

Selected Findings

Statistical Report on Arab Society in Israel الكتاب السنوي للمجتمع العربي في إسرائيل 2024

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המשרד לשוויון חברתי
וקידום מעמד האישה
הרשות לפיתוח כלכלי
של מזור המיעוטים



وزارة المساواة الاجتماعية
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Statistical Report on Arab Society in Israel 2024

The Israel Democracy Institute's *Statistical Report on Arab Society in Israel* seeks to provide information, data, and analysis that serve as the go-to address on Israel's Arab society for government officials, academics, professionals, and the wider public in Israel and abroad.

The Report presents data on the Arab population in Israel as a whole, while paying particularly attention to both socio-demographic diversity in the Arab sector, the comparison between Jews and Arabs in Israel and the impact of the early stages of the Swords of Iron war that followed the October 7, 2023 attacks.

The report is structured into four chapters that together present a multi-dimensional picture of Arab society. The first chapter surveys main demographic trends; the second addresses quality of life and standard of living; the third presents data on employment and wages among Arab citizens; and the fourth analyzes trends in education.

Now more than ever, a clear-eyed assessment is needed of the many challenges facing Arab society in Israel, which are becoming more pronounced amid growing public debate on issues of equality, political participation, and the relationship between the state and its Arab citizens. At the same time, rampant violence is unraveling the social fabric from within, weakening community safety networks and undermining political and municipal institutions. The data analysis indicates that the situation of many Arab citizens today is increasingly unstable and precarious.

We hope that this report will contribute to a deeper understanding of Arab society in Israel, support the advancement of equality and the reduction of disparities, and assist in promoting policy measures across the spheres of social and economic activity.

The Statistical Report editors,
Muhammed Khalaily, Arik Rudnitzky
Israel Democracy Institute



Chapter 1

Demography

Population Size and Demographic Distribution

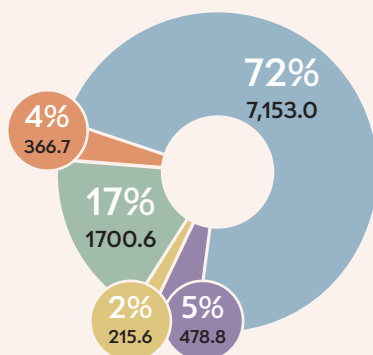
According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, the Arab population of Israel stood at approximately 2.1 million at the end of 2023, constituting 20.9% of the total population. This percentage is made up of 17.2% who hold Israeli citizenship and 3.7% who are defined as “permanent residents” living in East Jerusalem.

There are 163 localities in Israel (including 14 cities and 67 local councils) whose residents are all Arab citizens. The two largest Arab cities are Nazareth (77,200 residents) and Rahat (75,700 residents).

The majority of Arab citizens are Muslims (83.5%), and the rest are Druze (8.9%) and Christians (7.6%). Half of the Arab population (49%, not including East Jerusalem) live in northern Israel, and the rest reside in three main regions: the Triangle (19%), the Negev (18%), and the mixed cities (9%).

Israeli population, by population group, end of 2023

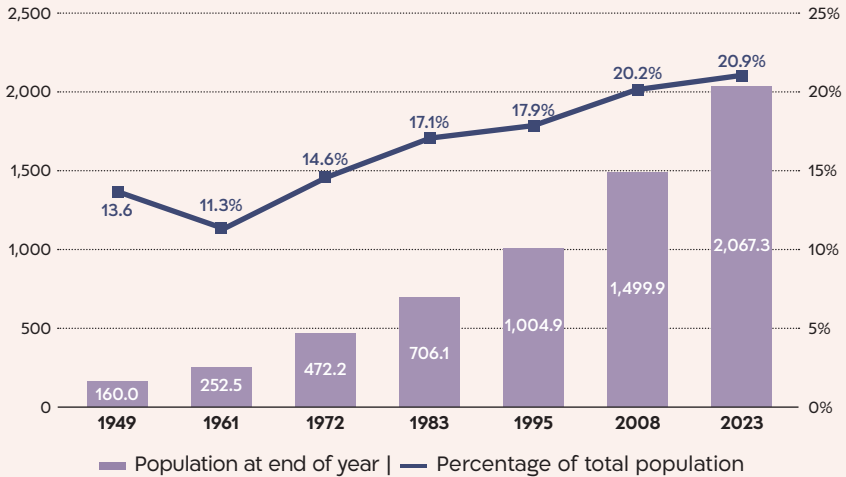
(thousands and percentage of total population)



■ Jews | ■ Arabs, permanent residents | ■ Arab citizens of Israel
■ Foreign citizens | ■ Others

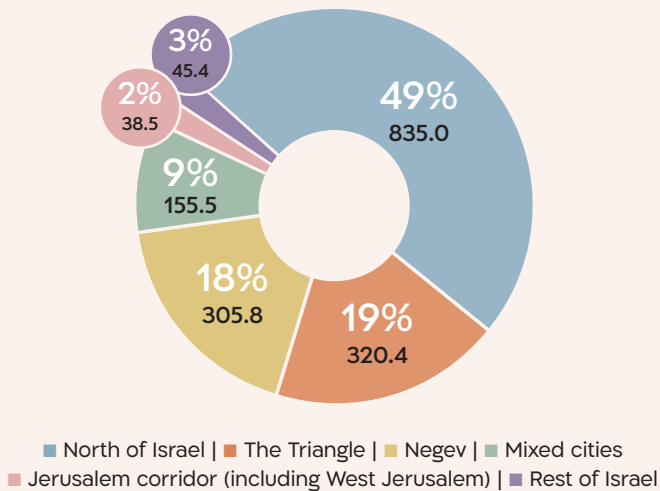
Arab population in Israel, selected years

(thousands and percentage of total population)



