



Haredi Employment

Facts and Figures – and the Story Behind Them

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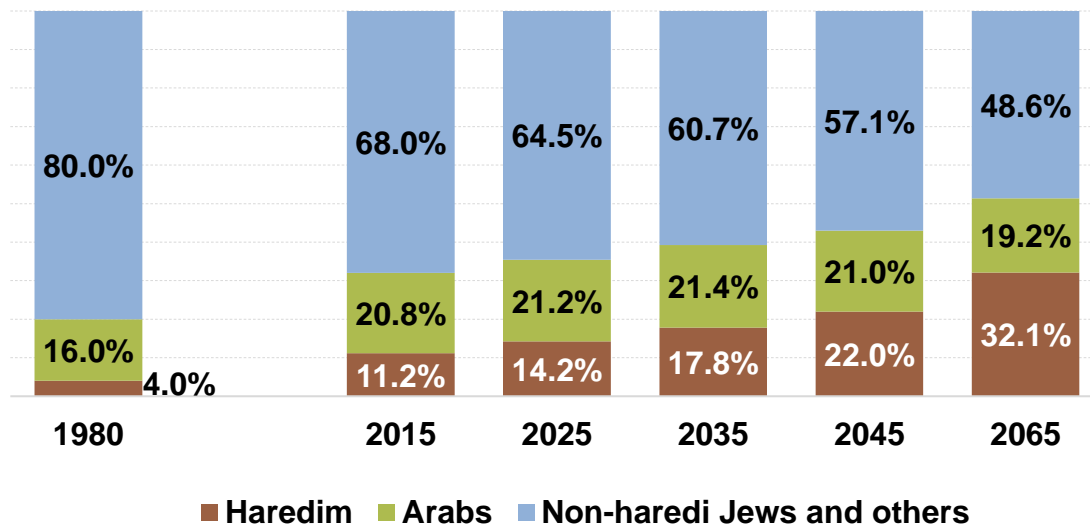
Haredi Employment: Facts and Figures – and the Story Behind Them

Nitsa (Kaliner) Kasir

In recent years we have seen much improvement in the rate of haredi employment. On the surface, this upward trend looks good. But data is only half the story – and sometimes it’s the wrong story. In order to effect change, we need informed policy. For that, we need not only accurate data but a proper analysis thereof.

Furthermore, any long-term planning addressing haredi employment needs to take demographics into account. In 1980, the haredi community comprised only 4% of Israel’s population. Presently it’s just over 11%, with demographers predicting that by 2065 it’ll comprise over 32% of Israel’s population. Given this expected growth, we can no longer regard the haredi community as marginal.

Population distribution and forecast



Source: Kasir (Kaliner), N. and D. Romanov, *The Haredi Institute for Public Affairs*, 2018. Analysis of the Central Bureau of Statistics’ data, 1980; for the years 2015-2065, “Israel’s Population as of 2017 and Scenarios for Future Population Growth,” Hleihel, A. Presentation, *Central Bureau of Statistics*, 2018.

Specifically, about 20% of children aged 0–9 are haredi, comprising 25% of the overall Jewish population aged 0–9. In 15–25 years from now, these children are going to be joining the workforce (and of course, this has ramifications for other areas as well, such as education, housing, and more).

