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# Data Gaps Regarding the Bedouin Population in the Negev

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This study was part of a multifaceted research program for the Government of Israel's five-year plan to promote the well-being of the Bedouin in the Negev, carried out in cooperation with the Department for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bedouin Society in the Negev



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## **About the research program of the five-year plan for the Bedouin in the Negev**

The research program was jointly funded by the Department for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bedouin Society in the Negev and the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute. It spanned 3.5 years and includes an array of topical studies, including education, children with disabilities, employment, and local government, as well as cross-cutting studies evaluating the five-year plan work programs; the values, strengths, and challenges of the Bedouin population and their leaders; key indicators of the health, economic, and social well-being of the Bedouin population; and an integrative assessment of the five-year plan.

The research program was carried out as a cooperative effort between the Department for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bedouin Society in the Negev and the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute (MJB). The Department led the choice of issues to be studied and provided feedback on the research. MJB coordinated the research program and was responsible for the quality of the studies.

# Abstract

## Background

The third five-year plan for the socio-economic development of the Bedouin population in the Negev, pursuant to Government Resolution 1279, was launched in 2022. Complex intervention plans such as the five-year plan require a comprehensive database to identify the needs of the target population, track changes in its status, and compare it with the status of other populations. However, many of the required data are unavailable. Given the data gaps, the Department for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bedouin Society in the Negev (hereinafter: the Department) commissioned the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute to map the available data and the data gaps regarding the Bedouin population in the Negev.

## Study Goal

The goal of this study was to map the quantitative data related to the Bedouin population in the Negev, characterize the limitations of the available databases, and suggest ways for improving them. This, with the purpose of developing a reliable knowledge base for planning and ongoing monitoring of the status of the Bedouin population in the Negev.

## Research Method

A variety of data sources regarding the Bedouin population in the Negev were examined from several aspects: publication frequency, information updating status, information reliability, and information limitations. This report summarizes the availability of the data in various fields: population size; the Bedouin local authorities and the Negev Bedouin classified by their place of residence; physical infrastructures in the Bedouin localities; k-12 education; higher education; employment; welfare; health; personal security; Internet use; and other social issues. The report also lists unpublished databases held by various bodies, from which it is difficult to derive useful information on the status of the Bedouin population due to bureaucratic or objective reasons. In addition, the report details fields regarding which no systematic information was collected, or, to the extent that such information was collected, it was not processed in accordance with the planning needs, or its storage location is unknown. The information presented in the report was last updated in the spring of 2022.

## Findings

Significant data gaps were found in many areas of life of the Bedouin population in the Negev. Furthermore, limitations of the accessible information sources obstruct the extraction of adequate information. The small size of the Bedouin population – only about 3% of the general population in Israel – is another factor that impedes the collection of information. This is reflected in some of the surveys, so that even when the Bedouin population is sampled according to its relative share in the general population, the number of respondents is too small to yield reliable information or to enable segmentation into subgroups. Such segmentation is required in particular in the case of a population with complex needs that is at the focus of governmental intervention programs. The information lacuna is all the more critical when it comes to the Bedouin population in the unregulated residences<sup>1</sup>, which numbers about 80,000 and has unique characteristics. The Bedouin society in the Negev is currently undergoing complex transition processes and is thus typified by significant diversity. This complexity further underscores the need for detailed information that would enable distinction between subgroups in the target population.

## Recommendations

The recommendations concerning each of the abovementioned fields are detailed in the relevant chapters of this report. Cross-cutting key recommendations are presented below.

- **In data collection efforts, information should be systematically collected on the Bedouin population in the unregulated residences.** This recommendation is particularly relevant to the surveys conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), which so far, have not sampled the population in the unregulated residences, but it is also pertinent to surveys conducted by other entities as well as to the collection and publication of administrative information regarding this population. The reality of life of those living in the

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<sup>1</sup> The following terms are used in this report to indicate the various forms of settlement of the Bedouin population in the Negev: **the 18 localities** – 18 localities in the local authorities (town, local councils, and regional councils): the town of Rahat, the local councils of Hura, Kuseife, Lakiya, Ar'ara BaNegev, Segev Shalom, and Tel Sheva; the localities of the al-Kasom Regional Council: Umm Batin, al-Sayyid, Drijat, Kukhle, Mulada, Makhul, and Tirabin al-Sana; and the localities of the Neve Midbar Regional Council: Abu Qrenat, Qasr al-Sir, Bir Hadaj, and Abu Tlul.

**Unregulated residences** – residences outside the 18 localities.

When information sources that are not included in the present study are referred to, the terms used in the relevant source are cited.

unregulated residences differs in many respects from that of the residents of the 18 localities. Therefore, the overall picture of the situation of the Negev Bedouin population should include information regarding those living in the unregulated residences and, no less important, be presented in a way that allows a comparison between these groups.

- **Representatives of the Bedouin population should be invited to take part in the data collection process to improve the surveys and, in particular, the surveying of those living in the unregulated residences,** this, in view of the logistical difficulties involved in the process (e.g., problems with residential address registration) and to allay concerns in the surveyed population and enhance its responsiveness.
- **Oversampling of the Bedouin population in the CBS surveys is recommended, particularly in relatively small-scale surveys** (e.g., the CBS Social Survey and Household Expenditure Survey), this, to enable the generation of reliable information on this rather small population and data segmentation according to subgroups: local authorities and localities, age groups, and gender. This recommendation is all the more important now that the third five-year plan for the socio-economic development of the Negev Bedouin is on the national agenda. Detailed and accessible information would enable focused and streamlined implementation and informed allocation of resources, which cannot be achieved based on general information that does not allow distinction between forms of settlement and population subgroups.
- **Professionals from government ministries and public bodies** (e.g., the health plans) **should be mobilized to collect information on the Bedouin population, update the information on an ongoing basis, inform policy makers, and present the information to the public at large.** Increased awareness of the importance of accessible information and coordination between the relevant entities would significantly improve the information accessibility and hence, the planning of programs for the target population, and streamline the ongoing evaluation of its ever-changing needs and status.