Geographical distribution of Arab citizens of Israel, end of 2023

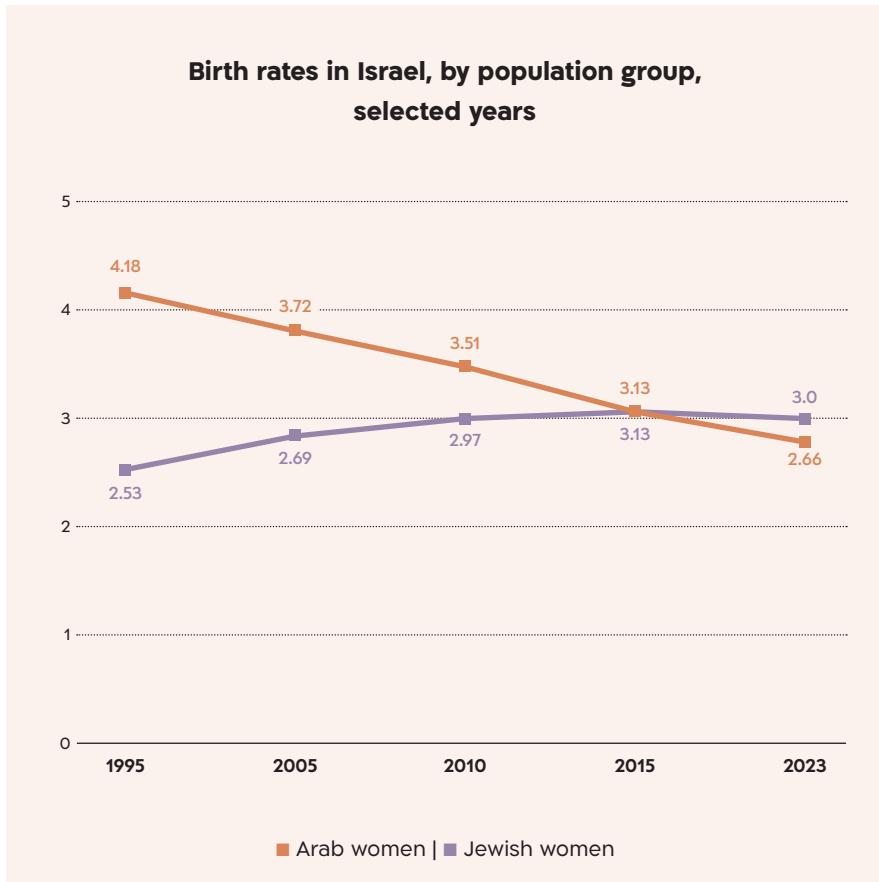
(thousands and percentage of total Arab population)



Birth Rates and Age Segmentation

The overall birth rate among Arab women in 2023 (2.66) was lower than that among Jewish women (3.00, including Haredi women). In Arab society, the highest birth rate was measured among Muslim women (2.81), followed by Druze (1.75) and Christian women (1.52).

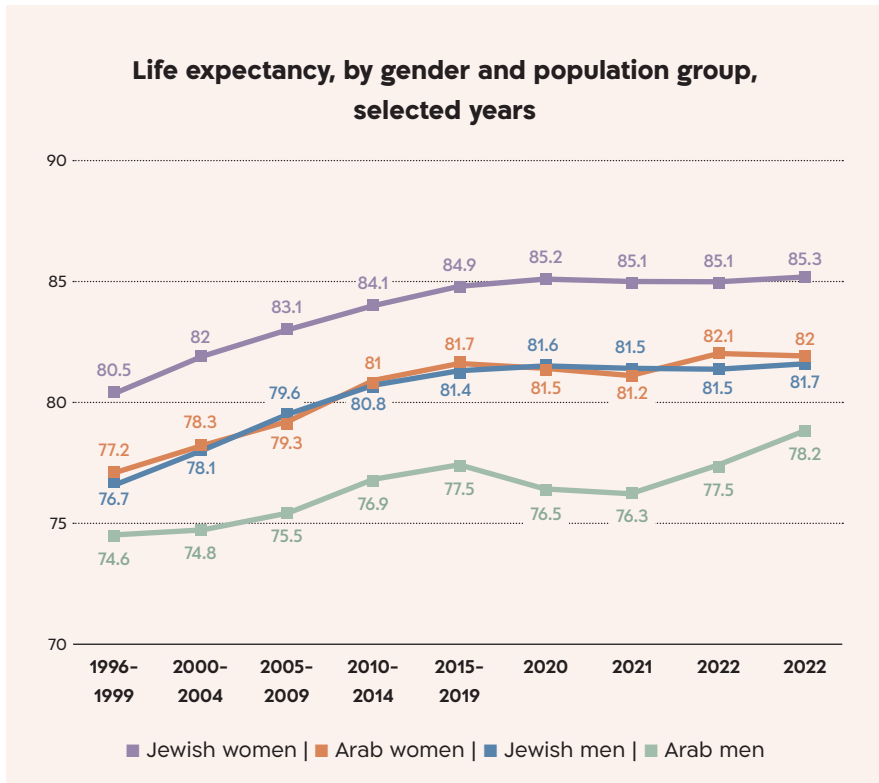
Due to high birth rates in the past, the proportion of children up to the age of 18 in Arab society (35.2%) continues to be higher than the corresponding proportion in Jewish society (31.4%). The proportion of children among Muslims (36.7%) is higher than that among Druze (27.6%) and Christians (23.6%).



Life Expectancy

Life expectancy in Arab society is rising steadily thanks to improvements in health indicators, but there is still a clear divide between Arabs and Jews: the life expectancy of men and women in Arab society today is the same as that of men and women in Jewish society two decades ago.

In the period between 2020 and 2023, Israel experienced two dramatic events that negatively affected the life expectancy of the population: the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–2021 had a negative impact on life expectancy for Arab men, while the Swords of Iron War, which broke out on October 7, 2023, harmed the life expectancy of Jewish men. Both these events slowed the rate of increase in life expectancy for men in both population groups.



