

Media Release

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Christmas 2019 - Christians in Israel

- On the eve of Christmas 2019, approximately 177,000 Christians¹ live in Israel; they comprise about 2% of the State of Israel's population.
- In 2018, the Christian population grew by 1.5%, compared to 2.2% in the previous year.
- 77.5% of the Christians in Israel are Arab Christians. They constitute 7.2% of the total Arab population of Israel.
- Most of the Arab Christians reside in the northern region of Israel: 70.6% reside in the Northern District.
- 41.3% of the non-Arab Christians reside in the Tel Aviv and Central Districts, as compared to 33.6% in the Northern and Haifa Districts.
- The localities with the largest Arab Christian populations are Nazareth (21,900), Haifa (16,100), Jerusalem (12,700), and Shefar'am (10,300), as of the end of 2018.
- 855 Christian couples married in Israel in 2017. The average age at the first marriage of Christian grooms was 30.1, and that of Christian brides was 26.0.
- In 2018, 2,721 infants were born to Christian women, about 76% of whom were born to Arab Christian women (2,067 infants).
- The average number of children up to age 17 in Christian families with children up to this age is 1.87. Of those, the average number of children up to age 17 in Arab Christian families is 1.96 - smaller than the numbers in Jewish families (2.37) and Moslem families (2.77).

¹ This preliminary estimate does not include Christians who do not appear in the Population Register (foreigners).

- Women constituted 74.4% of Christian students studying toward a second degree, whereas 63.1% of all students studying toward a second degree were women. For third degrees, the percentages were 62.8% and 53.2%, respectively
- Of all students studying toward a first degree, Christians were most highly represented in the following fields: information systems administration (15.3%), musicology (13.7%), and transportation engineering (10.9%).¹
- Compared to Arab Moslem students, the percentage of Christian Arab students studying education and teacher training was lower, and the percentage studying engineering, architecture, law, and medicine was higher.
- The largest percentage of pupils entitled to a matriculation certificate that met university entrance requirements was among Christian Arabs (70.9%). This was similar to the percentage of pupils in Hebrew education (70.6%), and higher than among Druze (63.7%) and Moslems (45.2%).

Selected Data on the Christian Population (end of 2018)

- At the end of 2018, there were approximately 174,000 Christians living in Israel, comprising 1.9% of the total population in Israel: 77.5% of the Christian population in Israel (135,300), were Arab Christians, comprising 7.2% of the total Arab population in Israel; and 22.5% of the Christian population in Israel (39,200) were non-Arab Christians. Since the 1990s, most of them (including their children who were born in Israel) immigrated to the country with their Jewish family members under the Law of Return
 - In 2018, the growth rate of the entire Christian population was 1.5%, compared with 2.2% in the previous year. By comparison, the growth rates of the Jewish and Moslem populations were 1.7%, and 2.3%, respectively. During the course of 2018, the Christian population grew by 2,548 persons, of whom 1,358 were added as a result of natural increase; and another 962 Christians were added to the Israeli population in the international migration balance, versus 1,813 during the previous year.
 - **The Arab Christian population** grew by 1.2% in 2018, primarily as a result of natural increase. By contrast, **the non-Arab Christian population** grew by 2.4%.

¹ Fields studied by 100 or more first degree students. A student studying two disciplines was counted in both of them.

Table A - The Sources of Growth in the Christian Population, 2018

Distribution of the Christian Population	Natural Increase Absolute Numbers	International Migration Balance Absolute Numbers	Annual Percentage of Growth
Total Christians	1,358	962	1.5
Arab Christians	1,351	63	1.2
Non-Arab Christians	7	899	2.4

The age composition of the total Christian population is different from that of the Jewish and Moslem populations. The percentage of young people aged 0-19 was 26.9%, lower than that of the Jewish of the Jewish population (34.8%), and even lower than that of the Moslem population.

Geographic Distribution

Most of the Arab Christians lived in the north: 70.6% lived in the Northern District, 13.3% in the Haifa District, and 9.5% lived in the Jerusalem District. As per the end of 2018, the localities with the largest Arab Christian population were Nazareth (21,900), Haifa (16,100), Jerusalem (12,700), and Shefar'am (20,300).

The geographic distribution of non-Arab Christians was different than that of Arab Christians: 41.3% lived in the Tel Aviv and Central Districts, and 33.6% lived in the Northern and Haifa Districts.

The largest communities of non-Arab Christians were concentrated in the three large cities - Tel Aviv (4,000), Haifa (3,900), and Jerusalem (3,300).

Marriage and Fertility

In 2017, 855 Christian couples married in Israel; 91% of the grooms and 88% of the brides were Arab Christians.

The average age of Christian grooms marrying for the first time in 2017 was 30.1 - about a year and-a-half older than the Druze grooms - approximately two and-a-half years older than the Jewish grooms, and approximately three and-a-half years older than Moslem grooms.

