



THE ISRAEL  
DEMOCRACY  
INSTITUTE



STATISTICAL  
REPORT ON  
**ULTRA-ORTHODOX**  
(HAREDI) SOCIETY  
IN ISRAEL  
2018

**ABSTRACT**



Gilad Malach | Lee Cahaner



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# Introduction

Recent years have seen a growing concern over what is perceived to be the fragmentation of Israeli society into what President Rivlin refers to as “tribes,” threatening to jeopardize its solidarity and resilience.

The ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) community is often defined as one such a “tribe”, particularly since it has chosen to erect, “walls of sanctity” to separate itself from mainstream Israeli society. This segregation by choice is virtually all-encompassing, extending beyond the beliefs and culture unique to this community, finding expression in residential patterns-separate ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods, in education-separate educational streams, in the political arena, and in the media unique to this community.

For many years, mainstream Israeli society’s response to this voluntary segregation was indifference and alienation, with only rare peeks beyond the “walls”. The Haredi community was in effect absolved of the responsibilities and obligations shared by other Israeli citizens, this in turn, reinforcing its isolation.

However, in recent years we are seeing an overall trend towards greater integration into the Israeli mainstream, indicated - among other things - by the establishment of a State-ultra-Orthodox educational stream, and by a growing number of Haredi students studying in colleges and universities.

We are pleased to present the 2018 Statistical Report on Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) Society in Israel, which includes comprehensive and up-to date data bringing to light many significant trends and changes within the ultra-Orthodox community. In addition to subjects presented in previous reports - the Haredi educational system; employment trends; military and civilian service and more - it also includes first time data on areas such as the Haredi community’s standard of living, lifestyle and health.

We hope the report will continue to serve as an important source of reliable and comprehensive information for decision-makers, for researchers, and the media, and no less so - for the ultra-Orthodox community itself.

Information on the methodology, definitions of terminology and the complete data set which served as the basis for the report, appear on the Israel Democracy Institute website. We wish to express our sincere gratitude to **The Russell Berrie Foundation** for their generosity and partnership.

**Dr. Gilad Malach    Dr. Lee Cahaner**

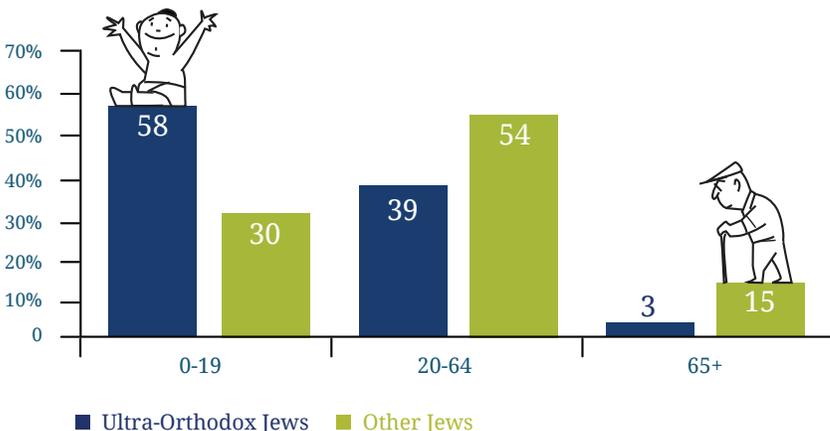
# Population and Demographics

The rate of demographic growth among the ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) population is the most rapid among all populations in developed countries; In Israel, the rate is approximately 4% a year. This unique pace of growth can be attributed to high fertility rates along with modern medical and living conditions, the young age at marriage and the large number of children per family. Indeed, the ultra-Orthodox population in Israel is very young ; almost 60% of its members are below the age of 20, as compared with 36% of the general population.

In 2018, the ultra-Orthodox population in Israel numbered 1,079,000 members (as compared with about 750,000 in 2009). According to Central Bureau of Statistics population projections, Israel's ultra-Orthodox population, which currently comprises 12% of the total population, is expected to reach 15% of the total population by 2027, and to number 2.3 million in 2037. Patterns of behavior within the ultra-Orthodox nuclear family over the past decade and a half, show a slight decline in the fertility rate, from 7.5 between 2003 and 2005, to 7.1 between 2015 and 2017. The fertility rate for other Jewish women in Israel is 4 children among national-religious women; 3.2 children among traditional-religious women; 2.5 children among traditional-secular women; and 2.2 children among secular women. Marriage rates among men and women ages 20 and over in the ultra-Orthodox population (82%) are much higher than among the rest of the Jewish population (62%). This difference can be attributed to the young age at marriage among the ultra-Orthodox.

