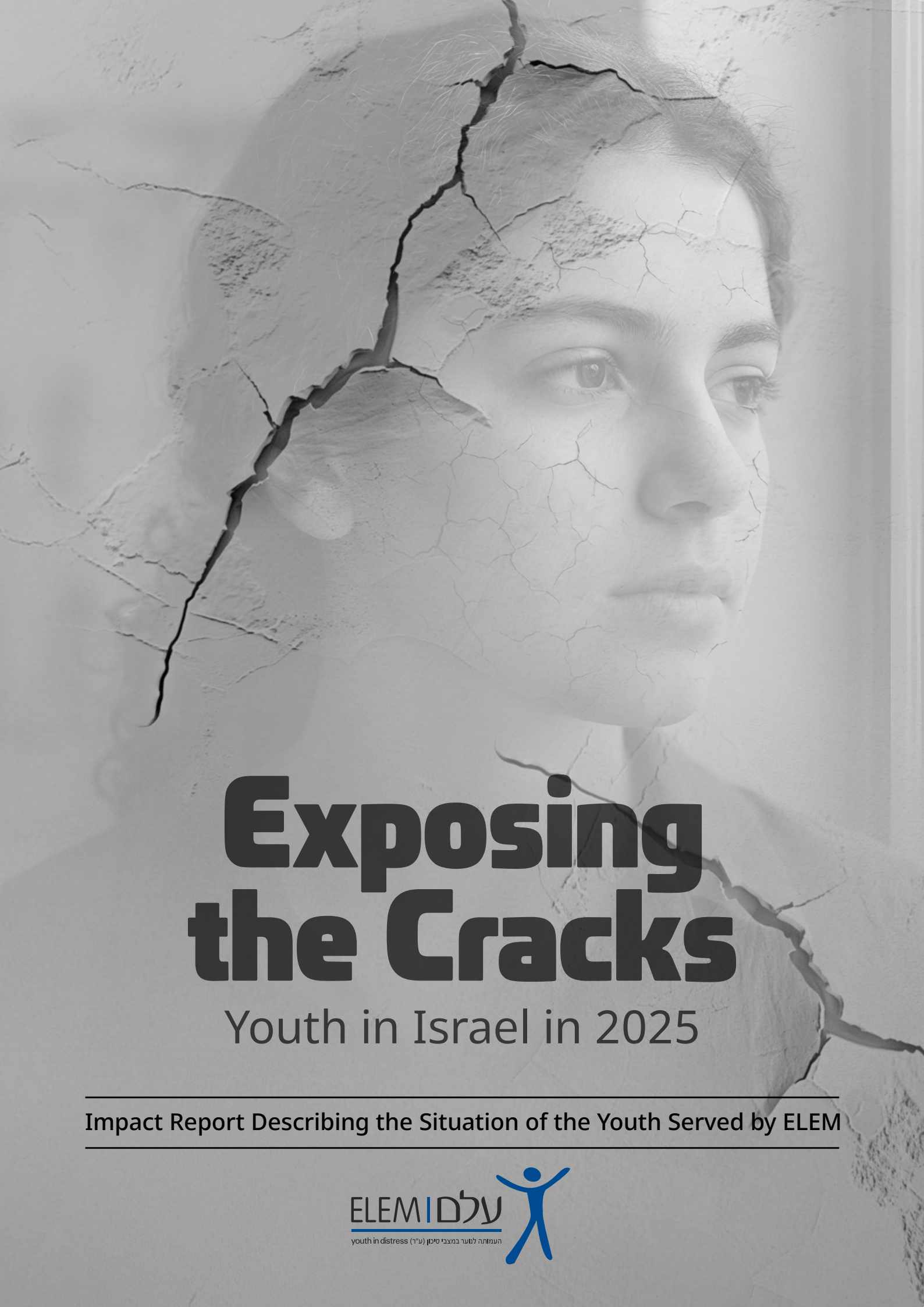




Exposing the Cracks

Youth in Israel in 2025

Impact Report Describing the Situation of the Youth Served by ELEM

ELEM | עלם

העמותה לעזר במצבי סיכון (ע"ר) youth in distress



2. Youth in Israel in 2025



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A Word from the Chairman

Rabbi Shai Piron



Photo: Keren Gafni

Israel's youth don't live in a bubble.

The COVID pandemic and a long war have affected them.

A complex reality which is a blend of anxiety and mourning, a blurring of boundaries and the deep need for support and accompaniment.

Alongside the youth mobilization for inspiring social initiatives, many teenagers have tasted the forbidden fruit: a large increase in alcohol consumption and dangerous substance use.

We are called to prepare ourselves for a change in our approach; not simply treatment adapted for marginal youth, but instead, a broad-based treatment system that will provide a response to more extensive sections of the adolescent population in Israel.

To this end, it is crucial we come up with a new way of thinking, in order to consolidate a broad-based strategic plan. It is our obligation to provide responses for the majority of teens and young adults in Israel.

ELEM's report describes the immense changes that have occurred.

We, all of us, all the support mechanisms – must not stand idly by!



In memory of Yonatan Richter z"l, Sigal Levi z"l, Lior Hadad Atias z"l, and Yasmin Bira z"l.

Good people who continued to give with generosity and love until their last moments. May their memories be forever a blessing.

Forward

2025 marked the "endpoint" of Israeli society insofar as everything concerning its future

The expression "exposing the cracks", describes the critical transition from the "apparent resilience" that characterized 2024, a year in which youth drew on their survival skills in order to "hold on", while repressing emotional distress until the predictable eruption of a deep rupture in 2025.

Paradoxically, it was actually the relative decrease in intensity of the security crisis situation which allowed the trauma to emerge, accompanied by anxiety, extreme loneliness, expressions of violence and a lack of direction.

For youth, and particularly those already dealing with risk situations and distress, this reality joins the existing challenges, affecting developmental processes, relationships and daily coping. Within this reality, it became clear that the need existed to systematically examine their situation, as reflected among those teenagers and young adults that ELEM encountered.

Methodology: This report is based on a process of systematic measurement conducted in December 2025, in which 3,142 male and female youth (from 12 through 26 years of age), who are accompanied by various ELEM services, participated. The data relies upon evaluations by the professionals and volunteers who accompany the youth on a daily basis, including synthesis of on-the-ground data and an analysis of statistical trends.*

ELEM's activities operate in partnership and with the funding assistance of the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security.

משרד הרווחה
והביטחון החברתי



* The data relates to youth with whom ELEM met and does not necessarily reflect the entire population of adolescents in Israel as a whole.



A Concerning Situation Assessment for Early 2026

As we conclude our review of the data from 2025, we are also looking at developments on the ground during the first months of 2026. We cannot ignore the complex reality facing youth in Israel today.

In recent months, there has been a troubling increase in reports of suicide attempts among youth. Although official data from state authorities has not yet been published, accumulating evidence from the field and various reports points to profound emotional distress among youth.

We would like to address the impact of Operation "Roaring Lion" (which began on February 28, 2026) and present an up-to-date picture from the field.

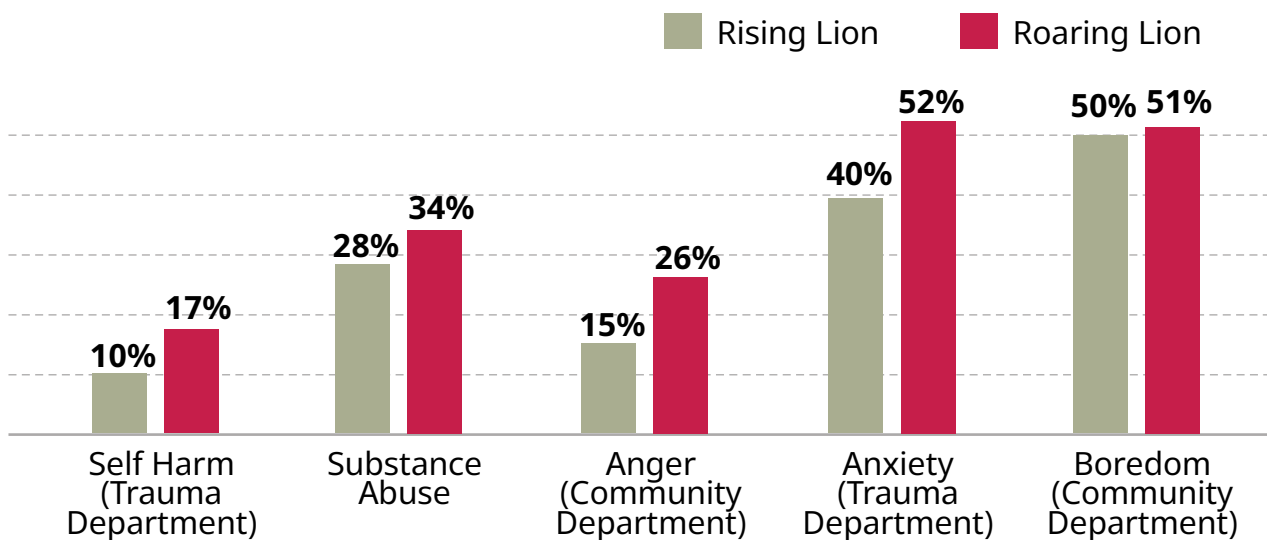
ELEM's findings are based on a sample of 91 professional assessments submitted by workers from 30 different programs operating across the country. Drawing on in-depth interviews, observations, and personal conversations, these findings paint a troubling picture of the condition of adolescents in the aftermath of Operation "Roaring Lion":

