

Children's Worlds National Report

Israel



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1. Introduction

1.1 Context and population

Israel is located in the Mediterranean and is 22,072 square kilometers in size. It borders Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt (formal Peace agreements exist only with two neighboring countries – Jordan and Egypt). Israel has a population of approximately 9 million, and it is comparatively densely populated. Add the data on number of children and their rate in the total population

Israel's GDP per capita was \$44,177.6 in 2020¹. The financial state of Israel is considered good and stable, with unemployment rates standing at 3.7% as of May 2022². Yet, not all the population enjoys this financial stability. Inequality in Israel (as measured by the Gini Coefficient) is among the highest among OECD countries³. Poverty rates are also high – 19.9% of households are considered poor, a rate which is one of the highest among OECD countries (Bank of Israel). Israeli children are among the poorest in OECD countries (OECD, 2022), with 31.7% of the children living below the poverty threshold (INCC, 2022). The poverty and unemployment rates among Arab citizens (both adults and children) are substantially higher than among Jewish citizens.

Most of Israel's residents are Jewish (75%), 17.4% are Muslims, 2% are Christian, 1.6% Druze, and about 4% have no religious affiliation. In terms of level of religiosity, out of the Jewish adult population, about 43% are secular, 38% are "traditional" (only slightly religious), 10% are religious and 9% are very religious (ultra-orthodox). Due to the fact that religious and ultra-orthodox Jews tend to have large families, these proportions are slightly different among children. In Israel, two formal languages exist: Hebrew and Arabic. All pupils are required to learn Hebrew, but not Arabic. This means that all Arab children know Hebrew, yet most Jewish children do not know Arabic.

¹ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=IL>

² <https://www.cbs.gov.il/EN/pages/default.aspx>

³ http://taubcenter.org.il/wp-content/files_mf/stateofthenation2018.pdf

Within Israel society, there are extensive differences between populations, and growing up in each group might be quite different. Among the Jewish secular and mildly religious society, children are a central aspect of life: most parents wish for a large family (the average number of children in a family is 2.4, relatively higher than the OECD average), and adults go to great lengths to answer children's needs and desires. Middle- and upper-class families usually encourage children to participate in organized afterschool activities (such as extra classes, sports or music lessons). In Jewish religious ultra-orthodox society, children from the age of three spend many hours in schools, which are separate for girls and boys. Most families are quite poor so after-school activities are rare. This society is very conservative and children are expected to respect adults. In Arab culture, respecting adults and authority figures is also a central value.

The most influential factor in children's lives in Israel is the national dispute and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The ongoing dispute and the outbursts of violence have a significant impact on both Jewish and Arab children as well as on the overall society. Furthermore, Israel has witnessed a growing economic inequality to a level in which 1 in every three children in Israel is poor.

Family and Child Policies

Political discussions in Israel tend to focus on either national security issues or on economic-social issues (housing issues, etc.). Therefore, child and family issues are not a main issue in t Israel's political agenda. However, some people and organizations in Israel (such as Israel's National Council for the Child) go to great lengths in order to put this issue "on the table".

Israel has laws guaranteeing free education for children (ages 3-18) and free dental care until the age of 12. Israel has a universal health insurance scheme and a universal child allowance system. However, the child allowance was dramatically cut back in recent years, and the amount paid to the parents for each child is roughly 45 dollars per month. Israel employs a paid maternity leave of 15 weeks (the father can receive some of these weeks instead of the mother) and an unpaid maternity leave (which secures the workplace) for up to 26 weeks. In some cities/towns with low socioeconomic status, children are given a hot meal for lunch and longer school

days. However, only 236,000 children were eligible for this in 2015-16 and only 50.5% of them actually received it⁴.

