

# Mixed Cities in Israel

This resource provides a basic introduction to mixed cities in Israel. Refer to the Source Sheet Companion on the last page for a list of references and resources for further learning.

**Mixed cities are the only localities in Israel where significant populations of Jews and Arabs live under one municipality.**

**Just over 8% of Arab citizens and 16% of Jewish citizens live in mixed cities.**

These cities present more opportunities for daily interaction between Jews and Arabs, while simultaneously reflecting and influencing issues in Jewish-Arab relations nationwide.

Each mixed city has its own distinct history and local dynamics. Likewise, the communities within them are diverse.<sup>1-3</sup>

## Types of Mixed Localities

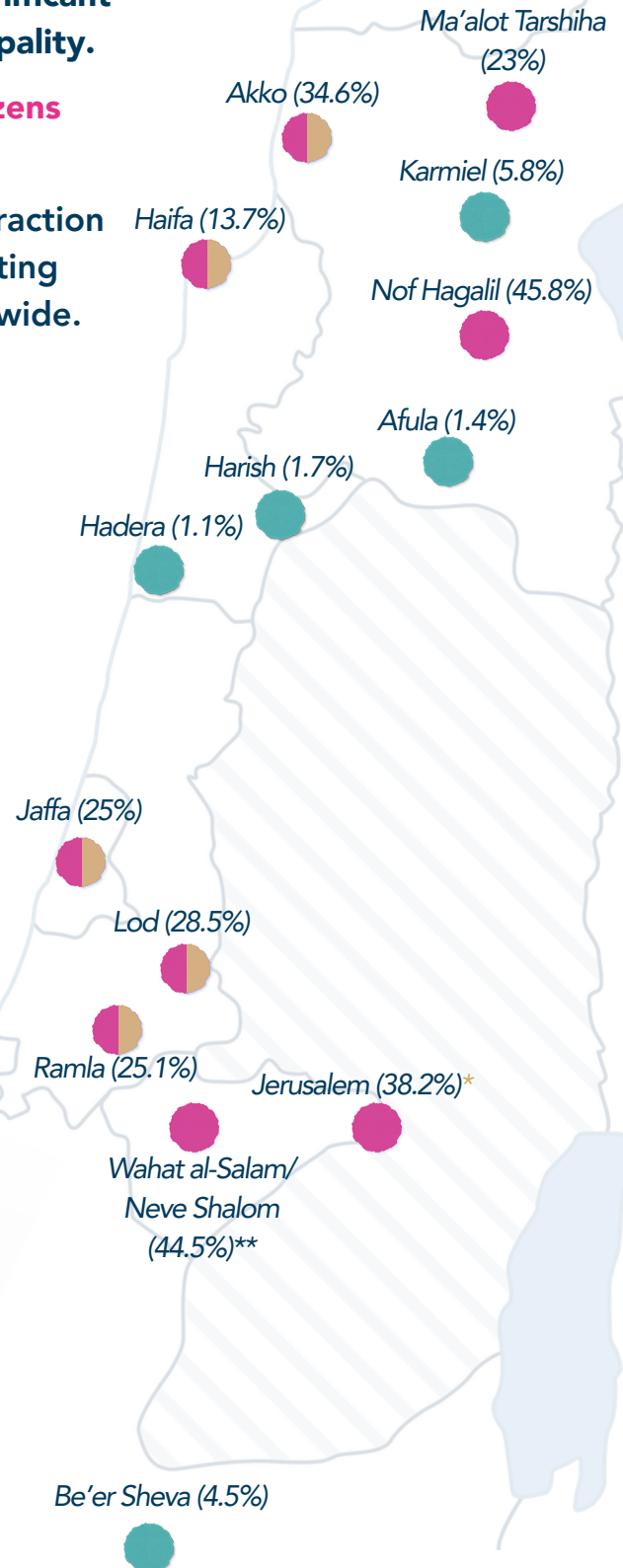
The state recognizes **nine mixed localities**, including **five historically mixed cities**. In addition, **mixed localities “in the making”** have steadily growing Arab populations.<sup>4,11</sup>

### Map Key

- State-recognized mixed localities
- Historically mixed cities
- Prominent mixed localities “in the making”
- (%) Percent of Arab residents

\* **Jerusalem** has more than 300,000 Arab residents. Most live in East Jerusalem and do not hold Israeli citizenship. Thus, references including Jerusalem data have an asterisk(\*).

\*\* Home to ~300 residents, **Wahat al-Salam/ Neve Shalom** is an intentionally planned Jewish–Arab community.



## Living in Mixed Cities

While daily proximity creates greater familiarity, Jewish and Arab citizens often have different experiences of mixed city life.<sup>12-15</sup>



Most Jews and Arabs typically live in separate neighborhoods. However, especially in mixed cities “in the making,” some residents live in the same neighborhoods or buildings.

Public spaces, like markets, hospitals, malls, and beaches, bring people into casual contact. Language plays an important role in shaping a sense of belonging in these shared spaces; however, Arabic signage remains less frequent.

The Ramla Market

Most Arab and Jewish children study in separate schools. In 2023, Arabs students made up just 1.3% of all students at Hebrew-language schools.\* Only 9 bilingual schools operate in mixed cities with limited capacity.

