



December 2021

Special Report no.2

Investigation of Complaints during the Third and Fourth Waves of the Covid-19 Pandemic - Selected Sections

THE OMBUDSMAN





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Selected Sections

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OPENING REMARKS BY THE OMBUDSMAN AND THE HEAD OF THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

THIS SPECIAL REPORT OF THE OMBUDSMAN IS HEREBY PRESENTED TO THE KNESSET (ISRAELI PARLIAMENT), UNDER SECTION 46(B) OF STATE COMPTROLLER LAW, 5718-1958 [CONSOLIDATED VERSION]. THE REPORT REVIEWS THE ACTIVITY OF THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN DURING THE THIRD AND FOURTH WAVES OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS - FROM 1.12.20 TO 15.10.21. THIS REPORT FOLLOWS SPECIAL REPORT "INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS DURING THE FIRST WAVE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (2020)", WHICH DETAILED COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC THAT WERE RECEIVED BY THE OFFICE DURING THE FIRST WAVE OF THE CRISIS, FROM 15.3.20 - 30.6.20, AND THE CHAPTER RELATING TO THE PANDEMIC IN ANNUAL REPORT 47 OF THE OFFICE, WHICH REVIEWED THE COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE OFFICE IN 2020 PERTAINING TO THE CRISIS.

DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT, THE OFFICE RECEIVED 16,191 LETTERS OF COMPLAINT, OF WHICH 1,687 RELATED TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS. WHEREAS DURING THE FIRST AND SECOND WAVES OF THE PANDEMIC MOST OF THE COMPLAINTS RECEIVED CONCERNED ELIGIBILITY FOR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, DURING THE THIRD AND FOURTH WAVES, WHICH THIS REPORT ADDRESSES, MANY COMPLAINTS WERE ALSO RECEIVED ON OTHER MATTERS RELATING TO EVERYDAY LIFE ALONGSIDE THE PANDEMIC. THESE MATTERS INCLUDE THE DIFFERENT STEPS TAKEN TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE PANDEMIC AND THEIR

IMPACT ON THE INDIVIDUAL, AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDED BY THE AUTHORITIES IN LIGHT OF THE CRISIS.

AS THE REPORT ILLUSTRATES, THE WAY IN WHICH THE STATE OF ISRAEL COPED WITH THE COVID-19 CRISIS IS WELL REFLECTED IN THE COMPLAINTS INVESTIGATED. THE OFFICE, WHICH AIMS TO ASSIST COMPLAINANTS IN DISTRESS BOTH IN TIMES OF CRISIS AND IN NORMAL TIMES, SERVED AS AN ADDRESS FOR COMPLAINANTS IN ALMOST ALL THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH THE AUTHORITIES DURING THE CRISIS, SEEKING TO PROVIDE THE COMPLAINANTS WITH SWIFT RELIEF. THIS POLICY IS REFLECTED IN THE FACT THAT 56.46% OF THE COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC THAT THE OFFICE WAS AUTHORIZED TO INVESTIGATE AND WHOSE INVESTIGATION WAS COMPLETED DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT, WERE RECTIFIED DURING THE INVESTIGATION OR FOLLOWING IT.

THE OFFICE'S INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS FOCUSES PRIMARILY ON ASSISTING THE COMPLAINANTS. NOTWITHSTANDING, IN APPROPRIATE CASES, WHERE THE INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS DISCLOSES A SYSTEMATIC DEFECT IN THE ACTIVITY OF THE PUBLIC BODY, THE RECTIFICATION OF WHICH CAN ASSIST MANY OTHERS, THE OFFICE BRINGS THE DEFECT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE PUBLIC BODY FOR IMMEDIATE RECTIFICATION. IN THIS WAY, THE OFFICE ASSISTS PUBLIC BODIES IN CORRECTING DEFECTS

AND SOLVING PROBLEMS IN REAL TIME. A PROMINENT EXAMPLE OF THIS IS ILLUSTRATED IN THE REPORT WITH REGARD TO THE INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE INITIATIVE FOR PROVIDING PREPAID CARDS FOR PEOPLE WITH LOW INCOMES, TO ENABLE THEM TO BUY FOOD DURING THE PANDEMIC. AS DETAILED IN THE REPORT, THE OFFICE RECEIVED HUNDREDS OF COMPLAINTS ON THIS SUBJECT, AND IT INVESTIGATED THEM ON TWO LEVELS: THE FIRST, BY PROVIDING INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE COMPLAINANTS IN ORDER TO ENABLE THEM TO EXERCISE THEIR RIGHT TO RECEIVE THE FOOD CARDS; THE SECOND, BY CONDUCTING A WIDE-RANGING EXAMINATION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES ARISING FROM THE COMPLAINTS, FOR THE PURPOSE, AMONG OTHERS, OF ASSISTING POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES - WHO FOR SOME REASON HAD NOT UTILIZED THEIR ELIGIBILITY FOR THE FOOD CARDS - TO EXERCISE THEIR RIGHTS.

ONE OF THE CHALLENGES FACING THE OFFICE DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS IS THE RESTRICTION IN RECEIVING THE PUBLIC. WHILE MOST OF THE COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE OFFICE ARE SENT VIA THE ELECTRONIC ONLINE FORMS THAT CAN BE FOUND ON ITS WEBSITE, THERE ARE COMPLAINANTS WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY FILING COMPLAINTS IN THIS MANNER AND PREFER TO FILE A COMPLAINT VERBALLY AT THE OFFICE, WITH STAFF MEMBERS WHO ADVISE THEM AND HELP THEM WRITE THEIR COMPLAINT. THE RESTRICTIONS IN RECEIVING THE PUBLIC STRONGLY AFFECTED THESE COMPLAINANTS AND IN ORDER TO ACCOMMODATE THEM, THE OFFICE MADE ITS PROCEDURE FOR FILING COMPLAINTS MORE FLEXIBLE

DURING THE CRISIS, ALLOWING THE FILING OF A COMPLAINT BY PHONE IN APPROPRIATE CASES. IN ITS EFFORTS TO COPE WITH THE RESTRICTIONS, IT HAS RECENTLY LAUNCHED A NEW SERVICE - RECEPTION VIA ZOOM, WHEN REQUESTED BY THE COMPLAINANT. IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THIS SERVICE, ANY COMPLAINANT INTERESTED IN FILING A COMPLAINT AGAINST A PUBLIC BODY MAY FILE A REQUEST FOR A ZOOM MEETING, VIA A LINK ON THE WEBSITE OF THE OFFICE, AND A MEMBER OF STAFF WILL GET BACK TO HIM/HER TO ARRANGE THE MEETING.

DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS, THE OFFICE CONTINUED WITH INCREASED INTENSITY TO CONDUCT DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES FOR RAISING THE AWARENESS OF POPULATIONS DESERVING SPECIAL ATTENTION AS TO THE POSSIBILITY OF TURNING TO IT. THESE ACTIVITIES INCLUDED THE INTERVIEWING OF STAFF MEMBERS IN THE MEDIA SERVING DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES AND DIFFERENT LANGUAGE-SPEAKERS. DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT, THE OFFICE FOCUSED ON PROVIDING INFORMATION FOR THE POPULATION OF OLDER PERSONS, WHICH HAS BEEN SERIOUSLY AFFECTED BY THE COVID-19 CRISIS. IN JUNE 2021, "NATIONAL OMBUDSDAY" TOOK PLACE, ON WHICH STAFF OF THE OFFICE REACHED OUT TO OLDER PERSONS IN DIFFERENT FACILITIES, GIVING LECTURES ON THE WORK OF THE OFFICE. THESE LECTURES, IN ADDITION TO THE ONGOING AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS OF THE REGIONAL BUREAUS OF THE OFFICE AND THE ACTIVITY ON SOCIAL NETWORKS, EXPOSED NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS THAT RUN FACILITIES FOR OLDER PERSONS TO THE ACTIVITY OF THE OFFICE.

JERUSALEM, DECEMBER 2021

THE OFFICE OF THE STATE COMPTROLLER AND OMBUDSMAN IS THE ONLY INSTITUTION IN THE WORLD WHERE THE STATE COMPTROLLER ALSO SERVES AS OMBUDSMAN. THIS AMALGAMATION OF AUTHORITY ACCORDS ADDED VALUE BOTH TO THE WORK OF STATE AUDIT AND TO THAT OF THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN, SINCE IT ENHANCES THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE OFFICE AND THE DIVISIONS OF STATE AUDIT. DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS, THE OFFICE CONVEYED TO THE STATE AUDIT DIVISIONS HIGHLY VALUABLE INFORMATION, WHICH ASSISTED THE AUDIT DEPARTMENTS IN THE PREPARATION OF A SPECIAL REPORT. THIS REPORT WAS PUBLISHED IN AUGUST 2021 AND ADDRESSED A WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE WAY STATE AUTHORITIES WERE COPING WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

THE COVID-19 CRISIS IS A GLOBAL CRISIS, AND OMBUDS INSTITUTIONS AROUND THE WORLD HAVE BEEN COPING WITH ITS IMPACT ON THE PUBLIC WITHIN THEIR COUNTRIES. THE OFFICE IS IN CONSTANT CONTACT WITH OMBUDS INSTITUTIONS IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND COOPERATES WITH THEM IN FORMULATING WAYS IN WHICH OMBUDSPERSONS CAN HELP POPULATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE CRISIS.