Education

System

The vast majority of students in Israel attend public schools. Compulsory free-of-charge education starts at age three (nursery education). Children begin attending elementary schools (grades 1-6, also compulsory and free of charge). Most children start middle school at 13 (grades 7-9) and high school at 16 (grades 10-12). Compulsory education ends at 18 (For Special Needs children, it ends at 21). The Dropout rate between the ages of 13-18 in 2020 was 1.6% among Jewish students and 2.1% among Arab students. The school system at all grade levels includes three types of schools for Jewish children, according to the level of religiosity (secular, religious and ultra-orthodox) and schools which teach in Arabic for Arab children. In general, students in elementary schools in Israel are not grouped in classes according to their academic abilities.

All children in Israel have access to free education, including children whose parents are illegal immigrants. Sending children to school is obligatory, and parents who do not send their children to the school are approached by officials and can be fined or even imprisoned for not upholding the law.

The education system is, unfortunately, quite unequal. According to Israel's National Council for the Child⁵, differing levels in socio-economic status are reflected in expenditure on education. In the lowest socio-economic level (level 1), local authorities' expenditure per pupil was 3,100 NIS. However, in the highest socio-economic level (level 10), local authorities' expenditure per pupil was 13,800 NIS.

Family

environment

Israel's society is still quite a conservative one, and the most typical family structure in the Israeli context is 'nuclear' - i.e. only parent(s) and children living in the same

⁴ https://fs.knesset.gov.il/globaldocs/MMM/135a4001-1afc-e611-80ca-00155d020699/2_135a4001-1afc-e611-80ca-00155d020699_11_10386.pdf

⁵ <https://www.children.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/%D7%99%D7%9C%D7%93%D7%99%D7%9D-%D7%91%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%A8%D7%90%D7%9C-%D7%A9%D7%A0%D7%AA%D7%95%D7%9F-2017.pdf>

household, but there is a big diversity of situations. The average number of children in a family is 2.4, a figure which has remained stable since 2005. Most households live in apartments (63%), 11% live in apartments with an attached garden or balcony, 14% live in private houses, and 12% live in cottages. In terms of ownership of flats, 66.5% of Israelis own an apartment/house⁶.

Changes in family structure are quite common if parent's relationships end. Thus, children live in diverse family forms, including lone parent, or parent and step-parent. It is also becoming increasingly common for children to spend some of their time living in two different homes when their two birth parents separate.

Approximately 4 of every 1000 children in Israel live away from their family because of serious concerns about the children's welfare⁷. In this case, children may be placed in residential care (children's homes) or, less frequently, in foster care or in 'kinship care' (i.e. with other family members).

Everyday

life

Children in Israel stay between 5.5 and 6 hours a day at school until they are 12. They usually start at 8 am, and finish at about 13:30. After school, approximately a third of the children (grades 6, 8 and 10) watch TV for more than four hours per day⁸. A significant proportion of children are "online" for many hours. In 2020, 68% of the children aged 13-17 were active in "Instagram", 42% were active in "Tiktok" and 32% were active in "Facebook."

Many children spend additional time at school after school hours because many schools offer "extra school" activities in their buildings, which the family must pay for. Many children in Israel do also many out-of-school activities, most of them fee-paying, particularly because the job hours of their parents do not allow them to go back home so early. Children from more wealthy families usually have access to higher quality extra-school activities, and additionally more educated families usually

⁶ http://www.cbs.gov.il/www/hodaot2015n/15_15_016b.pdf

⁷ <https://www.children.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/%D7%99%D7%9C%D7%93%D7%99%D7%9D-%D7%91%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%A8%D7%90%D7%9C-%D7%A9%D7%A0%D7%AA%D7%95%D7%9F-2017.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.children.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/%D7%9C%D7%A7%D7%98-%D7%A9%D7%A0%D7%AA%D7%95%D7%9F-%D7%99%D7%9C%D7%93%D7%99%D7%9D-%D7%91%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%A8%D7%90%D7%9C-2021-%D7%94%D7%9E%D7%95%D7%A2%D7%A6%D7%94-%D7%9C%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%95%D7%9D-%D7%94%D7%99%D7%9C%D7%93.pdf>

give higher importance to the so-called “educational leisure activities”. After school activities are much less common among lower class children, although some government programs and NGO's offer after-school activities to these children. Most children have their say choosing what extra-school or out-of-school activities they want to attend, and they usually enjoy them.

