

President of PCBS announces 2007 West Bank Census final results

Key changes in size, structure, growth rate, and type of housing of Palestinian households in the West Bank between the 1997 Census and the 2007 Census

Dr. Luay Shabaneh, President of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and National Director of Census announced on Monday, September 1, 2008 the final results of the Census in the West Bank. According to Dr. Shabaneh, the final results indicate that the total population count of the West Bank in the Second Census (2007) was 2,350,583 people, including 1,193,244 males and 1,157,339 females compared to the final results of the first Census of 1997, which showed that the West Bank population totaled 1,873,476 people (951,693 males and 921,783 females).

The President of PCBS also indicated that the Population, Housing, and Establishment Census 2007 was the second Palestinian census to be executed upon an independent Palestinian decision. The census was one of the largest statistical activities to be carried out in order to provide necessary data for designing and implementing economic and social development. The census was also one of the key elements of the official statistics system; therefore, its success required employing diligent work by all social categories and private and government institutions through giving the support that meets the requirements of the national team who planned and implemented the census activities.

Sex ratio

Dr. Shabaneh pointed out that the sex ratio in the West Bank between the two censuses of 1997 and 2007 had been balanced though it slightly declined from 103.2 to 103.1 males/100 females. The annual growth rate between the two censuses totaled 2.6%, this excluded the part of Jerusalem, which Israel forcefully annexed after occupying the West Bank in 1967. If the growth rate remained stable during the coming years, the West Bank population would multiply in 27 years, said Dr. Shabaneh. This canceled out previous PCBS estimates, which stated that the West Bank population would need 23 years to multiply. This was due to two main reasons: Decrease in fertility rates and assuming a positive net migration rate that had not taken place.

Households number

PCBS President also added that the Census final results showed that the number of West Bank households in 2007 numbered 427,097. The average size of a West Bank household was 5.5 people. On the other hand, the 1997 Census final results showed that the West Bank households numbers 307,624. Noticeably, there had been a decrease in the household average size between the two censuses from 6.1 in 1997 to 5.5 in 2007. This indicated a decline in fertility rate and a tendency towards nuclear family instead of extended family, according to Dr. Shabaneh.

The final results also showed that the percentage of nuclear family in the West Bank in 2007 reached 83.2% compared to 74.0% in 1997. On the other hand, the percentage of the extended family in the West Bank decreased from 21.7% in 1997 to 12.4% in 2007, which substantiated the prevalent tendency to increase the percentage of nuclear family instead of extended family. Moreover, there was a little increase in the percentage of Palestinian households of one person from 3.8% in 1997 to 4.2% in 2007. The other families were compound families; however, they had a tiny percentage of 0.2% in 2007 compared to 0.6% in 1997.

Age structure

Dr. Shabaneh stated that the final results showed that the Palestinian community in the West Bank was still young since the past ten years had witnessed a 3.8% decrease in the percentage of children aged 0-14 years (from 45.1% in 1997 to 41.3% in 2007). On the other hand, the percentage of working age population (15-64 years) had noticeably increased from 51.1% in 1997 to 55.3% in 2007 (an increase of 4.2%). In any case, the Palestinian society, in comparison with other societies, was still young; however, the percentage of young people was decreasing with time due to a decrease in fertility rate, which totaled 4.6 in 2007 in the West Bank compared to 5.6 in 1997.

PCBS President explained that the decrease in the percentage of the population aged less than 15 years meant an increase in the percentage of people ready to join the labor force. The age dependency ratio decreased from 95.6 in 1997 to 80.9 in 2007. This was due to a decrease in the total fertility rates, which led to a decrease in the percentage of people aged less than 15 years and the tendency towards nuclear family.

The percentage of the population aged 65 and over reached 3.4% in the West Bank in 2007 compared to 3.8% in 1997 (in the West Bank). Noticeably, there was a slight decrease in the percentage of elderly people. This is contrary to demographic expectations, which say that a decline in fertility rate means an increase in the percentage of elderly people. This means that the demographic transformation, which is reflected in the increase of the population in the age group of 15-64, has not affected the elderly people yet.

