

Arab Citizens of Israel: Two Years in War

Nearly two years of war has strained all facets of life for Israeli society. Arab citizens, one-fifth of the population, have faced unique vulnerabilities to the social, economic, and political upheaval intensified by the war. Pre-existing socio-economic gaps, complex identity dynamics, and heightened mistrust between Jews and Arabs have increased uncertainty about their place and overall security within Israeli society.

Already socio-economically weak before the war, Arab communities have been hit hard, raising concerns about the potential setback for progress and momentum around narrowing gaps for more than a decade. Across education, employment, public life, and intergroup relations, trends point to strained Jewish-Arab relations and growing disparities, yet also to ongoing progress on key aspects of mobility and development.

The implementation of five-year plans (GR-922 and GR-550) spurred measurable changes in the last decade, particularly in promoting infrastructure development, stronger Arab local authorities, coordination with government ministries, and individual-level outcomes such as higher participation in Israeli academia and greater labor market integration. These processes have contributed to an expanding middle class and a reduction of key barriers to social and economic opportunities. Cuts to these budgets during the war, heightened polarization, and emergency needs have placed new strains on these investments.

Meanwhile, Arab citizens continue reporting feelings of disconnection and marginalization within Israeli society. Since October 7 Jewish Israelis reported increased fear of Arab citizens, with a strong resurgence of us/them sentiments, contributing to an atmosphere of mistrust, silencing, and self-censorship during wartime. Crime also remains a top-most concern in Arab communities—often referred to as a war within a war—affecting daily life, sense of security, and trust in the state.

Drawing on recent surveys, official data, and the work of researchers in the field, this brief summarizes key indicators regarding Arab society and Jewish-Arab relations in Israel in 2024-2025. It is important to note that this brief draws on surveys with different samples, methodologies, and populations, which adds complexity to the interpretation of trends and comparisons.

Socio-Economic Indicators

The socio-economic data paint a mixed picture for Arab society in Israel. Over the past two decades, government and philanthropic efforts have yielded measurable improvements in Arab education and employment, including rising women's workforce participation and greater access to higher education—trends that continued to rise even in wartime. Still, Arab communities, particularly low-wage households and those newly entering upwardly mobile sectors, remain highly vulnerable during periods of upheaval, with most facing persistent inequalities, new barriers to mobility, and the compounded effects of crime and insecurity.

Economic Gaps

Arab families were disproportionately affected economically during the war, with 31% reporting a slight income decrease and 16% a large decrease, compared with 17% and 7% of Jewish families (Figure 1).¹

Economic hardship was also felt more acutely among Arab young adults than among Jews: 28% of young Arabs experienced difficulty compared to 12% among Jews (Figure 2).²