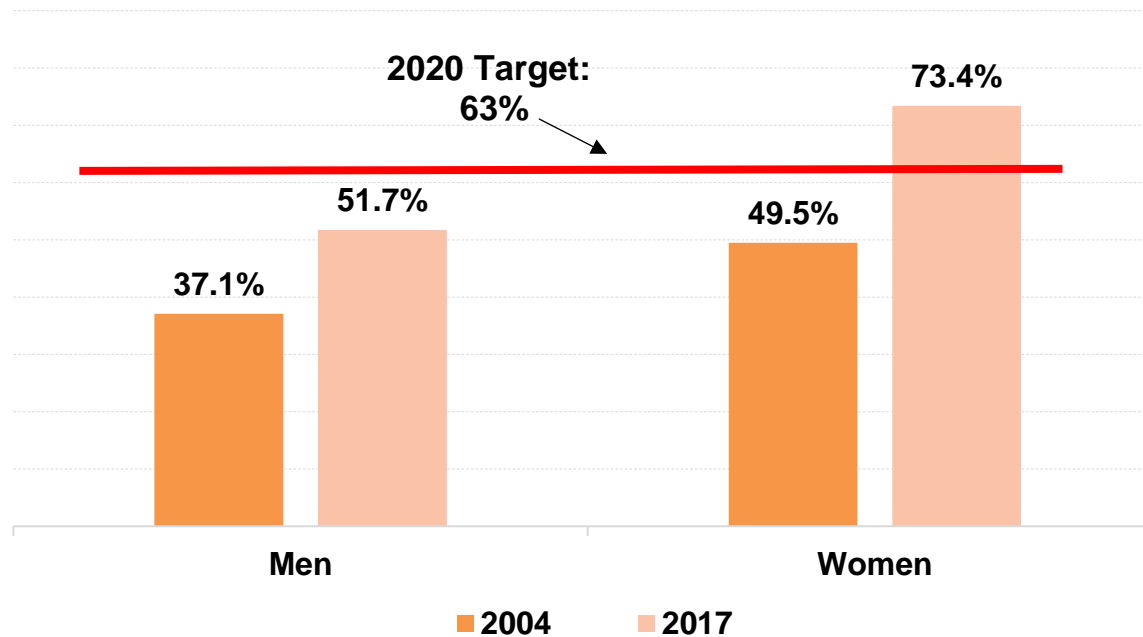
How does haredi employment compare with non-haredi employment?

As of 2017, the rate of employment among non-haredi Jews aged 25–64 was 87.8% among men, and 82.1% among women, compared to 51.7% among haredi men and 73.4% among haredi women of the same age group.

While the employment rate of haredim is lower than that of the non-haredi Jewish population, there is a definite upward trend: from 2004 to 2017, employment among haredi men rose from 37.1% to 51.7% and among women, from 49.5% to 73.4% – surpassing the government’s 2010 target of a 63% employment rate set for 2020.

In absolute numbers, the number of employed haredi men and women has tripled since 2004, accounted for by demographic growth as well as the increase in employment.

Employment Rate – Haredim Working age (25-64)



Source: Kasir (Kaliner), N. “Integration of Diverse Populations in Employment,” *The Haredi Institute for Public Affairs*, 2017.

This growth in haredi employment is the result of government policy which shifted from a focus on welfare to a focus on employment, as well as measures implemented by various philanthropic agencies committed to increasing haredi employment, such as Kemach, the Joint, and Yedidut Toronto, among others.

As is to be expected, growth in employment is higher among women – 23.9 percentage points, vs. 14.6 percentage points for men – because among haredim the woman is typically

the main breadwinner, a fact that must be taken into account when devising long-term planning for haredi integration.

Another point to keep in mind regarding the government target of 63% is that perhaps a better way of assessing employment is to assess it *per household*, by averaging the rate of employment for men *and* women. By that calculation, the employment rate among haredim has reached 62.4%. In other words, we've nearly reached the 63% target for men and women.

How does haredi employment differ?

When looking at Haredi employment, there are several cultural differences to consider. First, the haredi education system is focused on identity formation, not preparedness for the job market. Second, the ideal of Torah study among haredi men means that the woman is oftentimes the main breadwinner. Third, haredim typically have larger families. (The Total Fertility Rate among haredi women is 6.91, vs. 2.65 among non-haredi Jewish women.¹) Lastly, haredim generally prefer to live a segregated lifestyle – for example, living in exclusively haredi neighborhoods or working in religious environments.

