

**Annual
Statistical**



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**Report on
Ultra-Orthodox
(Haredi)
Society in Israel**

2024

Executive Summary



Introduction

The 2024 Statistical Report on Ultra-Orthodox Society is the eighth such publication, which presents a comprehensive picture of the Haredi community in key areas, including: demographic trends, education, employment, economic wellbeing and standard of living, and a special chapter highlighting key health metrics.

The sense of unity among Israelis that emerged in the early months of the war that broke out following Hamas' October 7, 2023 massacre gave some level of hope for a change after decades of ultra-Orthodox exemptions military service. Heartwarming images surfaced of Haredim lined up at IDF enlistment offices, and soldiers were cheered in the streets of Haredi communities. As 2024 unfolded, however, it became clear that this phenomenon was miniscule in scope and impact and did not represent a turning point for Haredi service in the IDF, as some had hoped. Indeed, as the war has continued on, non-Haredi Jews have continued to bear an overwhelming majority of the burden of service in the IDF – in both blood and treasure – and fierce debate has continued as Haredim contend Torah study is their service to the country, and the exhausted reserve forces make massive sacrifices for defense of the country.

There have, however, been both recent developments and big-picture trends, presented in the report, that give cause for cautious optimism for the integration of Haredim into Israeli society and economy. Given the shifting legal landscape around exemptions from the IDF for Torah study, the IDF is preparing to enlist thousands more ultra-Orthodox men of service age.

Furthermore, we have seen promising trends, such as increasing rates of higher education and more use of modern technology. Nevertheless, despite some

trendlines moving in the right direction, Haredim still have relatively high rates of poverty, lag behind other population groups in terms of matriculation certificates, higher education and labor force participation and earnings, and are still far from full integration in Israeli society.

The data in this report serves as a roadmap for decision-makers as they plan a way forward in the post-war reality with the goal of creating a more unified, secure, and prosperous State of Israel. It also helps inform public discourse and debate about Haredi integration.

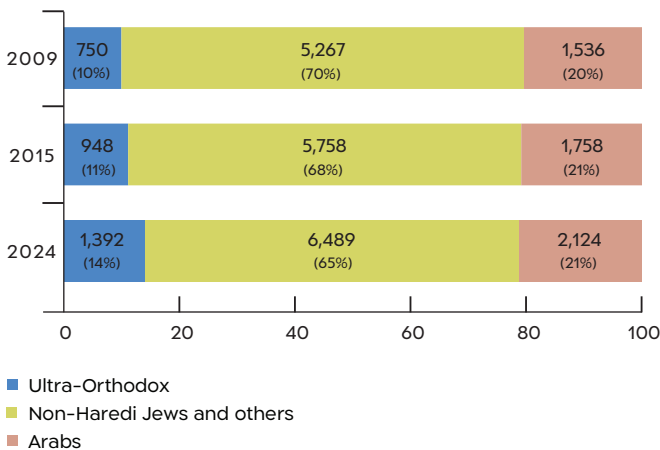
The Statistical Report on Ultra-Orthodox Society is produced by the Israel Democracy Institute's Program on Ultra-Orthodox in Israel in the Joan and Irwin Jacobs Center for Shared Society. The program focuses on studying trends in ultra-Orthodox society and on shaping public policy for ultra-Orthodox integration into Israeli society.