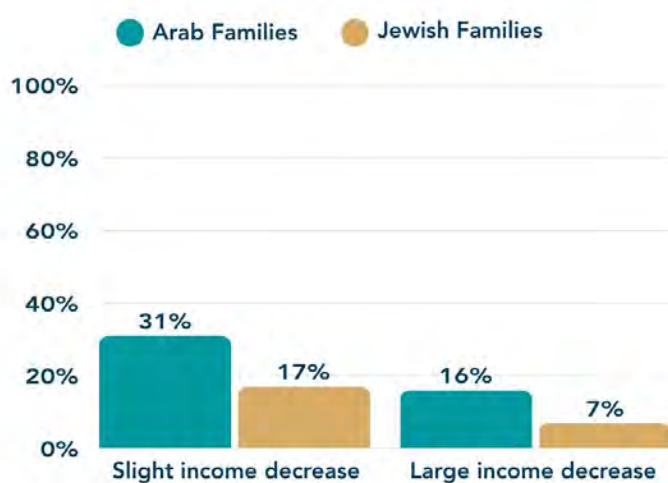


Fig. 1: Income Changes Among Arab and Jewish Families During the War

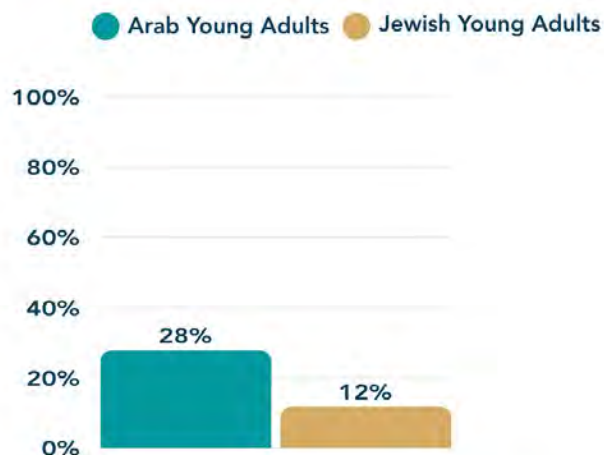


Fig. 2: Economic Hardship Among Young Adults (18-24 yo) During the War

¹ Weiss, A. (2025). A Picture of the Nation 2025: Israel's society and economy in figures. Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel.

² Haddad H., Ezgad T., & Tamuz Y. (2025, February). Mental health among young people in Arab society: Unique characteristics, barriers to treatment, and the impact of war. NAS Consulting.

Employment

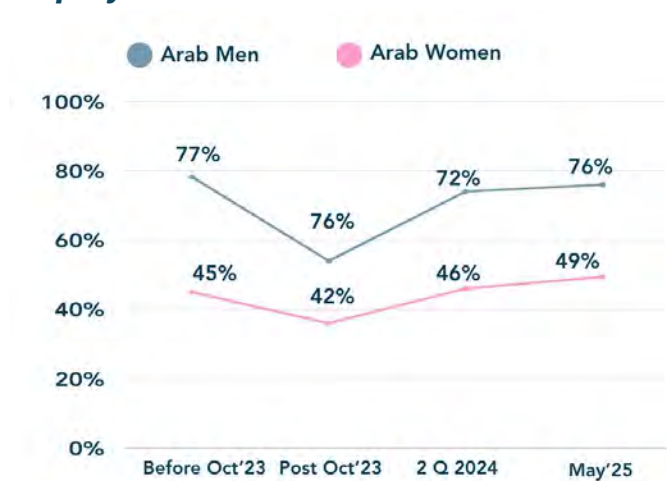


Fig. 3: Employment Trends Among Arab Men and Women, since October 2023

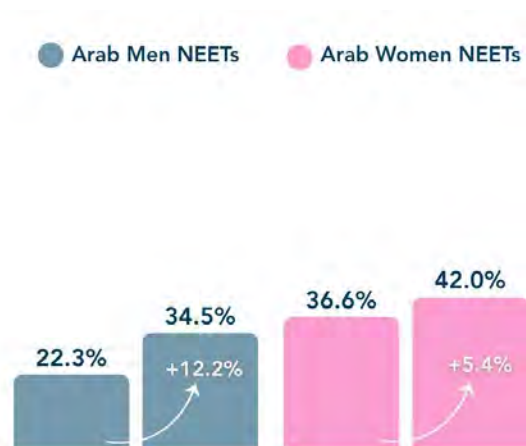


Fig. 4: Young Arab Men and Women Not in Employment Education, or Training (NEETs)

Before October 2023, employment among Arab men reached 77% and among women peaked at 45%.³ The conflict caused a sharp decline among men. By mid-2024, men's employment stabilized around 72%, and women's returned to pre-war levels.⁴ By May 2025, the employment rate of Arab men almost returned to pre-war levels, and women's rate rose to an unprecedented 49.4% (Graph 3).⁵

Young Adults on Mobility Tracks

The proportion of young Arab men aged 18-24 who are not working, studying, or in training (NEETs) rose from 22.3% at the beginning of 2023 to 34.5% in the months following the outbreak war. Among young Arab women the NEETs rate rose from 36.6 % to 42% (Figure 4).⁶

Wage Gaps

According to the report by the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI),⁷ the war intensified short-term economic hardship, reflected in reduced working hours and income, especially among self-employed workers and Arabs. At the same time, widening wage gaps between Arab and Jewish

³ [Impact of Operation "Am Kelavi" on the Labor Market, June 2025](#) [PDF]. Government of Israel.

