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## The “geography” of child maltreatment in Israel: Findings from a national data set of cases reported to the social services

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### Abstract

**Objectives:** This article examines the “geography” of reported cases of child maltreatment in Israel by determining its frequency and rates according to nationality, area of residence, and size and type of locality.

**Method:** The study collected data at the local level in Israel based on reports to social services of cases of child maltreatment during 2000; locality is the unit of analysis.

**Results:** The rate of reported cases of child maltreatment was 17.8 per 1,000 children in Israel in 2000. The rates varied, however, among different localities. They were lower in Arab localities (9 per 1,000 children) than in the Jewish ones (20 per 1,000), higher in large cities and other socioeconomic affluent localities (19 per 1,000), and varied according to the geographic area.

**Conclusions:** This study demonstrates considerable variation in rates of reported cases of child maltreatment by locality and by population makeup. Thus, to fulfill the Israeli legislation of mandatory reporting of any reasonable suspicion of child maltreatment, the state should better develop policies and services that encourage reporting of child maltreatment among the Arab and ultraorthodox populations and in smaller or socioeconomic disadvantaged localities. Furthermore, the social services must build a bridge to the minority populations in Israel, developing their trust in these services and increasing their propensity to use them.

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**Keywords:** Child protection services; Abuse and neglect; Child maltreatment; “Social-geography”

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## Introduction

Although child maltreatment is not a new phenomenon, recent years have brought it to the forefront of public concern and social research. Numerous studies on the frequency of child maltreatment have been carried out around the world (e.g., Gilbert, 1997; National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse, 1992; Tang, 1998). Such studies were carried out using either population-based surveys (Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994; Gelles & Straus, 1988; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980) or by using administrative data of reports to social services on child maltreatment cases (Finkelhor, Williams, & Burns, 1988; Marovich & Wilson, 1999). Either way, studies of the frequency of child maltreatment have proved to be an important contribution to the design of policies and to the delivery of services for children at risk, especially when the studies present not only the overall rates of maltreatment but also its “geography”, that is, the distribution across regions, communities, cultures, and populations of child maltreatment within a given society (National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse, 1992; National Research Council, 1993; Swanson, 2000).

Thus, it is surprising to learn that such studies, on a national level, are still to be carried out in Israel. This is especially striking as the Israeli research community has produced numerous studies in the field of child maltreatment (Dolev & Yoel, 1995; Efrat-Gut & Ben-Arieh, 2001; Haj-Yahia & Ben-Arieh, 2000). The study reported here aims to fill this gap by providing data on the frequency of reported cases of child maltreatment nationally as well as its geography across nationalities, ethnic affiliation, geographical areas, and communities.

## Background: studying the “geography” of child maltreatment by collecting data on reported cases

In 1967, David Gill was the first to collect data on all reported cases of child maltreatment in the United States. Since then, many more have conducted similar studies both in the United States and elsewhere (Marovich & Wilson, 1999; National Research Council, 1993). Studying reported cases is usually less resource-demanding, and it is easier to relate the findings to issues of service delivery and service quality (Van Voorhis & Gilbert, 1998). On the other hand, studying reported cases is less adaptive to changes in the definition and identification of child maltreatment and runs the risk of over-representing families who are already known to social services (Buchanan, 1996; Lawrence-Karski, 1997). Furthermore, using this method for studying child maltreatment can lead to both under- and overestimates of the overall frequency of child maltreatment. Many argue that the reported cases are only the “tip of the iceberg” of the real phenomena (Ben-Arieh, Zionit, & Binstock-Rivlin, 2000; Buchanan, 1996). Others argue that the reported cases include reports that were proved false, and thus overestimate the phenomena (Gilbert, 1997; Tomison, 1995).

In Israel, researchers have invested considerable effort in studying child maltreatment by collecting data on reported cases. All of these efforts, however, focused on a specific locality or social service, with very few studies examining the phenomena nationally. For example, several studies collected data on reported cases in Be’er Seva and Haifa (Ben-Rabi & Levi, 1995; Dolev & Yoel, 1995; Laytner, 1996), two different locales. Others collected data on reported cases of child maltreatment in a specific agency or service, such as reports known to the police or to the health system (Ben-Arieh et al., 2000).

