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## General hospital beds in Israel

There are **45 general hospitals** in Israel, a quarter of which are government-owned (nine government hospitals and two government-municipal hospitals).<sup>1</sup> A general hospital is comprised of the following wards: internal medicine, intensive care, pediatrics, surgery, maternity wards, and intermediate care wards. Israel has a shortage of beds in general hospitals; for many years, various parties—including the State Comptroller—have noted the gap between the demands made of the system of general hospitals and the resources allocated to it, and they have called for long-term planning of the system of general hospitals in Israel.<sup>2</sup>

According to data from the Ministry of Health, **in January 2019 there were 16,021 acute care beds in Israel—15,871 in general hospitals and 151 in geriatric hospitals. The rate of acute care beds in Israel has been declining since the late 1970s; as of 2019, it stands at 1.78 beds per 1,000 people**, as compared to 1.88 in 2011 and 2.09 in 2005.<sup>3</sup>

Ministry of Health data from January 2019 on the geographic distribution of acute care beds indicates that nearly half are located in the central district (23.8%) and Tel Aviv (21.4%), while the remaining beds are in the Haifa district (15.2%), Jerusalem (14.5%), the northern district (12.7%) and the southern district (12.3%).<sup>4</sup>

A comparison of the rate of acute care beds in hospitals per 1,000 people in Israel to the rate in 34 OECD member states, based on data from 2017,<sup>5</sup> indicates **a decline in the rate of acute care beds in hospitals in OECD countries due to technological developments and the expansion of community healthcare services, among other things**. Before we present Israel's ranking, we emphasize that while, in the past, the OECD published its comparison regarding acute care beds in hospitals separately, in recent years, it has based the comparison on a broader

<sup>1</sup> Ownership of the remaining institutions is as follows: 20% by Clalit Health Services (nine hospitals), 20% private ownership (nine hospitals), 17.8% a combination of public and other ownership (eight hospitals), 13.3% by Christian missions (six hospitals), and 4.4% by Hadassah (two hospitals). Ministry of Health, *Inpatient Institutions and Day Care Units in Israel 2017, Part 1: Hospitalization Trends*, 2018 [Hebrew].

<sup>2</sup> For more, see: Aharon Blank and Flora Koch Davidovich, *Key Terms in Healthcare*, Knesset Research and Information Center, 12 June 2019, p. 35 [Hebrew].

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Health, "[Hospital Beds and Licensed Stations, January 2019](#)," March 2019 [Hebrew].

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> The most recent year for which there are data.

definition, termed "curative (acute) care beds in hospitals." These are beds accommodating patients "where the principal clinical intent is to do one or more of the following: manage labor (obstetrics), cure illness or provide definitive treatment of injury, perform surgery, relieve symptoms of illness or injury (excluding palliative care), reduce severity of illness or injury, protect against exacerbation and/or complication of illness and/or injury which could threaten life or normal functions, or perform diagnostic or therapeutic procedures." The definition also includes "beds for psychiatric and non-psychiatric curative (acute) care and beds in all hospitals, including general hospitals, mental health hospitals, and other specialized hospitals."<sup>6</sup> In other words, **the current definition includes more than just acute care beds, and also encompasses, among other things, curative beds for mental health** and—according to the March 2019 Ministry of Health report entitled "[Hospital Beds and Licensed Stations—January 2019](#)"—**curative beds for geriatric inpatient care, including beds for tuberculosis patients**, which were also included in the report to the OECD.<sup>7</sup>

