



## Israeli universities maintain international standing

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A study found the universities keeping up standards despite budget cuts.

Israel has kept its academic standing in the world, but the competition has become tougher, according to a comprehensive comparative study for 2003-13 by the **Samuel Neaman Institute for National Policy Research** senior research fellow **Prof. Uri Kirsch** for the Council of Higher Education Planning and Budget Committee.

The report examined the number of academic articles published by universities in different fields and the quality of the publications, which was measured by the number of citations by other articles. The report found that while Israeli academe is struggling to cope with the growth in global research, in terms of quality, Israel was holding its own.

114,000 Israeli academic articles were published in 2003-13, out of 10.7 million articles in leading fields published worldwide. The average number of citations of an Israeli article was 12.5, compared with the global average of 10.3.

Israel is ranked 12th worldwide in the number of articles in psychology, 16th in computer science, mathematics, interdisciplinary sciences, and neurology, 17th in the social sciences, and 20th in immunology, molecular biology, and genetics. In computer science, Israel is ranked second in the number of citations of articles. It is in the top ten in citations in space, chemistry, materials, psychology and psychiatry, biochemistry, genetics, physics, flora

and fauna sciences, engineering, neurology, mathematics, and the social sciences. There are few fields in which Israel is not in the top twenty in citations.

21.5% of Israeli articles were in medicine, 14.4% in physics, 8.6% in chemistry, 6.8% in engineering, 6.5% in biology and biochemistry, and 6.1% in the social sciences. 28% of articles published by **Tel Aviv University** were in medicine.

In the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), **Hebrew University of Jerusalem** makes the top 100, followed by the **Technion Israel Institute of Technology**, **Weizmann Institute of Science**, and Tel Aviv University. No other university makes the top 200 or top 500 universities.

"The study was carried out against the backdrop of claims that the first decade of the 21st century was a 'lost decade' for Israeli academe, because of extensive budget cuts. It is not yet possible to measure the damage in full. Like Israel's handsome achievements in the sciences, the damage is usually expressed after a lag, and is liable to appear in reports that will be published in 10-20 years," says **Kirsch**.

"Meanwhile, it seems that the universities have succeeded in meeting the crisis. Some fields have been affected, but all in all, Israel is in the front ranks of global academic research. This is a mark of honor for the system's sturdiness. However, as time passes and more countries invest in their academic institutions, to keep its standing, Israel will have to increase its investment."

**Kirsch** concludes, "Israel must take the decision to invest, firstly across the board in academe, so that as many people as possible will receive a higher education. Secondly, fields in which there is a chance of achieving excellence should be chosen and invested in more heavily."

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