In this article, we offer the first effort to aggregate national data on child maltreatment cases reported to the social services, the principal agency for handling child maltreatment reports by virtue of legislation and practice. This effort was initiated by the Israel National Council for the Child (the country's oldest and largest nongovernmental organization devoted to children's well-being), and the collection of reports to the social services in 2000 (Ben-Arieh et al., 2000) constitutes the basis for the study reported here.

The study has three goals. First, as noted, the study aims to provide, for the first time, national data on reported cases of child maltreatment. Second, it aims to collect data in a manner that would enable analysis by nationality, geographic region, and type of locality. Finally, the study aims to collect data on the different forms and distribution of maltreatment as they were reported to the social services.

## Method

In 1989, the Israeli criminal code was amended, rendering it mandatory to report any reasonable suspicion of instances in which a child was "at risk" (in Israel, the law defines any child who is a victim of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, as well as one whose physical needs are neglected as being a child at risk). Reports were made to the police or to a social service "child protection officer" (CPO). Failure to do so is a criminal offense that could entail imprisonment (Kadman, 1992). CPOs, who are specially trained and commissioned social workers, are assigned to local social services. There are 276 municipalities and regional councils in Israel that maintain social service departments, each staffed with CPOs. Smaller localities may engage only one part-time CPO, whereas larger locales employ several full-time CPOs. Israel does not have a central administrative data system in which all reports on child maltreatment are aggregated. Thus, the social services in the 276 localities served as the data source for this study.

The data collection method was built on collecting aggregated data on reported cases of child maltreatment from each locality. To collect the data, a detailed questionnaire on child maltreatment reports was sent to the director of the social services in all 276 localities in Israel. The questionnaire was accompanied by a letter explaining the study's objectives and significance and a request for cooperation. The directors of the social services were asked to complete the questionnaire or ask their chief CPO to do so. In the questionnaire, they were asked to include information on the number of child maltreatment reports received during the year 2000, the distribution of the reports by the victim's age and gender, the type of reported maltreatment, and the number of reports found to be false. All the requested data were in aggregate numbers for the full year in the specific locality. No personal information on specific cases was requested. Thus, as the study collected only administrative aggregate data, it was exempted from an IRB approval. The first round of letters and questionnaires was dispatched in March 2001, with reminders sent to social services that did not respond by the end of May 2001. A third round of letters and questionnaires were mailed in July 2001, followed by phone calls to those who did not reply by the end of August 2001. Thus, local social services were approached up to four times by mail and phone before being eliminated from the survey for nonresponse.

These data were then classified by six characteristics of the localities (nationality, geographic area, socioeconomic status, locality type, locality size, and locality's predominant religion or religiosity) and entered into one national data set. Locality characteristics are of special interest in Israel, as individual localities are responsible for, and in fact deliver, the vast majority of social services. Hence, variability in reported child maltreatment rates may be related to social service structure that is in turn contingent, among other variables, on locality characteristics. This method is similar to those used by Trocme, Tourigny,

MacLaurin, and Fallon (2003), who conducted the Canadian incidence study of reported child maltreatment, although it differs by the Canadian study focus on the reported cases frequency and distribution along nationality, cultural, and geographical lines.

The six characteristics used in the study are defined as follows:

### *Nationality*

All localities in Israel can be categorized into three different groups. The first group (the majority) is exclusively populated by Jews and is referred to as Jewish localities. The second group is populated exclusively by Arabs and is referred to as Arab localities. The third group (only a handful of localities) is populated by both Arabs and Jews and thus is referred to as mixed localities.

### *Geographic area*

Although Israel is a very small country, it has widely differing geographic areas. Based on the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), this study used the following six geographic areas: the far north, Haifa and the lower north, center-coastal strip, Jerusalem and environs, south, and occupied territories (Jews only).

### *Socioeconomic status*

The study further sorts all localities by its socioeconomic status—based on the CBS social and economic ranking of all localities in Israel. The concept of socioeconomic level of the population reflects a combination of basic characteristics of a specific geographical unit investigated (in our case a locality). While financial resources are a central feature of the socioeconomic level, they are not the only ones. The socioeconomic level comprises other elements such as housing (density and quality), home appliances (e.g., air conditioners, personal computers, and VCR's), motorization level, schooling and education, employment and unemployment profile, various types of socioeconomic distress, and demographic characteristics (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001)

### *Type of locality*

The study next sorted all localities into four additional categories: cities, local councils (smaller urban localities), regional councils (small, nonurban localities), and *Kibbutzim*, *Moshavim*, and villages (small independent agriculture localities).

