

Accidents in the Israeli Construction Center: Data Report

Analysis and Visualization of Data from
Kav LaOved's Project "Nirtamim-Building Alliances for
Construction Workers' Safety"

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Introduction

Each year, hundreds of workers are injured and dozens die in Israel's construction sector; they are predominantly Palestinians, migrant workers, and asylum seekers. Over 2019 and 2020, construction sector deaths accounted for 57% and 53% of all workplace casualties (Situation Report). Indeed, the Israeli construction sector is 2.5 times deadlier than that of the European Union (Situation Report). This phenomenon can be traced back to government negligence: safety legislation and regulations are largely outdated; construction sites undergo safety inspections just once every 3 years on average. Moreover, because of the non-enforcement of reporting guidelines, there is no central government repository for information about accidents in the sector. Following public outcry, the Israeli government implemented several legislative reforms to improve safety conditions and inspections in the sector, but these have not led to measurable improvements (Situation Report).

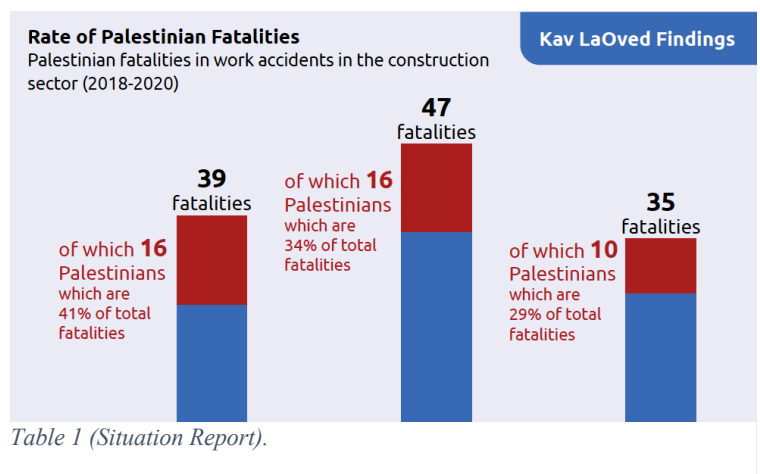
The organization Kav LaOved (Workers' Hotline) has initiated a project called "[Nirtamim-Building Alliances for Construction Workers' Safety](#)". This project tracks accident information to urge the Ministry of Labor to improve oversight of construction working conditions. Because the Israeli government does not publicize data about accident rates in the construction sector, the Nirtamim project compiles injury information from hospital emergency rooms, HMOs, individuals, and news sources. This report summarizes the data collected between the years 2017 and 2020. It should be noted that, because of the decentralized and ongoing nature of the data collection process, this data set is necessarily incomplete. Nevertheless, it offers some insights into the general patterns and dynamics that characterize injuries in the Israeli construction sector.

Data Overview

Nationality

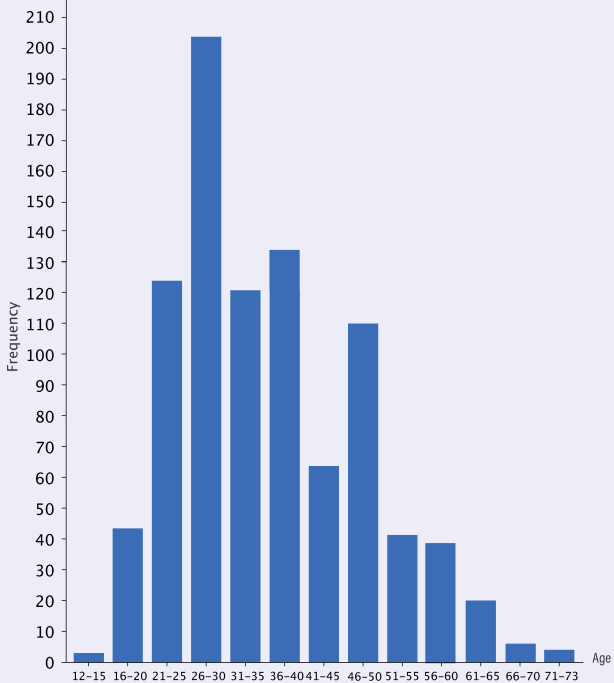
Due to the manner of reporting, workers' citizenship and nationality information is very limited. However, within the construction sector overall, over two-thirds of construction workers are Palestinians, Arab citizens of Israel, and migrant workers, who are hired for the most dangerous jobs (Situation Report, 37).

At the end of 2020, the Israeli construction sector employed over 300 thousand workers, of whom 90-95 thousand are West Bank Palestinians. Of these, 60-65 hold work permits and 30 thousand others are unpermitted. Palestinians comprise over half of those involved in constructing the building frames, which are particularly dangerous jobs characterized by frequent falls from structures. These falls make up half of the accidents in the sector and a large proportion of the mortalities (Situation Report, 38).



Age Distribution of Accidents

Number of people involved in accidents by age (2017–2020)



Age

The chart to the left represents the age distribution of workers who experienced accidents in the construction sectors in the years 2017 – 2020. Most workers involved in construction accidents are between the ages of 21 and 50, with those aged 26-30 most represented.

The youngest person involved in an accident was aged 12 years old. Mousa Fawzi Al-Amital, a Palestinian citizen of Israel, was killed in the village Bir Hadaj (near Be'er Sheva) on October 29, 2019, by a tractor that overturned. He was pronounced dead on the scene.

