



THE ISRAEL  
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Statistical  
Report on  
**Ultra-Orthodox**  
(Haredi) Society  
in Israel  
2019

**Abstract**



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The Statistical Report on Ultra-Orthodox Society in Israel is based on data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, government ministries and agencies, and the National Insurance Institute.

The terms ultra-Orthodox and *Haredi* are used interchangeably throughout the text.

# Introduction

Israel's ultra-Orthodox society is in transition. The Israel Democracy Institute's 2019 Statistical Report on Ultra-Orthodox (*Haredi*) Society in Israel provides a comprehensive and in-depth portrait of the ultra-Orthodox in Israel today, and an analysis of trends characterizing this community in key areas such as demographics, education, military service, employment, and use of leisure time.

The Statistical Report's rich data portray a complex picture of the current situation. On the one hand, there are clear signs of a transition from a self-contained and insular community towards integration into the Israeli mainstream. This trend is reflected in indicators such as the growing participation of women in the workforce, a rise in income levels, and lifestyle changes, such as a rise in use of technology. And yet, at the same time, in key areas such as enrollment in colleges and universities, and in employment among men - trends towards change have slowed down significantly or have come to a standstill.

The report serves as an important tool for the long-term planning of decision makers and for the formulation of policies geared to promoting the integration of the ultra-Orthodox into Israeli society, while simultaneously respecting their desire to maintain a unique lifestyle.

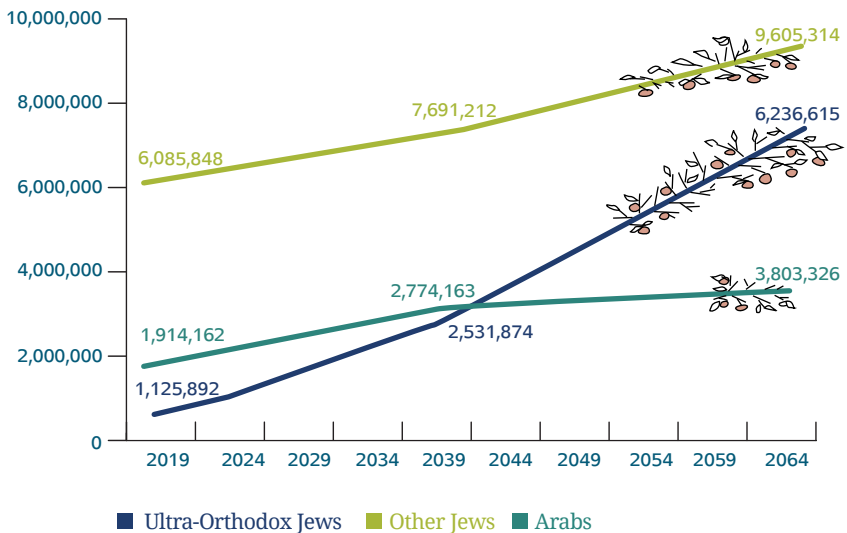
Today, the ultra-Orthodox make up 12% of Israel's total population. If the community continues to grow at the current rate, its size will double every 16 years. Future trends among the ultra-Orthodox community will have a significant impact on the wellbeing and economic self-sufficiency of its members, but no less so - on the future of Israel's economy and the sense of solidarity among its diverse populations

# The Ultra-Orthodox Population

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Israel's ultra-Orthodox population numbers 1,125,000, that is - 12% of the country's total population. The young age at marriage coupled with the relatively large number of children per family, lie behind the community's high rate of population growth (4% annually), as compared to that of Israel's population overall (1.9% annually). Therefore, while Israel's population and that of other developed countries are aging, the ultra-Orthodox community in Israel continues to be very young; more than half of its members are under age 16. If the current rates of growth among the Haredim are maintained, the size of this community will double every 16 years.

