

The Palestine Strategic Report 2020 – 2021



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Chapter Two

Palestinian Demographic and Economic Indicators

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Palestinian Demographic and Economic Indicators

Introduction

Seventy-four years have passed since the *Nakbah* and the displacements of the 1948 war, and the Palestinian people, at home and abroad, are still patiently insisting on their right to their land and holy sites and continuing with their endeavors to liberate and return to their land.

This chapter attempts to present general statistics concerning the Palestinian people at home and abroad. However, this process faces real difficulties, due to the fact that about half of the Palestinian people are under occupation and siege in their historical land, while the other half are refugees and displaced in various parts of the world. Nevertheless, through academic methods, available information and data were used to reach the most accurate results possible.

The second part of this chapter presents a study of the economic situation in WB and GS, where a reasonable amount of information and data is available, particularly from the PA's official institutions.

First: Demographic Indicators

1. The Palestinian Population Worldwide

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) available figures indicate that the number of Palestinians worldwide reached 14 million in 2021 compared to 13.68 million in 2020, an increase of 2.3% (see table 1/2).

Based on 2021 estimates, Palestinians in historic Palestine are estimated at 6.965 million, constituting 49.8% of Palestinians worldwide. Palestinians in the 1967 occupied territories are estimated at 5.291 million and constitute 37.8% of Palestinians worldwide, while Palestinians in territories occupied in 1948 (Israel) are estimated at 1.674 million, constituting around 12% of Palestinians worldwide (see table 1/2).



Palestinians in the Diaspora were estimated at 7.037 million at the end of 2021, comprising 50.2% of Palestinians worldwide. According to data available to al-Zaytouna Centre researchers, the Palestinians in Jordan (most of whom are holders of Jordanian nationality) are estimated at 4.493 million, representing 32.1% of Palestinians worldwide (about 63.8% of Palestinian Diaspora). As for other Arab countries, the number of Palestinians is estimated at 1.795 million, 12.8% of Palestinians worldwide, mostly living in neighboring Arab countries: Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and the Gulf countries (see table 1/2).

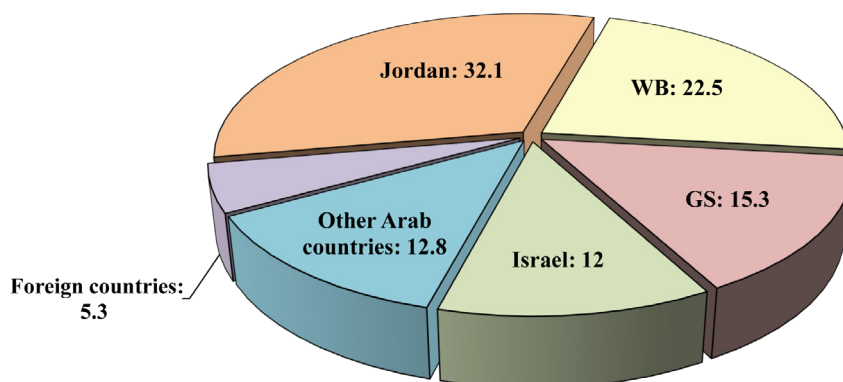
Table 1/2: Palestinian Population Worldwide Estimate by Place of Residence at the End of 2020 and 2021 (thousands)¹

Place of residence		2020		2021	
		Population estimates	Percentage (%)	Population estimates	Percentage (%)
Palestinian territories occupied in 1967	WB	3,086.8	22.6	3,154.4	22.5
	GS	2,077.4	15.2	2,136.5	15.3
Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)*		1,634.5	11.9	1,673.6	12
Palestinians in historic Palestine		6,798.7	49.7	6,964.5	49.8
Jordan**		4,388	32.1	4,493	32.1
Other Arab countries		1,757.2	12.8	1,794.6	12.8
Foreign countries		738.4	5.4	749.4	5.3
Palestinians in diaspora		6,883.4	50.3	7,037	50.2
Total		13,682	100	14,001.6	100

* For the Palestinian population in the 1948 occupied territories, the number excludes the Palestinians in the 1967 occupied territories including the Jerusalem governorate, Arab Syrians and Lebanese, non-Arab Christians and those classified as "Others." Israeli statistics publish figures different from PCBS figures, and show that the number of Arab Palestinians in the 1948 occupied territories reached about 1.995 million in 2021, and if we deduct the 370 thousand East Jerusalem citizens and the number of citizens in the Golan Heights which is around 25 thousand, the number becomes about 1.6 million.

** The number of Palestinians in Jordan is based on 2009 PCBS statistics reaching 3,240,473, and on the annual growth rates between 2009–2020, issued by the Jordanian Department of Statistics, Population and Housing, Demographic Statistics, ranging between 3.1% and 2.3%.
<http://dosweb.dos.gov.jo>

Palestinian Population Worldwide Estimate by Place of Residence at the End of 2021 (%)



According to PCBS, the Palestinians in foreign countries are estimated at 749 thousand, 5.3% of Palestinians worldwide, most of them are living in the US, Latin America, Canada, United Kingdom (UK), and the rest of the European Union (EU).

It should be noted that these estimates are not updated, and may not be accurate. For if we consider the number of Palestinians who left Arab countries in the past three decades (countries surrounding Israel, the Gulf countries and Libya), and from Palestine itself to the rest of the countries, the previous estimates of Palestinians worldwide have many discrepancies. For example, some estimates consider the number of Palestinian in South America more than 600 thousand, of whom at least 300 thousand are in Chile; While the number of Palestinians in Europe is not less than 350–400 thousand, and the Palestinians of North America are about 300–350 thousand, and in the rest of the countries they are not less than 100 thousand. According to these estimates, the number of Palestinians worldwide (excluding Palestine and the Arab world) is about one million more than the estimates of the PCBS. Perhaps researchers and specialists have a difficult, but necessary, task to have more accurate estimates.