⁴ [Debowy, M., Epstein, G. S., & Weiss, A. \(2024, December\). The Labor Market in Israel in 2024 in the Shadow of War. Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel.](#)

⁵ [Beeri-Sulitzeanu, A. \(2025, August 27\). From 18% to nearly 50%: How Arab women's employment became a success story. The Blogs - The Times of Israel.](#)

⁶ [Haddad H., Ezgad T., & Tamuz Y. \(2025, February\). Mental health among young people in Arab society: Unique characteristics, barriers to treatment, and the impact of war. NAS Consulting.](#)

⁷ [Aviram-Nitzan, D., & Cohen, O. \(2025, February 13\). Survey of the financial situation of workers during the Iron Swords War. Israel Democracy Institute.](#)

workers point to a longer-term trend. Over the past decade, the gap has grown from 66% to 70% among men and from 54% to 66% among women.⁸

Higher Education

About 64,110 students from Arab society now account for 19% of all students in Israel's higher education system,⁹ compared to around 10% a decade ago. Today, for example, at the Technion, Arab students make up about 30% of undergraduate students.

At the same time, during the 2023/2024 academic year, 35% of Arab students dropped out of their studies during the war, compared with 19% of Jewish and other students,¹⁰ an increase from 22% and 10% for Arab and Jewish students respectively in 2020

(Figure 6).¹¹ This figure carries long-term implications for their futures, as well as for the processes of identity formation and career development among Arab youth.¹²

Attitudes

Alongside this trend, gaps were also found in attitudes between Jewish and Arab students as they returned to their studies at the beginning of the previous academic year. While sense of belonging and academic success appeared similar across both groups, avoidance of self-expression was markedly higher among Arab students.¹³

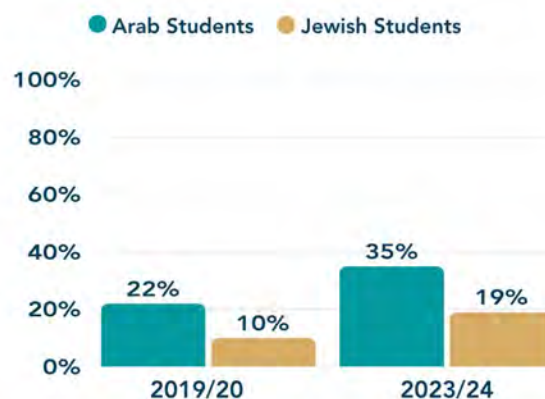


Fig. 6: Dropout Rates Among Arab and Jewish Students: 2019/20 vs. 2023/24 Academic Years

⁸ Haddad H., Ezgad T., & Tamuz Y. (2025, February). Mental health among young people in Arab society: Unique characteristics, barriers to treatment, and the impact of war. NAS Consulting.

⁹ Council for Higher Education. (2024, October). Opening of the 2024-2025 academic year amid the Iron Swords War.

¹⁰ Haddad H., Ezgad T., & Tamuz Y. (2025, February). Mental health among young people in Arab society: Unique characteristics, barriers to treatment, and the impact of war. NAS Consulting.

¹¹ Haj-Yahya, N. H. (2020, October 10). Arab students at higher risk – Survey. Israel Democracy Institute.

¹² Arab Society in Israel post-October 2023, Key data on shifts across various fields. Dr. Nasreen Haddad Haj-Yahya & Dr. Enaya Banna Jeries. El-Bayader. September 2025

¹³ Arab Society in Israel post-October 2023, Key data on shifts across various fields. Dr. Nasreen Haddad Haj-Yahya & Dr. Enaya Banna Jeries. El-Bayader. September 2025

Jewish-Arab Relations

The events of October 7 and the ensuing war damaged Jewish-Arab relations and eroded Arab citizens’ sense of security and belonging. In June 2025, a large majority of respondents (75.2%) stated that the war had deteriorated Arab-Jewish relations in Israel (Figure 7).¹⁴ Arab respondents in particular viewed Jewish-Arab tensions as the greatest internal existential threat (39%), compared with about one-quarter of Jewish respondents.¹⁵ Both groups showed strong desire for improved relations, though Jewish respondents have lower levels of willingness and belief in the possibility.