In many cases, having large families means the family relies on one main earner, with the second earner shouldering the burden of the home and children. Thus, if the father is learning in Yeshiva and the wife is the main earner, the father is much more involved with the children. The Yeshiva schedule is suited to this: studies typically begin at 9:00 or 9:30, enabling the husband to take the kids to school, and there's usually a break in the afternoon which enables him to pick them up, so the wife can work longer hours. (Keep in mind, however, that haredi women are not generally career-oriented; to most, a job is just a means of earning a living.)

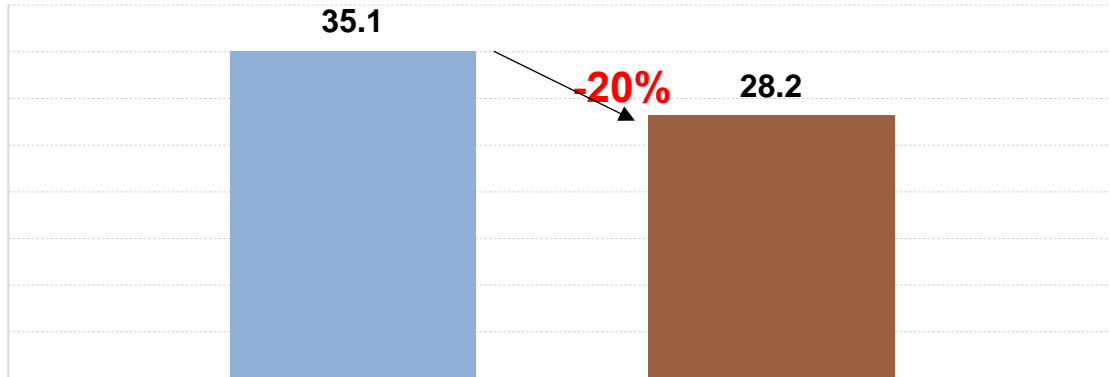
Haredi women work fewer hours and earn less

Despite haredi women being the main breadwinners, and though the 73.4% employment rate – which is higher than the OECD's rate – seems impressive, haredi women are actually working 20% fewer hours than their non-haredi Jewish counterparts, due to part-time

¹ **Source:** Hleihel, A. "Fertility Among Jewish Women in Israel, by Level of Religiosity, 1979-2014." *Central Bureau of Statistics, Working Paper Series*, 101.

employment. Furthermore, the rate of involuntary part-time employment among haredim is 1 in 4, in contrast to 1 in 7 among non-haredi Jewish women.

Number of hours worked per week, Haredi women (25–64)