WE WISH TO THANK ALL THE STAFF OF THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN, WHO ARE DEDICATED TO HELPING COMPLAINANTS EXERCISE THEIR RIGHTS AND TO FACILITATING THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES. THE PROFESSIONAL AND EFFECTIVE SERVICE PROVIDED BY THE STAFF FOR THE COMPLAINANTS IS REFLECTED IN

THE MANY MOVING LETTERS OF THANKS RECEIVED BY THE OFFICE. ACCORDING TO OUR DATA, APPROX. 34% OF THE COMPLAINANTS WHO INDICATED HOW THEY KNEW ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF RECEIVING ASSISTANCE FROM THE OFFICE, WROTE THAT A FRIEND HAD RECOMMENDED THE SERVICE. THIS FACT SHOWS FIRST AND FOREMOST THAT COMPLAINANTS FEEL THEY RECEIVED GOOD SERVICE FROM THE STAFF OF THE OFFICE AND THAT THEY REFER TO IT FRIENDS WHO ARE IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE.

THE OFFICE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY PUBLIC BODIES FOR THE PUBLIC DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS, IN THE HOPE THAT THE CRISIS WILL SOON BE OVER. WE CALL ON THE PUBLIC TO UTILIZE THE SERVICES OF THE OFFICE WHENEVER THEIR RIGHTS HAVE NOT BEEN RESPECTED AND THEY HAVE NOT RECEIVED APPROPRIATE SERVICE FROM THE PUBLIC BODY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NORMS EXPECTED OF A PUBLIC BODY IN THE STATE OF ISRAEL.

WE ARE HERE AT YOUR SERVICE.



MATANYAHU ENGLMAN
STATE COMPTROLLER
AND OMBUDSMAN OF
ISRAEL



DR. ESTHER BEN-HAIM, ADV.
HEAD OF THE
OFFICE OF THE
OMBUDSMAN

**DATA ON
COMPLAINTS
RELATING TO
COVID-19**

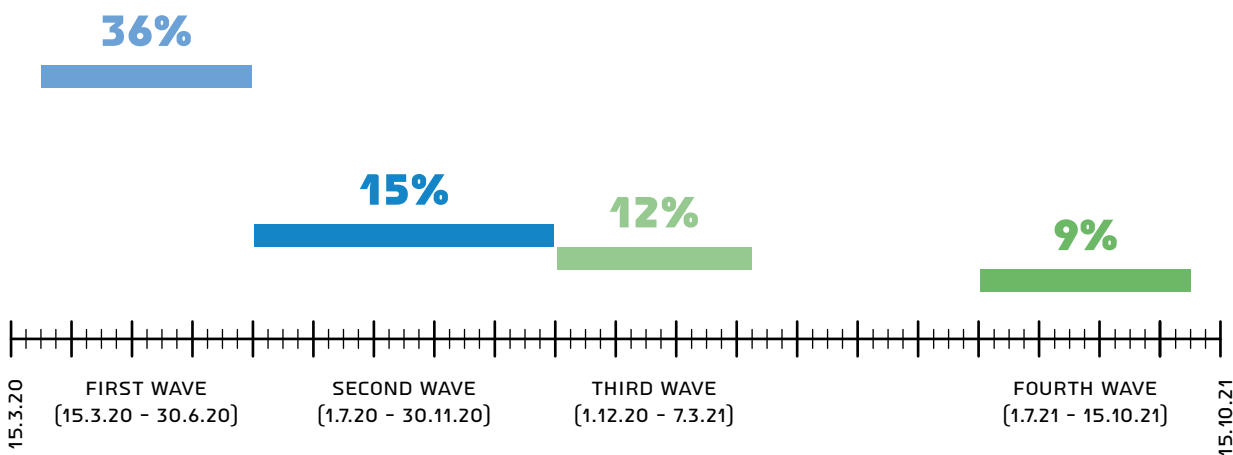


THIS CHAPTER WILL PRESENT DATA ON THE COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE OFFICE DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT (1.12.20 - 15.10.21). A COMPARISON OF THE DATA IN THIS REPORT WITH THE DATA IN THE PREVIOUS TWO REPORTS OF THE OFFICE RELATING TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS REFLECTS THE SHIFT FROM A STATE OF EMERGENCY TO A STATE OF "LIVING WITH COVID-19". THIS TRANSITION IS ALSO REFLECTED IN A COMPARISON OF THE DATA IN THIS REPORT WITH THOSE IN ANNUAL REPORT 46 FOR THE YEAR 2019. IT SHOULD BE POINTED OUT THAT THE DATA RELATE ONLY TO COMPLAINTS CONCERNING THE COVID-19 CRISIS, UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE. THE DATA FOR THE YEAR 2019, PRIOR TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS, RELATE TO ALL THE COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE OFFICE IN THAT YEAR.

Number of letters of complaint¹ received by the Office

DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT, THE OFFICE RECEIVED 16,191 LETTERS OF COMPLAINT, INCLUDING 1,687 LETTERS CONCERNING COVID-19. THIS CONSTITUTES A 36% DROP IN THE NUMBER OF LETTERS OF COMPLAINT RELATING TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS AS COMPARED WITH THE NINE MONTHS OF THE FIRST AND SECOND WAVES, DURING WHICH 2,637 LETTERS OF COMPLAINT REGARDING THE CRISIS WERE RECEIVED.

Chart 1: Percentage of letters of complaint relating to Covid-19 received during the different Covid-19 waves²

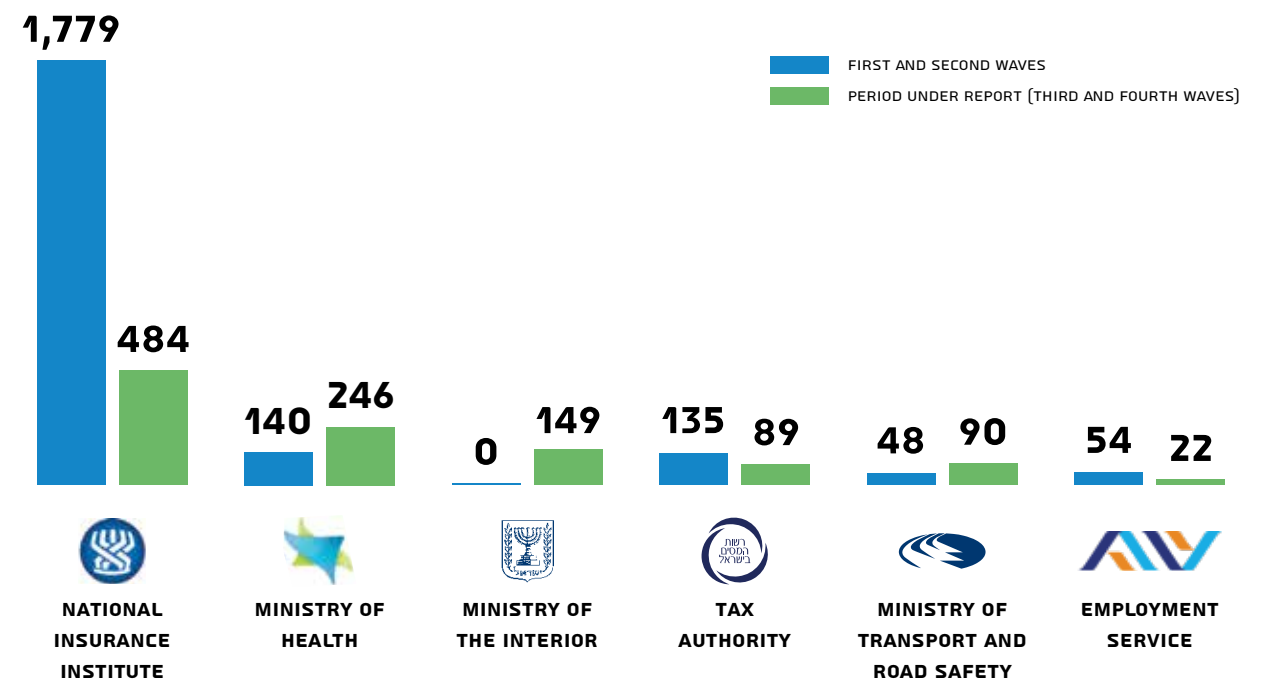


[1] A "LETTER OF COMPLAINT" IS A LETTER FROM A COMPLAINANT THAT CONTAINS ONE OR MORE COMPLAINTS AGAINST ONE PUBLIC BODY. THIS IS DIFFERENTIATED IN THE REPORT FROM THE TERM "COMPLAINT", WHICH REFERS TO THE CLAIMS OF THE COMPLAINANT AGAINST THE PUBLIC BODY.

