



THE STATE OF EDUCATION IN EAST JERUSALEM 2020-2021

ANNUAL EDUCATION REPORT



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I. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Percentage of Palestinian students in the education system (recognized but unofficial and official) out of the total number of students in Jerusalem	36%
2. Percentage of Palestinian students studying in the <i>official</i> educational institutions out of the total number of Palestinian students in East Jerusalem	38%
3. Percentage of Palestinian students studying in the <i>recognized but unofficial</i> educational institutions	34.7%
4. Number of Palestinian children of compulsory school age unaccounted for ("invisible children") from official municipal data and records	37,233
5. Percentage of "invisible children" out of total number of Palestinian children of compulsory school age in East Jerusalem	26.9%
6. Current classroom shortage in East Jerusalem	2,840
7. Number of classrooms completed prior to the start of the school year (September 2021)	158
8. Total increase in the number of classrooms in the construction pipeline	170
9. Number of student dropouts in 1st – 11th grades in the 2020-2021 school-year	
Boys	1,405
Girls	1,154
10. Percentage of Palestinian students studying for Israeli matriculation out of the total number of students in Arab educational institutions in Jerusalem	12%

II. EDUCATION IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Last year, [Ir Amim's annual education report](#) depicted the poor state of the education system in East Jerusalem as a compounded result of long-term neglect and extended closures due to the COVID-19 crisis. Many neighborhoods in East Jerusalem were frequently coded as “red” in terms of coronavirus transmission rates, leading to increased regulations and limitations on in-person gatherings – including schooling. **Ir Amim estimated that during this period upwards of 80% of students in the Arab education system in Jerusalem were not attending school.**

At Ir Amim's request, a hearing was held before the Knesset's Special Committee for the Rights of the Child, chaired by MK Yousef Jabarin (Joint List), on November 23, 2020. Ir Amim presented evidence¹ before the committee of the clear failings on the part of the Jerusalem Municipality regarding the education system in East Jerusalem during the coronavirus crisis. Furthermore, Ir Amim emphasized approaches in need of refining by the Municipality, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Communication with respect to both in-person and remote learning in East Jerusalem.

Among the evidence presented were estimates by the principals of schools in East Jerusalem that 40-60% of their students were unable to engage in remote learning due to internet-related infrastructure problems. Also noted were the results of mapping carried out by the Ministry of Jerusalem and Heritage in November 2020 that stated, “complaints regarding infrastructure and internet service problems have been voiced by residents of East Jerusalem for a long time.”²

The Jerusalem Municipality's response to a freedom of information request³ from August 16, 2021 reported the following concerning the direct distribution of remote-learning devices (ie: laptops, tablets, etc.) to students:

¹ [Evidence presented before the Committee on Rights of the Child](#), 23 Nov 2020 [Hebrew]

² [Internet Connectivity Issues in East Jerusalem \[Hebrew\]](#)

³ [Freedom of Information Request](#), 16 Aug 2021 [Hebrew]

In East Jerusalem, 13,785 devices were distributed by the Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem Municipality. Comparatively, 7,377 devices were distributed within the general sector and 2,441 in the Haredi sector.

Ir Amim was pleased to discover that the distribution of remote learning devices was carried out with no discrepancy between the students learning in schools with the Israeli matriculation curriculum (*bagrut*) and those with the Jordanian matriculation curriculum (*Tawjih*). Similarly, that students learning in recognized but unofficial schools were likewise provided with these devices and not just those in official schools. **Indiscriminate distribution of remote-learning devices was among the recommendations that Ir Amim presented to the authorities.**

The Jerusalem Municipality further reported that broadband infrastructure was installed in 56 schools throughout East Jerusalem in order to improve internet connectivity and speeds.

Previously, in October 2020, the Ministry of Communication had advertised⁴ (in Hebrew and in Arabic) to residents of East Jerusalem of the ability to connect to two of the largest internet providers. Moreover, residents who experience connectivity issues were encouraged to report them to the Ministry of Communication's Public Inquiries office.

In order to allow for the full or partial opening of the education system in accordance with the corona guidelines from the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education, the Municipality reported that it: recruited 479 teachers, acted to create learning spaces for small groups in the official schools, and developed updated cleaning guidelines for educational facilities.