Population Projections by Population Group: 2019 – 2064



# Trends in Education

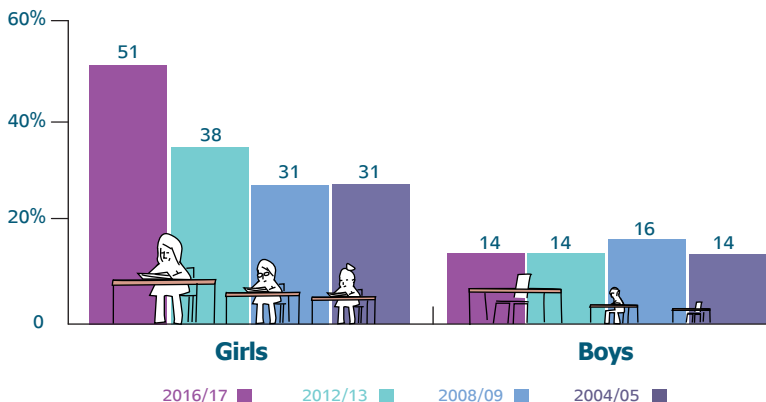
## The Elementary School System

Ultra-Orthodox students make up almost a quarter (24.5%) of all Jewish students, and 18.5% of all students in the school system - including both Arab and Jewish students. Beginning in 2000, the number of students in the Haredi school system was on the rise, but since the 2012-2013 school year, this trend has slowed down to 3.4% annually. The last decade has seen major system-wide and structural changes in the Haredi school system, including the establishment of an ultra-Orthodox unit within the Ministry of Education and of a state-Haredi educational stream. In the 2018-19 school year, there were approximately 332,000 ultra-Orthodox students in elementary schools and high schools.

## Studies towards a Matriculation (*Bagrut*) Certificate

The numbers of Haredi high school students taking at least one matriculation exam is on the rise - though not all taking the exam fulfill the necessary requirements for receiving a matriculation certificate. The numbers went up from 23% in 2004-05, to 35% in 2016-17. The percentage of Haredi girls taking the exams rose from 31% in 2008-09 to 51% in 2016-17, but over the same period of time, there was a slight drop in the percentage of Haredi boys taking the exams - from 16% in 2008-09 to 14% in 2016-17.

### Ultra-Orthodox Youth Taking Matriculation (*Bagrut*) Exams, by Gender and Academic Year



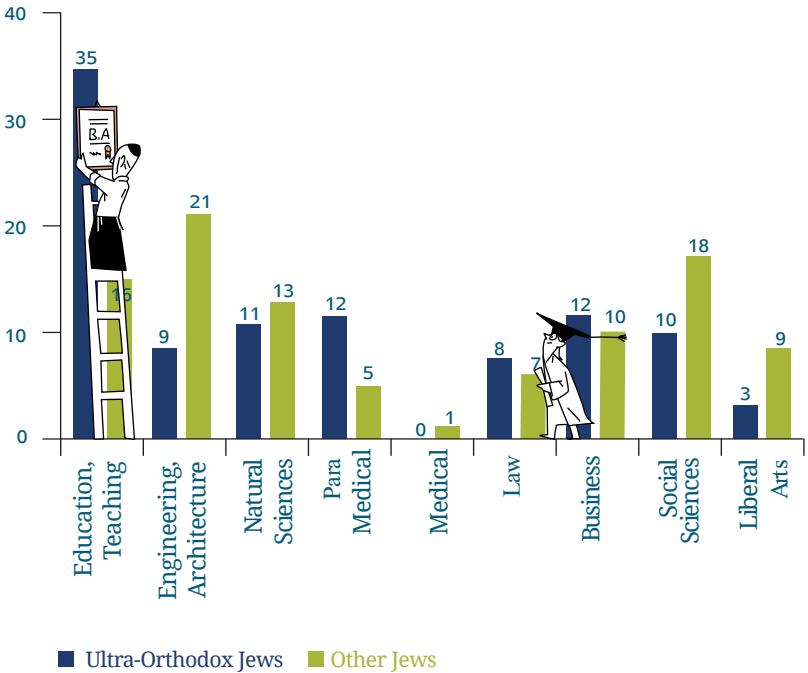
## **The Ultra-Orthodox and Higher Education**

Over the past decade, the number of Haredi men and women studying for an academic degree increased by 150%, with the average annual increase being 12.5%. In the 2018-2019 academic school year, approximately 12,000 Haredi students studied in higher education frameworks, and made up 3.8% of the general student population in Israel. 70% (8,400) of Haredi students are women. However, the growth in the number of Haredi students in higher education, in particular among men, has slowed down. In the past two years, 9% of Haredi men, and 12% of Haredi women studied in colleges and universities.

