

Israel: Over 50 Percent Of Chareidim Are Below The Poverty Line

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According to National Insurance Institute data, which measures the poverty according to per capita income, 52.6% of the chareidim are below the poverty line, compared with almost the same number in the Arab sector, and only 9% of the non-chareidi Jewish public.

A new study by the chareidi Institute for Policy Studies, published in Al-Monitor, shows that no less than 71% of chareidim are satisfied with their economic situation, compared to less than two-thirds of non-chareidi Jews and 53% of Israeli Arabs.

Only slightly less than eight percent of chareidim feel that they are poor, almost identical to that of non-chareidi Jews, and 31 percent of Arabs. More than 98% of the chareidim report satisfaction with their lives; Among non-chareidi Jews, the rate is also high, 91.6%, and three-quarters of the Arabs.

Less than 10 percent of the chareidim have been forced to give up food in the past year due to lack of money, compared to half of the non-chareidi Jews and more than 14 percent of the Arabs.



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almost identical to that of the residents of Givatayim.

In other words, not only do chareidim not feel poor and do not see themselves as such, but the economic data indicate that their behavior is not that of a sector that is unable to meet its needs.

Nitza (Kliner) Kasir, who served for nearly 30 years as a senior researcher at the Bank of Israel, told Al-Monitor that this paradox has several explanations. The most prominent of these is that the real poverty rate in chareidi society ranges from 8% to 14%. This number is achieved, inter alia, in a measurement adapted to the chareidi lifestyle, i.e., without products or services that the chareidim do not use or otherwise use, such as communications and transportation.

According to her, because of its character, chareidi society is an almost a closed economic entity, enabling it to provide for their needs despite their low income. One of Kasir's research measures examined the income level of the ultra-Orthodox family relative to average income in the chareidi sector alone, and not to the entire Israeli population.

A central factor in the ability of the chareidi family to provide for its needs is consumer behavior that is fundamentally different from the consumer character of Western society. This behavior includes the reuse of any non-expendable product, such as in the clothes transferred to the children in the family, purchasing according to real need, very low expenditure on luxuries, and more.

Expenditures in the field of communications, i.e. cell phones, internet, and computers, are much smaller in the chareidi sector than the expenditure basket for non-religious Israelis. According to various estimates, only about a third of chareidi adults hold cell phones, and only some are smartphones.

Moreover, in the chareidi sector, the number of vehicles per 1,000 people reaches 85, compared with 345 among non-chareidi Jews.

Thus, the average expenditure per chareidi household was 12% lower than the average expenditure for a non-chareidi Jewish household, although the number of persons in it was higher.



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In addition, the chareidi community, which is dedicated to charity and chessed, maintains a high level of community support, including high volunteer and donation rates, mutual assistance, care for the needy, various economic support frameworks, and more. This is in addition to the non-interest-bearing provident funds (gemach) or commissions, and in practice they keep the chareidi economy.

But the low level of income of the chareidi sector, even if it does not cause poverty in the accepted sense, is considered such in international indices. Israel, along with the United States, is at the top of the list of OECD countries in the incidence of poverty among its residents. According to the list, in Israel almost 18% of the population are poor.

(YWN Israel Desk – Jerusalem)

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