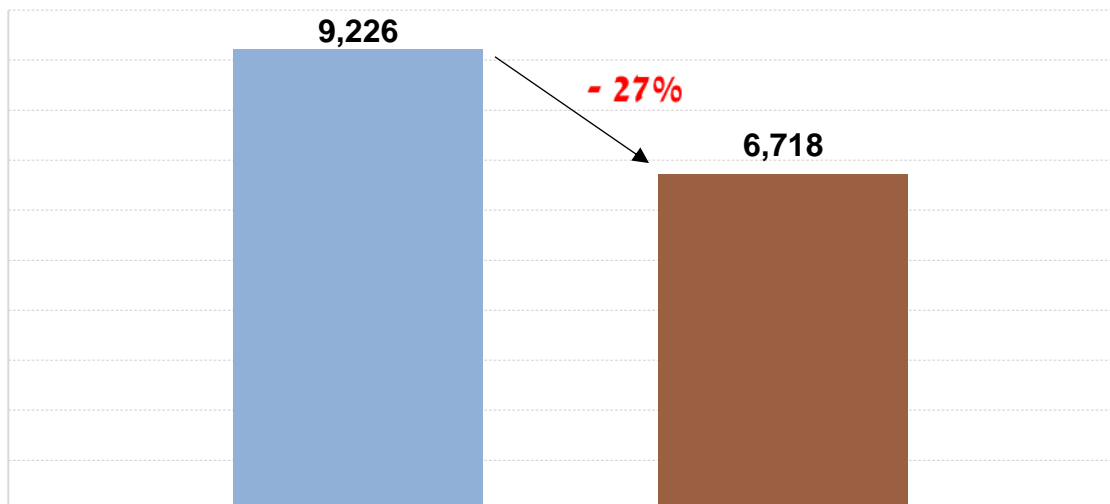
Actual hours worked

■ **Non-Haredi Jewish women**

Source: Kasir (Kaliner), N., S. Shahino-Kesler and A. Tsachor-Shai, “Haredi Women’s Underemployment,” *The Haredi Institute for Public Affairs*, 2018 (forthcoming).

Obviously, part-time work comes with a lower salary. As of 2016, the average income from salaried work among haredi women (ages 25–64) was 27% lower than among non-haredi Jewish women. The hourly wage, too, is lower than in the general population – a serious issue considering that in the haredi sector the woman is usually the main breadwinner.

Average income from salaried work – women of working age (25–64), 2016

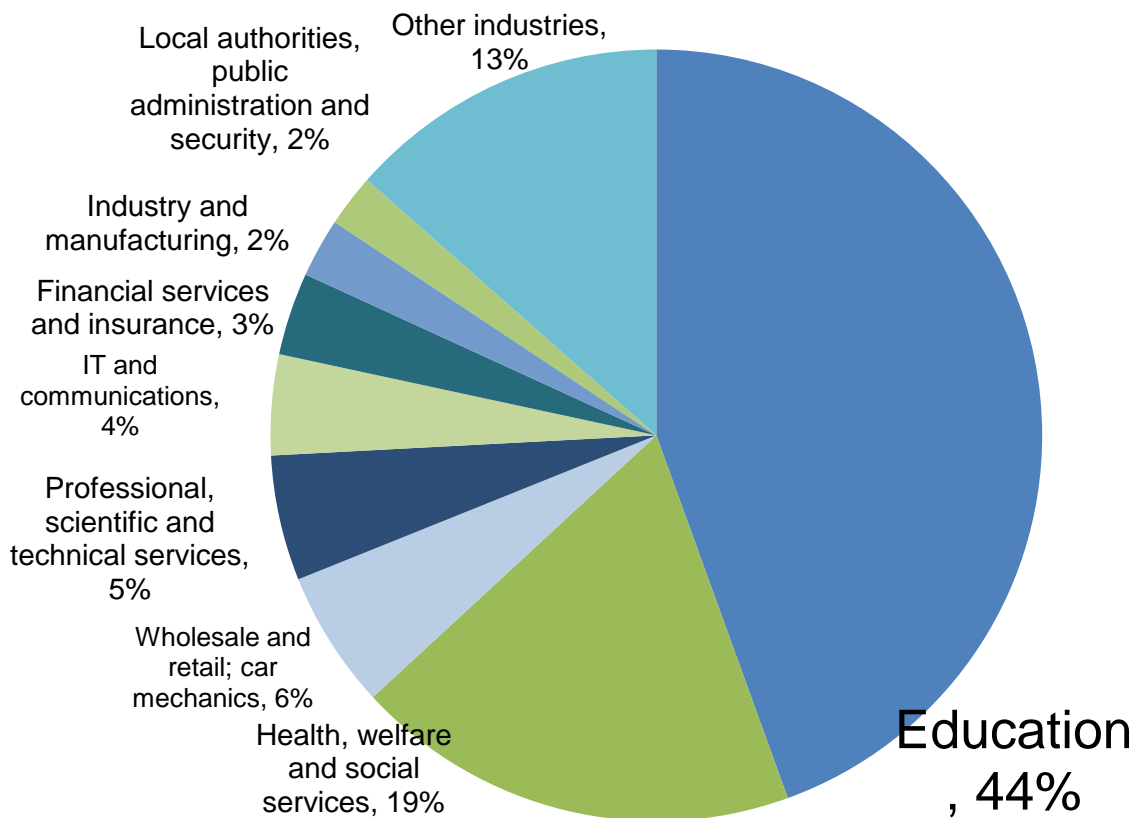


■ **Non-Haredi Jewish women**

Source: Kasir (Kaliner), N. *The Haredi Institute for Public Affairs*, 2017. Analysis of the Central Bureau of Statistics, Household Expenditure Survey, 2016.