The average age of Christian brides marrying for the first time was 26, similar to Jewish brides, about a year and-a-half older than Druze brides, and about three years older than Moslem brides.

In 2018, 2,721 infants were born to Christian women; approximately 76% of them were born to Arab Christian women (2,067 infants).

Out of 654 infants born to non-Arab Christian women, approximately 8% were born to Israeli-born women, approximately 49% to women born in the Former Soviet Union, approximately 17% to women born in Ethiopia, approximately 5% to women born in the Philippines, and approximately 3% to women born in Romania.¹

In 2018, the number of children a Christian woman was expected to give birth to during the course of her lifetime (the total fertility rate) rose, and was 2.06 children per woman, compared with 1.93 children in 2017. By comparison, a Moslem woman was expected to give birth to 3.20 children during her lifetime, a Jewish woman - 3.17, and a Druze woman - 2.18.

Households and Families²

In 2018, approximately 69,000 households were headed by a Christian, and comprised 2.7% of all households in Israel. Of these households, approximately 39,000 were Arab Christian.

In more than half of the households headed by a Christian (59%), the head of the household was an Arab Christian. The average size of these households was 3.38 persons.

The average size of a household headed by a Christian was estimated at 2.98 persons, similar to the size of households headed by a Jew (3.09), and smaller than that of households headed by a Moslem (4.69).

Of Christian households, approximately 78% (approximately 54,000) were "family" households (which include at least one family). This was similar to the percentage of Jewish family households, and lower than the percentage of Moslem family households (92%).

¹ Including infants born in Israel to Christian women who are not Israeli residents but whose husbands are Israeli residents.

² A **household** is defined as one person or a group of persons living together in one dwelling on a permanent basis most of the week, who have a common expense budget for food. A household may include persons who are not a family. A family household is a household that contains at least one "family".

Data on households and families are based on the Labour Force Survey 2015. The data does not include those living in institutions, kibbutzim, student dormitories and persons living outside localities (Bedouins in the South).

A **family** is defined as a nuclear family of two persons or more who share the same household and are related to one another as husband and wife, as an unmarried couple, or as parent and child. The major types of families are a couple only, a couple with children (in various age groups, defined by the age of the youngest child), or a single parent (a single-parent family) with children.

Non-family households, which include one person only or a group of persons who are not a family, comprised approximately 22% of the Christian households. This was similar to the percentage of Jewish households, and higher than the percentage of Moslem households, which was only 8%.

Approximately 6% of the households headed by a Christian consisted of 6 or more persons. This was in contrast to about 9% of the households headed by a Jew, and approximately 25% of the households headed by a Moslem.

There were approximately 55,000 Christian families in Israel. The distribution of Christian families by type of family differed from that among Jewish families, and differed even more from that among Moslem families.

The average number of children up to age 17 in Christian families with children in that age range was 1.87. Of those, the average number of children in Arab Christian families was 1.96. These data are lower than in Jewish families (2.37), and lower than in Moslem families (2.77).

Employment

The **percentage of participation in the labour force** among **Christians** aged 15 and over in 2018 was 70.05% (67.9% among men, and 66.4% among women). Among Arab Christians, the percentage of participation in the labour force was 60.9% (67.9% among men, and 53.1% among women). By comparison, **the percentage of participation in the labour force** among **Jews** aged 15 and over in 2018 was 67.8% (69.6% among Jewish men, and 66.2% among Jewish women).

The **employment rate** (percentage of employed persons out all persons aged 15 and over) among Christians aged 15 and over was 67.7% (72.0% among men, and 66.4% among women). The employment rate among **Arab Christians** was 58.7% (66.3% among men, and 53.0% among women). By comparison, the employment rate among **Jews** aged 15 and over was 65.2% (66.7% among Jewish men, and 63.7% among Jewish women).

The **percentage of unemployed persons among Christians** aged 15 and over was 3.4% (3.0% among men and 3.8% among women). This percentage among **Arab Christians** was 3.7% (2.5% among men, and 5.3% among women). By comparison, the **percentage of unemployed persons among Jews** aged 15 and over was 4.0% (4.1% among men and 3.8% among women).

In 56,100 **Christian households** (81.7% of all Christian households), there was **at least one employed person** (in 21,000 households there was only one employed person, and in 35,200 households there were two or more employed persons). In 32,500 **Arab Christian households** (80.6% of all Arab Christian households) there was at least one employed person (in 10,200

households there was only one employed person, and in 22,500 households there were two or more employed persons). By comparison, in 1,685,500 **Jewish households** (79.9% of all Jewish households), there was **at least one employed person** (in 64,400 households there was only one employed person, and in 1,041,100 households there were two or more employed persons).