At the end of 2020, according to PCBS statistics, Palestinians worldwide reached 13.682 million, of whom 5.164 million were living in WB and GS, and around 1.635 million in the territories occupied in 1948 (Israel), compared to 6.883 million living abroad; 4.388 million in Jordan, 1.757 million in other Arab countries and 738 thousand in foreign countries (see table 1/2).



2. The Demographic Characteristics of the Palestinians

a. The WB and GS

At the end of 2021, the number of Palestinians in WB and GS was estimated at 5.29 million, of whom about 3.15 million lived in WB (59.6%) and 2.14 million (40.4%) in GS. This means that the annual growth rate reached 2.5%, given that the number of Palestinians in WB and GS was 5.16 million at the end of 2020.

As for population count by governorate for the year 2021, Hebron has the largest population (792,200 or 15% of the WB and GS population), followed by the Gaza Governorate with 722,350 or 13.7% of the WB and GS population, then the Jerusalem Governorate with a population of 476,949 or 9% of the WB and GS population. As for the Jericho and Rift Valley Governorate, it is the least populated with 1% of the WB and GS population. Table 2/2 shows the estimated population count in the WB and GS governorates based on PCBS estimates:

Table 2/2: Estimated Population Count in WB and GS by Governorate 2020–2021 (thousands)²

Governorate	2020		2021	
	Estimates	Percentage (%)	Estimates	Percentage (%)
WB	3,086.8	59.8	3,154.4	59.6
Jenin	335.5	6.5	342.4	6.5
Tubas and Northern Rift Valley	65.2	1.3	66.6	1.2
Tulkarem	197.1	3.8	200.6	3.8
Nablus	411.7	8	419.6	7.9
Qalqilya	120.4	2.3	123	2.3
Salfit	81.2	1.6	83.1	1.6
Ramallah and al-Bireh	351.5	6.8	358.9	6.8
Jericho and Rift Valley	52.8	1	53.8	1
Jerusalem	466.7	9	476.9	9
Bethlehem	232.3	4.5	237.3	4.5
Hebron	772.4	15	792.2	15
GS	2,077.4	40.2	2,136.5	40.4
North Gaza	410.2	7.9	423.7	8
Gaza	704.7	13.6	722.3	13.7
Dayr al-Balah	298.4	5.8	306.7	5.8
Khan Yunis	407.7	7.9	419.9	7.9
Rafah	256.4	5	263.9	5
Total (WB & GS)	5,164.2	100	5,290.9	100

The Palestinian community in WB and GS is young with more than a third of its individuals (38%) aged under 15, with a stark difference between WB and GS, reaching 35.8% in the former and 41.1% in the latter. Statistics indicate that the median age (the age dividing the population into two numerically equal groups, i.e., half of the population is below that age and half is older) in the WB and GS has increased throughout 2000–2021 from 16.4 years to 21 years. Comparing the data of the WB and GS separately over the same period shows that the median age in WB increased from 17.4 years in 2000 to 22.1 years in 2021, while in GS it increased from 14.9 years in 2000 to 19.3 in 2021.³

Although the median age is lower in GS than WB, it increased over 2000–2019 by 29.5% in GS compared to 27% in WB.⁴

As for the elderly (65 years and over), they constitute a small percentage of the total population, estimated at 3.3%, with 3.7% in WB and 2.8% in GS in 2021. Here again, it is noted that the Palestinian community in GS is younger than that in WB.⁵

In 2020, 21% of households were headed by an elderly person (60 years and over), 23% in WB and 17% in GS. Also, the average size of households headed by an elderly person was usually relatively small reaching 3.4 individuals (3.1 in WB and 4.3 in GS) compared with 5.5 individuals for households headed by a non-elderly person.⁶

As for the COVID-19 impact on elderly, about 78% of deaths are among the elderly (60 years and above), and the percentage of the elderly infected reached 6% of the total number in WB and GS, by the end of 25/9/2021.⁷

Educational status data for the year 2020 showed that 34% of the elderly (60 years and over) in WB and GS did not complete any educational stage (20% males and 47% females), while the elderly who completed diploma degrees and higher did not exceed 15%. Notably, 26% of the total population aged 18 years and above obtained diploma and higher (24% males and 28% females).⁸

As for the distribution of population by sex, the number of males at the end of 2021 in WB and GS reached 2.69 million compared to 2.6 million females with a sex ratio 103.4 males per 100 females. In the GS, the number of males reached 1.08 million males compared to 1.05 million females with a sex ratio of 102.7, while the number of males in the WB reached 1.61 million compared to 1.55 million females with a sex ratio of 103.8.⁹



Data shows that the dependency rate (number of dependent persons per 100 individuals of working age, 15–64 years) in WB and GS decreased from 100.6 in 2000 to 69.9 in 2021. Remarkably, there is a big difference in dependency rate for WB and GS, where it decreased in WB from 94.3 in 2000 to 64.9 in 2021, while in GS it decreased from 112.8 in 2000 to 77.8 in 2021.¹⁰ Also, 2020 data shows that 11% of households are headed by females in WB and GS, with 12% in WB and 9% in GS.¹¹

As for Life expectancy, it has increased in WB and GS, from 70.7 years in 2000 to 73.1 years in 2021 for males, and from 72.2 years in 2000 to 75.3 years in 2021 for females. In GS, life expectancy was 73.8 years (72.7 years for males and 74.9 years for females), while in WB, it reached 74.5 years (73.4 years for males and 75.7 years for females) in 2021. The higher life expectancy is mainly due to improved health care, and lower infant mortality rates (see table 3/2).

Available data indicates a decline in Crude Death Rate (CDR) in WB and GS, where it decreased from 4.5 deaths per thousand population in 2000 to 3.7 deaths per thousand population in 2021. A slight difference is noted regarding the CDR between the WB and GS, where in 2021 it reached 3.9 deaths per thousand population in WB compared to 3.4 deaths per thousand population in the GS (see table 3/2).