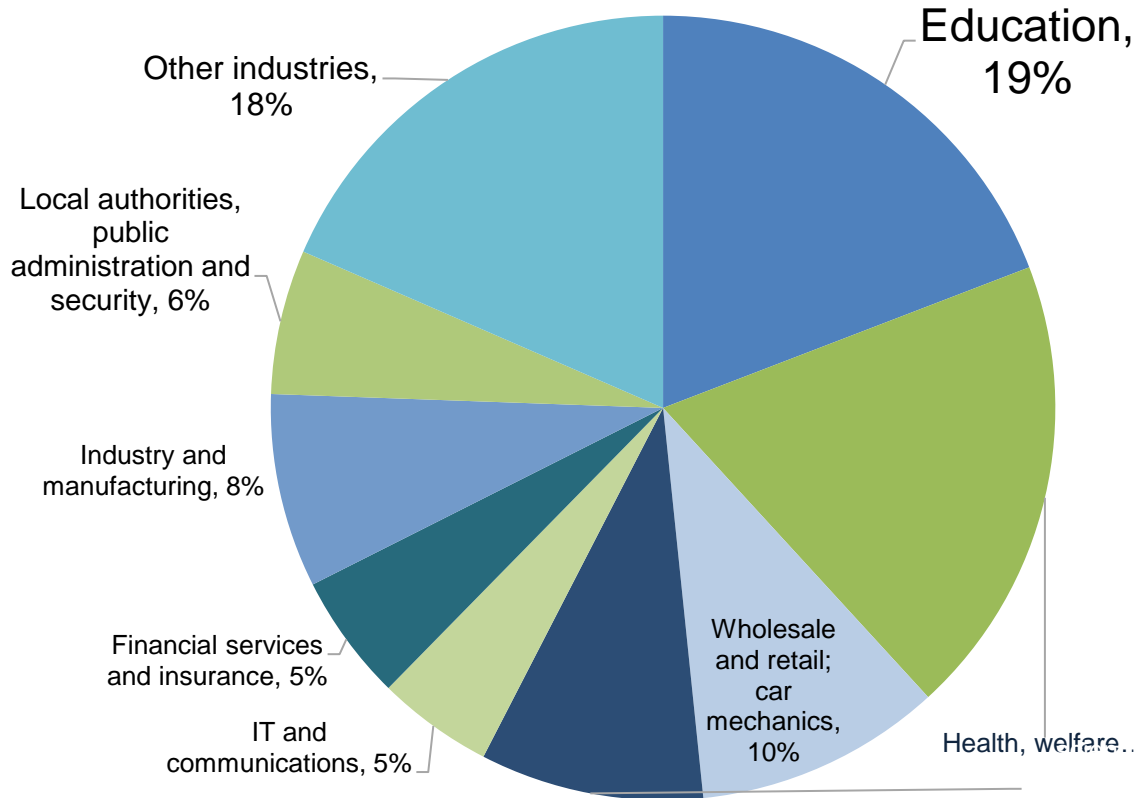
Part-time employment isn't the only cause of lower income; the *field* of employment is a factor as well. A staggering 44% of haredi women are employed in education – the largest sector of employment among haredim – in contrast to 19% of non-haredi Jewish women employed in education. Education isn't very profitable: the supply of women trained in education far surpasses the demand. Many women are competing for a limited number of positions, and as a result of the market saturation many settle for part-time work. Inevitably, haredi women's worker's rights are routinely violated: because they're so easily replaceable by many other haredi women willing to work for less, a haredi woman who won't accept a low salary is shown the door.