Over the years, we can see a rise in the percentage of single, divorced and widowed among the ultra-Orthodox, from 15% in 2003, to 17% in 2017. Some of this change stems from the rise in age at marriage. Between 2003-2004, for example, 23% of the ultra-Orthodox ages 20-29 were single, and the percentage rose to 33% in 2016-2017.

## Age Distribution by Population Group, 2018



# Education

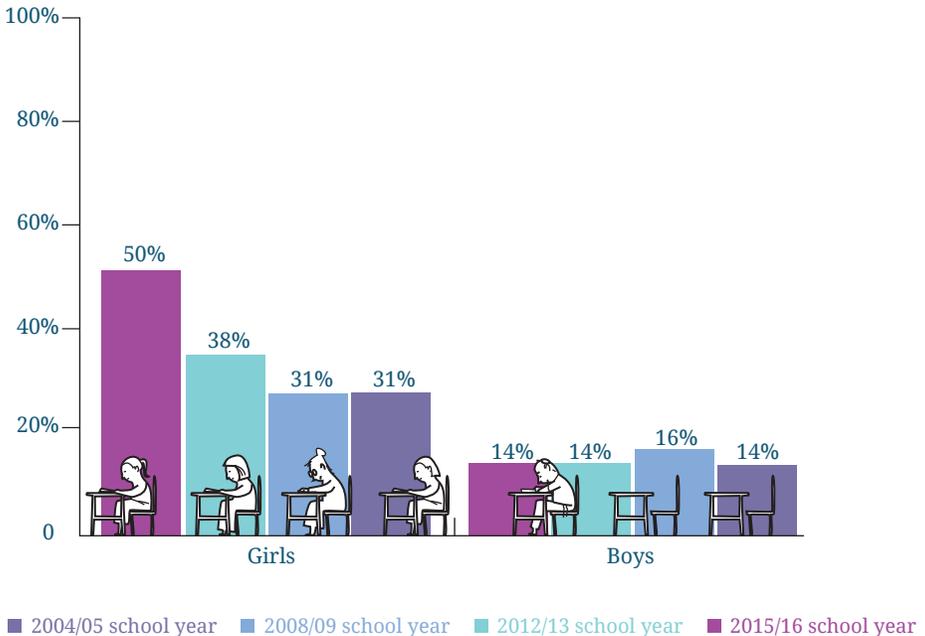
The ultra-Orthodox educational stream makes up a substantial segment of the Israeli educational system - 24% of the Jewish school system, and 18% of the system as a whole. In the 2016/17 school year, about 308,000 students studied in the ultra-Orthodox educational system - including both elementary and secondary schools. The number of ultra-Orthodox students has increased rapidly over the years, alongside the introduction of systemic and structural changes, such as the establishment of the Division for ultra-Orthodox Education in the Ministry of Education and the establishment of ultra-Orthodox State schools.

## Matriculation Exams

In the 2015/16 school year, 50% of ultra-Orthodox girls took at least one matriculation exam, as compared with only 31% in 2008/09. At the same time, there was a slight decline in the percentage of boys taking matriculation exams - from 16% to 14%.

In total, only 12% of ultra-Orthodox pupils were awarded matriculations certificates, as compared with 77% of pupils in the state and state-religious school systems.

## Ultra-Orthodox 12th Grade Students Taking Matriculation Exams, by Gender



**Yeshiva and “Kollel” Students**

In 2013-2014, the number of students in yeshivas and in “kollelim” (full-time studies of Jewish subjects and Talmud for married young men) was smaller than in previous years, but beginning with 2015 the number once again rose. In 2017, 124,450 ultra-Orthodox men studied in educational frameworks designated for students age 18 and over - 64% among them, in “Kollels”. The data reflect a 6% increase, surpassing the natural population growth of the ultra-Orthodox community, to which these students belong.