Chapter 1

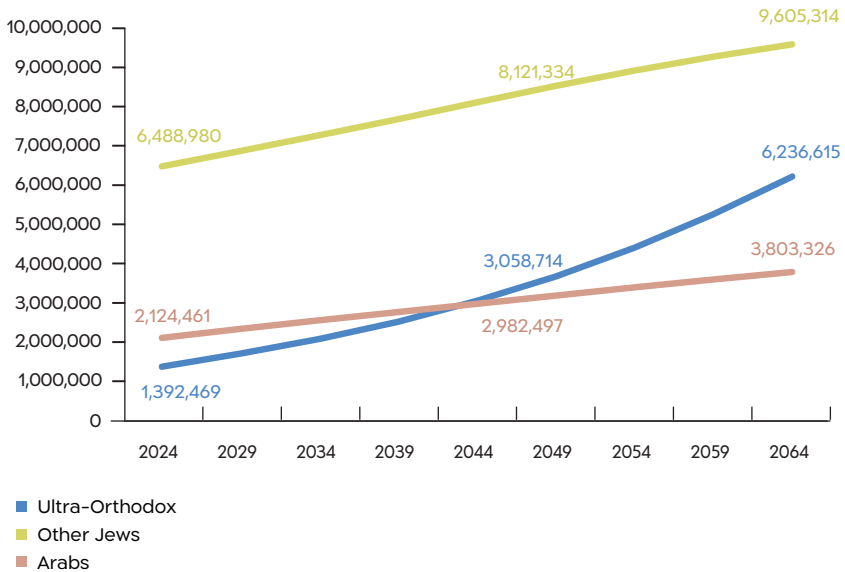
Population

The growth rate of the ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) population in Israel is the highest of any of the populations in developed countries, at around 4% per year. The factors underlying this particularly rapid growth are high fertility rates, modern standards of living and medicine, a young average age at marriage, and large numbers of children per family. Consequently, the ultra-Orthodox population in Israel is very young, with around 60% under the age of 20, compared with 31% of the country's general population. In 2024, the Haredi population numbered around 1,392,000, up from 750,000 in 2009, and constituting 13.9% of Israel's total population. According to Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) forecasts, its relative size is expected to reach 16% in 2030, and it will number two million people in 2033.

Population of Israel, by population group (in millions)



Population forecast, by population group



Analysis of the patterns in the ultra-Orthodox family over the last decade and a half, reveals a sizable drop in fertility rates, from 7.5 live births per woman in 2003–2005 to 6.4 in 2020–2022. Despite this decrease, this rate is still much higher than the average fertility rate among other Jewish women in Israel, which stands at 2.5. The average age at first marriage among ultra-Orthodox men was around 23 in 2022, and around 22 among ultra-Orthodox women, and the average age at birth of the first child was 24 for men and 23 for women.

The geographical distribution of the Haredi population reveals two “capital cities”—Jerusalem and Bnei Brak, which were home to 41.5% of Israel’s ultra-Orthodox citizens in 2022 (24.4% in Jerusalem and 17.1% in Bnei Brak). An additional 26% live in a series of ultra-Orthodox satellite cities, including Beit Shemesh, Modi’in Illit, Beitar Illit, and Elad. A third group can be found in more established large cities such as Ashdod, Petah Tikva, Haifa, Rehovot, and Netanya, in which 11% of the ultra-Orthodox population reside. Together, these three categories of localities with a high percentage of the Haredi population—encompassing 11 cities in total—account for 78.5% of the ultra-Orthodox population of Israel.

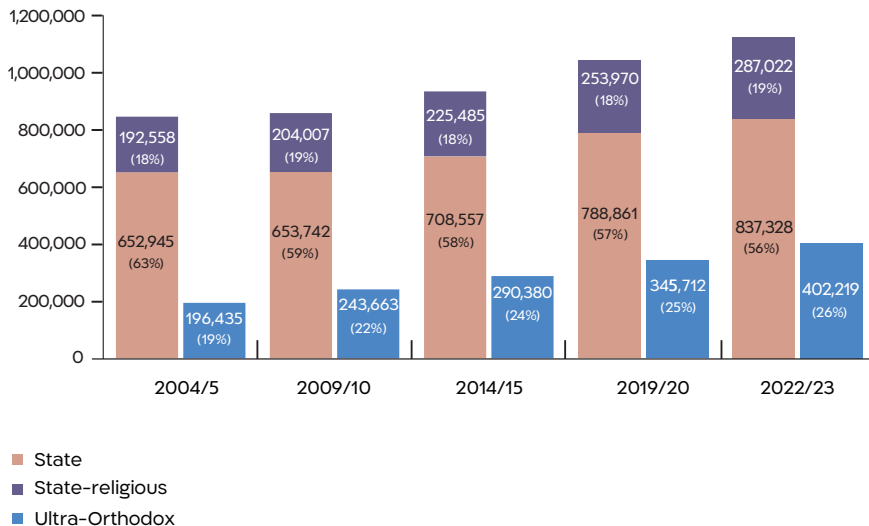
Chapter 2

Education

Since the beginning of the millennium, there has been a rapid increase in the number of students in ultra-Orthodox education frameworks, reaching around 402,000 in the 2023-2024 school year, including in both elementary and secondary education. Ultra-Orthodox education now constitutes 26% of the Hebrew-language (Jewish) education system in Israel, and 20% of the entire Israeli education system.

