



State Comptroller of Israel | Local Government
Audit Report | 2023

Social Audit

The Local Authorities' Treatment of Senior Citizens Within Their Jurisdiction



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Background

Due to increased life expectancy and quality of life, senior citizens continue to lead an independent, active lifestyle with plenty of options. According to the Senior Citizens Law, a senior citizen in Israel is a resident who has reached retirement age – 67 for men and 65 for women. Around the world, it is customary to define those 65 and older as senior citizens, which is how they are defined in this report. The aging of the population poses challenges and requires preparation on the part of countries worldwide, including Israel. The World Health Organization formulated a global strategy for healthy aging, which addresses the role of the local authority in developing services adapted to the needs of senior citizens and promoting active aging, and it was adopted in Israel.



Key Figures

**1.16
million
(12%)**

senior citizens out of the general population in Israel at the end of 2021

**32
(12.5%)**

local authorities that have not appointed an advisor for senior citizen affairs

**17%—
126%**

the "optimal aging" budget growth rate in the examined local authorities in 2022

**NIS
141—772**

the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs annual budget allocated for a senior citizen in the examined local authorities in 2021

**126—
444**

the average number of cases per social worker position in senior citizens units in the examined local authorities

60%

the average daily occupancy rate in the day centers in three of the examined local authorities, out of the maximum occupancy

only 60%

of the senior citizens who participated in the senior citizens' survey are familiar with one or more of the local authorities' services

42%

of the senior citizens who participated in the senior citizens' survey are not familiar with the local authorities' recreational activities

Audit Actions



From May to November 2022, the State Comptroller's Office audited the local authorities' treatment of senior citizens within their jurisdiction. The audit was conducted in nine local authorities (**Elad, Ashkelon, Ma'alot-Tarshiha, Nes Ziona, Nazareth, Arad, Kiryat Bialik, Sdot Dan, and Tel Mond**). A completion audit was conducted at the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs (the Ministry of Welfare) and the Ministry of Social Equality. Furthermore, from July to August 2022, the State Comptroller's Office conducted two public participation initiatives: an online (internet) survey among 524 senior citizens from all local authorities in Israel (senior citizens survey) and interviews with 90 senior citizens who stayed at day centers and clubs in all the examined local authorities.



Key Findings



The Local Authorities' Information About the Senior Citizens Within Their Jurisdiction – the examined local authorities do not have complete and updated information on all the senior citizens within their jurisdiction, which could optimize the communication channels with them and help them in routine and emergencies. During the Covid-19 crisis, the authorities updated their data on senior citizens. Still, they did not establish a mechanism and action plan to continue updating the details even after the crisis passed, even though in some of them (**Ashkelon, Ma'alot-Tarshiha, Nes Ziona, Arad** and **Kiryat Bialik**), the senior citizens' rate today is 13%–19% of the total population.



Development of Services for all Senior Citizens in the Local Authorities – in the nine examined local authorities, there are no master plans for the aging of the population; Eight of them – **Ashkelon, Ma'alot-Tarshiha, Nes Ziona, Nazareth, Arad, Kiryat Bialik, Sdot Dan**, and **Tel Mond** did not conduct needs or satisfaction surveys among the senior citizens within their jurisdiction.



The Advisor for Senior Citizen Affairs in the Local Authority – 32 (about 12.5%) out of the 258 local authorities in Israel have not appointed an advisor for senior citizen affairs, including two of the examined local authorities – **Ma'alot-Tarshiha** and **Arad**. In about 55% (124 out of 226) of those who appointed an advisor for senior citizen affairs, the position was assigned to the director of the social services department or the director of the senior citizens unit operating in the social services department. The Ministry of Interior did not include the position of advisor for senior citizen affairs in the occupation analysis file, even though the obligation to appoint one was established by law. The advisor for senior citizen affairs does not receive additional remunerations.










Allocation of the Ministry of Welfare's Budget to Senior Citizens Units and its Utilization – six of the examined local authorities, **Ashkelon, Nes Ziona, Arad, Kiryat Bialik, Sdot Dan** and **Tel Mond** did not utilize the entire budget allocated to them by the Ministry of Welfare at the beginning of 2021 for the treatment of senior citizens (**Ashkelon** – NIS 4,894,179 (90%), **Nes Ziona** – NIS 879,971 (87%), **Arad** – NIS 1,431,848 (81%), **Kiryat Bialik** – NIS 1,442,085 (76%), **Sdot Dan** – NIS 936,341 (77%), **Tel Mond** – NIS 213,862 (89%))




Allocation of Social Worker Positions to the Local Authorities – the Ministry of Welfare did not set the maximum number of senior citizens treated per one social worker position. Hence, in some local authorities (such as **Elad, Ma'alot-Tarshiha**, and **Arad**), the average number of cases per social worker varies between 324 and 444.




