

# Gender in Jerusalem

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**Building Common Visions for the Future  
of Jerusalem: A Bottom-Up Approach**



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## Executive Summary

This paper is part of the “Building Visions for the Future of Jerusalem: A Bottom-Up Approach” project, which engages Israeli and Palestinian residents of East and West Jerusalem and aims to dignify diverse voices, enhance knowledge of the complexity of Jerusalem, and contribute toward constructive public and civil society engagement regarding the future of the city. The paper focuses on Gender. Gender analysis and the inclusion of women in discussions regarding problems and visions for change is fundamental for an effective intervention that takes into account the unique needs of all groups of Jerusalem residents.

The project examines the realities for Palestinian and Israeli female and male Jerusalem residents and their visions for change. The result reflects the city’s deep divisions and differing realities for its Palestinian and Israeli residents as well as for women and men. Analyzing the realities through a gender lens opens a gateway into the deepening of our understanding of the living conditions for all Jerusalem residents with more effective recommendations for prioritizing policy change. The paper begins with a brief overview of the project, outlines the background of the politics of gender within the context of Jerusalem, and analyzes the primary concerns and visions of the current residents of the city.

The paper also outlines results from the project’s survey of Jerusalem residents from East and West. Safety was the number one concern for Palestinian women and men, with Palestinian women having witnessed the highest level of violence, while Israeli women had witnessed the lowest. For Israeli men and women, their largest concerns in Jerusalem were related to sanitation and infrastructure. Employment and the cost of living was an area of significant concern to Palestinian residents, particularly to women, while education, community, and culture were also highly ranked, more predominantly by Palestinian men. A common concern for all Israeli and Palestinian residents of Jerusalem was infrastructure, including roads, sidewalks, and open spaces.

The project created Palestinian, Israeli, and joint working groups consisting of a wide diversity of Jerusalem residents, including youths and some professionals. The findings from the Israeli, Palestinian, and mixed thematic discussion groups focused on the following:



Safety and Protection, Infrastructure and Public Space, Youth and Education, and Political Representation. Several of the groups, including the safety and protection and the Palestinian youth group, consisted of only women and girls. Key problems outlined by the Palestinian groups included the following: checkpoints, safety, public transportation, sexual harassment, and the lack of sports and other activities for girls and boys. Key problems discussed by the Jewish Israeli groups included the following: the lack of public transportation on weekends, the lack of activities for girls and boys, the modest dress code for women, dark public spaces, and soldiers in the streets. Key recommendations and visions for change for the Israeli groups included the following: more lights in dark public spaces to make women feel more secure, sports activities, such as soccer for girls, and non-intrusive invisible security. Key recommendations and visions for change for the Palestinian residents from East Jerusalem included the following: activities and public spaces for male and female youths, the removal of security barriers and more gates, a united approach against sexual harassment, and better infrastructure such as sidewalks.

## About the Project

“Building Visions for the Future of Jerusalem: A Bottom-Up Approach” is a *Leonard Davis Institute* (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem) and *Israel-Palestine: Creative Regional Initiatives* (IPCRI) collaboration funded by the European Union. The project engages residents of East and West Jerusalem, urban planners, students, women, youths, and local leaders to work together to shape the current and future reality of their neighborhoods and the city as a whole. Urban planning and formal negotiations in Jerusalem have generally ignored the voices of the residents, in particular those from marginalized and diverse communities.

This project aims to dignify diverse voices, enhance knowledge of the complexity of Jerusalem, and contribute toward constructive public and civil society engagement with respect to the future of the city. The project includes surveys of residents of Jerusalem, the mapping of local needs, community projects, and the increased efficacy of local residents of Jerusalem in shaping the future of the city. In its first stage, the project engaged residents from different Jerusalem neighborhoods in generating equitable solutions to local problems.



Building Common Visions for the Future of Jerusalem: A Bottom-Up Approach

The project provided and utilized capacity-building and participatory techniques to empower local communities and work with residents to create small interventions that would improve their reality. The community projects were decided on by the residents and included the creation of green spaces, public gardens, and libraries, as well as the beautifying of neighborhoods and any other initiatives or actions they prioritized. We believe that focusing on current inequalities while building partnerships at the neighborhood level can empower marginalized communities and answer some of their needs.

