



State Comptroller of Israel | Annual Report 71C | 2021

Israel National Service

National Service and Civic Service



National Service and Civic Service

Background

Young people between the ages of 18 and 24 who receive an exemption from compulsory military service or those who are not called up for it, can perform voluntary National-Civic service in a variety of disciplines. Volunteers from several population groups serve in the Israel National-Civic Service, including women who receive an exemption on religious grounds; Jewish men and women who received exemptions from military service for various reasons, including medical grounds; the disabled; members of Arab society, men from the ultra-orthodox Jewish society and youth at-risk.

The main objectives of the National-Civic Service are: to strengthen citizens' connection and identification with the State, with society and the community; minimize inequality between those serving (in any type of service) and those not serving, and increase their prospects of integration into all spheres of life. This includes strengthening their professional capabilities and preparing them for future employment. The National-civic Service benefits society in general and aids populations in need of advancement in particular. The Israel National-civic Service Authority ("the Authority") operates Israel National Service.



Key figures

17,641

Number of national-civic service volunteers in 2020.

NIS 756 million

Public expenditure on national-civic service in 2019.

82%

Of the national-civic service volunteers in 2020 were women.

1,200

Number of ultra-orthodox Jewish volunteers in national-civic service in June 2020.

26%

Of the national-civic service, volunteers in 2020 were from the Arab society, most of them women (90%).

72%

Of the ultra-orthodox Jewish volunteers in national-civic service in 2020 were married with children.

15,000

Estimated number of public inquiries received by the Authority annually.

71

Number of reports of sexual harassment received by the Authority in 2019.

Audit actions




From February to August 2020, the Office of the State Comptroller audited several subjects in the National Service-Civic system. Including economic aspects; volunteering in the Arab society; volunteering in the ultra-orthodox Jewish society; cost-benefit analysis of operating the service; supervision and control over the operation of the service; and the handling of volunteers' personal affairs – responding to their inquiries, preventing sexual harassment and assaults on volunteers and providing benefits to volunteers. The audit was performed in the Authority For National-Civic Service. Supplementary examinations were performed, inter alia, in the Ministry of Finance, in the Accountant-General's Department, in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and in the Ministry of Defense.


Key findings





The number of civic service volunteers – The number of civic service volunteers has not risen over the years and has even slightly declined, although in the years 2015–2020 the population of each age group rose by approximately 9%.




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Volunteers from the Arab society – In the years 2015–2020, the targets defined in the government's resolutions regarding the number of volunteers from the Arab society were not achieved. The government had tasked a steering committee to address the weak aspects of civic service in the Arab society, but the committee did not take any systematic actions to encourage volunteering in the Arab society. The Authority had no substantiated and updated information about factors that motivate and inhibit volunteering for national-civic service in the Arab society. approximately 70% of the volunteers from the Arab society served in the education system. This situation could inhibit the National Service from reaching its objective of preparing youth for employment.

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Volunteers from the ultra-orthodox Jewish society – As of 2015, the number of volunteers for the National-Civic Service from the ultra-orthodox Jewish society has dropped by approximately 36%. In 2019, it stood at 25% of the last stated target. The stipend paid un-married ultra-orthodox Jewish volunteers is 35% and 50% lower than the stipend to other volunteers. Surveys conducted by the Authority and other studies have found that the objectives of the National-civic Service – strengthening volunteers' professional skills; preparing youth for employment in the future; and strengthening their connection to Israeli society and to the State – were achieved to a limited extent. approximately 31% of the ultra-orthodox Jewish volunteers began National-civic service after the age of 24 and had already received an exemption from compulsory military service. The IDF had reinstated their status as subject to compulsory service only in order to redirect them to national service.

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Cost-benefit analysis of operating national-civic service – Volunteering for national-civic service by ultra-orthodox Jewish males generates economic benefit to the economy, mainly due to the increase in their employment rates and in their wages. This in comparison to other employed ultra-orthodox Jewish males. The findings with regard to the economic benefit of employing volunteers from the Arab society were inconclusive, although they reflected mainly extra benefit.

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The Authority's handling of public inquiries – The Authority handled public inquiries in accordance with an internal procedure that shifted the responsibility for clarifying certain inquiries by recognized bodies. However, the document was not disseminated to organizations outside of the Authority nor published on the Authority's website. The Authority also did not define obligatory timeframes for handling inquiries.

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Actions to prevent sexual harassment and assault – The Authority's supervisory actions to prevent sexual harassment and assaults of volunteers are deficient and must be rectified.



The Office of the State Comptroller commends the Authority's activities to update the stipend for volunteers and formulate guidelines for reducing the number of volunteers living away from home.

The Office of the State Comptroller commends the Authority's initiative to promote a technological track for volunteers from the ultra-orthodox Jewish society.

