

What is Important in Life? New Research Measures Satisfaction with 'Important' Area of Life

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Abstract

A new article by Nitsa (Kaliner) Kasir, deputy chairman, Dmitry Romanov, senior fellow, and Assaf Tsachor-Shai, senior researcher, all of the Haredi Institute for Policy Studies presents the findings of a unique survey examining the priorities of distinct population groups in Israel – Ultra-Orthodox Jews (Haredi), non-Ultra-Orthodox Jews and Arabs, in a wide range of areas of life, as well as satisfaction in these areas. The findings of the survey show great similarity between the preferences of the populations, while the priorities among Arabs are somewhat different. Health and Education ranked high among the general population, while the economy reaches only fourth place in the terms of importance. The findings indicate significant gender differences in the importance accorded to some areas of life: the largest variance exists among the ultra-Orthodox, apparently as a result of a greater cultural difference between genders in this particular population.

In all areas covered by the survey, the Jewish populations rated their satisfaction higher than Arab participants. In seven categories, non-Haredi Jews are most satisfied with their situation, and in three community and social life, personal security and the environment – Ultra-Orthodox are the most satisfied. Among the Ultra-Orthodox, the percentage of men who are satisfied with their situation is lower than that of women in most areas, and younger people are more satisfied with their situation compared to adults, especially in the material categories (income and economic status, employment and housing).

The study also examined the relationship between the ranking of the importance of each category and participants' level of satisfaction, and found that there was a positive correlation between the variables in all population groups: the more important respondents rated the category, the more satisfied they were more likely to be. One explanation, is that resources are invested in "important" areas, which increase individuals' satisfaction. In addition, "private" areas such as education, health, and personal welfare may be preferred over "public" areas such as security, environment, and infrastructure, which are of lesser importance in the individual's perspective. The intensity of the relationship varies among the population groups – it is the weakest among the Haredi population and is the strongest in the Arab society.