In the final stage of the project, Jerusalem residents working in thematic groups discussed wider issues of concern. Israeli, Palestinian, and mixed thematic groups gathered to talk about four main themes: 1) Youth and Education, 2) Infrastructure and Public Spaces, 3) Political Leadership and Representation, and 4) Safety and Protection. We also asked them to imagine and create new visions regarding what they wish their reality to look like. The results are a baseline for the following policy papers, which will hopefully contribute to local input toward short- and long-term solutions in Jerusalem. In the end, the participants' visual visions, the leaders' verbal visions, and the policy papers will be presented in a traveling exhibition that will uncover some of Jerusalem's wishful future. Through this approach, we aim to engage and inspire residents, policy designers, and other activists to work on local creative initiatives, increase the knowledge of the complexities of Jerusalem, and contribute toward a negotiated solution for the city.

### Background: Gender Realities within East and West Jerusalem

As one of the most divided and polarized cities in the world, Jerusalem's diplomatic and political status is controversial and unresolved. Since the 1967 Six-Day War, when Israel occupied East Jerusalem and united the city under Israeli administration and control, the realities have been dramatically different for Palestinian residents living in East Jerusalem and Israeli residents living mostly in West Jerusalem. While the Israeli residents, comprising about 65% of the population, have full rights and access to all services, Palestinian residents, comprising about 35% of the population, live mostly in less developed East Jerusalem, do not have Israeli citizenship, and lack full socio-economic rights and access to equal services,



including infrastructure, education, the freedom of movement, political representation, and policing. Checkpoints, the lack of Palestinian police, and the general sentiment of vulnerability affect mainly Palestinians, especially women and youths. Palestinian women have the highest levels of unemployment, with up to only one quarter of Palestinian women employed in Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

The wide differences between the everyday realities of Palestinian and Israeli women and men touch every aspect of their lives, including education, housing, employment, the environment, transportation, security, and social services. Gender is a fundamental category in Jerusalem, alongside national identity, religious affiliation (including the divisions between the secular and the religious), and socio-economic differences. Previous research focused on women in Jerusalem has noted that most women feel safe within “their territory” or national neighborhoods; however, they are fearful when entering the areas of others.<sup>2</sup> This is especially the case for religious Muslim women and religious Jewish women who tend to spend time in the secular neighborhoods of Jerusalem and avoid each other’s neighborhoods. In addition, Palestinian women feel a deeper sense of insecurity than their Jewish counterparts and Palestinian men. This sentiment mirrors the sentiment of Muslim women in Israel. In a 2016 survey conducted by the Israeli Knesset on the status of women, more than 59% of women and 54% of men polled were concerned about being harmed by state institutions. Most concerned were Palestinian (Arab) women, of whom 74% worried about damaging behavior by state agencies that would negatively affect their personal security.<sup>3</sup>

Housing and infrastructure has been an area of wide differentiation and concern due to the lack of building permits in East Jerusalem, the fear of evictions and demolitions, and the lack of open space. Local NGOs noted that limited access to appropriate housing has had serious implications on women’s physical and psychological wellbeing and their familial and

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<sup>1</sup> The rate of employment among Palestinian women in Jerusalem varies between 13% and 20%. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, the employment rate for Palestinian women living in Jerusalem is 13%. Most Palestinian men are employed in trade, construction, and hospitality, and most Palestinian women are employed in education and health.

<sup>2</sup> Raanan, Malka Greenberg, and Noam Shoval. "Mental maps compared to actual spatial behavior using GPS data: A new method for investigating segregation in cities." *Cities* 36 (2014): 28-40.

<sup>3</sup> Survey, Knesset Committee on the Status of Women, 2016

[https://m.knesset.gov.il/EN/News/PressReleases/pages/Pr12073\\_pg.aspx](https://m.knesset.gov.il/EN/News/PressReleases/pages/Pr12073_pg.aspx)



social bonding.<sup>4</sup> The close proximity of people and the stress of living in cramped quarters with multiple families in the same household has increased violence against Palestinian women. Violence against women is a serious problem especially in East Jerusalem. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of police as Israeli police do not function in some Palestinian areas, and Palestinian residents in most East Jerusalem neighborhoods, especially women, would not call Israeli police. The lack of Israeli citizenship for East Jerusalem residents and the lack of connection to the Palestinian Authority, including Palestinian or non-national police, has left the residents vulnerable to harsh collective security measures, expulsion, and abuse by local security authorities. In October 2015, the Jerusalem Women's Coalition, which includes women NGOs and East Jerusalem feminists, issued an urgent request for international protection: "We ... call upon the international community to protect our families, community, and children. We are calling for the protection of our bodily safety and security when in our homes, walking in our neighborhood, reaching schools, clinics, work places, and worships venues".<sup>5</sup> The subsequent section will examine the results of the projects, including the survey, and some of the problems raised by the groups.