Children's

Rights

Israel is a signatory of the UN Charter on the Child's Rights. Israel's National Council for the Child (an NGO) has operated an Ombudsman for Children and Youth since 1990. Moreover, there has been an Independent Ombudsman for Children and Youth in out-of-home care since 2017.

1.2 COVID-19 in the Israeli context

The COVID-19 pandemic started to spread in the world in late 2019. In Israel, the pandemic had spread in five main waves:

First Wave (February- May 2020):

The first COVID-19 infection in Israel was documented on February 21, 2020. The First confirmed patient arrived in Israel from the “Diamond Princess” Quarantined cruise ship. The first death related to COVID-19 was documented on March 20, and by the end of May, there were already more than 250 reported death cases related to COVID-19.

The First lockdown was announced at the end of March and occurred between 25.3.2020-4.5.2020. Around April 19, lockdown restrictions were more relaxed. Mask wearing in public places became obligatory on April 2, 2020, until 2022. The first wave of COVID-19 spread in Israel in April with around 17,000 infections and approximately 700 new cases daily. During the First Wave of COVID-19, the restrictions included distancing rules, a stay-at-home policy, quarantine, and lockdown. In addition, schools were closed from March 2020 until May 2021, and learning moved to be online (Saban et al., 2020).

Second Wave (June- October 2020):

The second wave of COVID-19 spread in Israel from June until October 2020, with approximately 297,526 infections and 9,078 infections per day. 2,281 deaths have been documented related to COVID-19. Lockdown was announced between: 18.9.2020-17.10.2020.

Third Wave (December 2020-March 2021):

The third wave of COVID-19 spread in Israel between December 2020 and March 2021. In the Third Wave, we observed 10,114 infections per day and 523,931 infections in total. In addition, 3,813 deaths have been documented related to COVID-19. The Third and last lockdown was announced between: 27.12.2020-7.2.2021

Fourth Wave (June- October 2021):

The Fourth wave of COVID-19 spread in Israel in June-October 2021. We observed 11,333 infections per day in the fourth wave and 487,947 in total. In addition, 1,687 deaths have been documented related to COVID-19 during this wave.

Fifth Wave (December 2021-):

The fifth wave is associated with the most contagious strain of the COVID-19 - the Omicron. In this wave, we observed 85,141 infections per day and 2,204,964 infections in total until now. In addition, 2,324 deaths have been related to Covid-19 in this wave until now.

1.3 Sampling: Strategy and outcome

The Israeli sample surveyed fourth, fifth, and sixth-grade children. It was based on a Convenience, non-representative sampling. The researchers draw on readily available populations, such as people in schools familiar with the researchers, critical figures in the educational system, and personal connections in schools.

We tried to reach a variety of children, both geographically and demographically. We tried to reach Jewish, Arab, secular, and religious children. We focused on getting to schools with these specific characteristics, and not just schools that were convenient and easy for us to reach.

A passive consent letter describing the research and its goals was sent via the school principal to the parents. The letter was sent a few days before the collecting data

with a due date for a response that was usually a day or two before the collecting data. The parents who refused their child's participation were asked to return the letter with their signature until the due date.

2. Results

2.1 The participants:

Table 1: Sample by age and gender (Numbers)

	10 years old	11 years old	12 years old	Total
Boy	119	194	175	488
Girl	112	163	171	446
Total	231	357	346	934

The Sample included a slightly bigger sample of the 11 years old. Generally, there was an almost equal number of boys and girls, with a somewhat higher number of boys in the 11-year-old Sample. In addition, the Sample included 21 children who reported they do not think of themselves as boys or girls.