## **Fields of Study for a B.A. Degree**

The percentages of Haredi students studying fields such as education, para-medical professions, and business management, are higher than those among other Jewish students (35% and 18%, 12% and 6%, 12% and 10%, respectively). This reflects a pragmatic approach to higher education among the ultra-Orthodox, and the desire to study practical, applied subjects that will help them find employment, particularly within their own community. By contrast, there are subjects such as engineering that are only rarely studied (9% among Haredim, in comparison to 21% among the rest of the Jewish population), apparently because the Haredim - especially men - lack the prior education essential for studying these fields.

Students for a B.A. Degree by Fields of Study and Population Group: 2017-2018 (%)



# Yeshiva and “Kollel” Students

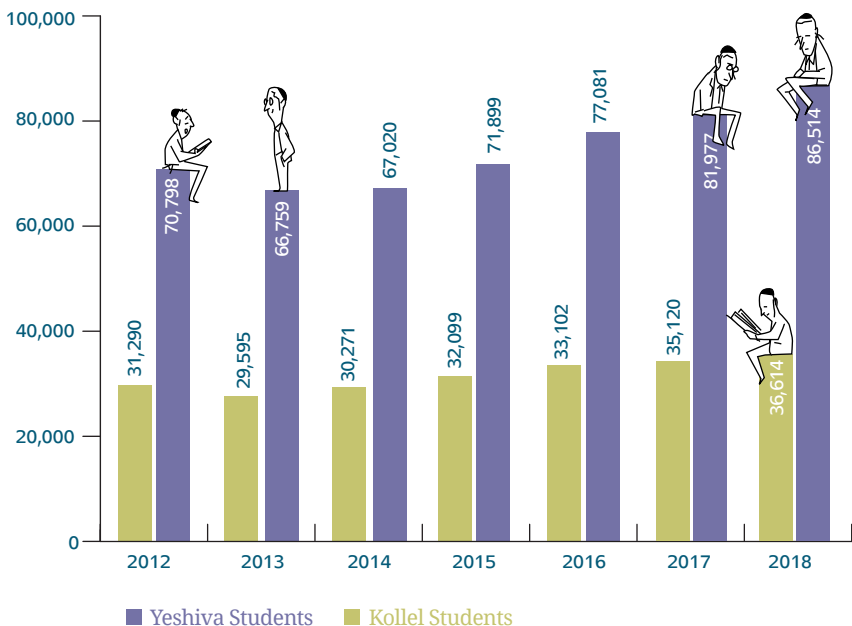
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**Growing numbers of yeshiva and kollel students** (the former - for unmarried men, and the latter - for married men):

In 2018, 133,933 ultra-Orthodox men were studying in yeshiva and kollel frameworks (including students from overseas). From 1999-2012, these numbers grew steadily, at an annual rate of 4% (in line with the growth rate of the ultra-Orthodox population in Israel). However, between 2015-2018, there was a dramatic 30% increase in the number of kollel students - from 67,000 in 2014, to 86,500 in 2018.

Between 2014-2018, the number of yeshiva students also increased by 21%, from 30,000 to 37,000. In a single year 2018, the number of yeshiva students grew by 6% - exceeding the rate of growth of the ultra-Orthodox population (4%). This growth can be attributed to the financial incentives provided to yeshiva and kollel students, and the reinstatement of government stipends to these students.

Yeshiva and Kollel Students (2012 – 2018)





# Service in the IDF or in National Service

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## **The IDF**

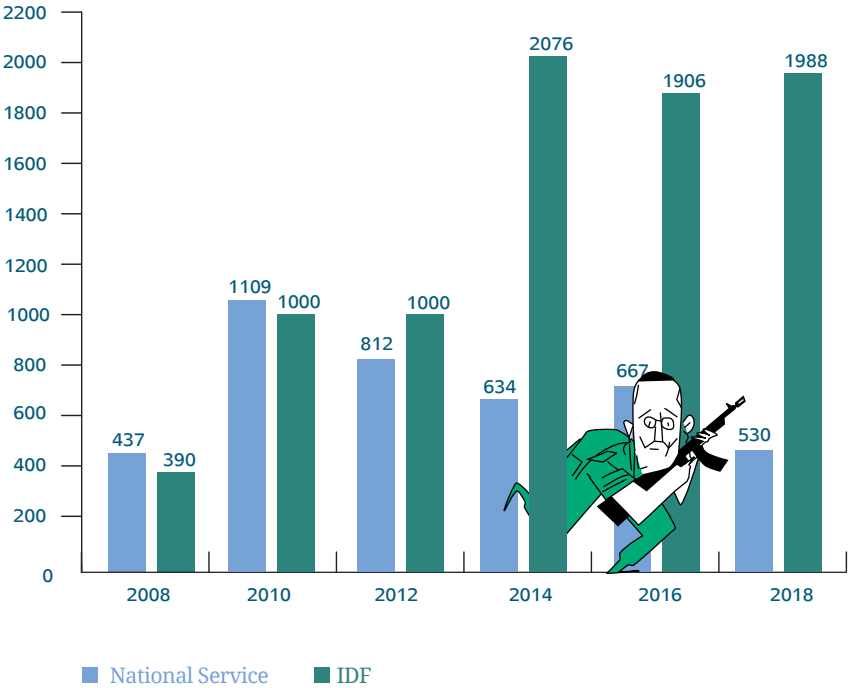
In early 2020, the director of the IDF Manpower Directorate appointed a commission chaired by General (ret.) Roni Numa to review the data on ultra-Orthodox conscription to the IDF, following media reports on the inflation of figures that had been previously published. The findings presented below are updated, and reflect the commission's conclusions.