**Yeshiva and “Kollel” Students, 2012-2017**



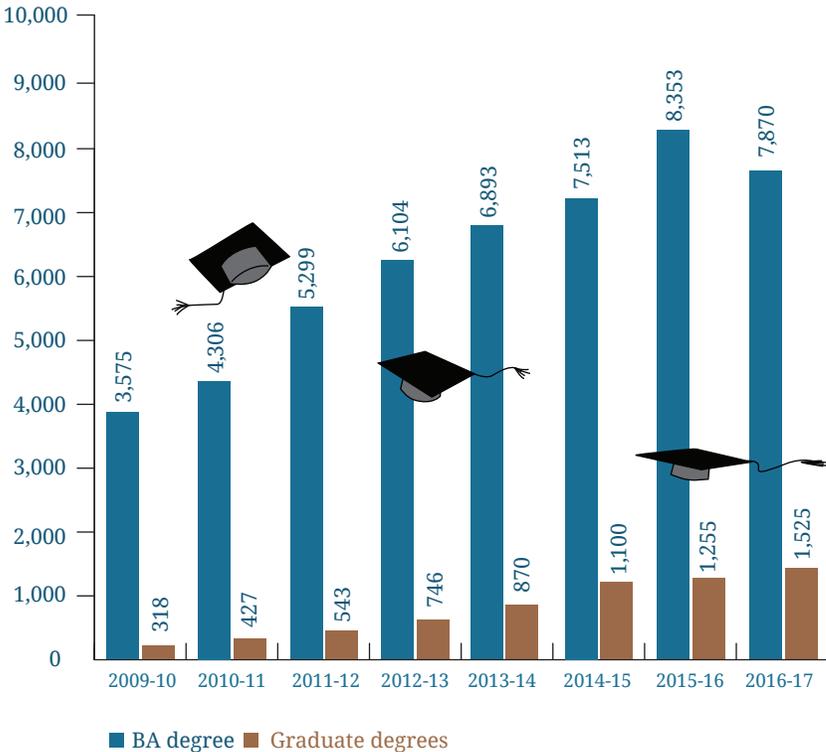
### Academic Studies

For many years, the number of ultra-Orthodox students enrolled in programs for academic degrees was very small. However, in light of changing demands of the labor market and the establishment of academic frameworks adapted to the needs of the ultra-Orthodox community, there was a rise of 150% in the number of ultra-Orthodox students studying for academic degrees between 2010-2017.

In the 2016/17 academic year, approximately 9,400 students studied in academic institutions (not including the Open University or programs leading to a diploma rather than to an academic degree), 70% of them women.

Ultra-Orthodox students tend to study subjects which will make it possible for them to work within the ultra-Orthodox community (education, teaching, and para-professional professions) and those - such as law and business administration - which open the door to employment in "practical" professions. In 2016/17 - for the first time - there was a slight drop in the number of ultra-Orthodox students, as compared with the previous year. This can be attributed in part to the drop in the number of ultra-Orthodox-from 12% in 2015/16 to only 8% in 2016/17, as a result of more stringent conditions and cutbacks in scholarships.

### Ultra-Orthodox Students in Academic Studies, by Degree and Academic Year (2009/10- 2016/2017)

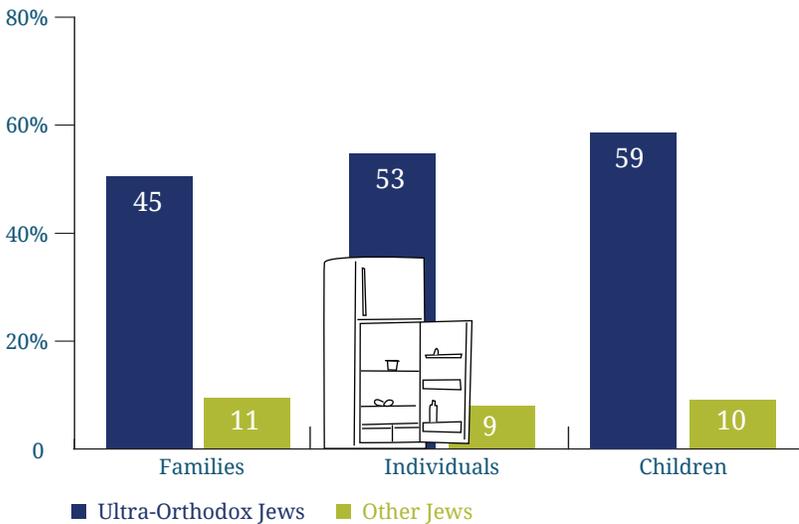


# Standard of Living

## Poverty Rates

The prevalence of poverty is far greater among the ultra-Orthodox than among the general population. In 2016, almost half (45%) of ultra-Orthodox families were living in poverty, as compared with 11% of other Jewish families. However, after a decade in which the percentage of ultra-Orthodox families living in poverty ranged between 50% and 58%, we can see a decline in the poverty rate.

