



State Comptroller Report | February 2023

Israel Defense Forces

Screening and Recruitment to the IDF – Extended Follow-up Audit



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Background

The Israeli Defense Service Law sets provisions regarding call to report for registration and examinations of those intended for military service (candidates). The Manpower Directorate (MD), as part of the general staff, is responsible for exhausting manpower potential in the IDF. IDF's screening and recruitment policy is set by the Human Resources & Planning Division (HRP) of the MD and by Meitav, the Division's executive body, implementing the policy. A colonel heads Meitav, and it is divided into five branches. These branches, including five regional recruitment bureaus, manage all candidates' registration and military service suitability processes. Meitav's other responsibilities are: identifying recruitment potential and planning its scope; calling candidates to first summon; initial screening and placement of all candidates under the guidelines of the HRP Division in the MD; handling candidates' requests; handling the enlistment process and approving exemptions from military service. Meitav contends with the need to adjust to technological developments, social and intergenerational changes affecting candidates' conduct and expectations.



Key Figures

hundreds of thousands of youth

are handled every year by Meitav, including candidates and recruits

about 40% of candidates

do not complete medical examinations (determining medical profile) during the first summon to the recruitment bureau

only about 3%

of the required evaluations of Medical Committees physicians, by the chief physicians were carried out in 2020–2021

2.5 million

candidates' inquiries were received at Meitav through phone calls and digital channels in 2021

16.5%

the periphery residents' rate serving in the leading technological tracks compared to their rate amongst other IDF units, which is 32%

1,102 inquiries

Meitav received through an "unofficial channel"¹ from May 2020 to December 2021

31.4%

is the predicted non-recruitment rate of men born in 2003, whose main recruitment year is 2021

44.9%

is the predicted non-recruitment rate of females born in 2003, whose main recruitment year is 2021

Audit Actions



In November 2016, the State Comptroller's Office published a report on "Screening and recruitment to the IDF " (the previous audit). From October 2021 to June 2022, the State Comptroller's Office examined the rectification of the main deficiencies noted in the previous audit and raised new findings.

The follow-up audit was conducted at the IDF: in the HRP Division of the MD, Meitav Headquarters, Recruitment Bureaus, the Screening Systems Development Branch of the Behavioral Science Department, and at the Chief Medical Officer Department (CMO).




The sub-committee of the State Control Committee of the Knesset decided not to submit the full report to the Knesset but rather to publish only short sections of it, for the sake

¹ "Unofficial channel" – candidates' referring to Meitav through other than the official channels (such as the Mitgaisim website, e-mail, call center, etc.) and directly to Meitav officials rather than through the call center.



of maintaining state security, under article 17 of the State Comptroller Law, 1958 [consolidated version].

Key Findings

-  **The Rise of IDF's Non-Recruitment Rates** – in the birth yearbooks 1998–2003, there was a 4% rise in non-recruitment amongst men based on their status as religious scholars and a 2% rise in non-recruitment amongst women on religious grounds. In addition, a 1% rise in non-recruitment of men (except a slight decrease for 2003) and women, based on medical grounds, was also found for the same age cohorts. On the whole, regarding the above age cohorts, there is a 3.5% rise in non-recruitment of men and a 2.5% rise in non-recruitment of women, on different grounds, so the predicted non-recruitment rate for youth born in 2003 (whose main recruitment year is 2021) is 31% for men and 45% for women.
-  **Medical Screening Processes** – by the previous audit, the medical profile of 60% of the candidates was determined in the first summon. The follow-up audit raised that the candidates' rate whose medical profile was not determined in the first summon remained at 40%. Moreover, Meitav and the CMO Department had not set a multi-year target for raising the low rate of candidates' profile determination in the first summon. Delays in summarizing the medical profile may reduce the screening and placement options for the candidates.
-  **The Scope and Frequency of Audits Conducted on the Medical Committee's Physicians** – the previous audit noted that the performance of most medical committees' physicians at the various recruitment bureaus was not evaluated annually, as required by the CMO Department's guidelines. The follow-up audit raised that **the deficiency had not been rectified**: according to the references saved at the Medical Screening Branch, in 2020–2021, the chief physicians conducted about 3% of the required evaluations of doctors in their bureaus. Except for Tel-Hashomer Recruitment Bureau, the Medical Screening Branch conducted only one partial audit at each recruitment bureau instead of two audits under the updated guidelines. These audits were partial since they did not include sample evaluations of records and physicians. That year, the branch conducted two partial audits at Tel Hashomer Recruitment Bureau. The situation improved in 2021: Two audits were conducted at three recruitment bureaus (Tel Hashomer, Haifa, and Tiberias) as required. However, only one audit was conducted at the Jerusalem Recruitment Bureau and at Beer-Sheva Bureau – two audits were conducted. Still, they were partial and did not include a sample records evaluation.



