

Media Release

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Christmas 2013 - Christians in Israel

- **On the eve of Christmas 2013,¹ approximately 161,000 Christians live in Israel; they comprise about 2% of the population in Israel.**
- **79.8% of the Christians in Israel are Arab Christians;** the remaining are mostly Christians who immigrated to Israel with their Jewish family members under the Law of Return (including children born in Israel). Most of them arrived during the wave of immigration in the 1990's from the Former Soviet Union.
- **The localities with the largest Arab Christian population,** as of the end of 2012, were Nazareth (approximately 22,400), Haifa (14,600), Jerusalem (11,900), and Shefar'am (9,600).
- **The median age² at the first marriage of Christian grooms in 2011 was 28.9, and of Christian brides it was 24.4.**
- **In 2012, 2,610 infants³ were born to Christian women,** of those, about 77% were born to Arab Christian women (2,004 infants).
- **The average number of children up to age 17** in Christian families with children up to this age was 1.9, less than Jewish families (2.3) and Moslem families (2.9).
- **The number of Christian pupils in primary and secondary education** was 28,157; they comprise 1.8% of the total active pupils. The vast majority (88%) of the Christian pupils are Arabs.
- **Over the course of years Christian Arabs have had the highest rate of success in matriculation exams,** both in comparison to Moslems and Druze, and in comparison to total pupils of Hebrew education. In the school year of 2011/12, 69% of Christian 12th grade pupils were entitled to a matriculation certificate, compared with 50% of Moslems, 64% of Druze, and 61% of pupils in Hebrew education (including ultra-Orthodox supervision).
- Christian Arabs lead also in receiving a matriculation certificate that meets university entrance requirements: 61% of Christian Arabs, compared with 51% of Hebrew education students, 45% of the Druze, and 35% of Moslems received a matriculation certificate that meets university entrance requirements in 2012.

¹ This preliminary estimate does not include Christians among the foreign workers residing in Israel.

² The age at which half the persons marrying are younger and half are older

³ Live births.

Selected Data on the Christian Population (End of 2012)

- Most of the Arab Christians live in the north – about 71% live in the Northern District and 13% in the Haifa District; 9.5% live in the Jerusalem District.
- Non-Arab Christians are scattered among various districts: Approximately 38.8% are in the Tel Aviv District and the Central District, approximately 34.4% in the Northern District and the Haifa District, another 14% in the Southern District, and 11.5% in the Jerusalem District.
- The largest communities of non-Arab Christians are concentrated in three large cities – Haifa (3,400), Tel Aviv (3,100) and Jerusalem (2,900).
- The age composition of the Christian population is different than that of the Moslem population, and resembles more the age composition of the Jewish population. The percentage of young persons aged 0-19 stood at 29.6%, similar to that of the Jewish population (33.6%), and lower than that of the Moslem population (48.7%). The percentage of persons aged 65 and over among the total Christian population stood at 10.3%, as of the end of 2012 (by comparison, they comprised 12.2% of the Jewish population and 3.6% of the Moslem population).
- The rate of growth of the entire Christian population stood at 1.7%, compared with 1.7% in the Jewish population and 2.5% in the Moslem population.

Marriage and Fertility

- Approximately 861 Christian couples married in Israel in 2011; the vast majority were Arab Christians.
- The median age⁴ of Christian grooms marrying for the first time in 2011 was 28.9, approximately one year older than Jewish grooms and Druze grooms, and approximately three years older than Moslem grooms.
- The median age of Christian brides marrying for the first time was 24.4, about a year and a half younger than Jewish brides, about two years older than Druze brides, and about three and a half years older than Moslem brides.
- In 2012, 2,610 infants⁵ were born to Christian women; approximately 77% of them were born to Arab Christian women (2,004 infants).
- In that year, the number of children a Christian woman is expected to give birth to during the course of her lifetime stood at 2.2 children per woman, and is presently the lowest among the various categories of religion in Israel. In comparison, a Moslem woman is expected to give birth to 3.5 children during her lifetime, a Jewish woman – 3.0, and a Druze – 2.3.

⁴ The age at which half the persons marrying are younger and half are older

⁵ Live births.

