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THE 2009 SOCIAL SURVEY

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סדרת ניירות מדיניות

הסקר החברתי - 2009

נחום בלס ודלית נחשון-שרון

נייר מדיניות מס' 2010.09

הסקר החברתי של מרכז טאוב ו"מדד טאוב" מציגים ממד משלים לתמונת המצב החברתי, המוצגת בדו"ח המרכז על מצב המדינה בתחומים השונים. תוצאות הסקר מגלות חברה, שרמת שביעות הרצון שלה מההתפתחויות שחלו בתחומים החברתיים בשנה האחרונה נמוכה לעומת השנה שעברה. הציבור ער להתרחבות הפערים הכלכליים-החברתיים, וסבור שהממשלה, למרות כל הציפיות המופנות כלפיה, איננה תורמת לסגירת הפערים אלא אף להעמקתם הנוספת. הציבור סבור, שהשגשוג הכלכלי היטיב בעיקר עם האוכלוסייה המבוססת ופחות עם האוכלוסייה החלשה. בשנים האחרונות נפגע הביטחון החברתי של הציבור גם מהתגברות תחושת החשיפה לאלומות.

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נחום בלס הוא חוקר בכיר במרכז טאוב לחקר המדיניות החברתית בישראל. דלית נחשון-שרון היא העורכת במרכז טאוב לחקר המדיניות החברתית בישראל. כל הטעויות הן של המחברים. הדעות המובאות להלן הן של המחברים ואינן בהכרח משקפות את דעות מרכז טאוב לחקר המדיניות החברתית בישראל.

מותר לצטט קטעי טקסט קצרים – שאינם עולים על שתי פסקאות – ללא הסכמה מפורשת, ובלבד שיינתן אזכור מלא למקור הציטוט.

The 2009 Social Survey

Nachum Blass, Dalit Nachshon-Sharon*

Abstract

The Taub Center Social Survey and the Taub Index of Social Confidence provide a complementary dimension for the picture of the social situation presented in the Taub Center report. The survey's outcomes reveal a society in which the level of satisfaction from developments in the social areas over the past year is lower than during the previous year. The public is aware of the widening socioeconomic gaps and believes that the government, despite the public's expectations, is not helping to close the gaps but rather is widening them further. The public believes that the economic prosperity benefited primarily the established population and less the weak population. In recent years the public's social confidence declined also due to the rise in the sense of vulnerability to violence.

The Taub Center's annual *Social Survey* gauges the Israeli public's sense of well-being and social confidence, as well as its attitudes toward a variety of social issues. In the early years of the survey, the expectation was that it would provide another dimension to the different aspects of the social perspective presented in the Center's annual report. Over time, it emerged that the survey has a unique contribution for the

* We thank Yulia Cogan for her assistance in preparation of this chapter, for her comments, for her data analysis and her work on the figures. We also thank Prof. Ayal Kimhi for his illuminating comments on this chapter.

“reading” of changes taking place in the way society feels and reacts to economic and social developments.¹

This year the main survey was conducted in September and was preceded in March by an abridged survey.² As in previous years, special effort was made to include in the survey several questions identically phrased to those of previous years to allow an assessment of trends or changes. Six questions reflecting directly the most fundamental aspects of social confidence constitute the foundation for calculating the Taub Index of Social Confidence. The Index provides a more comprehensive picture of social confidence than responses to single questions.³ This year the survey included several new questions in areas that lie at the heart of recent Israeli public discourse with an emphasis on social gaps and solidarity, education, as well as the sense of escalating violence in society and ways to deal with it.

Overall, the survey portrays a society whose level of satisfaction with developments in social issues over the past year is lower than in previous years (56.6 points on the Taub Index in 2009, versus 58.2 in 2008, and 60.3 in 2007); a society convinced that the socioeconomic disparities are widening (71 percent), with a government, contrary to expectations, that is not effective in narrowing the disparities and is, in fact, contributing to their widening (55 percent). The public believes that economic prosperity has benefited the well-off segments of society more than the weaker ones – which may have not benefited from it at all (84 percent). Responses regarding the expected standard of living at old age are especially alarming, because more than 40 percent of respondents expressed the

¹ The Taub Center Social Survey has been conducted in a similar way for a decade. Data collection for processing the survey results was done by *Smith Consulting – Data for Decision Makers Ltd.*

² The full survey is conducted among 1,000 people, as a representative sample of the population, with sampling error of 3.1 percent. [The abridged survey (in March) includes only 500 people with a higher sampling error – 4.5 percent.]

³ The Taub Index of Social Confidence was developed at the Taub Center by Joel Blankett for the publication of the 2005 Social Survey, the sixth survey conducted by the Center (Taub Center Report, 2005 – op.cit. p. 11).

belief that they were “not really” or “absolutely not” guaranteed an adequate standard of living in their old age.

Public social confidence declined in recent years partly due to an increased sense of exposure to violence (only 29 percent responded this year that they had no exposure to violence, compared with 40 percent last year). The perception of violence as a central and disturbing problem was also reflected in responses to a question designed to identify the main problems of the education system: 41 percent of respondents identified violence as the central problem currently challenging the educational system. In this context, 36 percent of the public believe that education towards tolerance is the way to reduce violence, while a similar share believed imposing stricter penalties (37 percent) is necessary. A certain increase in public dissatisfaction with the education and health systems was detected, as well as criticism about the handling of major problems in each of them.

