



High-Quality Employment and Its Effect on Haredi Households

Hila Axelrad, Idit Kalisher, Itschak Trachtengot,
Arthur Sandler and Tom Sadeh*



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This is a short summary, for the full paper (in Hebrew) see

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* Dr. Hila Axelrad is a senior researcher at Aaron Institute for Economic Policy, Reichman University, and Head of The Center for Economic Policy of the Haredi Society at the Institute. Dr. Idit Kalisher is a senior researcher at Aaron Institute. Dr. Itschak Trachtengot, Arthur Sandler and Tom Sadeh are researchers at Aaron Institute. This research was conducted in the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) research environment, using anonymized individual records prepared by the CBS, and we thank the professional staff there for their fruitful cooperation and willingness to help.

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→ **Contact details:**

Reichman University, P.O. Box 167, Herzliya, ISRAEL 4610101

Phone: 972-9-9602431

Email: aaron.economics@runi.ac.il

Website: <https://www.runi.ac.il/en/research-institutes/economics/aiep>

High-Quality Employment and Its Effect on Haredi Households

What are the effects of the decision to pursue employment, and of the quality of this employment, on Haredi households? We used surveys conducted by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) over the last two decades to examine the characteristics of employment and wages in Haredi households, and administrative individual data in the CBS research rooms to explore the relationship between employment and its quality on the one hand, and the household structure on the other hand, looking at variables such as age, number of children, educational attainment level, and spouse employment characteristics. Based on our findings, we point to barriers and market failures hindering the integration of both Haredi spouses in high-quality employment avenues.

In addition, we conducted a dedicated survey among over 900 married Haredi people aged 25 to 64, to examine the extent to which integration in the labor market leads to broader integration in Israeli society, looking at opinions and views of Haredi households, some of whom work and others do not, regarding their attitudes towards Israeli society, democratic values, and the desired level of assimilation in Israeli society.

Our findings indicate that in the years 2019-2021 there were fewer households in which none of the spouses work, concurrent with an increase in the share of households in which only the woman works, and the share of households in which both spouses work, compared to 2007-2009.

Another positive trend is an improvement in educational attainment level, reflected in a decrease in the share of households in which the educational level of the head of the household is high school or less, and an increase in the percentage of households in which the highest educational level of the head of the household is a vocational diploma or an academic degree.

Regarding the relationship between employment and income of Haredi women and men on the one hand, and household characteristics on the other hand, we found that the share of employed men is higher among households in which the woman is employed. We also found that the employment rate of Haredi men has been steadily rising since 2007, except for a slump during COVID-19, however the rate of this increase has slowed down since 2015. As far as family size is concerned, there is a clear negative correlation between the income of both spouses and the number of children.

The main barriers to the employment of Haredi men, according to our study, are insufficient education and training, lack of basic skills required for the job market, entering employment at an older age, community norms inimical to seeking employment, and difficulty acquiring high-quality occupations which require lengthy, substantial training.

Among Haredi women, the main problem is employment quality (wages), and the barriers are aversion to academic studies stemming from community norms, insufficient or inadequate vocational training, concentration in low-income employment sectors, and profusion of part-time work.

Our survey indicates a higher sense of Israeli identity among Haredi people who work in heterogenous environments, particularly those working alongside secular people, modern Haredim,¹ and women. Furthermore, a heightened sense of belonging to Israeli society was found among workers (particularly in secular environments), academics, and those with a higher income. Hence, it can be said that integration in the labor market is correlated with integration in Israeli society, in terms of belonging and identity.

¹ A term describing people who belong to the Haredi sector in Israel but are open to the modern world and the wider society, to an extent exceeding the norm of the Haredi mainstream.

1. Summary and Conclusions

In this study, we focused on the Haredi household, and how seeking employment and high-quality employment correlate with the household's structure. Using CBS surveys, we examined the characteristics of employment and wages in Haredi households, and administrative individual data in the CBS research rooms were utilized to explore the relationship between employment and its quality on the one hand, and the household structure on the other hand, with reference to variables such as age, number of children, educational attainment level, and spouse employment characteristics. Based on our findings, we point to barriers and market failures hindering the integration of both Haredi spouses in high-quality employment avenues.