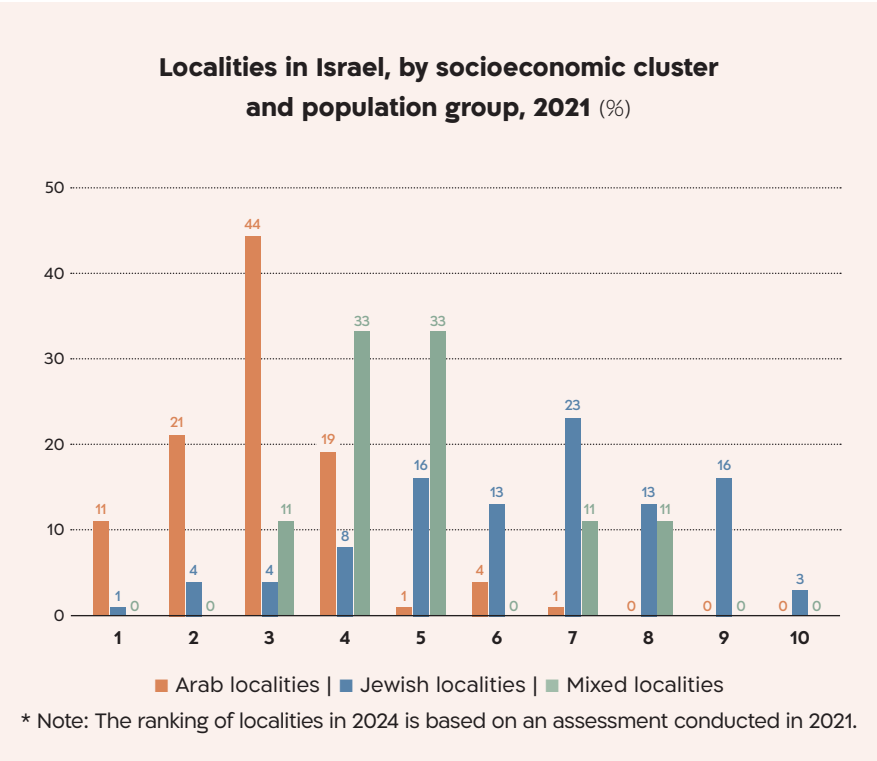


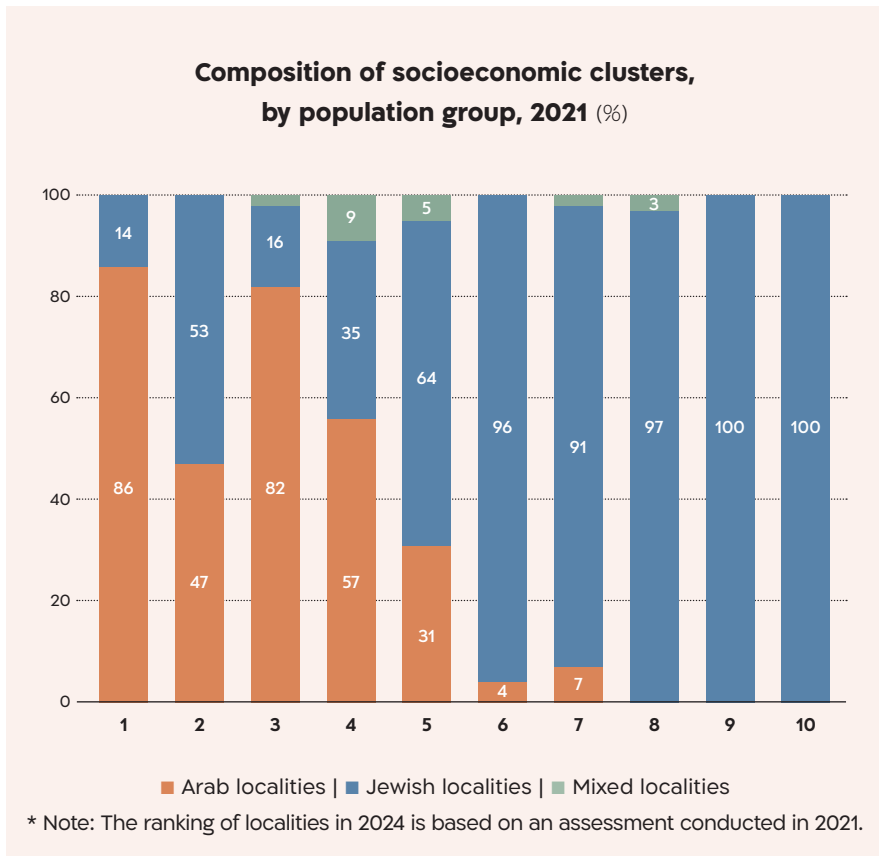
Chapter 2

Standard of Living and Quality of Life

Socioeconomic Ranking of Localities in Israel

Fully 95% percent of Israel's Arab localities are ranked in the four lowest socioeconomic clusters (out of ten). More specifically, 11% of Arab localities are ranked in cluster 1, 21% in cluster 2, 44% in cluster 3, and 19% in cluster 4. By contrast, only 17% of Jewish localities are ranked in the four lowest clusters (1–4), while 68% are in the five highest clusters (6–10).

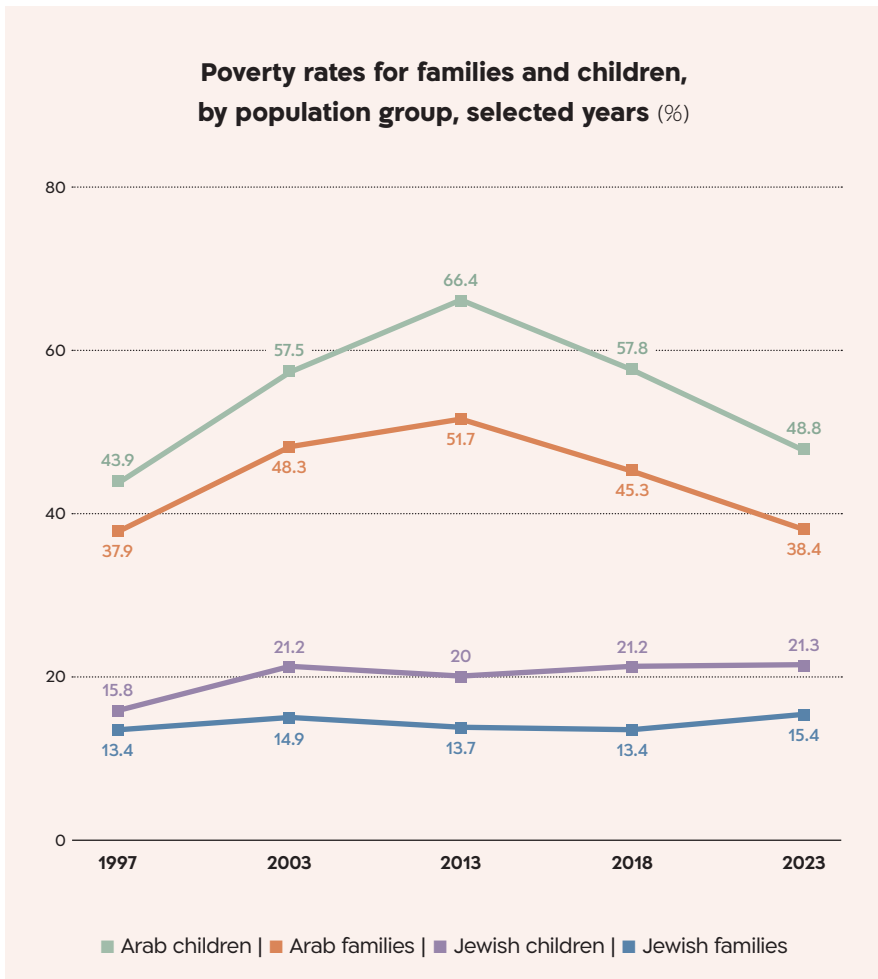




Arab localities are in the lowest socioeconomic clusters, while Jewish localities are in the highest clusters: 86% of the localities in cluster 1 are Arab and 14% are Jewish; 47% of the localities in cluster 2 are Arab and 53% are Jewish; and fully 82% of the localities in cluster 3 are Arab, while 16% are Jewish, and 2% mixed. By contrast, 100% of the localities in clusters 9 and 10, which are at the top of the scale, are Jewish, and these clusters do not contain any Arab or mixed localities.