The survey shows that an individual's income level greatly affects the differences in social confidence – differences reflected in more and more areas of social life. The effect of income level is prominent in the Taub Index, which shows “parallel” trend lines at different income levels (the index is currently at 73 for the population group that defines itself as “far above average” in terms of income versus 48 for the “far below average” income group). The survey in general also indicates the effect of respondents' education level on responses, but the weight of education in most cases is much lower than that of income disparities in predicting social confidence. In this year's survey, as in other years, certain groups in Israeli society stand out in a consistent and systematic manner, in their responses to a significant number of questions, compared to the overall average response. This is particularly evident for the former Soviet Union (FSU) immigrants, Arab and ultra-Orthodox populations. A significant part of the survey report is devoted to the presentation of findings divided by distinct population groups.

The first section of the chapter presents the development of the Taub Index of Social Confidence for the Israeli society as a whole and for

specific population groups within it. The second section offers an assessment of the standard of living and changes in it. Some questions about the standard of living are included in the Taub Index calculation and weighting. The third section presents answers to a set of questions with an emphasis on socioeconomic disparities and inequalities. This section presents the feelings of respondents on a macro-social level in the same areas that were examined on a micro level. It is followed by a reference to the sense of exposure to violence, which constitutes a significant element in social confidence (section 4). The connection between the issue of exposure to violence and education, which is presented in the following section (section 5), was dictated by these very findings, since a majority of respondents indicated violence as the main problem facing the educational system. Consequently, the last two sections of the chapter are devoted to the two key areas of social services, education and health. A brief summary is provided at the end of the report, linking, *inter alia*, the findings of the Taub Center survey to findings of other surveys in similar areas.

1. The Taub Index of Social Confidence

The Taub Index for 2009 fell to 56.6 points, indicating in the most general sense a decline of social confidence in Israel's population. The Index, developed by the Taub Center, uses a scale of 0-100 with 100 indicating the highest levels of social confidence and 0 indicating a total lack of social confidence. The numeric score allows a measure of the degree of social confidence experienced by the Israeli public as a whole, and by specific groups within the population over time, above and beyond the picture provided by responses to individual survey questions. The Index provides an aggregate score for a set of recurring questions that address basic components of social well-being. The responses to these questions enable an assessment of public perceptions of changes in

standard of living, exposure to criminal violence, basic economic security, and fear of unemployment.

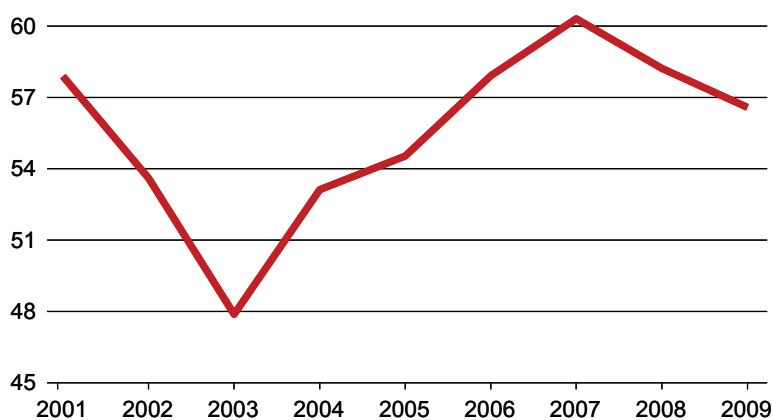
The 2009 Taub Index was calculated at two points in time, March and September. The March 2009 Taub Index indicates a very slight decline compared with that of September 2008, and the September 2009 Index declined further to 56.6. This level is lower than the 2007 peak, but not as low as the scores for 2002-2005, when the economic recession resulted in a depressed Index score.

Table 1. **The Taub Index of Social Confidence, 2001-2009**

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009*	2009
57.9	53.6	47.9	53.1	54.5	57.9	60.3	58.2	57.9	56.6

* In March 2009 an interim survey was conducted. In those years in which there were two surveys or more, the comparison relates to the full survey as follows: in 2005 and in 2006 the full survey was conducted in July; in 2007, the full survey was conducted in September.

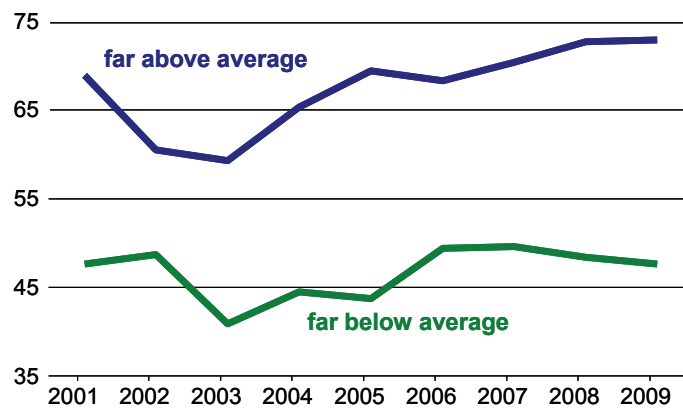
Figure 1
The Taub Index of Social Confidence
 2001-2009



Source: Taub Center, Social Survey, various years.

The Index, when calculated for different population groups, shows the differences in their sense of social confidence. For example, dividing the population by income groups reveals variance in the Index levels as well as a deepening gap in the sense of well-being. In 2009 the Index for people with much-higher-than-average income reached a high of 73 points, compared with 61 points for those with slightly-higher-than-average income, 58 points for those with close-to-average income, 54 points among those earning slightly less than average and 48 points among those with significantly lower income than average. This is the widest gap recorded since the Index was formulated, with the exception of 2005⁴ (see Figure 2).

Figure 2
The Taub Index of Social Confidence
 by income group, 2001-2009



Source: Taub Center, Social Survey, various years.