[2] PERCENTAGE OF ALL LETTERS OF COMPLAINT RECEIVED DURING THE SAME PERIOD.

THE DATA CLEARLY DISCLOSE A DROP IN THE NUMBER OF LETTERS OF COMPLAINT DEALING WITH COVID-19 AS COMPARED WITH THE TOTAL NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE OFFICE DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT. THIS DROP IS LIKELY TO INDICATE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, A RETURN TO EVERYDAY LIFE ALONGSIDE COVID-19 AND PERHAPS AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY PUBLIC SERVICE BODIES DURING THE CRISIS.

Chart 2: The bodies against which the highest number of letters of complaint relating to Covid-19 were received during the first and second waves and during the period under report



THE ABOVE DATA ILLUSTRATE A CHANGE IN THE IDENTITY OF THE PUBLIC BODIES AGAINST WHICH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS RELATING TO COVID-19 WAS RECEIVED. INDEED, AS DURING THE FIRST AND SECOND WAVES, DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT MOST OF THE LETTERS OF COMPLAINT WERE AGAINST THE NATIONAL INSURANCE INSTITUTE (NII); IN FACT, THE NUMBER OF LETTERS OF COMPLAINT AGAINST THE NII DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT WAS DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF LETTERS OF COMPLAINT RECEIVED

DURING THE SAME PERIOD AGAINST THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH, ABOUT WHICH THE SECOND HIGHEST NUMBER OF LETTERS OF COMPLAINT WAS RECEIVED ON THE SUBJECT OF COVID-19. NOTWITHSTANDING, THE NUMBER OF LETTERS OF COMPLAINT AGAINST THE NII DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT WAS APPROX. 73% LOWER THAN THE NUMBER OF LETTERS OF COMPLAINT FILED AGAINST THE NII DURING THE FIRST AND SECOND WAVES. FURTHERMORE, THERE WAS A 34% DROP IN THE NUMBER OF LETTERS OF COMPLAINT AGAINST THE TAX AUTHORITY AS COMPARED WITH THE FIRST AND SECOND WAVES.

CONVERSELY, THE NUMBER OF LETTERS OF COMPLAINT AGAINST THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR ROSE³. THE NUMBER OF LETTERS OF COMPLAINT AGAINST THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH ALSO ROSE BY APPROX. 75%.

THE CHANGE IN IDENTITY OF THE PUBLIC BODIES ILLUSTRATES THAT THE COMPLAINTS IN THE THIRD AND FOURTH WAVES DEAL NOT ONLY WITH THE DEMAND FOR SOCIAL SECURITY - MATERIAL ASSISTANCE AND THE RECEIPT OF BENEFITS AND MONETARY GRANTS - BUT ALSO WITH LIVING A NORMAL LIFE ALONGSIDE COVID-19 - EXITING AND ENTERING ISRAEL⁴, PARTICIPATION IN EVENTS WITHIN THE GREEN PASS RESTRICTIONS, ETC.

[3] MOST OF THE LETTERS OF COMPLAINT AGAINST THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR CONCERNED THE MINISTRY'S DECISION TO DISTRIBUTE PREPAID FOOD CARDS TO ELIGIBLE POPULATIONS.

[4] THE COMPLAINTS WERE FILED AGAINST THE POPULATION AUTHORITY, WHICH WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY PERTAINING TO EXITING AND ENTERING ISRAEL.

Subjects of complaints

Chart 3: Main subjects of complaints relating to Covid-19

FIRST AND SECOND WAVES



BENEFITS

1,677

COMPLAINTS



PUBLIC SERVICE*

368

COMPLAINTS



PAYMENTS AND GRANTS**

208

COMPLAINTS



CONSUMER ISSUES

40

COMPLAINTS



EDUCATION

61

COMPLAINTS

THIRD AND FOURTH WAVES



PUBLIC SERVICE*

552

COMPLAINTS



BENEFITS

424

COMPLAINTS



WELFARE - MATERIAL ASSISTANCE

338

COMPLAINTS



PAYMENTS AND GRANTS**

161

COMPLAINTS



FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

72

COMPLAINTS

THESE DATA REVEAL A DROP IN THE NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT BENEFITS; A POSSIBLE REASON FOR THIS IS THE SUCCESS OF BODIES DEALING WITH BENEFITS AND GRANTS (THE NATIONAL INSURANCE INSTITUTE AND THE TAX AUTHORITY) IN OVERCOMING THE DIFFICULTIES POSED BY THE COVID-19 CRISIS (SEE MORE DETAILS BELOW) OR THE FACT THAT THE EASING OF RESTRICTIONS DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT (FROM FEBRUARY 2021) LED TO AN

* NOT INCLUDING COMPLAINTS ABOUT BENEFITS THAT ALSO RAISED ISSUES OF DEFECTIVE SERVICE

** GRANTS FROM THE TAX AUTHORITY, INCLUDING GRANTS TO ASSIST THE SELF-EMPLOYED, REIMBURSEMENTS OF MONEY BY DIFFERENT AUTHORITIES AND PUBLIC BODIES, ETC.

INCREASE IN THE RATE OF EMPLOYMENT AND A DECREASE IN CLAIMS FOR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT⁵. THERE WAS ALSO A NOTICEABLE DROP IN THE NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT EDUCATION⁶. CONVERSELY, THE NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT PUBLIC SERVICE AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT INCREASED, FOLLOWING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EXCEPTIONS COMMITTEE DEALING WITH ENTERING AND EXITING ISRAEL.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO POINT OUT THAT 338 COMPLAINTS CONCERNED THE DECISION OF THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR TO DISTRIBUTE PREPAID FOOD CARDS TO ELIGIBLE POPULATIONS⁷.

Characteristics of complainants

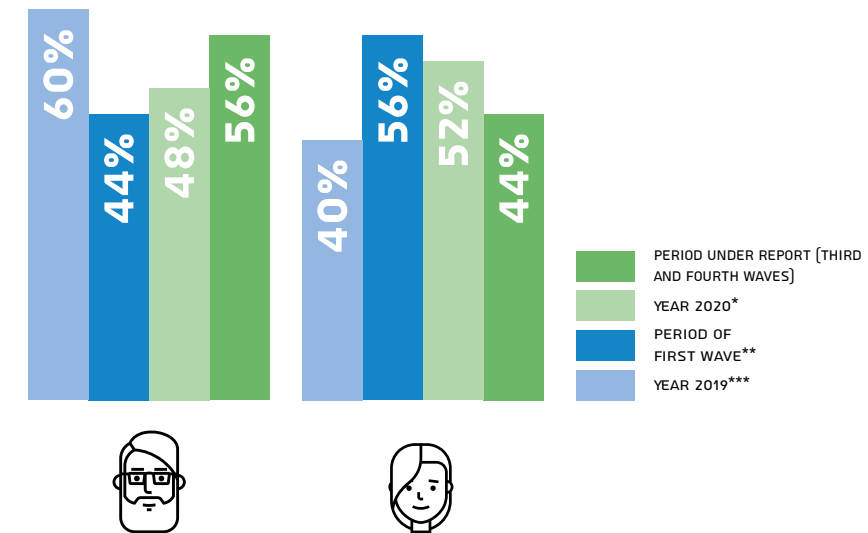
Gender

THE COVID-19 CRISIS DID NOT AFFECT THE DIFFERENT POPULATIONS TO THE SAME EXTENT. DATA PUBLISHED BY THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE DISCLOSE THAT THE PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WHOSE EMPLOYMENT WAS TERMINATED DURING THE LOCKDOWNS IMPOSED DUE TO COVID-19, OUT OF ALL WOMEN EMPLOYEES, WAS HIGHER THAN THE PERCENTAGE OF MEN IN THE SAME SITUATION (21% AS OPPOSED TO 16%). THIS CAN BE EXPLAINED BY THE FACT, AMONG OTHERS, THAT THE SALARY OF WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY IS LOWER THAN THAT OF MEN, AND LOW-SALARIED EMPLOYEES WERE MORE AFFECTED BY THE LOCKDOWNS. HOWEVER, IT WAS FOUND THAT THE INCREASED DISPARITIES BETWEEN THE GENDERS WERE OBSERVED ONLY DURING THE MONTHS OF THE LOCKDOWNS. AFTER EACH LOCKDOWN, WOMEN RETURNED TO WORK AT A HIGHER RATE THAN MEN, AND THUS THERE WAS NO GENDER DISPARITY IN THE RATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT DURING THE OVERALL PERIOD OF THE PANDEMIC⁸.