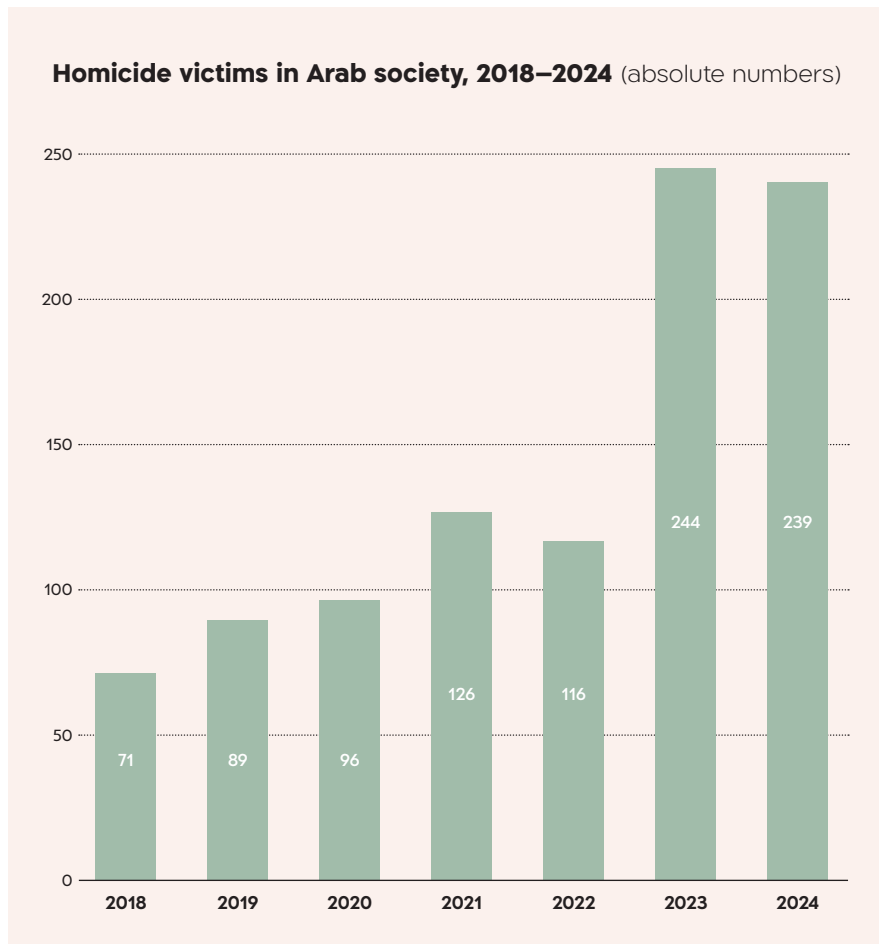
Poverty Rates

According to data from the National Insurance Institute for 2023, poverty rates in Arab society for both families (38.4%) and children (48.8%) have been on a downward trend over the past decade. However, poverty rates in Arab society are still more than twice as high as those in Jewish society for both families (15.4%) and children (21.3%). As noted, the trend within Arab society is one of steady improvement, but the gaps relative to Jewish society have remained.



Violence and Crime

The murder rate in Arab society has been on the rise for the past two decades. Since 2000, more than 2,000 Arab civilians have been killed by internal violence. In 2024, the elevated levels observed in 2023 persisted, with 239 victims. In this context, it should be noted that only 36 of the huge numbers of cases in which Arab civilians were murdered and injured have been solved. Despite the steady increase in the number of deaths and injuries, the majority of such cases and files are not solved by the Israel Police.





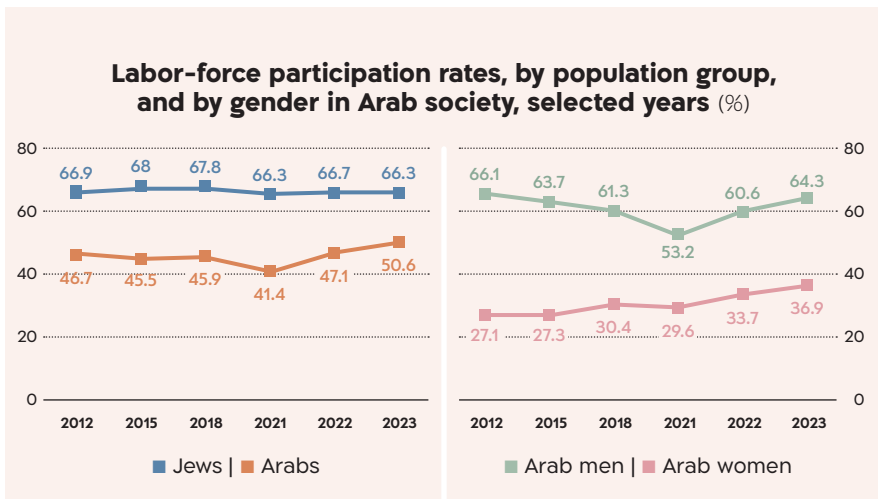
Chapter 3

Employment and Wages

Participation in the Labor Force

According to Central Bureau of Statistics data for 2023, 64.3% of Arab men participate in the labor force, a slightly lower rate than that of Jewish men (67.2%). Among women, there is a large difference: the labor-force participation rate among Arab women is 36.9%, much lower than the corresponding rate among Jewish women (65.4%). However, the rate among Arab women has increased by 10 percentage points over the past decade. In the primary labor force age group (25–54 years old), the participation rate of Arab women reached 50% in 2023.

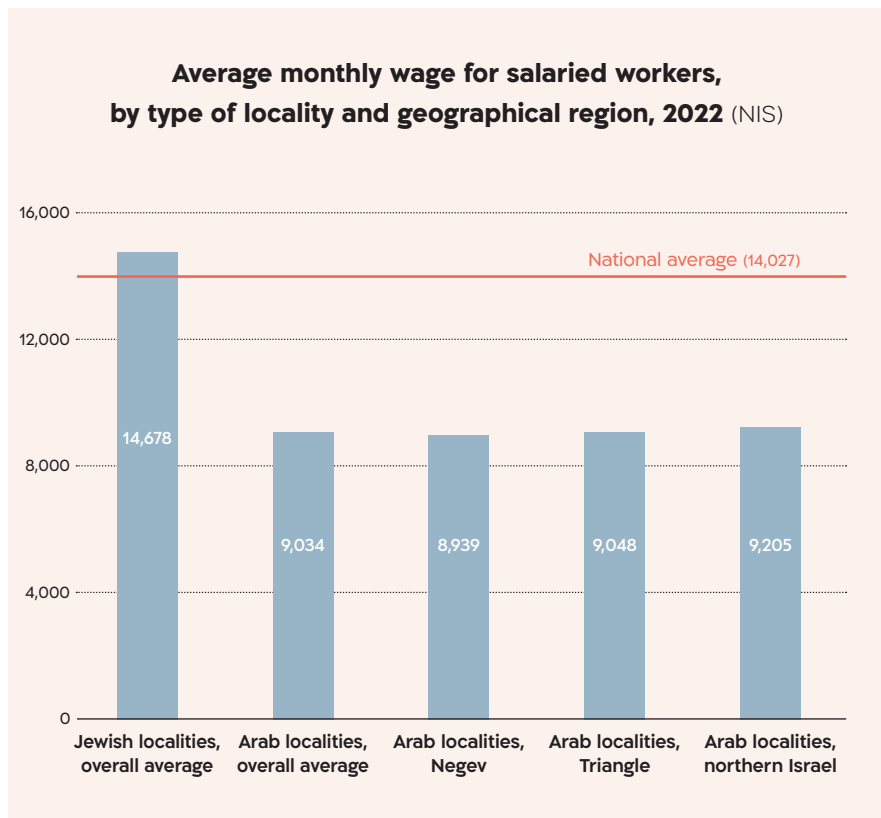
Until the outbreak of the Swords of Iron War, the average monthly share of Arab job seekers out of all job seekers in Israel was 30.8%—larger than the share of Arabs in the country's population. This proportion declined slightly over the first months following the outbreak of the war (down to a monthly average of 27.8%), due to the sharp increase in the number of job seekers in Israeli society as a whole. Toward the end of 2024, however, the number of job seekers in Arab society and their share of all job seekers in Israel returned to the levels observed before the war.