Natural population growth (the difference between birth and death rates) in the WB and GS decreased from 3.6% in 2000 to 2.4% in 2021. In GS, the natural population growth rate decreased to 2.8% compared to a 2.2% decrease in WB (see table 3/2).

There are indications that the fertility rate of Palestinian women has decreased, especially since last decade of the twentieth century, although it remains in the short and medium term higher than its Jewish counterpart. Based on the results of the Palestinian Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (PMICS) 2019–2020, the total fertility rate in the WB and GS has decreased, where there were 3.8 births per woman during 2017–2019 compared to 5.9 in 1999. Comparing WB with GS shows slight difference in fertility rate at the same period; where in GS there were 3.9 births per woman compared to 3.8 births during 2017–2019. This rate was higher in GS compared to WB in 1999, where it reached 5.8 births in GS compared to 4.1 births in WB.¹²

In 2020 reveals a decline in the average household size in WB and GS compared to 2010, where it decreased from 5.5 persons in 2010 to 5.1 in 2020. The average household size in WB declined from 5.2 persons in 2010 to 4.7 in 2020, and in GS from 6.4 persons to 5.7 at the same period (see table 3/2).

In addition to the decline in the average household size, a decrease is also observed in the Crude Birth Rate (CBR) in WB and GS, as it deteriorated from 40.9 births per thousand in 2000 to 29.5 in 2021. An obvious difference is noted regarding the CBR rate between WB and GS; in WB, it was estimated at 27.2 births per thousand compared to 32.9 in GS in 2021 (see table 3/2).

As for housing density (persons per room), in 2019, it was high in GS compared to WB, where it was 1.6 persons/room in GS compared to 1.3 in WB, while the total average housing density in GS and WB was 1.4 persons/room. The percentage of Palestinian households in which a family member owned a housing unit was approximately 87.7%, with 87.3% in WB and 88.4% in GS.¹³

Available data shows that 39.5% of households in WB and GS, in 2019, use safe drinking water, with 66.2% in WB and only 4.3% in GS.¹⁴ This triggers concerns regarding the health of Palestinians, particularly in GS.

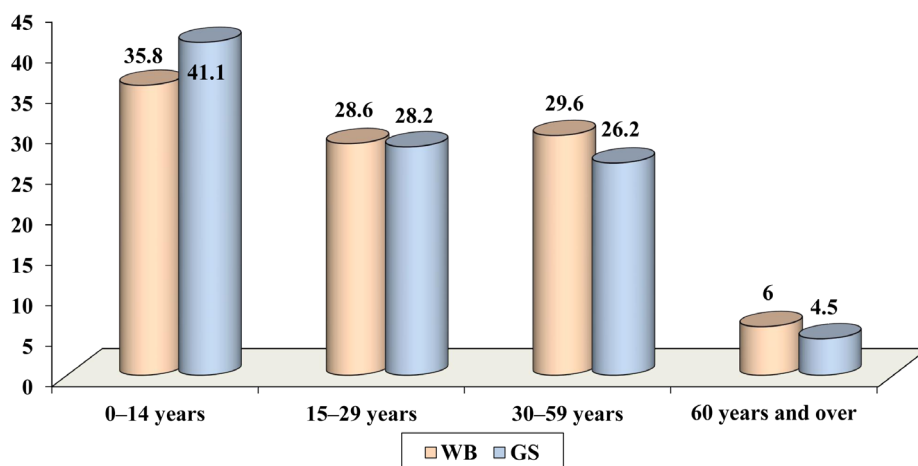
The registered marriages in 2020 indicate a decline in the number of marriage contracts compared to 2019, as they decreased from 44,320 in 2019 to 41,221 in 2020. The general marriage rate decreased to 8.1 marriages per thousand in 2020 (6.7 cases in WB and 10.1 cases in GS) compared to 10 marriages per thousand in 2017.¹⁵

As for the characteristics of the population related to education, the 2020 data revealed that 21.7% of the population (15 years and above) in WB and GS have completed high school. The illiteracy rate for individuals aged 15 years and over is 2.5%. This rate is among the lowest rates in the world, where illiteracy rates for individuals aged 15 years and above reached 19.7% in the countries of West Asia and North Africa, according to the data of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics in 2019. It is noted that the illiteracy rate has decreased among females and males, although the female illiteracy rate remained higher when compared with males, reaching 3.8% for females and 1.2% for males in 2020, compared to 20.3% for females and 7.8% for males in 1997. This represents a significant decline over 20 years, especially among females. As for the illiteracy rate among the Palestinians aged 15 and above, it was 2.8% in WB compared to 2% in GS in 2020.¹⁶



Table 3/2: Selected Demographic Indicators of Palestinians in WB and GS¹⁷

Indicator		WB	GS	WB & GS
Population density (persons/ km2) (mid 2021)		551	5,773	868
Population growth (2021)		2.2	2.8	2.4
Average family size (2020)		4.7	5.7	5.1
Life expectancy at birth (males) (years) (2021)		73.4	72.7	73.1
Life expectancy at birth (females) (years) (2021)		75.57	74.79	75.3
CBR (births per thousand population) (2021)		27.2	32.9	29.5
CDR (deaths per thousand population) (2021)		3.9	3.4	3.7
Infant mortality rate (deaths per thousand live births) (2015–2019)		11.7	12.7	12.1
Average number of rooms in the housing unit (2019)		3.6	3.6	3.6
Age structure (%) (mid 2021)	0–14 years	35.8	41.1	38
	15–29 years	28.6	28.2	28.4
	30–59 years	29.6	26.2	28.3
	60 years and over	6	4.5	5.3
Average housing density (persons/ room) (2019)		1.3	1.6	1.4

Age Structure in WB and GS mid 2021 (%)

b. The Palestinian Territories Occupied in 1948 (Israel)

PCBS has indicated that Palestinians living in Israel at the end of 2021 were estimated at 1.67 million compared to 1.63 million in 2020. Available data shows that they are a young community, where individuals aged under 15 represent 32% of males and 31% of females, while those aged 65 years and over amounted to 4.6% of males and 5.6% of females (see table 4/2).