### *Size of localities*

Locality size fell into one of six categories, based on CBS official population figures: population less than 4,999; 5,000–9,999; 10,000–49,000; 50,000–99,999; 100,00–199,000; and 200,000 and greater.

### *Religion and religiosity*

Arab localities were predominantly a combination of Muslims, Christian, and Druze Arabs. Among the Jewish localities, the study differentiated populations by degree of religiosity, as indicated by the

Table 1

Comparison between localities that responded and were included in the study and all the localities in Israel

Characteristics of localities	All localities in Israel	Localities that responded
<i>N</i>	276	184
Nationality (%)		
Jewish	68.1	68.5
Arab	29.7	28.3
Mixed	2.2	3.2
Religiosity (%)		
Percentage of substantial ultraorthodox population	5.1	4.9
Geographic region (%)		
North	38.0	38.5
South	11.7	10.1
Center	50.3	51.4

presence of a large portion of ultraorthodox residents. Although unable to classify the localities by the exact portion of its ultraorthodox population (due to definition and measurement issues), the study did identify the localities with a large portion (>15% of the child population) of ultraorthodox residents (Ben-Arieh et al., 2000). Thus, we were able to classify the localities as either including large portions of ultraorthodox Jews or not.

The next step was to analyze the distribution among reported cases by type of maltreatment, gender, and age group as rates of reported cases per 1,000 children in the appropriate population group. Demographic data for this portion of the study were from Ben-Arieh et al. (2000). Different rates were compared in a pair-wise method. Based on Newcombe (1998), we have employed an unconditional method for setting confidence intervals for the difference between pairs of rates, using the following formula:

$$Z_{12} = \frac{P_1 - P_2}{\sqrt{(P_1(1 - P_1))/N_1 + (P_2(1 - P_2))/N_2}}$$

where  $Z_{12}$ : degree of difference between pairs of rates,  $P$ : rate, and  $N$ : number of children.

Furthermore, in light of our population size, an  $\alpha/2$  probability was chosen as our threshold; hence a significant statistical difference would be evident when  $|Z_{12}| \geq \alpha/2$  (0.196).

Our overall response rate was 67% of the relevant localities, from which we were successful in obtaining data on 84%, or 1.77 million, of the country's children (from birth to 18 years of age). As noted in Table 1, there were no differences between the localities that responded and those that did not in terms of nationality, religiosity, or geographic location.

## Results

As noted in Table 2, 31,168 maltreated children (17.8 per 1,000 children) were reported to social services during 2000 in Israel. Because only 67% of the localities, but 84% of the child population was included, we estimate that nationally approximately 37,500 cases of child maltreatment were reported.

Neglect is the most common type of maltreatment, followed by physical abuse, while sexual and mental abuses are far less common. Furthermore, older children (aged 12–17) are over-represented in the child

Table 2  
Reported child maltreatment in 2000

General	
Number of reported cases	31,618
Rate per 1,000 children	17.8
% of false reports	2.8
Type of maltreatment (%)	
Neglect	34.6
Physical	30.5
Mental	16.4
Other	10.8
Sexual	7.7
Gender (%)	
Male	53.9
Female	46.1
Age group (%)	
0–5	21.8
6–11	36.7
12–17	41.3

welfare cases, making up some 33% of the general population but 41.3% of the reported cases. Only 2.8% of all reported cases were classified as false reports.

Table 3 presents the numbers and rates of reported cases of child maltreatment by the various characteristics of the localities described above. The rate of reported cases of child maltreatment is significantly lower in Arab localities than in the Jewish and mixed localities ( $Z_{12}$  is 47.53 and 32.89, respectively). The Jewish localities had a higher rate of reported child maltreatment cases than the nationwide rate ( $Z_{12} = 13.56$ ). One question that arises from these data is whether this gap reflects differences in actual rates of child maltreatment across nationality lines or simply a gap in reporting. We discuss this more later.

The rates of reported child maltreatment cases vary according to geographic area, with significantly higher rates than the national average in the southern area of Israel and in Haifa and the lower northern regions ( $Z_{12} = 12.94$  and 8.36, respectively). Furthermore, rates were similar to national averages in the far north and along the central coast strip, and they were significantly lower in the Jerusalem area and among the Jewish population living in settlements in (the West Bank and Gaza Strip) the occupied territories ( $Z_{12} = 24.24$  and 10.48, respectively).

