



State Comptroller | Special Audit Report – Mixed Cities | 2022

Municipal Services in Mixed Cities



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Background

The local authorities are the main service provider to their residents. As such, they should be attentive to how they perform their duties and ensure an equitable allocation of their resources to all the population groups in their area. Particularly in local authorities with many residents from the Arab society, also known as "mixed cities."

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), a mixed community in Israel is where a significant majority of Jewish residents live alongside a considerable minority of Arab residents¹. Still, no criterion has been defined for the percentage of Arab residents for which a community will be defined as mixed. There are cities (Jerusalem, Haifa, Ramle, Lod, and Acre) that are historically perceived as mixed cities; Other cities (Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Ma'alot-Tarshiha) are recognized as mixed cities due to municipal unification; And there are cities that became mixed due to the migration of an Arab population from nearby communities (Nof HaGalil)² (the **Mixed Cities**).

The mixed cities in Israel face multiple challenges: the relationship history between the Jewish people and the Arab residents requires significant efforts from both sides to lay an infrastructure for promoting coexistence; They should provide municipal services in an equitable manner that serves all population groups, considering their various characteristics; And they should increase the sense of belonging and integration of all residents in the city. At the same time, in the mixed cities, there are also many positive instances of cooperation between Jewish and Arab residents and an excellent potential for getting acquainted with one another and for holding a dialogue to create a tolerant and respectful public space and coexistence.

¹ The Central Bureau of Statistics website, glossary: mixed settlement.

² The Knesset's Research and Information Center, "Arabs in Mixed Cities: An Overview", review dated May 27, 2021, p. 4.



Key Figures

**about
2,000,000**

the number of residents who lived in the mixed cities as of 2020

**about
500,000**

the number of Arab residents who lived in the mixed cities, as of 2020, 370,000 of them are in Jerusalem

2021

the year in which the government's resolutions on improving the state of Arab society also addressed those in the mixed cities for the first time

48

the total number of senior employees from the Arab population in the municipalities of Lod, Nof HaGalil, and Ramle (out of 165 employees) as of 2021

26%

the municipal property tax collection rate in Arab neighborhoods in Ramle in 2020

5

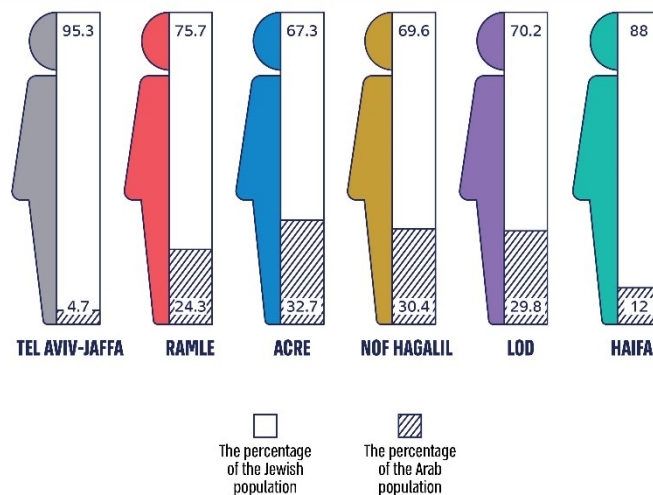
the examined properties allocated to the Arab society entities in the five mixed cities, out of the total number of 500 properties, as of 2021

**About
40%**

the gap in the budgeting of the Ministry of Education for a student in a Jewish elementary school and a student in an Arab elementary school in Lod in the two lower care quintiles in the 2018 school year

6%

the support rate is given in 2020 by the examined mixed cities to the Arab society entities out of all the support (NIS 1.5 million out of NIS 26.5 million)





Audit Actions



From June to November 2021, the State Comptroller's Office examined various aspects of municipal services in mixed cities. Among other things, the composition of the human capital employed in these cities and the composition of the key municipal committees were examined; The municipal infrastructures; Collection of municipal property tax (arnona); Support; Education services; And the accessibility of information in Arabic.

The Audit was conducted in the Haifa, Lod, Nof HaGalil, Acre, and Ramle municipalities. Moreover, aspects of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipality were examined. Completion examinations were conducted at the Ministries of Education and Social Equality.

Since the mixed cities are on the public agenda, and the municipal services these authorities provide affect the lives of many residents, the State Comptroller's Office added a public participation process to the customary audit tools.

Key Findings



The Definition of "Mixed Cities" and Their Inclusion in Government Resolutions Improving the State of Arab Society – a review of the key government resolutions to improve the state of Arab society in 2010–2020, at over NIS 19 billion, indicates that except for specific resolutions regarding the Arab population in Jerusalem³, they do not address the Arab residents in the mixed cities. Consequently, the Arab population in these cities did not receive dedicated budgets or dedicated attention, and no systematic policy was formulated. It should be noted that the government's resolutions from 2021 addressed, for the first time, Arab residents in mixed cities and included a budget for mixed cities at about NIS 300 million for 2022–2026. It was further found that the Ministries of Justice, of Interior, and for Social Equality did not define "mixed cities." By CBS's current definition of a mixed community, criteria are unclear, including the number of Arab residents or their percentage.