⁴ The question presented in the survey was: “The average monthly income for a family of four is today NIS 13,000 before taxes (and for a single person, about NIS 5,000 after tax). Compared to this income, is your income much below average, slightly below average, about average, slightly above average, much above average?”

An examination by level of education distinguishes between the Index trend typical of people with very low education (primary or partial secondary) and those of the other three education-level groups (higher education, post-secondary education and secondary education) where the differences are relatively minor. For people with higher education, the index in 2009 was about 58, only slightly higher than the overall average, reflecting a decline compared to recent years. The Index score of those with low education was 49 points, also showing a decline from recent years.

Two years ago a general question was added to the survey concerning the overall sense of socioeconomic confidence: “*Generally speaking, how would you define your and your family’s sense of socioeconomic confidence?*” Responses to this question further validate and confirm the Index findings. 61 percent of respondents placed their sense of socioeconomic confidence between the “not so good” (44 percent) and “not good at all” (17 percent), and only about 40 percent attested to a “good” sense of socioeconomic confidence (of which 7 percent say “very good” and 32 percent “good.”). Generally speaking, there is no significant change in 2009 compared to the previous two years. The percentage of those attesting to a “good” and “very good” sense of socioeconomic well-being eroded slightly from 2007 (42 percent) but is close to that of 2008 (39 percent); and the percentage of those expressing a “not good” sense is similar to 2008 (17-18 percent) and slightly higher than 2007 (from 15 to 17 percent).

Table 2. Responses to the question: *“In general, how would you define your and your family’s sense of socioeconomic confidence?”* (percent)

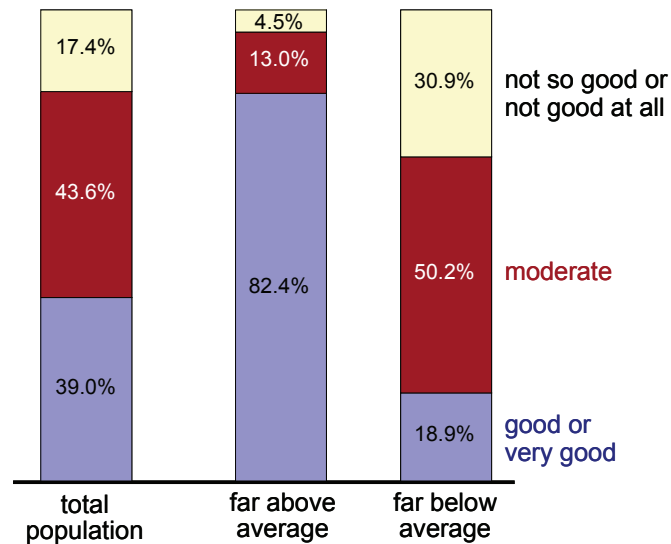
	2007	2008	2009	
			March	September
Very good	9	8	5	7
Good	33	31	34	32
Moderate	43	42	45	44
Not so good	11	13	11	12
Not good at all	4	6	5	5

Income level greatly affects the reported sense of social confidence as illustrated in Figure 3. The percentage of those who answered to a “good” sense of socioeconomic confidence increases along income levels from 19 to 82 percent, while the percentage of those who attest to a “not good” sense declines from 31 to 5 percent. Education level also has an effect but of a lesser magnitude than income: thus, the percentage of people with low education reporting a “good” sense is below 18, rising to 41 percent among people with higher education (only slightly higher than the average for the entire population).

While, on the whole, the change from recent years was small, improvement can be seen in several population groups. Among new immigrants, for example, the percentage of those reporting a sense of “not good at all” fell sharply (from 40 to 34 percent). The percentage of people with higher education who claimed to be satisfied rose by 7 percent and the unsatisfied declined accordingly. Some improvement is noticeable among those with the lowest incomes, reflected mainly in a decrease in the share of those who are not satisfied with their situation in the past year (from 38 percent in 2008 to 31 percent in 2009). Even among Israeli Arabs the share of those attesting to a sense of “not good” declined, from 27 to 18 percent, with no change in the percentage of

those who attest to a sense of “good” (that is, the percentage of those reporting “moderate” rose). The ultra-Orthodox reported an opposite sense: the percentage of those attesting to a sense of “good” declined (from 49 percent in 2007 to 31 percent in 2009), of those attesting to a sense of “not good” showed no change, and reports of a sense of “moderate” rose from 36 to 54 percent.

Figure 3
Economic Confidence
 by income group, 2009 (percent)



Source: Taub Center, Social Survey, various years.

2. Changes in Standard of Living

In all the surveys we asked several questions about the public's assessment of its living standards. Responses to this cluster of questions largely reflect fluctuations in the Israeli economy over the decade.

The first question in the "standard of living" cluster gauges the ability of survey participants to meet basic subsistence needs (and is included among the Index questions).

Table 3. Responses to the question: *"To what degree does your income level allow you and your family to meet your basic needs?"* (percent)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
							Mar	Sep
Allows it without any difficulty	22	23	23	27	29	30	23	27
Allows it reasonably	47	43	41	41	47	45	46	47
Doesn't allow it at all	31	34	37	32	24	25	31	27

This year, answers to this question indicate a change from the decade-long trend of consistent improvement that was expressed in a sense that income allows subsistence without difficulty. 27 percent of respondents stated that their income provides for basic subsistence needs without difficulty (compared to 29 and 30 percent the previous two years) and another 27 percent stated that their income does "not at all" or "barely" meets their basic needs. However, most families still believe that their income is sufficient to meet basic needs "without difficulty" or "reasonably well" (74 percent together).