After a consistent increase in the number of Haredim serving in the IDF during 2008-2014, beginning in 2015 the numbers have plateaued—with 2,000 enlisting every year. Many of those serving are graduates of the Haredi educational system, but at the time of their enlistment can no longer be defined as “Haredi” in their religious observance and practice.

## **National Service**

In 2018, 530 ultra-Orthodox men—only 5% of the graduates of the ultra-Orthodox education system—joined the National Service. This is only about a quarter of the target number, set at 2,000, and less than half the number of Haredim joining National Service in 2011. Over the years, National Service has become less attractive to the ultra-Orthodox, and in 2018, the numbers of those who served were less than half of the numbers in 2011.

# Haredim Serving in the IDF or National Service: 2008-2018



# Employment

Between 2003 and 2018, a combination of pressing economic circumstances and public policies encouraging the entry of the ultra-Orthodox to the labor force, created a turnaround in ultra-Orthodox employment rates, among both men and women. As a result, over 50% of ultra-Orthodox men, and 76% of women ages 25-64, are currently employed. However, the impressive rise in employment rates over these years came to a halt in 2015, and since that time, there has been no year-by-year increase in the employment rate for ultra-Orthodox men, though the rate for women has continued to rise. It is possible that this standstill is the result of the coalition agreements of the government that was formed in that year, which led to a cutback in the incentives for entering the work force, and an increase in financial support for yeshiva and kollel students.

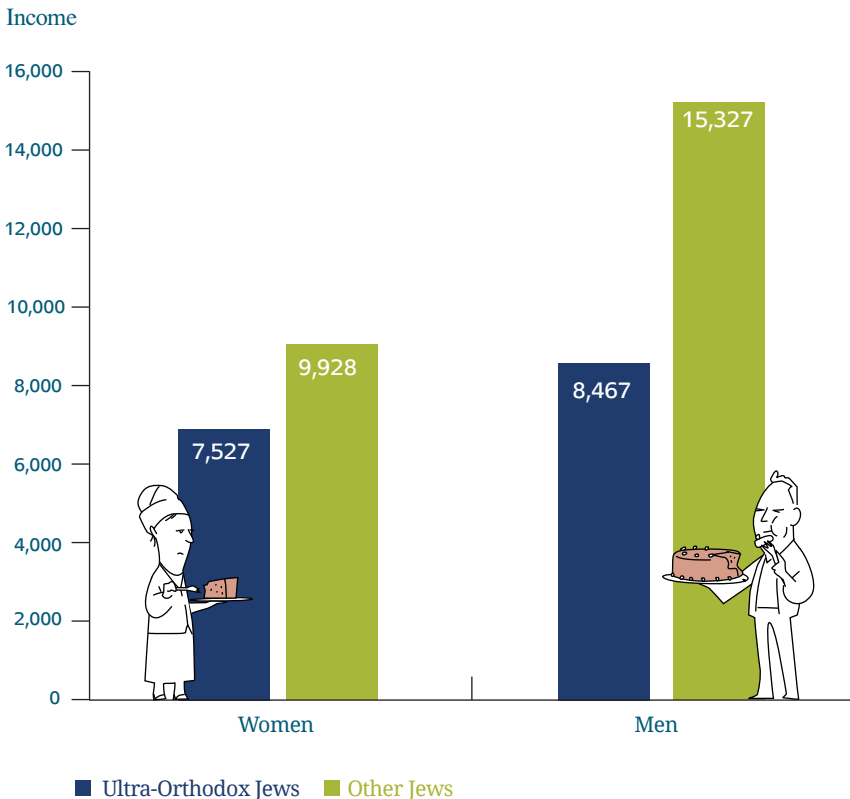
Employment of Working Age Adults (ages 25-64),  
by Population Group and Gender: 2003–2018