Characteristics of the Labor Force in Arab Society

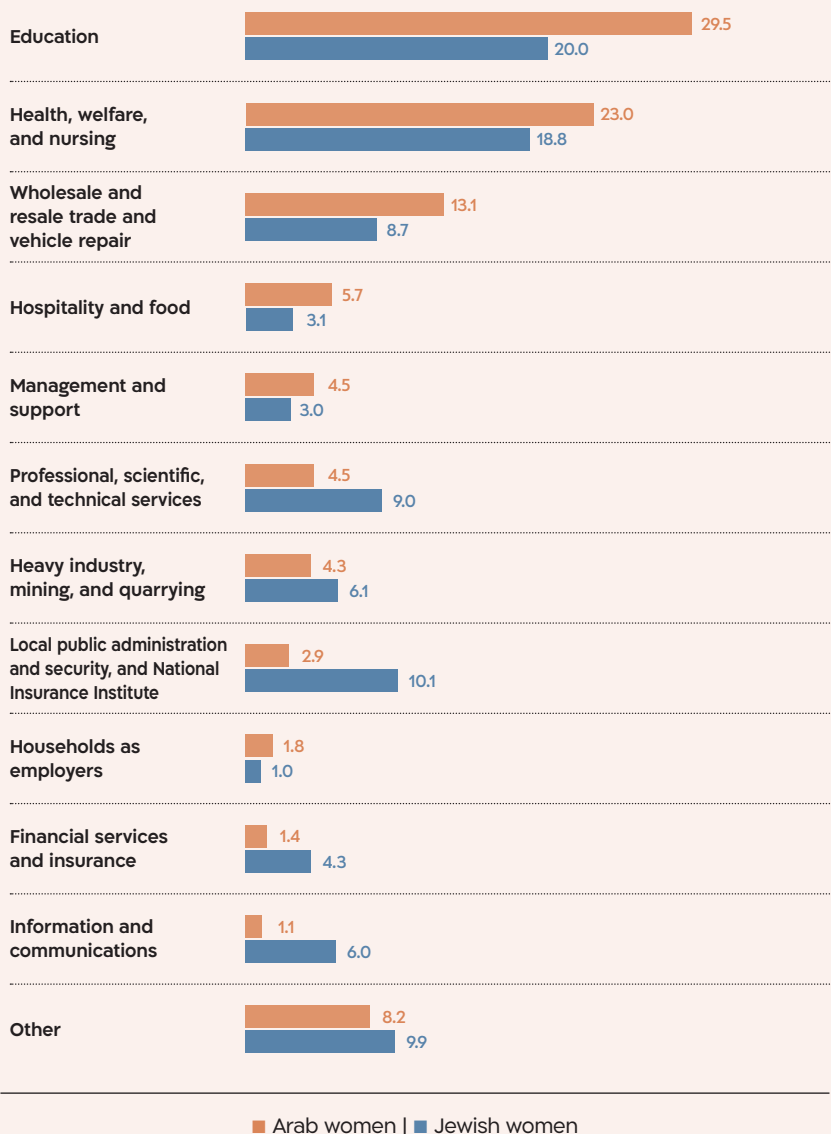
The Arab labor force is characterized by a relatively high concentration of employees in certain economic sectors (such as construction for men and education for women), while the Jewish labor force is more diverse. Furthermore, the Arab labor force is concentrated in economic sectors in which wages are lower than the average wage in Israel, while the Jewish labor force is concentrated in employment sectors with above-average wages.

According to National Insurance Institute data, the average monthly wage of a salaried worker in a Jewish locality (NIS 14,687) is 63% higher than that of a salaried worker in an Arab locality, which is just NIS 9,034 (2022 data, updated to the end of 2024).