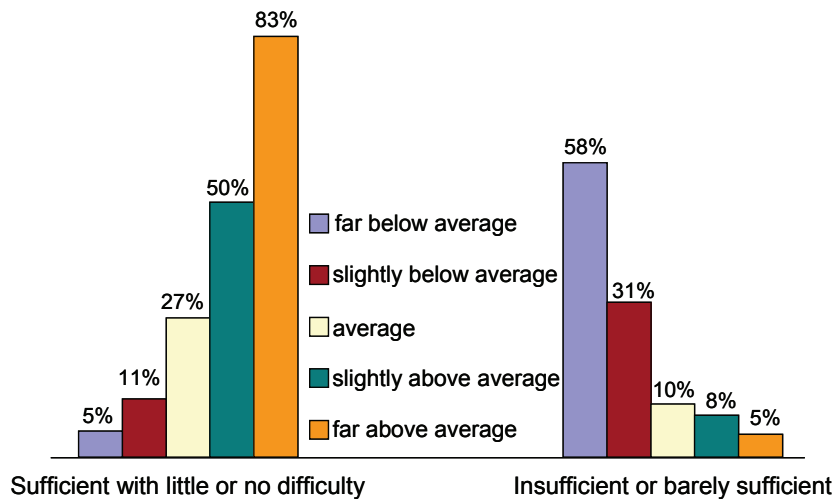
Answers to this question indicate a clear correlation with respondent income, and the shift in the percentage of respondents for each category

is notable (see Figure 4). Thus, among those with much-higher-than-average income, the percentage of those whose income allows them to meet their basic needs without difficulty is very high (83 percent), continuing the rising trend since 2003, albeit at a somewhat slower pace in the past three years. Still, even over the past two years with its accompanying economic crisis, the percentage of respondents with higher income who say that they can manage without any difficulty kept rising, while that of respondents who reported barely managing declined. The gap between the two groups increased from 67 to 78 percent.

Figure 4

To What Extent Does Your Income Allow You and Your Family to Meet Basic Needs

by income group*, 2009 (percent)



* With the category "allows it reasonably" the distribution by income totals 100.

Source: Taub Center, Social Survey, various years.

The percentage of low income families responding that they cannot manage with their income declined from 68 percent in 2005, to 53 percent in 2007, but rose again in 2009 to 58 percent. This finding indicates that the 2005-2007 economic prosperity “trickled down” to the underprivileged segments of the population, but the 2008-2009 crisis hit them much worse than the more well-off segments. Later we refer to this issue: the impact of economic boom or recession on weaker versus more well-off populations. A particularly noteworthy finding is that over half of low income respondents (58 percent) reported that they were unable or barely able to meet their basic needs on their income.

An analysis of responses by education level indicated that the declining economic situation that began in 2007 continues both among people with higher education and among poorly educated ones; of the latter, only 4 percent indicated that they can manage without difficulty on their income, compared to 18 percent in 2008. The percentage of highly educated people whose income allows managing without difficulty, 33 percent, is much lower than that of people with higher income subsisting on their income without difficulty, 83 percent. This differentiation is not surprising, since among those with higher education many hold occupations with relatively low income, such as teachers, social workers, and others, as well as many immigrants from the FSU who often are not even employed in their academic specialty. Nonetheless, there are signs of an upward trend of the percentage of those who are able to manage as their education level rises.

For population groups considered weak, namely the ultra-Orthodox, Israeli Arabs and new immigrants, the percentage of those who can manage on their income without difficulty is much lower. The percentage of those who have difficulties living on their income is higher for those three groups than the entire population average. Furthermore it is clear that the situation of the immigrant population, which improved significantly between 2004 and 2006, continued to deteriorate in 2009. The survey also reveals that 2009 was a very bad year for the ultra-Orthodox, of whom the number of respondents who stated that they are

able to subsist on their income without difficulty dropped to the lowest level ever measured by this survey (9 percent). At the same time, the number of ultra-Orthodox respondents who declared they are unable to manage with their income rose to 42 percent in 2009 and is much higher than the average for the entire population (27 percent) or even the entire Jewish population (25 percent).

The second question in the standard of living cluster examines respondents' current living standards compared to the previous two to three years. Less than one-fifth of participants answered that their standard of living has improved in recent years, and another nearly two-fifths felt a deterioration. Compared with 2007-2008, the share of those who experienced a decline rose significantly, while the share of those reporting an improvement dropped a great deal. While in 2008 the greatest change was among those who feel that their situation worsened, the greatest change in this survey is among those who feel that their situation improved, whose share declined from 26 to 19 percent. The two points of time in 2009 when the survey was conducted (March and September), support our impression that respondents' standard of living took a turn for the worse.

Table 4. Responses to the question: *“When you compare your and your family’s standard of living to that of 2-3 years ago, do you think it has...”* (percent)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
							Mar	Sep
It improved	8	12	19	21	26	26	20	19
It has not changed	34	38	43	46	49	42	41	44
It has declined	58	50	38	34	25	33	39	37

It is interesting to note the correlation with the respondent's age. It turns out that the share of those who attest to improvement declines with a rise in age, from 30 percent among young people up to age 29, to 20 percent among 30 to 49-year-olds, 15 percent among the 50 to 64-year-olds, and only 6 percent among the elderly. There seems to be some correlation with respondents' education (from 10 percent reporting about improvement among the poorly educated to 22 percent among the highly educated), and, as expected, also with respondents' income – from 10 percent reporting improvement among those with low income to 41 percent among those with high income.

Special attention should be given to the disturbing finding that about 50 percent of the poorly educated reported a worsening of their situation, as was found with other weak population groups. Also prominent is the fact that there is little improvement compared with 2008 within Israel's Arab population – 48 percent of Israeli Arabs attest to a decline in their situation, versus 35 percent among Jews.

