



Disabled Parking Permits in Israel: Between Real Need and Exploitation

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This paper presents the existing data on the issuance of disabled parking permits (or badges) in Israel, including the recent accelerated growth of permits obtained and used. The paper explores the reasons for the expansion of the phenomenon, conducts an international comparison and makes recommendations for minimizing fraud and exploitation in this area.

The **first chapter** introduces the subject, and the **second chapter** examines the expansion in the issuance of disabled parking permits.

The **third chapter** explores the two primary failings in this area: the procedural flaws in obtaining disabled parking badges in Israel and the deficiencies in enforcement.

The **fourth chapter** compares disabled parking permits as well as length-of-road to number-of-cars ratio in 21 other countries, with an **appendix** detailing the qualification requirements for a permit in the UK.

The **fifth chapter** lays out recommendations to improve the procedure for obtaining a badge, and the enforcement, to amend past failings and address incentives.

Summary:

Accessible parking for people with disabilities is a laudable and worthy goal, typically facilitated around the world by issuing designated parking permits. However, the parking benefits that states extend to those in need, create incentives for fraud and exploitation in the use of disabled parking permits. This has emerged as a significant issue in many countries, prompting authorities the world over to seek solutions.

In Israel, the problem is particularly acute, as greater incentives exist to unlawfully obtain or misuse permits: Israeli disabled parking badges afford greater benefits in comparison to other developed countries, while the country is also denser than most in terms of vehicle-to-road ratio.

The exploitation of disabled permits harms actual disabled persons and their caregivers, who often find their designated parking spaces (close to the destination, accessible to wheelchairs etc.) taken up by other permit holders who don't need them. It also harms the public at large through unfair allocation of the limited public resource of parking spaces and the reduction in revenue for local municipalities and the state treasury due to lost parking and vehicle license fees.

The data on disabled parking badges in Israel shows an unprecedented growth in the number of permit holders in recent years, particularly since 2022. The number of people with disabled parking badges rose from 74,000 to 265,000 between July 2006 and January 2023. While annual growth previously ranged from 5.7% to 9.9%, 2022 saw an unprecedented 36% spike in new permits.

The two main failings leading to this explosion in permit use are: (i) lax permit issuance procedures, further weakened in 2021 by the simplification of the **process** during the Covid-19 pandemic; and (ii) the difficulty in **enforcing** the restriction of the badges' use to the actual disabled persons, further aggravated by the permission to register two vehicles to one badge.

Most critically, the Disabled Parking Law 5754-1993 has no clear medical criteria to qualify for a permit, and includes vague language regarding those for whom "traveling without a car may negatively impact their health". The majority of disabled parking permits are issued without clear medical documentation of a specific disability, with "other" being listed as the reason (or no reason being provided at all) in 44% of cases in 2022, when the notable spike in permit issuance occurred.

During 2021, following the COVID pandemic, steps were taken at the Ministry of Transport to ease the burden on the public in several areas, including the process of obtaining a disabled parking badge and the associated bureaucracy. This proved unfortunate, as the combination of transition to a digital process for obtaining the permit together with the possibility of obtaining a disabled parking permit without going through the process of receiving recognition as a disabled person, such as that required to qualify as an IDF disabled veteran or as an allowance recipient by the *Bituach Leumi* (National Insurance Institute), created opportunities for abuse by parties who know how to exploit gray areas in the law, or simply operate fraudulently.

The law also permits the allocation of residential parking spaces for disabled persons. Eligibility for this allocation is also ungoverned by clear medical criteria, and to make matters worse, local authorities may override even the loose standards and allocate parking if they consider it "justified under the circumstances".

Beyond the procedural issues, there are enforcement challenges with tracking the illegal use of permits. Inspectors have almost no tools to verify whether a vehicle using a disabled parking space is actually being used by or for the benefit of the

permit holder. This problem is compounded by the ability to register multiple vehicles under a single permit. Badges end up serving as "family parking passes," to the point of absurdity, where a relative living in a different city from that of the disabled person can freely make use of the permit.

International review shows that parking accommodations in most developed countries are significantly less generous than those in Israel, in terms of where one is allowed to park, time restrictions on parking, and exemptions from fees. Some municipalities abroad have reinstated time and fee restrictions. The incentive to commit fraud in Israel is thus higher than in other countries. One recent case exposed a large-scale permit fraud ring involving doctors and others, who according to the police, issued thousands of permits illegally.

Recommendations:

1. **Establish clear medical criteria** for eligibility for disabled parking badges in the Disabled Parking Law, 5754-1993, or in dedicated regulations, further determining the conditions under which applicants would be exempt from in-person medical assessments by the authorizing physician of the Ministry of Transport – for instance, in certain types of medical disabilities or in cases where the application is submitted through the Ministry of Defense (for IDF disabled veterans) or the Ministry of Welfare (for the visually impaired). Additionally, establish clear medical criteria for the entitlement to allocated residential parking spaces, and remove the provision that allows local authorities to allocate such parking without meeting criteria.
2. Consider moving to a **personal-use model, based on biometric ID or a digital app**, so that only one vehicle at a time may park with the same permit, and codify this change in the Disabled Parking Law and The Ministry of Transport's guidelines.
3. **Review all badges issued from 2021**, when significant leniency was introduced and the contracting process with the Ministry of Transport was changed. Start the process by providing the option of voluntary return for anyone who may have obtained an unlawful permit unintentionally. Returners will be free to reapply for a permit if they are unsure of their eligibility.

For the [full Hebrew paper](#)