Disability

A comparison between the two censuses in this regard cannot be held due to variations in concepts and methodologies; however, it is possible to say that the percentage of people with at least one disability is 5.3% compared to 1.9% in the 1997 Census. The distribution of individuals with disability is as follows: 60,041 people or 2.9% have seeing difficulty; 28,658 people or 1.4% have hearing difficulty; 42,181 people or 2.1% have movement difficulty; 4,781 people or 0.7% have difficulties in cognition & understanding; and 14,959 people or 0.7% have difficulties in communication.

Education and illiteracy

According to Dr. Shabaneh, the final results showed that the percentage of school attendance for those aged 5 years and over had risen from 37.7% in 1997 to 42.7% of the total Palestinian population aged 5 and over in 2007. The final results also indicated that the number of the illiterate population aged 10 and over in the West Bank was 5.8% of the total population of the same age group in the West Bank compared to 11.8% in 1997. There is also a decrease in the percentage of people who can read and write only from 17.0% in 1997 to 13.3% in 2007. This was accompanied by an obvious increase in the percentage of people with secondary education and below from 61.9% in 1997 to 69.1 in 2007. The other levels have not changed in a noticeable way.

The refugees

The final results show that the percentage of Palestinian refugees in the West Bank in 2007 is 28.1% compared to 26.6% in 1997. The increase in the percentage of the refugee population could be due to an increase in the fertility rates among the refugees in refugee camps or due to lack of migration among this part of the population.

Participation in the labor force

Economic participation of the population aged 10 years and over in the labor force decreased from 37.7% in 1997 to 33.6% in 2007 due to the economic situations resulting from Israeli procedures and the difficulties in joining the Palestinian labor market during the Al Aqsa intifada. The percentage of people involved in elementary occupations, which occupied first place in 1997 census, decreased to 20.1%. The percentage of people involved in crafts and related workers stabilized at 24.0% for both censuses and occupied the first place in the 2007 census. The percentage of skilled agricultural workers in the West Bank decreased from 7.0% to 3.7%.

Marital status

Dr. Shabaneh stated that the percentage of married people in the West Bank in 2007 was 51.5% compared to 56.5% in 1997. Additionally, the percentage of married males in 1997 was 52.5% compared to 50.3% in 2007. The percentage of married females in 1997 was 55.2% compared to 52.7% in 2007. This indicates a decrease in marriage rates in the West Bank, which could be due to Israeli measures during the Intifada and the resulting economic impacts.

Divorce rates, on the other hand, had not changed between the two censuses and remained 0.6%. The median age at first marriage among people aged 12 and over has increased from 18 years for females in 1997 to 19 years in 2007. Conversely, The median age at first marriage among males had not changed and remained 24 years.

Housing conditions

The average number of individuals in a room between the two censuses decreased from 1.9 individuals per room in 1997 to 1.55 in 2007. This shows an increase in individual's share in rooms, which is due to the decrease in the average number of individuals in a household and increase in the average number of rooms in a housing unit.

Dr. Shabaneh stated that the comparison of the types of occupied housing units between the two censuses showed that the percentage of apartments had increased from 44.5% in 1997 to 53.3% in 2007. On the other hand, the traditional house percentage had decreased from 52.2% in 1997 to 43.2% in 2007, which was in line with the urban tendency and family structure tendency towards nuclear family. The percentage of villas slightly rose from 0.9% in 1997 to 1.7% in 2007.

The percentage of the occupied housing units connected to the electricity network increased from 94.1% in 1997 to 98.4% in 2007. Moreover, the percentage of the occupied housing units connected to public sewers rose from 24.4% in 1997 to 35.8% in 2007. No major changes occurred to connection to public water network since it only increased from 79.1% in 1997 to 81.4% in 2007.