In addition, we conducted a dedicated survey, among over 900 married Haredi people aged 25 to 64, to examine the extent to which integration in the labor market leads to broader integration in Israeli society, looking at opinions and views of Haredi households, some of whom work and others do not, regarding their attitudes towards Israeli society, democratic values, and the desired level of assimilation in Israeli society.

Haredi households tend to be younger in comparison to households among the rest of the Israeli population, and are mostly comprised of married couples with a relatively high average number of children (a third of Haredi families have five or more children).

In the years 2019-2021, there was a decrease in the percentage of households where none of the spouses work, alongside an increase in the share of households in which only the woman works, as well as the share of households in which both spouses work, compared to 2007-2009. The share of households in which both spouses work is higher in the 40-64 age group than in the 25-39 age group. In addition, older Haredi households work longer hours than younger ones.

Another positive trend is an improvement in educational attainment level, reflected in a decrease in the share of households in which the educational attainment of the head of the household is high school or less, and an increase in the percentage of households in which the educational level is a vocational diploma or an academic degree. Education is also correlated with the number of children, and the average number of children in the household decreases slightly when the woman's educational level increases. Research literature shows that people tend to marry those who are similar to them, in terms of status and education, and our data indicates that this is true in Haredi society as well.

Income from work of Haredi households is only 34% of that of non-Haredi Jewish households, and 74% of that of Arab households. However, Haredi households in which the woman has academic education tend to earn more than other Haredi households, in any employment configuration (only the woman works/both spouses work), and older Haredi households tend to earn more than younger Haredi households in any employment configuration. This is explained in part by longer working hours.

Obviously, low-income bears on poverty level. However, when controlling for the number of household members, the disparities in poverty between Haredi and non-Haredi households are smaller. In other words, the higher number of household members raises poverty rates. The gap between Haredi and non-Haredi Jewish households is reduced as a result of income from allowances and stipends, lower tax rates, transfer payments, and so on. For example, when both spouses work, the gap between Haredi and non-Haredi Jewish households decreases from 27% to 17%.

In regard to the relationship between high-quality employment and income of Haredi women and men on the one hand, and household characteristics on the other hand, our study shows that the share of employed men is higher among households in which the woman is employed, yet interestingly there is no correlation between the man's employment and the woman's salary, meaning there is no significant difference in the likelihood that the man will be employed between households in which the woman's salary is low and those in which it is higher. We also found that the employment rate of Haredi men has been steadily rising since 2007, except for a slump during COVID-19, however the rate of this increase has slowed down since 2015.

On the household level, employment configurations in which the woman is employed (either as a sole income earner or along with her spouse) are more strongly correlated with the educational level of the man (compared to households in which none of the spouses, or only the man, is employed). Thus, for the three Haredi branches on which we focused – Litvishe, Hasidic, and Sephardi – the percentage of households in which both spouses are employed is higher among households in which the man holds an academic first degree, regardless of the woman's educational level; similarly, the share of households in which only the woman is employed is higher among households in which the man only has high school matriculation diploma.

As far as family size is concerned, there is a clear negative relationship between the income of the father and the number of children, however in most years (among all three branches) there is no clear relationship between the mother's income and the number of children, which is to say there is no significant difference in family size between those in which the mother's income is high and those in which it is low, accounting for educational level and occupational experience. Conversely, in households in which the father's income is high, the average number of children is lower in comparison to households in which the father's income is low. The relationship between the educational level of the spouses and the size of the family is more pronounced among younger age cohorts (born 1980-1986), being negative and stronger, meaning the average family size of families from younger cohorts decreases as their educational level increases, compared to older cohorts – even when comparing data from different years, so that the ages of the parents are similar across cohorts.² Among Hasidic households there is hardly any correlation between the man's educational level and family size, with the exception of vocational training which is negatively correlated with the number of children. Among Litvishe and Sephardi households, on the other hand, the average number of children tends to decrease as the man's educational level increases.

Examination of wages reveals that, all in all, the last decade has seen an increase in the wages of Haredi Hasidic men, while among Letvishe, who have had the highest base salary during most of the last decade, wages have hardly changed (relatively speaking), and among the Sephardi there had been a decrease during most of the decade and an increase since 2019.

