



State Comptroller of Israel | Annual Report 72a – Part Two | 2021

Ministry of Transport and Road Safety

Providing Accessibility in Public Transportation to Persons with Disabilities



Providing Accessibility in Public Transportation to Persons with Disabilities

Background

The commitment of the society in Israel to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities is based on acknowledging the principle of the equal rights, the value of all human life and human dignity¹. Public transportation is vital for persons with disabilities, enabling them to be independent, have access to employment services, education and health and to integrate into society. Adapting the physical and human environment to physical, sensory, emotional and cognitive abilities of persons with disabilities will improve their functioning.

¹ Article 1 of the Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities Law 1998



Key figures

**1.56
million**

The number of persons with disabilities in Israel (of which 1.2 million are aged 20 and over).

17%

Of the general population in Israel are persons with disabilities.

50%

Of persons with disabilities do not work².

33%

Of the persons with disabilities population travel by city buses daily. 15% of the persons with disabilities population travel daily by intercity buses.

**NIS 2.4
billion**

The estimated direct government expense in 2017 on mobility for passengers with disabilities (according to the Joint survey).

875

Accessible taxis operating currently in Israel out of the 1,000 licenses distributed around Israel.


85

Settlements in which 1,000 and over residents do not have an accessible possibility to physically travel by public transportation from their place of residence to other settlements.

**NIS 3.9
billion**

The Ministry of Transport cost estimate of providing accessibility in all intercity bus services³.

Audit actions

 From September 2020 to March 2021 the State Comptroller's Office examined the subject of providing accessibility in public transportation to persons with disabilities, and among others, arriving at the pick-up point, the accessibility of stations and of means of transportation. The audit was conducted at the Ministry of Transport and Road Safety (the Ministry of Transport). Supplementary audits were performed at the Commission of Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities at the Ministry of Justice (the Equality





² According to a survey conducted by the Joint in 2019.

³ According to the Ministry of Transport data that was presented to the Knesset Data and research Center in 2017, as processed by the State Comptroller's Office.



Commission), at Egged transport Company Ltd, at Dan Public Transportation Company Ltd and at the Israel Railway Company Ltd. The audit included a public participation process, within which participation meetings were held with dozens of organizations and NGO's, with public representatives and with activists and other relevant entities.

Key findings

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Travel difficulties in public transport – a survey conducted by the Joint in 2019 indicates that most persons with disabilities of all kinds (around 60%) are not satisfied with the existing accessibility solutions in public transportation. The survey further indicates that passengers with cognitive or physical disability or sight disability experience difficulties during most of the travel by public transportation, whereas persons with hearing disability or emotional disabilities have difficulty in leaving their home, in waiting for the travel and in travel itself. Accordingly, there is only a low number of persons with disabilities that use the various transportation services compared to the general population.
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The absence of obligation in the Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities Law 1998 to provide accessibility in inter-city buses – even though the law was passed in 1998, at the time of the audit completion date, the law had not yet included an obligation to provide physical accessibility in inter-city buses. Moreover, the insight survey and the public participation process indicated that the obligation for sensory accessibility in buses as determined by the regulations (PA system, electronic data) is not completely fulfilled and there are flaws in its implementation.
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The cost of accessing inter-city buses – according to the Ministry of Transport estimate, the total costs required for accessing inter-city buses is NIS 3.9 billion for 12 years. The Ministry of transport evaluation refers to the accessibility process of all inter-city buses, and does not refer to the possibility of partial accessibility, i.e. in some of the routes or some of the operating hours of the buses or by coordination in advance, and particularly routes that do not have parallel train lines. Partial accessibility should decrease costs.
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Accessibility of city buses – a survey conducted by the Ministry of Transport raised deficiencies in the accessibility of city buses which resulted in the need to improve the accessibility in several major areas: (a) adapting the service to persons with disabilities including, among others, encouraging bus drivers to act respectfully and thoughtfully and train them to be aware of the difficulties persons with various disabilities deal with and be considerate of them. (b) ensure the use of accessibility means such as: stopping as nearby to the curb as possible, using lowering means and ramps, beginning to drive after wheel chairs are secured and operating public address systems. (c) response time adherence by public transportation operators to complaints concerning accessibility to



persons with disabilities and ensuring the availability and response of an accessibility officer representing the public transportation operators. (d) Reducing bus ticket costs for people that accompany persons with disabilities. At the time of the audit completion date the Ministry of transport had not prepared a comprehensive and detailed program for handling this matter, and there was no reference to the issue of training the drivers in the Ministry of Transport's supervision reports.