The Human Capital Composition Employed in the Mixed Cities – in all the mixed cities examined, it was found that the proportion of senior Arab employees is low compared to their share of the city's population: In Haifa, their percentage is 7.7%; In Lod 1%; In Nof HaGalil 5%; In Acre 9%; In Tel Aviv-Jaffa 1.5% and in Ramle there are no senior Arab employees at all. In the municipalities of Lod, Nof HaGalil, and Acre, it was found that the rate of Arab workers is lower than their percentage among the city's

³ The scope of the resolutions addressing the Arab population in Jerusalem was over NIS 2 billion.



residents (13%, 11%, and 20%, respectively). Disparities were also found in the rate of Arabs employees at the municipal call center in Lod, Nof HaGalil, and Acre (6%, 11%, and 6%, respectively).



The Municipal Committees Composition – in Lod, Nof HaGalil, and Acre, the Arabs rate in the committees was lower than their rate in the city's population in all five municipal committees examined (education, tenders, support, allocations, and names); In the Ramle municipality, the 33% representation in the education committee is commended. However, the rate was relatively low in four of the five committees. The committees in which the lack of representation for Arab society stood out are the Support Committee and the Allocations Committee.



Allocation of Municipal Properties to the Arab Population – out of 500 properties allocated by the mixed cities examined, five properties were allocated to the Arab population entities: Nof HaGalil and Acre⁴ did not allocate assets to the Arab population entities; Haifa allocated two properties; Lod allocated two properties, and Ramle allocated one property. Contrary to the allocation procedure provisions, the Nof HaGalil municipality did not publish information on the allocation procedures for properties within its territory in an Arabic-language newspaper. It was found that a small number of Arab entities applied for an allocation in all the mixed cities examined.



Provision of Support – the support rate given to Arab society entities out of the support budget of the Haifa, Nof HaGalil, Acre, and Ramle municipalities was less than 6%. The mixed cities examined did not examine the needs of their Arab residents, including in religion, welfare, youth, and culture, the reasons for the small number of applications submitted for support on its part, and the barriers on the subject.



Municipal Property Tax (arnona) Collection Rate – municipal property tax collection figures for 2020 in some Arab neighborhoods in the cities of Lod, Acre, and Ramle were lower than the general collection rate in those cities: In Lod, the collection rate in selected Arab neighborhoods was 35%, while the general rate was 88%; In Acre, the collection rate was 62% in selected Arab neighborhoods compared to a general rate of 89%; And in Ramle the collection rate was 26% compared to 87%. It was also found that the proportion of the outstanding property tax debts for residences in the Arab neighborhoods in Lod, Acre, and Ramle out of the total property tax debts for residences is significant: about 30%, 40%, and 60%, respectively.



Providing Educational Services in the Mixed Cities – the average cost per student (the ratio between the total budget that the Ministry of Education allocates to the institution and the number of students attending it) in a Jewish educational institution was higher than the average cost per student in an Arab educational institution: In Haifa

⁴ Six properties given by the Municipality of Acre for the use of the Arab population are in the process of allocation.



by about 9%; In Lod by about 12%; In Acre by about 20% and in Ramle by about 22%. Differences were also found in the rate of those eligible for matriculation, in the rate of those eligible for matriculation in advanced math (5 units), and in Lod and Acre also in the number of computers per student: In Lod, there are 15 computers per 100 students in Jewish educational institutions compared to seven in Arab institutions, and in Acre there are 35 computers per 100 students in Jewish educational institutions compared to 27 in Arab institutions.



The Safety of Students on the Way to the Educational Institutions in Lod – in Lod, a railroad crossing allowing safe crossing has not been regulated: the only overpass in the area was locked and blocked; Crossing the railroad tracks near the railway neighborhood (Varda) is not controlled and is not safe, and often the tracks are crossed even when the train barrier goes down. The lights flash as a sign of an approaching train.



Accessibility of Information in the Arabic Language – Haifa, Lod, Nof HaGalil, and Acre did not make their websites accessible in the Arabic language; In Haifa, Lod, Acre, and Ramle, the call center does not give notifications in the Arabic language; In Nof HaGalil there are municipal signs without captions in the Arabic language; And the rate of book titles in the Arabic language in the municipal libraries in all the mixed cities is low compared to the percentage of the Arab residents and particularly in Lod, Nof HaGalil and Ramle, where the rate of book titles in the Arabic language is significantly low (2.5%, 2% and 3.1%, respectively).








The Human Capital Composition Employed in the Mixed Cities – in the municipalities of Haifa and Tel Aviv-Jaffa, the Arab employees rate is higher than their rate among city residents; The Municipality of Tel Aviv-Jaffa promotes occupational diversity and the integration of Arab workers in its ranks and creates a respectful and diverse organizational climate.