Findings of the Evaluation of Physicians' Performance at Recruitment Bureaus

– the previous audit noted that the audit staff of the CMO Department found some "substantial" errors in physicians' judgment in about 26% of the files, for example, failure to establish an impairment clause, completing records without thorough inquiry, lack of reference to medical documents and medical issues noted in the medical questionnaire and determining wrong impairment clause. The follow-up audit raised that the Medical Screening Branch does not sample all types of medical files at the recruitment bureaus but instead focuses on "complex" ones. Moreover, during the follow-up audit, the results of sample evaluations conducted by the Medical Screening Branch were presented as questions addressed to the chief physician of the audited bureau and did not include a professional decision made by the Medical Screening Branch. Therefore, based on the findings of the sample reviews, it was impossible to understand whether there were errors in professional judgment in the physicians' judgments.



Evaluation of Psycho-Technical Evaluators' Performance – the previous audit noted that the Psycho-technical Department did not set at what stage during his service the feedback interview with the evaluators will be conducted. In addition, some evaluators' feedback interviews were conducted at a very advanced stage of their military service, and some evaluators were never interviewed. The follow-up audit raised that **the deficiencies were rectified to a small extent**: a time-frame for a feedback interview was regulated, by which any deviation from the time frame requires approval by the head of the Psycho-technical department. Nevertheless, some deviations were found at a scope of 16%, and the approvals for the deviations were not documented.



Documentation of Candidates' Inquiries & Feeding Data into Mechanized Systems

– the previous audit noted documentation deficiencies in the computerized customer system for management of actions carried out by all the entities dealing with candidates. The follow-up audit raised that **the deficiency was not rectified** – there was a lack of documentation, deficient documentation and entry of documents were found in both the customer care system and the mechanized systems, and also malfunctions in the management system documentation (to which all candidates' data are fed). It Should be noted that throughout the years, the number of inquiries Meitav received through digital channels increased from 152,230 in 2017 to 1,346,150 in 2021 (800% increase), while the number of phone inquiries decreased from 1,524,869 in 2017 to 1,235,000 in 2021 (19% decrease). Overall, there is an upward trend of about 54% in the total inquiries received at the service center in those years.



Functional Continuity of Mechanized Systems at Meitav's Service Center

– the previous audit noted that there had been multiple and frequent disruptions in the functional continuity of the call centers at the service center and the system server's management. These disruptions caused systems to shut down, ("drop", or "unresponsive"), or slow every month. The follow-up audit raised that **the deficiency in the telecommunication system was rectified. As for the management system, the deficiency was not rectified**, affecting the level of service provided to the candidates.



Clarity & Completeness of Information on Screening and Placement Inquiries

– the previous audit noted multiple information sources regarding candidates' inquiries handling – specific instructions were found on the Mitgaisim website, while others were found in different instruction files. Furthermore, some instructions were unclear. The follow-up audit raised that **the deficiency was rectified to a small extent**: information references on the Mitgaisim homepage included duplications and were not organized logically. Therefore, Mitgaisim's homepage is not user-friendly, making navigating the website challenging. The information available for the candidates and representatives handling candidates' requests includes inconsistent instructions.



Candidates' Inquiries Outside Meitav's Service Center

– Meitav's contact information is specified on the Mitgaisim website, and candidates are invited to contact it through the website, e-mail, call center, etc. These inquiries are documented in the service center's systems and handled there. The follow-up audit raised some unofficial channels of communication outside Meitav's service center, which are not published on Mitgaisim's website. Such channels might compromise candidates' equal opportunities.



Periphery Residents Rate Serving in Technological Roles

– the IDF offers various technological roles that provide the desired experience in the civil labor market. As a result, these roles are very popular with many candidates. As a rule, to be given such a role, the candidate must undergo preliminary screening. The central technological bodies in the IDF are the Israeli Intelligence Corps and the Israeli Computer and IT Directorate. The follow-up audit raised that the periphery residents' rate serving in the leading technological tracks is half their rate in all IDF units: about 16.5% in main technological tracks, compared to about 32% in all IDF units.