The data reveal a situation in which the rate of reported child maltreatment cases in socioeconomic disadvantaged localities is substantially lower than the nationwide rate and that of socioeconomic affluent localities ( $Z_{12} = 25.65$ ). However, these findings should be considered cautiously in light of our lack of ability to isolate and study socioeconomic disadvantaged neighborhoods in affluent cities, as our unit of analysis is the locality.

The reported child maltreatment rates are slightly but significantly higher than the national average in cities and larger towns ( $Z_{12} = 5.96$ ), higher in small agricultural communities (*Kibbutzim*, *Moshavim*, and Villages) ( $Z_{12} = 2.36$ ), and substantially lower in small towns and rural regions (generally comprising several small agricultural communities) ( $Z_{12} = 3.26$ ).

Table 3  
Reported child maltreatment in 2000 by localities characteristics

Nationality of locality	Number of reported cases		Rate per 1,000 children in appropriate group
Nationwide	31,618		17.8
Nationality			
Jewish	20,886		20.1
Arab	2,340		9.2
Mixed	8,392		18.0
Nationality of locality	Number of reported cases		Rate per 1,000 children in appropriate group
Geographic area	% of population who are Arabs		
Far north	60.5	5,121	16.7
Haifa and lower north	33.0	4,361	20.2
Center—coastal strip	5.5	13,818	18.9
Jerusalem and environs	33.8	3,589	12.3
South	29.3	3,664	22.8
Occupied territories (Jews only)	0.0	1,065	13.4
Nationality of locality	Number of reported cases		Rate per 1,000 children in appropriate group
Socioeconomic status			
Affluent	27,184		18.9
Disadvantaged	4,434		13.1
Type of locality			
Cities	26,414		18.7
Local councils	3,848		12.3
Regional councils	1,322		13.2
Kibbutzim, moshavim, and villages	34		29.6
Size of locality			
2,000–4,999	715		12.4
5,000–9,999	1,947		14.1
10,000–49,999	10,132		18.9
50,000–99,999	3,100		16.2
100,000–199,999	7,093		20.1
200,000 or more	8,631		19.2

## Discussion

This study found that in Israel in 2000 the rate of reported maltreated children was 17.8 per 1,000 children. This compares (notwithstanding the different legislation and definition of child maltreatment in different countries) with 2.6 per 1,000 children in the United Kingdom and 11.8 per 1,000 children in the United States (UK Department of Health, 2002; US Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). The distribution of reported cases between the different types of maltreatment in Israel is consistent with



worldwide statistics. In Israel, as in the United Kingdom but unlike the United States, the percentage of boys among maltreated children was higher than that of girls (UK Department of Health, 2002; US Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). In Israel, reported cases are more often older children, whereas in the United States and United Kingdom, proportionately more young children were reported to be maltreated (UK Department of Health, 2002; US Department of Health and Human Services, 2002).

We found that reported rates were substantially lower in Arab localities than in Jewish ones ( $Z_{12} = 47.52$ ). Relying on reported rates only, it would appear that child maltreatment is far more prevalent among Jews. However, several studies carried out in the Israeli Arab society show the frequency of child maltreatment to be higher and similar to that of estimated rates among Jewish children in Israel (Haj-Yahia & Dawud-Noursi, 1998; Haj-Yahia & Ben-Arieh, 2000), possibly indicating that the gap found in this study is largely owing to deficient reporting rather than from differences in incidence. This conclusion is reinforced by the gap's dimensions: A reported case rate in Arab localities amounting to less than half the rate in Jewish locales is difficult to attribute to cultural or societal differences alone.

Although differences in reporting (i.e., between Arabs and Jews) are likely culture contingent and may be attributed to nationality to some extent, structural and organizational variables may exert an effect as well. Not least among the structural variables is the availability of a service to which one can report. In this regard, we are aware that social workers in general and CPOs in particular are far less available in Arab localities than in Jewish locales, possibly contributing to the reporting gap. Arab social workers consist of some 8.2% of all social workers in Israel, while Arab residents compose about 19% of the country's population (Ben-Arieh et al., 2000). Low government investments in health, education, and welfare services for the Arab population and the tremendous load carried by practitioners providing these services in Arab society clearly has led to the development of inferior health, education, and welfare services, discouraging their use and leading to lower reporting rates (for comprehensive data on these issues, see reports in the Annual Yearbook of the Israel State Comptroller). Professional literature confirms that the rate of social services take-up (the rate by which the target population receives the benefits of a given program) is easy to relate to issues of service delivery and quality. For example, social security take-up rates in socioeconomic affluent or disadvantaged localities were found to be linked to availability and quality of social services (Corden, 1993; van Oorschot, 1995). Similarly, several studies, found different reporting rates of child maltreatment when comparing rural and urban regions (Paquin, Schafer, & Carle, 2001).