**The definition used in the OECD comparisons and in Israel's reports to the OECD indicates that the comparison is based on a figure that is higher than the number of acute care beds in Israel.** According to Ministry of Health data, which were reported to the OECD in 2017, there were 19,212 curative care beds (using the OECD definition), of which some 80% were used for acute care. **When comparing the data on Israel to the OECD data for 2017 using the expanded definition, the rate of curative (acute) care beds in hospitals in Israel is still among the lowest of the 34 countries on the list. Israel ranked 29th out of the 34 countries with a rate of 2.2 curative (acute) care beds in hospitals per 1,000 people, a rate lower than the average (3.6) and the median (3.2) of the 34 countries on the list**—above the UK, Sweden, Chile, Canada and Mexico.<sup>8</sup> Note that previously, when the OECD comparison was based on the narrower definition—which included beds intended mostly for managing labor, performing surgeries, and carrying out diagnostic or medical procedures<sup>9</sup>—**Israel was ranked much lower among OECD countries.** For example, in 2012, Israel was ranked 28th out of 29 countries, with a rate of 1.89 acute care beds per 1,000 people, exceeding only Mexico.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> These beds do not include beds intended for other purposes, such as rehabilitation, long-term care or palliative care. OECD Health Statistics 2019, Definitions, Sources and Methods, "Curative (Acute) Care Beds in Hospitals," available for download at <https://stats.oecd.org/FileView2.aspx?IDFile=261f59d6-0bbe-4c86-ae5c-0dccc5f59f3e>, accessed 11 December 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Health, "[Hospital Beds and Licensed Stations](#)."

<sup>8</sup> "Health Care Resources", [OECD Health Statistics \(database\)](#), accessed 11 December 2019.

<sup>9</sup> OECD, [Health at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators](#), OECD Publishing, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> For more, see: Flora Koch Davidovich, [Key Issues in Healthcare](#), Knesset Research and Information Center, 21 May 2019 [Hebrew].

In addition, besides the rate of beds per 1,000 people, other measures—which are presented below—can provide a broader picture of the state of the general hospitals. These data are current to 2017, when the Ministry of Health published its most recent report on the subject.<sup>11</sup>

- The average **occupancy rate of acute care beds in hospitals** in 2017 was 93%, down from 96% in 2012.
- **The average stay in acute care**<sup>12</sup> has been relatively stable in the past decade, with a 2017 average of four days.
- **Bed turnover rate** is a metric that expresses the average amount of hospitalizations per bed for a specific time, i.e. the workload of the hospital system. The high bed occupancy rate and the decline in the length of the average hospital stay have led to an increased bed turnover rate. The bed turnover rate, not including inter-hospital patient transfers, was 85.9 patients per bed on average in 2017, compared to 87.6 in 2016. The bed turnover rate, including transfers, was 100.7 patients per bed on average in 2017, compared to 102.2 in 2016.<sup>13</sup>

Data regarding average hospital occupancy rates are not sufficient to determine occupancy rates at any specific point in time. Ministry of Health data on daily occupancy of the internal medicine ward in 15 general hospitals (out of 45 institutions in Israel) indicate **an average occupancy rate of 107.26%** as of 9 December 2019. **In six of the 15 general hospitals included in the report (40%), occupancy rates in the internal medicine ward exceeded 100%:** Hadassah Ein Kerem in Jerusalem (213.6%), Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center (145.5%), Mount Scopus Hospital—Hadassah Medical Center (141.7%), Laniado Hospital in Netanya (135.5%), Rambam Health Care Campus in Haifa (117.7%), and the Ziv Medical Center in Safed (107.5%). Among the other hospitals mentioned in the report, **occupancy rates ranged from 64.9% at Rabin Medical Center—Golda-Hasharon Campus to 98.4% at Mayanei Hayeshua Medical Center in Bnei Brak.**<sup>14</sup>

It should be noted that on 10 February 2019, the deputy Minister of Health, MK Yaakov Litzman, and the Director General of the Ministry of Health appointed the [Committee for Improving the Inpatient Hospitalization System](#), chaired by Professor Ran Tur-Kaspa, which submitted its recommendations in July 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Health, [Inpatient Institutions and Day Care Units in Israel 2017, Part 1: Hospitalization Trends](#), 2018 [Hebrew].

<sup>12</sup> The average number of days a patient stays in a ward or hospital, from date of admission to release date.

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Health, [Inpatient Institutions and Day Care Units in Israel 2017, Part 2: Movement of Patients by Institution and Department](#), pp. 308, 310 [Hebrew].

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Health, Medical Directorate, "Daily Occupancy Report for 9 December 2019," received by fax, 10 December 2019 [Hebrew].