



State Comptroller of Israel | Local Government Audit | 2022

Social Audit

Local Authorities' Treatment of Drugs and Alcohol Abuse Within Their Jurisdiction



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Background

Drugs and alcohol are part of the psychoactive substances group, which affect the body and mind and change the user's attitude to occurrences around him without the ability to control the change. Social work regulations define addiction as a process of deterioration a person goes through in which he becomes dependent on a substance, altering mood or behavior to the point of impairing a significant part of the main functions in his life. There is an addiction continuum depending on users' frequency and amount of psychoactive substance consumption, from initial experience, casual or occasional use, abuse, and up to addiction. Treating people on the addiction continuum to psychoactive substances requires holistic treatment, including medical and psychosocial treatment.



Key figures

120,000

the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs' estimate of the people in drug and alcohol abuse continuum in Israel in 2020

about 27,000

number of drug and alcohol addicts known to local authorities and various treatment bodies in Israel in 2020

15,243

number of patients in all the local authorities' addiction treatment units in 2020

36 million

number of drug addicts worldwide in 2019, according to the UN estimate

2.9

number of addicts in the general population in Israel per thousand persons in 2020

7.2%, 10.2%

alcoholic beverages intoxication rate among students in the tenth until twelfth grades and the rate of students in these classes who have used cannabis at least once in the last 12 months in 2019 – respectively

929

number of adolescents aged 12–18 patients of local authorities addiction treatment units in 2020

about NIS 88 million

the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs total and fully realized budget for addictions treatment in 2020

about NIS 117 million

the Israel Authority for the Prevention of Alcohol and Drug Abuse budget allocated to the local authorities in 2020, after a 25% cut from the budget in 2019, which was about NIS 157 million

134

number of local authorities with no addiction treatment unit (out of 255) in 2020; The total number of patients therein was 1,846

140

number of local authorities in which 213 parent patrols operated in 2020



Audit actions



From May to October 2021, the State Comptroller's Office examined the local authorities' treatment of drugs and alcohol abuse within their jurisdiction. The audit was conducted in seven local authorities: Haifa, Tira, Nof HaGalil, Rishon Lezion, and Ramat Gan municipalities; In the Mate Asher Regional Council and the Yarka Local Council (the Authorities Examined). Completion audits were conducted at the Israel Authority for the Prevention of Alcohol and Drug Abuse (the Israel Authority); At the Addiction Treatment Service at the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs (Ministry of Welfare); In the Unit for the Prevention of the Use of Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco in the Psychological Counseling Service Division in the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education); In the Israel Police; And in the Federation of Local Authorities in Israel.

Key findings



Data mapping – all the local authorities audited (Haifa, Tira, Yarka, Mate Asher, Nof HaGalil, Rishon Lezion, and Ramat Gan) do not orderly work to complete the data for the establishment of a comprehensive and updated data on drug and alcohol users within their jurisdiction. Moreover, the data collected by the Israel Authority from all parties involved in the struggle of drugs and alcohol do not provide a comprehensive and updated situation report of the extent of drug and alcohol use in the country. It was found that no entity holds data on the entire potential population needing the service it provides. Thus, while the Ministry of Welfare estimated that 120,000 people were on the drug and alcohol use continuum in Israel in 2020, the number of persons known to local authorities and treatment bodies was 26,549, and the number of patients in all addiction treatment units in the local authorities was 15,243 this year, including 929 adolescents.







The Israel Authority budget allocation to the local authorities – the cut in the budget allocated to the local authorities due to the state budget absence resulted in the local authorities without an activities budget except for staffing in 2019–2020. Haifa and Rishon Lezion and the Mate Asher Regional Council, classified high in the socio-economic index, paid from their budgets to preserve the personnel contending with addiction. The Israel Authority's program workers in Nof HaGalil and Tira municipalities were given unpaid leave or diverted to another position. In Yarka local council, the scope of employment and wages of workers in the field have been cut.




The Ministry of Welfare's contractual engagement termination with non-profit organizations – at the end of June 2019, the Ministry of Welfare terminated its contractual engagement with two non-profit organizations (NGOs) that treated





adolescents and adults on the drug and alcohol use continuum: NGO A, which at that time treated about 300 adolescents on the addiction continuum, and NGO B, which treated about 660 adults under the contract with it. The Ministry of Welfare and the local authorities have not been able to bridge the gaps created following the termination of the contract with the NGOs and still have difficulty manning all of the positions required to perform the work done by the NGOs.

