

Survey summary: Family ties between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank

September 2013

The 1993 Oslo Accords defined the Gaza Strip and the West Bank as a single territorial unit. This renowned international declaration is the outcome of the geo-political history of the two areas, which, until 1949, were inseparable parts of the territory of the British Mandate. In 1949, when Israel, Egypt and Jordan signed the Armistice Agreement, the West Bank was transferred to the control of the Jordanian Kingdom (without international recognition). The Gaza Strip came under Egyptian military rule. The separation between the two areas was made worse by the fact that each took in hundreds of thousands of refugees during the 1948 war and a smaller wave of refugees during the 1967 war.

The refugee issue is particularly central in Gaza as the Strip is home to a fifth of the Palestinian refugee population and refugees make up the majority of its residents. Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank originate in a single geographic region, which, under the violent circumstances of war, was divided into two areas that continue to be home to a large number of refugees. The two areas were not historically, socially and economically separate or isolated from one another.

A survey of the family ties between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and Israel conducted at Gisha's request reveals that approximately 26% of Gaza's residents have relatives in the West Bank. About 7% have first degree relatives in the West Bank and about 19% have more distant relatives there. In addition, about 15% of the people living in the Gaza Strip have relatives in Israel and/or East Jerusalem. In total, 31% of Gaza residents have relatives in Israel, East Jerusalem or the West Bank. Seventy percent of these residents are in touch with their relatives, but most (56%) keep in touch via telephone or internet, and a small percentage (9%) meet their relatives in person.

The survey was conducted by the Palestine Center for Policy and Survey Research, headed by Khalil Shikaki. It was held in September of 2013 and included interviews with a representative sample of 1270 randomly selected individuals from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Results of the survey in Gaza

Relatives in the West Bank

26.4% of Gaza residents have relatives in the West Bank

- ✓ 7.2% of Gaza residents have first degree relatives in the West Bank
- ✓ 10.4% of Gaza residents have second degree relatives in the West Bank
- ✓ 8.8% of Gaza residents have more distant relatives in the West Bank
- ✓ 17.6% of Gaza residents have first or second degree relatives in the West Bank

Relatives in East Jerusalem

8.5% of Gaza residents have relatives in East Jerusalem

- ✓ 1.4% of Gaza residents have first degree relatives in East Jerusalem
- ✓ 3.7% of Gaza residents have second degree relatives in East Jerusalem
- ✓ 3.4% of Gaza residents have more distant relatives in East Jerusalem

Relatives in Israel

6.7% of Gaza residents have relatives in Israel

- ✓ 0.7% of Gaza residents have first degree relatives in Israel
- ✓ 3.2% of Gaza residents have second degree relatives in Israel
- ✓ 2.7% of Gaza residents have more distant relatives in Israel

Other results:

31% of Gaza residents have relatives in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, or Israel

- ✓ 70% of them keep in touch with their relatives
- ✓ 56.4% of those who keep in touch, do so via phone, internet or mail (no in-person meetings)