## Prevalence of Poverty among Families, Individuals, and Children after Transfer Payments and Taxes, by Population Group, 2016



## Income and Expenditures

Standard of living is closely linked to households' levels of income and expenditures. In 2016, the gross monthly income of an ultra-Orthodox family averaged NIS 13,650 - far lower than that among other Jewish households (NIS 20,876). This low income level can be attributed to the fact that the ultra-Orthodox nuclear family often depends upon a single breadwinner who is likely to spend fewer hours on the job in a lower-paying job, and to their relatively modest capital and pension savings.

Nevertheless, the rates of poverty among the ultra-Orthodox, declined slightly –from 49% in 2015 to 45% in 2016, due to an average increase in income from work of 1,000 NIS per month between those years, and as a result of an increase in government financial support for

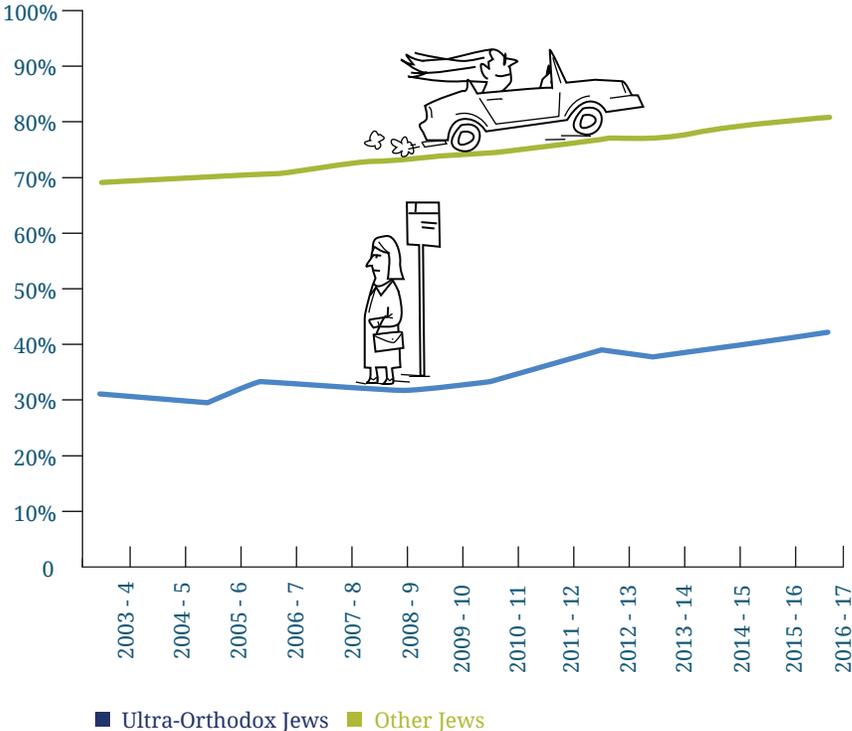
Yeshiva and Kollel students. Surprisingly, despite relatively low income, 70% of the ultra-Orthodox population over the age of 20, is “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their economic situation.

A look at monthly expenditures reveals that the monthly per capita expenditures among the ultra-Orthodox is less than half among the rest of the Jewish population (NIS 2,658 as compared with NIS 5,635), despite the fact that on the average - ultra-Orthodox families are larger. For example, in 2016 - monthly expenditures of an ultra-Orthodox family averaged NIS 14,357 - 12% less than among other Jewish households.

**Car and Home Ownership**

Gaps between the two populations - the ultra-Orthodox and other Jews - can also be seen with regard to ownership of a car (in 2016-2017: 42% among the ultra-Orthodox and 80% among other Jews) and in the use of public transportation for travel to work (ultra-Orthodox -35%; other Jews -19%), The only area in which we found full parity between the two groups was in home ownership (74% in both).

