to 30% among junior high students. (8)
- ◆ **High School:** In 2013/14, 16% of 15-year-olds reported 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 2014/15, 8.5% of 17-year-olds were no longer in school, down from 10.4% in 2001/02. The dropout rate for Arab students declined even more significantly, from 24.4% in 2001/02 to 11.9% in 2014/15. One implication of the decline is that students with learning or school behavior difficulties are remaining in school and, thus, more children require school-based supports. (10)

High School Matriculation (11)

- ◆ In 2014/15, 67% of 12th-grade students received a general matriculation certificate
 - Arab 12th-grade students: 58%
 - Jewish 12th-grade students (including ultra-Orthodox): 69%
 - Ethiopian-Israeli 12th-grade students: 53%
- ◆ 55% of 12th-grade students received a university-level matriculation certificate
 - Arab 12th-grade students: 45%
 - Jewish 12th-grade students (including ultra-Orthodox): 59%
 - Ethiopian-Israeli 12th-grade students: 31%

Gaps are significant between students from different socio-economic backgrounds

- ◆ In 2014/15, 80% of Jewish students in high socio-economic communities (levels 7-10) received a general matriculation certificate, compared with 34% of students in low socio-economic communities (levels 1-4). For a university-level matriculation certificate, the rate was 72% compared with 25%. (12)

Children and Youth at Risk

- ◆ The National Program for Children and Youth at Risk has identified over 260,000 children and youth at risk in 184 communities across Israel. (13)
- ◆ 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 44,000 cases of child abuse or neglect were reported to the social services in 2015. (A single case might include multiple children.) (14)
- ◆ As of January 2016, 367,000 children and youth at risk (up to age 17) were registered with the municipal social service departments. (15)

Alcohol and Drug Use

- ◆ In 2014, 27% of boys in 10th grade reported that at least once in the previous month, they had drunk 5 or more alcohol servings within hours, compared with 14% of girls. (16)
- ◆ In 2014, 12% of boys and 5% of girls in 10th grade reported having used cannabis at least once. These rates are below the European average of 15%. 6% of boys reported using Ecstasy frequently. (17)

Violence and Criminal Behavior

- ◆ In 2014, 10% of 12-16 year-olds were involved in frequent acts of violence in school (3+ times in the previous twelve months). (18)
- ◆ 25,000 youth criminal files were opened in 2015, a decline of 21% since 2005. (19)

Sources

1. Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) Statistical Abstract of Israel 2016 (2015 data), Table 2.3.
2. CBS Statistical Abstract of Israel 2016 (2015 data), Table 5.13
3. Barlev, L., Keren-Abraham, Y., Haber, Y., and Admon-Rick, G., editors. *People with Disabilities in Israel 2017*. Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute and Ministry of Justice Commission for Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
4. CBS Statistical Abstract of Israel 2016 (2015 data), Table 5.4.
5. CBS Statistical Abstract of Israel 2016 (2015 data), Table 5.5.
6. The Israel National Council for the Child. *The State of the Child in Israel – 2016*, Figure 2a (in Hebrew only).
7. Israel Social Security Administration, *2015 Poverty Report* (December 2016). These poverty figures come from CBS Survey of Households, which does not include children in insitutions, children in non-privatized kibbutzim and Bedouin children. Hence there is a discrepancy between the total number of children in Israel as reported in source 1 and the percentage of poor children as reported here.
8. Ben-Rabi, D., Baruj-Kovarsky, R., Konstantinov, V., Rotem, R., and Navot, M. 2014. *Second National Study of Elementary and Junior High School Practices to Advance Low-Achieving Students*. Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute.
9. Ben-Rabi, D. Baruj-Kovarsky, R., Navot, M. and Konstantinov V. 2014. *Hidden Dropouts in Israel: Re-examination of School Disengagement in Israel*. Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute.
10. CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel (Data for 2000/01 from 2003 Abstract, Table 8.7; data for 2014/15 from 2016 Abstract, Table 8.22.)
11. Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute special analysis of Ministry of Education matriculation statistics, 2014/15.
12. CBS Statistical Abstract of Israel 2016 (2015 data), Table 8.26.
13. National Program for Children and Youth at Risk (December 2016).
14. *The State of the Child in Israel – 2016*, Table 14.6 (in Hebrew only).
15. *The State of the Child in Israel – 2016*, Table 14.1 (in Hebrew only).
16. *Youth in Israel: Health, Emotional and Social Wellbeing and Patterns of Risk Behavior Among Youth in Israel 2014*. Harel-Fisch, Y., Walsh, S., Steinmetz, N., Lubell, S., Reis, Y., Tessler, R., and Habib, J. (2016), Section 10.2.
17. *Youth in Israel*, Section 10.3.
18. *Youth in Israel*, Section 11.
19. *The State of the Child in Israel – 2016*, Table 12.2 (in Hebrew only).
