



East Jerusalem: Facts and Figures 2021

May 2021

Population

- Jerusalem, Israel's largest city, is home to **358,804** Palestinians — constituting **38%** of the total population.¹ Most of the Palestinians who live in Jerusalem have permanent resident status and the vast majority live in neighborhoods in the east and south of the city.
- **Between 120,000 – 140,000** residents of East Jerusalem live in neighborhoods on the far side of the Separation Barrier. Of these, around **60,000 – 80,000** live in Shu'afat Refugee Camp and three adjacent neighborhoods – Ras Khamis, Ras Shahadeh, and Dahiyat a-Salaam. Approximately **61,500** live in the Kafr 'Aqab neighborhood, which is situated to the north of Qalandiya checkpoint.
- Several thousand Palestinians live in various “enclaves” created along the municipal boundary of Jerusalem. In some areas, the Separation Barrier separates residents of Jerusalem from the remainder of the city, such as at the edge of the Jabal Mukabber neighborhood (in the area of Sheikh Sa'ad and Sawahreh). In other areas, the Barrier separates Palestinian residents of the West Bank from the remainder of the West Bank, trapping them on the “Jerusalem” side of the Barrier, such as in the Wadi Humus area.
- The residents of East Jerusalem suffer ongoing neglect by the municipal and state authorities, reflected in a lack of infrastructures and basic services in all areas of life. A report by the State Comptroller examining the social services provided for the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem found *“gaps in most of the infrastructures and services in East Jerusalem in comparison to the west of the city, including gaps in education and higher education and lack of knowledge of Hebrew, as well as gaps in transportation, the quantity of public buildings and public spaces, sanitation, and municipal services.”*
- In the neighborhoods beyond the Separation Barrier and in the enclaves that it created, the situation is even worse. In addition to a lack of infrastructure and services, residents suffer from restrictions on their freedom of movement due to the need to cross checkpoints. They also face a lack of emergency services.

¹ Detailed footnotes and citations can be found in Hebrew [here](#).

Legal Status

- After Israel annexed the east of the city in 1967, the residents of East Jerusalem received permanent resident status. This status grants eligibility to all services and rights enjoyed by citizens, with the exception of the right to vote in Knesset elections.

Unlike citizenship, temporary residency status can be revoked for a variety of reasons. For example, residency status can be revoked due to an extended stay abroad or on the grounds of breach of trust. Despite the fact that the Palestinians who live in East Jerusalem are indigenous residents, many of whose families have lived there for many generations, the status that Israel imposed on them after occupying the city renders their residency conditional.

- Between 1967 and 2020, Israel revoked the residency status of **14,701** Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem. In 2020, the Interior Ministry revoked the permanent residency of **18** Palestinians from East Jerusalem, 10 of whom were women.
- Over the years, there has been an increase in the number of residents of East Jerusalem requesting Israeli citizenship. In 2020, for example, **1,633 requests for naturalization** were submitted and 934 requests were approved. In 2019, a record number of 1,200 naturalization requests were approved.

The naturalization process is lengthy and complex. Residents of Jerusalem who seek Israeli citizenship can submit their request only at the Population and Migration Authority office in Wadi Joz. Applicants may wait up to three years for a reply to their request.

Poverty and Welfare

- In 2020, the standard of living in Israel, in general, fell due to the COVID-19 crisis. This reality had a profound impact on Jerusalem, which has one of the highest poverty rates in the country. By 2017, **75%** of all Palestinian families in Jerusalem were living below the poverty line, compared to **22%** of Jewish families; **86%** of Palestinian children in Jerusalem lived below the poverty line, compared to **33%** of Jewish children.
- The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic led to a sharp rise in unemployment among the residents of East Jerusalem. In 2019 approximately **79%** of Palestinian men and **23%** of Palestinian women in East Jerusalem participated in the labor market. Over the course of 2020, approximately **one-third** of employed East Jerusalem residents lost their jobs. Meanwhile, over half of the new job seekers among this population were in the **18-25** age range.

- As of June 2020, the unemployment rate in Jerusalem was **26%**. Residents of East Jerusalem accounted for **39%** of the unemployed, while only accounting for **30%** of the total number of those in employment.

Education

- East Jerusalem is home to **137,250** Palestinian children between the ages 3-18, but only **96,328** students are registered at the various educational institutions in the city. Around **30%** of Palestinian children in East Jerusalem (**43,760**) are not registered at any formal educational institution, or there is no information as to which institution they attend.

This figure is significantly higher than in previous years (the figure for 2019 was 14%), and it is reasonable to assume that it reflects the disruption experienced by the education system in Israel during the COVID-19 epidemic. In places such as East Jerusalem, where the education system was already failing to meet accepted standards for learning infrastructures even before the outbreak of the pandemic, the educational crisis it has sparked is particularly serious.

- There is a shortage of around **1,670** classrooms in East Jerusalem. This figure includes 765 classrooms that are currently in use but are not fit for purpose or are rented.
- Despite the significant shortage of classrooms, the pace of construction of new classrooms is slow and inadequate. In 2019-2020, only **44** new classrooms were completed at five educational institutions.