THE IMPACT OF THE CRISIS ON WOMEN IS ALSO REFLECTED IN THEIR PERCENTAGE OF THE COMPLAINANTS TURNING TO THE OFFICE DURING THE FIRST WAVE. IN CONTRAST TO NORMAL TIMES, DURING WHICH IN RECENT YEARS THE CLEAR MAJORITY OF COMPLAINANTS HAVE BEEN MEN, DURING THE FIRST WAVE THE CLEAR MAJORITY OF COMPLAINANTS WERE WOMEN.

- [5] MINISTRY OF FINANCE - CHIEF ECONOMIST DIVISION, "UPDATE ON LABOUR MARKET AS OF JUNE 2021" (WRITTEN IN AUGUST 2021), P.6.
- [6] DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT, ONLY 15 COMPLAINTS ABOUT EDUCATION RELATING TO COVID-19 WERE FILED.
- [7] SOME OF THE COMPLAINTS WERE FILED AGAINST THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR AND SOME WERE FILED AGAINST THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES WHO WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE DECISION OF THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR.
- [8] MINISTRY OF FINANCE - CHIEF ECONOMIST DIVISION, "GENDER DISPARITIES IN THE LABOUR MARKET DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS" (2020), P. 26.

Chart 4: Breakdown of complainants by gender⁹



- [9] COMPLAINANTS THAT ARE NOT CORPORATIONS.
- * OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN, ANNUAL REPORT 47 (2021), P. 65.
- ** OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN, SPECIAL REPORT NO.1 - INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS DURING THE FIRST WAVE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (2020), P. 26.
- *** OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN, ANNUAL REPORT 46 (2020), P. 44.

Chart 5: Complaints about benefits and public service

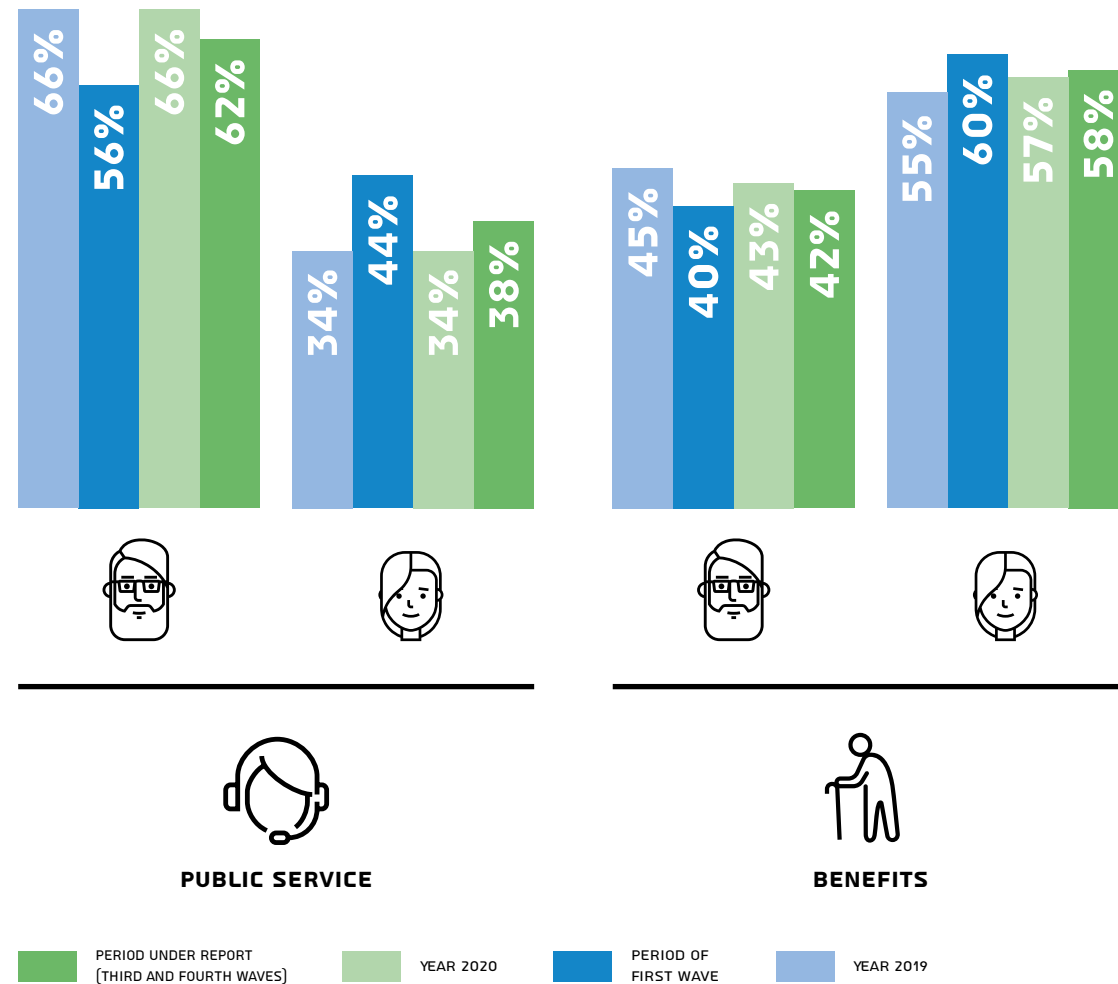


CHART 4 ILLUSTRATES THAT DURING THE FIRST WAVE, THE PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN'S COMPLAINTS RELATING TO COVID-19 WAS HIGHER THAN IN NORMAL TIMES (56%, AS OPPOSED TO 40% IN 2019). HOWEVER, IN 2020 THE NUMBER OF MALE COMPLAINANTS ROSE WHILE THE NUMBER OF FEMALE COMPLAINANTS DROPPED, SO THAT DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT THE PERCENTAGE OF MALE COMPLAINANTS WAS ONCE AGAIN HIGHER THAN THAT OF WOMEN.

THE RETURN TO THE TREND EXISTING BEFORE THE COVID-19 CRISIS, WHERE THE PERCENTAGE OF MALE COMPLAINANTS WAS HIGHER THAN THE PERCENTAGE

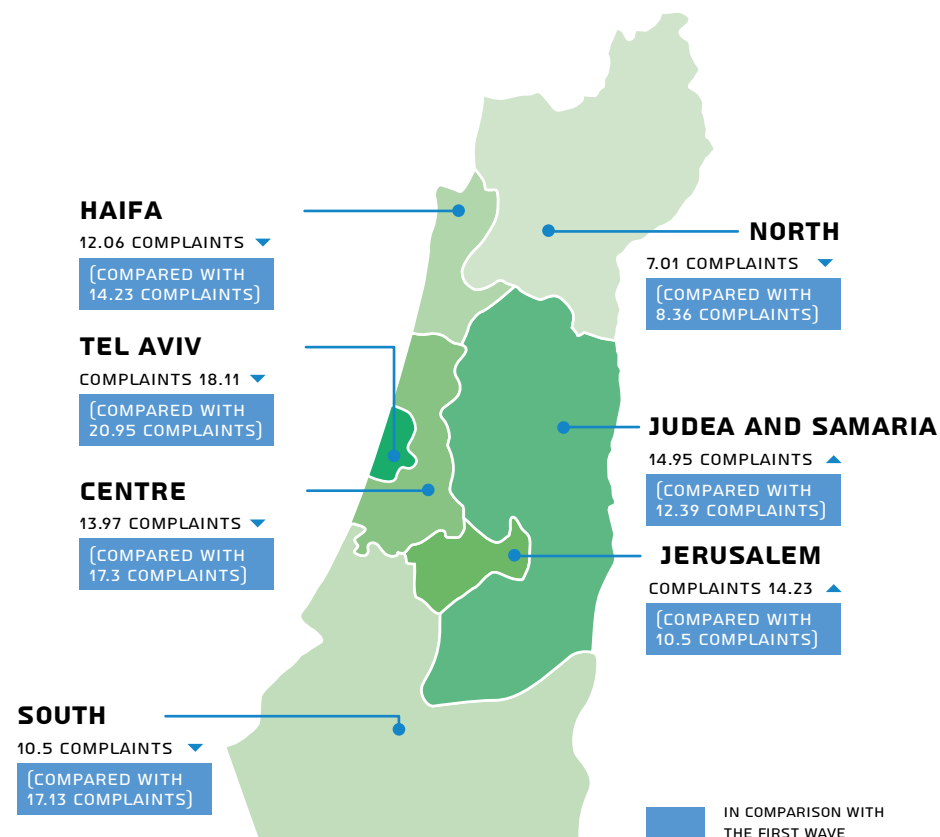
OF FEMALE COMPLAINANTS, IS LIKELY TO INDICATE, AS SAID, A SHIFT IN THE ISRAELI PUBLIC FROM A STATE OF EMERGENCY TO A STATE OF "LIVING WITH COVID-19". AN ADDITIONAL EXPLANATION FOR THIS TREND IS LIKELY TO BE THE SUBJECTS OF THE COMPLAINTS. THE MAIN SUBJECT OF COMPLAINTS DURING THE FIRST WAVE WAS BENEFITS, AN ISSUE THAT MORE WOMEN COMPLAIN ABOUT THAN MEN EVEN DURING NORMAL TIMES. IN CONTRAST, ON THE SUBJECT OF PUBLIC SERVICE MEN COMPLAIN MORE THAN WOMEN (SEE CHART 5 ABOVE). SINCE PUBLIC SERVICE ONCE AGAIN BECAME THE MAIN SUBJECT OF COMPLAINTS DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT (SEE CHART 3 ABOVE), THE PERCENTAGE OF MEN FILING COMPLAINTS NATURALLY ROSE, WHILE THE PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN COMPLAINANTS DROPPED.