- Out of 606 infants born to non-Arab Christian women, approximately 8% were born to women born in Israel, approximately 41% were born to women born in the Former Soviet Union, approximately 17% to women born in Ethiopia, approximately 7% to women born in the Philippines, approximately 5% to women born in Romania, and the rest were born to women born in other countries.

Primary and Secondary Education

- The number of Christian pupils in primary and secondary education was 28,157, and they comprise 1.8% of total active pupils. The vast majority (88%) of the Christian pupils are Arabs.
- Approximately 2,215 Christian pupils began first grade in the 2011/12 school year – approximately 1.52% of total first grade students.
- Among Christian upper secondary education pupils, 53.5% study in a general tract, a percentage similar to that among Moslem upper secondary education pupils (58.0%), and lower than that among Jewish upper secondary education pupils (66.4%).

Matriculation Exams Results

- **Over the course of years Christian Arabs have had the highest rate of success in matriculation exams**, both in comparison to Moslems and Druze, and in comparison to total pupils of Hebrew education. In the school year of 2011/12, 69% of Christian 12th grade pupils were entitled to a matriculation certificate, compared with 50% of Moslems, 64% of Druze, and 61% of pupils in Hebrew education (including ultra-Orthodox supervision).
- Christian Arabs lead in receiving a matriculation certificate that meets university entrance requirements as well: 61% of Christian Arabs, compared with 51% of Hebrew education students, 45% of the Druze, and 35% of Moslems received a matriculation certificate that meets university entrance requirements in 2012 and were potential candidates to continue their studies in institutions of higher education.

Higher Education and Science

Christian Students – 2012/13

- In 2012/13, 5,900 Christian students⁶ were studying; they comprised 1.9% of total students in all the institutions of higher education in Israel.
- Among Christian students, 92.2% were Arabs (5,400 students) and 7.8% were immigrants who came under the auspices of the Law of Return (463 students).
- Among total Christian students, 78.6% were studying for a **first degree**, 18.8% were studying for a **second degree** and 2.6% were studying for a **third degree**.

⁶ Not including students who were not Israeli citizens (foreign students).

- Christian students comprised 1.9% of total students who are studying for a first degree, 2.0% of total students studying for a second degree, and 1.5% of total students studying for a third degree.
- 53.3% of Christian students studied in **universities**, 10.5% studied in the **Open University**, 24.5% studied in **academic colleges**, and 11.7% studied in **colleges of education**.
- Christian students comprised 2.6% of total university students and 2.1% in colleges of education. The percentage of Christian students among total students studying in the Open University and academic colleges was 1.3% and 1.4%, respectively.
- 5.0% of the total population of students for a first degree in Israel is studying paramedical studies, compared with 10.1% among Arab Christian students who study this field. The percentage of students studying medicine was also higher among Arab Christian students compared with the general students (3.0% versus 0.9%, respectively), and the same was found in the fields of languages, literature and regional studies (3.3% versus 1.8%, respectively). On the other hand, 16.9% of the total student population studying for a first degree in Israel is studying engineering and architecture, whereas 13.2% of the Arab Christian students study this field. Three additional fields with similar gaps are business and administration sciences (12% of total students compared with 7.9% of Arab Christian students), physical sciences (1.2% versus 0.7%, respectively) and especially agriculture (0.5% versus 0.1%, respectively).
- Among the Arab Christian **students** studying for a first degree in universities and academic colleges, the main subject of study was a B.A. in social sciences fields (9.9%), followed by law (9.8%), nursing (5.2%), computer sciences (4.8%), economics (4.4%), business administration (4.2%), general humanities (2.9%), electrical engineering (2.7%), biology (2.7%), English language and literature (2.4%), and general medicine (2.2%).
- Among Arab Christian students studying for a first degree, women comprised 62.5%, compared with 56.5% among total students studying for a first degree. Of Arab Christian students who are studying for a second degree, 71.0% were women, compared with 59.9% among total students studying for this degree. Among Arab Christian students studying for a third degree, the percentage of women was 62.9%, compared with 52.1% among the total students studying for this degree.