### Analysis: The Main Problems

The project's survey of Jerusalem residents was conducted in January 2018 with equal samples of Palestinian and Israeli residents as well as of women and men.<sup>6</sup> The survey demonstrated the national category to be far more important than gender. Safety was the number one concern for Palestinian women and men (Figure 1). While 53% of Israelis felt safe in Jerusalem, this sentiment was the case for only 32% of Palestinian residents. A small percentage of women felt safety to be a more important issue than their male counterparts; however, the main differences were national. While more than 20% of Palestinian women surveyed highlighted safety as their first priority, this was only the case for 3% of Israeli

<sup>4</sup> Aren Kiresh, 'Colonial Housing Policies in Occupied Jerusalem and its Effects on Families' Dynamics and Life Tactics,' Palestine Education for Employment (PEFE).

<sup>5</sup> Jerusalemite Women's Coalition, 'Palestinian Women from Occupied East Jerusalem Calling for Protection,' October 30, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> The public opinion survey included 612 Palestinian residents East Jerusalem and 516 Jewish residents of West Jerusalem. Full methodological information about the survey and results are available here:

<https://jerusalemvisions.huji.ac.il/book/survey-report>



women. In another survey question concerning the witnessing of violent acts in the past 6 months, 34% of Palestinian residents had witnessed violence between security forces and local residents, but this was only the case for 3% of Israeli residents. Palestinian women had observed the highest levels of violence, while Israeli women had experienced the lowest.

For Israeli men and women, their largest concerns were related to sanitation and infrastructure. Infrastructure was an equally important area of concern for Palestinian women and men. Although sanitation or the cleanliness of Jerusalem was not ranked highly in terms of priorities for Palestinians living in Jerusalem, this issue came up as a problem in most of the individual groups. Employment and the cost of living were an area of significant concern to Palestinian residents, in particularly to women, while education, community, and culture were highly ranked, more predominantly by Palestinian men. Israeli residents, both women and men, ranked public transportation, parking, commerce, and green spaces as their highest areas of concern after sanitation and infrastructure.

