



Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)

Press Release by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) on the occasion of International Literacy Day on 08/09/2021

The illiteracy rate in Palestine is one of the lowest rates in the world

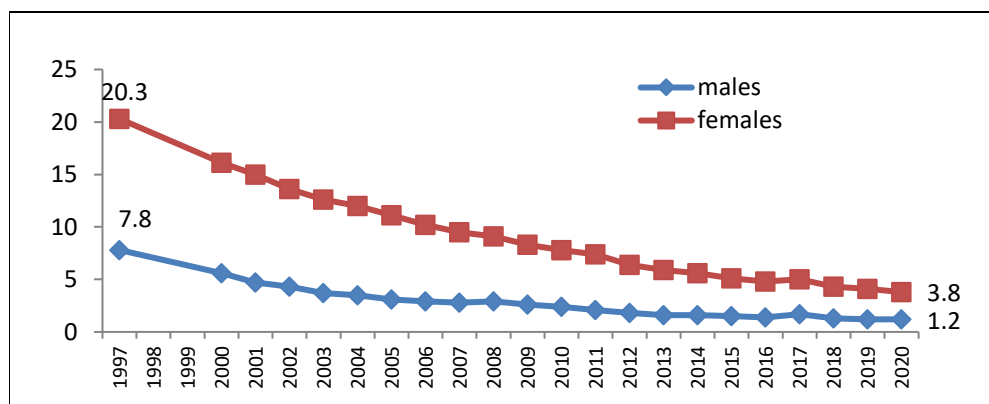
According to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), an illiterate person applies to persons unable to read and write with understanding a simple statement related to one's daily life. This rate reached 2.5% among Palestinian population (15 years and above) during 2020.

According to UNESCO's Institute for Statistics, the illiteracy rate among persons (aged 15 years and above) in *Western Asia and Northern Africa* was 19.7% in 2019; 14.3% among males, compared to 25.4% among females. In the same year, the rate was 13.5% in the world among the same age group; 10.7% among males compared to 17.0% among females.

The illiteracy rates decreased by 82% throughout the last two decades

Illiteracy rates among the Palestinian population (aged 15 years and above) in Palestine dropped during the period 1997-2019 from 13.9% to 2.5%. Which is a decline from 7.8% in 1997 to 1.2% in 2020 among males, and decline from 20.3% to 3.8% among females during the same period.

Illiteracy rates for persons (aged 15 years and above) in Palestine by sex for the years 1997, 2000-2020



According to the region, the illiteracy rate decreased from 14.1% in 1997 to 2.8% in 2020 in the West Bank, while it decreased from 13.7% in 1997 to 2.0% in 2020 in Gaza Strip.

The illiteracy rate and the number of illiterate (15 years and above) by region and sex, 2020

Region	Both Sexes		Males		Females	
	Rate	Number (thousands)	Rate	Number (thousands)	Rate	Number (thousands)
Palestine	2.5	78.4	1.2	19.3	3.8	59.1
West Bank	2.8	53.8	1.3	13.1	4.2	40.7
Gaza Strip	2.0	24.6	1.0	6.1	3.1	18.4



More than half of illiterate persons are elderly

The illiteracy rate varies considerably between age groups. The age group (65 years and above) recorded the highest rate, while the lowest rate was among the age group (30-44 years). In 2020, the illiteracy rate among older persons 65 years and above reached about 25.5% (43.1 thousand illiterate persons). The rate was about 2.5% (15.8 thousand illiterate persons) among the age group 45-64 year, 0.9% (8.3 thousand illiterate persons) among the age group 30-44 year and 0.8% (11.2 thousand illiterate persons) among youth 15-29 years for the same year. It's worth mentioning that the illiteracy rate among women aged 15-24 year was 0.3% (Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey PMICS6 2019-2020).

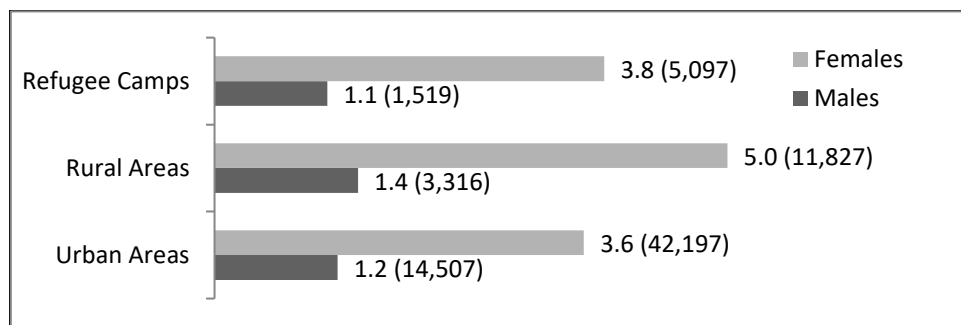
Percentage distribution and number of illiterate persons (15 years and above) by age group and sex, 2020

Age group (years)	Both Sexes		Males		Females	
	Percentage (%)	Number (thousands)	Percentage (%)	Number (thousands)	Percentage (%)	Number (thousands)
15-29	14.4	11.2	26.3	5.1	10.4	6.2
30-44	10.6	8.3	20.0	3.8	7.5	4.4
45-64	20.1	15.8	19.9	3.9	20.2	11.9
65 years and	54.9	43.1	33.8	6.5	61.9	36.6
Total	100.0	78.4	100.0	19.3	100.0	59.1

72% of illiterate persons live in urban areas

In 2020, the illiteracy rate reached 3.2% in rural localities (15.1 thousand illiterate persons), 2.5% in refugee camps (6.6 thousand illiterate persons) and 2.4% (56.7 thousand illiterate persons) in urban areas.

Illiteracy rate and number of illiterate persons (aged 15 years and above) by locality type and sex, 2020



81 literacy centers in Palestine

Data from the Ministry of Education showed that the number of literacy centers in Palestine for the scholastic year 2019/2020 was 81 centers; 56 centers in the West Bank and 25 centers in the Gaza Strip. The total number of students enrolled in such centers was 1,247, including 695 males and 552 females.

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