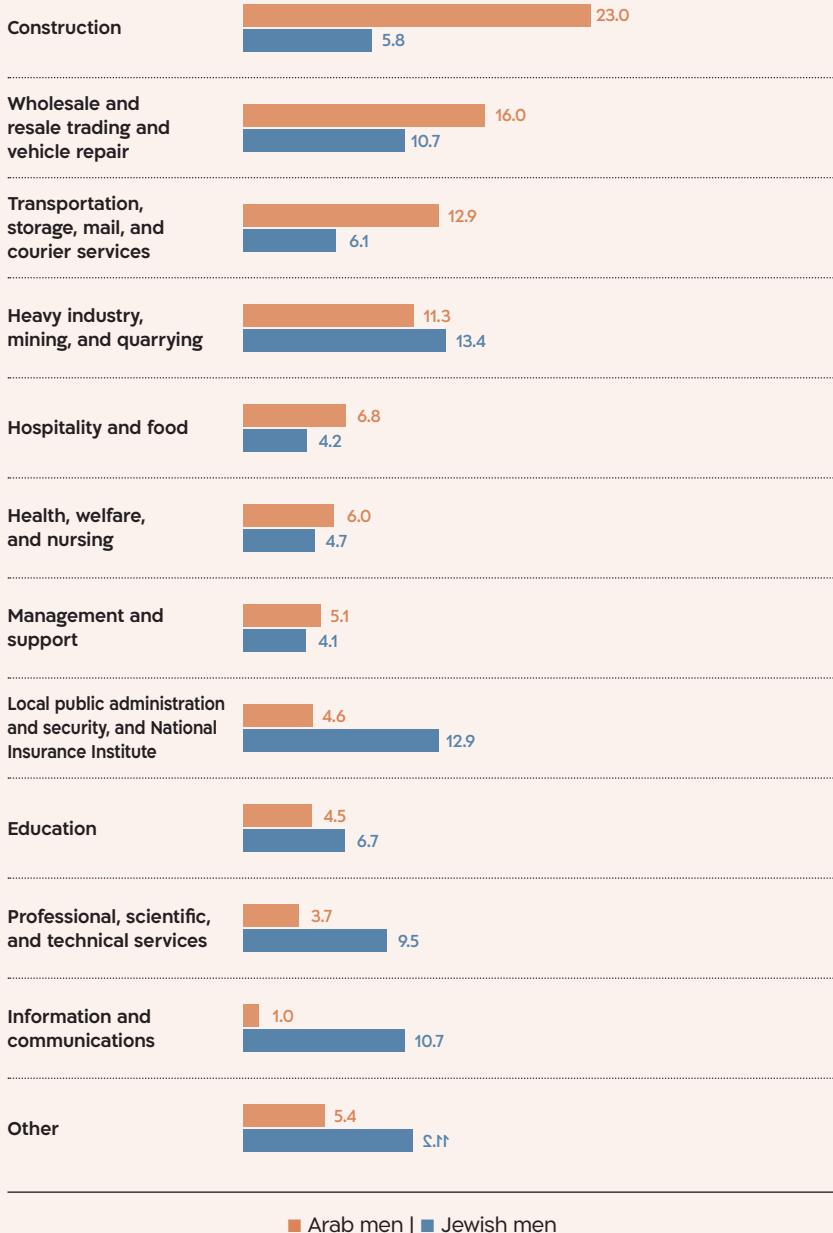


Employees by main economic sectors, by gender and population group (%)

Women



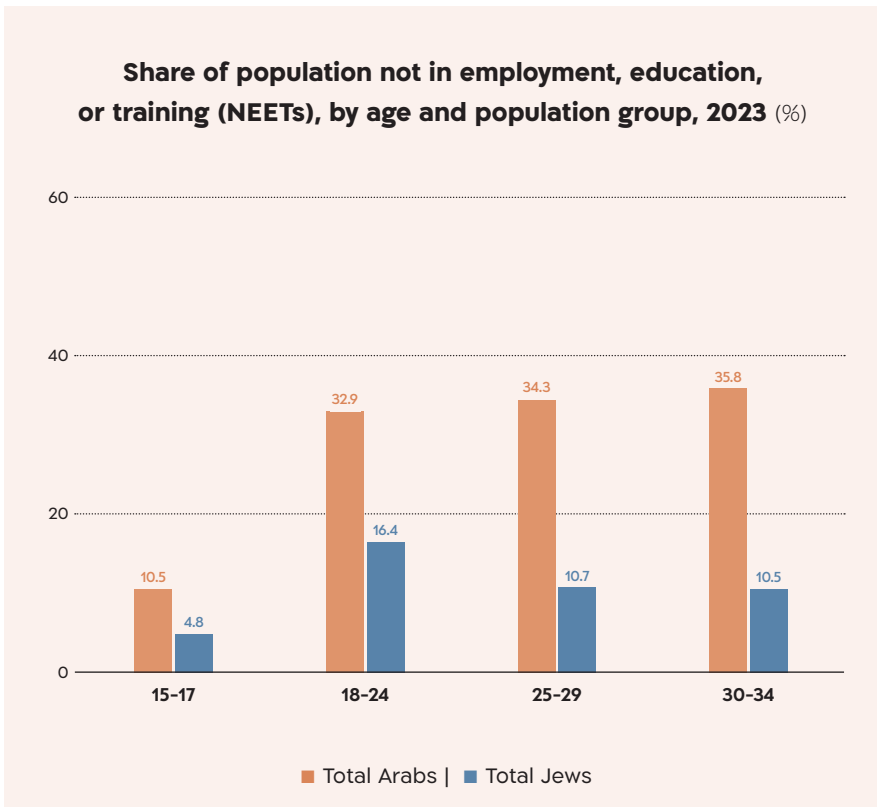
Men



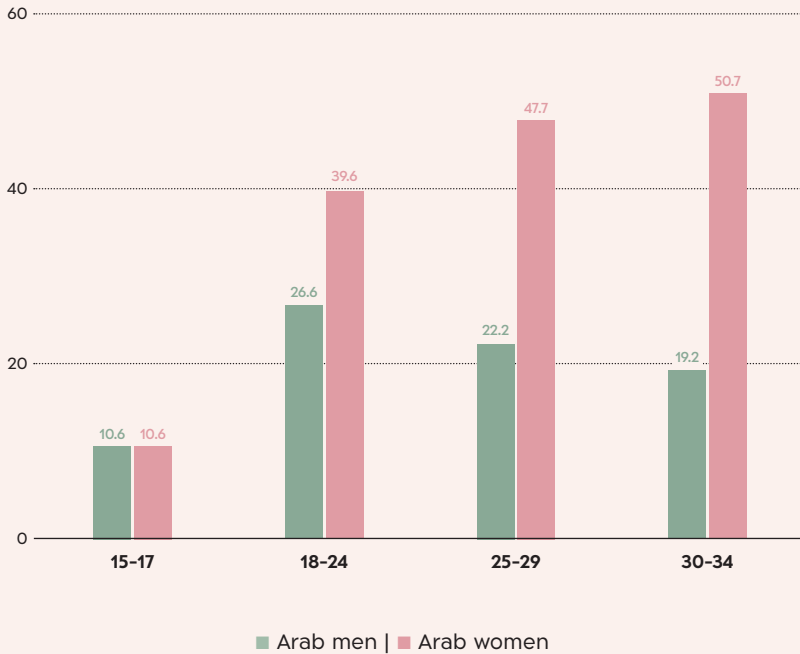
NEETs

According to 2023 data, 32.9% of the 18–24 age group in Arab society are classified as NEETs (not in employment, education, or training). This percentage remains stable even in the next age groups up (covering ages 25–34), meaning that this is a chronic condition—particularly among women in Arab society—rather than a passing phase. By comparison, in Jewish society, only 16.4% of the 18–24 age group are classified as NEETs, and this proportion declines in later age groups (25–34) as they enter the labor market.

The proportion of Arab women defined as NEETs is significantly higher than that of Arab men in all age groups, and between the ages of 25 and 34, this percentage is more than twice as high among Arab women than among Arab men.