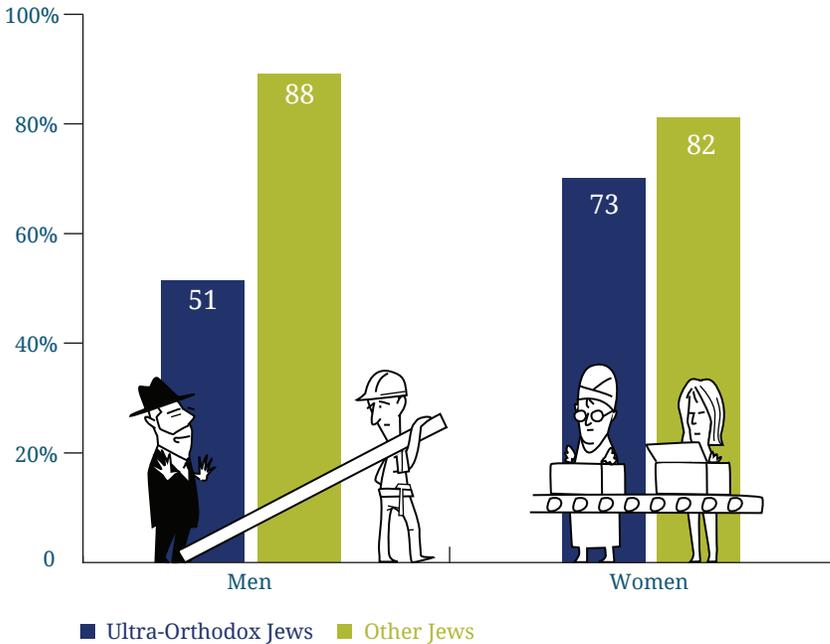
**Car Ownership among Individuals Ages 20+, by Population Group, 2003-2017**



# Employment

In the years 2003-2005, pressing economic needs among the ultra-Orthodox combined with a public policy facilitating their entry into the workforce created a turning point in employment rates among them, among men and women alike; in the 25-64 age group, more than 50% of ultra-Orthodox men and almost 75% of women were employed. However, this impressive increase in the rates of employment came to a halt in 2015, and since then, they have remained stable from year to year - among men and women alike. This standstill may stem from the implementation of the current government's coalition agreements, resulting in a cutback in incentives to employment, and an increase in stipends for yeshiva and "Kollel" students.

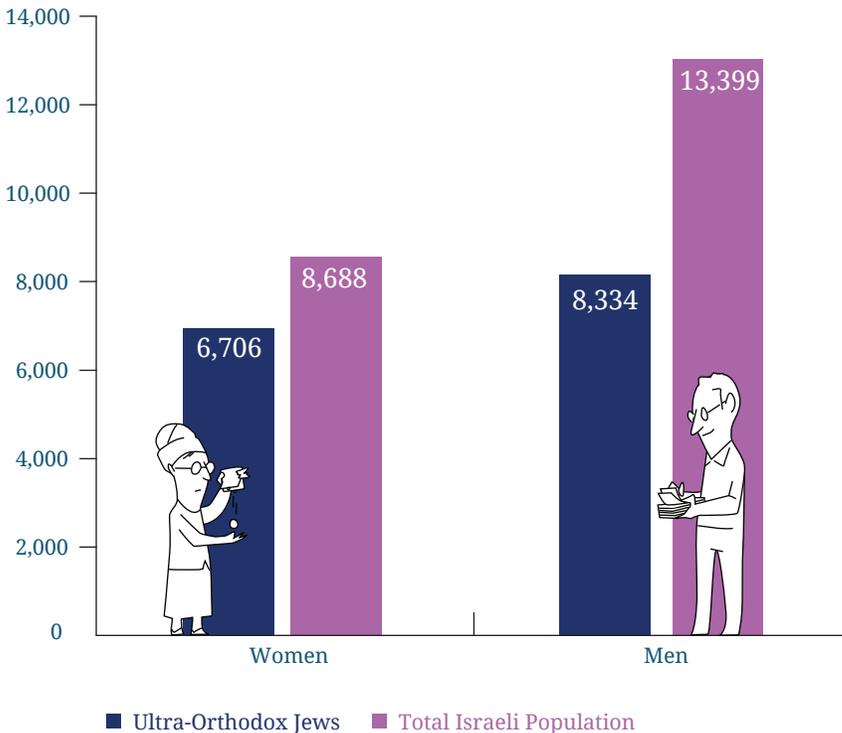
**Employment among Ages 25-64,  
by Population Group and Gender, 2017**



### Income from Employment

A highly significant component of total income, is income from work. The average level of income among ultra-Orthodox workers in 2016 was 67% of the average income of the total population (including Arab-Israelis). This gap can be attributed to the fact that a large percentage among the ultra-Orthodox work fewer hours and in lower-paying economic branches (for example, in education), and to their low representation in industry and hi-tech. However, we can discern a change in these patterns. The data indicate a decline in the percentage of the ultra-Orthodox employed in education and a rise in the percentage working in industry. If this trend continues, over the long term we can expect to see an increase in per-capita income and as a result, in the standard of living of ultra-Orthodox households.