The relationship between the educational level and income of Haredi men varies between the different branches. Thus, while Hasidic graduates of vocational training courses enjoy higher wages (by 10%) compared to those without such a qualification, there is no significant wage gap along these lines among Letvishe and Sephardi men. However, graduates of MAHAT (The Government Institute for Training in Technology and Science) among Letvishe and Sephardi men enjoy significantly higher wages (by 43% and 34%, respectively) than their counterparts who had not undergone such training. Academic education is also correlated with higher wages across all branches, and the wages of academics with a second degree are higher than that of first-degree graduates.

² That is, this pattern was also seen when we compared the relationship between number of children and spouses' education among older cohorts as it had been at the end of the first decade/beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, with the same relationship among couples belonging to the younger cohorts at the end of the second decade.

The main barriers hindering the employment of Haredi men, according to our study, are insufficient education and training, lack of basic skills required for the job market, entering employment at an older age, community norms inimical to seeking employment, and difficulty acquiring high-quality occupations which require lengthy, substantial training.

Among Haredi women, the main problem is employment quality (wages) rather than employment rates, and the barriers include aversion to academic studies, insufficient or inadequate training, concentration in low-income employment sectors, or part-time work.

Is integration in the labor market conducive to integration in Israeli society in general? A survey we conducted among Haredi households suggests a higher sense of Israeli identity among Haredi people who work in heterogeneous environments, particularly those working alongside secular people, modern Haredim,³ and women. Furthermore, a heightened sense of belonging to Israeli society was found among workers (particularly in secular environments), academics, and those with a higher income. Hence, it can be said that integration in the labor market is positively correlated with integration in Israeli society, in terms of belonging and identity.

Regarding math and English studies for boys, despite the official Haredi position which is opposed to such studies, there are parts of Haredi society who are actually in favor of teaching math and English to boys. Support rates are higher among more modern respondents and those with a higher income.

Interestingly, in households in which the man works but the woman does not work, there is a higher rate of support among the parents for math and English studies, similar to families in which both spouses work. This finding indicates the importance of both spouses seeking employment, and also suggests that the working man is a catalyst for reducing isolationism, particularly when he works in a secular environment. On the other hand, a working woman by herself does not affect change, and sometimes may even adopt more conservative views. Regarding reducing the age of exemption from military draft, men – particularly working men – tend more than women or working women to agree that reducing men's age of exemption will lead to an increase in employment rates. This finding can be seen as another indication that women tend to be the "bearers of the flame", who represent the conservative Haredi stance and prevent openness to change.

³ See footnote 1.

Is it imperative to contribute to the state beyond Torah studies? A majority of Haredi people are unwilling to relinquish their position regarding the importance of the Torah. They consider Torah studies their most significant contribution to the state of Israel, above and beyond any other contribution. Only a few of them are willing to acknowledge the necessity of further contribution. Respondents who work expressed more willingness to consider the need for further contribution – particularly those who work in secular environments, while high-income workers support it more than those with lower incomes. Hence, integration in employment, and high-quality employment in particular, is correlated with integration in Israeli society in terms of inclination and willingness to contribute to the state.

Regarding the appropriate model for a Haredi family, respondents with above-average income and those who work (particularly alongside secular people) expressed more support for the model in which both spouses work as the appropriate model. That is, it appears that integration in employment, particularly high-quality employment, is correlated with a slight decline in the idealization of the “society of scholars”, in which the man studies Torah and the woman works. Finally, regarding issues of democracy and human rights, there are parts of Haredi society who exhibit high rates of support for Israeli democracy, including Hasidic people, modern Haredim and high-income workers. We also found that high-income workers tend to have higher levels of trust in state authorities (Knesset, government, the justice system), and to hold more egalitarian views regarding the rights of minorities and women. Hence, high-quality employment (as indicated by high income level) is correlated with higher support for democratic principles.

In conclusion, our survey indicates the existence of a variety of views and opinions among Haredi people. While conservative attitudes prevail in some areas, openness and even a desire for change can be seen in others. In this context, it is possible to discuss multiple “Haredi societies”, which share a common worldview but differ among themselves in some positions and perceptions. Inasmuch as we wish Haredi society to take part in the responsibility for – and the leadership of – the state of Israel, we need to identify the change-seeking elements within it as revealed in this study, and to help them act as the trailblazers who would lead the way for the rest of Haredi society.