Share of population not in employment, education, or training (NEETs), by gender in Arab society, 2023 (%)



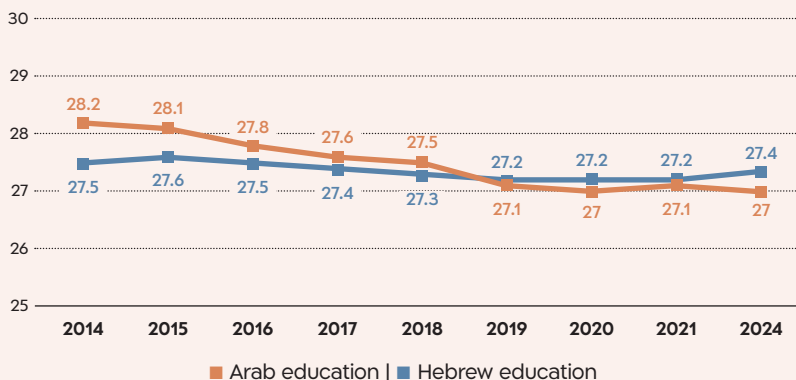


Chapter 4 Education

Physical Infrastructure of Schools

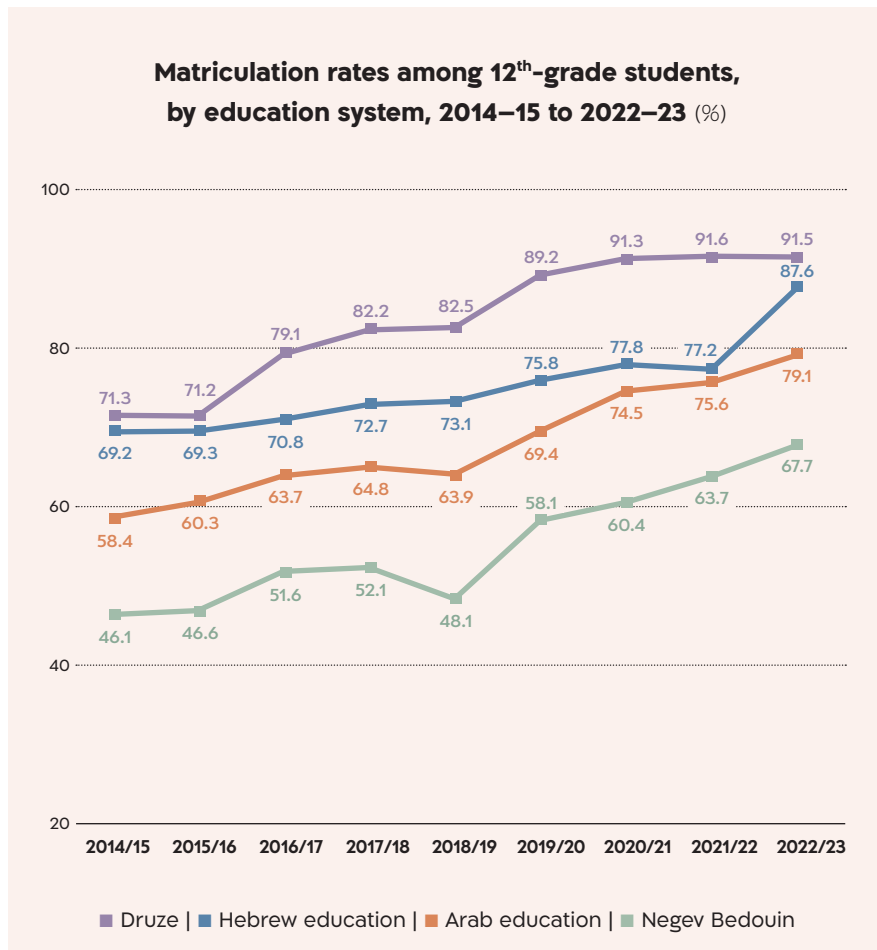
According to the data for the 2023–24 school year, there was an increase relative to the previous year in terms of the physical infrastructure of educational institutions. The number of schools in the Arab education system in Israel stands at 1,146, with 18,511 classrooms, and the number of students in grades 1–12 in the Arab education system is 453,011. It should be noted that the changes in the Arab education system reflect a mix of both demographic changes and conceptual changes, according to which education has become a central tool for socioeconomic mobility. In this context, it is worth noting that up until a decade ago, the average number of students per class in the Arab education system was higher than the average in the Hebrew education system. Over the years, there has been a steady fall in the average number of students in both education systems, but the rate of decline in Arab education has been higher. Thus, the average number of students per class in the Arab education system in recent years has been slightly lower than the average in the Hebrew education system.

**Average class size, by education sector,
selected years (absolute numbers)**



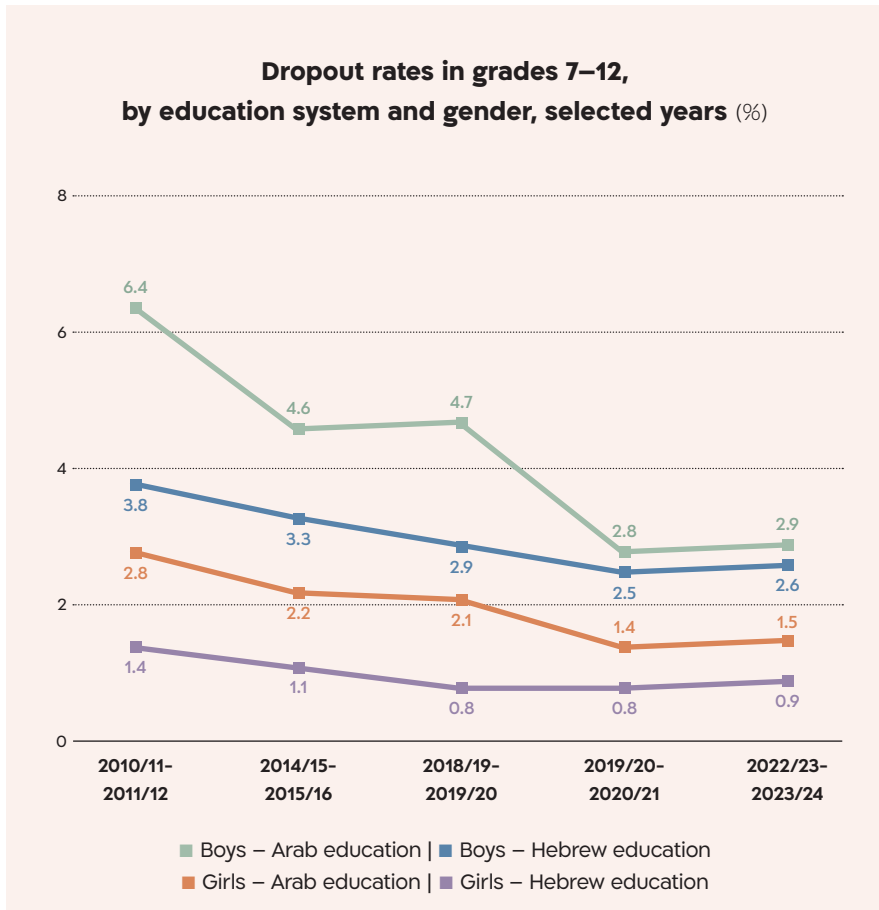
Academic Achievement

Similar to other indicators in this field, the matriculation rate (proportion of graduating students eligible for a bagrut certificate) in Arab education has also been rising steadily, and in recent years the gap between Arab and Hebrew education has narrowed. Though differences still remain, the matriculation rate in Arab education was 79.1% in the 2022–23 school year, while the matriculation rate in Hebrew education reached 87.6%. Within the Arab education system, matriculation rates are particularly high in Druze schools, and particularly low in Bedouin schools in the Negev.