A significant deterioration in young people's emotional and behavioral well-being. The transition from 2025 ("Rising Lion") to 2026 ("Roaring Lion") has been marked by a sharp escalation in risk indicators, including **a 70% increase in reports of self-harm and a 73% increase in expressions of anger.**

Analysis of the youth's needs highlights **a critical need for stabilizing anchors.** Nearly half of the youth surveyed (49%) need routine and structure, while 40% require meaningful human presence. Almost one in every two youth is experiencing boredom and inactivity (46%), approximately 40% report loneliness or social isolation, and 37% are coping with anxiety or fear.



Concerning Trends: "Rising Lion" (2025) vs. "Roaring Lion" (2026)



30%
rise in
anxiety

73%
rise in
anger

21%
rise in
substance abuse

70%
rise in
self harm



About ELEM

In 2025, ELEM teams met with 15,000 at-risk teens and young adults, both in physical locations and online, serving as a significant, professional source of assistance in integrating into the various spheres of life, and helping them fulfill their potential.

ELEM, active for over 43 years, is the leading organization in Israel for the identification, outreach, accompaniment and treatment of at-risk youth.

Through dozens of programs spread throughout the country, hundreds of employees and over a thousand volunteers, ELEM operates in all the spheres of life of our youth – in the community, on the street and online, creating trust-based connections which provide support, stability and an opportunity for change.

The organization's activity takes place in partnership with government ministries, particularly the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security, local municipalities and philanthropic funds, as a central part of the national effort for at-risk teenagers and young adults in Israel.

משרד הרווחה
והביטחון החברתי



ELEM by the Numbers



14,982

Teenagers and young
adults received
assistance

5,800 **9,182**
In person Online



1,052
Volunteers



279
Employees
120
Freelancers

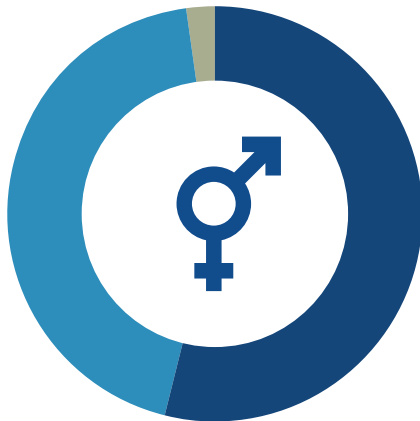


35
Municipalities
where we work



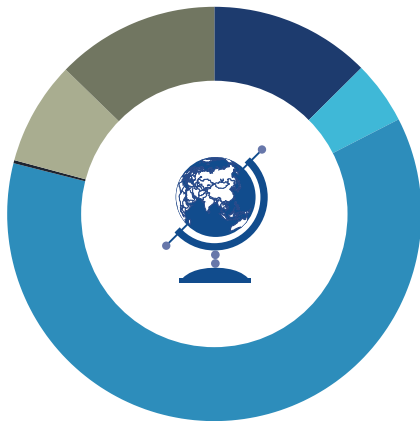
53
Projects





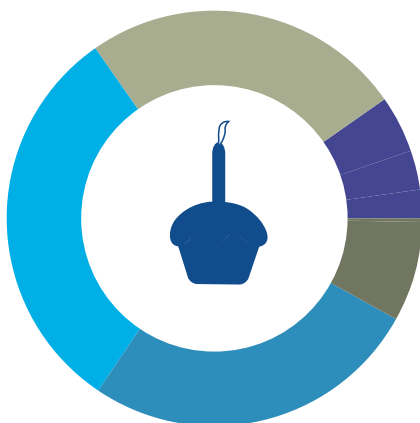
Gender

60% Male
38% Female
2% Transgender/Queer



Multiculturalism

61% Veteran Israelis
13% Arab society
8% Former Soviet Union background
5% Ethiopian background
12.7% Other
0.3% Without status



Age

9% 10-13
27% 14-15
30% 16-17
25% 18-21
9% 22-30





ELEM Throughout the Country



Youth Center



Street Outreach



Treatment Centers
for Extreme Risk/
Prostitution



Treatment for
Sexual Assault



Holistic Model –
Outreach Van,
In-School
Breathing Space,
Youth Center

National programs:



ELEM Digital



Good People / Yuvalim



Treatment for
Sex Offenders



"Housing First"
Apartments



External Organizational Activity

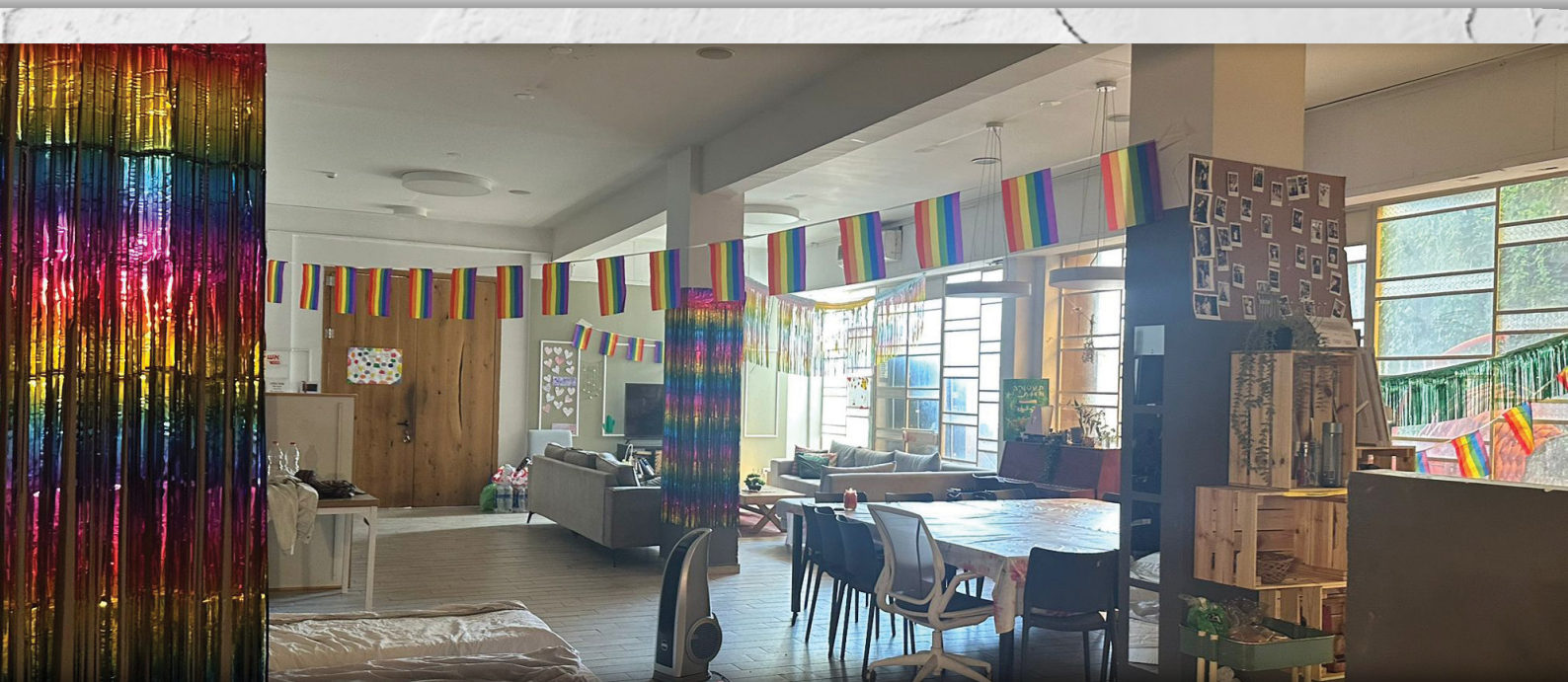
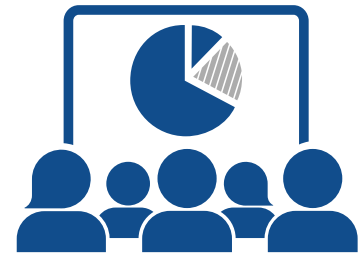
From the field to policy – in order to create systemic change for at-risk teens and young adults, ELEM operates within a number of complementary fields, beyond our direct, daily engagement with youth. This approach expands the influence from the individual to the entire system, by strengthening professionals and influencing public policy.