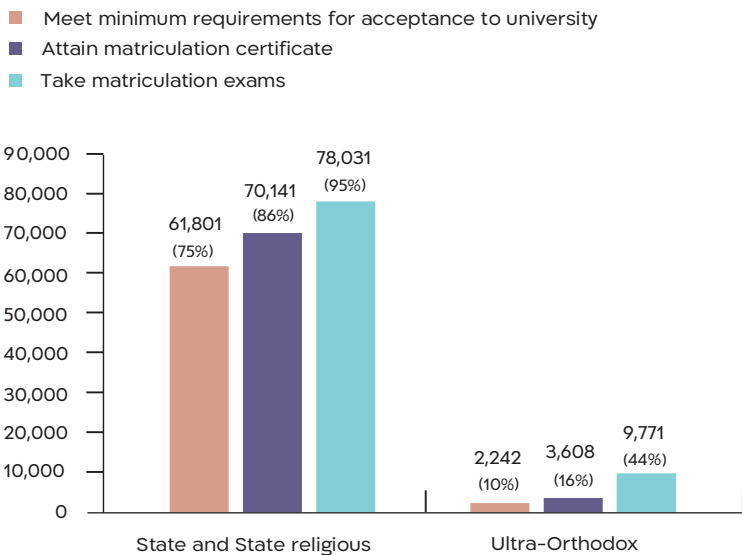
The last decade has seen several systemic and structural changes in ultra-Orthodox education, including the establishment of the Haredi Department in the Ministry of Education and of the State-Haredi education stream. Only 4.5% of Haredi schools are State schools; 73% are not defined as State schools but are "recognized" by the State under the compulsory education law, and 22.5% — schools which are "exempt" from the compulsory education law.

Students in Hebrew-language education, by religious stream



In the 2021-2022 school year, 72% of ultra-Orthodox girls took at least one matriculation (Bagrut) exam, representing an increase of 10 percentage points since the 2019-2020 school year, and compared with just 31% a decade earlier, in 2008–2009. However, during the same period, the percentage of boys taking matriculation exams remained stable, at only 16%, as compared with 85% in the State and State-religious education streams.

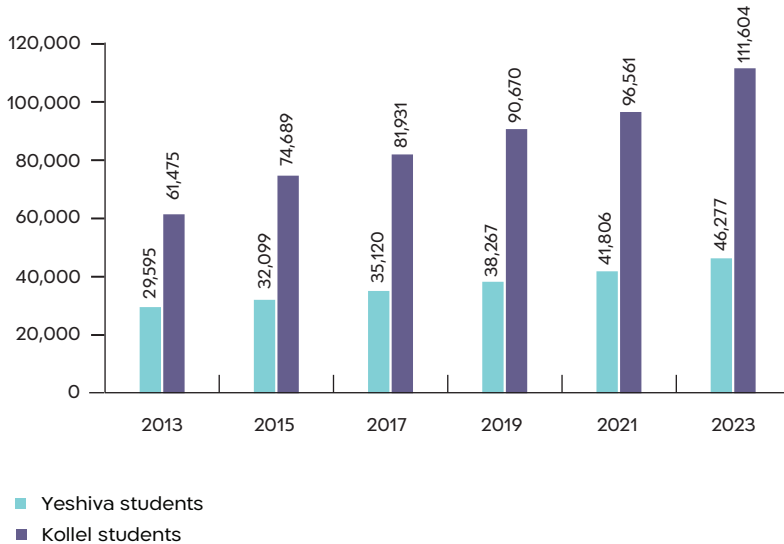
Students taking matriculation exams, attaining a matriculation certificate, and meeting minimum university requirements, by religious stream



There are four tracks in the post-secondary education system for Haredi men: studies in a yeshiva; studies in a kollel (full time advanced Torah study frameworks for married men); academic studies; and vocational training. For ultra-Orthodox women, the options are studying in a "seminar" (ultra-Orthodox post-secondary educational institutions, which also offer vocational training) or pursuing academic studies. Between 2013–2023, there was a 83% increase in the number

of yeshiva and *kollel* students (males) in Israel, reaching 169,366 in 2023. This rise likely stemmed from increased state support for these students, which also brought to a halt the trend of more and more ultra-Orthodox men into the workforce.