The third question in the living standard cluster seeks to elicit the public's expectations of changes in its economic situation in the near future. Responses indicate that while most of the public believes that there will be no change (56 percent), there was a slight increase in the share of those who expect things to become worse, from 13 percent in 2006 to 15 percent in 2009; and a decrease in the share of those who expect an improvement, from 40 percent in 2006 to only 29 percent in 2009. Compared to 2008 there is a feeling of some increased optimism, and we also have preliminary indications early in 2009 that this is the case: although the change is moderate, the public may be sensing that the peak of the economic crisis is over, a feeling supported when comparing the results to the March survey, which was fairly grim.

Table 5. Responses to the question: *“Do you expect that your and your family’s situation will change in the coming year?”* (percent)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
						Mar	Sep
It will worsen a lot	13	16	13	14	21	24	15
It will not change	58	58	47	57	54	54	56
It will improve somewhat	29	26	40	29	25	22	29

Interestingly, in line with earlier findings, the expectation of improvement decreases with age, from a high of 37 percent among young people in their 20s, to 34 percent among 30 to 49-year-olds, to 20 percent among 50 to 64-year-olds, and a low 17 percent among the elderly. These results may be indicative of the effect of age on the changing level of optimism, as well as a more realistic perspective of the chances of improvement in the individual life path, a perspective that reflects more than simply the impact of the economic crisis and its outcomes. Expectation for improved situation does not increase with increased education or income level (although the percentage of those who think their situation will worsen declines with the rise of income, indicating economic confidence of those with the highest incomes).

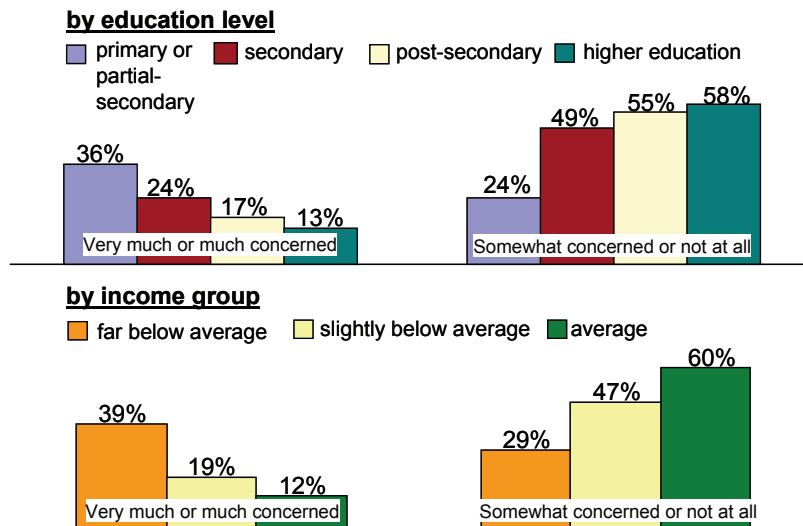
The fourth question of the living standards cluster related to the fear of falling into poverty. A stable pattern seems to have emerged in the past two to three years where almost half of the public are afraid to some degree (47 percent last year) while 53 percent are not at all concerned about the possibility of falling into poverty or distress. The high incidence of those who are concerned suggests that the sense of economic confidence among respondents is unstable. However, the situation over the past three years has been decidedly better than that of the previous years.

Table 6. *“Are you concerned that you or your family might find yourselves in poverty or economic distress?”* (percent)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Much or very much concerned	31	27	18	18	20	18
Concerned to some degree or somewhat concerned	43	43	49	24	28	29
Not at all	26	30	31	58	52	53

When we examine the various population groups in their assessment of the possibility of falling into poverty we find very large differences between the groups (see Figure 5). The degree of concern (greatly and very greatly) decreases with increased education, from 36 percent among those with poor education, to 13 percent among those with higher education (university level). The share of those not concerned at all is also correlated with education and it could be claimed that the survey shows that education gives a degree of economic confidence. Interestingly, the biggest leap from one education level to the next, in terms of confidence in the face of the prospect of poverty, is from primary or partial-secondary education to full secondary education. Although we did not see the influence of education on over-optimism about the possibility of imminent improvement, it affects the sense of relative immunity when it comes to concern about the possibility of falling into poverty and distress. Obviously, a clear correlation to income level can be seen when the share of those greatly or very greatly concerned declines with the rise in income, from 39 to 3 percent, respectively, and the feeling of economic security is the highest among those with the highest income level. The concern of falling into poverty is much higher among Arab Israelis – twice that of Jewish Israelis (on average) and higher among new immigrants compared with the average Jewish population.

Figure 5
**Concern about Falling into Poverty
 and Economic Distress*, 2009**



* With the category “concerned to some degree” the distribution by education and income totals 100.

Source: Taub Center, Social Survey, various years.

Following the question about a setback in economic security, we asked the public about its expectations of standard of living at old age: “Do you believe that you are guaranteed an adequate standard of living at old age?” Responses to this question are very alarming, because more than 40 percent of survey participants answered the question in the negative (responding that an adequate standard of living at old age is “not really” or “absolutely not” guaranteed to them). Moreover, the percentage of those who believe that they are not guaranteed an adequate standard of living at old age is twice that of those who think their income at old age will allow them to live in dignity. This question was included in the Taub Center surveys in previous years as well and the findings show that the rate of those concerned has been fluctuating between 40 and 54 percent

over the decade, and the share of those who feel secure about their standard of living at retirement has been relatively stable at about one-fifth of the population. The percentage of those who are concerned was high early in the decade and rose further in the years 2003 and 2006, which were times of economic recession.