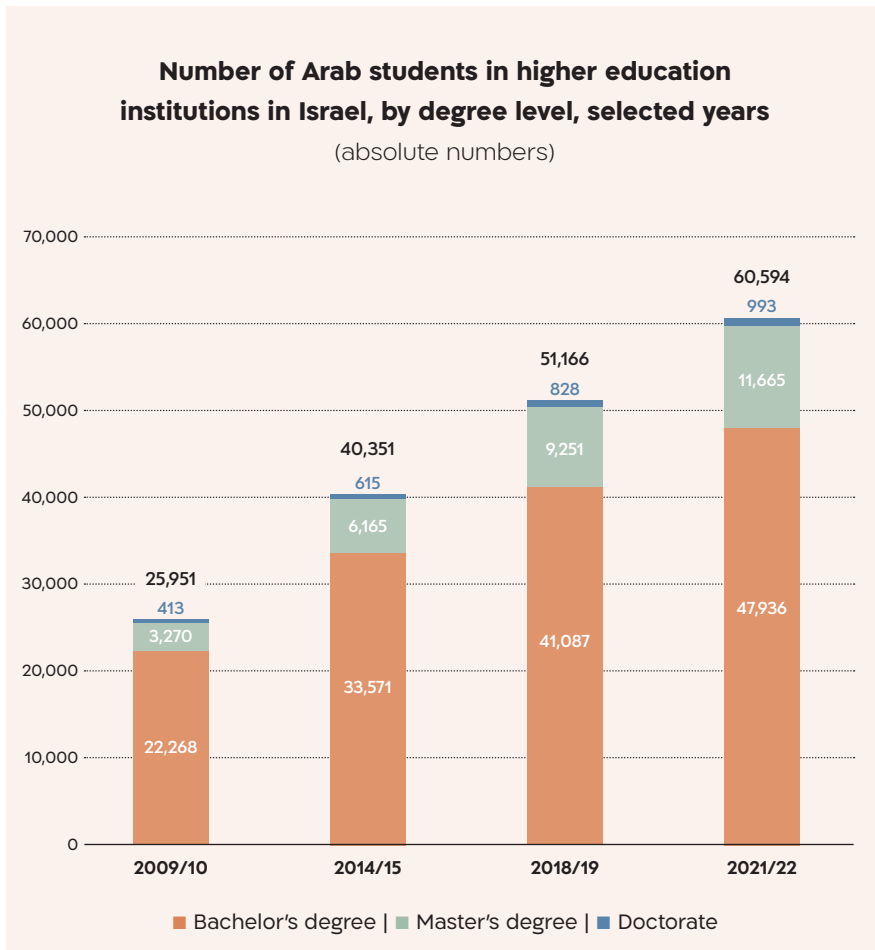
School Dropout

Rates of school dropouts are affected by social, gender, and geographic factors. In both Arab and Hebrew education systems, dropout rates are higher among boys than among girls, with the highest dropout rates among boys in Arab education. At the same time, the dropout rates among boys in the Hebrew education system are higher than those of girls in the Arab education system. Dropout rates are lowest among girls in Hebrew education. While the difference in dropout rates between the two education systems is narrowing, the overall gender gap between boys and girls remains stable.

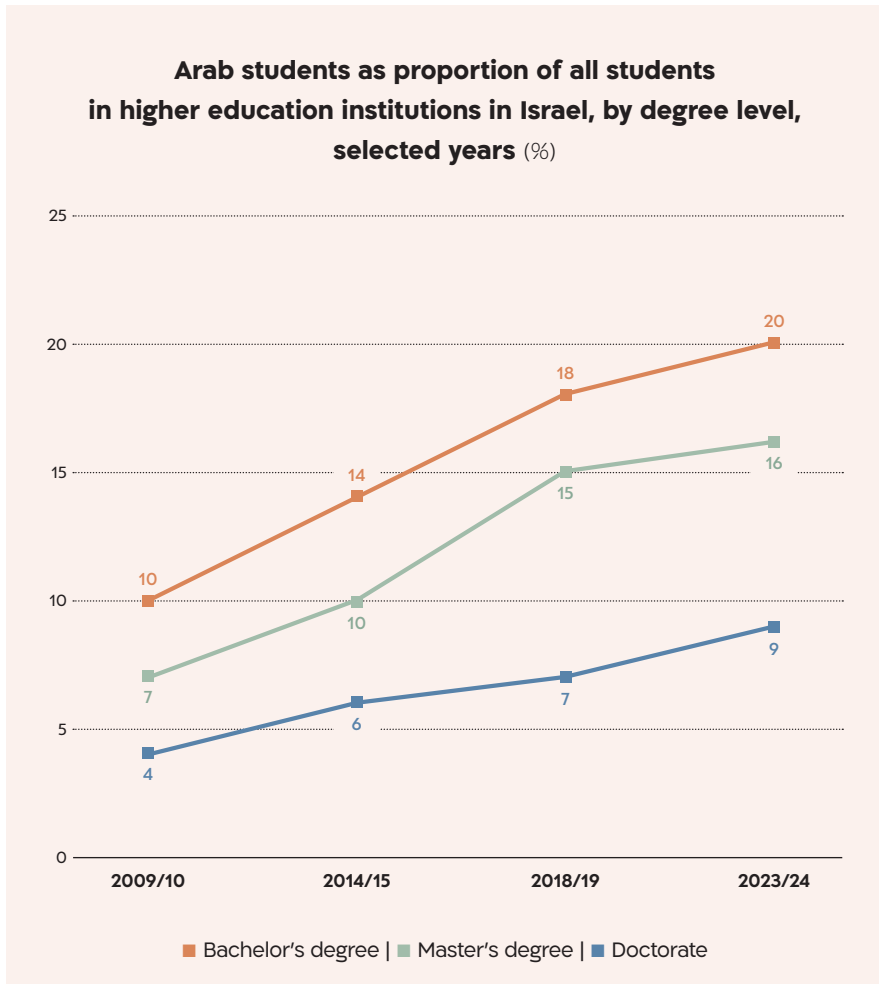


Higher Education

Arab society is experiencing a “higher education revolution.” Over the past decade, both the number of Arab students studying in institutions of higher education in Israel and the relative share of Arab students in the overall population of students in higher education have risen significantly. Both the number and proportion of Arab students at all degree levels doubled between the 2009–10 academic year and the 2023–2024 academic year, bringing the total number to over 60,000 students.



As can be seen in the figure below, the share of Arab students in the total population of undergraduate students in Israel has reached a record 20.4%. This proportion then falls to 16.3% for master's degree students, and to 9.1% for doctoral students. Although the share of degree recipients declines as the level of education rises from bachelor's to doctorate, these trends demonstrate the increase in the importance and value of education and how it affects other economic and social aspects.



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