Furthermore, several studies found that minorities make far less use of available social services than do majority groups (Sue & Sue, 1990; Sue, Zane, & Young, 1994), an observation also found to be valid among Arabs in Israel (Fenison, Popper, & Handelsman, 1990). The Arab population of Israel is a minority with a history of national and religious conflict with the majority of Israeli society. Social service personnel are perceived not only as "outsiders" but also as representatives of the Jewish state. Haj-Yahia (2000), for example, found that Arab women strongly resist applying to social services and are even more opposed to seeking legal aid or reporting to the police cases of domestic violence and wife abuse.

The conservative and traditional nature of the Arab community in Israel (Al-Haj, 1987; Haj-Yahia, 1995) is also a likely contributing factor. Such communities are known to have lower reporting rates and a tendency to avoid involving "outsiders" in their internal issues (Haj-Yahia, 1995).

The ultraorthodox Jewish population, too, is far more conservative than the general population of Israel. As such, cultural arguments for lower reporting rates are likely to apply (Friedman, 1991). In fact,



the reporting rates between areas with large populations of ultraorthodox Jew, such as in the occupied territories, are similarly low. The reporting rate in the occupied territories is 13.4/1,000, and in Jerusalem, also with a large ultraorthodox population, it is 12.3. Furthermore, the ultraorthodox separate themselves from the formal State of Israel in various respects. Like the Arab population, they perceive social service personnel not only as outsiders but also as representatives of the state and have developed their own institutions accordingly, including social services, a civil guard (a kind of civilian police force responsible for enforcement of public order and modesty within the community) in lieu of the national police, and even a religious court system in which they prefer to settle civil and personal affairs and even business disputes (Marty & Appleby, 1993). Child maltreatment reporting rates are also affected by the ultraorthodox community's support of more patriarchal patterns of family interaction. Moreover, even when cases of maltreatment do occur, they are dealt with within the community's own proprietary agencies (rabbis or social services).

Geography also likely plays a role in the reporting rates. Another evident gap in reporting rates is that between southern Israel and the Jerusalem area ( $Z_{12} = 24.68$ ); rates in southern Israel are nearly double those in Jerusalem and environs. To some extent, the geographical areas in Israel correlate with demographic variables, such as nationality and religious status. In this instance, the composition of the child population may contribute to the reporting gaps. The child population of Jerusalem includes more Arab and ultraorthodox minorities, who likely underreport child maltreatment, than does the south of Israel.

Geography may also reflect cultural differences. In some countries, different cultures have developed in different geographic areas, as it is evident in Israel. Furthermore, even though Israel is a small country and has had a nationwide social service system since the late 1970s, take-up and operation of social services differ from one area to another (Ben-Arieh & Gal, 1998).

Finally, rates of reported cases of child maltreatment also vary among different localities by size, type, and socioeconomic status. For all three variables, we found availability and quality of social services in general and child protection services in particular to constitute a sound explanation of the differences noted.

In summary, our study suggests three variables that possibly correlate with and might explain the differences in the reported rates of child maltreatment in different localities: (1) cultural differences among minority groups that lead to underreporting (i.e., the Arab and ultraorthodox groups); (2) the perception of the social and the child protection services as formal state institutions, leading possibly to underreporting by minority groups wishing to avoid connection with the State of Israel (i.e., Arab and ultraorthodox); (3) the availability and quality of social services at-large and child protection services in particular, demonstrating that the issue concerns take-up as well as culture.

### **Practical implications for social services**

First and foremost, it is evident that reporting rates vary along different dimensions. Hence, to meet the requirements of Israeli legislation for mandatory reporting of any reasonable suspicion of child maltreatment demands that the state develop policies and services that encourage reporting in places where it is currently lacking. Emphasis should be placed on new and innovative efforts. Previously, most attempts at increasing public awareness and encouraging people to report suspicion of child maltreatment were carried out on a nationwide scale. Our findings suggest that such efforts

would be far more effective if addressed to the Arab and ultraorthodox populations and conducted in smaller or socioeconomic disadvantaged localities. Furthermore, increasing public awareness alone is insufficient, given that political obstacles play a role as well. In this respect, our findings showed that the social services must build a bridge to the minorities in Israel, developing their trust in these services and increasing their desire to use them rather than reject them categorically as part of the formal state apparatus. Generating partnerships between formal social services and the community services developed by minority populations could serve as a vital tool in enhancing such trust and eventually improving reporting rates, thereby ensuring more effective assistance to maltreated children.