Table 7. *“Do you believe that you are guaranteed an adequate standard of living at old age?”* (percent)

	2000	2001	2003	2006	2008	2009
To a great or very great degree	28	20	19	16	21	21
To some degree	28	33	27	32	42	38
Not really or not at all	44	48	54	52	37	41

Gaps between the different population groups in response to this question largely overlap the socioeconomic differences. Among new immigrants, who are less likely than the rest of the population to qualify for high retirement pension, the “pessimistic” rate is threefold that of the “optimists,” and even more so among poorly educated and low income respondents. It should be noted that the much-lower-than-average income is not a marginal population group in the survey sample, representing 28 percent of respondents.

The impression created by the survey findings regarding the worsening of social disparities, from the Taub Index questions and questions about the standard of living, as well as from reliable and objective measures indicating the deepening of social gaps and inequality,⁵ leads to the next section of the report about social gaps and inequality. First we examined the importance of the problem of social gaps and their widening, and the desired position of this issue in public priorities; later we examined the reactions of the public to the way the government handles the problem as well as the public’s willingness to really engage in reducing inequality and social gaps.

⁵ See, for example, the macro-economic overview above.

3. *Gaps and Inequality in Society*

This cluster of questions examined several dimensions of survey participants' ideological/value system and their assessment of government policy in those areas.

3.A. *Widening Gaps in Society*

The first question in this area was, “*Do you think socioeconomic gaps have widened, narrowed or not changed at all in the past year?*” The majority (71.4 percent) believe that gaps have expanded and another one-fifth responded that gaps have not changed in the past year (21 percent). The public seems to be aware of changes in the level of social equality. This is not a new finding in the Taub Center surveys, but it is being repeatedly validated, and the impression from subsequent questions on the same topic is that government policy does not properly address the issue of widening gaps.

As an indicator of public sensitivity to this problem, respondents were asked whether they felt that gaps were widening. While no deterioration was detected in the past year compared with 2008 (when those who believed that the gaps increased reached 75 percent (see Table 8)), the situation worsened considerably over the past two years compared with 2007 (when 61 percent responded that the gaps had increased over the previous year). This or a similar question was included in many Taub Center surveys and, looking back to the early part of the decade, we find even in its early years a trend of increasing awareness of the widening gaps. The share of those who believe that the gaps increased (annually) rose from 61 percent in 2000 to 67 percent in 2001 to 75 percent in 2002. In 2003, 72 percent of survey participants found that gaps have increased and this percentage declined somewhat in 2007 (in the years 2004-2006 the question was not asked in a similar way). In the past two years the share of those who believe that gaps have expanded rose to over 70 percent.

Table 8. *“Have socioeconomic gaps widened, narrowed or not changed at all in the past year?”* Share of respondents thinking that gaps have widened (greatly or slightly)

2000	2001	2002	2003	2007	2008	2009
61	67	75	72	61	75	71

The public assessment of the deepening gaps varies between different population groups: working age respondents stood out in their assessment that the gaps have deepened, compared both to younger and older respondents. The highly educated thought, more than any other education group, that gaps have expanded. There was a positive correlation between the level of education and perception of widening gaps: from 63 percent among the poorly educated to 77 percent among those with higher education. Israeli-born stand out compared with other groups of origin, with 80 percent who believe that gaps in society widened, compared with only 56 percent among new immigrants. Classifying the population by degree of religious observance, a higher proportion of ultra-Orthodox (86 percent) believe that gaps are wider, whereas modern Orthodox and traditionally observant Jews are similar to the general average. Nonetheless, Jewish Israelis, more than Israeli Arabs, believe that social gaps are widening (75 percent versus 57 percent, respectively), which is rather surprising, given the relative situation of the Israeli Arab population.

Interestingly, with regard to comparable surveys from previous years, we found that early in the decade salaried employees, people with higher education and those with average income are more concerned by the widening disparities, while poor and less educated people are less aware of deepening gaps than others.

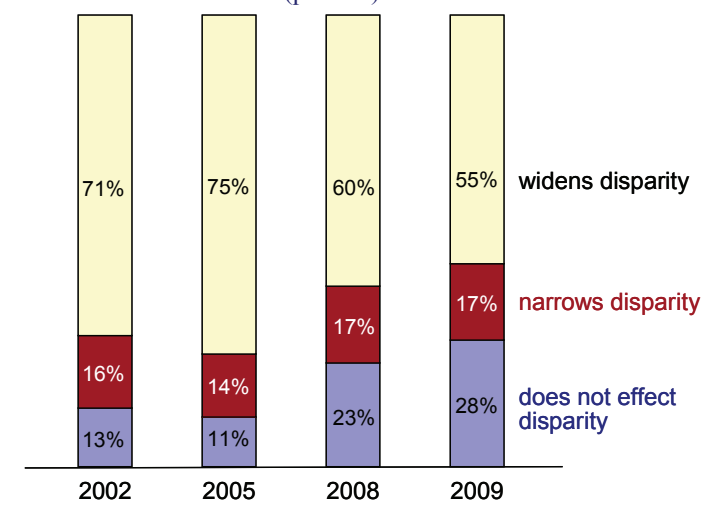
In this context, the following question, concerning the impact of government on social gaps, shows that the public is not satisfied with government policy in this field. This is another of the oft-repeated questions in the Taub Center surveys. In this survey (2009) 55 percent of the public thought that government increases the gaps and 28 percent

thought it has no impact whatsoever on them. Although most of the public believes the government increases disparities, it is interesting to note there is some change in the public assessment of the government's policy and influence in this area. The change is reflected in an increasing proportion of Israelis who believe that the government has no impact on the gaps and that its policy "has no impact at all." In 2008, 60 percent believed that government policy increased gaps, 75 percent thought so in 2005, but as early as the beginning of the decade more than 70 percent of survey respondents said that government policy increases disparities. Additionally, the proportion of those who believe that the government has no impact at all rose from 10-13 percent to 28 percent, and the increase came largely "on account" of the category of increasing gaps. (It is possible that when the government makes budget cuts, which are often characterized by a worsening in the conditions for the weaker population groups, the public believes the government policy causes an increase in the gaps).