2.2 The home and the people children live with:

As the study was conducted in the school setting, not surprisingly, the vast majority of children were living with their families, as can be seen in Table 2. Almost 70% of the children's rated the highest score to their satisfaction with the people they live with (Table 3), while less than 5% rated their satisfaction with the people they live with as lower than 5.

Table 2: Children's home type by gender (%)

The home you live in	With my family at our home	With my family, not in our home	With my family, in more than one house	Residential care	Foster Care
Boy	90.5	0.8	8.3	0.4	0
Girl	89.8	0.7	9.1	0.2	0.2
Total	90.2	0.8	8.7	0.3	0.1

Table 3: Satisfaction with the people you live with (%) (N= 907)

Scale	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
%	2.1	0.3	0.9	0.8	0.6	4.1	3.3	3.5	6.6	7.9	69.9

Children rated highly feeling that their family care for them, with almost 75% rating they "totally agree" with this statement. About 65% of the children also "totally agreed" that they feel safe at home, and if they have a problem someone in their family will help. 60% of the children rated "totally agreed" that their parents listen to them and take what they say into account. About 50% of the children said they "totally agreed" they have a good time with their family, and that they are making decisions with their parents regarding their own life. Almost 18% of the children marked they "don't agree" or "agree a bit" regarding the last question.

Table 4: Variations in questions about home and family (%)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
There are people in my family who care about me (N=879)	3.1	3.1	7.5	12.5	73.8
If I have a problem, people in my family will help me (N=875)	4.6	5.0	8.8	16.3	65.3
We have a good time together in my family (N=866)	3.9	8.9	14.8	18.5	53.9
I feel safe at home (N=914)	1.0	4.3	12.7	15.9	66.2
My parents listen to me and take what I say into account (N=858)	3.6	7.7	12.1	16.6	60.0
My parents and I make decisions about my life together (N=865)	7.1	10.5	12.8	22.2	47.4
During the Coronavirus, I became closer to some members of my family (N=883)	10.4	10.5	17.1	21.7	40.2

Overall, children rated high scores regarding their connection with their family and time together (Table 4). More than 80% percent of the children felt that people from their family care for them and will help them with any problem. More than 70% of the children marked they are having a good time with their family, they feel safe at home and that their parents take what they say into account. Yet, 5% of the children marked that they don't feel safe at home, and above 10% did not agree that they have a good time with their family or that their family takes their opinions into account. More than half of the children "agreed a lot" and "totally agreed" that they made decisions with their parents and became closer to their family during COVID-19.

Table 5: home and COVID-19 (%)

	Yes	No	Not sure
Me or somebody in my home got infected with Covid-19 (N=878)	21.6	74.9	3.4
Somebody in my family got infected with Covid-19 (N=879)	40.7	46.5	12.7
Somebody I know got infected with Covid-19 (N=899)	75.2	15.0	9.8
At home we had to be very careful because somebody was considered at high risk of getting very ill if they got infected (N=892)	28.1	57.2	14.7
I had to stay at home for many days (N=900)	73.7	16.9	9.4
My family had to move to another home (N=890)	4.4	93.6	2.0
I had to be in Quarantine once (N=887)	51.2	46.2	2.6
I had to be in quarantine more than once (N=886)	49.0	46.2	4.9
There were times where I had to be in my home all day because of Covid-19 (N=902)	72.2	20.7	7.1
There were times where I was only allowed to leave my home for a few hours during the day because of Covid-19 (N=894)	44.5	36.9	18.6

Most of the children marked they know someone who got infected with COVID-19 (Table 5). Almost 75% percent of the children marked they had to stay at home the whole day for many days.

2.3 The home where children live:

Overall, children rated their satisfaction with their home high (Table 6). Almost 70% of the children rated the highest satisfaction (10). However, 8.2% of the children rated their satisfaction from home as five or below. In addition, 67.2% of the children sampled stated they have their own room (Table 7). Finally, 95.4% of the children have a place in their home where they can study.