Available estimates for 2020 indicate that the fertility rate for Palestinians residing in Israel was 2.8 births per woman, almost equal to the fertility of Jewish women, noting that the fertility of religious Jews women is 7 births. As for the average Palestinian household size, it was 4.4 persons. The CBR and CDR reached 21.9 births and 3.3 deaths per thousand respectively, while infant mortality rate was 5 deaths per thousand live births. Notably, these figures exclude Arab citizens in the Syrian Golan Heights, citizens in J1 of the Jerusalem governorate, as well as, Lebanese Arabs who have moved to live temporarily in Israel, for it considers all these within its population and as part of the Arab population as a whole (see table 4/2).

A study on the high rate of murders in the 1948 occupied territories indicated an unprecedented increase in the rate of murder among Arab Palestinians in the 1948 occupied territories. The year 2020 witnessed the murder of 111 Arab Palestinians, an increase of 23.3% compared to 2019.¹⁸ The Abraham Initiatives, which monitors and campaigns against violence in the Arab community revealed that the “killing brings the number of Arabs killed in Israel in 2021 as a result of violence and crime to 126.”¹⁹

According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) data at the end of 2020 (which also include East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights), Muslims in the 1948 occupied territories counted for 1.671 million comprising 85.4% of the population, while Druze counted for 146.8 thousand and Christians 137.6 thousand comprising 7.5% and 7% respectively.²⁰

c. Jordan

Palestinians living in Jordan at the end of 2021 were estimated at 4.5 million from 4.39 million at the end of 2020, most of whom hold Jordanian citizenship (Jordanian citizens of Palestinian descent) (see table 1/2).



According to the Jordanian Department of Statistics, annual population growth was 2.4% in 2020, a percentage that included Jordanian citizens of Palestinian descent as well. Statistics also reveal that in 2017–2018, the total fertility rate in Jordan was 2.7 children per woman, the infant mortality was 17 deaths per thousand live births, and the under-5 mortality rate is 19 deaths per thousand live births. These statistics include all Jordanians.²¹ Jordanian citizens of Palestinian descent most likely have the same rates.

According to a study by FAFO Foundation regarding the living conditions in Palestinian refugee camps (RCs) in Jordan in 2011, 39.9% of RC residents were under 15 years old, while those aged 65 and above comprised 4.3%. The average household size was 5.1 persons per household.²² It's worth noting that there are no documented scientific updates of these information at the time of writing this report.

According to UNRWA, there were 2,463,130 Registered Persons (RPs) in Jordan as of 31/12/2020 compared to 2,376,481 RPs in February 2019.²³

d. Syria

According to UNRWA figures, the total RPs in Syria was 655,729 as of 31/12/2020 compared to 643,142 in February 2019. It is worth noting that these are estimated figures due to the unstable situation of Syria.²⁴

Although the Palestinian gatherings in Syria were among the most stable, yet, the events that erupted since 2011 have had a tremendous impact on them. The 2020 estimates indicate that out of 656 thousand, about 200 thousand were forced to leave Syria. More than 120 thousand immigrated to Europe, about 10 thousand moved to Turkey, and tens of thousands left to Lebanon; where a number of them resided temporarily in order to arrange their immigration, some of them returned to Syria, while about 25 thousand remained in Lebanon.

Moreover, about 40% of those who remained in Syria were internally displaced (more than 180 thousand) after their RCs were destroyed, especially the following camps: al-Yarmouk, Dera'a, Handarat, and Khan al-Shiekh. They live in a tragic state where they suffer from unemployment, poverty and instability, threatening them with more misery. The Commissioner-General of UNRWA Philippe Lazzarini revealed that over 90% of the Palestinian refugees in Syria live below the poverty line.²⁵ UNRWA also announced in a statement in March 2021 that,

“ten years after demonstrations started in Syria, over half of the Palestine refugees in the country have been displaced at least once because of the brutal conflict that ensued, including 120 thousand who have sought safety in neighbouring countries, mainly Lebanon and Jordan, and beyond.” The agency adds that “since the start of the conflict, many UNRWA installations inside Syria, such as schools and health centers, have become inaccessible or sustained severe damage,” where “40% of UNRWA classrooms have been lost and almost 25% of the Agency’s health centres are currently unusable due to the conflict. UNRWA in Syria has also lost 19 staff members during the 10-year conflict.”²⁶

According to UNRWA report “Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal 2021,” the vulnerability of Palestine refugees in Syria is increasing. In July 2020, UNRWA assessed the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on Palestine refugees in Syria, and found that close to 80% had reduced the number of meals or quantity of food consumed. The report also revealed that as of 10/12/2020, more than 8,600 confirmed COVID-19 cases, including 465 deaths had been reported in Syria.²⁷

The Syrian conflict had its impact on the Palestinian refugees. The Action Group for Palestinians of Syria (AGPS) revealed on 2/10/2021 that more than six thousand physical violations perpetrated against Palestinian refugees since the launch of the Syrian conflict. Of those 1,797 have been secretly held in Syrian dungeons, among them 110 women and girls.²⁸

AGPS documented in February 2022 “the death of 4,116 Palestinian refugees in Syria, including 493 women and girls, since 2011 as a result of war-related incidents.”²⁹ Moreover, 620 refugees were killed under torture in Syrian prisons until December 2020.³⁰

AGPS also indicated that 57 Palestinians from Syria, mostly women, children, and elderly refugees, drowned onboard the death boats to Europe, fleeing the tattered Syrian territories.³¹