Providing accessibility of bus stations and access routes to the stations – in 2019 there were approximately 27,000 bus stations in Israel. As of that year there were still 13,500 inaccessible city stations and 3,500 intercity- service stations that are not accessible. In 37.5% of the 80 examined settlements not all the stations are accessible and in 22.5% of the examined settlements, less than 85% of the stations are accessible. Moreover, at the audit completion date, almost 16 years since the date of amending the Equal Rights Law, the Minister of the Interior has not yet legislated regulations for accessible routes.



Ministry of Transport supervision – the Ministry of Transport did not require the public transportation operators to provide information regarding the publication of accessible routes, on installing static signs and on handling of public complaints. The audit also found that the Ministry of transport did not require the Local Authorities to submit a list of accessible bus stations; moreover, the National Public Transportation Authority did not issue a semi-annual report concerning bus stations that provide city services, and at the Public Transportation Accessibility department in the Ministry of Transport no received reports on this matter were found.






Israel Railways Accessibility

- **Coordinating travel for persons with disabilities** – according to the train travel coordination procedure, a person with disability wishing to travel by train should coordinate his travel two hours in advance with the company's service center. The audit found that the number of persons with disabilities able to travel at the same time is limited to the amount of coordinations and the type of the disability. The audit also found that for most of the coordinated travel the departure stations are in the center of the Israel, whereas the amount of coordinated travel at peripheral stations is low.
- **Height differences between platforms and railway carriages** – there are height differences between the platforms and the stair at the passengers entrance to the railway carriages. These differences are significant for passengers in wheelchairs as well as passengers aided by other mobility aids.
- **Sensory accessibility at train stations** – in six out of eight stations examined in the audit complete sensory accessibility was found in all the passenger elevators, in the ticket offices and in all other public areas. However, at the Ashdod Ad-Halom station and the the Tel Aviv elevators, the PA system designed to assist persons with




sight disability in their orientation and movement between floors in the station was not working.

-  **Accessible taxis** – in Israel 1000 licenses for operating accessible taxis have been issued, providing a ratio of one accessible taxi per 1,600 persons with disabilities, compared to one taxi per 340 passengers without disabilities. In reality, at the audit completion date, 875 accessible taxis are active. Moreover, despite the corporations having been awarded a discount of 95% in the fees payment (NIS 10,000 instead of NIS 240,000) deficiencies were found in all matters pertaining to the collection of high traveling fees and failure to document travel records. Complaints were received that the accessible taxis serve in fact as transportation vehicles and therefore are not available for persons with disabilities seeking to order an accessible taxi. It was further found that the issuing licenses process was done without determining any criteria or threshold requirements, where any entity seeking such licenses was awarded the license based on the quantity of licenses allocated by the Ministry of Transport for this purpose. After receiving the franchises, and even after the various operators began providing services, the Ministry of Transport did not formulate any contract or agreement with the operators to regulate their liabilities and rights concerning provision of this service.
-  **Geographical distribution of the licenses for accessible taxis** – a review of the 19 corporations holding public rights indicates that seven corporations are in the Jerusalem area, four in the Tel Aviv and central area and six in additional areas. This data shows that for most corporations the license validity will expire within five years of the audit completion date.
-  **The price of travel in accessible taxis** – despite the corporations having been awarded a 50% discount in the fee payment, deficiencies were found in all matters pertaining to the collection of high tariffs and of failure to keep travel records.








Accessibility at train stations – the audit examined eight train stations – in most stations there is convenient and adjusted access to disembarkation areas near the station entrances and parking lots, the entrance lobbies or checkpoints. In all stations examined there are visual marking for passengers from embarkation and disembarkation points in all passenger halls and up to the station entrance.

