Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)

A Press Release by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) on the Occasion of the International Literacy Day on 08/09/2026

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 a simple statement related to one's daily life. Hence, the illiteracy rate reached 2.1% among the Palestinian population (15 years and above) during 2023. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the illiteracy rate among persons (15 years and above) in *Western Asia and Northern Africa* was 19.0% in 2022. In the same year, it was 13.0% in *the world* among the same age group.

Narrowing the gap in illiteracy rates between males and females

The illiteracy rate among individuals (15 years and above) in the West Bank was 2.1% in 2025 (1.0% among males and 3.2% among females), while the illiteracy rate among males (15 years and above) in the West Bank was 7.3% in 1997, compared to 21.1% among females of the same age group and year.

18 out of every 100 elderly people are illiterate

The illiteracy rate varies considerably by age group. The age group (65 years and above) recorded the highest rate, while the lowest rate was among the age group (15-29 years). In 2025, the illiteracy rate among elderly people (65 years and above) reached about 17.5%, while it was about 2.0% among the age group (45-64 years), 0.9% among the age group (30-44 years), and 0.8% among the youth (15-29 years) during the same year.



Rural localities recorded the highest illiteracy rate

In 2025, the illiteracy rate in the West Bank reached 2.3% in rural localities, 2.1% in urban areas, and 1.6% in refugee camps.



The reality of education and illiteracy in Gaza Strip: between achievement and the repercussions of aggression

Due to the ongoing aggression against Gaza Strip, it was not possible to collect illiteracy data for Gaza Strip for the years 2024 and 2025**.** While data for the period (1997-2023) indicated a significant decrease in the illiteracy rate in Gaza Strip, the illiteracy rate among individuals aged 15 and over decreased from 13.7% to 1.9% in 2023. Education is a fundamental human right granted to everyone under Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, the ongoing bombardment and violent airstrikes on Gaza Strip have destroyed a significant portion of the infrastructure of schools and universities. In Gaza Strip, more than 179 public schools were completely destroyed since the beginning of the Israeli aggression on October 7th, 2023, until September 01th, 2026, and more than 105 UNRWA schools were subjected to bombing and damage. The number of students enrolled in schools who were martyred in Gaza Strip exceeded 19,169, while more than 28,571 students were injured. The aggression also completely destroyed more than 63 university buildings. Since the beginning of the Israeli aggression, the number of martyrs among students enrolled in higher education institutions has reached more than 1,386, while more than 3,082 students were injured. So far, there is no information available about the number of university students who were detained by the Israeli occupation army during ground operations in various areas of Gaza Strip.

Sources:

1. **Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2026.** Databases of Labor Force Survey for years 1997, 2023, 2025. Ramallah – Palestine.
2. **Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2026**. Report on Israeli Occupation Violations Against Education in Palestine, since 07\10\2023 to 01\09\2026. Ramallah – Palestine.
3. Database of UNESCO Institute for Statistics