Key recommendations



It is recommended that the Authority take systematic action to encourage volunteering from the Arab society and to diversify the available fields for volunteering. This can be achieved by promoting dialogue with the local leadership of the Arab society and by taking action to increase its explanatory and publicity efforts, including on social networks.



It is recommended that the Authority and the Human Resources Directorate in the IDF perform an orderly analysis of the implications of the IDF referring citizens to the National-Civic Service and the motivation of ultra-orthodox Jewish males aged 24 and older to volunteer for civic service and the integration of these National Service graduates into the labor market. According to the findings of this analysis, their volunteering for civic service should be regulated and targets for this age group should be defined. It is recommended that the Authority consider making changes in the stipends to ultra-orthodox Jewish volunteers.



It is recommended that the Authority perform periodic cost-benefit analyses of the National-Civic Service, present its findings to the public and use its findings, inter alia, to encourage volunteering from the Arab society and the ultra-orthodox Jewish society, and expand the volunteering frameworks for these populations.



The Authority should expand its controls and supervision to include assignment of volunteers to various roles; the financial management of the recognized bodies; volunteer coordinators' activities; and the content of the volunteers' roles.



It is recommended that the Authority draft regulations, meanwhile, it should formulate written guidelines for handling public inquiries and complaints. The guidelines should define work procedures and handling timeframes. The Authority should inform all relevant parties – the recognized bodies that operate the volunteering and the volunteers – about its guidelines for handling public inquiries and publicize them on its website.

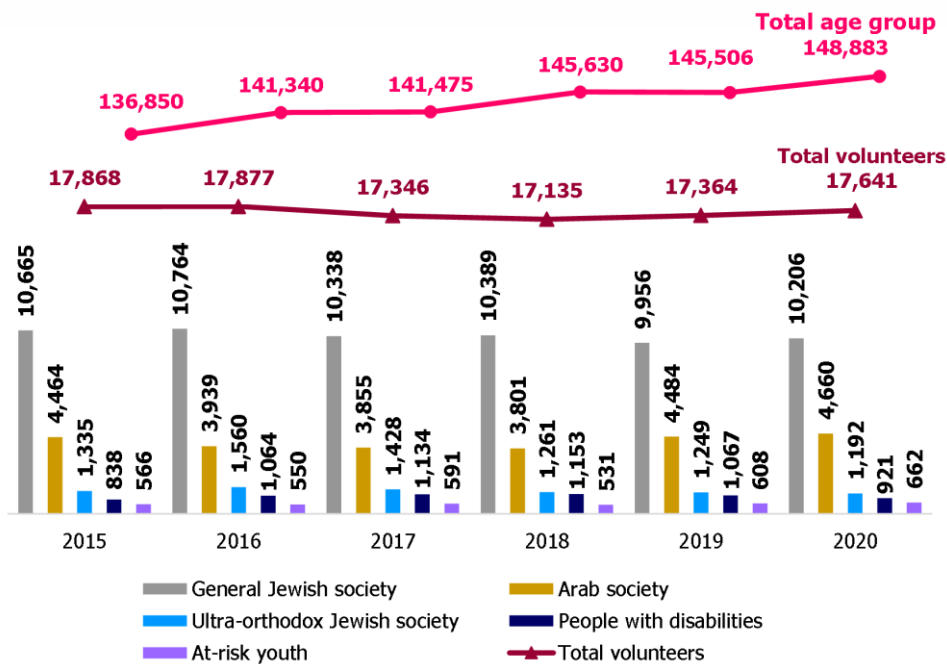


The Authority should establish a supervisory system for receiving frequent, full reports of sexual harassment complaints and their resolution. It is recommended that the



Authority implement an online course to prevent sexual harassment for all volunteers and verify that all volunteers receive this instruction. The Authority should conduct periodic surveys among volunteers, asking them about their sense of personal security and their exposure to sexual harassment, in order to heighten awareness of this problem, obtain an indication of the magnitude of the phenomenon, and examine ways to prevent it. It is recommended that the Authority apply its procedure for handling complaints about sexual harassment to volunteers from the ultra-orthodox Jewish society.

Number of volunteers in the National-Civic Service, by population groups in the years 2015–2020





Summary

The government set a target to increase the number of volunteers from the Arab society and from the ultra-orthodox Jewish society, but failed to achieve this target. Furthermore, the Israel National-Civic Service Authority took limited action to encourage volunteering in the Arab society and in the ultra-orthodox Jewish society. Deficiencies were raised in relation to one of the Authority's main functions – supervision and control over the activities within the scope of the National Service and over the volunteers' service conditions. The Authority should rectify these deficiencies and consider the recommendations specified in this report, especially with regard to volunteering from the Arab society and from the ultra-orthodox Jewish society.