Place of residence

THE DATA REGARDING THE BREAKDOWN OF COMPLAINTS BY THE COMPLAINANTS' DISTRICT OF RESIDENCE REFLECT CONSIDERABLY THE AWARENESS OF THE RESIDENTS OF THE DIFFERENT DISTRICTS AS TO THEIR RIGHTS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF EXERCISING THEM. THESE DATA BECOME MORE IMPORTANT IN A PERIOD OF FINANCIAL CRISIS AND EXTENSIVE LOCKDOWNS, WHICH ARE LIKELY TO AFFECT MORE SEVERELY RESIDENTS OF THE PERIPHERY WHO ARE UNABLE TO ENJOY THE FINANCIAL AND SOCIAL ADVANTAGES THAT ARE PREVALENT AT THE CENTRE OF THE COUNTRY¹⁰. IN ORDER TO MAKE A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT DISTRICTS, WHICH DIFFER FROM EACH OTHER IN SIZE, THE NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS HAS BEEN INCREASED BY 100,000 AND THE SUM DIVIDED BY THE NUMBER OF RESIDENTS OF EACH DISTRICT.

[10] NOAM BOTOSH, EMPLOYMENT AND SALARY DISPARITIES BETWEEN THE PERIPHERY AND THE CENTRE - DATA AND POSSIBLE POLICY TOOLS (2020); DAPHNA AVIRAM-NITZAN AND YARDEN KEDAR, THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS ON VULNERABLE POPULATIONS IN THE LABOUR MARKET - FINDINGS OF A COVID-19 SURVEY (2020).

Chart 6: Number of complaints relating to the Covid-19 crisis per 100,000 residents, according to the districts of the Ministry of the Interior during the third and fourth waves and in comparison with the first wave



THE DATA DISCLOSE THAT DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT, THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS PER 100,000 RESIDENTS, WERE FROM THE TEL AVIV DISTRICT, FOLLOWED BY THE DISTRICTS OF JUDEA AND SAMARIA AND JERUSALEM. WITH REGARD TO THE COMPLAINTS RELATING TO COVID-19 DURING THE FIRST WAVE, THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS PER 100,000 RESIDENTS WERE FROM THE TEL AVIV DISTRICT, FOLLOWED BY THE CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN DISTRICTS¹¹.

[11] OMBUDSMAN, SPECIAL REPORT NO.1 – INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS DURING THE FIRST WAVE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC [2020], P.27.

A PROMINENT PIECE OF DATA IS THE SIGNIFICANT DROP (40%) IN THE NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS FROM THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT DURING THE THIRD AND FOURTH WAVES. IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO NOTE THE LOW PERCENTAGE OF COMPLAINTS IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICT DURING THE THIRD AND FOURTH WAVES - 7 COMPLAINTS PER 100,000 RESIDENTS. THESE DATA ARE LIKELY TO REFLECT THE DISPARITY BETWEEN RESIDENTS OF THE PERIPHERY AND THOSE OF THE CENTRE WITH REGARD TO THE EXERCISING OF THEIR RIGHTS.

Findings of complaint investigations

56.6% OF THE COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS THAT THE OFFICE WAS AUTHORIZED TO INVESTIGATE AND WHOSE INVESTIGATION WAS COMPLETED DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT, WERE FOUND JUSTIFIED OR WERE RECTIFIED IN THE COURSE OF THE INVESTIGATION.

Chart 7: Percentage of justified or rectified complaints whose investigation was completed, 2019 - 2021



AS THE DATA DISCLOSE, THE PERCENTAGE OF COMPLAINTS WHOSE INVESTIGATION WAS COMPLETED DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT – WHETHER BECAUSE THE COMPLAINT WAS FOUND JUSTIFIED OR BECAUSE THE MATTER OF THE COMPLAINT WAS RECTIFIED WITHOUT THE NEED TO REACH A DECISION PERTAINING TO IT – REMAINS HIGH. THIS IS SO DESPITE THE SIGNIFICANT DROP IN COMPLAINTS IN COMPARISON WITH THE NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS WHOSE INVESTIGATION WAS COMPLETED FOR THE SAME REASONS IN 2020. THESE DATA ARE LIKELY TO INDICATE THAT PUBLIC BODIES HAVE BECOME USED TO THE DEMAND ON THEM TO PROVIDE THE PUBLIC WITH NEW AND DIFFERENT SERVICES DURING THE PANDEMIC.

DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT, 33% OF THE COMPLAINTS WERE INVESTIGATED TO THE POINT OF A FINAL DECISION BEING REACHED IN THE MATTER¹². THIS PERCENTAGE IS HIGHER THAN THE PERCENTAGE OF SUCH COMPLAINTS DURING THE FIRST WAVE (20.8%), AND COMES CLOSE TO THE PERCENTAGE OF SUCH COMPLAINTS DURING NORMAL TIMES - 35.7% IN 2019. THE PERCENTAGE OF JUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS OUT OF ALL THE COMPLAINTS WHOSE INVESTIGATION WAS COMPLETED WAS 28.1% DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT, AS COMPARED WITH 35.2% IN 2019.

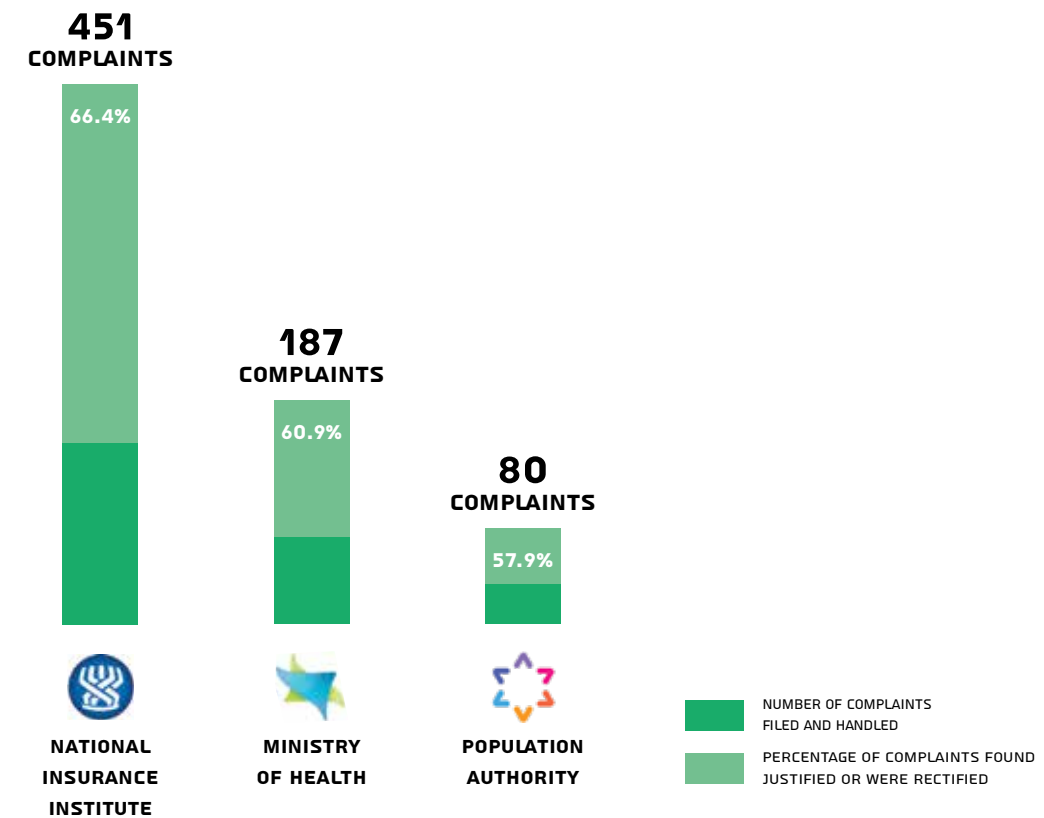
Findings of complaint investigation according to gender

