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Report estimates hundreds of thousands of at-risk teens in Israel

A recent report finds 'every night thousands of young people' roam public places, taking part in drug use, self-harm and prostitution; One-fifth found to be homeless or not living at home.

Asaf Zagrizak | Last update: 08.05.17 , 22:56

Hundreds of thousands of Israeli teenagers are estimated to be at risk, according to a report submitted to President Reuven Rivlin on Monday by ELEM, a nonprofit watchdog monitoring at-risk youth.

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The report's estimates are based on ELEM's connection with some 20,000 teenagers in 2016. About a fifth of them (3,811 teenagers) were homeless or living in places other than their homes. Among them, 231 were living in a dangerous place or with a stranger in return for sexual favors.



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Over 700 teenagers the nonprofit group dealt with were involved in prostitution —451 of them on a regular basis and 336 occasionally. Teenage girls were three times more likely to be involved in prostitution than teenage boys (550 girls compared to 179 boys).

Calls to help lines regarding sexual abuse

Ages of minors for whom help was sought

Under 6	20.1%
8-6	12.8%
12-8	25.6%
15-12	18.3%
18-15	22.9%

Distribution by age

Under 12	3%
13-12	1%
15-14	5%
18-16	40%
21-19	37%
26-22	14%

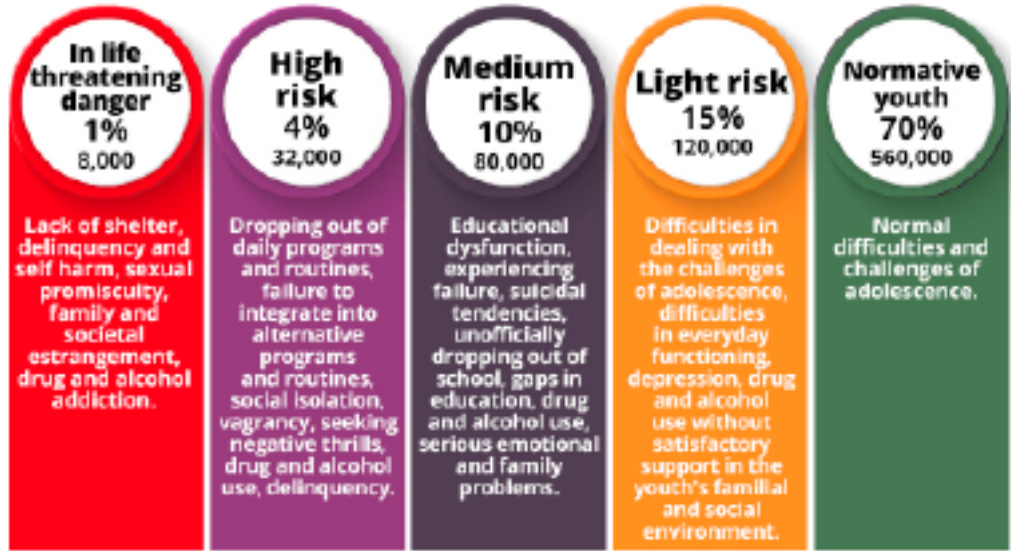
Where teens referred for further treatment

Welfare, education and aid	944
Other ELEM programs	394
IDF/national service	221
Crisis intervention	126
Employment or professional training	11

ELEM employs 280 professionals and 1,600 volunteers, who maintain continuous contact with the youth.

A report submitted to the president states: "Every night thousands of young people roam public parks, city squares, recreation centers and hiding places. Many of them dropped out of educational or therapeutic frameworks. In the absence of support and assistance, these young people suffer from environmental neglect, social and emotional problems and may deteriorate into drug and alcohol abuse and engage in destructive activity and self-harm. "

Risk level for teenagers in Israel



ELEM President Na'ama Barak added: "ELEM is at the forefront of the struggle for the care of homeless youth and young adults, who we lead together with young people who receive assistance from us and regularly participate in meetings held by the Knesset subcommittee in charge of treating homeless young people, where they make themselves heard. We are currently working to open a new shelter for homeless young women in Jerusalem, and enlisting public support for the project through (fundraising website—ed) Headstart.

"The shelter will be open 24 hours a day and will provide young women with a warm place to sleep, nutritious food, mental support and enrichment workshops, giving young women a real chance to raise their heads above the water," added Barak.