Yeshiva and *kollel* students

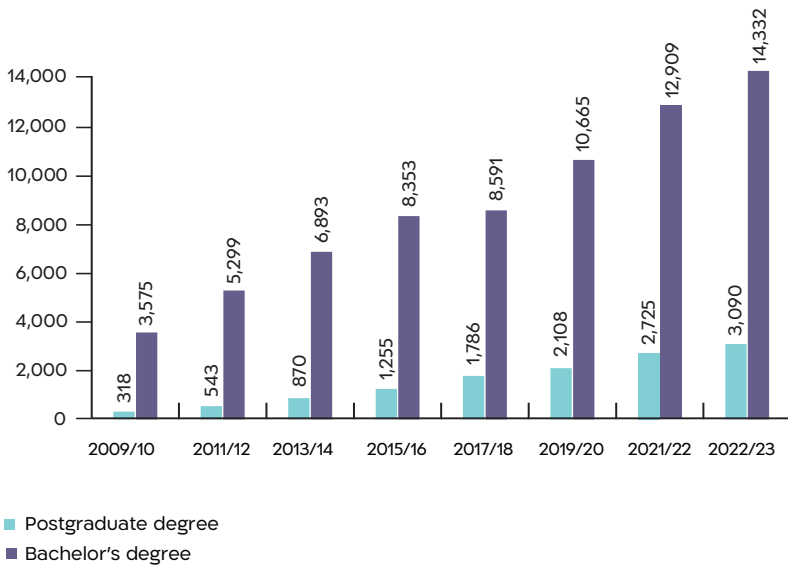


The number of Haredi students in higher education frameworks has grown rapidly and dramatically. Between 2010 and 2024, their number grew by 274%, compared with a 18% increase in the overall number of students in Israel. In 2009–2010, ultra-Orthodox students constituted around 2% of the total student body; this leaped to 5% by 2023–2024. During this 14-year period, the number of ultra-Orthodox students rose by an average of 10% annually.

The total number of Haredi students in higher education stood at around 17,400 in 2023–2024. The subjects they choose to study are mostly practical and those that allow them to work within the ultra-Orthodox community or to enter professions that are in demand in the labor market (such as teaching and education, paramedical professions, business administration, and law). Haredi students choose mainly to attend colleges due to their lower entry requirements, and only

11% study at universities (not including the Open University)—compared with 35% of other Jewish students. The dropout rate of ultra-Orthodox students between the first and second year of academic studies has fallen in recent years and is now equivalent to the dropout rate among other Jewish students. The number of Haredi students in technological vocational training (under the auspices of MAHAT, the Government Institute for Technology and Science Training) stood at more than 8,600 in 2023.

Ultra-Orthodox students in higher education

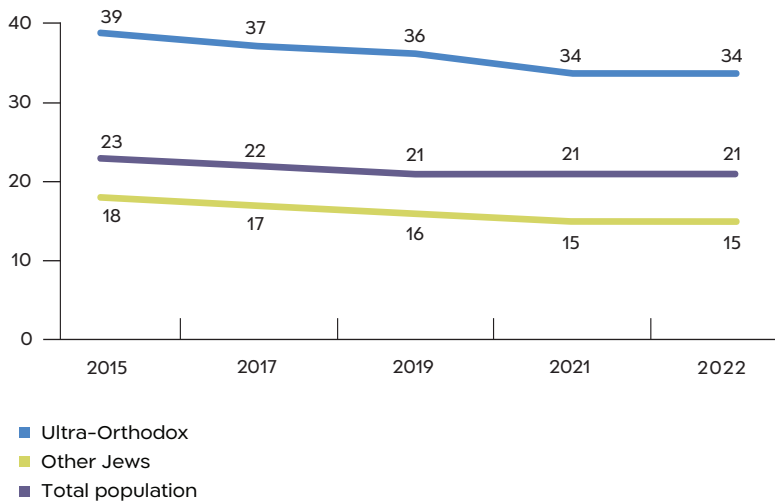


Chapter 3

Standard of Living

The prevalence of poverty among Israel's ultra-Orthodox population and its impact on the standard of living, is much greater than in the rest of the Israeli population. While there has been a sizable decline in the poverty rate among the ultra-Orthodox since 2015, it remains very high, standing at 34% in 2022—significantly higher than among the rest of the Jewish population (14%).