## Income

The average income for ultra-Orthodox workers in 2017 stood at 63% of that of other Jewish workers. This gap can be explained by the fact that the ultra-Orthodox work fewer hours and receive lower wages. Among other factors, the gap in wages can be attributed to the preponderance of ultra-Orthodox workers in low-paying fields, such as education, and their underrepresentation in industry and hi-tech. At the same time, recent years have seen a decline in the rate of ultra-Orthodox workers in education, and an increase in those employed in industry. If this trend continues, this may result in higher per-capita incomes in the future, and consequently, in a higher standard of living for ultra-Orthodox households.

Average Gross Income: 2017 (ages 25-64)



# Poverty Rate and Standard of Living

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## **Poverty Rate**

The poverty rate among the ultra-Orthodox is much higher than among the rest of the Jewish population. In 2017, almost half (43%) of ultra-Orthodox families lived below the poverty line, as compared with 11% of other Jewish families. However, after over a decade during which the percentage of ultra-Orthodox families living below the poverty line stood at between 50% and 58%, since 2015 there has been a steady and significant drop in these rates. This decline can be attributed to several factors: an increase in the number of ultra-Orthodox families in which at least one adult is employed; a rise in the level of income among working ultra-Orthodox adults; implementation of negative income tax, along with increases in child benefit allowances and in state support for full-time Torah students.

## **Income and Expenditures**

Standard of living is closely related to the levels of household income and expenditures. In 2017, the average gross monthly income - from all sources - of an ultra-Orthodox family was NIS 15,015, much lower than that among other Jewish families (NIS 22,190). However, in one year alone - 2017 - there was a rise of NIS 1,050 in the average monthly income from employment among ultra-Orthodox households, which can be attributed mostly to a rise in salaries of ultra-Orthodox women. This increase led to a rise of 40% in compulsory payments in ultra-Orthodox families (such as direct and indirect taxes, compulsory health insurance and Social Security) between 2015 and 2017, but this expenditure still stands at just 43% of the equivalent expenditure in other Jewish families. A surprising finding indicates that despite their relatively low level of income, 68% of ultra-Orthodox Israelis aged 20 and above are either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their financial situation.

Monthly per-capita financial expenditure among the ultra-Orthodox is less than half of that among the rest of the Jewish population (NIS 2,135 versus NIS 4,590 per person per month), despite the fact that the average size of ultra-Orthodox households is larger. In 2017, for example, the average expenditure of an ultra-Orthodox household was NIS 14,311 per month, 18% lower than the average for other Jewish households.

## **Car and Home Ownership**

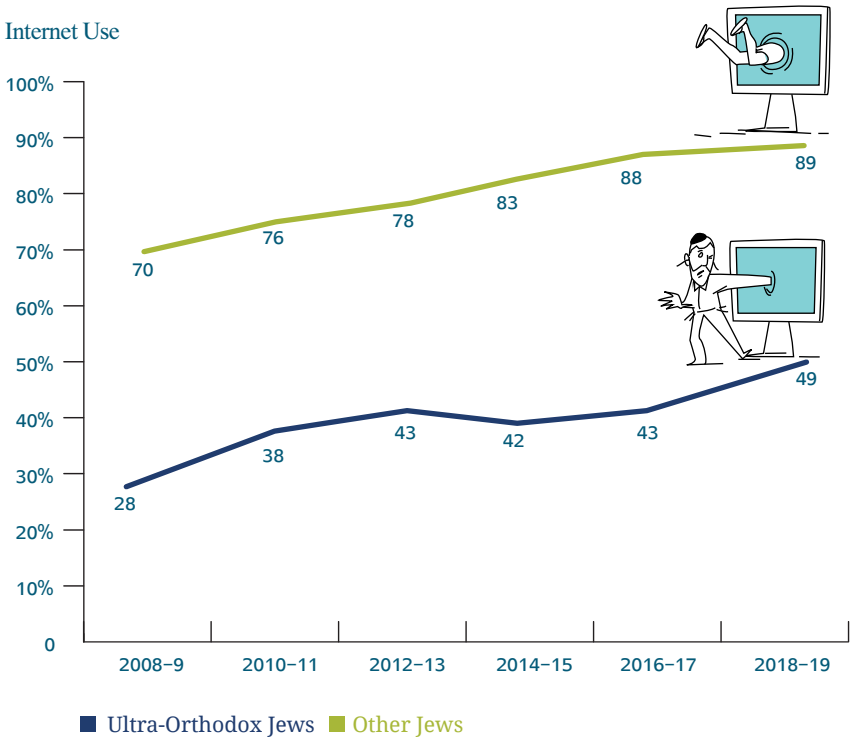
The gaps between Israel's ultra-Orthodox population and the rest of the Jewish population are also evident in car ownership. In 2018, 44% among the ultra-Orthodox owned a car, as compared with 81% of other Jewish Israelis. The two groups are more similar when it comes to home ownership: 72% among ultra-Orthodox Jews, and 74% among other Jewish Israelis. However, the rate of ultra-Orthodox home ownership dropped from 79% to 72% between 2006 and 2018, while no significant change occurred among other Jewish Israelis over this period.