Because of the current political situation and the war in Syria, the available data on the social and family conditions of Palestinians in Syria cover only the period 2009–2010. They indicate that the Palestinian community in Syria is a young one and that, as of 2009, individuals aged under 15 years comprised 33.1% of the total population, while those aged 65 years and above comprised 4.4%. The 2010 data indicate that the total Palestinian fertility rate in Syria was 2.5 births per woman



and the CBR was 29.2 births per thousand, while the annual growth rate was 1.6%. Palestinian Infant mortality rate in Syria was 28.2 deaths per thousand live births, while the mortality rate among children aged under 5 years reached 31.5 deaths per thousand live births.³²

e. Lebanon

According to UNRWA figures, RPs residing in Lebanon as of 31/12/2020 constituted a total of 543,284, compared to 533,885 until February 2019.³³ However, the census in Palestinian RCs and gatherings in Lebanon for 2017 revealed that there are only 174 thousand refugees residing in Lebanon.³⁴ Even if we assume that there is a higher margin of error in this census; the estimates that most researchers agree on are 200–250 thousand, with a high percentage of the rest is willing to immigrate if given the opportunity. This means that the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have been suffering from a high rate of migration, which has increased in recent years with the continued work restrictions on the Palestinians, and emergence of the political and economic crises in Lebanon. ‘Abdelnasser el Ayi, the office director of the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) stated that “the wave of Palestinian immigration from Lebanon has been on the rise since 2005, but the numbers doubled in the last two years, 2020 and 2021, both through legal and illegal immigration.” He added that in 2020 between 6 and 8 thousand Palestinians left Lebanon without return, whereas in 2021 and until the end of October, 12 thousand Palestinian travelers were recorded and did not return to Lebanon. This is a higher number than the average of previous years.³⁵

The Lebanese government “estimates that the country currently hosts 1.5 million people who have fled the conflict in Syria,” of whom about 866 thousand are registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and about 28 thousand are registered with UNRWA as Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS).³⁶ The UNRWA report, “Emergency Appeal 2021,” stated that 87% of Palestine refugees who fled from Syria to Lebanon live below the poverty line, while this percentage reached 65% of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The report counted more than 104 thousand confirmed COVID-19 cases, including more than one thousand deaths during 2020.³⁷

The Palestinian Association for Human Rights “Witness,” conducted a study concerning the Lebanese crisis and its impact on the Palestinian refugees. The study monitored the dismissal of hundreds of Palestinian workers from their jobs, noting that 65% of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are already unemployed. As for the income of Palestinian families, the results showed that 49% of families have a monthly income that is below the minimum wage, noting that 38% of the Palestinians in Lebanon suffer food insecurity. The study stated that 72.4% of the refugees surveyed confirmed their inability to pay the substitution in the medical bill, according to the UNRWA treatment system.³⁸

According to the Population and Housing Census in the Palestinian RCs and Gatherings in Lebanon 2017, people aged under 15 comprised 29% while those aged 65 years and above comprised 6.4%. The average household size of the Palestinian family in Lebanon was 4 members and families headed by women comprised 17.5%. The fertility rate among Palestinian women in Palestinian RCs and gatherings in Lebanon was 2.7 births per woman.

f. General Comparisons Among Palestinians

Before comparing the major demographic indicators summarized in table 4/2, we would like to point out that, occasionally, some data are used for different years, which may disturb the comparison process. Nonetheless, they remain useful as general indicators, according to the latest available statistics. The following are the main observations:

- The percentage of Palestinians under the age of 15 is highest in GS and lowest in Lebanon
- The percentage of Palestinians aged 65 and over is highest in Lebanon followed by the territories occupied in 1948 (Israel) and Syria, and it is lowest in GS.
- CBRs are highest in GS, then in Jordan and Syria, followed by WB then Lebanon, and the lowest are in the territories occupied in 1948 (Israel). This rate is consistent with the general trend of births in the past years, where GS remained the area with the highest rate of the CBRs, which leads to demographic pressure on the besieged GS, which has a limited capacity.
- CDR remained high in WB and GS reaching 3.7 deaths per thousand in 2021. This was due to Israeli policies pursued over decades, particularly the killing of Palestinians.



Table 4/2: Selected Demographic Indicators of Palestinians by Residence³⁹

Indicator	WB 2021	GS 2021	WB & GS 2021	Israel 2020	Jordan 2011	Syria (2009–2010)	Lebanon 2017
% of individuals under 15 years	35.6	40.9	37.7	32 males 31 females	39.9	33.1	29
% of individuals 65 years and over	3.7	2.8	3.3	4.6 males 5.6 females	4.3	4.4	6.4
Sex ratio (males per 100 females)	103.8	102.7	103.4	102.7 (2015)	–	100.4	102
CBR (births per 1,000 population)	27.2	32.9	29.5	21.9	29.2 (2010)	29.2	25.8 (2010)
CDR (deaths per 1,000 population)	3.9	3.4	3.7	3.3	–	2.8 (2006)	–
Total fertility rate (births per woman)	3.8 (2017–2019)	3.9 (2017–2019)	3.8 (2017–2019)	2.8	3.3 (2010)	2.5	2.7
Average household size (individuals per house)	4.7 (2020)	5.7 (2020)	5.1 (2020)	4.4	5.1	4.1 (2010)	4

3. Palestinian Refugees

Although it is difficult to accurately determine the number of Palestinian refugees in the world, it is possible to benefit from the data available to estimate approximate numbers. According to PCBS, the number of Palestinians abroad at the end of 2021 are estimated at 7.04 million, while the PCBS statistics in 2017 have indicated that the Palestinian refugees in WB and GS are estimated at 42.2% of the population. This means that their number has reached 2.242 million at the end of 2021, of whom 830 thousand are living in WB, and 1.412 million in GS representing 26.3% and 66.1% of its population, respectively.⁴⁰ These figures are close to UNRWA's, which stated that the number of registered refugees was about 872 thousand in WB, and about 1.477 million in GS at the end of 2020. Probably the reason for the differences is that some refugees have left WB and GS. Furthermore, a number of Palestinians living abroad are from WB and GS, they have the Palestinian "citizenship" and can return to reside there (see table 5/2). Furthermore, it is estimated that there

are at least 150 thousand Palestinians from the 1948 occupied territories, who were displaced from their historical cities and villages, but remain within the geographical borders of occupied Palestine in 1948. Therefore, the total number of Palestinian refugees at the end of 2021, is estimated at 9.432 million, constituting 67.4% of the Palestinians worldwide.