Poverty rate among families, by population group (%)

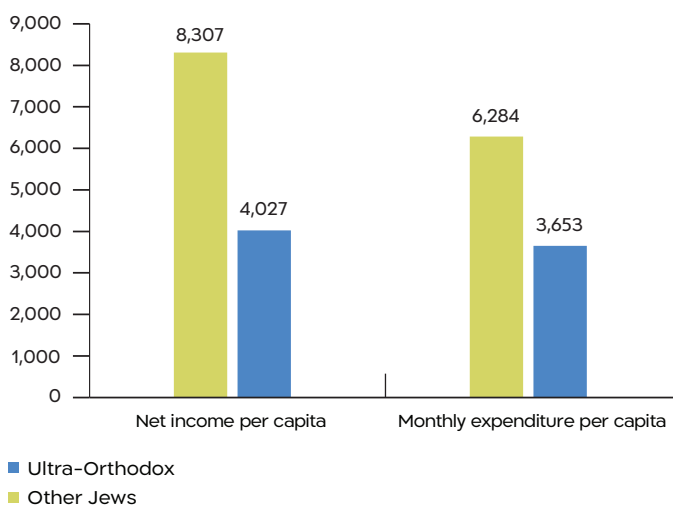


Standard of living is closely linked to household income and expenditures. In 2022, the average gross monthly income for Haredi households was NIS 14,816—far lower than the average for other Jewish households in Israel (NIS 24,466). The factors behind this low level of income include the fact that many households rely on the earnings of a single breadwinner (almost always the woman), working relatively few weekly hours in a low-paying job, and with fewer funds in investments or in pension plans.

An assessment of monthly household expenditure reveals that the ultra-Orthodox spent an average of NIS 3,653 per capita, compared to NIS 6,284 per capita among other Jews. To some extent, these differences can be explained by the ultra-Orthodox consumer culture, which puts a high premium on thriftiness, as well as by consumer outlets for the ultra-Orthodox population, at which shoppers can buy products more cheaply, and even receive them for free on occasion.

The expenditure of ultra-Orthodox households on income taxes, social security and health insurance is on average only 33% of the expenditure of non-Orthodox households.

Monthly income and expenditure per capita (NIS)



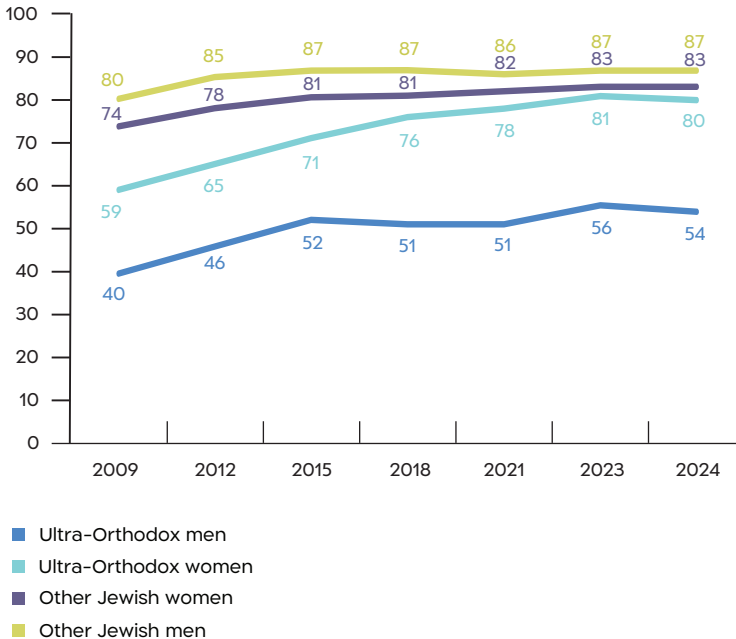
Analysis of data on the standard of living in the ultra-Orthodox public reveals that there are large differences in standard of living between Haredim and the rest of the Jewish public, but the gaps have decreased in recent years in some areas, such as poverty rates and access to motor vehicles. The only area in which findings for the two populations are comparable is in home ownership, where we see that 78% of Haredim owned a home, compared to 73% of other Jews.