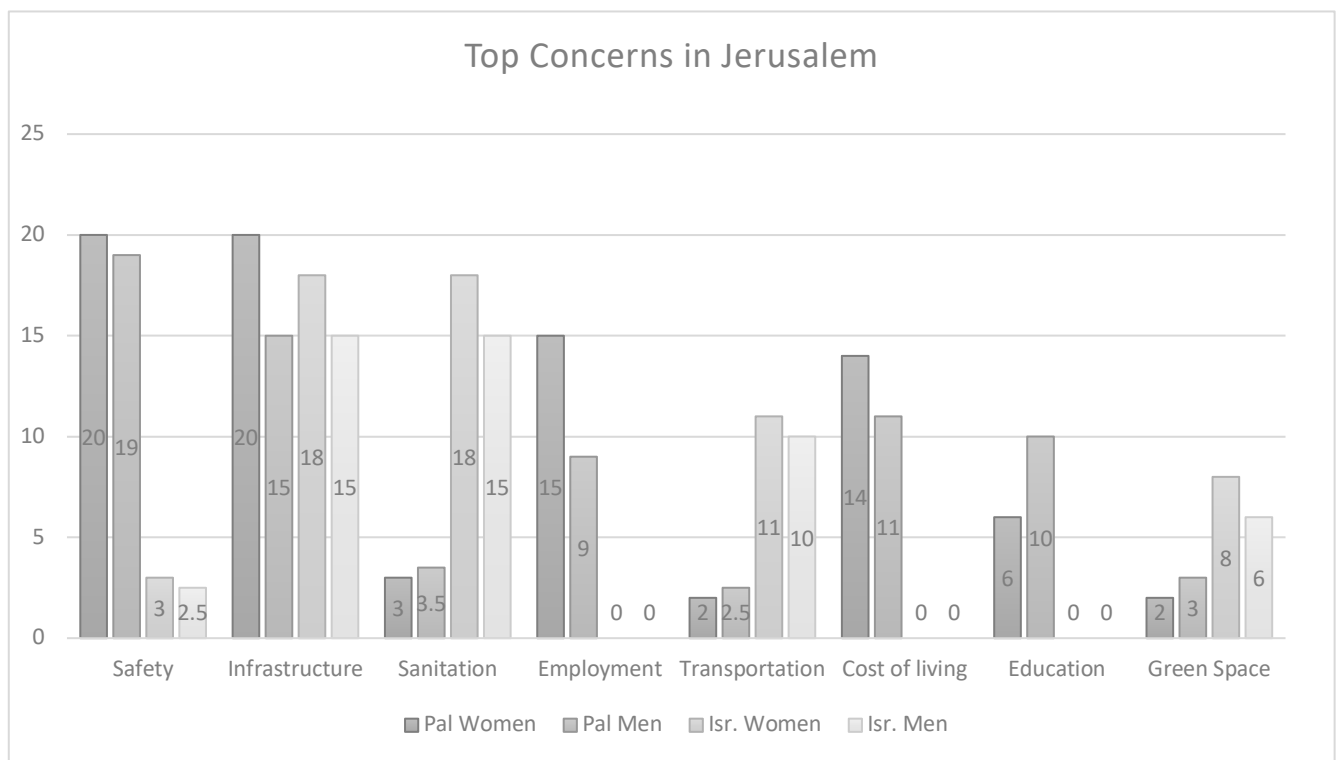


Figure 1: Top Concerns in Jerusalem. Source: One City Two Realities.



According to the survey, Israeli and Palestinian residents were dissatisfied with cleanliness, sports and cultural facilities, and transportation, and all residents were similarly satisfied with health care. The widest gaps were regarding public spaces, green spaces, and policing, where Palestinian residents expressed a deep dissatisfaction. In general, the sentiments of Israeli women were similar to those of Israeli men, while the sentiments of Palestinian women were similar to those of Palestinian men. According to the survey, Palestinian women were the most satisfied with public transportation, while Israeli men were the least satisfied. Palestinian women were the least satisfied with sports facilities, and women in general were less satisfied with sports facilities than men. One area of difference between women and men was regarding social distance. More Palestinian women work on the Israeli side than Palestinian men, and more Palestinian women have an employer who is an Israeli. Palestinian women have more contact than Palestinian men with residents on the other side.

The discussion within the thematic groups reflected some of the same problems, while also shedding light on new ones. The project created 12 thematic groups on the themes of Safety and Protection, Infrastructure and Public Spaces, Youth and Education, and Political Leadership. Many of the issues were closely interconnected with similar problems identified in East Jerusalem created by the lack of local leadership and policing. Issues such as cleanliness and the lack of safety and infrastructure were brought up in all groups; however, the severity of the issues was more significant in East Jerusalem. The smaller discussion groups also brought to the forefront more sensitive issues touching on current realities and future visions for women and men.

Although, within the large survey, Palestinian women were the most positive about public transportation in Jerusalem, in small groups, it was highlighted as being one of the problem areas. Palestinian women, especially teenage girls, noted several serious problems, namely not feeling safe and being harassed by bus drivers. Sexual harassment was present in all stories shared by the teenage participants from the all-girl Al-Abdallah School.

Participants shared stories of verbal sexual harassment by bus drivers as well as harassment taking place at the bus station due to the long wait experienced by students at the end of school. According to the participants, sometimes the teenage girls have to wait 40-50





minutes before a bus arrives, and unlike in West Jerusalem, schedules are not available at the bus stations. Another teen explained that bus drivers do not always care if there are 20 people standing on the bus, and they are all squeezed together, which leads to “inappropriate closeness” with men and boys on the bus. Beyond public transportation, other topics discussed as problems faced by Palestinian youths in Jerusalem included Israeli soldiers; traffic in Shu’fat refugee camp; the rigid education system; the lack of interactive activities during the school year; the lack of facilities in schools, particularly modern science labs; the lack of neighborhood libraries; checkpoints; and, as labeled by the Palestinian teens, the “apartheid wall.”



*Figure 2: Crowded bus*

Public transportation was a key concern for Israeli students, who are dependent on it to get to school, return home, and move around the city. According to the teenage participants from Israeli *Hamasorti* School, there are delays, and public transportation is not available in the nights or on Saturdays; thus, teenagers cannot travel. Teenage girls spoke about restrictions regarding dress and behavior. As explained by one participant, in many places in the city, there is the enforcement of certain forms of dress, coming from the Jewish Ultra-Orthodox and religious communities. According to the Israeli teens, there are not



enough spaces for young people to go to hang out in the city. Hence, many young people hang out on the streets and drink, which results in violence. Israeli girls also pointed out the lack of sport for women and girls. According to one participant, there are no football teams for women in Jerusalem, not in schools and not in other places: “we deserve to have the opportunity to play on a football team, just like men.” The mixed youth group pointed to many problems in Jerusalem including the following: violence, the hatred of others, violence against girls and women (Figure 3), traffic and public transportation, pollution, the destruction of property, and protests that harm the population.