Even in mixed cities, meaningful connections between Arabs and Jews often don’t occur until adulthood, through higher education or the workplace.



The Haifa City Hall



Herzog Street, Lod

Unequal access to housing and services contributes to inter-communal tensions, as Arab neighborhoods receive less municipal investment in infrastructure, public transport, and community facilities. This leads to overcrowding and poorer living conditions in some localities.

## Representation

Local politics influence Jewish-Arab relations in mixed cities by shaping resource allocation and public dynamics. Narrowing gaps in Arab representation is seen as key to meeting community needs, building trust, and fostering a shared civic vision.<sup>16-20</sup>

### Early 2000s

Officials from mixed cities gain representation on national Arab leadership bodies.

### 2021

Arab citizens make up 2% of historically mixed city local councils and have limited presence in senior municipal roles, remaining underrepresented.

### 2018

Joint Arab-Jewish coalitions form in five historically mixed cities, underscoring a shared agenda.

### 2024

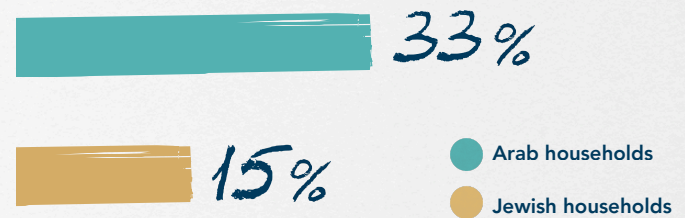
Arab candidates gain 26 seats (~15%) in historically mixed municipalities in local elections.

## Socio-economic Reality

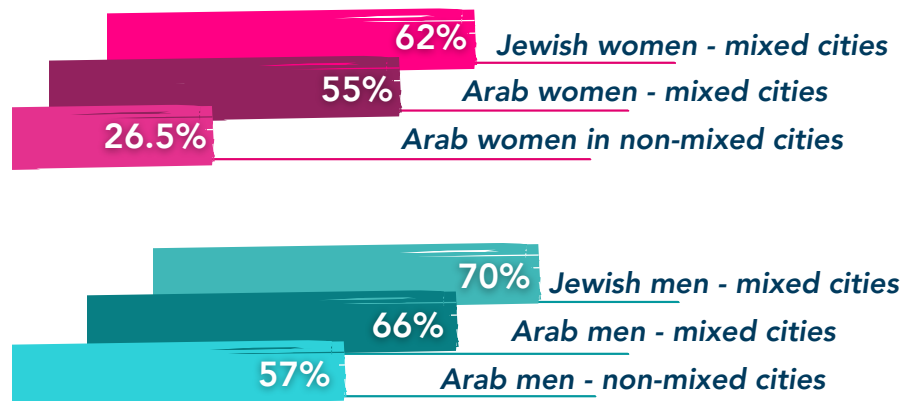
Arab residents in mixed cities often benefit from better access to infrastructure, education, and employment than those in Arab towns and cities.

However, **substantial socio-economic disparities remain between Arab and Jewish residents**, with variation across the mixed cities.<sup>21-25</sup>

### Poverty Rate\*



**Employment rates** for Arab citizens from mixed cities are higher than those from Arab localities, particularly among women, due to better access to jobs, transportation, and language learning opportunities.\*

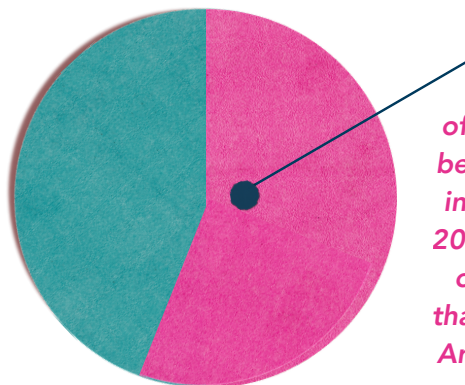


In 2022, the government launched its first five-year plan to address socio-economic gaps in the mixed cities, allocating 300 million NIS.

## Mixed Cities Under Tension

Moments of crisis often draw attention to mixed cities. During periods of heightened tension, such as May 2021 and following October 7th 2023, mixed cities become flashpoints for inter-communal strain.<sup>26-30</sup>

Yet, three to six months after October 7th, research indicates that due to sustained proximity, **residents of mixed localities report a greater sense of safety, show more willingness to engage across communities, and report higher empathy and support for shared life** than those in homogeneous localities.



**>60 %**

*of Arab and Jewish residents believe they can live together in peace, even after the May 2021 events, a severe episode of inter-communal violence that renewed focus on Jewish-Arab relations in mixed cities.*

## From Mixed to Shared

Mixed cities hold significant potential as incubators for Jewish–Arab collaboration, shared civic life, and community resilience. Community, civil society and municipal efforts continue to translate this potential into tangible examples of shared society.



**"Shared Society"** is a cohesive and inclusive framework where communities of different ethnic, national, and religious backgrounds coexist with mutual respect and equitable access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making.

Scan the QR-code to the Source Sheet Companion for a list of references and additional resources for further learning about mixed cities in Israel.



*Images, Page 2: Ramla – mixed city, Jews and Arabs, Photo by Yossi Zamir / Shatil Stock | The Haifa City Hall / Seeds of Partnership | Herzog Street, Lod, Israel / Public Domain, Wikimedia Commons*