The **housing density** of Christian households was 0.93 persons per room (0.98 persons per room in Arab Christian households). By comparison, the housing density of Jewish households was 0.80 persons per room.

Education

Students in the Education System (School Year 2018/19)

In the school year 2018/19, there were 26,738 Christian pupils in primary and secondary school, comprising 1.5% of all primary and secondary school students. This percentage was the same as in the school year 2017/18 (1.5%).

The vast majority (86.8%) of these pupils were Arab. Christian pupils comprised approximately 5% of the pupils in Arab education.

In 2018/19, there were 1,836 Christian pupils in first grade (Arab education) in the 2014/2015 school year - approximately 4.8% of all first graders in Arab education.

Among Christian upper secondary education pupils (Arab education), 44.5% studied in a technological/vocational track. This was slightly higher than the percentage among Moslems (40.6%), and considerably higher than the percentage among Jewish upper secondary pupils (Hebrew education), which was 34.7%.

Matriculation Exams (School Year 2017/18)

In the school year 2017/18, Christians comprised 6.7% of all 12th-grade pupils in Arab education. In 2017/18, 78.8% of Christian 12th grade pupils were entitled to a matriculation certificate, which was similar to the percentage in the previous year (78.5%). The percentage of Christian pupils entitled to a matriculation certificate in 2017/18 was lower than the percentage in Hebrew education (83.0%) and lower than the percentage of Druze (83.1%), but it was higher than the percentage of Moslems (62.3%).

Christian Arabs receiving a matriculation certificate that meets university entrance requirements, who were potential candidates for continuing to higher education was highest (70.9%). This

percentage was similar among Hebrew education students (70.6%),¹ and higher than the percentage of Druze (63.7%) and Moslems (45.2%) who received such a certificate.

Students in 2018/19)

In 2018/19, there were 6,200 Christian students,² who comprised 2.3% of the total students in all the institutions of higher education in Israel.³

Among Christian students, 94.3% were Arabs (5,900 students) and 5.7% were non-Arab Christians (350 students).

Among the Christian students, 73.8% were studying for a first degree, of whom 24.1% were in their first year (and 49.7% were in the other years); 22.0% were studying for a second degree, and 3.6% were studying for a third degree.

Christian students comprised 2.4% of the total number of students studying for a first degree, 2.3% of the total students studying for a second degree, and 1.9% of the total students studying for a third degree.

Of the Christian students, 51.9% studied at universities, 37.9% studied at academic colleges (25.0% at funded colleges, and 12.9% at non-funded colleges) and 10.1% studied at academic colleges of education.

Christian students comprised 2.6% of all university students, and 2.2% of the students at the academic colleges (2.5% at funded colleges, and 1.8% at non-funded colleges), and 1.8% of all students at academic colleges of education.

¹ Not including pupils in schools under ultra-Orthodox supervision.

² Not including international students, who are not Israeli citizens.

Distribution of First-Degree Christian Arab Students, by Field of Study and Population Group (2018/19)

Field of Study / Population Group	Total	Total Christians	Thereof: Arab Christians	Moslem Arabs
Total - Absolute numbers	194,265	4,602	4,340	27,025
- Percentages	100	100	100	100
General humanities	3.2	2.0	1.8	2.4
Languages, literature and regional studies	1.5	2.1	2.1	2.6
Education and teacher training	18.2	12.1	12.3	29.2
Art, crafts and applied art	4.0	4.6	4.4	2.5
Social sciences	17.2	15.9	15.8	15.1
Business and management sciences	10.5	9.5	9.2	11.6
Law	6.3	8.0	8.2	4.4
Medicine	1.0	2.0	2.0	0.7
Paramedical professions	6.6	10.8	10.9	10.4
Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Sciences	8.3	9.2	9.3	5.6
Physical sciences	1.4	0.8	0.8	1.0
Biological sciences and agriculture	3.0	3.6	3.6	3.2
Engineering and architecture	18.8	19.4	19.7	11.2

Compared with Moslem Arab students, the percentage of Arab Christian students studying Education and teacher training was lower (one out of 3 versus one out of 8, respectively). In addition, the percentage of Christian Arab students studying Engineering and architecture, law, and medicine was higher than among Moslem Arabs.

Of all first degree students, Arab Christians were most highly represented in the following fields: database management (15.3%), musicology (13.7%), and transportation and transport engineering (10.9%).¹

The relative share of women among Christian students was higher than the share of women among all students, for all degrees and particularly among those studying for higher degrees.

¹ Fields studied by 100 or more students. A student studying two disciplines was counted in both of them. Does not include the Open University and academic colleges of education.

Table C - Percentage of Women Among Christian Students and Among All Students, By Degree 2018/19

Degree	Among Christian students	Among all students
Total (including diplomas)	63.3	59.6
First degree	59.7	58.8
Second degree	74.4	63.1
Third degree	62.8	53.2