-  **Patients in addiction treatment units** – at the end of 2020, 134 of the 255 local authorities in Israel, with 1,846 patients, including 76 adolescents, did not have an addiction treatment unit. It was found that 81 of the local authorities that do not have an addiction treatment unit are Jewish authorities, and 53 are Arab authorities. Following the contractual engagement termination with the NGOs in 2019, in 2020 there was a decrease compared to 2018 of 715 patients who came to addiction treatment units, of which about 250 were adolescents, and the number of patients was 15,243, of which 929 were adolescents.
-  **Training of social workers in the field of addictions** – in 2018–2019 and 2021, the number of participants in the Ministry of Welfare's basic course did not meet the scope required for training social workers treating drug victims, according to the regulations on Institutions treating Drug Users. Hence, the course waiting number was high, in 2021 stood at 118, and was close to the number of participants – 135. In 2020, the Ministry of Welfare did not conduct basic course; therefore, in 2021, there was a great demand for the course, which increased the number of those waiting.
-  **Committee for Combating the Dangerous Drugs Problem** – **Tira** municipality and **Yarka** Local Council did not establish this committee, **Mate Asher** Regional Council established the committee, but it did not convene in 2019–2021, and in **Haifa** and **Nof HaGalil** municipalities, the committee did not convene as often as required by law.
-  **Protection instructors** – in 2020, 581 protection instructors were employed in 110 local authorities. The instructors work within the school as adult figures in the student environment and engage in preventing violence and in advocacy against it or in preventing the use of psychoactive substances and detecting student involvement in these activities. In two local authorities out of seven with an ultra-Orthodox population, eight protection instructors were employed, 1.3% of the total instructors. It was also found that it is challenging to preserve the employment of protection instructors when schools are closed, and the instructors are forced to go on unpaid leave and sometimes are even fired. These difficulties mainly affect local authorities classified low in the socio-economic index. It was found that following the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the protection instructors in the **Tira** municipality went on unpaid leave and returned to work in September 2021 in some schools. In **Nof HaGalil** municipality, they were fired. In contrast, local authorities classified high in the socio-economic index manage to preserve their protection instructors even in such times.



 **Detection within the school grounds** – school leaders are charged on behalf of the Ministry of Education, and their role is to coordinate the treatment of tobacco, alcohol, and drug use on the school grounds. It was found that only in **Yarka** local council were school leaders appointed in all schools; In the other local authorities audited, some schools did not appoint any school leaders. Thus, for example, in 2020–2021, there was some improvement in the appointment of school leaders compared to the previous two years, but some local authorities had no school leaders: **Mate Asher** and **Nof HaGalil** – one school, **Haifa, Tira,** and **Ramat Gan** – two schools, and **Rishon Lezion** – three schools. Moreover, in 2020 about one-fifth of the school leaders promoted, to a minimal extent, actions to locate students involved in alcohol and drugs and steps for their treatment.

 **Detection by Welfare Departments** – in 2020, only 12 out of the 255 local authorities operated units for detecting youth on the addictions continuum, which serve the localities in which they operate, and found 859 adolescents who were users.

 **Enforcement of the sale of alcoholic beverages and hazardous substances in kiosks** – the audit raised that **Nof HaGalil, Yarka, Tira,** and **Mate Asher** did not supervise and enforce business licensing laws for drugs and alcohol in their jurisdictions. **Haifa** and **Ramat Gan** have not made enforcement themselves and were satisfied with the police enforcement actions in their jurisdictions.



The State Comptroller's Office commends the initiative of **Ramat Gan** to prepare a program for detection, prevention, and advocacy among adolescents and young people on the addiction continuum and the action of **Rishon Lezion** to involve youth in advocacy and prevention activities.

Key recommendations



It is recommended that the Israel Authority and the other parties involved: the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Health, and the Israel Police, act in accordance with their responsibility and authority, to complete the data on all drug and alcohol users and to create a uniform and coordinated regularly updated database. Thus, a comprehensive and updated database will be built and reflect the reality for decision-makers as reliably as possible. It is also recommended that the Israel Authority and local authorities conduct an epidemiological survey and periodic surveys, respectively, to map usage rates and trends at the national and local levels.



The State Comptroller's Office recommends that the Ministry of Finance consider creating budgetary certainty to address the struggle against drug and alcohol addiction and anchor the budget allocated to local authorities in the budget base of the government ministry entrusted with the activities of the Israel Authority and establish a budget update mechanism, based on a mapping of the needs.