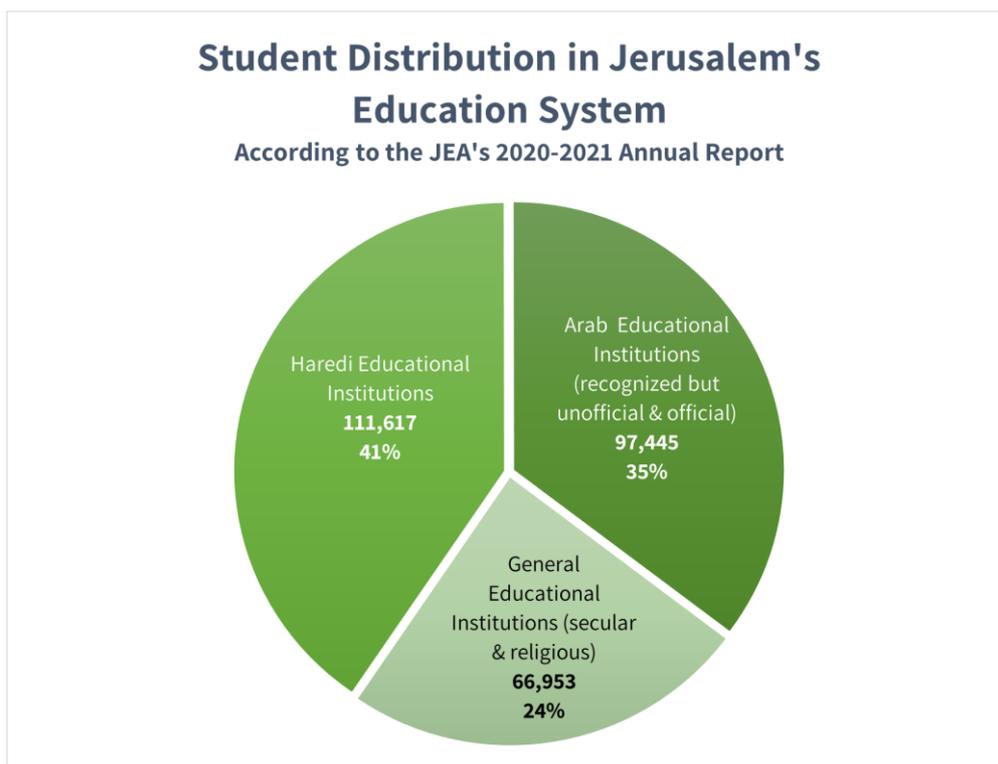
⁴ [Advertisement for Internet connectivity \[Hebrew\]](#)

III. DISTRIBUTION OF PALESTINIAN STUDENTS IN JERUSALEM'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

1. Distribution of Students in Jerusalem's Educational Institutions

<i>According to the Jerusalem Education Administration (JEA) Data⁵, 2020-2021</i>	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
General Education Schools (state secular & state religious)	67,353	24.1%
Haredi Schools	111,617	39.9%
Arab Schools (recognized but unofficial & official)	100,485	36.0%
Total	279,455	

⁵ [JEA annual report data](#) [Hebrew]



2. Distribution of Palestinian Students in Jerusalem's Education System

<i>According to the Jerusalem Municipality's response to the Freedom of Information Request, Aug. 16, 2021</i>	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Students in official Arab educational institutions	52,577	38.0%
Students in recognized but unofficial Arab educational institutions	47,994	34.7%
"Invisible children" – school-age children whose educational status is unknown to the Municipality	37,233	26.9%
Total number of Palestinian children of compulsory school age (3-18) in Jerusalem	138,219⁶	

⁶ The total number of students adds up to 137,804. The total number in the table was provided from the response of the Jerusalem Municipality.

3. “Invisible Children”

The Jerusalem Municipality responded⁷ to a Freedom of Information request with data showing that they are unaware of the educational status of 37,233 Palestinian students, amounting to nearly 27% of the compulsory school-age children in East Jerusalem. Last year, the percentage stood at 23%, yet the situation has worsened. **The Jerusalem Municipality does not know the educational status of more than a quarter of Palestinian children in East Jerusalem who should ostensibly be students.**

In the words of the State Comptroller, this denotes “the inaction and weakness of the Jerusalem Municipality and the Ministry of Education in locating these children of East Jerusalem in order to provide a basic education ... the Jerusalem Municipality and the Ministry of Education must act without delay in accordance with their legal duty, in order to locate these children’s place of schooling or their location....”⁸

For two years now the Jerusalem Municipality has failed to provide numerical data regarding Palestinian students studying in private educational frameworks. This data was previously published in the Jerusalem Education Administration’s annual reports; yet by ceasing to present this information to the public, the JEA is continuing to abdicate its responsibility for all school-age students in Jerusalem.

⁷ [Freedom of Information Response](#) [Hebrew]

⁸ The State Ombudsman, Special Auditing Report – The Development and Strengthening of the Status of Jerusalem, Part 2 (June 2019, p. 384).