Sectoral employment distribution – Haredi women



Source: Analysis of the Central Bureau of Statistics, Labor Force Survey, 2015, ages 25–64.

Sectoral employment distribution – Non-Haredi Jewish women



Source: Analysis of the Central Bureau of Statistics, Labor Force Survey, 2015, ages 25–64.

So why are haredi women going mainly into education? Why aren't they branching out into other fields?

Haredi vocational training

Haredi girls have limited vocational training. The emphasis is on training to be teachers, in line with the haredi worldview of women as teachers of the next generation. Even when vocational training is offered in other fields, it's generally for low-income jobs and not in fields relevant to the demands of the job market. It goes without saying that most haredi girls are not going to pursue academic degrees.

Several steps need to be taken to expand haredi girls' employment options. First, we need to map out current and future trends in the job market, to assess what sorts of vocational training would enable graduates to obtain jobs in demand. Second, we need to adapt curricula and career training to meet those market demands. Curricula reforms need to be

implemented already in high school, for optimum post-high school professional training. The Haredi Institute for Public Affairs is currently conducting a study that maps present trends in the job market, assessing which professions are in demand and are compatible with the haredi lifestyle. The study will also provide seminary administrators with recommendations as to what changes are required in order to implement relevant professional training in their schools.

Third, we need to focus on high-tech – a field that is much in demand and which does not require an academic qualification. For this, we need to raise the level of math and English being taught in high schools. Fourth, we need to develop career options in healthcare services and paramedical professions. This requires working with the Ministry of Health to devise regulations for paramedical professional training that is of the highest caliber but which does not require an academic degree (for example, occupational therapy, speech therapy and other paramedical fields.).

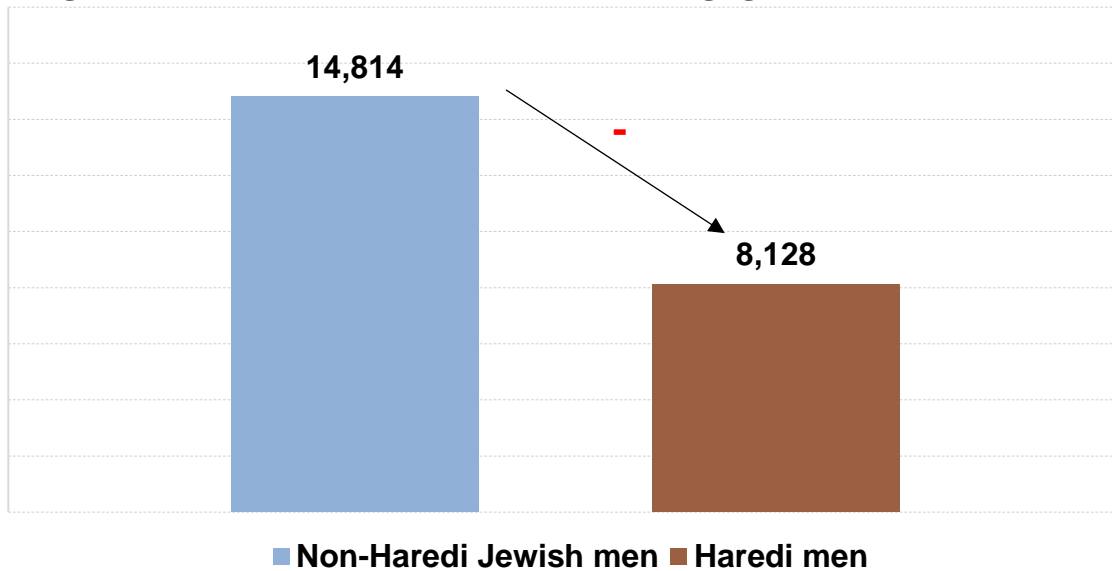
At present, in order to work in these fields one has to have an academic degree, even though in many paramedical professions this requirement isn't justified. In fact, in various countries around the world there is no such requirement.