Recruitment Threshold – there are several grounds for non-recruitment, mainly religion and medical conditions. One of the exemptions is granted if a candidate does not meet the MD's "recruitment threshold" criteria. The previous audit noted that the IDF had not defined the "recruitment threshold" and no criteria were formed to set the threshold or approve it. Moreover, the committee's composition, authorities, and procedures discussing exemptions based on the recruitment threshold had not been specified in any of the IDF's regulations or orders. The follow-up audit raised that **the deficiency had been rectified**: the head of the HRP Division in the MD had set a recruitment threshold policy. The policy was then included in Meitav's order and approved by the director of the MD.

Collaboration with the Ministry of Education – "Collective First Summon"

– the State Comptroller Office commends the cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the IDF to conduct "Collective First Summon" (a tool shared by the IDF and the Ministry of Education, allowing educational institutions to plan the first summon for an entire age group) enabling the candidates to prepare for IDF's screening together and receive support and guidance not always available otherwise. However, 236 institutions




out of 806 (29%) had not collaborated with the IDF and had not adopted the "Collective First Summon".


A Quota of Examinees by the Medical Committee – the previous audit noted that the physicians' quota for daily tasks, determined by Meitav and the CMO Department, did not include all the required tasks. The follow-up audit raised that **the deficiency had been rectified**: the quotas were adjusted to include all different types of outputs the physicians are expected to fulfill.

Medical Committees' Quality Control – the previous audit noted that the audit of all recruitment bureaus was assigned to an audit staff headed by the chief physician of one of the recruitment bureaus, who, according to the guidelines, was supposed to be subject to the same audit. The follow-up audit raised that **the deficiency had been rectified**: the CMO Department issued an updated directive, by which the audit would not be conducted by the audit staff, as was previously done, but instead the chief physicians at the various recruitment bureaus are required to perform a periodic evaluation of all the physicians employed at his bureau according to the frequency prescribed in the directive, and the chief physicians' performance would be evaluated as part of a semi-annual audit by the head of the Recruitment Bureaus Department of the Medical Screening Branch.

Maintaining Candidates' Privacy at the Medical Committee – the previous audit noted some deficiencies in the working environment of the medical committees in the various recruitment bureaus. The main deficiency was the inadequate setup of the physical structure of the medical unit at the recruitment bureaus leading to candidates' privacy issues. The follow-up audit raised that **the deficiency was rectified**: the medical committees' rooms were separated, so different medical committees worked in different rooms.

Key Recommendations

 Given the significant importance of recruitment to the IDF including the recruitment threshold policy that determines the circumstances an exemption from conscription will be given, it is recommended that the division of non-recruitment trends, including the recruitment threshold policy and its effect on recruitment volume trends are periodically presented to the Chief of Staff, the Minister of Defense and the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

 It is recommended that Meitav and the CMO Department complete the strategic work determining candidates' medical profiles and set multi-year targets to raise the rate of candidates' medical profile determination during their first summon. It is further recommended that the Ministry of Health and the HMOs consider establishing an online



interface through which candidates' medical information is transferred, under the provisions of the law. Thus, optimizing the process. Moreover, it is recommended that the Medical Screening Branch consider ways to minimize the number of unnecessary referrals to further medical inquiries since a delayed medical profile might decrease the number of screening and placement options available for candidates.



The Medical Screening Branch of the CMO Department should improve the scope of audits conducted at the various recruitment bureaus and perform them periodically under the updated guidelines. It is further recommended that the Medical Screening Branch ensure that the chief physicians at the recruitment bureaus evaluate all the physicians employed at their recruitment bureaus and send the reports as required.



It is recommended that Meitav examines the clarity and completeness of information on the Mitgaisim website and that it ensures the accessibility and availability of the required data for the candidates and the entities that handle them, and that the completeness of the information is strictly monitored. As part of examining and rewriting of the appeal policy, it is recommended that Meitav determines at which phase of the process a candidate is allowed to appeal against screening and placement decisions. It is also recommended that Meitav form the appropriate appeals hierarchy and set applicable procedures accordingly. Furthermore, it is recommended that Meitav thoroughly examines the leading causes for repetitive candidates' inquiries, aside from appeals, and address them.



Meitav should ensure that all candidates and representatives on behalf of them contact Meitav through the official channel and the service center so all inquiries are documented at the service center and the mechanized systems. Meitav should also set in its policy the circumstances under which inquiries are sent to the head of the Conscripts Branch, the Help Center, or any other relevant entity and anchor this in a procedure that will be published for all candidates on the "Mitgaisim" website.