**Average Gross Monthly Income among Ages 25-64, by Population Group and Gender, 2016**



# Ultra-Orthodox Lifestyles

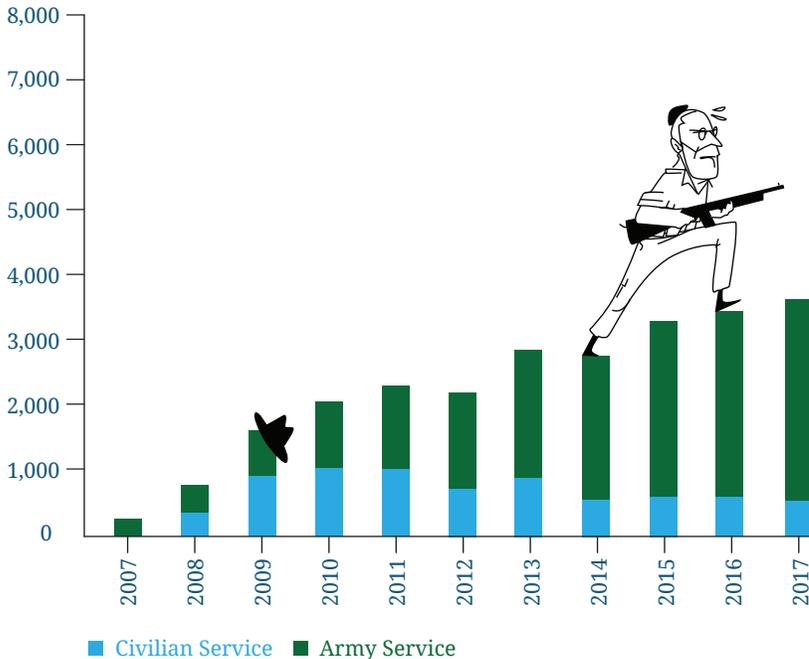
The lifestyle of the ultra-Orthodox community is in constant flux. More and more members of the ultra-Orthodox community are enlisting in the army and serving in Civilian National Service, use the internet, hold drivers' licenses, and go for vacations; thus, despite the wide gaps between the ultra-Orthodox and the rest of the Jewish population in these areas of life, it is clear that the trend toward its integration into the broader society is gaining strength.

## Enlistment in the IDF or Volunteering for Civilian National Service

In 2017, 3,685 ultra-Orthodox men, comprising about 34% of male graduates of the ultra-Orthodox education system, enlisted in the army or joined the Civilian National Service - an increase of only 5% as compared with 2016. Among those who chose to serve, 83% enlisted in the army in 2017, and 17% joined the Civilian National Service - a decline of 8% when compared with the previous year.

Despite the fact that the ultra-Orthodox can enlist in the IDF at an older age, the vast majority enlist at an early age. In 2017, 69% of those who enlisted in the army were between the ages of 18-20, as compared with 21% between the ages of 21-23, and only 10% ages 24-27.