It is recommended that the Ministry of Welfare conduct a conclusion-drawing procedure following its decision to terminate the contractual engagement with NGOs A and B and examine its impact, especially on local authorities that fail to provide an appropriate solution for patients within their jurisdictions.



Yarka and **Rishon Lezion** should train social workers in the basic course, and all local authorities should formulate in cooperation with the Ministry of Welfare a multi-year plan for training all social workers in the addiction treatment units in the basic and advanced courses.



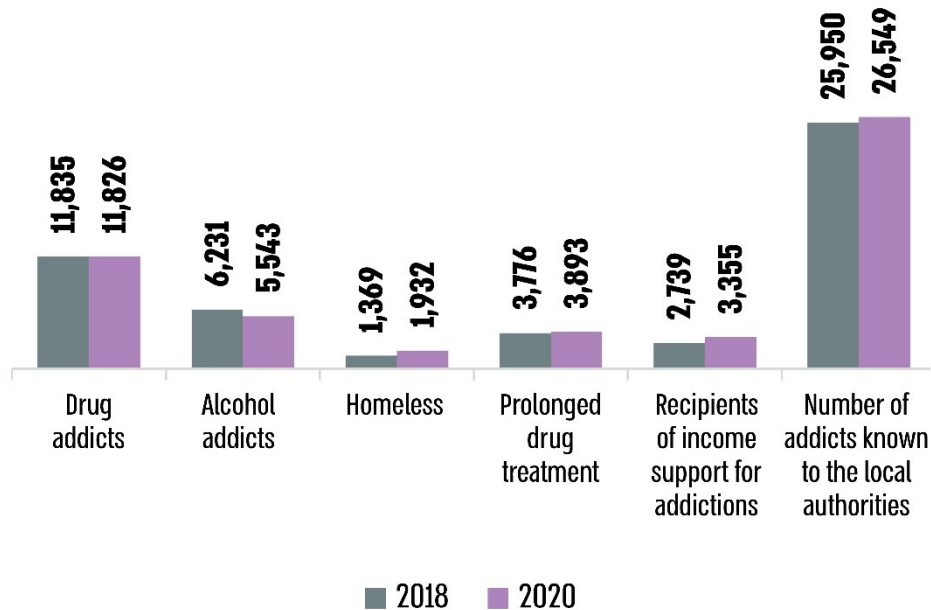
It is recommended that the Israel Authority, in cooperation with the Ministries of Education, and of Interior, and the Federation of Local Authorities in Israel, appoint protection instructors in all local authorities, examine ways to preserve their employment and reinforce their status by regulating the position and anchoring it in the occupation analysis file, while setting binding threshold conditions of education and experience.



Haifa, Tira, Yarka, Mate Asher, Nof HaGalil, and Ramat Gan should enforce the business licensing laws in their jurisdictions, supervise, and enforce the sale of alcoholic beverages and hazardous substances in kiosks within their jurisdictions.



Mapping of drug and alcohol addicts in 2018 and 2020



The database prepared by the Israel Authority for the years 2018 and 2020 was processed by the State Comptroller's Office.

Summary

Substance abuse and drug and alcohol addiction harm the individual's health, emotional and physical condition and functioning, and their family and environment, leading to systemic destruction at the functional, occupational, economic, and health levels. The spread of these can also harm society at all levels. Therefore, it necessitates giving attention to each of the circles surrounding the individual and systemically combining an effort by local authorities, government ministries, especially the Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health, Israel Police, the Israel Authority, and relevant factors in the third sector.

The local authorities and relevant government ministries did not map and collect data on the extent of drug and alcohol abuse. No entity in the country has a comprehensive and updated database. Without a database, government ministries and local authorities find it difficult to optimally prepare and address the prevention and advocacy, detection, treatment, and enforcement actions.



The State Comptroller's Office recommends that local authorities increase cooperation with those involved in the struggle against drugs and alcohol, including the Ministry of Welfare, the Israel Authority, the Israel Police, and the Ministries of Education and Health, to improve their prevention, advocacy, detection, treatment, and enforcement efforts, for the purpose of answering users and addicts. It is also recommended that local authorities and the Israel Authority conduct periodic surveys and epidemiological surveys, respectively, to obtain a comprehensive and updated situation report on the extent of the abuse at the national and local levels.