-  **The Committee for Examining the Model of Operating Day Centers for Senior Citizens** – six months after the submission of the Committee's recommendations summary in May 2022, the Ministry of Welfare has not yet implemented its recommendations, including encouraging the operation of a day center as a meeting center, the establishment of MOFET clubs (offering enhanced activities including nutrition) within the day centers and the extension of the hours of operation.
-  **The Social Frameworks for Those Treated in the Senior Citizens Units** – the average number of participants per month in the day centers and MOFET clubs/enrichment clubs in the examined local authorities is low compared to the number of senior citizens treated in the welfare departments, and ranges from 9% to 30%; The average occupancy per day in enrichment clubs, in MOFET clubs and the supporting communities, is close to maximum occupancy, while in the day centers there is a difference of up to 60% (in **Ashkelon**, **Nes Ziona** and **Kiryat Bialik**) between the average occupancy per day and the maximum occupancy.
-  **Recreational Activities for Senior Citizens Outside of the Activities Provided by the Ministry of Welfare** – the State Comptroller's Office's senior citizens survey raised that 42% of them are not familiar with the recreational activities provided by the local authorities and that 64% of the senior citizens who are familiar with the activities participate therein; Most senior citizens (63%) do not participate in the frameworks offered to them due to lack of interest.
-  **Recreational Activity Within the Ministry of Social Equality's Calls for Bids** – **Ashkelon** and **Nazareth** did not participate in even one of the calls for bids published by the Ministry of Social Equality over the last three years to provide activities for senior citizens.
-  **Social Frameworks for Senior Citizens** – the average number of participants per month in other social clubs in the examined local authorities is low compared to the total population of senior citizens within their jurisdiction, from 20 participants per club in **Kiryat Bialik** (there are five clubs in the city) to 72 participants per club in **Elad** (there is one club in the city of **Elad**, and the number of participants also includes activities for senior citizens that take place virtually).
-  **The Local Authorities' Engagements with the Entities Operating the Senior Citizens Frameworks** – **Ma'alot-Tarshiha** and **Kiryat Bialik** did not hold a tender for operating some of the frameworks operated by local associations that are not municipal associations; **Kiryat Bialik**, **Ma'alot-Tarshiha**, **Arad** and **Ashkelon** did not sign agreements with the entities that operate some of the frameworks, for the provision of services to senior citizens, anchoring the parties' obligations and rights.
-  **Accessibility of Information** – according to the senior citizens survey, less than 60% of them are familiar with one or more of the local authorities' services, and less than 40% use them. The rate of senior citizens who use the local authorities' services and



activities, except for recreational activities, ranges from 4% to 14%. Moreover, the information on the websites of the examined local authorities is not prominent and not easily available for senior citizens, and not all are aware of their rights.

 **Exhaustion of Rights** – according to the State Comptroller's Office senior citizens survey, these citizens expect the local authorities to contact them, and 84% of them stated that the local authority did not contact them on its initiative.



 **Discounts and Benefits for Senior Citizens on Behalf of the Local Authorities** – in seven of the nine examined local authorities – **Elad, Ashkelon, Nes Ziona, Arad, Kiryat Bialik, Sdot Dan, and Tel Mond** – the number of senior citizens who receive a 30% discount under the Senior Citizens Law is low (between 1% to 5% of the senior citizens). The rate of recipients of the senior citizen discount of 25% under the Municipal Property Tax Discount Regulations ranges from 18% to 40%. The examined local authorities do not proactively inform the senior citizens who receive a 25% senior citizen's discount that they can submit a one-time request to receive a 30% discount under the Senior Citizens Law, subject to an income test.








Allocation of the Ministry of Welfare's Budget to Senior Citizens Units – the State Comptroller's Office commends the increase in budgets for the care of senior citizens.

Discounts and Benefits for Senior Citizens on Behalf of the Local Authorities – the State Comptroller's Office commends **Ashkelon** and **Kiryat Bialik** for free parking in the regulated parking spaces to senior citizens living within their jurisdictions.