*Figure 3: Picture of the Mixed youth group: “If you think this only happens in the movies you are not living in Jerusalem. As an adolescent living in Jerusalem”*

In terms of security and protection, the Palestinian women’s group called attention to the linkages between the poor infrastructure and the lack of sports activities for youths in East Jerusalem and the safety of women. For example, poor street lighting made it dangerous for women to be in the streets after dark (Figure 4). Palestinian male youths are lacking activities and places and parks to hang out in; thus, they are in the streets at night, making



Palestinian women feel uncomfortable. The Palestinian women also expressed the fear that they will be mistakenly targeted by security forces and shot. Regarding safety and protection, the Israeli women’s group also expressed a fear of the soldiers in the streets, attacks by violent perpetrators, items in the street that might be explosives, and unlighted public spaces in Jerusalem that they are hesitant to enter when they are alone. Their feelings of insecurity increase the closer they come to the border area of the Palestinian neighborhoods.



*Figure 4: Picture of the Palestinian safety group, a road in East Jerusalem: “Many roads without pavement and lightening at night, we don’t feel safe at all to walk there”*

The three groups—Palestinian, Israeli, and mixed—which focused on leadership also discussed issues related to gender. The Palestinian group expressed concerns over the closed-mindedness of society, early marriage, drug abuse, and high dropout rates of schools. The Palestinian group also spoke about the lack of leadership and the isolation of residents of East Jerusalem as they do not feel that they belong to the Jerusalem municipality as it is an institution of occupation, they are not part of Israel, and they are separated from the Palestinian Authority. The Israeli group discussed a lack of accountability and transparency of



policies designed at the national level according to national and symbolic aspirations and not according to the daily needs of the residents.

### Visions for the Future

All the Palestinian, Israeli, and mixed groups came up with ideas for improving Jerusalem and their visions for the future. The facilitator(s) for each group asked them to select the three most important solutions or visions for the future in Jerusalem. The first solution of the Palestinian youth group made up of teenage girls was the removal of checkpoints and the separation wall. The teen participants' vision for the future was the right to see green trees on their way to school, rather than grey walls. The second solution was public transportation where screens should display bus arrival times and any delays. As noted by one participant: "I just want to see a digital screen that shows the time my bus will take to arrive, just like on the Israeli side." The third vision was the creation of scientific laboratories in East Jerusalem schools (Figure 5). As noted by one participant, "Having a modern science laboratory at school would allow me to practice science and not see it only as theory. Maybe I would become a scientist one day."



Figure 5: Picture of the Palestinian Youth group.



The solutions of the mixed youth group, which was made up of Kids for Peace teenage participants, also focused on checkpoints, violence against women and girls, and cleaner streets. The teens noted that “in an ideal world, checkpoints should not exist, and people should have the freedom to move. But until that happens, more checkpoints should be opened, so I do not have to stand for hours waiting at the only one available in my area.” Violence against women was an issue that touched everyone. As noted by the participants: “Women and girls have to feel like they are not alone. We share the responsibility to put a stop to this violence. It is not something we can’t do.” Finally, regarding the trash in the streets, according to the participants, the municipality should put more trash cans in East Jerusalem’s streets, so people can use them and keep the streets clean. Solutions to smelly Jerusalem and the adding of garbage bins were pointed out by several groups in both East and West Jerusalem.



*Figure 6: : Picture of the Mixed safety group – Vision for a shared space*

Regarding safety and protection, the mixed women’s group, made up of Israeli and Palestinian women, suggested the creation of parks on the Palestinian side, giving the male



youths, who make women feel insecure, somewhere to hang out. As noted by the participants, male youths are not bad youths, they just do not have anywhere to go. Suggestions included the creation of parks with public exercise machines in East Jerusalem, better lighting, and canteens/restaurants in existing and new parks so that women and kids would feel safe there and so as to direct youths to the parks created for them (Figure 6). The group's suggestions mirrored some of the same suggestions made by the Palestinian teenage girls and Israeli students. In general, the discussions in groups were similar to the challenges outlined in the wider Jerusalem survey, but they also brought up additional issues, including sentiments of fear and insecurity, violence against women, child marriage, sexual harassment, and the lack of parks and "hanging out" spots for youths, especially in East Jerusalem. The discussion also brought up minor issues that affect women in a major way, such as lights in streets and parks.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

We would recommend the following steps in the field of gender in Jerusalem:

1. More public open spaces and activities for teenage girls and boys in Jerusalem, especially in East Jerusalem.
2. Safer and more reliable public transportation. Up-to-date schedules in East Jerusalem and available public transportation in West Jerusalem.
3. Bus drivers should limit crowding on buses, and drivers should receive mandatory training on sexual harassment to ensure the safety and wellbeing of female passengers.
4. Legitimate local policing available for all Jerusalem residents.
5. Security that is not aggressive, intrusive, or visible.
6. Sports activities for women and girls.
7. Transparent and inclusive local leadership that is representative of all residents.

