



ההסתדרות הציונית העולמית
World Zionist Organization
המחלקה לפעילות בתפוצות
Department for Diaspora Activities



Arab Women in Israel

The Arab Community in Israel

Arab citizens of Israel are non-Jewish, Israeli citizens whose cultural, linguistic or ethnic identity is Arab. Most Arab citizens are Muslim, though a significant minority identify as Arab Christian and as Druze, among other religious communities. According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, approximately 20% of the Israeli population is Arab. The majority of these Arabs identify as Arab or Palestinian by nationality and Israeli by citizenship. Negev Bedouins tend to identify more as Israelis than other Arab citizens of Israel.



Arab citizens are not required to serve in the IDF. While the Bedouin community has traditionally volunteered for military service, the number of Bedouin in the army has drastically dropped in recent years. Druze are required to serve in the IDF in accordance with an agreement between their local religious leaders and the Israeli government in 1956.

Women in Israeli-Arab Society

The role of women in Arab society is complicated, as they represent a “double minority” as women and as Arabs. Most Arab women still marry at a young age (average age: 21), and the average age difference between brides and grooms is 5 years (double the age difference in the Jewish population). The birth rate among Arab women has drastically declined and it is estimated to meet the Jewish birth rate in the near future. Arab women are attaining a higher level of education than in years past (and this correlates with the lower birth rate). 56% of Arab girls graduate from high school, compared to 38% of Arab boys and this difference is reflected in higher education as well, where 66% percent of Arab university students are women. but they



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are still under-represented in the work force. Yet despite these gains, Arab women still must negotiate life in a highly traditional, patriarchal society and they face unique problems of domestic violence in the form of honor killings.

Questions for Discussion

- Were you familiar with this population? If so, what pre-conceived notions did you have about this community, and specifically about the women in this community?
- Are there aspects of this community that you can appreciate and/or identify with?
- Can you summarize the tensions between this community's traditional values and practices and the values and practices of contemporary Israeli society?
- What issues in contemporary Israeli society do you think are of special importance to this community, and especially to its women? Choose one of the social issues examined earlier in the program and consider the issue from the perspective of an Israeli-Arab woman.