Figure 6

Effect of Government's Economic Policy on Social Disparities

2002-2009 (percent)



Source: Taub Center, Social Survey, various years.

Higher proportions of university educated people believe that government policies contribute to widening gaps (62 percent). Classified by degree of religious observance, the ultra-Orthodox were particularly prominent (59 percent). Interestingly, when we divide respondents by income levels, we find that only 44.5 percent with income far above the average thought that policy increases the gap (lower than the overall average), whereas 22 percent of them contended that government policy helps reduce the gaps, compared with an average of 16 percent for the population as a whole.

In this context, it may be noted that in the survey conducted in 2008 which placed special emphasis on the issue of disparities, it was found that the public is not satisfied by the widening of social gaps in Israeli society and does not shy away from expressing its views on the subject. Furthermore it was found that most people think it is possible to reduce significantly the gaps in Israel. We also found a wide consensus that the government has a central role to play in narrowing gaps (see the 2008 Social Survey). Consequently, finding that “the government has no impact at all” is in fact a criticism of government policy for not applying an active and focused policy to reduce social disparities.

This year there were two additional questions about the widening gaps and the effects of crisis or prosperity on those with low income (the poor). Generally speaking, the vast majority believes that economic prosperity has not improved the situation of the poor or that prosperity did not benefit them as much as it did the rich. Likewise, the feeling is that in times of crisis the weak are hurt more than the strong. 52 percent responded to the question about the effect of economic prosperity on those with the lowest incomes by saying that the condition of the weak has not improved at all and 31 percent responded that their situation improved less than others. To the question regarding the expected impact of the recession on people with low income, 64 percent responded that their situation will worsen more than those with higher income and 16 percent thought that the situation of both groups will worsen equally.

Only two population groups assessed that the recession will have a lesser effect on the poor: FSU immigrants and people with high income.

It seems that in addition to an awareness of the widening disparities, most of the Israeli public is consistent in its assessment that those with low income are less likely to benefit from economic growth but are the first to be hurt in times of crisis. More people aged 50 and over (57 percent) said that the situation of the weak has not improved at all (compared with 48 percent of younger people). These findings match the findings of last year's survey (2008), in which we asked in general about the distribution of benefits from economic growth among population groups in recent years: a large majority (73 percent) responded that the rich are the main beneficiaries of growth and only 7 percent thought that the primary beneficiary is the poorest population.

3.B. *Government Policy Priorities*

In view of the depiction of the role of government policy in reducing gaps in society, it is interesting to examine the public's opinion about the desired priorities in government policy. In this year's survey we included the old question, "*Which of the following areas should be at the top of the government's priorities?*" Respondents could choose from the following: economic growth, security, reducing unemployment, reducing poverty and social gaps, or other.

Table 9. "*Which of the following areas should be at the top of the government's priorities?*" (percent)

	2006	2007	2009
Economic growth	13	13	16
Security	34	47	35
Reducing unemployment	9	5	13
Reducing poverty and social disparities	41	32	33
Other	3	0	4

The public is split evenly between the choice of security (35 percent) and reducing poverty and social disparities (33 percent). It should be noted, though, that another 12 percent of the public chose as their top priority the reduction in unemployment, so that 45 percent of the public prioritized social issues this year. Security declined significantly compared to 2007 but it is partially similar to 2006 (the 2006 survey was conducted in July, before the Second Lebanon War). Presumably the prominent position of security in 2007 reflects and was influenced by the “after the war” public debate. As noted, in 2006, the percentage of people who placed the reduction of disparities and poverty at the highest priority was high (41 percent) and another 9 percent placed unemployment at a high priority (altogether 50 percent for social issues). Our impression is that in relatively “quiet” security periods, the public gives preference to the social sphere. Incidentally, this year (2009) there was a slight increase in the importance of economic growth in the public eye.

With regard to economic growth there are significant differences between population groups. In contrast to people of higher income level who believe that economic growth is as important as the issues of security and reducing gaps, immigrants from the former Soviet Union continue to emphasize security (62 percent) and only a small minority (13 percent) think the first priority is to introduce a policy of reducing social gaps. Israeli Arabs stand out in the relatively low priority they attach to security (23 percent) and the high importance they attach to treating problems of unemployment (23 percent versus 13 percent on average in the entire population).

3.C. Willingness to Pay More Taxes for Specific Objectives

Following the question about the desired government priorities we asked survey participants whether they are willing to pay more taxes to reinforce the government's handling of certain issues. (*“For the improvement of which of the following areas would you be willing to pay*

more taxes?"). Respondents were given six areas and the possibility of "not willing to pay more taxes."

The most remarkable finding is that 41 percent of respondents said that they are willing to pay more taxes to ensure an improvement in education. In second and much lower place, 13 percent are willing to increase their taxes in order to improve healthcare. 26 percent of the public are not willing to pay more taxes. Interestingly, when asked in 2005 about willingness to pay more taxes to improve social services (without distinction between areas), sixty percent of the public rejected paying more taxes.