Table 6: Satisfaction with home (%) (N=904)

Scale	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
%	1.7	1.0	0.6	0.6	1.1	3.2	3.0	4.4	6.9	8.8	68.8

Table 7: Things you have (%)

Whether you have...	Yes
Own room (N=922)	67.2
Place to study (N=923)	95.4

2.4 Friends:

The children's satisfaction with their friends was lower than the family and home, with 55.6% rating the highest satisfaction (Table 8). 8.3% of the children rated their satisfaction with their friends as lower than 5. More than 70% (Table 9) percent of the children stated they have enough friends, usually nice and supporting. Half of the children reported their relationships with their friends were affected by COVID-19. Almost 75% reported they did not make new friends during COVID-19.

Table 8: Satisfaction with friends (%) N=900

Scale	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
%	2.3	1.4	1.7	1.0	1.9	4.4	2.6	5.8	9.2	14.1	55.6

Table 9: Agreement with statements about friends (%)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
I have enough friends (N=866)	4.6	5.2	10.3	18.9	61.0
My friends are usually nice to me (N=865)	3.1	6.7	13.5	20.9	55.7
If I have a problem, I have a friend who will support me (N=860)	5.6	8.3	12.6	22.7	50.9
My relationships with my friends was affected during the Coronavirus (N=878)	21.4	16.7	19.0	19.7	23.1
I made new friends with other children online during the Coronavirus (N=873)	58.9	12.5	8.0	7.1	13.5
During the Coronavirus, I felt well-supported by some of my friends (N=870)	14.3	19.1	25.4	17.5	23.8

2.5 School:

53.4% of the children reported being satisfied with their school as seven or above (Table 10). Half of the children noted they feel their teachers care for them. Almost half of the children pointed their teachers take what they say into account and let them make decisions. 35% of the children don't feel safe at school (Table 11).

Table 10: Satisfaction with school (%) (N=911)

Scale	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
%	8.0	2.1	2.4	5.7	7.9	12.1	8.3	11.6	11.2	8.8	21.8

Table 11: Agreement with statements about school (%)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
My teachers care about me (N=856)	7.7	15.7	22.7	26.8	27.2
My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account (N=853)	11.0	18.8	23.9	22.3	24.0
At school, I have opportunities to make decisions about things that are important to me (N=853)	17.7	19.1	21.5	19.6	22.2
I feel safe at school (N=909)	14.0	21.0	27.5	17.8	19.7

Almost 30% of the children reported being hit by other children from school during the last month, and 40% were called unkind names (Table 12). However, most of the children (84.6%) were not left out by other children in their class.

Table 12: Frequencies of bullying (%)

How often (in the last month) have you been...	Never	Once	Two or 3 times	More than 3 times	Don't know
Hit by other children in your school (N=816)	68.1	12.3	7.5	9.3	2.8
Called unkind names by other children in your school (N=813)	57.1	13.3	10.1	16.6	3.0
Left out by other children in your class (N=824)	84.6	6.9	2.4	3.9	2.2

Table 13: School and COVID-19:

76.7% of the children could not attend school for many days, and 85.3% reported their school was closed during the lockdown.

	Yes	No	Not sure
I could not attend school for many days (N=897)	76.7	16.2	7.1
My school was closed during lockdown (N=901)	85.3	5.3	9.3

2.6 The area where children live:

Overall, children reported high levels of satisfaction with their area. 85% of the children rated 7 and above. Almost half of the children noted there was a lockdown in their city for many days.

Table 14: Satisfaction with the area (%) (N=901)

Scale	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
%	3.1	0.8	0.9	1.1	1.8	3.8	3.9	4.1	8.5	11.3	60.7

Table 15: Area and COVID-19

	Yes	No	Not sure
Everybody in my city was in lockdown for many days (N=887)	46.1	16.0	37.9

2.7 Money and the things children have:

Most children (88.2%) reported they always had enough food to eat during the lockdown. However, More than 10% of the children reported they had "often" "sometimes," or "never" enough food to eat every day (Table 17). In addition, 61.3% of the children reported one of their parents had to work from home. 16.2% of the children reported that their parents were forced to stop working and received money from the government, and 8.5% reported their parents did not receive money from the government although they were forced to stop working (Table 18).