Chapter 4

Employment

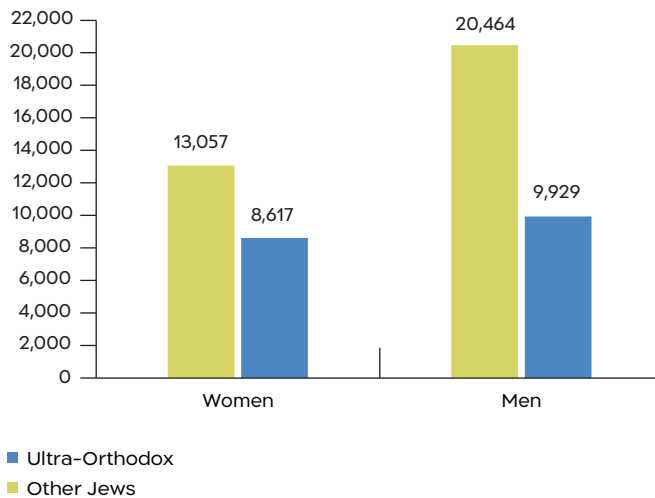
One of the main topics of public debate regarding the place of the ultra-Orthodox community in Israeli society is employment. In 2002, around one-third of ultra-Orthodox men were employed, and just over half of ultra-Orthodox women. Between 2003 and 2015 there was a major surge in ultra-Orthodox employment rates for both men and women, resulting from a combination of economic need in the community and of public policy designed to promote entry of ultra-Orthodox Israelis to the labor market by various means. As a result, more than half of ultra-Orthodox men (54%) and more than three-quarters of ultra-Orthodox women (80%) are now employed. However, the rise in employment rates among men has come to a halt in recent years (2016–2024).

Employment rates, ages 25–66, by population group (%)



The average income of ultra-Orthodox employees is just 55% of that of other Jewish workers. Among other factors, this difference can be attributed to the fewer weekly hours worked by ultra-Orthodox workers and lower compensation, which is a result of limited vocational training and concentration of these workers in lower-paying occupations.

Average gross monthly income from employment, ages 25–66, by population group (NIS)



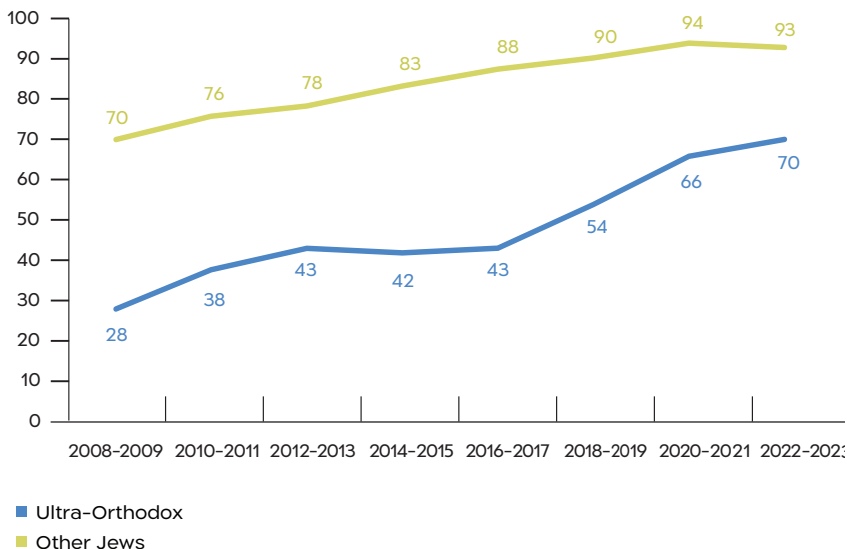
In the last nine years which we examined (2014–2023), we have not seen a trend towards narrowing the difference between the industries in which ultra-Orthodox men and women are employed and those in which other Jewish men and women work. For example, 20% of non-Haredi Jewish men work in high tech, compared to only 3% of Haredi men.

Chapter 5

Lifestyles

Lifestyles in the ultra-Orthodox community are in constant flux, and serve as a good source for understanding the relations between ultra-Orthodox society and the general Israeli society. Regarding military service and national civilian service, for example, recent years have seen a decline in participation among the ultra-Orthodox—in 2022, only 1,266 ultra-Orthodox men entered military service, and just 814 entered national civilian service. On the other hand, when it comes to internet usage, the gaps between the ultra-Orthodox and the rest of the Israeli public have narrowed, with 70% of the ultra-Orthodox and 93% of other Jews reporting that they are regular internet users. Similarly, there has been a rise in the share of ultra-Orthodox Israelis with access to a motor vehicle and of those who have a driver's license. In light of the increased ultra-Orthodox participation in these activities, it can be stated that the trend towards social and economic integration of ultra-Orthodox society into general society is gaining strength.