Training and Tools for Professional Teams

Based on the understanding that early prevention and professionalism on the ground reduce future risk, ELEM trains educational, therapeutic and community teams in identifying, reaching out and intervening with at-risk youth.

Training includes workshops, professional consulting, seminars and study days for a range of audiences, to significantly expand the number of significant adults that interact with youth on a daily basis.

In 2025, 1,500 professionals participated in training in 150 groups across the country.



Promoting Policy and Rights

ELEM works to promote structural change and improve bureaucratic processes that affect the lives of at-risk adolescents and young adults. Guided by the belief that those directly affected by public policy should have a voice in the discussions that shape it, ELEM participates in parliamentary hearings, inter-ministerial forums, professional committees, and legislative processes, bringing its extensive field-based knowledge to decision-making tables.

In 2025, we participated in 58 committees and round tables in the Knesset and government ministries, where needs, obstacles and policy recommendations based on direct work experience with youth were presented.



The Events that Formed the Cracks

The Breaking Point

October 7, 2023 – The terror attack and the outbreak of war

Exposure to extreme violence, loss and the sense of immediate threat.

A sharp halt of regular life, closing of educational institutions, isolation at home and total uncertainty.

Life in a State of Emergency

Continuous missile fire, evacuation of towns and cities in the north and south, extensive reserve call-ups.

Youth experience disconnection from their familiar environment, separation from friends, and the absence of parents who have been called up. This is in addition to distance learning and being stuck at home for long periods.

**October
2023**

**Oct-Nov
2023**

**November
2023**

**Early
2024**

A Moment of Hope and Fragility

The return of the hostages and a temporary break in fighting

Short moments of relief and hope, alongside emotional overload and a rapid return to an unstable reality.

Partial Return to School

Renewed yet discontinuous educational and social activity

A return to routine, with continued tension, cumulative exhaustion and high exposure to news and social networks.



Renewed Escalations

Ongoing Military Activity and Expansion of Warfronts

Youth continue to "hang on" and to keep going in survival mode, sometimes with no in-depth emotional discourse.

Partial Return of Hostages

End of evacuation and civilian return to the North.

A tense return to "normal".

Fragile Routine

A lack of clear resolution and continued tension

A partial routine characterized by instability, continued emotional overload and a sense of being worn down.

Spring
2024

End of
2024

Spring
2025

June
2025

Jul-Dec
2025

Twelve-day war

Another round of fighting takes its toll

An increased sense of peril and a return of tension among youth who already experienced accumulated emotional exhaustion.

"There were no more sirens, but I still had them in my head."

The Picture Becomes Clearer

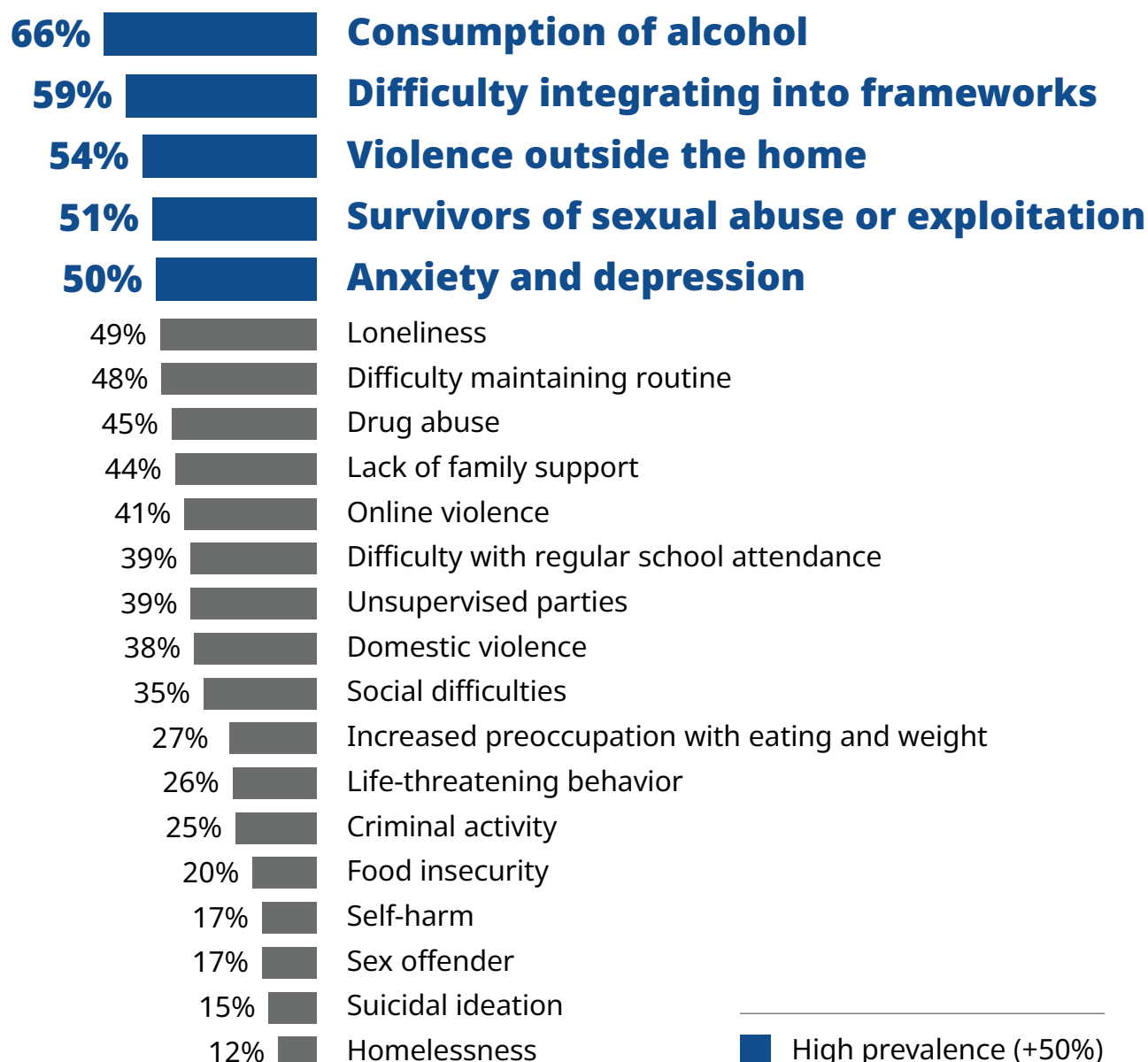
Relative decline in intensity of security events

As the emergency situation begins to subside, repressed emotions such as anxiety, loneliness, anger, and a sense of aimlessness emerge with great intensity, revealing the psychological toll of two years in survival mode. The cumulative impact of repeated trauma, constant threat, and chronic instability is becoming more apparent, manifesting in emotional exhaustion, burnout, and difficulty reestablishing routines and a sense of normalcy.



Mapping the Prevalence of Concerning Phenomena

Ranking 23 risk and distress factors according to reported percentages



*The terms used refer to a spectrum of emotional experiences, and not to clinical diagnoses.



The Effects of the War - Intersecting Risk

Since October 7th, and shadowed by ongoing war and uncertainty, there is a renewed understanding of the crisis youth are undergoing. If in the past we tended to examine phenomena individually, it is currently clear that they are intertwined: the internal emotional experience, daily functioning, methods of coping and family and social reality all affect one another and together shape the reality of each youth.



