

**Christmas 2011 – Christians in Israel**  
**(Communicated by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics)**

**On Christmas Eve 2011<sup>1</sup> there are 154,500 Christians living in Israel, who constitute 2% of the population of the State of Israel.**

**Introduction:**

- **80.4% of the Christians in Israel are Christian Arabs**; the remainder are mainly Christians who immigrated to Israel with Jewish members of their families under the Law of Return (including their children who were born in Israel). Most of them arrived in the wave of immigration in the 1990s from the former Soviet Union.
- **The towns with the largest Christian Arab populations** are Nazareth (about 22,200), Haifa (13,800), Jerusalem (11,600) and Shfaram (9,300), as of the end of 2010.
- **The median age<sup>2</sup> of Christian bridegrooms in their first marriage in 2009** was 29.1, about a year and a half older than the Jewish bridegrooms, about two years older than the Druze bridegrooms and about three and a half years older than the Muslim bridegrooms.
- The average number of children up to age 17 in Christian families with children up to that age is 2.2, similar to the Jewish families (2.3) and lower than the Muslims (3.1).
- **The percentage of participation in the civilian workforce** among Christians age 15 and over was 58.0% (64.2% among the men and 52.0% among the women).
- **The percentage of unemployment among Christians** age 15 and over was 4.9% (4.8% among the men and 5.1% among the women).
- The number of Christian students in primary and post-primary education is 28,400, constituting 1.9% of all active students. The vast majority (88.3%) of the Christian students are Arabs.
- **Over the years, the Christian Arabs have had the highest rates of success in the matriculation examinations**, both in comparison to the Muslims and the Druze and in comparison to all students in the Jewish education system. In the 2010 school year, 63% of the Christian 12<sup>th</sup> grade students earned a matriculation

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<sup>1</sup> The estimate is temporary and does not include the Christians among the foreign workers living in Israel.

<sup>2</sup> The median age is the age below which are half of those who marry and above which are the other half.

certificate compared with 46% of the Muslims, 55% of the Druze and 58% of the students in the Jewish education system.

- In the 2010 school year, 5,300 Christian students learned in Nazareth, constituting 1.8% of the total number of students in all the institutions of higher education in Israel.
- Among Christians Arab students studying toward a bachelor's degree, the main subject was law (11.4%) and after that were studies toward a bachelor's degree in the social sciences (9.3%).

### **Select data on Christian population (at the end of 2010):**

- As of Christmas Eve 2011, 154,500 Christians are living in Israel, constituting 2% of the population of the State of Israel.
- 80.4% of the Christians in Israel are Christian Arabs; the remainder are mainly Christians who immigrated to Israel with Jewish members of their families under the Law of Return (including their children who were born in Israel). Most of them arrived in the wave of immigration in the 1990s from the former Soviet Union.
- Most of the Christian Arabs live in the north of the country – 71.4% live in the northern district and 12.7% live in the Haifa district. 9.5% live in the Jerusalem district.
- The non-Arab Christians are spread throughout the various districts: 39% in the Tel Aviv district and the central district, about 34% in the northern district and in the Haifa district, another 14% in the southern district and 11.6% in the Jerusalem district.
- The towns with the largest Christian Arab populations are Nazareth (about 22,200), Haifa (13,800), Jerusalem (11,600) and Shfaram (9,300).
- The largest communities of non-Arab Christians are concentrated in the three large cities – Haifa (3,300), Jerusalem (3,000) and Tel Aviv (2,800).
- The composition of ages in the Christian population differs from that of the Muslim population, and is more similar to the composition of ages in the Jewish population. The percentage of young persons ages 0-19 is 30.4%, similar to that of the Jewish population (33.2%) and is lower than that of the Muslim population (49.7%). The percentage of persons 65 and older among all the Christians is 9.8% as of the end of 2010 (in comparison, the percentages are 11.6% among the Jews and 3.5% among the Muslims).
- The rate of growth of the entire Christian population is 0.9% (Christian Arabs –1% and other Christians – 0.7%) compared with 1.7% in the Jewish population and 2.7% in the Muslim population.