THE PERCENTAGE OF COMPLAINTS OF WOMEN THAT WERE FOUND JUSTIFIED OR WERE RECTIFIED DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT (61%) WAS HIGHER THAN THE PERCENTAGE OF SUCH COMPLAINTS OF MEN (55%). IT SHOULD BE POINTED OUT THAT IN THE YEAR 2020 AS WELL, THE PERCENTAGE OF COMPLAINTS OF WOMEN THAT WERE FOUND JUSTIFIED OR WERE RECTIFIED (76%) WAS HIGHER THAN SUCH COMPLAINTS OF MEN (65%). CONVERSELY, IN 2019 NO SIGNIFICANT DISPARITY WAS FOUND BETWEEN THE PERCENTAGE OF COMPLAINTS OF WOMEN THAT WERE FOUND JUSTIFIED OR WERE RECTIFIED (43%) AND SUCH COMPLAINTS OF MEN (42.8%).

Findings of complaint investigation according to public bodies

THE FOLLOWING CHART SHOWS THE PUBLIC BODIES RELATING TO WHICH THE PERCENTAGE OF COMPLAINTS THAT WERE FOUND JUSTIFIED OR WERE RECTIFIED WAS HIGHER THAN THE OVERALL PERCENTAGE OF SUCH COMPLAINTS IN THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT (56.6%).

Chart 8: The public bodies relating to which over 70 complaints were filed and handled, the number of complaints filed against them and the percentage of complaints filed against them that were found justified or were rectified



[12] NOT ALL THE COMPLAINTS END IN A DECISION BEING MADE. SOME OF THE COMPLAINTS ARE COMPLETED WITHOUT THE NEED TO MAKE A DECISION REGARDING THEM BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN RECTIFIED; OTHERS ARE TERMINATED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE LAW THAT REQUIRE THE TERMINATION OF THE COMPLAINT.

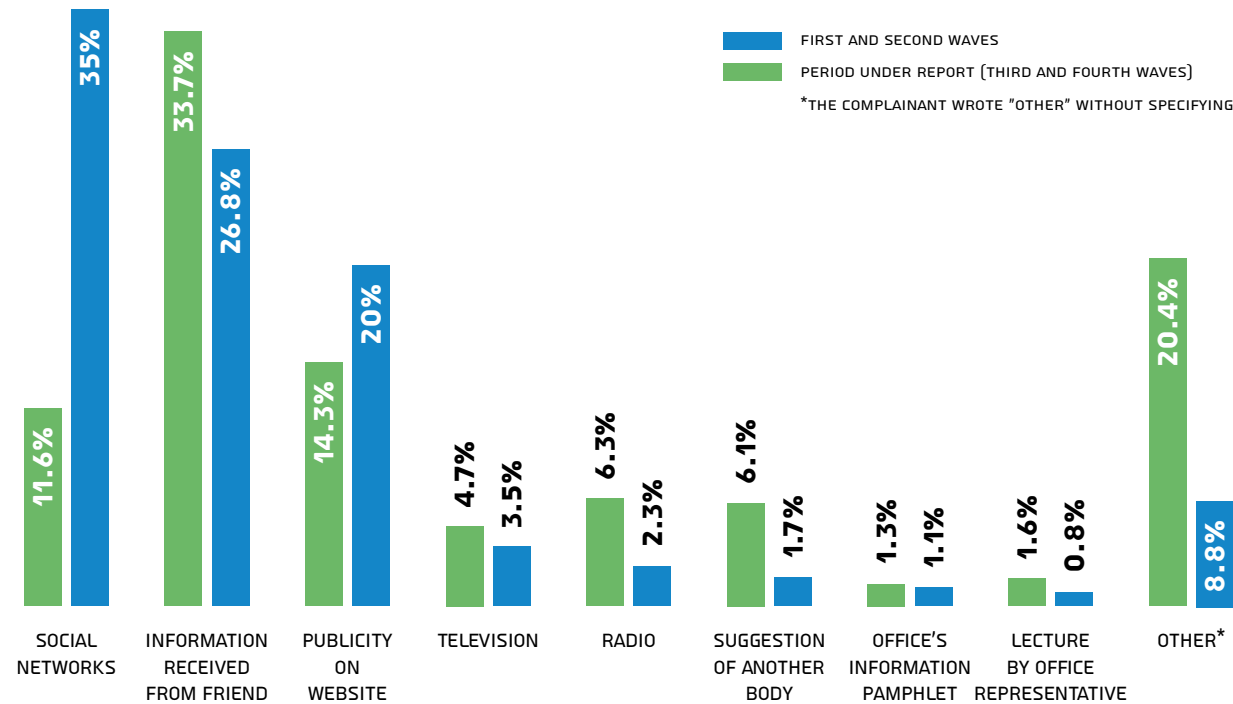
IT SHOULD BE POINTED OUT THAT THE TAX AUTHORITY AND THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND ROAD SAFETY WERE AMONG THE FIVE PUBLIC BODIES AGAINST WHICH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS REGARDING COVID-19 WERE RECEIVED (SEE CHART NO. 2). HOWEVER, THE PERCENTAGE OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST THESE BODIES THAT WERE FOUND JUSTIFIED OR WERE RECTIFIED WAS LOWER THAN THE OVERALL PERCENTAGE. IN CONTRAST, THE POPULATION

AUTHORITY IS NOT INCLUDED AMONG THE FIVE PUBLIC BODIES AGAINST WHICH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF LETTERS OF COMPLAINT WERE RECEIVED, THOUGH THE PERCENTAGE OF COMPLAINTS FILED AGAINST THE AUTHORITY THAT WERE FOUND JUSTIFIED OR WERE RECTIFIED WAS HIGHER THAN THE OVERALL PERCENTAGE.

How complainants were informed about the Office

THE OFFICE STRIVES TO REACH POPULATIONS THAT ARE NOT AWARE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF TURNING TO IT. THE OFFICE THUS ASKS COMPLAINANTS TO SPECIFY HOW THEY HEARD ABOUT THE OFFICE AND THE POSSIBILITY OF CONTACTING IT. 50% OF THE PEOPLE WHO FILED COMPLAINTS RELATING TO COVID-19 DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT SPECIFIED HOW THEY HAD HEARD ABOUT THE OFFICE. THE FOLLOWING IS A BREAKDOWN OF THEIR ANSWERS:

Chart 9: Breakdown of complainants' answer to the question - "How did you hear about us?"



A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE COMPLAINANTS' ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION DURING THE FIRST WAVE (DURING THE PERIOD OF SPECIAL REPORT NO. 1) AND THE RESPONSE GIVEN DURING THE PERIOD OF THE PRESENT SPECIAL REPORT, INDICATES A SHIFT IN THE WAY THE ACTIVITY OF THE OFFICE IS MADE KNOWN. FOR EXAMPLE, THE PERCENTAGE OF COMPLAINANTS WHO HAD LEARNT ABOUT THE OFFICE BY WORD OF MOUTH ("INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM A FRIEND") ROSE - FROM ABOUT 27% DURING THE PERIOD OF SPECIAL REPORT NO. 1 TO ABOUT 34% DURING THE PERIOD OF THE PRESENT REPORT. CONVERSELY, THE PERCENTAGE OF COMPLAINANTS WHO HAD LEARNT ABOUT THE OFFICE'S ACTIVITY VIA SOCIAL NETWORKS DROPPED SIGNIFICANTLY - FROM 35% DURING THE PERIOD OF SPECIAL REPORT NO. 1 TO APPROX. 12% DURING THE PERIOD OF THE PRESENT REPORT. THIS DROP IN THE PERCENTAGE OF COMPLAINANTS WHO LEARNT ABOUT THE OFFICE VIA SOCIAL NETWORKS CAN BE EXPLAINED BY THE FACT THAT DURING THE FIRST WAVE, MANY COMMUNITIES ENCOUNTERED URGENT DIFFICULTIES OF A COLLECTIVE NATURE, SUCH AS RECEIVING BENEFITS AND GRANTS, CAUSING THEM TO TURN TO A SOCIAL NETWORK IN THE HOPE OF FINDING RELEVANT INFORMATION THERE¹³. HOWEVER, DURING THE PERIOD OF "LIVING WITH COVID-19", THE PROBLEMS WERE OF A LESS COLLECTIVE NATURE AND THUS THERE WAS LESS INFORMATION ABOUT THEM ON THE NETWORK.

IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THE RISE IN THE NUMBER OF COMPLAINANTS WHO LEARNT ABOUT THE OFFICE AFTER BEING REFERRED TO IT BY ANOTHER BODY - FROM 1.7% DURING THE PERIOD OF SPECIAL REPORT NO. 1 TO 6.1% DURING THE PERIOD OF THE PRESENT REPORT. THIS INDICATES THE RECOGNITION BY PUBLIC BODIES AND NGOS OF THE OFFICE'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROTECTION OF THE COMPLAINANTS' RIGHTS. IT SHOULD BE POINTED OUT THAT IN JUNE 2021, NATIONAL OMBUDSDAY¹⁴ TOOK PLACE, ON WHICH STAFF OF THE OFFICE VISITED OLDER PERSONS IN DIFFERENT FACILITIES AND GAVE LECTURES ABOUT THE ACTIVITY OF THE OFFICE. THESE LECTURES, IN ADDITION TO THE ONGOING AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS OF THE REGIONAL BUREAUS AND THE ACTIVITY ON THE SOCIAL NETWORKS¹⁵, OPENED A WINDOW ON THE WORK OF THE OFFICE FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS RUNNING THE FACILITIES FOR OLDER PERSONS, AND IT IS POSSIBLE THAT AS A RESULT THESE BODIES REFERRED COMPLAINANTS TO THE OFFICE.

[13] AT THE OUTBREAK OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS, DESIGNATED FACEBOOK GROUPS WERE OPENED WHERE PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY PEOPLE CLAIMING BENEFITS AND GRANTS WERE DISCUSSED.

[14] NATIONAL OMBUDSDAY TOOK PLACE IN THE KNESSET (ISRAELI PARLIAMENT), FOR THE FIRST TIME, IN JUNE 2020. IT WAS DETERMINED THAT ON THIS DAY THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OMBUDSMAN, REVIEWING THE ACTIVITY OF THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN IN THE PRECEDING YEAR, WOULD BE PRESENTED.

[15] THE OFFICE MANAGES A FACEBOOK PAGE AND CONDUCTED A WEBINAR TO PUBLICIZE ITS ACTIVITY.

Data on main subjects of complaints

Benefits

FOLLOWING THE EXTENSIVE RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED ON THE ACTIVITY OF THE ISRAELI ECONOMY DUE TO COVID-19, FROM MARCH 2020 HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF EMPLOYEES WERE SENT ON UNPAID LEAVE OR WERE DISMISSED. ACCORDING TO THE DATA OF THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE, BY THE END OF MAY 2020 THE TOTAL NUMBER OF JOB SEEKERS STOOD AT 1.165 MILLION¹⁶. ABOUT A MILLION OF THEM FILED CLAIMS FOR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT WITH THE NATIONAL INSURANCE INSTITUTE (NII). AS A RESULT OF THE CRISIS, DIFFERENT EMERGENCY REGULATIONS WERE MADE IN ORDER TO ASSIST JOB SEEKERS AND PROVIDE DIFFERENT GRANTS FOR THE GENERAL POPULATION¹⁷.

THE HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT AND CHANGES IN THE TERMS OF ELIGIBILITY FOR OTHER BENEFITS AND GRANTS, CAST AN EXCEPTIONAL BURDEN ON THE NII, WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING THESE PAYMENTS, AND THUS IT WAS AT THE CENTRE OF FRICTION BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE AUTHORITIES. THIS CAN BE LEARNT, AMONG OTHER THINGS, FROM THE NUMBER OF LETTERS OF COMPLAINT RECEIVED AGAINST THE NII DURING THE FIRST WAVE, WHICH WAS 500% HIGHER THAN THE NUMBER OF LETTERS OF COMPLAINT RECEIVED AGAINST THE NII DURING THE SAME PERIOD IN 2019¹⁸. 93.6% OF THE COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE NII RELATING TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS WERE ABOUT BENEFITS.

AS SHOWN IN CHART 3 ABOVE, DURING THE FIRST AND SECOND WAVES OF THE PANDEMIC, THE MAIN SUBJECT OF COMPLAINTS FILED WITH THE OFFICE WAS THE BENEFITS PAID BY THE NII. THE HIGH NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE NII INDICATED THAT THE ISRAELI PUBLIC, WHICH DURING THE FIRST DAYS OF THE CRISIS WAS IN NEED OF THE SERVICES OF THE NII MORE THAN DURING NORMAL TIMES, DID NOT RECEIVE THE SERVICE IT EXPECTED. THE CONTINUAL DROP IN COMPLAINTS INDICATE THAT THE NII MANAGED TO IMPROVE ITS SERVICE FOR THE PUBLIC DURING THE CRISIS. THIS TREND IS ALSO APPARENT FROM THE FINDINGS OF COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION¹⁹.

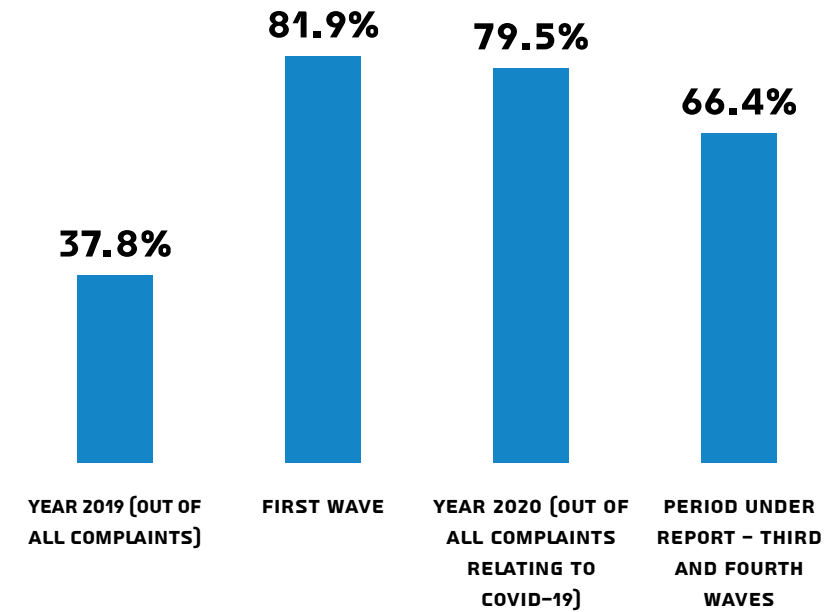
[16] SEE "THE PULSE OF THE LABOUR MARKET: MONTHLY PUBLICATION, MAY 2020": [HTTPS://WWW.TAASUKA.GOV.IL/HE/INFOANDPUBLICATIONS/IESFILESMANAGERREPORTSLIST/PIRSUMHODSHIO520.PDF](https://www.taasuk.gov.il/he/infoandpublications/iesfilesmanagerreportslist/pirsumhodshio520.pdf)

[17] IN ADDITION TO REGULATIONS RELATING TO UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT, NEW REGULATIONS CONCERNING A VARIETY OF BENEFITS AND GRANTS WERE ALSO MADE: BENEFITS FOR WOMEN WHO GAVE BIRTH DURING THE PANDEMIC, GRANTS FOR DISCHARGED SOLDIERS, RESERVE SERVICE BENEFIT, INCOME SUPPORT, ADJUSTMENT GRANTS FOR PEOPLEAGED 67 AND OVER, PROLONGED UNEMPLOYMENT GRANT, PAYMENT TO EMPLOYERS FOR ISOLATION DAYS, ETC.

[18] OMBUDSMAN. **SPECIAL REPORT NO. 1 – INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS DURING THE FIRST WAVE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC** (2020), P. 23.

[19] IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT THE PERCENTAGE OF JUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE NII, OUT OF ALL THE COMPLAINTS WHOSE INVESTIGATION WAS COMPLETED, STOOD AT 21.3% DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT, WHICH IS CLOSE TO THE PERCENTAGE OF JUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE NII IN 2019 (18%).

Chart 10: Percentage of complaints against the NII that were found justified or were rectified out of all the complaints against the NII



THIS CHART ILLUSTRATES A DOWNWARD TREND IN THE NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE NII THAT WERE FOUND JUSTIFIED OR WERE RECTIFIED BETWEEN THE FIRST WAVE OF THE PANDEMIC AND THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT.