Key Recommendations

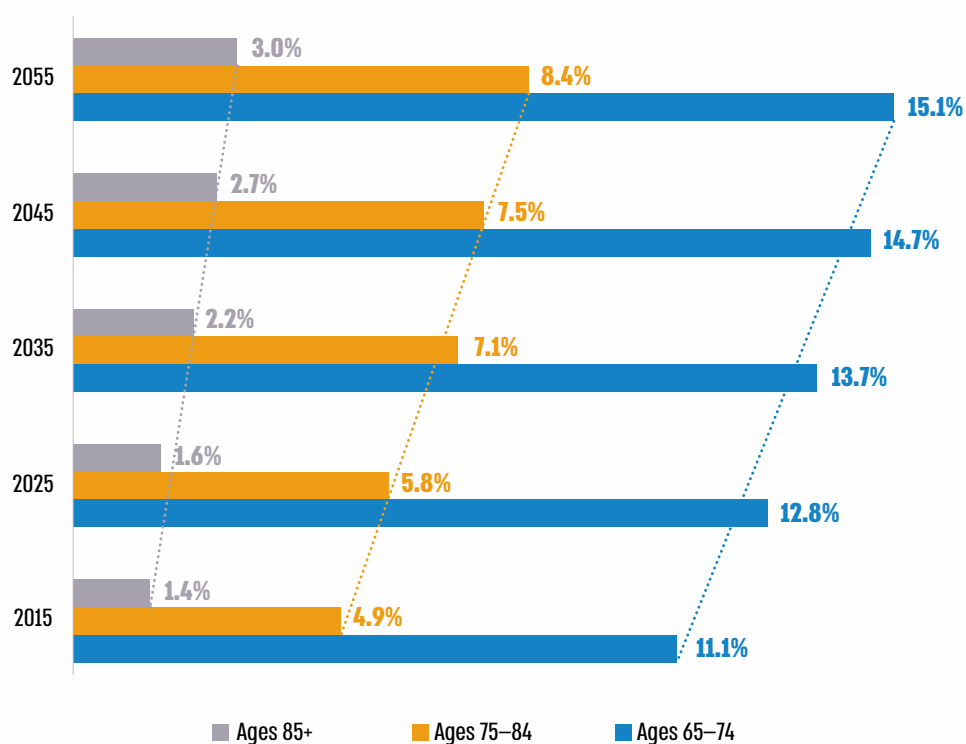
-  It is recommended that all local authorities continue to update the details of all the senior citizens who live within their jurisdiction, thus streamlining the channels of contact with senior citizens and assisting them in routine and emergencies.
-  It is recommended that the local authorities cooperate with the senior citizens to prepare local master plans, including long-term goals and objectives, based on which the services and activities to promote the well-being of senior citizens will be determined. It is further recommended that the local authorities conduct needs and satisfaction surveys to map the services required for the senior citizens in their jurisdiction, to derive maximum benefit from the investment in public resources, and to provide an optimal solution for the senior citizen's needs.



-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Interior include the position of advisor for senior citizen affairs in the occupation analysis file. It is further recommended that the Ministries of Interior and Social Equality complete the discussions with the Ministry of Finance to reward the advisor and allocate him the resources required to perform his duties, as is customary in other responsibilities imposed by law.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Welfare set the maximum number of senior citizens treated per one social worker position. This will allow the social workers to perform their duties well and provide the senior citizens with proper and high-quality care. It is also recommended that the local authorities examine the workload imposed on the social workers in the senior citizens' units and allocate personnel accordingly.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Welfare discuss the recommendations of the Committee for Examining the Model of Operating Day Centers for Senior Citizens, examine the consequences and the costs involved in their implementation, and establish a policy and implement it with the local authorities.
-  To ensure quality and adequate care and service for the senior citizens within their jurisdiction, **Ashkelon, Ma'alot-Tarshiha, Arad, and Kiryat Bialik** should anchor in agreements with the entities that operate the senior citizens' clubs, all the duties stipulated in the Social Work Regulations concerning the employment of personnel, social care, social activities, and catering that they provide to senior citizens within their jurisdiction.
-  To increase and optimize the accessibility of information on the activities, on the exercise of rights, and the assistance that the local authority can provide to senior citizens, it is recommended that the local authorities carry out proactive information activities, especially in concentrations of senior citizens, to inform them of the channels open to them to exercise their rights. It is also recommended that the local authorities make the websites accessible to senior citizens by centralizing the information and highlighting it on the home pages of their websites.