We have suggested that the availability and quality of child protection services might be directly correlated with rate of reporting. Hence, if the goal is to encourage the detection and reporting of child maltreatment, the development and operation of sound, accessible child protection services may constitute a crucial step on the long road to its fulfillment. In this respect, the geography of reported cases of child maltreatment in Israel could serve as an indicator of service availability and quality, showing that Arab and ultraorthodox populations and residents of smaller or socioeconomic disadvantaged localities are largely prevented or inhibited from using such services.

Our findings also imply a need to reach out and find the maltreated children who require such services. In some localities and population groups, no records are kept of such cases. Discovery is the first step—but not the only one—toward tendering assistance. Apparently, some outreach is required to accomplish this goal.

Finally, we note the dilemma between reporting and discovering (and eventually helping). In some population groups and locations, the current emphasis on reporting child maltreatment may lead to the underreporting described above, possibly implying that the social services should focus on discovery and assistance within these groups and places.

## **Limitations**

We acknowledge that our study is not free of limitations. First and foremost, it examines the frequency of reported cases of child maltreatment in Israel and not the actual phenomenon.

Any discussion of the study findings should address the question of whether differences in reporting rates reflect different levels of actual child maltreatment or whether they are a manifestation of different reporting levels. The study of child maltreatment through reported cases may generate both under- and overestimations of overall maltreatment rates.

Second, the study used children's locality as its unit of analysis and examined the distribution of reported child maltreatment rates according to several characteristics of the respective localities. Clearly we were unable to address data on individual children. The data analysis was also insufficiently sensitive to variances within the relevant localities (especially the larger ones), such as differences between neighborhoods. However, we found this method to be of great potential, particularly because it facilitates data collection and analysis and enables comprehensive study of reported cases of child maltreatment and the services intended to help such children.

Thus, future research needs to address the actual occurrence of child maltreatment in Israel, its frequency and characteristics. Research is in need also in regard to smaller units than the locality and especially such research which examines children as individuals.

## Conclusion

This study consist the first national study of the “geography” of child maltreatment in Israel. The study demonstrated considerable variation in rates of reported cases by locality and population makeup. It has especially highlighted the low reporting rates among the Arab and ultraorthodox populations and in smaller or socioeconomic disadvantaged localities. For the social services to fulfill their legal obligation and their moral commitment to maltreated children they must build a bridge to minorities and develop their trust as means for increasing their propensity to use then social services and report suspicions of child maltreatment.

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## Résumé

**Objectifs :** Cet article étudie la “géographie” des signalements de maltraitance infantile en Israël en déterminant sa fréquence et ses taux selon la nationalité, selon la zone de résidence, la taille et le type de localité.

**Méthodes :** L'étude a recueilli au niveau local en Israël des données basées sur des signalements aux services sociaux de cas de maltraitance infantile en 2000; la localité est l'unité de l'analyse.

**Résultats :** Le taux de signalements de maltraitance infantile a été de 17,8 pour 1000 enfants en Israël en 2000. Les taux ont varié, cependant, selon les localités. Ils ont été moindres dans les localités arabes (9 pour 1000 enfants) que dans les localités juives (20 pour 1000), plus élevés dans les grandes villes et d'autres localités socio-économiques aisées (19 pour 1000), et ont varié selon la zone géographique.

**Conclusions :** Cette étude montre des variations considérables des taux de signalements de maltraitance infantile selon la localité et le type de population. Ainsi, pour respecter la législation israélienne de

signalement obligatoire de toute suspicion raisonnable de maltraitance infantile, l'état devrait mieux développer des politiques et des services qui encouragent le signalement de maltraitance infantile dans les populations arabes et ultraorthodoxes et dans les localités les plus petites et désavantagées socio-économiquement. De plus, les services sociaux devraient établir une communication à l'intention des populations minoritaires d'Israël, de façon à développer leur confiance à l'égard de ces services et à accroître leur propension à les utiliser.