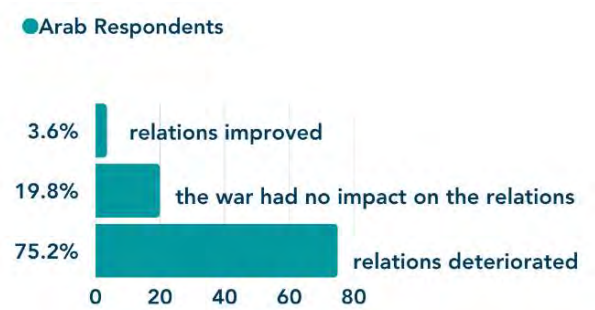


Fig. 7: How were relations between Arab and Jewish citizens affected by the war which began on October 7?

Fear, Hatred, Mistrust, Avoidance of Mixed/Shared Spaces

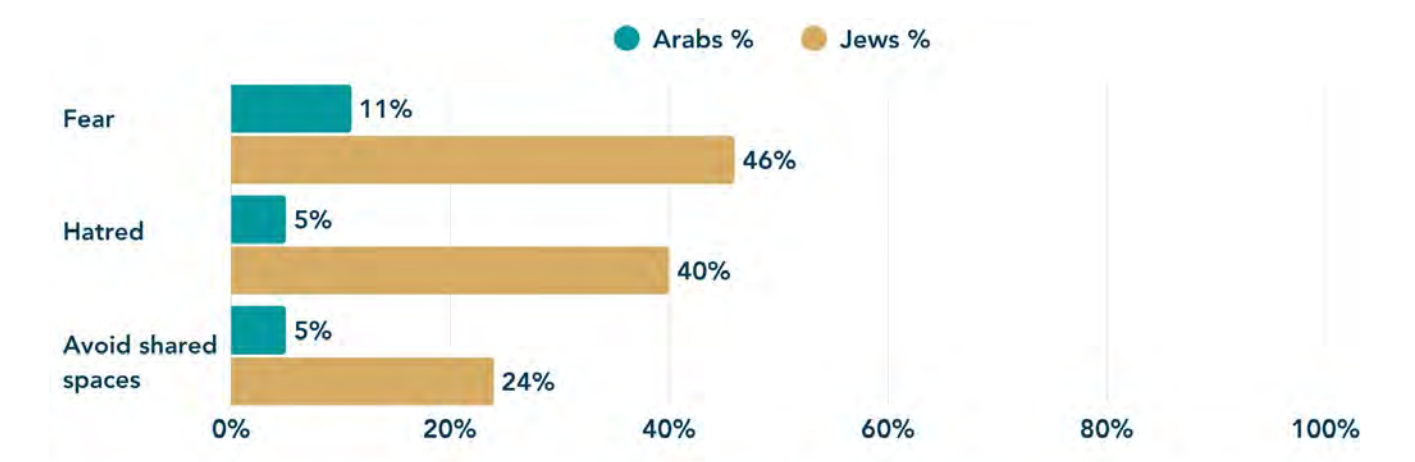


Fig. 8: Level of Fear, Hatred and Avoidance of Mixed/Shared Spaces

Compared to early 2023, surveys showed a significant rise in mistrust and mutual fear between Jews and Arabs. Between May and November 2024, almost half of Jewish respondents reported high levels of fear toward Arabs; 40% express strong feelings of hatred, and about a quarter say they avoid places where they might encounter the other group. In contrast, only 11% of Arab respondents report high levels of fear, 5% express hatred, and another 5% say they avoid shared

¹⁴ Rudnitzky, A. (2025, June 25). Between two wars: In-depth survey of the Arab community. Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation.