## Ultra-Orthodox Men by Army Service and Civilian National Service: 2007- 2017

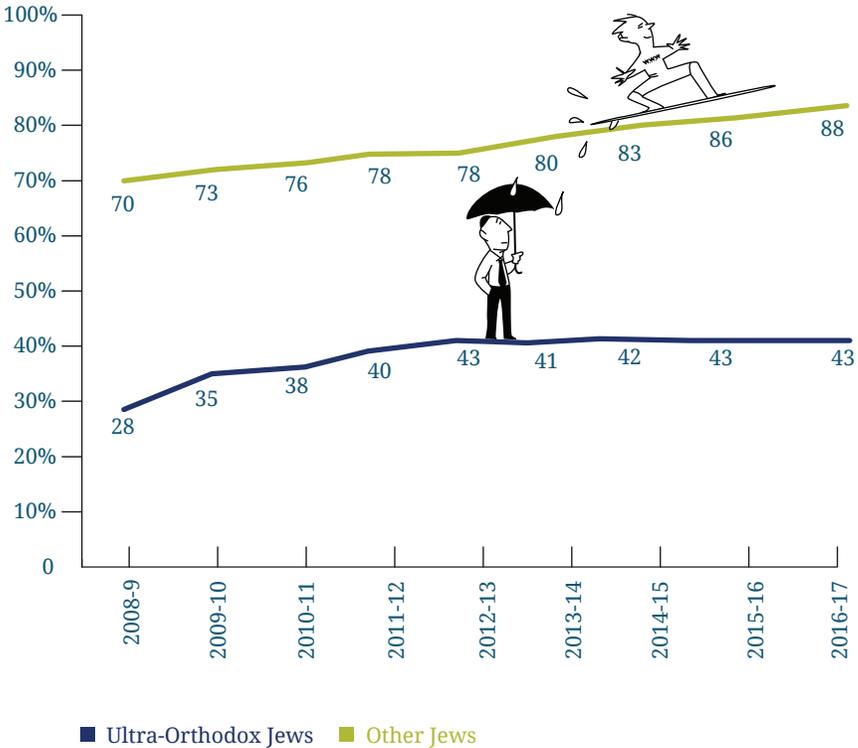


### Use of the Internet among the ultra-Orthodox ages 20 +

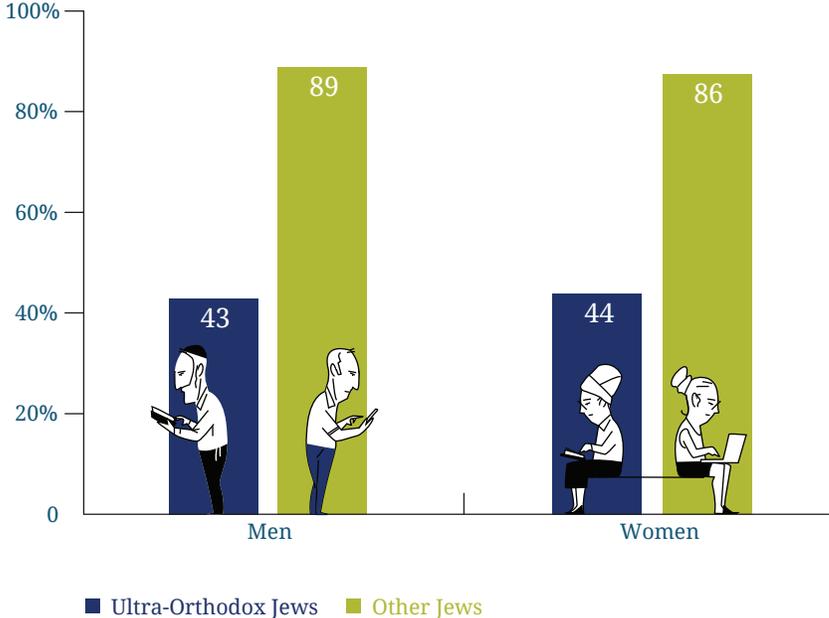
In 2016-2017, 43% of the ultra-Orthodox population used the internet, less than half of the percentage among the rest of the Jewish population (88%). In comparison, in 2008-2009, only 28% of the ultra-Orthodox population used the internet.

There is no difference between ultra-Orthodox men and women in use of the internet.

### Use of the Internet among the ultra-Orthodox ages 20+ by Population Group, 2008- 2017



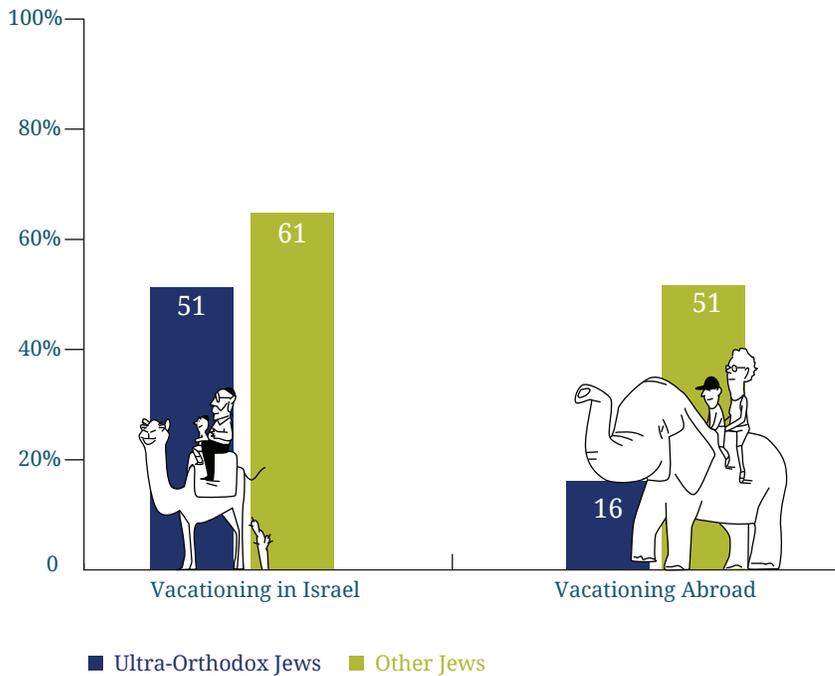
**Use of the Internet among the Ultra-Orthodox ages 20+  
by Population Group and Gender, 2016- 2017**



### Vacationing in Israel and Abroad

The ultra-Orthodox prefer to vacation in Israel, though there is an upward trend towards vacationing abroad. In 2016-2017, 51% vacationed in Israel and 16% abroad (as compared with 12% in 2013-2014), as compared with 61% in Israel and 51% abroad among the rest of the Jewish population.