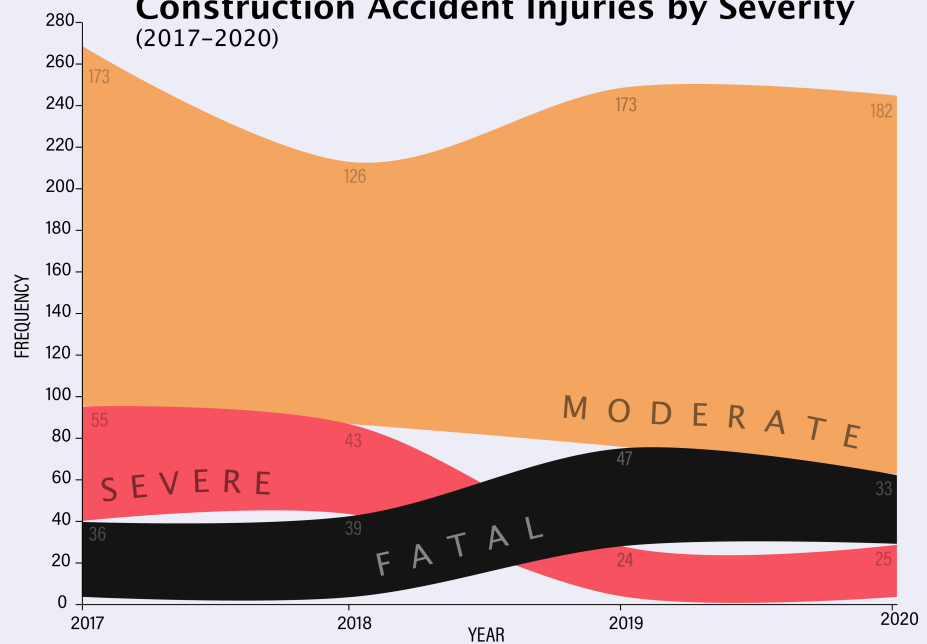
The two oldest people involved in accidents were both 73. One was severely injured by a disk saw at a construction site in the Hefer Valley in 2020. The other, Danya Cebus, was an Israeli Jew who was hit by a truck at a construction site for the Tel Aviv lightrail on October 28, 2018 and died of his injuries later that night.

Injury Severity

Each accident is ranked into one of three categories to designate the severity of the injury: moderate, severe, or deadly. The stream graph below shows the proportion of all accidents resulting in moderate, severe, or deadly injury. These three categories are subdivided by year to indicate changes in proportion over time.

The findings show that while moderate injury rates have remained relatively constant, severe injuries have declined significantly while fatality rates have varied.

Construction Accident Injuries by Severity (2017–2020)



Location

The map below demonstrates the locations of the accidents, differentiated by the severity of the injuries. Moderate injuries are represented in orange, severe in red, and deadly in black.

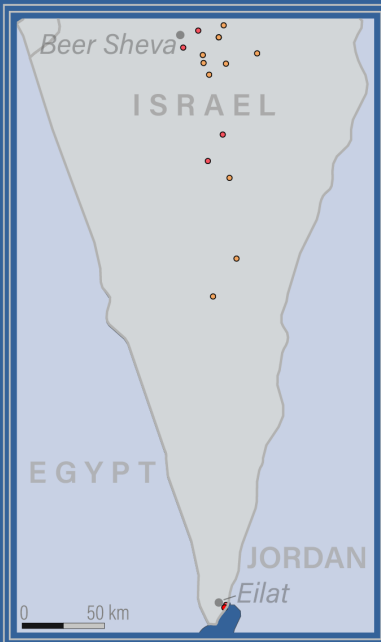
Accidents in the Israeli Construction Sector (2017-2020)

Each point represents one worker injured or killed in a construction accident.

Injury severity:

- moderate
- severe
- fatal

0 25 50 km



Tel Aviv

Haifa

LEBANON

Nablus

Ramallah

Jerusalem/
Al Quds

Ashkelon

Gaza City

ISRAEL

WEST
BANK

GAZA

JORDAN

On August 1st, 2017, Khalifa Mohammed Khalifa, a 30-year-old Palestinian, fell from the third floor of a construction site in Modi'in Illit and died of a head injury.

On May 14th, 2020, Pokin Lin, a 47-year-old Chinese worker, was crushed between a platform and a ceiling on a construction site. He died on the scene.

Summary

Overall, analysis of the construction sector's accident data highlights several trends within the dataset. First, within the 24 entries that identify contractor names, four contractors account for most of all accidents: Elektra Bniyaah (7), Rimon BeDaon (5), Naot Shamir (5), and B.T.S. (4). Within the four-year period, there have been 802 reported injuries and 155 deaths. According to KLO's data, 16.2% of reported accidents are deadly, with the remaining 83.8% resulting in injuries. Of these, 18.6% were severe, and 81.4% were moderate.

Implications and Conclusion

At the beginning of the Covid pandemic, the Israeli government shut down most sectors except for the most essential ones: healthcare and construction. While this signals the importance of the construction sector in the eyes of the Israeli government, construction is also one of the least-regulated sectors in Israel. In fact, since Palestinian day laborers were unable to return to their homes in the West Bank, they were often forced to sleep on-site for weeks at a time (Situation Report). The lack of regulation and enforcement on the part of the Israeli government suggests a disparity between the government's valuation of the construction sector as "essential" and its treatment of construction workers as disposable.

Works Referenced

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