¹⁵ Hermann, T., Yohanani, L., Kaplan, Y., & Sapozhnikova, I. O. (2024). The Israeli Democracy Index 2024: Selected findings. Israel Democracy Institute.

spaces (Figure 8).¹⁶ These findings highlight that negative emotions and avoidance behaviors are considerably more prevalent among Jewish respondents than among Arabs.

In January 2025, when asked whether they trust the majority of Arab citizens, 72% of Jews said they do not, while 43% of Arabs said they did not trust the Jewish majority.¹⁷

Willingness to Connect and Hope for Better Relations

Overall, the data show both Arabs and Jews are mostly willing to work and study together. Arabs report higher willingness to engage across all spheres of life, while Jewish respondents are consistently less willing, particularly in personal and social settings like children’s activities and friendship (Figure 10).¹⁸

Both Jews and Arabs express a strong desire for improved relations: 50% of Arabs and 53% of Jews report a high degree of belief that better relationships are possible, and 47.5% believe to a moderate degree, meaning the vast majority see at least a moderate potential for improvement. Jewish respondents are more cautious, with only 24% expressing high confidence, 41% moderate, and 35% low (Figure 11).¹⁹

Media Representation and Sense of Silencing

In the first half of 2024, Arab representation on Israeli television and radio reached a historic low since 2016, with only 1.4% of interviewees, commentators, and broadcast figures being Arab.²⁰ This underrepresentation parallels growing concerns

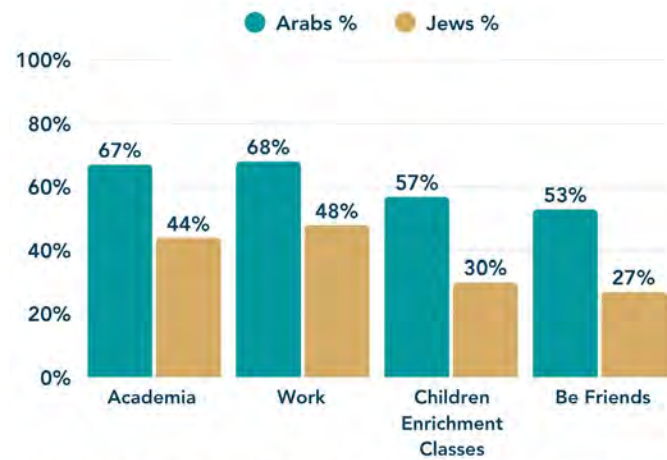


Fig. 10: Willingness to Connect (% Jews, Arabs).

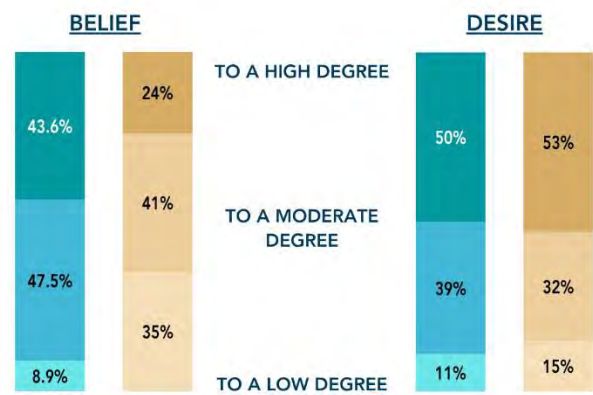


Fig. 11: Belief and Desire for Better Relationships between Jews and Arabs.

¹⁶ Hermann, T., Yohanani, L., Kaplan, Y., & Sapozhnikova, I. O. (2024). The Israeli Democracy Index 2024: Selected findings. Israel Democracy Institute. Also: 2025, January. Choosing Shared Society. Attitude Survey on Jewish-Arab Relations and Promoting Shared Society During the Crisis of 2025. Givat Haviva. Also: Trends in Jewish-Arab Relations in Israel Following the October 2024 War. aChord. March 2024.