Negative strategies

- Regulation through substances (alcohol, drugs)
- Regulating arousal/risk (parties, dangerous behaviors)
- Regulating power/harm (violence)
- Regulating through the body (eating disorders, self-harm)

Emotional distress

- Depression and anxiety
- Loneliness / isolation
- Social difficulties / ostracism

Environmental harm

External conditions

- Violence in the home
- Poverty and hunger
- Difficulty accessing rights
- Parental alienation

Difficulty functioning

- Difficulty in frameworks
- Difficulty maintaining daily routine



Trends in Distress and Risk

Long-Term Analysis - 2024 to 2025



Environmental Vulnerability

An increase from 13% to 29% (more than doubled in one year)



Risk Behaviors

An increase from 26% in 2024 to 37% in 2025

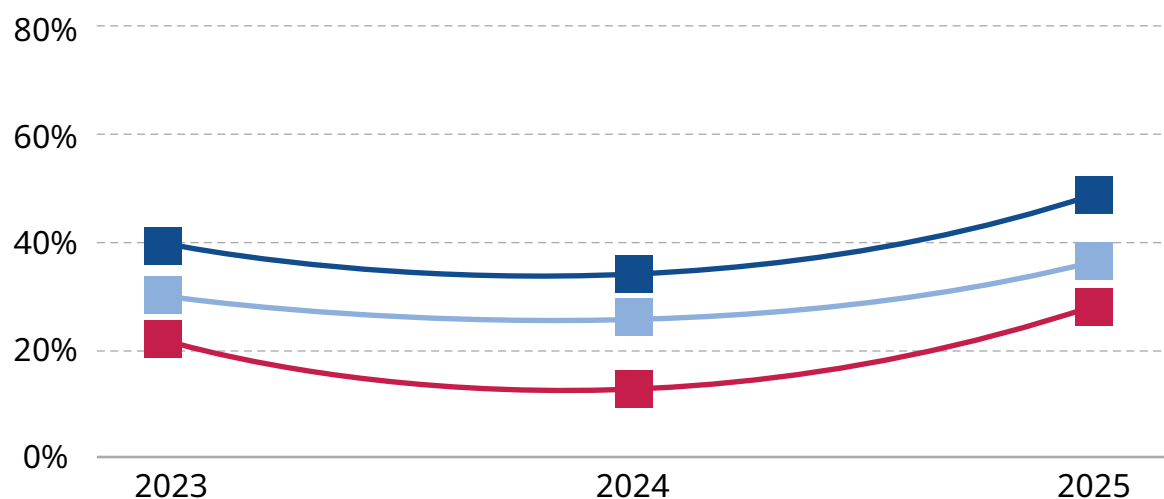


Difficulty functioning

A dramatic rise from 34% to 49% (+15%)

■ Environmental vulnerability ■ Risk behaviors ■ Difficulty functioning

Prevalence of the phenomena (%)



* 2023 refers, for the most part, to the period prior to October 7.





Distribution of Phenomena by Gender

Gender Gaps in Risk and Distress Phenomena



Emotional Distress

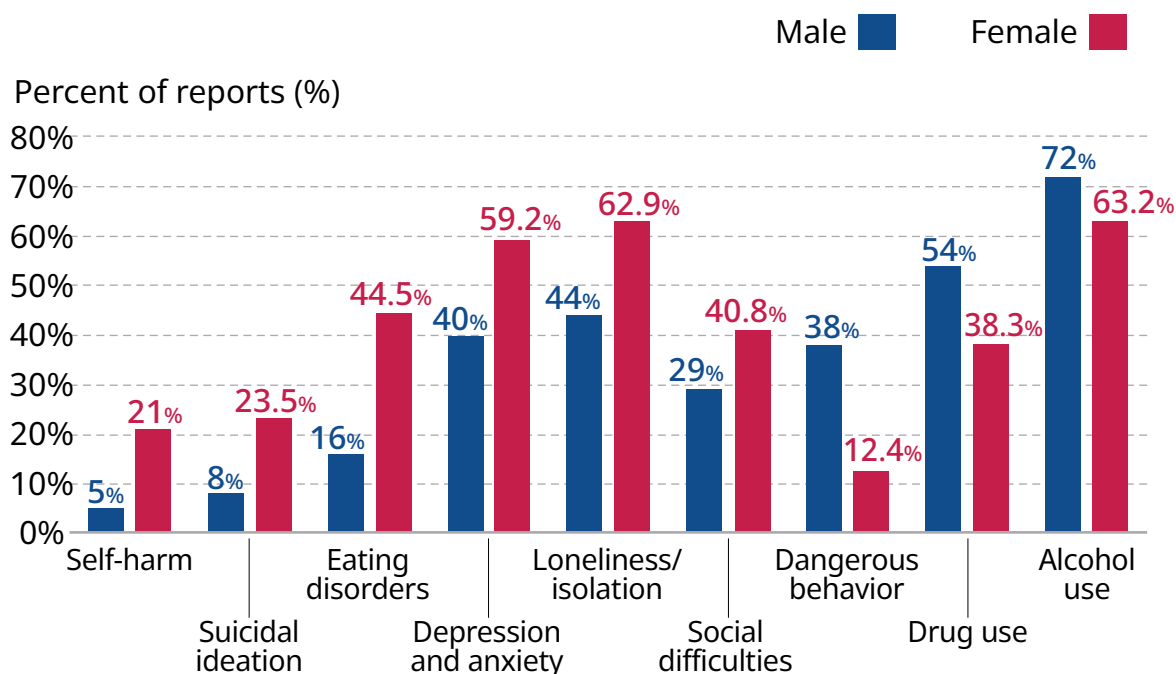
clear gap

Girls report four times the rate of self-harm (21%) and 3 times more eating disorders (44.5%) compared to boys.



Substances and Risk

Boys present a higher rate of life-threatening behaviors (38%) and drug use (54%).

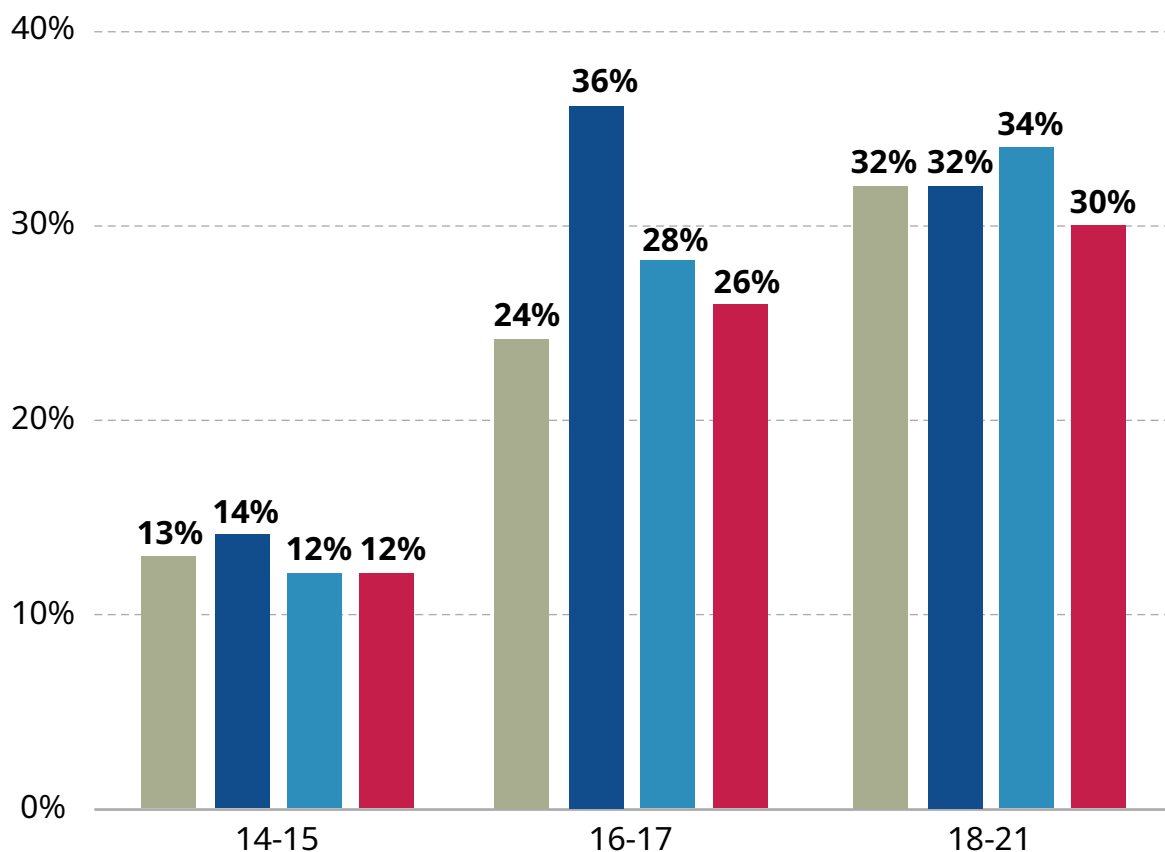


Tracking Risk Development by Age

Tracking 4 Dimensions of Distress Through the Critical Years

Emotional distress Difficulty functioning Risk behaviors Environmental vulnerability