Key recommendations

-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Transport complete comprehensive examination of all aspects regarding public transportation of persons with disabilities, including mobility habits, the obstructions preventing their use of public transportations and the reasons for their immobility. Accordingly, it is recommended to formulate a proposal for

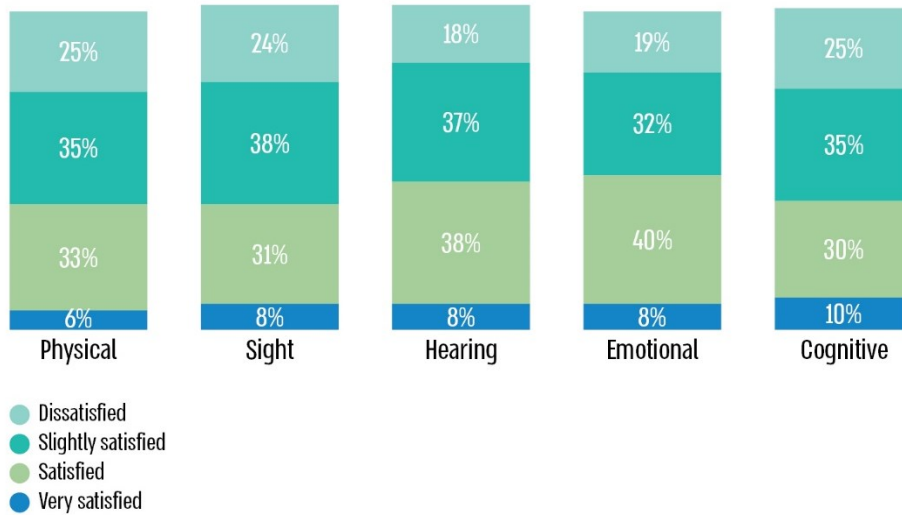


ways of government intervention that will ensure consideration of all persons with disabilities including the matter of technological developments.

-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Transport include in its supervision program mechanisms for monitoring the behavior and training of drivers, to ensure greater accessibility to persons with disabilities by the service providers. It is further recommended that the Ministry of transport examine the need for updating regulation regarding the accessibility of public transportation services, including determining training procedures and contents, and update the directives to bus drivers and other service providers of public transportation and monitor their implementation; all this in order to improve service regarding the interface between drivers and persons with disabilities using public transportation.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Transport and the Equality Commission act to promote the matter of accessibility regarding intercity transportation, examine this matter compared to solutions practiced in other countries worldwide, and propose operative actions for activating accessible intercity transportation, including performing a pilot if necessary.
-  It is recommended that the Israel Railway hold public participation processes among persons with disabilities, from time to time, to learn of the disparities they show and to formulate a program to improve these matters and examine solutions for the difference between the railway carriages and platforms and improve service coordination in the periphery.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Transport set an agreement with operators of accessible taxis defining the rights and duties required thereof as part of operating franchises for accessible taxis, will act to prevent sale of licenses before ten years from the license receipt date will pass and set a procedure that will ensure awarded licenses are indeed used for the transportation of persons with disabilities.
-  It is further recommended that the Ministry of Transport, together with the Equality Commission, taxis associations and NGO's that deal with accessibility matters for passengers with disabilities, examine ways of providing high availability of accessible taxis for persons with disabilities throughout Israel in general, and in the peripheral regions in particular.



Satisfaction with accessibility solutions, according to type of disability



The source: Joint survey of 2019.

Summary

In Israel there are almost 1.5 million persons with disabilities constituting 17% of the total population, and over 20% of the adult population aged 20 and over are persons with disabilities (1,176,600). Many have to contend with low incomes (75% are persons with severe disability) and with difficulties in financing monthly expenses (19% of persons with severe disability and 11% of person with moderate disability), in owning and maintaining a car (63%) and in obtaining a driver's license (60%). An additional difficulty is to the ability to use transportation in order to travel independently. Adapting the physical and human environment to the physical, sensory, emotional and cognitive abilities of persons with disabilities coincides with the principle of equal rights for persons with disabilities and is an important step in the process of enabling independent, respectable and equal lives in the community while contributing to their mobility. Improving the traveling Possibilities of persons with disabilities provide extensive financial benefits, such as social and financial mobility for persons with disabilities, new employment possibilities, saving costs of special transportation, expanding possibilities for receiving vital services and increasing productivity in the economy.