The Bilingual Schools and Joint Activities – the municipalities of Haifa, Acre, and Tel Aviv-Jaffa have initiated many joint activities between Jewish and Arab students and youth, and there are state bilingual schools in Haifa and Tel Aviv-Jaffa. Joint action and a joint study space create an educational and ethical infrastructure for getting acquainted with one another and those who are different, expand the common ground between the different parts of the population, and contribute to coexistence.

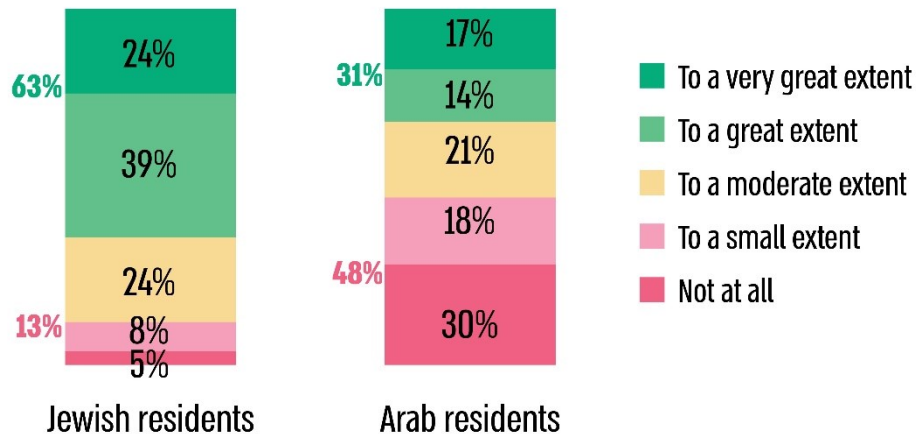


Key Recommendations

-  It is recommended that the Ministries of Justice, Interior, and Social Equality define "mixed cities" and examine the need to define mixed regional councils, considering the municipal services they should provide to all their residents.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Interior clarify the binding legal situation to provide adequate representation of the Arab community in the local authorities, Promote adequate representation of the members of the Arab population among the employees in the mixed cities and examine additional ways to encourage their integration among employees; And that it consider implementing a mechanism that will result in the key committees of these municipalities having adequate representation for the residents of the authorities, without affecting the balance established between the various council parties. It is also recommended that the mixed cities integrate the Arab population into their ranks, including senior positions and the key committees operating in the city and decision-making centers.
-  Along with the demand from the authorities to provide equal services to the entire population living in their area, the municipalities of Lod, Acre, and Ramle should increase property tax collection in Arab neighborhoods where collection rates are low.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Interior and the mixed cities increase the Arab population's awareness of the possibility of receiving property allocations and support, and identify the barriers to submitting requests for allocations and support, to ensure that the municipal assets and supports provided are used for the needs of all residents.
-  It is recommended that the mixed cities formulate, in coordination with the Ministries of Education and for Social Equality, a dedicated plan reducing the gaps between the Jewish educational institutions and the Arab educational institutions operating in their territory. It is appropriate that the difficulties arising from the language differences between Jewish students and Arab students be examined and that an outline be drawn up to reduce the differences, similar to the existing one regarding new immigrants. It is also recommended that the aforementioned bodies invest resources in educational and value programs for getting acquainted with each other to break down social and cultural barriers and contribute to respectful coexistence.



The Attitudes of Residents in the Examined Mixed Cities Regarding Equality in the Provision of Municipal Services



Summary

This audit report indicates gaps between the municipal services to the Jewish residents and the municipal services to the Arab residents in the examined mixed cities. It was found that the representation of the Arab residents in the human capital employed in the municipalities is lacking and that there is a minority of Arab representatives in the municipalities' key committees; The municipal infrastructures in the Arab neighborhoods of Lod and Ramla are poor; A small number of municipal properties were allocated for the use of Arab society; In the cities of Acre, Lod, and Ramle, the rate of current municipal property tax collection in the Arab neighborhoods is lower than the total collection rate, and the rate of the outstanding residential property tax debts in those neighborhoods is high compared to the total outstanding residential property tax debts; Nof HaGalil municipality did not publish information about allocations in the Arabic language; And the scope of the municipal supports given to Arab society entities in all the mixed cities except for the municipality of Lod was small. Gaps were also found in the municipal education services, both in the level of infrastructure in educational institutions and in educational achievements, and deficiencies were found in the accessibility of municipal services in the Arabic language.

Simultaneously, it was found that the Haifa, Acre, and Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipalities initiated many joint activities between Jewish and Arab students and youth. In Haifa and Tel Aviv-Jaffa, there are state bilingual schools.



It is recommended that within the multi-year plan for mixed communities, formulated by the Ministry of Social Equality and the Prime Minister's Office, operative steps to reduce the gaps between the various population groups establish dedicated budgets to that end. It is further recommended that the mixed cities examine the municipal services they provide and provide a dedicated response to all population groups, alongside collecting municipal taxes from all residents, and that they also lay a solid foundation for an infrastructure of coexistence.

All local authorities should study the findings of this report, especially given the demographic changes expected in the coming years in the composition of the population in various local authorities, and adapt their services to the emerging population mix