Frequency of the phenomenon (%)



The figures indicate a continuous trend of increase in risk factors as age increases. In all four of the risk dimensions a deterioration appears from 14-15 years of age to 16-17, with an even stronger one from 18-21. **This trend highlights the importance of early intervention, before risk patterns become ingrained and deepen throughout adolescence.**



Impact of Loss Due to the War

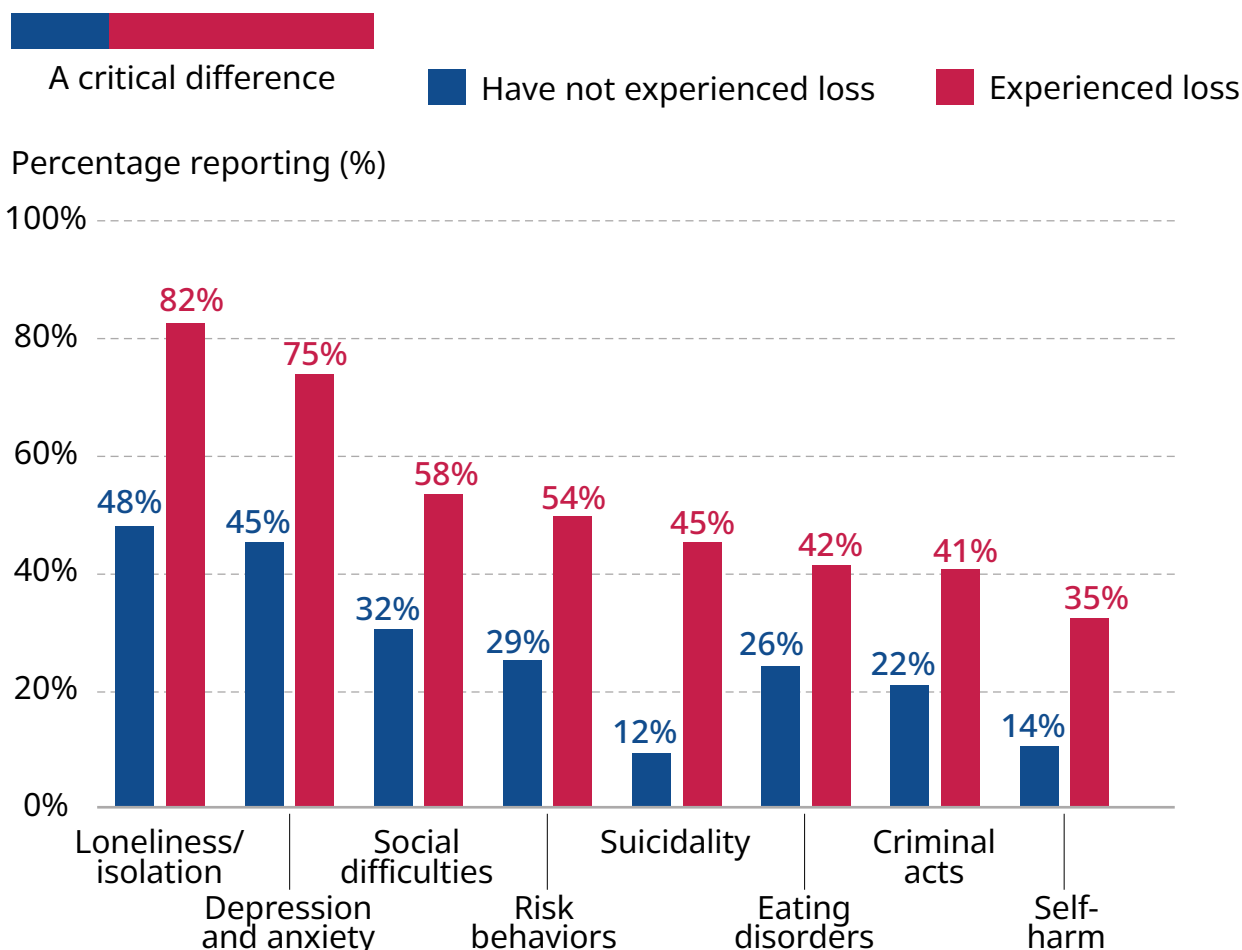
Comparison Among Youth who have Experienced Personal Loss and Those who Have not

Suicidality 3.7 times more

Among adolescents who have experienced loss, the rate of suicidality is 45%, as opposed to only 12% among the rest.

Loneliness/isolation and depression

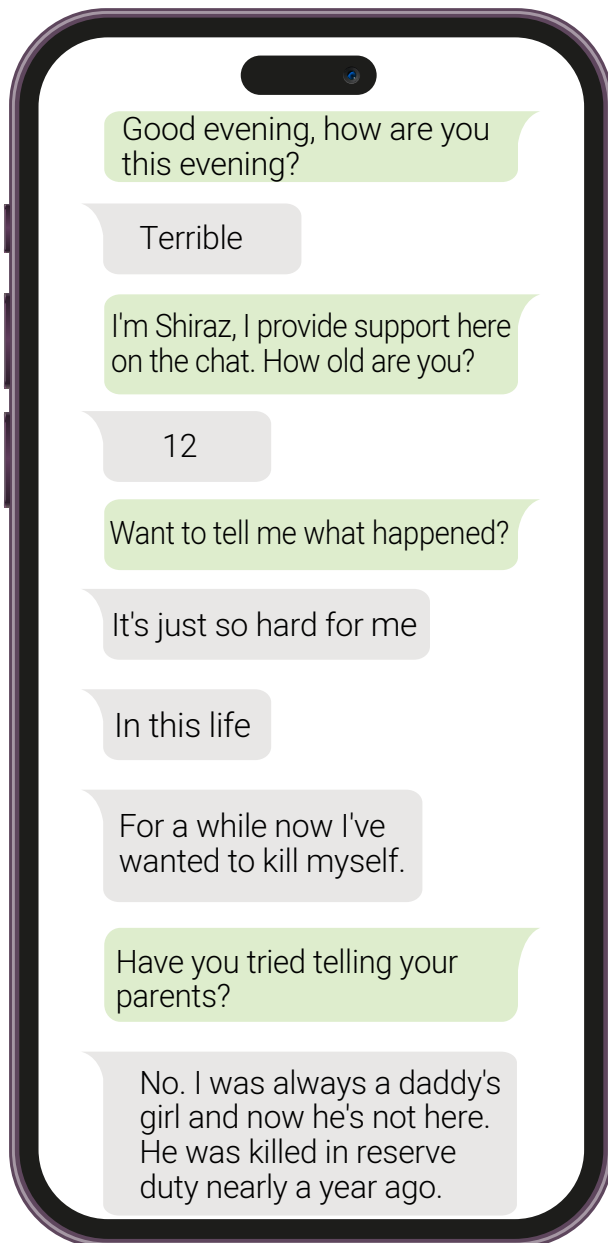
82% of those who have experienced loss report loneliness
And 75% reported extreme levels of anxiety and depression.



* Sample of 110 youth who experienced direct loss



Part of an anonymous chat conversation on ELEM Digital that led to cooperation between the girl and one of ELEM's professionals and the counselor at the school the girl attends –



Systemic Red Flags after Two Years of War



35%
Social Difficulties Including Ostracism

More than a third of youth have encountered social difficulties, including being ostracized.



20%
Food Insecurity
1 in 5 youth are dealing with financial difficulties and food insecurity.







