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A medical research lab at Tel Aviv University.

Nir Kafri

Report: Israeli research excels despite declining university budgets

Lior Dattel

Many of Israel's universities are still global leaders in scientific research, even though Israel spends less than the OECD average on its universities on a per-student basis, according to a report by the Technion.

The report, produced by the university's **Samuel Neaman Institute for National Policy Research**, found that Israel ranks among the top 10 nations in research in fields including computer science, chemistry, physics, biology, business management and economics.

Four Israeli research universities stand out in international rankings – Hebrew University, the Technion, the Weizmann Institute of Science and Tel Aviv University.

They are still ranking highly on international lists despite the crisis facing Israel's higher education over the past decade due to poor management and budget erosion. The crisis harmed research infrastructure and instruction quality, significantly reducing staff and sending Israeli academics abroad.

"The state of research in Israel relative to that abroad is a source of pride, but this is the result

of investments made in the 1980s," said **Prof. Uri Kirsch**, who conducted the research. "It's too early to say what the long-term effects will be of the crisis over the last decade. We need to look not just at what our relative place is in research quality, but whether we stayed in the same place relative to countries such as Iran, Turkey and countries in the Far East, which have invested massive sums in higher education over the past few years."

The data rank Israeli research based on the number of citations of articles written at the country's universities.

Israeli computer science research ranks second in the world, and Israeli research in space science and chemistry ranked fourth and fifth, respectively.

Israeli research in physics, life sciences, psychiatry, psychology, molecular biology, and economics and business management all ranked sixth worldwide.

However, Kirsch found in a previous study that the quality of Israeli research declined in global rankings in several major fields. As of the end of the last decade Israeli research ranked 13th overall, versus 12th at the end of the 1990s and 10th at the end of the 1980s.