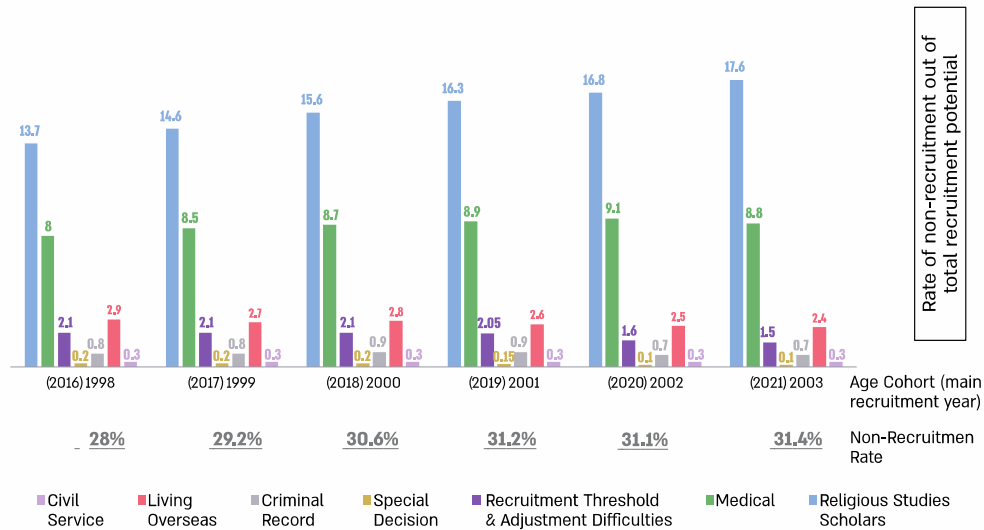


It is recommended that the IDF continues to minimize the gaps between candidates who reside in the periphery and the rest of the candidates and increase the periphery's representation in technological roles. Moreover, the State Comptroller's Office recommends conducting periodic examinations and control of the processes of the various initiatives handling the gaps above, especially on the changes in screening processes minimizing the gaps, and meeting the targets set by the Minister of Defense and the Chief of Staff.



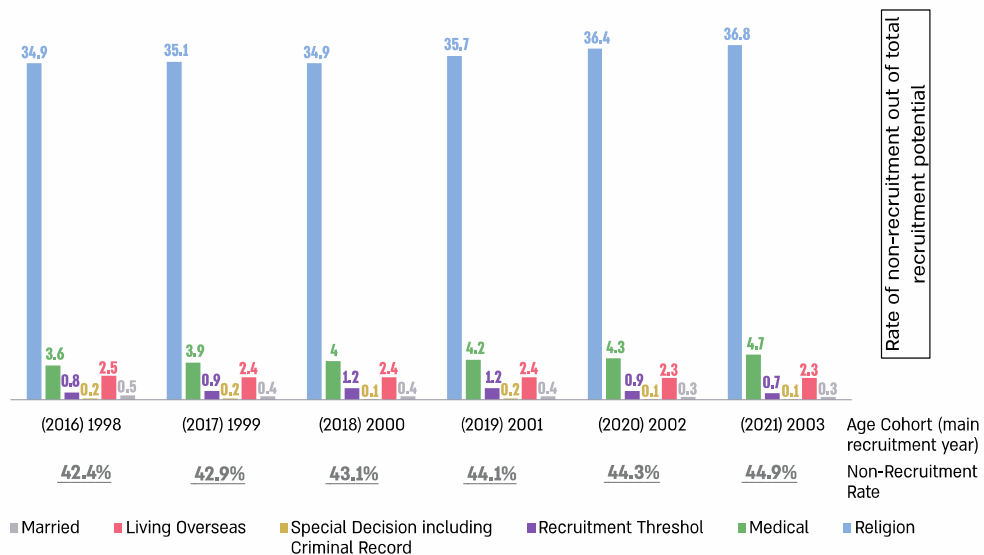
Distribution of Non-Recruitment Grounds

Distribution of Non-Recruitment Grounds – Men



According to Meitav's statistics from July 2022, processed by the State Comptroller Office.

Distribution of Non-Recruitment Grounds – Women



According to Meitav's statistics from July 2022, processed by the State Comptroller Office.