¹⁷ 2025, January. Choosing Shared Society. Attitude Survey on Jewish-Arab Relations and Promoting Shared Society During the Crisis of 2025. Givat Haviva

¹⁸ 2025, January. Choosing Shared Society. Attitude Survey on Jewish-Arab Relations and Promoting Shared Society During the Crisis of 2025. Givat Haviva

¹⁹ March 2025. Relations between Jews and Arab-Bedouins in the Western Negev Following October 7. aChord

²⁰ David Cohen, I. (2025, March 9). Arab representation on Israeli television and radio hits historic low during 2024. Haaretz.

among Arab citizens regarding freedom of expression. These pressures have contributed to self-censorship in Arab society. In December 2023, survey found that 71% of Arabs living in Israel are worried about voicing their views on social media.²¹

The fear of expressing opinions is particularly pronounced in professional and educational contexts. Among Arab employees in the high-tech sector, 68% of men and 78% of women reported feeling extremely high fear of sharing their views online.²² On university campuses, 52% of Arab students reported fear of expressing opinions to a high degree, compared with 35% of Jewish students.²³

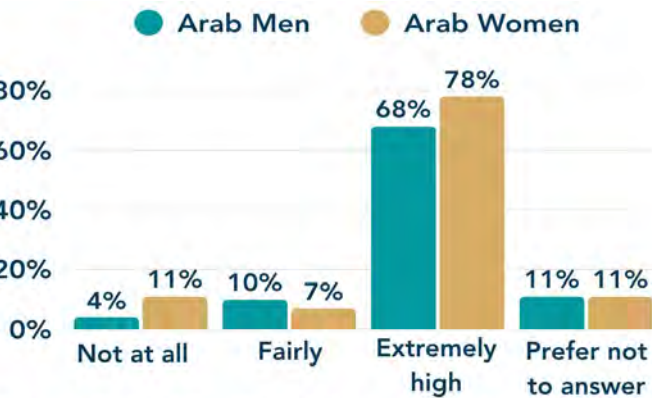


Fig. 12: Fear of Expressing Opinions on Social Media: Arabs in Hi-Tech

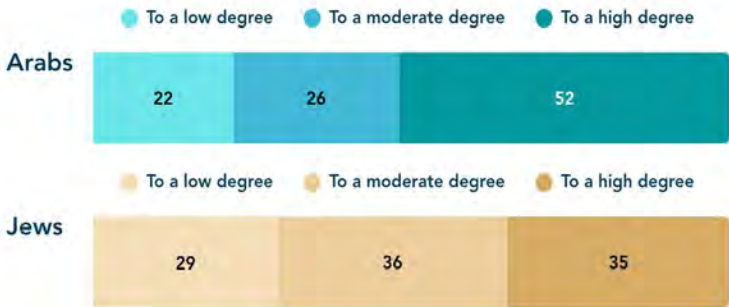


Fig. 13: Fear of Expressing Opinions on Social Media:

Political Partnership

A large majority of Arab citizens support the participation of Arab parties in a future governing coalition. In contrast, support for political partnership within the Jewish public is very low (Figure 14).

Crime and Violence

While the war greatly increased the sense of risk and vulnerability, violent crime remained the top-most threat in Arab communities, with homicide rates continuing to surge. The number of victims reached 244 in 2023, 230 in 2024, and 209 as of November 1, 2025.²⁴ In a recent survey, 93% of Arab respondents report being alarmed by crime and the widespread availability of firearms

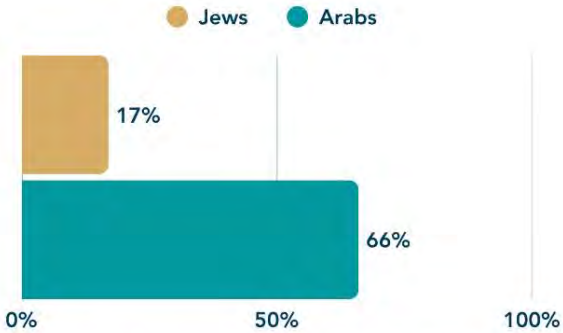


Fig. 14: Support for a Jewish-Arab Coalition. (% Jews, Arabs)