Table 16: Money and food (%) (N=895)

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always	Don't know
During the lockdown did you have enough food to eat each day?	0.4	3.7	6.6	88.2	1.1

Table 17: Work and COVID-19

	Yes	No	Not sure
At least one of my parents was forced to stop working and did not receive money from the government (N=869)	8.5	70.7	20.8
At least one of my parents was forced to stop working and receive money from the government (N=884)	16.2	62.9	20.9
At least one of my parents worked from home (N=893)	61.3	30.1	8.6

Table 18: Having different items (%)

Which of the following do you have	Yes	No
Clothes in good condition (N=926)	98.8	1.2
Enough money for school trips and activities (N=920)	97.6	2.4
Access to the internet at home (N=925)	97.5	2.5
The equipment/things you need for sports and hobbies (N=923)	93.6	6.4
Pocket money / money to spend on yourself (N=912)	87.1	12.9
Two pairs of shoes in good condition (N=921)	96.2	3.8
A mobile phone (N=925)	89.7	10.3
The equipment/things you need for school (N=926)	98.6	1.4
Access to computer or a tablet when needed (N=926)	95.7	4.3
Devices (e/g/ microphone and camera) for video-classes (N=921)	92.1	7.9

Most of the children have all the items above (Table 18). However, 12.9% did not have pocket money, and 10.3% of the children did not have a mobile phone.

2.8 Time use:

Table 29: Satisfaction with time use (%) (N=909)

Scale	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
%	2.4	1.4	0.8	2.5	4.0	11.9	8.1	11.3	15.6	10.2	31.7

Almost 70% of the children rated 7 and above about their satisfaction with their time use. However, 23% rated 5 and less.

2.9 Subjective well-being:

Table 20: Your life as a whole (%) (N=905)

Scale	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
%	2.3	0.6	0.8	1.7	1.4	3.5	3.0	5.2	7.3	10.9	63.3

Overall, children rated high their satisfaction with their life as a whole. 81.5% rated 8 and above. However, 2.3 were not satisfied at all (rated 0) with their life.

2.10 Children perceptions of their country:

Table 21: Perception of the government

Satisfaction with	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
How the government is treating children your age (N=882)	13.5	5.2	6.0	8.2	8.2	14.7	9.0	7.5	7.3	7.0	13.5
Decisions the government made about classes at school (N=901)	16.8	5.0	6.8	7.1	7.8	13.7	7.7	9.3	7.4	5.4	13.1

Almost 50% of the children were not satisfied with the government treatment of children their age and the government decisions about classes at school.

3. Conclusions

Overall, children in Israel represented here by the sample of 10-12 years old showed high satisfaction in their life, with high satisfaction in their life as a whole.

Children rated high scores regarding their relationship with their family and their time together. More than 80% percent of the children felt that people from their family care for them and will help them with any problem.

Regarding school satisfaction, the data is more divided. 53.4% of the children reported being satisfied with their school as seven or above. Half of the children noted they feel their teachers care for them.

In addition, almost a third of the children reported being hit by other children from school during the last month, and 40% were called unkind names.

Regarding the area children live in, children reported high levels of satisfaction with their area. For example, 85% of the children rated 7 and above.

Most children have all the tested items regarding money and the things you have. However, 12.9% did not have pocket money, and 10.3% of the children did not have a mobile phone.

In addition, most children (88.2%) reported they always had enough food to eat during the lockdown. However, More than 10% of the children reported they had "often" "sometimes," or "never" enough food to eat every day.

Regarding time use, Almost 70% of the children rated 7 and above about their satisfaction with their time use.

Finally, regarding government decisions, Almost 50% of the children were not satisfied with the government treatment of children their age and the government decisions about classes at school.