# Lifestyles

Ultra-Orthodox lifestyles are in a state of flux. More and more ultra-Orthodox Israelis are using the internet, have been issued a driving license, and taking vacations. Thus, it is clear that despite the significant gaps that still exist between the ultra-Orthodox and the rest of the Jewish population, there is a growing trend toward integration of the ultra-Orthodox into mainstream Israeli society.

Internet Use (ages 20+) 2008-09 – 2018-19

## Internet Use



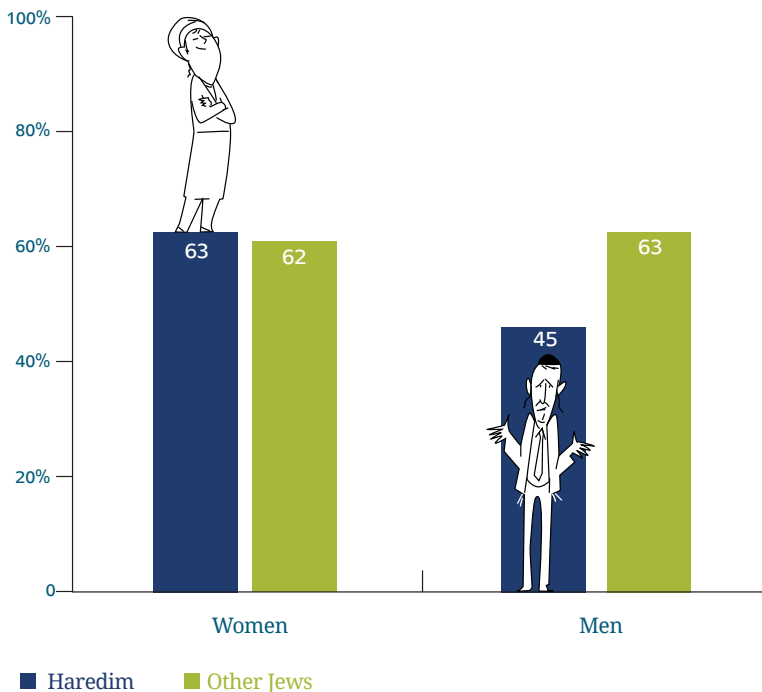
# Social Mobility

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The Central Bureau of Statistics Social Survey reveals that ultra-Orthodox Israelis enjoy less mobility on the job than do other Jewish Israelis. This is the case with regard to wage increases, job promotion, and growing responsibility on the job. However, the large gaps in these areas exist only among men, while almost no such differences were found between ultra-Orthodox women and other Jewish women. Thus, for example, the percentage of ultra-Orthodox women who have been given greater responsibility on the job (31%) is very close to that of other Jewish women (34%). By contrast, only 23% of ultra-Orthodox men have been given greater responsibility, compared with 34% of other Jewish men.

The impact of having children on the employment rate among ultra-Orthodox women is less significant than it was in the past, and is now similar to that among other Jewish women.