IV. The Classroom Shortage in East Jerusalem

1. 2,840 Classrooms Lacking in East Jerusalem

Missing Classrooms in East Jerusalem, 2020-2021	
Classrooms necessary to replace substandard ones <i>(according to the Municipality's response to the FOI request, Oct. 14, 2021)</i>	384
Estimated number of classrooms necessary to absorb half of the students from recognized but unofficial schools and private schools, as well as to accommodate natural growth in the school-age population <i>(according to the Municipality's response to the FOI request, Oct. 14, 2021)</i>	1,077
Additional classrooms required to accommodate "invisible children" (avg. 27 students per classroom)	1,379
Total Classroom Shortage	2,840

Over the course of the past school year there has been encouraging growth in the number of classrooms completed. **For the first time, the pace of classroom construction matches the need brought about by the natural growth in the school-age population and the cumulative dearth of classrooms.** There was an increase of 170 classrooms in the construction pipeline over last year, however 409 classrooms remain in the stage prior to planning. The serious lack of classrooms in East Jerusalem necessitates a quicker pace of planning and execution for construction. **Likewise, in light of the classroom shortage the number of classrooms in the construction cycle needs to be at least doubled in order to adequately serve East Jerusalem's school system.**

2. The Pace of Classroom Construction, 2001-2021

Classrooms in the Construction Pipeline

At start of school year	Completed	Under construction	Under Planning and Implementation	Facing Expropriation or Legal Complications	Planning Yet to Begin	Total in all stages
2001-9/2009	257					
9/2010	24					
9/2011	7	89	193	86		375
9/2012	32	85	173	84		374
9/2013	61	75	110	147		393
9/2014	57	56	157	108		378
9/2015	38	44	168	259		509
9/2016	42	46	124	245		457
9/2017	32	35	266	131		464
9/2018	35	444		355		834
9/2019	44	108	26	752	382	1312
9/2020	6	198	621	85	409	1319
9/2021	158	198	639	85	409	1489
Total classrooms completed		635				

V. School Dropout Rates in East Jerusalem

According to the Jerusalem Municipality's response to the Freedom of Information request, 1,405 boys and 1,154 girls in East Jerusalem dropped-out of school in the 2020-2021 school year alone. Students begin dropping out of school already in the first grade and increase in number until eleventh grade. However, the data provided by the Jerusalem Municipality is incomplete: the total number of students provided by the Municipality does not add up to the data provided elsewhere regarding the total number of students in the recognized but unofficial and official education systems. Furthermore, drop-out rates among 12th grade students are absent from the Municipality data.

Data from the Municipality points to a significant increase in dropout rates for students in 8th grade compared to those in 9th grade. There is a 4% rate for boys and a 5% rate for girls in 8th grade, which rises to a 9% dropout rate among boys and girls, individually, in 9th grade. **Even so, in comparison to the data on drop-out rates from the 2019-2020 school year, there seems to have been an improvement in preventing students from dropping-out.**⁹

As stated in the main recommendations in the Ombudsman’s report: “In light of the scale of the drop-out rate in East Jerusalem, the Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem Municipality must significantly increase its activity with respect to the phenomenon of school drop-outs,” (p. 346).

VI. Decrease in the Number of the Students Studying the Israeli Curriculum

[Last year’s education report](#) pointed to a significant rise in the number of students who began studying the Israeli matriculation curriculum¹⁰. **This year saw a substantial drop of nearly 40% in these numbers, which now stand at merely 11,766 students (9375 in the official school system and 2401 in the recognized but unofficial system).**

[Government Decision 3790 for the Reduction of Socio-Economic Gaps and Economic Development](#) in East Jerusalem includes a chapter on investment in education in East Jerusalem. **Of the 445 million NIS earmarked for the education budget, 43% (approximately 193 million NIS) is explicitly conditioned on being provided to students/schools in East Jerusalem using the Israeli curriculum.** Yet, three years after the Decision was finalized, the number of students studying according to the Israeli matriculation curriculum increased by only 50% and now constitute a mere 12% of the total number of students in the Arab school system.

The percentage of those earning the *Tawjihi* matriculation certificate continues to account for the majority of graduates in East Jerusalem, making up over 90% of the

⁹ In the 2019-2020 school year, 1,964 boys and 1,305 girls in East Jerusalem dropped-out of school. Ir Amim, Education Report East Jerusalem, 2019-2020, Discrimination in the Shadow of Corona (Sept. 2020).

¹⁰ In the 2019-2020 school year, they numbered 18,953 students (13,739 of them in official schools, and 5,214 students in recognized but unofficial schools).

certificates in the sciences and 68% in the humanities. The data regarding those who earned an Israeli matriculation certificate have yet to be received for this year.

Performance goals for Hebrew-language study have yet to be provided because the Jerusalem Municipality is still gathering and processing the necessary data. According to what is known, and in line with the information set forth in Ir Amim's 2020 Education Report, there is a significant gap in the number of hours a student studying for the Israeli matriculation curriculum will learn Hebrew compared to those in the Jordanian matriculation curriculum. **According to the Ombudsman's report, students studying for the *Tawjih* in official schools receive only 71% of the minimum required hours for Hebrew-language study compared to their peers in the Israeli curriculum. In the recognized but unofficial schools, a mere 44% of the allocated hours are utilized (p. 396).**