²¹ Tamsut, F. (2024, March 26). Arab Israelis battle repression amid Israel-Hamas conflict. Deutsche Welle.
²² 2024, January. Arab Hi-Tech Workers in the Current War - Situation Report. A NAS Research Survey for Tsafen.
²³ 2024, September. Findings from a Current Survey of Arab and Jewish Students: Towards the Fall Semester 2024-2025. aChord, Edmond De Rothschild Foundation.
²⁴ Hajia, D. (2025, November 1). Thousands march in northern Israel in protest of murder rates in Arab society. Haaretz.

among. 75.4% of Arab respondents²⁵ reported feeling personally insecure primarily due to the high incidence of violence in Arab towns civilians (Figure 15).²⁶

The limited progress in addressing violent crime is also reflected in the low rate of case resolutions. In 2024, of 209 homicide cases only 31 were solved. Persistently low clearance rates contribute to a sense of insecurity among Arab citizens, weaken confidence in public institutions, and reduce willingness to cooperate with authorities, further challenging the state's capacity to address and prevent crime effectively.²⁷

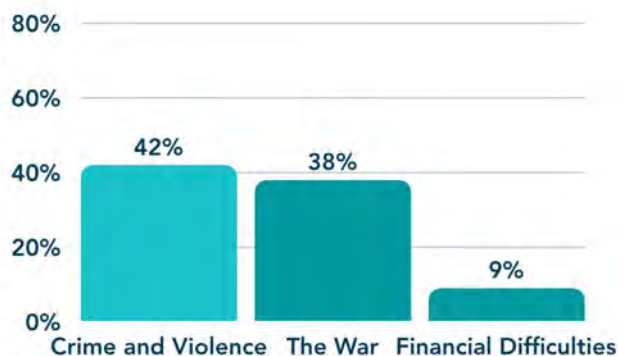


Fig. 15: What is the main factor adversely affecting your mood?

Emergency Response and Recovery

Protective Infrastructure Gaps

Arab localities remain without adequate protective infrastructure (Figure 16).²⁸ 46% of residents in Arab communities (about 550,000 people) live in housing without proper protection, compared with 26% of the general population. In approximately 29% of Arab schools there is either inadequate or no protection, compared with 13% of Jewish secular schools and 12% of Jewish religious schools. Research on the preparedness of local authorities shows that, while many Arab municipalities lack shelters and essential emergency equipment, the war has also fostered high levels of community resilience and the development of volunteer management mechanisms to support local response efforts.²⁹

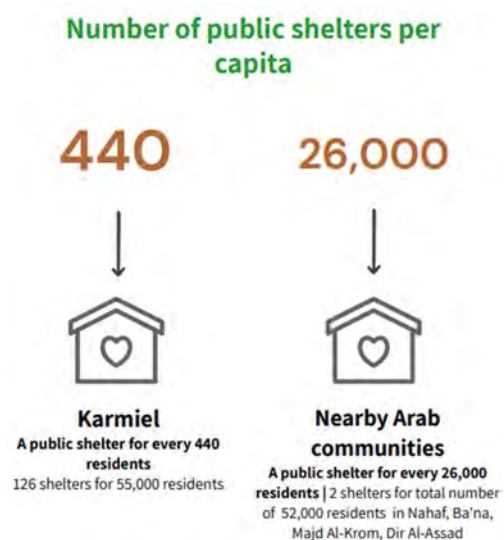


Fig. 16: Number of public shelters per capita. (Karmiel, local Arab communities). 2025. Sikkuy-Aufoq, & Injaz Center.

²⁵ Rudnitzky, A. (2025, June 25). Between two wars: In-depth survey of the Arab community. Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation.

²⁶ Ben-Nun, S., & Benson, P. (2025, September 25). Man shot dead in front of family as homicides in Israeli Arab society spike. The Jerusalem Post.