The Extent the Main Deficiencies Noted in the Previous Audit were Rectified

Audit chapter	The Deficiency Noted in the Previous Audit	The Extent of Deficiencies Rectification in the Follow-up Audit			
		Not Rectified	Slightly Rectified	Significantly Rectified	Fully Rectified
Recruitment Threshold	The IDF did not define the term "recruitment threshold" and no criteria were formed setting the threshold or approving it. It was found that the composition, authorities, and procedures of the committee discussing exemptions based on the recruitment threshold was not included in any of the IDF's regulations or orders.				
Medical Screening	The physicians' quota of daily tasks, as determined by Meitav and the CMO Department, did not include all the tasks they were required to undertake, such as reviewing appeals and exceptional requests, and as a result, physicians carried out tasks that exceeded the pre-defined quotas.				
	The audit of all recruitment bureaus was assigned to an audit staff headed by the chief physician of one of the recruitment bureaus, who, according to the guidelines, was supposed to be subject to the same inspection.				
	Most of the medical committees' physicians at the various recruitment bureaus were not evaluated annually, as the CMO Department requires, and most were not evaluated for two or three years.				



Audit chapter	The Deficiency Noted in the Previous Audit	The Extent of Deficiencies Rectification in the Follow-up Audit			
		Not Rectified	Slightly Rectified	Significantly Rectified	Fully Rectified
Qualitative Sorting	Deficiencies were found in the working environment of the medical committees at the recruitment bureaus. The main one was the inadequate setup of the physical structure of the medical unit at the recruitment bureaus, which led to candidates' privacy issues.				
	The medical profile of about 40% of the candidates was not determined during the first summon.				
	The Psycho-technical Department did not determine the stage at which the evaluators should have a feedback interview. With some evaluators, the feedback interviews were conducted at a very advanced stage of their military service, and other evaluators never participated in such interviews.				
	Independence Personality Trait: definition of this personality trait and the process of assessing it is too complicated, and high scores do not necessarily indicate positive characteristics of the interviewee. This should be examined professionally and determined by the head of the MD.				



Audit chapter	The Deficiency Noted in the Previous Audit	The Extent of Deficiencies Rectification in the Follow-up Audit			
		Not Rectified	Slightly Rectified	Significantly Rectified	Fully Rectified
Managing Candidates for IDF Service	Deficiencies were found in documenting the different actions of various officials dealing with the candidates.				
	Multiple and frequent disruptions in the functional continuity of the call center servers at the service center and of other systems were found. These disruptions caused shutdowns or slowed operations every month.				
	Multiple sources of information for the management of candidates' inquiries was found – specific instructions were found on the Mitgaisim website, while others were found in the different instruction files. Furthermore, some instructions were unclear.				



Summary

The follow-up audit raised that both the MD and Meitav tried to rectify some of the deficiencies noted in the previous audit. Regarding medical screening, quotas of physicians' work were set considering the required outputs; An updated quality control guideline over the medical committees at the various recruitment bureaus was issued; and structural changes were applied to maintain candidates' privacy. Regarding qualitative screening, a timeframe for a feedback interview with the evaluators was set; the head of the HRP Division of the MD formed a non-recruitment policy. The policy was established as an order and approved by the head of the MD. Moreover, the recruitment threshold policy and MD's actions were intended to increase the recruitment volume amongst diverse populations and create unique recruitment tracks for that purpose. Regarding the screening and placement processes, some projects were initiated for their improvement: collaboration with the Ministry of Education through the "Collective First Summon"; strategic work improving the medical screening processes and a plan to improve the qualitative screening system – both through advanced technological tools; establishing a professionally enhanced staff to deal with the challenges of screening and placement; improving the function of the call center and adding some advanced technological innovations to handle candidates' inquiries. In addition, some actions were taken to better exhaust human capital while maintaining equal opportunities and minimizing bias.

Some of the deficiencies noted in the previous audit were not rectified or only partially rectified, especially in two main domains: regarding the medical screening – the rate of chief physicians' evaluations at the recruitment bureaus and the CMO Department is lower than required; the Medical Screening Branch does not sample all types of medical files at the recruitment bureaus, but instead focuses on the "complex" files; and contrary to the previous audit, the results of the sample reviews conducted by the Medical Screening Branch are mainly presented as questions addressed to the chief physician of the audited bureau, and do not include a professional decision made by the Medical Screening Branch. Regarding handling candidates' inquiries, there is still deficient documentation, and their entry into mechanized systems, and occasional system malfunctions. Furthermore, the information references on the Mitgaisim homepage include duplications and are not organized logically. Therefore, Mitgaisim's homepage is not user-friendly, making navigating the website challenging. The information available for the candidates and their representatives includes inconsistent instructions. In addition, some unofficial communication channels outside Meitav's service center are not published on Mitgaisim's website.

The MD and Meitav should rectify the above deficiencies since the medical profile is the basis for the candidates' future military service, and handling candidates' inquiries might affect their entire military career.