## Marriage and fertility

- 758 Christian couples were married in Israel in 2009, most of them Christian Arabs.
- The median age<sup>1</sup> of Christian bridegrooms in the first marriage in 2009 was 29.1, about a year and a half older than the Jewish bridegrooms, about two years older than the Druze bridegrooms and about three and a half years older than the Muslim bridegrooms.
- The median age for Christian brides marrying for the first time was 24.5 about a year younger than the age of Jewish brides, about three years older than the Druze brides and four years older than the Muslim brides.
- In 2010, 2,511 children<sup>3</sup> were born to Christian women, of whom 79% were Christian Arab women (1,985 children).
- This year, the number of children expected to be born to a Christian woman during her lifetime was 2.1 children per woman, which is now the lowest among the religious groups in the country. In comparison, a Muslim woman is expected to bear 3.8 children during her lifetime, a Jewish woman 3.0 children and a Druze woman 2.5 children.
- Among the 526 babies born to non-Arab Christian women, 10% were born to women who were born in Israel, about 40% were born to women who were born in the former Soviet Union, about 15% were born to women who were born in Ethiopia, about 8% were born to women who were born in the Philippines, 7% were born to women who were born in Romania, and the remainder were born to women from other countries.

## Households and families<sup>4</sup>

- In 2010, there were about 60,000 households in Israel headed by a Christian (of which 48,000 were households of Christian Arabs), which constituted about 3% of all households in Israel.

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<sup>3</sup> Living children.

<sup>4</sup> **Household** – Defined as one person or a group of persons who live together in one apartment on a permanent basis on most days of the week, who have a joint budget for food expenses. A household can include persons who are not related. A family household is a household that has at least one family. The data on households and families are based on a personnel survey for 2010. The data do not include those living in institutions, on kibbutzim, in student dormitories and those living outside the towns (Bedouin in the South and others).

**Family** – Defined as a nuclear family of two or more persons who share one household and are connected to one another as a husband and wife, as an unmarried couple, or as a parent and child. The main types of family are only a couple, a couple with children (in various age groups according to the youngest child) a single parent (single parent family) with children.

- The size of the average household was estimated at 3.5 persons, slightly higher than the Jewish household (3.1), but a great deal smaller than the households in the Muslim population of 5.0 persons.
- Since 1992, the size of the average Christian household has decreased from 4.2 to 3.5 persons. One of the causes contributing to this change is the addition of Christians who immigrated in the waves of immigration from the former Soviet Union, which began in the 1990s. This population is characterized by relatively small households.
- In 68% of the households headed by a Christian, the head of the household was a Christian Arab. The average size of these households is 3.7 persons.
- 85% (about 52,000) of the Christian households are “family” households, which encompass at least one family, compared with 95% among the Muslims and about 78% among the Jews.
- The non-family households, in which one person lives alone or in which a number of unrelated persons live, constitute about 15% of the Christian households. Among the Jewish households, the percentage of non-family households is 1.5 times higher at about 22%, while among the Muslim households, the percentage is only 5%.
- In Israel, about 53,000 Christian families, half of all the Christian families, are families of a couple with at least one child up to the age 17, a rate that is similar to the Jewish families (45%) and compared with 71% of the Muslim families.
- About 18% of the Christian families are composed of a couple without children and about 9% of the families are single parent families with children, the eldest of which is up to age 17.
- The average number of children up to age 17 in Christian families with children up to that age is 2.2, similar to the Jewish families (2.3) and lower than the Muslims (3.1).

## Employment

- **The percentage of participation in the civilian workforce** among Christians age 15 and over was 58.0% (64.2% among the men and 52.0% among the women). This percentage among Christian Arabs was 52.4% (62.1% among the men and 42.7% among the women). In comparison, **The percentage of participation in the civilian workforce among Jews** age 15 and over in 2010 was 60.6% (62.4% among the Jewish men and 58.8% among the Jewish women).
- **The rate of employment** (The rate of employed persons out of all those age 15 and over) among Christians age 15 and over was 55.1% (61.2% among the men

and 49.4% among the women). The rate of employment among **Christian Arabs** was 50.1% (59.3% among the men and 41.0% among the women).

- **The percentage of unemployment among Christians** age 15 and over was 4.9% (4.8% among the men and 5.1% among the women). This percentage among **Christian Arabs** was 4.3% (4.5% among the men and 4.0% among the women). In comparison, **the rate of unemployment among Jews** age 15 over was 6.5% (6.6% among the men and 6.3% among the women).
- **The housing density** in Christian households was 1.09 persons per room (1.16 persons per room in Christian Arab households). **In comparison**, the housing density in Jewish households was 0.83 persons per room.
- In 48,300 Christian households, there was at least one employed person (in 19,400 households there was only one employed person and in 28,900 households there were two or more employed persons). In 31,500 Christian Arab households, there was at least one employed person (in 12,800 households there was only one employed person and in 18,700 households there were two or more employed persons).

## **Education – Christian students**

### **Elementary and post-elementary students - 2010-2011**

- The number of Christian students in primary and post primary education is 28,400, constituting 1.9% of all active students. The vast majority (88.3%) of Christian students are Arabs.
- About 2,300 Christian students began first grade in the 2011 school year, constituting 1.6% of all first grade students.
- Among the Christian high school students, 59.8% are studying in the theoretical track, a similar rate to that of the Muslim high school students (58.1%) and lower than that of the Jewish high school students (68%).