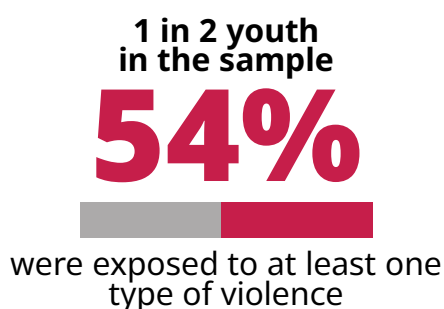
עלם ELEM

העמותה לנער במצבי סיכון (נ"ר) youth in distress

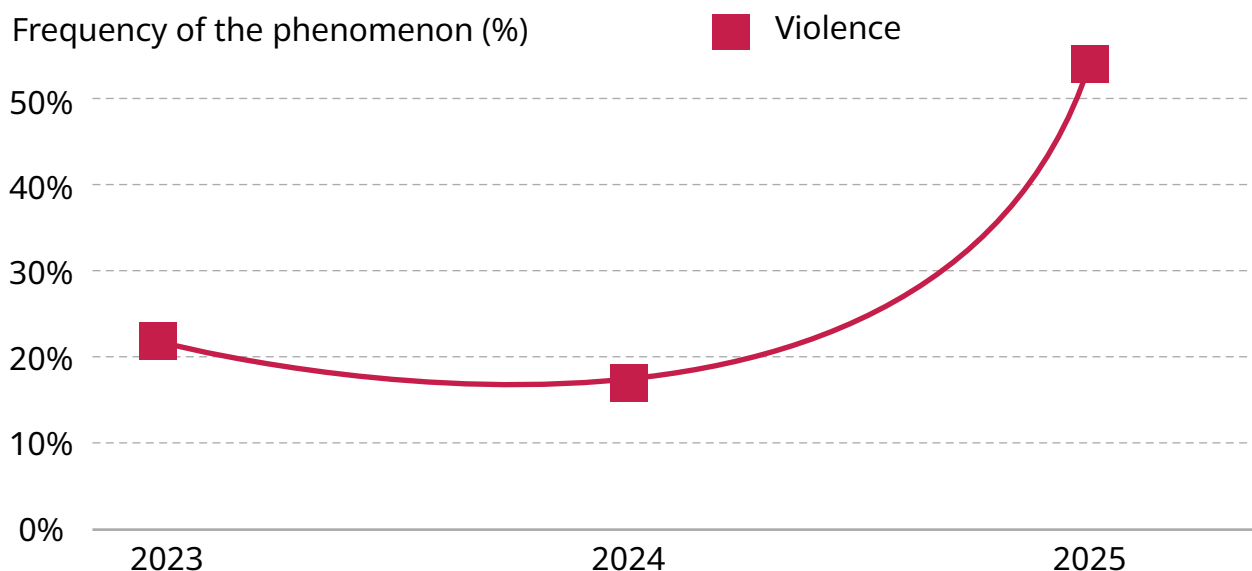


Cross-Setting Violence among Youth

Current mapping shows that violence stands out as one of the most significant phenomena in the data. However, an in-depth study of the findings shows that this is not an isolated or localized phenomenon, but rather an expression that extends across various areas of life and sometimes occurs in parallel with other phenomena. The data refers to exposure and/or involvement in different types of violence.



The recent period, which has been characterized by ongoing social and security instability presents a complex reality for youth. In this context, violent behaviors are likely to reflect difficulty with self-regulation, an ongoing sense of threat or harm to their sense of security and boundaries.



A moderate decline in 2024 (from 22% to 17%) and then a sharp increase in 2025 (from 17% to 40%).

Violence Doesn't Come On its Own! Other Risk Factors are Involved

Among youth who reported violence, we identified other phenomena and risk situations. A clear picture emerges from the data: Violence is not an isolated phenomenon, but part of a broad configuration of risk situations. This approach enables us to see violence not only as a behavior in itself, but an expression of a wide range of challenges that youth face.

Sexual Violence

Depression and anxiety	81%
Isolation/loneliness	76%
Self-harm	71%
Suicidal ideation	68%
Social difficulties	67%
Difficulty with routine	66%

Violence in the Home

Depression and anxiety	78%
Difficulty with frameworks	74%
Difficulty with routine	72%
Truancy	69%
Suicidal ideation	66%
Lack of support	65%
Self-harm	63%

Online violence

Isolation/loneliness	74%
Social difficulties	71%
Depression and anxiety	69%
Self-harm	61%

Outside the Home

Unsupervised parties	73%
Alcohol use	71%
Involvement in crime	69%
Drug use	64%
Truancy	58%

This understanding is essential for formulating services that do not focus on violence as a single phenomenon, but rather relate to the totality of conditions within which it develops.

Violence Outside of the Home Compared to Violence in the Home

Distribution of Type of Violence by Year (Including Trends)

38%

almost double



**In the
home**

of violence at home compared to 2024 (20%). The home space is becoming more dangerous

53%

new record



**Outside of
the home**

A sharp increase in violence in the public space in 2025 (53%) after a decrease in 2024.

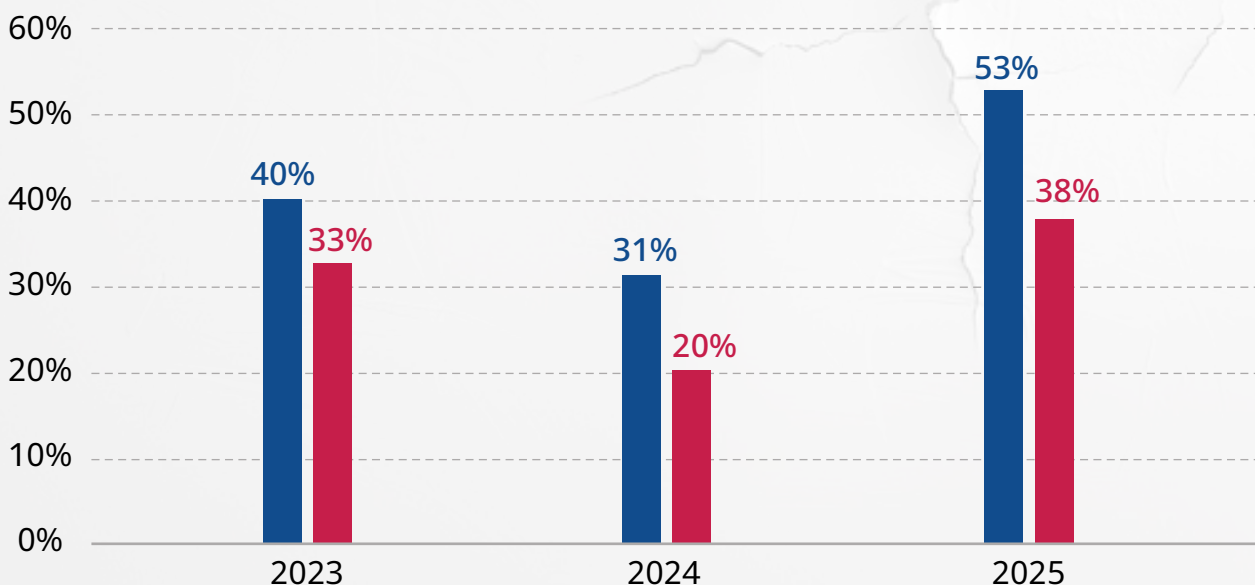
Combined Escalation

2025 is characterized by a sharp increase of both fields simultaneously, as opposed to past trends.

