



Myers JDC
Brookdale

The Arab Population in Israel: The Relationship Between Matriculation Achievements and Integration into Higher Education

Adi Arad Yaniv Reingewertz
Alexander Zablotsky

Editor (Hebrew): Revital Aviv Matok
English editing (Abstract): Suzanne Brown
Graphic design: Efrat Speaker

The study was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and funded with its assistance.

Myers JDC Brookdale Institute

P.O.B. 3886, Jerusalem 9103702, Israel

Tel: 02-6557400

brookdale.jdc.org.il/en | brook@jdc.org

Jerusalem | December 2025

Abstract

Background

Over the past decade, the Arab education system in Israel has undergone substantial changes. The proportion of students in the Arab population eligible for a Bagrut (matriculation) certificate has risen significantly and is now nearly equal to that of the Jewish population (75% and 77%, respectively, in 2021). However, other indicators – such as integration into the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and into higher education in general– have shown only limited improvement. Upper-secondary (hereafter: high school) education is a critical stage in a young person's development, serving as an important bridge from adolescence to adulthood. Recent research shows that the student's success during this period affects numerous life domains, including future earning potential, personal and social well-being, and overall quality of life.

Objective

At the request of the Ministry of Education, the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute conducted a study to estimate the relationship between achievements in Arab high school education and outcome measures in higher education.

Method

A quantitative analysis was conducted at the level of the local authority for the years 2002–2022. The analysis used the two-way fixed effects statistical method, commonly applied in panel data research, to estimate the relationship between the explanatory variable and the outcome variable while controlling for unobserved or unmeasured factors that influence the model.

Key Findings

The study found a positive correlation at the local level between the proportion of students eligible for a high-quality Bagrut certificate – that is, one that meets university admission requirements – and integration into higher education. A positive correlation was also found between integration into higher education and the average income in the local authority. No positive correlation was found between the overall proportion of Bagrut-eligible students in the local authority and integration into higher education. The study also examined the possibility of reverse causality. The findings show that, in previous years, investment in education correlated with higher

income among residents of the local authority, raising questions about the direction of the relationship between education and income.

Conclusions

The findings suggest that the quality of high school education may play a significant role in shaping long-term economic and social outcomes. A positive association was found between eligibility for a Bagrut certificate that meets university admission requirements and participation in higher education, whereas holding a standard Bagrut certificate alone does not have a similar effect, particularly among the Arab population.

Recommendations

- Strengthen the teaching of core subjects: Emphasis should be put on instruction in mathematics and English at the 4–5-unit level, which are necessary for obtaining a high quality Bagrut certificate.
- Focus on educational quality: Improve the quality of high school education rather than focusing solely on raising eligibility rates for the standard Bagrut certificate since the findings indicate that a standard Bagrut certificate alone is insufficient to ensure progression to higher education.
- Develop targeted policies for specific groups, particularly for the Bedouin population: Design tailored programs that consider geographic and cultural characteristics unique to different groups within the Arab population.
- Strengthen the link between education and employment: Develop programs that connect high schools with higher-education institutions and employers, especially in Arab communities where the relationship between higher education and income is stronger.
- Conduct ongoing monitoring and evaluation: Establish monitoring systems to measure the long-term economic and social impacts of educational policy on outcome variables, while accounting for differences among various population groups.