Lastly, we need to work hand in hand with rabbinic and communal leaders. Our experience has shown that the rabbis and heads of educational institutions are interested in developing career options for their graduates. However, if we want to implement change, it has to be *with* the leadership, not against it or undermining it.

What about haredi men's employment?

Haredi men, too, work 20% fewer hours per week than non-haredi Jewish men. The increase in part-time employment, commensurate with the increased rate of employment, reflects the difficulties haredi men encounter in the job market as well as the fact that many of them work alongside yeshiva studies. Not surprisingly, haredi men, like haredi women, earn less – by a staggering 45%.

Average income from salaried work – men of working age (25–64), 2016



Source: Analysis of the Central Bureau of Statistics, Household Expenditure Survey, 2016.

Among haredi men, education also takes a large share of the employment pie, with 30% employed in education vs. 5% employed in education among non-haredi Jewish men.

So what’s holding them back?

There are several employment challenges facing haredi men, compounding the cultural differences and social gaps already hampering their integration. First, the education system at the primary and high school levels focuses exclusively on Torah studies. This mindset is carried on into adulthood, with Torah study being the preferred choice among most haredi men. Typically, studies continue till *at least* age 23–24, if not longer. What this means is that most men are already married with children by the time they go out to work. Once they’ve got a family to support, they can’t afford tuition, let alone to be in school fulltime.

However, there are definite advantages: Haredim have high learning capabilities, despite the lack of formal education. And although being married with children is a barrier to entry, this actually has an advantage once they’re employed: married men/fathers have much more life experience, demonstrate a high work ethic, and are much more committed to their employer.

Where do we go from here?

Haredi integration in the workforce has seen tremendous progress. With that, those interested in joining the workforce sometimes encounter barriers that prevent them from obtaining certain jobs and/or integrating into certain places of employment, especially as regards better paying jobs. Two fields particularly amenable to haredi integration are the high-tech industry and the civil service.

The high-tech industry offers a high salary, without the need for an academic degree. The Institute is presently conducting a study, under the guidance of industry leaders and representatives of the Ministry of Education as well as the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, which maps out the trends and needs in the high-tech industry, and ways to maximize the latent haredi human capital.

As to the public sector, as the largest employer in the economy, it has many job opportunities to offer. However we need to institute standards that will enable the recruitment of suitable candidates from the haredi community. Presently one of the major barriers to entry for haredim is a lack of academic qualification. Key positions require a BA, even without any particular specialization or major; any degree will do. In some cases this requirement is absurd: an applicant with a degree in musicology and no experience can obtain the position of spokesperson while someone with no degree and ten years of experience in the field is rejected out of hand.

People can be highly professional and experienced in some fields in the public service, despite not having an academic qualification. We need to devise ways to enable haredim (and other population groups) to enter the public service, even without a degree, obviously in positions where a degree isn't necessary. We can do this by instituting a qualifying exam that effectively screens potential candidates.

There are two other spheres of operation that would improve the status of haredim seeking employment: developing scholarship programs and instituting tax reforms.

As noted earlier, haredim going out to work are generally married with children and can't afford to be in school fulltime. We need to devise scholarship programs that will enable those entering the workforce later in life to finance their education and receive a stipend to cover living expenses for the duration of their studies.

As regards tax reforms, presently women get tax credits for children under 18; for men, it's for children under age 5. In cases where men are working, this system is inefficient. The Institute is pushing for reforms that would enable unused child tax credits to be transferred between parents.

There is a Japanese saying that “Vision without action is a daydream, but action without vision is a nightmare.” Accurate data – and proper analysis thereof – is the basis for developing long-term vision and action. Having a better understanding of haredi culture, its sensitivities, barriers to entry and inherent potential is crucial to optimal haredi integration.