Israel's Arab Population: Facts & Figures

All data refer to 2017, except where indicated otherwise. Source citations are listed at the conclusion of this document.
DEMOGRAPHY

| Total Population |
In 2017, Israel had 1.84 million Arab citizens, representing 21% of the country's total population. (1)

| Religious Composition |
As of 2017, 85% of Arabs were Muslim. The remainder were Christians, Druze, and other religions. (2)

| Age Structure |
In 2017, 42% of Arabs in Israel were age 18 or younger, compared with 33% of Jewish Israelis. (3)

| Fertility Rates |
Fertility rates have declined since 1960 among all Arab groups, and the gaps between Arabs and Jews have all but disappeared. Of note is the fact that the fertility rate of both Christian Arabs and of Druze is now below the rate of Jews.

Figure 1: Fertility Rate (average children per female), by Religious Group, 1960-2017 (4)
| Family Size |
Despite the decline in fertility, Arab households are still larger. 11% had five or more children under age 17 in 2017, compared with 8% of Jewish households. (5)

| EDUCATION |
There have been significant improvements in the educational levels of Arabs, although the gaps between Arabs and Jews are still large.

| Dropping Out of High School |
Dropout rates of Arab students continue to be above the rates of Jewish students. In 2017, by age 17, 10% of Arab students had dropped out of school versus 7% of Jewish students. This makes them ineligible for most vocational training programs, and reduces their employment prospects considerably. (6)

| University-bound |
In Israel, high school students take a series of matriculation exams known as bagruyot. These exams are the primary basis for admission to higher education. The exam scores, therefore, are an important indicator of the trend in educational advancement and subsequent economic success.

Between 2001 and 2016, general and university-eligible matriculation rates steadily improved among Arab 17-year olds from different backgrounds. (7)

These improvements notwithstanding, matriculation rates are still well below those of Jewish students (apart from the Druze student rates for general matriculation). (7)
Figure 2: Percentage of Arab and Jewish 17-Year-Olds Receiving General Matriculation Certificate, 2001-2017 (7)

Figure 3: Percentage of Arab and Jewish 17-Year-Olds Receiving University-Eligible Matriculation Certificate, 2001-2017 (7)
Arab education levels have improved dramatically since 2000, with Arab women making the most rapid educational progress.

In 2017, 32% of Arab women ages 25-34 had 16+ years of education, compared with only 10% in 2000. In fact, the rates for Arab women have now surpassed those for Arab men – 32% compared with 22%.

Figure 4: Percentage with 16+ Years of Education, Arab and Jewish Men and Women, Ages 25–34, 2000 and 2017 (8)
EMPLOYMENT

| Arab Women |

Even though employment rates for Arab women have increased since 1997, only 32% of Arab women of working age were employed in 2016, compared with 81% among Jewish women. (9)

Figure 5: Employment among Arab Women and Jewish Women, Ages 25-64, 1997-2018 (9)
Arab Men

In 2018, 74% of Arab men of working age were employed, compared with 83% of Jewish men. (9)

Figure 6: Employment among Arab Men and Jewish Men Ages 25-64, 1997-2018 (9)

Socio-economic status

The gaps in family size, education, employment and wages and have led to major gaps in socioeconomic status between Arabs and Jews.

- In 2017, 47% of Arab families lived in poverty (after taxes and transfer payments), compared with 13% of Jewish families. (10)
- 61% of Arab children lived in poverty, compared with 20% of Jewish children. (10)
- Arab families constitute 37% of all poor families, far above their proportion of all Israeli families (15%). (11)
| Life Expectancy |
Life expectancy has increased considerably among Arab men and women since 2000. In 2017, life expectancy for Arab men was 77.5 years, and 82 years for Arab women. (12)

Figure 7: Life Expectancy in Years for Arab and Jewish Men and Women, 2000 and 2017 (12)

| Infant Mortality |
The infant mortality rate of the Arab (Moslem) population has declined drastically over the years, although the 2015-17 rate of 6.1 per thousand for Arabs is still almost three times the rate for Jews and others (2.3 per thousand). (13)
| Disability |

Disability rates of both adult and elderly Arabs are significantly higher than the rate of Jewish Israelis, especially for people with severe disabilities. (14)

Figure 8: Disability Rates for Arabs and Jews (2018) (14)
Sources

6. MJB special analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics data.
8. MJB special analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics data, 2000 and 2017, Table 8.76.
Founded in 1974, the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute is Israel's leading center for applied social research. The Institute identifies and examines key social challenges. We use our knowledge and research to help inform policy, advise programming, and improve services for individuals, families, and communities. We work to strengthen Israeli society and the wellbeing of all its members.

MJB is an independent, non-profit partnership between the Joint Distribution Committee, the Government of Israel, and the David and Inez Myers Foundation of Cleveland. The Institute's governance committee is composed of senior government officials from the ministries of Labor and Social Affairs, Education, Health, and Finance, and Israel's National Insurance Institute, and major lay leaders in the Jewish world.

To learn more about MJB, visit brookdale.jdc.org.il or MJBInstitute