Arrest and Indictment of Minors

- In the last year, **73%** of all minors arrested in Jerusalem were Palestinians. Over the course of 2020, 606 minors were arrested—of these, **443** were non-Jews and the vast majority were Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem. Of this figure, **146** were under the age of 15. Over the same period, **178** Jewish minors were arrested, and **70** of whom were under the age of 15.
- Of the **148** minors from Jerusalem detained and pending the completion of proceedings, **the vast majority were Palestinians (120** Palestinian minors, accounting for **81%** of the total number of detained minors). Of these, **58** of the minors detained pending completion of proceedings were under the age of 15, of whom **49** were Palestinians.
- In 2020, indictments were served against **143** Palestinian minors in East Jerusalem, **50** of whom were under the age of 15. This compares to **50** indictments served against Jewish minors in the city, **17** of whom were under the age of 15.

Building, Planning, and Demolitions

- The level of housing congestion in Jerusalem is 1.15 persons per room—the highest in any of the major cities in Israel. This figure is higher than the national average of 0.86 persons per room.
- Housing congestion in the Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem averages **1.8 persons per room – almost twice** the rate of housing congestion in the Jewish neighborhoods in the west of the city, which is one person per room.
- Only around **15%** of the area of East Jerusalem (equivalent to **8.5%** of the total area of Jerusalem) is zoned for residential use by Palestinian residents. Building percentages for Palestinians in the city are particularly low. Only **2.6%** of the land in East Jerusalem is zoned for public buildings for the Palestinian population of the city.
- Due to these planning obstacles, the potential for the development of public infrastructures in the neighborhoods of East Jerusalem is very limited. The majority of the plans are localized and do not create significant reserves for construction.
- Due to the failure in planning, residents of East Jerusalem have almost no possibility to obtain building permits, and, as a result, much of the construction is undertaken without permits. From 2004 to 2018, dozens of homes were demolished in East Jerusalem every year on the basis of construction without permits. In recent years, there has been a sharp rise in the number of demolitions:
 - In 2019, **169 homes were demolished**, which left 328 people homeless, 182 of whom were minors.
 - In 2020, **121 homes were demolished**, which left 379 people homeless, 194 of whom were minors.
 - As of the end of April 2021, **20 homes were demolished**, which left 50 people homeless, 25 of whom were minors.
- From 2019 through the end of April 2021, **155** non-residential structures were demolished in East Jerusalem, including storerooms and businesses.
- In 2017, the Planning and Building Law was amended and budgets were allocated for actions by the National Enforcement Unit in Arab locales within the State of Israel. The amendment transformed planning and building offenses from criminal offenses to administrative transgressions, thereby empowering municipalities to impose heavy fines. As a result, there was a sharp rise in the number of homes demolished by their owners: in 2020 the number of demolitions carried out by owners was **47%**, compared to an average of **21%** in previous years.

Transportation and Infrastructures

- Over the past decade, there has been a significant increase in the development of transportation plans in East Jerusalem. In 2018 a five-year plan was approved for the area that provided for the allocation of around half a billion shekels in order to improve the transportation infrastructures in East Jerusalem. However, these investments are not sufficient to close gaps created over five decades. Many roads in East Jerusalem are still full of potholes and bumps, as well as lack safety barriers and sidewalks. The roads cannot cope with the volume of traffic using them. Many of the roads are very narrow, built on steep inclines, and do not meet the accepted standards. Moreover, there is a significant gap between the planning and implementation of the construction of roads in these neighborhoods. In many cases, it is impossible to construct the planned roads, since they pass through areas that in practice have been built up, or due to topographic features that are inconsistent with the original planning.
- In May 2021, after a long delay, the Rav-Kav automated charge card was introduced in East Jerusalem. Seven private bus companies operate in the area and, until now, these companies served tens of thousands of customers by means of tickets purchased with cash at the bus stops or from the driver after boarding. The introduction of the Rav-Kav arrangement will allow residents of East Jerusalem to transfer between different lines and types of public transportation, as well as to receive discounts and benefits that they have not previously enjoyed access.

Water and Sewage

- As of 2018, only **44%** of the residents of East Jerusalem had proper and legal connections to the water grid. The lack of proper water and sewage connections is the result of the ongoing failure of the authorities to properly plan the Palestinian neighborhoods and to establish appropriate infrastructures that can meet the needs of the growing population.
- In 2020, Hagihon water company replaced **4,203.89 meters** of sewage lines in East Jerusalem and laid **6,760.86 meters** of new lines.
- According to an estimate prepared by Hagihon in April 2021, there is a shortage of around **23,950 meters** of new sewage lines in the neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, in part due to the need to eliminate the use of cesspits.

Removal and Restriction Orders

- In 2020, the Commander of the Home Front signed **5 restriction orders** concerning 4 Palestinian adults who hold permanent residency status in East Jerusalem (in some cases the orders include more than one restriction). Additionally, over the course of 2020, **18 restriction orders** were imposed on 16 Palestinian adults and one minor—9 of these prohibited the recipients to contact various others, while 13 imposed nighttime house arrest.