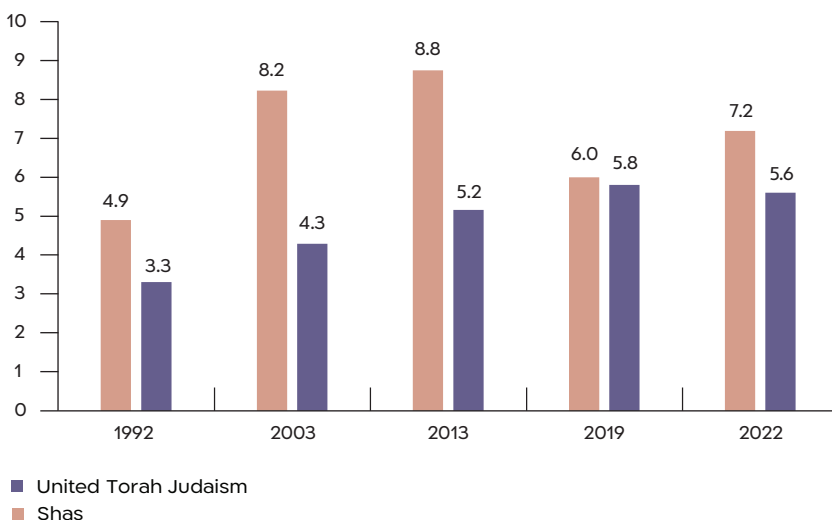
Use of the Internet among ages 20+, by population group (%)



Over the past decade, the growing numbers of ultra-Orthodox Israelis in higher education and the growing numbers of women who are employed, are generating greater disposable income, awareness of consumer and leisure culture, and a modern discourse among the growing middle class in ultra-Orthodox society. The communal and social characteristics of the Haredi sector find expression in volunteer activity (40% of the ultra-Orthodox volunteer, as compared with 23% of other Jews) and in making major financial contributions to the community (89% of the ultra-Orthodox ages 20 and over versus 61% of other Jews). Note that the data do not account for the rise in volunteerism seen following the October 7, 2023 attack.

We also analyzed voting patterns for the United Torah Judaism and Shas electoral lists in Knesset elections, which are indicative of the political power of the ultra-Orthodox parties, the geographical distribution of the ultra-Orthodox public in Israel, and the internal composition of the population residing in locales with heavy concentrations of Haredim. Between 1992 and 2022, the overall share of the vote gained by Shas and United Torah Judaism rose from 8.2% to 14.1%. In addition, there has been a change in the geographical distribution of voters for these lists, reflected in the growing population of the ultra-Orthodox satellite cities and the decline of Jerusalem and Bnei Brak.

Voting for United Torah Judaism and Shas, by election year (%)



Chapter 6

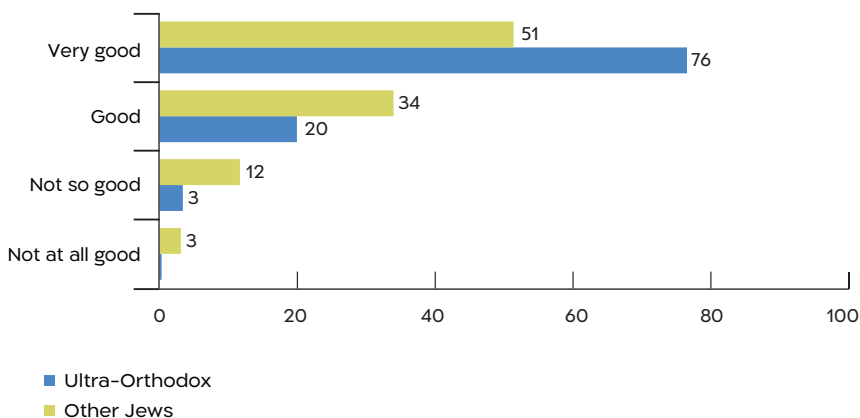
Health

Some 76% of Haredim say that their state of health is very good (representing a rise over the years from 58% in 2010), compared to 51% of non-Haredi Jews (and a similar share of 47% in 2010). When asked about the year prior to the survey, only 7% said that their state of health had become slightly or much worse during that period, compared to 17% of non-Haredi Jews.

Only 39% of the ultra-Orthodox reported having required medical treatment during the year prior to the survey, compared to 60% of non-Haredi Jews. Like the rest of the Jewish population, ultra-Orthodox respondents say that they almost never have to forego medical treatment due to financial constraints (91%).