Percentage of reports (%)

■ Outside the home

■ In the home



Online Violence

Scope of Reports of Online Violence

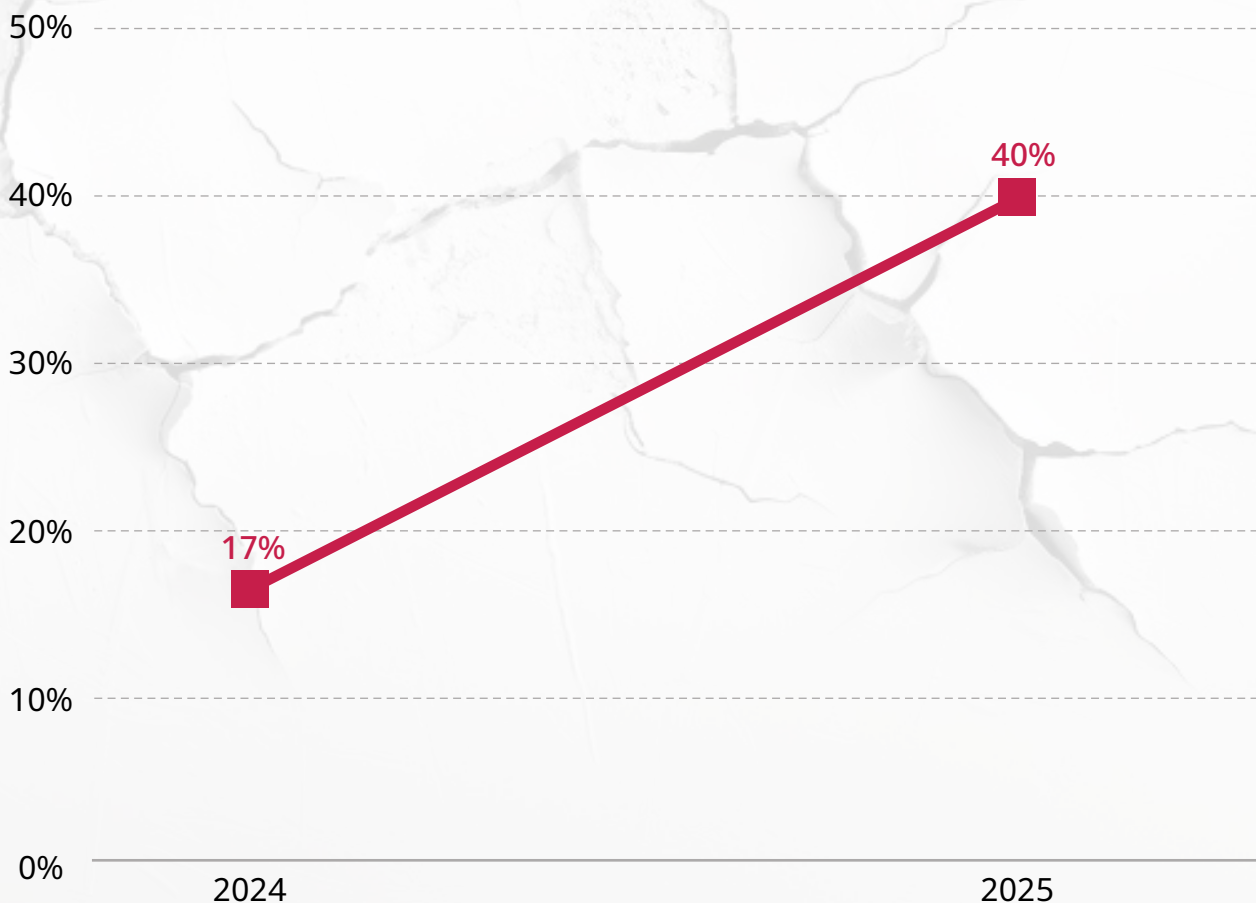
Annual comparison: percentage of youth involved/victims (annual trend)

135%

Annual increase

A dramatic increase from 17% to 40% in just one year.

The digital space has become the focal point for violence



*All the data is from the total cases treated by the ELEM digital department. ELEM activity online is funded by and in cooperation with the National Insurance Institute funds.

Testimonies On the Ground

Our Staff Report from Interactions with Youth

Physical Violence

"Broke his leg in a fight."

"Head injury from a fence following a physical altercation."

"Rage episodes – got into a severe physical fight with another teenager."

Recurring Social-Emotional Violence, Ostracism, Humiliation and Social Exclusion

"Ostracized from 1st to 5th grade – no one noticed."

"Hangs out with a group but is an outsider."

"Looks lost, comes alone and does not know where his friends are."

Sexual Violence, Control, Distribution and Ongoing Harm

"A sexual video of her was spread everywhere."

"She was filmed without her knowledge – deals with anxiety attacks."

Verbal Abuse and Bullying

"Has been hostile towards everyone today."

"Acts like a bully to quieter kids."

Violence is not an isolated incident.

It is an ongoing continuum - social, emotional and physical - that requires presence, early detection and consistent intervention.



Teenagers Share About 2025

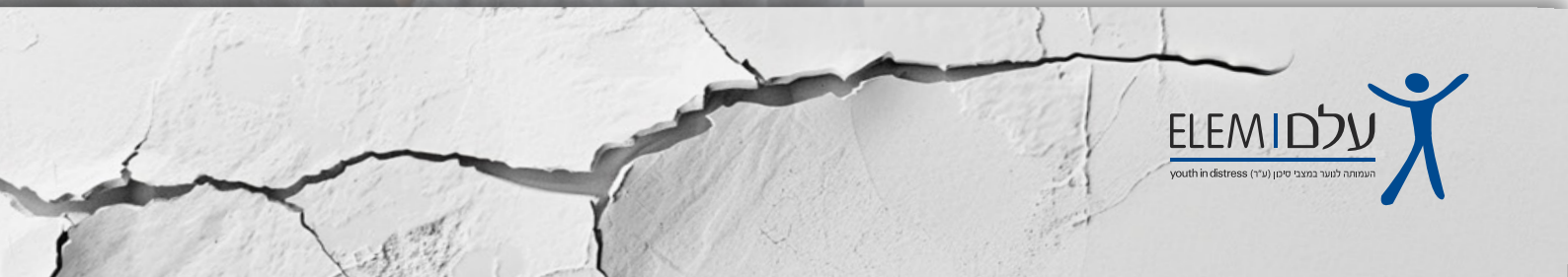
"I am always hungry. There is not always food at home, and I am ashamed to tell anyone."

"At night I prefer being outside. There is tension and yelling at home and outside it is quiet at least. People think I roam around because I want to. The truth is I just don't want to go home."

"I feel as though I am always on guard, like something is about to happen."



"Sometimes during alerts the only call I got asking me how I am doing was from my ELEM counselor."





Youth risk is no longer a marginal phenomenon, but rather a widespread reality that is reflected in daily functioning, behavior and life experiences

Conclusion

The report findings indicate a change in distress patterns among teenagers. Emotional distress continues to present at high levels, but it is increasingly expressed as difficulty in functioning and as risk behavior. The data indicates a reality in which distress is not an isolated symptom, but rather a combination of life circumstances, everyday challenges and complex coping mechanisms. This image reflects a growing risk beyond marginal groups, and reinforces the need for early, consistent intervention adapted to the changing reality of the lives of youth in Israel.

Main Insights from the Findings

Multidimensional Distress

The data indicates that youth distress is no longer expressed as an isolated phenomenon, but rather as a combination of emotional distress, difficulty functioning and risk strategies that exist simultaneously and affect one another.

Change in the Way Emotional Distress is Expressed

This year, phenomena of risk and difficulty functioning are rated with higher frequency than emotional phenomena. This finding reflects a change in observed ways of expressing distress and not necessarily a change in the depth of distress.

Environmental and Familial Vulnerability as a Factor in Increased Risk

Lack of family stability, exposure to violence and complex life circumstances are significant background factors that increase vulnerability and make it difficult for youth to function and cope.

Violence as a Widespread and Combined Phenomenon

Violence appears in different areas of life, at home, in the community and online, and does not stand alone but exists alongside emotional distress, difficulty in functioning and other risk behaviors.

Adolescence as a Sensitive Stage for Increased Risk

There is a significant increase in measures of risk throughout adolescence, with a prominent increase at ages 16-17 and a continuing trend in young adulthood.

Gender Gaps in Patterns of Distress

Girls express higher levels of internalized distress, while boys present higher frequency of risk behaviors, indicating different coping patterns.

Volatility in Indicators of Distress and Risk (2024-2025)

After a relative decrease in 2024, in 2025 a renewed increase of risk was recorded, indicating a lack of stability and the ongoing influence of current circumstances.

Impact of Loss following the War

Youth who have experienced loss present especially high levels of isolation/loneliness, depression and risk behaviors, and show signs of being an especially vulnerable group.



Looking Forward to 2026

The War has Introduced Risk into Every House

The boundaries are blurred; the war changed the reality in every household in Israel. The distinction between 'normative' and 'at risk' is disappearing.

In the past, the definition of at-risk youth centered on those at the extreme end of the spectrum, those who underwent prolonged crises, often since childhood. However, since the outbreak of Covid, and increasingly since the war began, we are witnessing a collapse of such boundaries.

Risk is no longer defined by familial or socio-economic background, but rather it has become a reality looming in every household in Israel. The string of national crises, starting with the social isolations forced by Covid, through unsupervised exposure dangerous situations on social media, all the way to the traumas of the war, has placed every single teen on the spectrum of vulnerability.