There might be problems of replications, due to changes of residence where the refugee is registered or holds his/her passport; However, this affects only a limited amount of the large proportion of refugees.

It's worth noting that UNRWA statistics have been limited to registered refugees in its five areas of operation: WB, GS, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Thus, these statistics do not accurately reflect the refugee population worldwide as they exclude many refugees residing outside UNRWA's operation areas, and even do not include a lot of those residing in its areas of operations, because they did not need to register with the Agency and benefit from its services. Also, UNRWA's figures exclude the Palestinian refugees who took refuge after the war of 1967 (*Naksah*). Besides, there are refugees who had to flee Palestine under different circumstances (other than war) and were prevented from returning. As a result, UNRWA statistics are incomplete and should not be dealt with as factual numbers reflecting the reality of the refugee population in 1948 (except in Syria and Lebanon to some extent). These numbers only reflect those who have registered with UNRWA, and can receive its aid and services, rather than all Palestinian refugees.

The number of registered refugees in UNRWA's five areas of operation on 31/12/2020 is estimated at 6.389 million of whom about 2.463 million live in Jordan (38.6%); 2.726 million in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 (42.6%), where 1.643 million live in GS (25.7%) and 1.083 million live in WB (16.9%); and the rest constitutes 1.2 million (18.8%), who are registered in Syria and Lebanon. The number of families registered in UNRWA's five areas of operation reached 1.5 million, while the average household size was 4.3 persons.⁴¹

Refugee numbers remain estimated figures, especially when it comes to Palestinians abroad, outside UNRWA's operation areas, where there are no official statistics, nor accurate knowledge of growth rates. There is also the difficulty of resolving problems of replication due to changes in country of residence or citizenship, as is the case with the Palestinians of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, and Palestinians in historic Palestine residing abroad.



**Table 5/2: UNRWA-RPs According to Their Area of Operation
as of 31/12/2020⁴²**

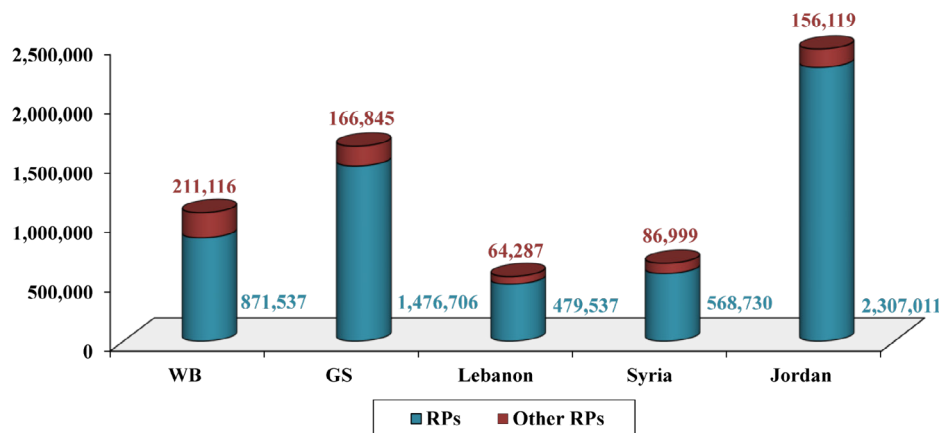
	WB	GS	Jordan	Syria	Lebanon	Total
RRs	871,537	1,476,706	2,307,011	568,730	479,537	5,703,546
Other RPs*	211,116	166,845	156,119	86,999	64,287	685,366
Total RPs	1,082,653	1,643,551	2,463,130	655,729	543,284	6,388,887
Families	278,707	358,043	558,842	192,105	145,078	1,532,696
Official camps	19	8	10	9	12	58
Schools	96	278	169	102	65	710
Pupil enrolment	45,883	286,645	119,047	50,609	37,586	539,770
Primary health-care facilities	43	22	25	23	27	140
Area staff	3,849	12,132	6,094	3,014	3,046	28,563**
International staff	17	16	16	13	13	193***

* Other RPs: include non-refugee wives, non-refugee husbands, non-refugee children, Frontier villagers, Jerusalem poor, Gaza poor, and Compromise cases.

** Agency total includes staff in UNRWA headquarter, Amman.

*** The number of Agency-wide international staff in 2020 includes 11 international staff based in UNRWA liaison offices, including UNRWA headquarter, Amman.

UNRWA's Figures as of 31/12/2020



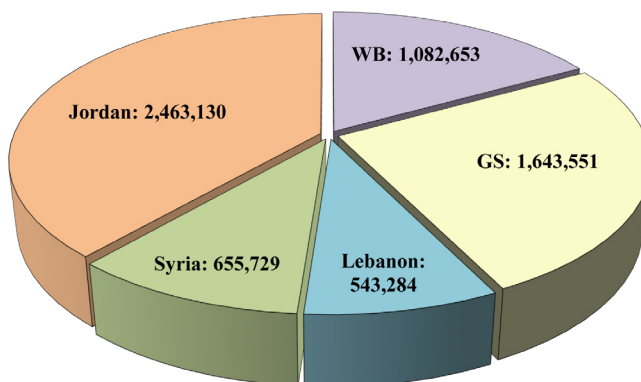
UNRWA–Total RPs by Area as of 31/12/2020


Table 6/2 indicate that the UNRWA refugee communities, like the Palestinians in general, are young, where 30% of refugees registered with the Agency are children under the age of 18, with highest rate in the GS (41.3%) and lowest in Lebanon (22%).