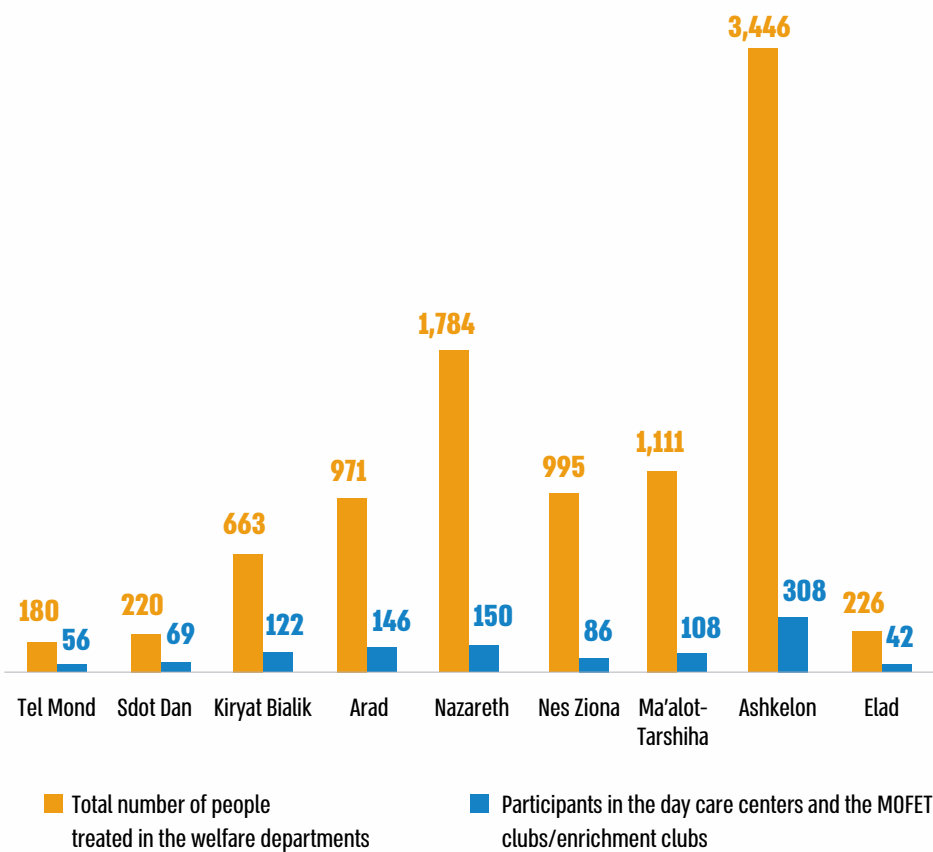
Forecast of the Senior Citizens Rate Among the Total Population, by Age, in Selected Years



According to the CBS data – Israel's population forecast until 2065 (May 2017) was processed by the State Comptroller's Office.



The Participants in Day Centers and MOFET Clubs/Enrichment Clubs in the Examined Local Authorities, Compared to the Number of Senior Citizens Treated in the Welfare Departments, 2022





Summary

The aging of the population is a worldwide phenomenon that poses new challenges to society, welfare, and medicine professionals. In Israel, too, there is an increasing trend in life expectancy, and the local government has a central role in providing services to senior citizens and developing solutions for their various and unique needs. According to the audit findings, the examined local authorities did not conduct needs and satisfaction surveys nor master plans to prepare for the aging of the population. The average number of participants per month in the day centers and MOFET clubs/enrichment clubs in the examined local authorities is low and ranges from 9% to 30% of the senior citizens treated in the welfare departments. Regarding the accessibility of information to the senior citizens and the exercise of their rights, it was found that the information on the local authorities' websites is not prominent and is not easily available for the senior citizens and that not everyone is aware of their rights. It was also found that the Ministry of Welfare did not set the maximum number of senior citizens treated per one social worker for senior citizens position and did not define specific experience and training requirements for these social workers.

According to the senior citizens survey, local authorities should proactively address senior citizens for the provision of information and assistance. It is recommended that the local authorities expand the communication channels with the senior citizens within their jurisdiction and improve their accessibility of information. It is also recommended to map the needs of the senior citizens and prepare master plans with long-term goals and objectives, and to address their needs accordingly, as their proportion in the population is expected to continue to grow in the coming years.