Unemployment benefit

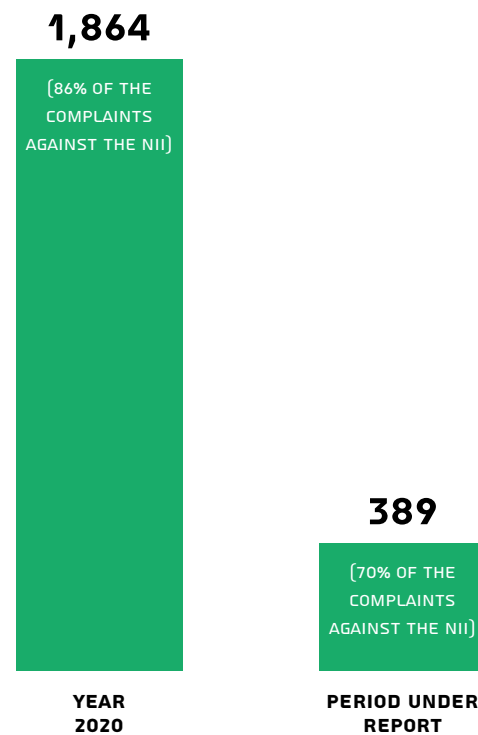
AS MENTIONED, DUE TO THE EXTENSIVE RESTRICTIONS PLACED ON THE ACTIVITY OF THE ISRAELI ECONOMY RESULTING FROM THE COVID-19 CRISIS, SINCE MARCH 2020 HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN SENT ON UNPAID LEAVE OR DISMISSED. IN ORDER TO ASSIST EMPLOYEES WHOSE WORK HAS BEEN TERMINATED, THE GOVERNMENT DECIDED TO ALLEVIATE THE CONDITIONS FOR RECEIVING UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT FROM THE NATIONAL INSURANCE INSTITUTE. IT ACCORDINGLY AMENDED NATIONAL INSURANCE LAW [CONSOLIDATED VERSION], 5755-1995 IN THE FRAMEWORK OF EMERGENCY REGULATIONS, AND LAID DOWN EMERGENCY PROVISIONS FOR ALLEVIATING

THE CONDITIONS FOR RECEIVING UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT REQUIRED OF EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE BEEN FORCED TO TERMINATE THEIR EMPLOYMENT DUE TO COVID-19²⁰. IT WAS ALSO DECIDED TO GIVE A SPECIAL ADJUSTMENT GRANT TO EMPLOYEES AGED 67 AND OVER²¹, WHOSE EMPLOYMENT HAD BEEN TERMINATED.

DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT, THE GOVERNMENT DECIDED ON MEASURES FOR RESTORING THE MANY UNEMPLOYED TO THE LABOUR MARKET. AMONG OTHER THINGS, A BONUS WAS PAID TO PEOPLE RECEIVING UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT WHO RETURNED TO WORK DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS²².

AS CHART 2 ILLUSTRATES, THE NUMBER OF LETTERS OF COMPLAINT RELATING TO THE CRISIS THAT WERE FILED IN 2021 AGAINST THE NATIONAL INSURANCE INSTITUTE DROPPED IN CONTRAST TO 2020.

Chart 11: Number of complaints about unemployment benefit filed against the National Insurance Institute in 2020 and during the period under report



[20] THESE AND OTHER ALLEVIATIONS HAVE BEEN ANCHORED IN EMERGENCY REGULATIONS (NEW CORONAVIRUS) (SPECIAL REGULATIONS RELATING TO UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE), 5780-2020.

[21] THOSE WHO ARE INELIGIBLE FOR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT BECAUSE OF THEIR AGE.

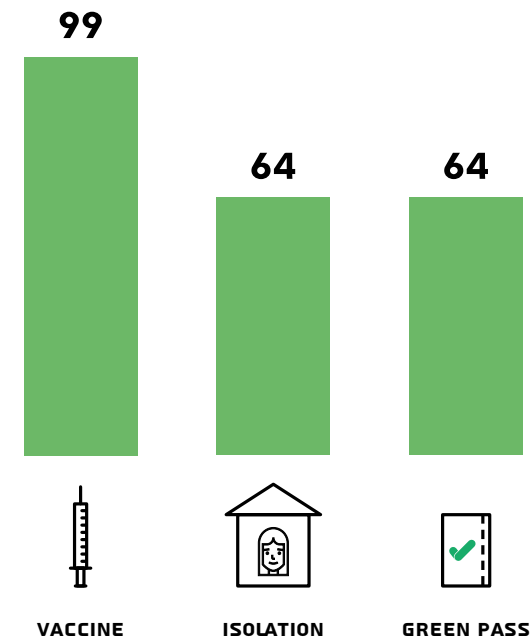
[22] "AGREEMENT RELATING TO THE PROVISION OF BONUSES FOR UNEMPLOYED PERSONS RETURNING TO THE LABOUR MARKET", SIGNED ON 15.3.21. OFFICIAL GAZETTE 9484 [16.3.21]. THE AGREEMENT WAS AMENDED IN AUGUST 2021.

DURING THE FIRST WAVE, 97% OF THE COMPLAINTS ABOUT BENEFITS RELATING TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS CONCERNED UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT, THE PERCENTAGE OF THESE COMPLAINTS STANDING AT 86% THROUGHOUT 2020. DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT, THE PERCENTAGE OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT DROPPED TO 70% OF THE COMPLAINTS RELATING TO BENEFITS.

THE DROP IN THE NUMBER OF LETTERS OF COMPLAINT, INCLUDING COMPLAINTS ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT, CAN BE ACCREDITED TO THE FACT THAT MOST OF THOSE ELIGIBLE FOR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT FILED THEIR CLAIMS FOR THE BENEFIT IN 2020 WITHIN A SHORT SPACE OF TIME, AND THE NII FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO COPE WITH THIS WAVE OF CLAIMS. HOWEVER, AFTER THE CLAIMANTS' ELIGIBILITY HAD BEEN APPROVED, IT CONTINUED AUTOMATICALLY FOR AS LONG AS THEY WERE OUT OF WORK. ANOTHER POSSIBLE EXPLANATION IS THE GRADUAL RETURN OF THE UNEMPLOYED TO THE LABOUR MARKET, TOGETHER WITH A DROP IN THE NUMBER OF SICK PERSONS AND THE RECOVERY OF THE ECONOMY.

Health Services

Chart 12: Number of complaints against the Health Services regarding main issues



COPING WITH COVID-19 REQUIRED THE BODIES RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING HEALTH SERVICES TO JOIN FORCES IN A CAMPAIGN TO FIGHT THE PANDEMIC. ACCORDINGLY, THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH PUBLISHED THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL DISTANCING DIRECTIVES, THE HEALTH CLINICS VACCINATED THE CITIZENS AND MAGEN DAVID ADOM [ISRAEL'S NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR EMERGENCY PRE-HOSPITAL MEDICAL CARE AND BLOOD SERVICES] AND THE HOME FRONT COMMAND CONDUCTED TESTING OPERATIONS FOR DETECTING THE VIRUS.

DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT, DRAMATIC CHANGES TOOK PLACE IN THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL DISTANCING DIRECTIVES OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH. THE CENTRAL CHANGE CAME AFTER THE NATIONAL VACCINATION CAMPAIGN THAT BEGAN IN DECEMBER 2020, AFTER WHICH A CHANGE WAS MADE TO THE DIRECTIVES FOR THE ISOLATION OF PERSONS WHO HAD COME INTO CONTACT WITH PEOPLE WHO HAD CONTRACTED THE VIRUS. FURTHERMORE, THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH ISSUED A GREEN PASS FOR PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN VACCINATED OR HAD RECOVERED FROM THE ILLNESS, AND LAID DOWN THAT PRESENTATION OF THE PASS WAS A PREREQUISITE FOR ENTERING PLACES THAT WERE REQUIRED TO ACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GREEN PASS DIRECTIVES. THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH ALSO ISSUED COVID-19 CERTIFICATES; THESE CERTIFICATES SERVED PEOPLE LEAVING THE COUNTRY AND WERE VALID IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE EU, AS WELL AS IN OTHERS WITH WHICH THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH HAD REACHED AN AGREEMENT FOR MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF THE CERTIFICATES.

DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT, THE OFFICE RECEIVED 336 LETTERS OF COMPLAINT CONCERNING COVID-19 THAT RELATED TO THE BODIES RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING HEALTH SERVICES, 73% OF THEM BEING AGAINST THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH. THE MAIN ISSUES ABOUT WHICH COMPLAINTS WERE FILED WERE THE VACCINE AGAINST COVID-19, THE ISOLATION DIRECTIVES AND THE GREEN PASS.





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