The data shows that fertility rates among refugees in WB and GS are the highest among UNRWA's five operation areas (3.6 births per woman), as is the case for the average family size in WB and GS (5.6 individuals per household). The dependency ratio (number of dependent persons per 100 individuals of working age, 15–64 years) among registered refugees is significantly high in the GS (75.6) mainly due to the high percentage of people aged under 15, which may be challenging in light of the high unemployment rates and deteriorating economic conditions.

Table 6/2: Selected Demographic Indicators of Palestinians by Residence 2020⁴³

Indicator	GS	WB	Jordan	Syria	Lebanon	Agency
Children below 18 years (%)	41.3	27.5	25.8	28.3	22	30
Average household size (individual per house) (2015)	5.6	5.6	5.2	4.8	4.7	5.3
Fertility rate	3.6	3.6	3.2	2.7	2.7	3.2
Dependency ratio	75.6	50.5	46.4	49.5	47.5	54.1

Regarding education, figures showed that refugees are better educated than non-refugees in WB and GS, where the illiteracy rate was 2.5% among refugees (15 years and over) compared to 3% among non-refugees, while holders of a bachelor's degree and above comprise 16% for refugees and 14% for non-refugees.⁴⁴

4. Demographic Growth Trends

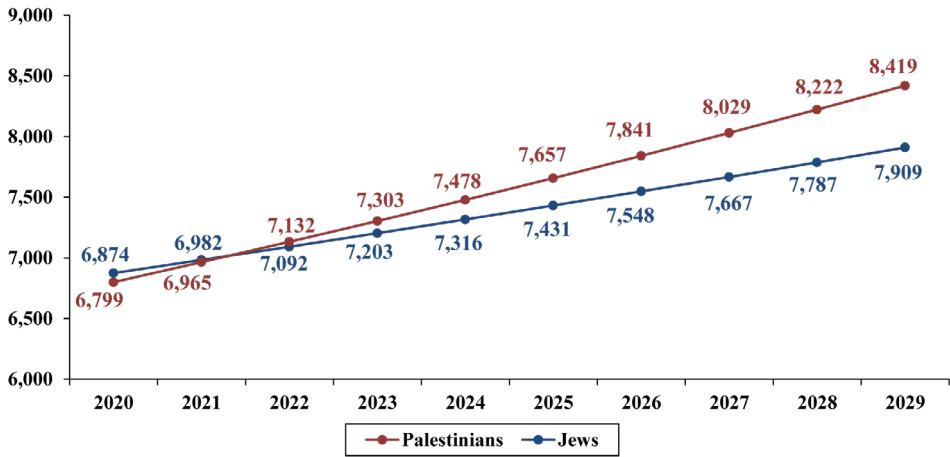
Despite the relative decline in the rate of natural population growth among the Palestinian population, the rate remains high compared to other populations including the Israelis. Based on PCBS estimates, Palestinians in historic Palestine reached 6.965 million at the end of 2021, while Jews reached 6.982 million according to Israel's CBS estimates.

Based on annual growth rates, the Palestinian and Jewish population in historical Palestine is expected to be equal at the end of 2022, reaching approximately 7.1 million. Palestinians are expected to outnumber Jews in historic Palestine in 2029 by about 510 thousand.

Table 7/2: Estimated Population Count of Palestinians and Jews in Historic Palestine 2020–2029 (thousands)⁴⁵

Year	Palestinians in historic Palestine	Jews
2020	6,799	6,874
2021	6,965	6,982
2022	7,132	7,092
2023	7,303	7,203
2024	7,478	7,316
2025	7,657	7,431
2026	7,841	7,548
2027	8,029	7,667
2028	8,222	7,787
2029	8,419	7,909

Estimated Population Count of Palestinians and Jews in Historic Palestine 2020–2029 (thousands)



From a Palestinian point of view, the positive interpretation of these projections, confirms that the Palestinian people, despite suffering oppression, displacement and occupation, are still steadfast in their land. Moreover, it shows that after the establishment of the World Zionist Organization by 125 years, and after the establishment of Israel by 74 years, this Zionist project is facing the fact that the Palestinian population inside Palestine exceeds the number of Jews there, whom were gathered throughout those years from more than a hundred countries. This is undoubtedly a disturbing fact for Israel. However, talking about the Palestinian “demographic bomb” should not make Palestinians swept up in the euphoria of victory or make them feel relaxed. For Palestinian steadfastness and population growth are important phenomena, but they are not enough. History has shown that, in many cases, colonialism was able to deal with and overcome such phenomena.

Second, the Israelis are aware of the risk this phenomenon poses, they have been working on it for decades. Hence, their disengagement from GS in 2005. Their plan in the WB was to annex the largest area of land that has the smallest number of inhabitants, keeping the Palestinians in “cantons” that have the form of a distorted self-rule and nominally bear the title of a state. This is what actually has been happening, after the collapse of the peace process and the two-state solution.

Moreover, Israel has made the living environment for the Palestinians unbearable. Some statistics indicate that about 415 thousand Palestinians left WB and GS during 1967–2003, in addition to tens of thousands of people



from each WB and GS in the past years, for which accurate statistics are not available. In addition, the displacement and “transfer” files are still on the Israeli decision-maker’s desk, whose society is developing to become more extreme, more religious and nationalistic.

Although the Israeli population growth rate was in 2021, around 1.57%, i.e., less than its Palestinian counterpart, however, the fact that the number of Palestinians would exceed the number of Jews in historical Palestine must be placed within an objective context, and must be viewed within a framework of many challenges and dangers facing the Palestinian people inside Palestine.⁴⁶

5. Palestinians Outside Palestine and the Right of Return

The Palestinian people abroad continued to resist all attempts to liquidate the Palestine issue, by reiterating the right of return and liberating their land, and by rejecting the Deal of the Century and normalization. They continued to hold activities and events that emphasize their association with Palestine, and which remind the emerging generations of the right to land and return.