Even in houses that are considered normative and well-functioning, we are now seeing new patterns of risk that stem from the destabilization of family support structures.

The combination of prolonged reserves duty, financial uncertainty, and ongoing stress have significantly eroded parental presence and the emotional availability of adults in teenagers' lives.

As a result, many adolescents who were considered "resilient" until recently, find themselves facing a menacing reality without guidance or protection. In our current age, risk is no longer confined to specific groups in the population, but rather it is a challenge that threatens all sectors and social classes.

The report findings show that in an ongoing state of uncertainty, teenagers not only need crisis response, but stable and continuous human presence. For many of them, ongoing contact with a meaningful adult provides a central component of resilience, sometimes the only anchor that allows regulation, belonging, and coping skills.

Simultaneously, the distress described in the report does not grow in one area alone. It moves between the home, school, community and social spaces, and combines emotional distress, difficulty functioning and risk behavior. The data indicates that we are witnessing a rise of complicated phenomena that exacerbate each other. In the past, our services could target particular issues, but today these issues are increasingly common and accompanied by interconnected distresses. This reality is the result of a cumulative, multi-year crisis that has created an unprecedented level of complexity.

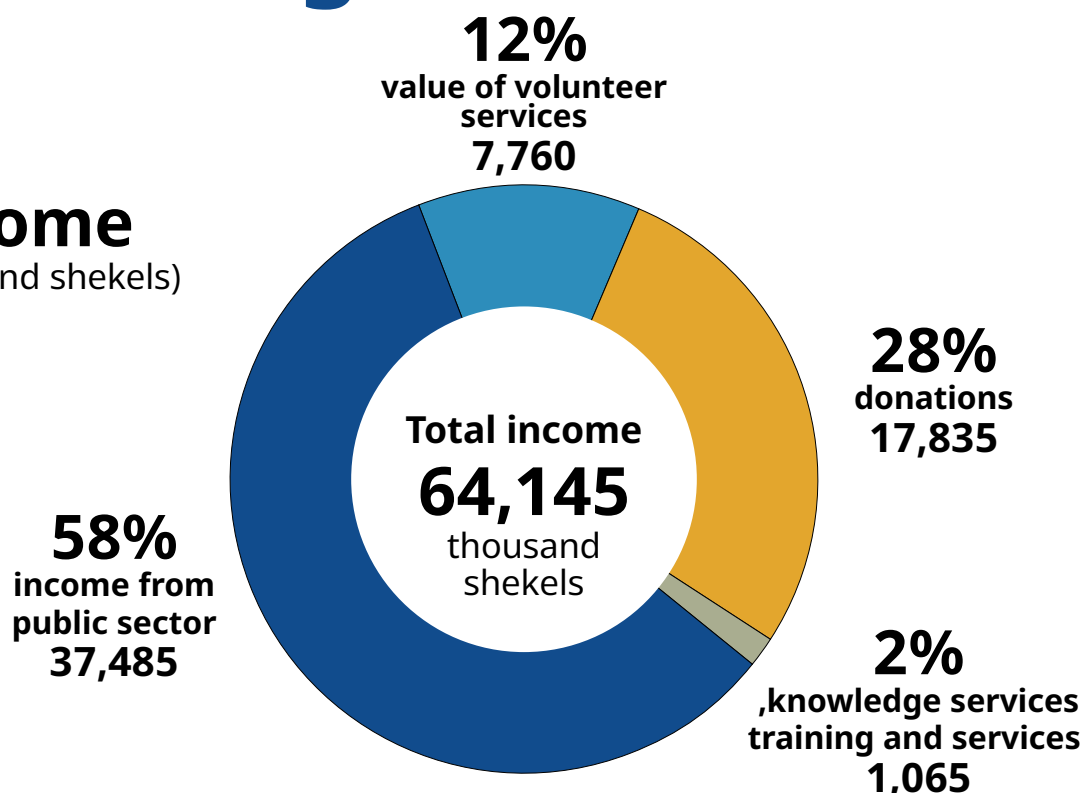
These circumstances require a shift from isolated interventions to a broader perspective that views young people as part of a larger life system, recognizing the interconnected factors shaping their experiences and well-being.

Strengthening youth resilience is dependent on the ability to work together: state and local authorities with civil society organizations, and building a continuum of coordinated and long-term responses.

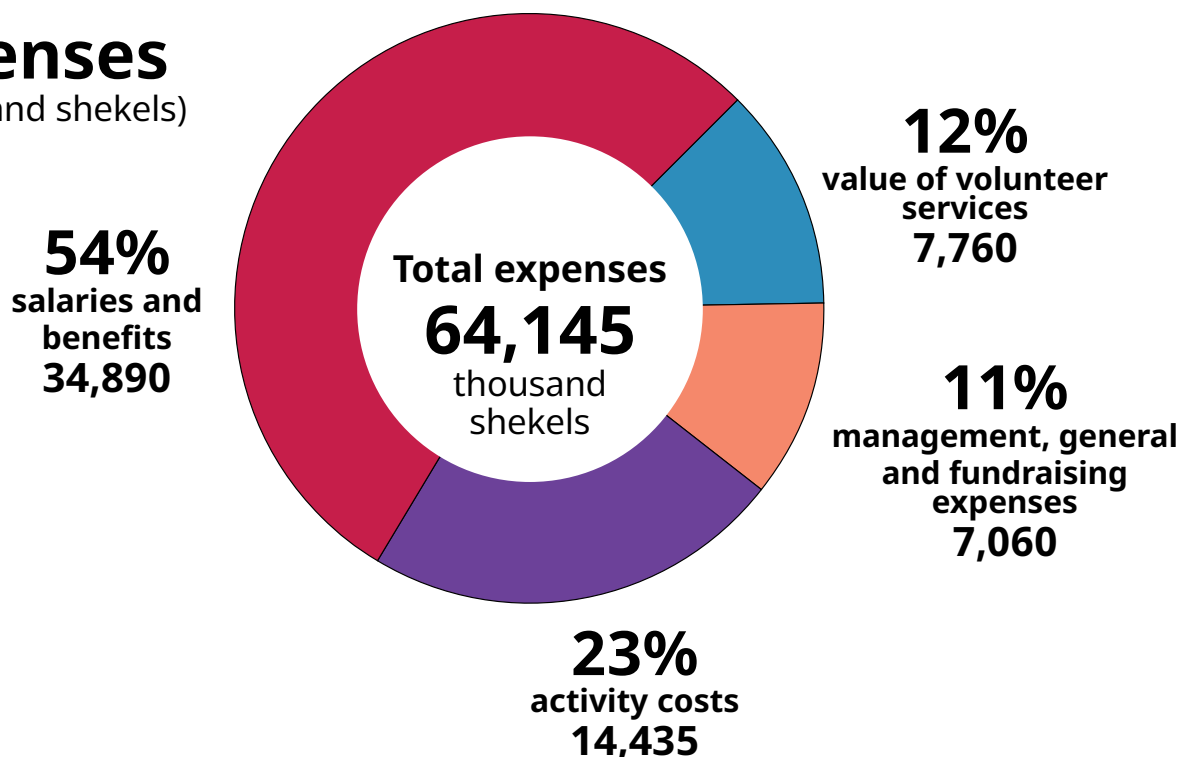
Investing in youth today is a necessary condition for the resilience of Israeli society of tomorrow.

2025 budget

Income (in thousand shekels)



Expenses (in thousand shekels)





Thank you so much

From the ELEM family, from the teens and young adults of Israel

Ann Bialkin
and the Bialkin Family
Foundation



בנק הפועלים



Lenore Ruben
President, American
Friends of ELEM



משפחת ליאון



גברת ומר ורדה
ובעז דותן



Nitzan
Foundation

Todd and Yadira
Patkin



The Frieze
Family Foundation

הבית של דורון



ELEM | עלם

youth in distress (נער) בעתה לנער במצבי סיכון



Horace W. Goldsmith
Foundation

The Gary Saltz
Foundation



Robin Nourmand
and Sepideh Makabi

Mark and Lorraine
Schapiro Family
Foundation



מנחם שליגי

Dan and Sara
Sapadin



*“There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.”*

(Leonard Cohen)

**Our responsibility,
the adults,
is to gather and heal
the cracks.**

ELEM - Youth in Distress

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ELEM works in collaboration with the
Ministry of Welfare and Social Security

משרד הרווחה
והביטחון החברתי

