

Part-Time Work by Choice or by Necessity? Factors Impacting the Number of Hours Worked Among Haredi Women*

Nitsa (Kaliner) Kasir
Shlomit Shahino-Kesler
Asaf Tsachor-Shai

Research Abstract

- **Haredi women work an average of 30 hours a week, compared to an average of 37 hours a week among working non-Haredi Jewish women.**
- **Most of the gap between the Haredi women and the non-Haredi Jewish women stems from the number of hours defined as full-time work: 36 hours among Haredi women and nearly 42 hours among non-Haredi Jewish women.**
- **A smaller portion of the gap stems from the relatively high proportion of Haredi women employed in part-time positions: 37% of Haredi women, compared to 21% of non-Haredi Jewish women.**
- **The child care variable has a smaller, more marginal effect on the work hours of Haredi women, compared to non-Haredi Jewish women, but the cumulative effect is significant, due to the large number of children in Haredi families.**
- **Higher wages also have a more minor effect on increasing the number of hours that Haredi women work than among non-Haredi Jewish women: an increase of 10% in the hourly wage prompts Haredi women to work 0.5 more hours, compared to 0.8 hours among non-Haredi Jewish women.**
- **The high proportion of Haredi women who work as teachers, and the fewer weekly work hours in that profession are responsible for about 17% of the weekly work hours gap between Haredi women and non-Haredi Jewish women.**
- **A relatively high proportion of working Haredi women are employed for about 24 hours a week, a finding that can be attributed to the minimum number of hours required for eligibility for a daycare subsidy for working mothers.**

* This study was published in the issue of the legal journal *Law, Society and Culture – The Law and Haredim in Israel* (in Hebrew), edited by Yoram Margalit and Haim Zicherman.

Despite the encouraging figures of the high rate of participation of Haredi women in the work force, the wage gaps between Haredi women and non-Haredi Jewish women are still wide. In 2015 the average monthly wage among Haredi women was NIS 5,750, compared to about NIS 9,400 among non-Haredi Jewish women – a gap of 39%, despite there being only a 13% gap in their hourly wages. A large portion of this gap in monthly wages stems from the different number of hours that Haredi women and non-Haredi Jewish women worked per week, which, as noted above, is 30 hours and 37 hours, respectively.

The research quantifies the factors that affect the number of work hours among Haredi women and non-Haredi Jewish women. The findings show that most of the gap between the work hours of Haredi women and non-Haredi Jewish women stems from the average number of hours worked by women employed in full-time positions – 36 hours per week among Haredi women and nearly 42 hours among non-Haredi Jewish women. About 60% of the gap in the number of work hours stems from the number of hours per week in full-time positions: 63% of Haredi women are employed in full-time positions and work an average of 36 hours per week, compared to 79% of non-Haredi Jewish women, who work an average of nearly 42 hours per week.

Only about 40% of the gap in the number of weekly work hours stems from the high percentage of Haredi women employed in part-time positions. 37% of Haredi women work in part-time positions (working an average of 21 hours per week), compared to 21% of non-Haredi Jewish women who work a similar number of hours per week. The relatively high percentage of Haredi women working part-time is not by choice. About 22% of the Haredi women who work part-time reported that they would rather work more hours, compared to 15% of non-Haredi Jewish women. There is also a relatively high percentage of Haredi women who work about 24 hours per week, a figure that can be attributed to the minimum number of hours required for eligibility for a daycare subsidy for working mothers.

The large number of children in Haredi families affects the work hours of Haredi women. Still, the findings show that the number of children and the age of the youngest child have a more marginal effect on Haredi women than on non-Haredi Jewish women, with respect to the number of hours they work. Among full-time workers, for example, a comparison between families with 1-3 children and families with 4-5 children shows that Haredi women with more children work 0.5 fewer hours per week, while non-Haredi Jewish women work 2 fewer hours per week. Among women who work part-time, Haredi women with more children work 9 fewer hours per week, while non-Haredi Jewish women work 12.5 fewer hours per week. It is evident that Haredi women make a greater effort in the job market, as they are the primary – and often the only – breadwinners, and have pressing economic needs. The daily study schedules of the married Torah scholars are also coordinated with the children's school hours, such that the men can share in the child care and support the women going out to work.

The economic need is also reflected in the more rigid job supply for Haredi women compared to non-Haredi Jewish women. Increased wages have less of an effect on increased work hours among Haredi women than among non-Haredi Jewish women: a 10% increase in hourly wages results in an additional 0.5 work hours per week among Haredi women, compared to 0.8 work hours per week among non-Haredi Jewish women. The difference in hourly wages accounts for about 11% of the gap in the work hours of Haredi women compared to non-Haredi Jewish women.

Historical and sociological conditions created a high proportion of Haredi women in the teaching profession: the suitability for growing families and the cultural restrictions with respect to modesty made teaching a very attractive profession, and education classes became part of Haredi girls' training – to be the educator in their families. 32% of Haredi women are teachers, compared to 11% among non-Haredi Jewish women. About 17% of the gap in work hours among Haredi women and non-Haredi Jewish women stems from the teaching profession in Haredi society. The high percentage of Haredi women in the education field, which typically demands fewer work hours per week, has a big effect on the average number of work hours per week among Haredi women.

The study's findings indicate two prominent fields that require examination and intervention. One is the field of higher education and professional training; investments should be made in varying the courses offered in the seminaries, with guidance toward professions that are in demand both within Haredi society and outside of it, and especially high-paying professions. The other aspect of Haredi society that requires closer examination is the unique needs of Haredi working mothers and the types of solutions that can be offered to Haredi households, which typically have many children.