On 25/9/2021, the Palestinians in Europe Conference held its 19th annual conference online, under the slogan “Jerusalem Unites Us till We Return,” with the participation of prominent Palestinian, Arab, and European figures. The conference called for the reform of the PLO, the suspension of “absurd negotiations” and the prevention of normalization with the Israel. Moreover, it confirmed in its closing statement, the adherence of the Palestinian people, everywhere, to their inalienable rights, especially the right of return. Furthermore, it valued the Palestinian people unity in their last confrontation against the Israeli aggression on Jerusalem and the holy sites.⁴⁷

The first Palestinians in Europe Conference was held in London in 2003, and then it was held annually in several European capitals and cities, the last of which was the 18th Conference in Paris in April 2020, which was canceled due to COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁸

On 11/1/2022, in the first meeting of its coordinating office, the “European-Palestinians Initiative for National Action” announced the formation of a pressure group in favor of the Palestine issue in Europe, consisting of the initiative’ members, who are more than 200 figures from 18 countries. It is noteworthy that the “European-Palestinians Initiative for National Action” was established by Palestinians from various European countries, it is based in Brussels, and was

launched in March 2020.⁴⁹ In its founding statement in October 2020, the initiative reported that it was founded to unite “all national efforts across Europe to serve the Palestinian cause, developing national action in proportion to the size of risks and in order to achieve a work methodology aimed at protecting legitimate national rights, and calling for true national unity.”⁵⁰

On 5/3/2021, The Popular Conference for Palestinians Abroad organized a three-day conference entitled “The National Dialogue for Palestinians Abroad,” with the participation of more than 200 Palestinian figures from 26 countries of six continents. It discussed the future Palestinian leadership scene and the pivotal role of Palestinians abroad.⁵¹

Furthermore, in solidarity with Palestine, the Palestinian Forum in Britain (PFB) organized the annual Palestine Festival 2021, which kicked off with the participation of thousands from the Palestinian and Arab communities. The festival witnessed the honoring of a number of pro-Palestine figures in UK, most notably Jeremy Corbyn, the former leader for the British Labour Party.⁵²

The activities of the second annual Return Week, held by the Palestinian Return Centre, kicked off on 3/12/2021, with an art exhibition displaying paintings by Palestinian artists, whose theme is the Palestinian refugees’ adherence to the right of return.⁵³ It is noteworthy that “Return Week” is an annual event that was organized for the first time in 2020. It aims to commemorate the UN Resolution 194 regarding the return of Palestinian refugees.⁵⁴

Latin America is witnessing growing solidarity with the Palestine issue, due to the continuous efforts of the Arab and Muslim community, especially the Palestinian one. They have been informing the public about the suffering the Palestinians under Israeli occupation, while emphasizing the right of return.

The PLO had sponsored the establishment of the Confederation of Palestinian Organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean (COPLAC), but its impact declined in recent years due to the weak performance of the PLO and the PA abroad. Therefore, in order to reactivate the role of the Palestinians there, the Palestinians of Latin America established in 2017 the Palestinian Union of Latin America (Unión Palestina de América Latina—UPAL), whose elected leader is Siman Khoury.

Communities in Latin America organized activities in support for the Palestine issue, including the week of solidarity with Palestine (27/11/2020 to 2/12/2020),



coinciding with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.⁵⁵ The organizers were the Latin Palestinian Forum (FLP), a non-governmental organization based in Sao Paulo, Brazil; the Friends of Palestine, an Argentinean organization founded by a number of Palestinian activists residing in Latin America; and the Middle East Monitor website.⁵⁶ After the normalization deal between Israel and the UAE, the FLP called for launching a campaign to support humanitarian work in WB and GS.⁵⁷

Several European capitals and cities, in addition to US, Canada, Brazil and other countries, witnessed dozens of demonstrations and protests in solidarity with Palestine, emphasizing the right of the Palestinians to their land and their right of return. These activities also rejected the Deal of the Century, the displacement of Palestinians in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem, the GS siege, the May 2021 aggression, and the violations against Palestinian prisoners. In January 2020, dozens of demonstrations and protests took place in European and non-European countries, rejecting the Deal of the Century.⁵⁸ On 18/2/2020, Palestinian and Dutch institutions supporting the Palestine issue protested in front of the Dutch parliament, States General of the Netherlands, in the Hague, rejecting the Deal of The Century.⁵⁹

On 7–9/8/2020, the “Days of Resistance” activities were launched in several cities and capitals in Europe and the Americas, to perpetuate the culture and concept of the Palestinian resistance against colonial policies, Zionism and the plans of liquidation and normalization.⁶⁰ Moreover, in May 2021, tens of thousands of Palestinians, Arabs, Americans and Europeans participated in demonstrations and activities in several US states and European and Canadian cities, in rejection of the Israeli aggression on GS.⁶¹

Second: Economic Indicators in WB and GS

1. GDP in PA Territories (WB and GS)

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) reflects the overall economic activity carried out by all institutions producing goods and services in the public, private and other sectors in a country over one year. It is a widely used indicator employed locally, regionally and internationally on different levels. It shows the state of economic

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This Report

Al-Zaytouna Centre is pleased to present to its readers the Palestine Strategic Report (PSR) 2020–2021, the 12th PSR to be published.

With an academic methodology and comprehensive objective approach, the report details the developments concerning the Palestine issue and provides the latest information and data available at the end of 2021, along with analyses and forecasts.

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The PSR now occupies a prominent position as an indispensable reference, integral to Palestine studies and research. Al-Zaytouna Centre hopes the PSR will continue to make valuable contributions in this field.

Prof. Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh

The Palestine Strategic Report 2020 – 2021



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