Labour Force

- The proportion of Arab men (aged 15 and over) in the labour force is almost identical to that of Jewish men (60%). However, the proportion of Arab women (17%) is much lower than that of Jewish women (55%).
- Therefore, the overall participation rate of the Arab population (39%) is lower than that of the Jewish population (57%). Since the late 1980s, there has been a significant decline in the labour force participation rate among Arab men (from 68% to 60%), whereas the rate among Jewish men has declined more moderately — from 62% to 60%.

Standard of Living

- In 2003, the average gross hourly income of Arab wage earners was NIS 29.5 — NIS 29.3 for men and NIS 30.3 for women (the level of education of employed women is higher than that of employed men). On average, the income of Arab wage earners was 69% of the amount earned by Jewish wage earners (63% for men and 82% for women).
- 76% of the total income of Arab households derives from work (compared with 77% in Jewish households), 20% derives from National Insurance allowances and subsidies (compared with 11% in Jewish households), and the rest derives from other sources.
- In Arab households, the largest expenditure is for food, and in Jewish households — for housing.

Geographical Distribution

- 46% of the Arab inhabitants reside in the Northern district, and constitute 52% of the total population there.

- 60% of the Arab persons in the labour force are 15-34 years of age (compared with 40% of the Jewish persons).
- Among persons with an academic degree, the rates of participation in the labour force are 84% for Arab men (compared with 76% for Jewish men), and 62% for Arab women (compared with 79% for Jewish women).
- 25% of all employed Arab men work in construction — more than in any other industry. 38% of all employed Arab women work in education.

- In 122 localities, Arab residents comprise almost the entire population — 89 localities have more than 2,000 residents, and 33 have less than 2,000 residents.
- Nazareth, the largest Arab city, has 62,000 inhabitants. Four more cities have more than 30,000 inhabitants.
- In Jerusalem, Arab residents comprise 33% of the population, in Haifa — 9% and in Tel-Aviv-Jaffa — 4%.

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The Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel
Internet: www.cbs.gov.il | E-mail: info@cbs.gov.il
Phone: 972-2-6592666 | Fax: 972-2-6521540

Written by: Nurit Yaffe
Photo: Courtesy of The Ministry of Tourism
At the end of 2003, the Arab population of Israel numbered 1,302 million people (19% of the total population) — 1,073 million Moslems (82% of the Arab population), 116,000 Christians (9%) and 111,000 Druze (9%).

1. Arab population, by religion, %, 1950-2025

- In 2003, the Arab population grew by 3% — 2.9% due to natural increase and 0.1% due to migration balance. By comparison, Syria and Jordan had a natural increase rate of 2.4%, Egypt had 2% and Lebanon had 1.7%.


- As a result of high fertility, the Arab population is very young — its median age is 19.7 (18.5 for Moslems, 22.7 for Druze, 27.9 for Christians). The median age of the Jewish population is 30.3.
- There are 1,035 men per 1,000 women in the Arab population, compared with 966 men per 1,000 women in the Jewish population.

3. Age composition, %, 2003

4. Types of families, %, 2003

- Arab families have 4.9 persons on the average, compared to 3.5 persons in Jewish families.
- 36% of all Arab families (compared to 10% of the Jewish families) have more than 5 persons.
- 76% of all Arab families have at least one child (aged 0-17). On the average, Arab families (with at least one child) have 3 children.

- The share of Moslem and Druze women at ages 40-44 who have never married has risen from 4% in 1970 to 11.4% in 2002 (6.7% among Jewish women).
- Since 1980, the average age of Arab brides at first marriage has increased by 1.5 years, and that of grooms — by 2.1 years.

5. Average age at first marriage, 1980, 2002

- The average age of Arab males at first marriage was 23.9 years in 1980 and 24.8 in 2002, compared to 22.9 and 23.9 for Jewish males, respectively.
- The average age of Arab females at first marriage was 20.5 years in 1980 and 21.0 in 2002, compared to 20.3 and 20.7 for Jewish females, respectively.


- 49% of all Arab men aged 20 and over smoke at least one cigarette a day, compared with about one-third of the Jewish men. Arab women smoke less than Jewish women — 7% and 17%, respectively.
- Only 16% of the Arab women aged 40 and over had Mammograms (over a period of 6 months), compared with 32% of the Jewish women.


- In 1980, the infant mortality rate of the Arab population of Israel was 24.2. Nonetheless, the infant mortality rate of the Arab population is still twice as high as that of the Jewish population.
- The infant mortality rate of the Arab population of Israel is much lower than in the neighboring Arab countries and in the Palestinian Authority. 102 deaths per 1,000 live births in Iraq, 38 in Egypt, 27 in Lebanon, 26 in the Palestinian Authority, 22 in Jordan and 18 in Syria.

Source: Population Reference Bureau, 2004 World Population Data Sheet

8. Selected indicators of health, persons aged 65 and over, rates per 1,000, 1999/2000

- In 2000-2003, the life expectancy of Arab males was 74.6 years, and that of Arab females — 78.0 (3.3 and 3.8 years lower than the life expectancy of Jewish males and females, respectively). Since the early 1980s, the life expectancy of the Arab population has increased by nearly four years, compared to five years in the Jewish population. As a result, the gap between them has widened.
- In 2003, the infant mortality rate of the Arab population was 8.2 deaths per 1,000 live births; in 1980 it was 24.2. Nonetheless, the infant mortality rate of the Arab population is still twice as high as that of the Jewish population.

9. Persons aged 25-34, by type of last school attended, %, 2003

- The median number of years of schooling of the Arab population has increased from 9 in 1990 to 11.1 in 2003. Among the Jewish population, the median has increased from 11.9 to 12.6 during the same period.
- 26% of all Arab persons aged 25-34 (compared to 60% in the Jewish population) studied more than 12 years.

10. Pupils entitled to a matriculation certificate (% of all 12th grade pupils), 2003

- The difference in the rates of 12th grade pupils who met university entrance requirements (31% for Arabs and 48% for Jews) is greater than the difference in the rates of entitlement to a matriculation certificate (51% and 57%, for Arabs and Jews, respectively).
- Arab students comprised 8.1% of all university students — 9.8% of the Bachelor’s degree students, 5.1% of the Master’s degree students and 3.5% of the Ph.D. degree students.
- In teacher training colleges, Arab students comprised 28% of the student population.

11. Students at universities, by field of studies, %, 2002/2003

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