### **Achievements in the matriculation examinations**

- **Over the years, the Christian Arabs have had the highest rates of success in the matriculation examinations**, both in comparison to the Muslims and the Druze and in comparison to all students in the Jewish education system. In the 2010 school year, 63% of the Christian 12<sup>th</sup> grade students earned a matriculation certificate compared with 46% of the Muslims, 55% of the Druze and 58% of the students in the Jewish education system.
- The Christian Arabs also had higher rates of accessibility to higher education than the other groups: in 2010, 56% of the Christian Arabs compared with 49% of students in the Jewish education system, 39% of the Druze and 33% of the Muslims earned matriculation certificates that meet the admission requirements

for the universities and were potential candidates for continuing their studies in institutions of higher education.

### **Higher education and science**

#### **Christian students – 2009-2010**

- In the 2010 school year, there were 5,300 Christian students, constituting 1.8% of all students in the institutions of higher education in Israel.
- Among the Christian students, 92.3% were Arabs (4,900 students) and 7.7% were new immigrants who arrived under the Law of Return (400 students).
- Among all the Christian students, 82.7% were studying toward a **bachelor's degree**, 14.9% were studying toward a **master's degree** and 2.4% were studying toward a **doctorate**.
- The Christian students constituted 2.0% of all the students studying toward a bachelor's degree, 1.6% of all the students studying toward a master's degree and 1.2% of all students studying toward a doctorate.
- 54.5% of all the Christian students were studying in **universities**, 11% were studying in the **Open University**, 21.8% were studying in **academic colleges**, and 12.7% were studying in **academic colleges of education**.
- The Christian students constituted 2.4% of all the students in the universities, and also in the academic colleges of education. The relative percentage of the Christian students among all students studying in the Open University and in the academic colleges was 1.3%.
- 6.4% of the students studying at the **University of Haifa** were Christians (of whom 6.2% are Arabs). At the Technion, the rate of Christian students was 5.0% (of whom 4.7% are Arabs). In comparison, 0.4% of the students studying at Ben Gurion University were Christians.
- Among the academic colleges, it was found that 12.7% of the students studying at the **Carmel Academic Center** were Christians. At the Safed Academic Center, 7.6% were Christians. In three other academic colleges, it was found that the relative percentage of Christian students ranged between 4% and 6%. In comparison, in 10 academic colleges, the rate of Christian students was less than half a percent.
- The Christian students constituted 14.7% of the students studying at the **Academic Arab College of Education**. At the Sakhnin College for Teacher Education the relative rate of Christians was 9.4%. Additionally, in three academic colleges of education, it was found that the relative percentage of Christian students ranges between 5.0% and 6.0%. In comparison, in 11 academic colleges of education, the rate of Christian students was less than 0.2%.

- 4.4% of the entire student population studying toward a bachelors degree in Israel are studying in the field of paramedical professions, compared with 10.1% among the Christian Arab students studying in that field. The rate of students studying in the field of medicine was also higher among the Christian Arab students, compared with all the students (2.5% compared with 0.8% respectively). In contrast, 17.1% of the student population studying toward a bachelor's degree in Israel are studying in the field of engineering and architecture, while 12.8% of the Christian Arab students are studying that field. Two other fields with similar disparities are business and management (11.3% of all the students compared with 6.5% of the Christian Arab students) and particularly agriculture (0.4% compared with 0.1% respectively).
- Among Christians Arab students studying toward a bachelor's degree, the main subject was law (11.4%) and after that were studies toward a bachelor's degree in the social sciences (9.3%), nursing (4.8%), economics (4.5%), business administration (3.7%), computer science (3.7%), general studies in the humanities (3.5%), electrical engineering (2.7%) and English language and literature (2.5%).
- The median age of Christian Arab students studying toward a bachelor's degree is 22.3, compared with 25.3 among all the students studying toward a bachelor's degree. Among the Christian Arab students studying toward a master's degree, the median age was 27.9, compared with the median age of all the students studying toward the same degree, which was 30.4. Among all the students studying toward a doctorate, the median age was 33.4, compared with 32.8 among Christian Arab students studying toward the same degree.
- Among the Christian Arab students studying toward a bachelor's degree, the women constituted 63.0% compared with 55.9% among all the students studying toward a bachelor's degree. 67.9% of the Christian Arab students studying toward a master's degree were women compared with 57.9% among all the students studying toward that degree. Among the Christian Arab students studying toward a doctorate, the relative percentage of women was 53.8% compared with 52.7% among all the students studying toward that degree.