### Vacationing in Israel and Abroad, 2016-2017



# Health

The self-assessed physical and mental health situation of the ultra-Orthodox is better than that of the rest of Israel's Jewish population; 73% of the ultra-Orthodox report that their health is "very good" as compared with 51% of other Jews. The ultra-Orthodox place a high level of trust in the health system and report that they do not need to do without medications or medical treatments because of their financial situation. Nevertheless, objective measures indicate poorer health as compared with the rest of the Jewish population. Furthermore, a comparison of 2017 and 2010 findings, indicates that the gap between the two populations is growing.

## **Preventive Medicine**

There is a significant gap between the ultra-Orthodox population and the rest of the Jewish population in the area of preventive medicine. The ultra-Orthodox take fewer preventive tests and fewer immunizations for seasonal illnesses (such as the flu). For example, only 50% of ultra-Orthodox women ages 40 and over have ever had a mammography, as compared with 80% of other Jewish women of the same ages.

Between 2010-2017, there was a drop of 22% in preventive tests (mammography, colonoscopy, and cervical screening) among the ultra-Orthodox.

## **Healthy Life Style**

Indicators of a healthy life style are similar among ultra-Orthodox and non-ultra-Orthodox Jews, with the exception being physical activity: about half (47%) of the ultra-Orthodox report that they engaged in physical activity in the three months preceding the survey, as compared with 58% among non-ultra-Orthodox Jews.

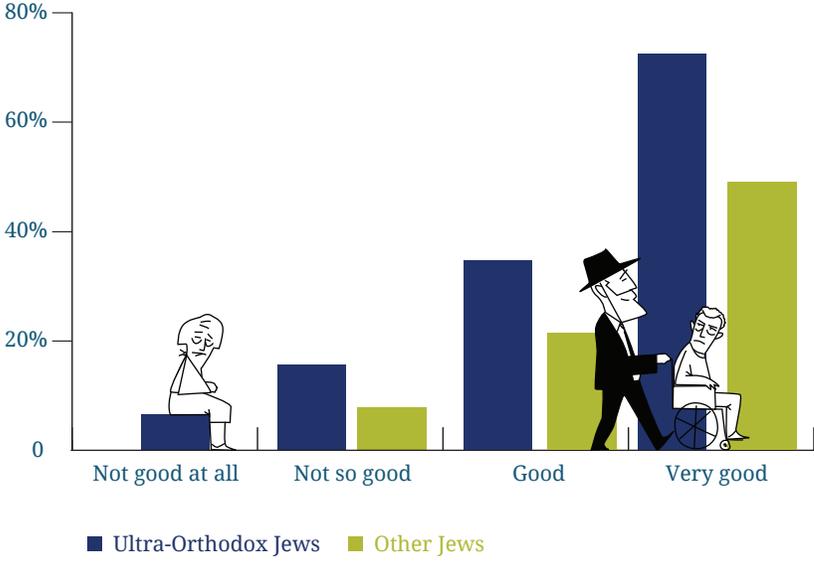
As for smoking: The situation here is better among ultra-Orthodox; only 11% of the ultra-Orthodox smoke, as compared with 23% of other Jews.

## **Information on Health and Health Insurance**

Since the exposure to the internet among the ultra-Orthodox is low, they turn to the internet as a source of information on health topics less than other Jews (45% vs. 63%).

With regard to private health insurance, the percentage of ultra-Orthodox with private health insurance is very low - 17% as compared with 42% among the rest of the Jewish population.

# Self-Assessed Health Situation, 2017



**Dr. Gilad Malach** heads IDI's Ultra-Orthodox in Israel program and is a lecturer at Bar-Ilan University. Malach's field of expertise is in developing public policy initiatives for the haredi population.

**Dr. Lee Cahaner** is a researcher with IDI's Ultra-Orthodox in Israel program. In addition, she is a senior lecturer in geography and environmental studies at Oranim College. Cahaner's primary field of expertise is spatial trends among Israel's haredim.



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For the full Hebrew study,  
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Illustrator: Leo Atelman

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