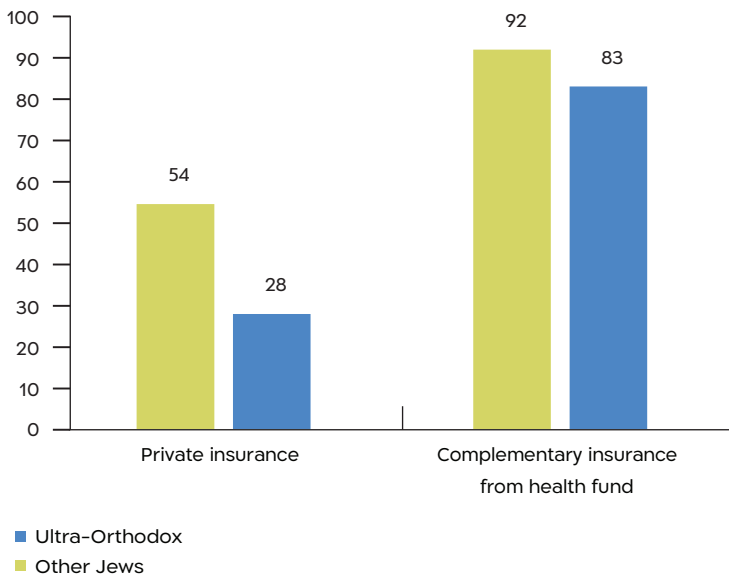
85% of Haredim report that they have felt depressed only rarely or not at all, compared to 73% of the non-Haredi Jewish population. These findings may be attributed to the relatively young age of the the ultra-Orthodox population, to its strong community structures, and to the tendency of Haredim to respond positively when asked subjective questions.

State of health, self-defined, by population group, 2023 (%)



Since 2010, there has been a decline in the share of Haredim who report leading a healthy lifestyle, contrasting with a rise in the equivalent share of non-Haredi Jews. Around half (49%) of Haredim say that they engage in physical activity (down from 53% in 2010), smaller than the equivalent share of the non-Jewish Haredi population (61%). Similarly, 41% of Haredim engage in intensive physical activity more than 4 hours per week, compared to 61% of non-Haredi Jews. 39% of Haredim report being of a healthy weight (down from 53% in 2010), compared to 46% of non-Haredi Jews (47% in 2010).

Have health insurance, by population group, 2023 (%)



Regarding smoking, 9% of Haredim smoke, compared to 21% of non-Haredi Jews. The share of smokers in the the ultra-Orthodox population has remained relatively stable (8% in 2010), while it has declined in the non-Haredi Jewish population (from 27% in 2010).

Regarding insurance, an overwhelming majority of the the ultra-Orthodox population hold complementary health insurance from their health fund (83%), though this is still a lower rate than in the non-Haredi Jewish population (92%). However, only 28% of Haredim have private health insurance, compared to 54% of the non-Haredi Jewish population.

The following chart provides a big picture summary of various health indicators in recent years.

Health indicators, by population group, 2010, 2017, and 2023 (%)

	Haredim 2010	Haredim 2017	Haredim 2023	Non- Haredi Jews 2010	Non- Haredi Jews 2017	Non- Haredi Jews 2023
State of health						
Very good state of health	58	73	76	47	51	51
Exams and prevention						
Colonoscopy	31	21	24	39	43	53
Mammography after 40	60	50	50	76	80	80
Lifestyle						
Healthy weight	51	46	39	47	47	46
Physical exercise	53	47	49	55	58	61
Currently smoke	8	11	9	27	23	21
Eyeglasses		72	69		62	55
Health information and health insurance						
Internet search about health		12	39		23	71
Complementary insurance	74	82	83	88	91	92
Private insurance	11		28	36		54

Dr. Gilad Malach established the Israel Democracy Institute's Ultra-Orthodox in Israel Program and is a Research Fellow at IDI. He is an expert in public policy planning for the ultra-Orthodox population, in fields including employment, military service, schooling, and higher education.

Dr. Lee Cahaner is a social geographer. She is a research fellow at the Israel Democracy Institute's Ultra-Orthodox in Israel Program, and a senior lecturer and Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Oranim Collage. Her work examines, among other topics, the Haredim in the public space in Israel and the "modern Haredi" subgroups.

Moshe Bachar is the data coordinator for this year's statistical report. He is a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and a researcher of gender and culture in ultra-Orthodox society.

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