²⁷ Victims of Crime and Violence in Arab Society Annual Report 2024, Abraham Initiatives.

²⁸ Sikkuy-Aufoq, & Injaz Center. (2025). Emergency preparedness and social resilience as a key for recovery of the Arab society in Israel: Initial findings from a research by Sikkuy-Aufoq and Injaz Center. Lexidale Company for Policy Research.

²⁹ Ibid.

Emergency Plans and Equipment

Although 66% of local authorities reported having emergency plans, there are critical gaps in their readiness to implement them on the ground. As of January 2025, emergency equipment in 52% of the authorities remains insufficient or entirely missing (Figure 17).³⁰

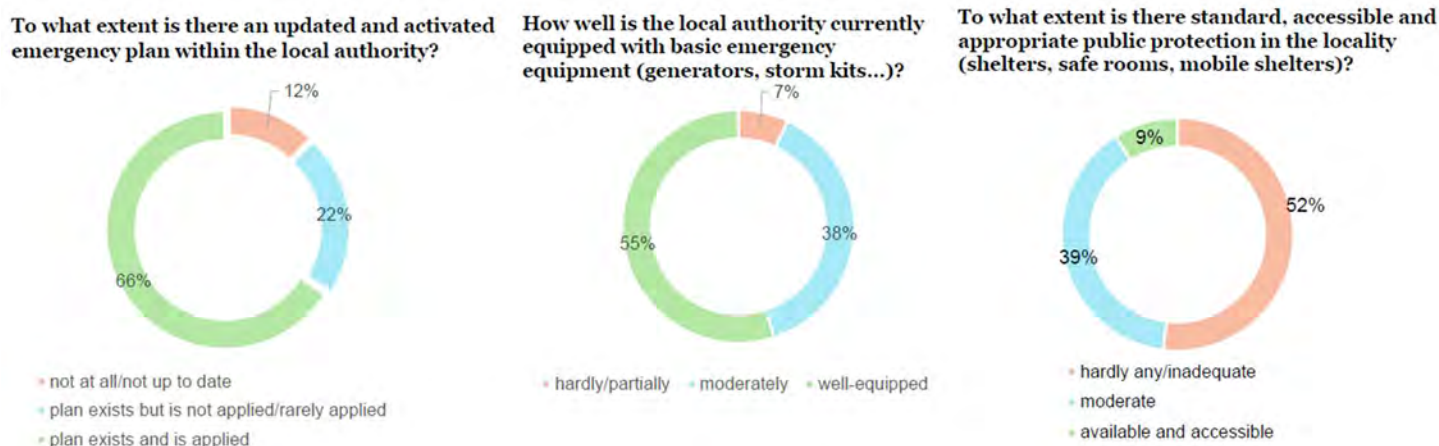


Fig.17. Emergency Preparedness in Arab Local Authorities. 2025. Injaz Center&SFI

Local Volunteer Mobilization

During the war, volunteerism has played an important role in Arab communities, helping to fill gaps where government support is limited. The volunteer rate reached 28% in the first two weeks, higher than during the COVID-19 crisis, highlighting the community's capacity to respond collectively in times of need.³¹

Mental Distress

The mental health infrastructure in Arab localities continues to face severe capacity gaps in serving Arab society. The severe shortage of Arabic-speaking and culturally competent therapists, limited healthcare access, financial constraints, and insufficient budgets in Arab local authorities all hinder the ability to provide adequate care. Feelings of alienation and stigma surrounding mental health further reduce help-seeking behaviors and exacerbate underutilization of available services.

These gaps persist amid rising need: 57% of Arabs reported high levels of depression in the aftermath of the war, reflecting deepening distress driven by increased violence, employment instability, and a pervasive sense of exclusion and insecurity.³²

³⁰ Social Finance Israel (SFI). (2025, October). Evaluation of local authorities' emergency preparedness: Findings of the survey and in-depth interviews. Injaz Center.

³¹ Ibid.

³² [The Task Force on Arab Citizens of Israel. \(2024, August 30\). Arab society navigating trauma and resilience.](#)