Wage Increases by Population Group and Gender, 2008- 2018

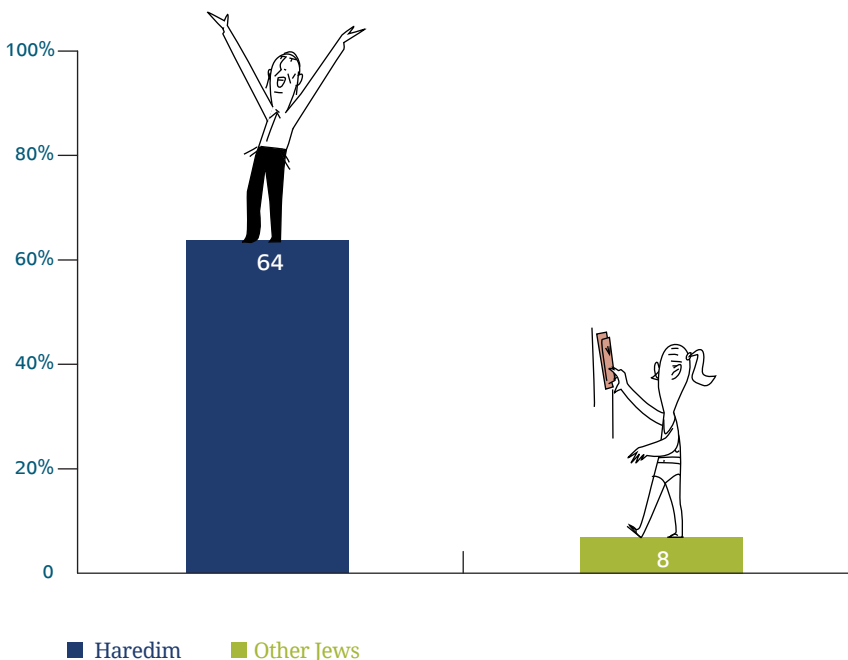




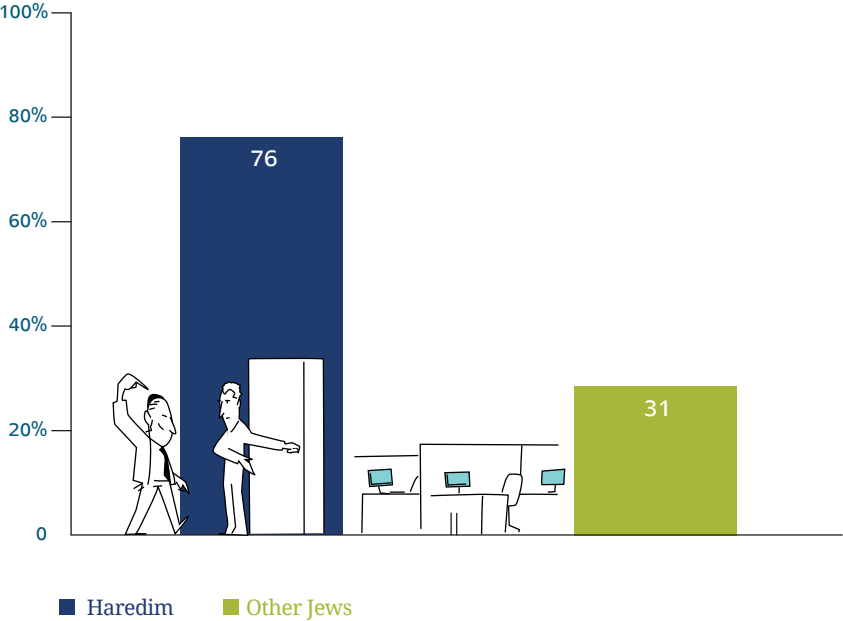
## Perceptions of Factors Affecting Social Status

There are significant differences in the beliefs of the ultra-Orthodox and other Israeli Jews with regard to the factors determining an individual's social status. Ultra-Orthodox respondents believe that people have only limited control over their fate, and that 'divine providence' is the most important factor affecting their social status. The ultra-Orthodox do not attribute great significance to factors such as higher education, financial situation, or profession. On the question of whether ultra-Orthodox Israelis deserve to benefit from affirmative action in academia or in the workplace, an overwhelming majority of the ultra-Orthodox believe that this should be the case, while only a minority of other Jewish respondents agreed.

### Divine Providence Determines Social Status and Mobility in Israeli Society: 2018



# Haredim Should Benefit from Affirmative Action in Academia and in the Workplace: 2018



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