When respondents were divided by population groups, the main differences were by age: the middle-age group is much more willing to pay increased taxes for education compared with other age groups (48 percent); Israeli-born stand out compared with other groups of origin (46 percent); and people with higher education stand out compared with all other education groups (44 percent). Another interesting point, Israeli Arabs express more willingness to pay higher taxes for improved healthcare compared to Jews (20 vs. 11 percent) and slightly less so for education (43 vs. 41 percent). In addition, a much lower rate among Israeli Arabs, 15 percent versus 28 percent among Israeli Jews, stated that they are not willing to pay more taxes. Among Jews, new immigrants from the Former Soviet Union stood out in their lack of willingness to pay more taxes (37 percent versus 26 of the overall average), and at a similar level are the ultra-Orthodox (36 percent). Interestingly, new immigrants from the former Soviet Union are willing to pay more taxes, well above average, for security – 19 percent versus 7 percent of the population average.

3.D. The Public's Position Regarding Wage Differentials

As in the previous survey, respondents were asked about the level of acceptable wage gaps in the public sector.

Table 10. *“What do you think the acceptable differential should be between the lowest and the highest wages paid in the public sector?”* (percent)

	2008	2009
There should be no differential	12.6	13.1
Double	27.8	29.1
5 times	25.9	31.7
10 times	16.4	12.8
20 times or more	5.7	4.4
There is no need to limit the differential	11.5	8.9

The impression from answers this year (2009) and their comparison with those of 2008 is that the general inclination among survey respondents is to limit wage differentials. More than 60 percent of respondents were divided between limiting the difference to 2-times and 5-times – that is, wage gaps will not exceed 5-times – compared with 54 percent last year. This rate and maybe also the change may be attributable to the public debate following the collapse of banks and other institutions in the United States and elsewhere which publicized the issue of large wage differentials. On the other hand, about a quarter of the public believes that wage gaps of ten times or more are acceptable, and 12 percent believes that wage differentials should not be limited at all. Needless to say, in this context, current income gaps in Israel are much higher than 20-times. (This point could have been shared with survey participants before asking the question and it would have been interesting to note its affect on answers.)

There are also differences between population groups on this question. Among higher income earners none believe the gap is totally unnecessary, and the share of those who think that no limit should be set is twice that of the average for the entire population. However, even within this group the majority believes that the gap should not be higher than 5 times. In contrast, 20 percent of lowest income earners, those with the lowest education and Israeli Arabs believe there should be no gap at

all. Furthermore, 22 percent of very young (18-22), whose share of the sample is 9 percent, believe there should be no gap at all. This share declines sharply starting in the next age group.

Another question about sharing the cake or sharing the burden, as well as the welfare state approach and allocating resources to the entire population, had to do with granting social security benefits to high income earners. A similar question was asked in previous surveys, which indicated a certain consistency in the feelings of the Israeli public. On the one hand, the majority of the public opposes a complete elimination of benefits for high wage earners, but on the other hand, it feels that benefits for stronger population groups should be restricted.

This year the question was changed slightly and offered several options for altering the distribution of social security benefits. Here, too, the indication is that there is no majority for the complete elimination of benefits for the rich – only one-fifth of the public chose the option to cancel benefits for the rich and allocate the full amount to the poor. However, 34 percent chose to reduce the amounts for the rich and increase them for the poor. A similar share of 35 percent indicated the need to establish criteria other than income for the allocation of benefits – a finding that might be worthy of further study. That is, this year's responses show that only 11 percent believe no change is needed. The survey, though, cannot indicate the desired change but only its general direction.

3.E. *Social Solidarity*

Another issue that came up in past Taub Center surveys shows the face of social solidarity. In 2008 survey participants were asked about the need for affirmative action for the two population groups identified as economically weak – Israeli Arabs and ultra-Orthodox. Responses indicated a (slightly) higher willingness to show preference to Israeli Arabs over the ultra-Orthodox, with nearly 50 percent of the public thinking neither population group should have preferential treatment.

This year the question was slightly re-phrased and two separate questions were asked. Responses are consolidated below.

Table 11. *“The Israeli Arab/ultra-Orthodox populations are socio-economically weak. Do you think it is necessary to have a policy of affirmative action for these populations to reduce the gaps?”* (percent)

	Israeli Arab	Ultra-Orthodox
Yes, in all areas of government services and National Insurance allowances	18	20
Yes, but only in providing government services (education, health, etc.)	10	7
Yes, but only in the areas of employment and providing jobs	12	9
Yes, provided that they agree to participate in National Service	18	26
No, there should not be affirmative action for Arabs/ultra-Orthodox populations	43	39

The results are interesting. For both sectors, the percentage of those who believe that they should have no preference or that they should have preference in all areas is similar. 18-20 percent of the public chose to give preference to these populations in all areas, and 40 percent chose not to give them preference at all. On the other hand, a certain support for preference to Israeli Arabs in public service or employment was noted. A differentiation in the attitude toward Israeli Arabs and ultra-Orthodox was found in making affirmative action conditional on participation in national service: 26 percent responded to stipulate preference for the ultra-Orthodox on their participation in national service, and for the Arabs, only 18 percent said that affirmative action should be conditional on their doing national service.

There are differences in the solidarity of various population groups toward the two sectors: ultra-Orthodox Jews and immigrants from the

former Soviet Union stood out in their opposition to giving preference to Israeli Arabs (more than 70 percent). Also, most of the religious (modern Orthodox) Jews also opposed giving preference to Israeli Arabs (61 percent). However, the biggest supporters of giving preference to Israeli Arabs – other than the Israeli Arabs themselves – are Jewish Israelis with university degrees and high income. Also, in certain areas, immigrants are willing to give more preference to Israeli Arabs than to the ultra-Orthodox. This is similar to the secular community in the population who showed more opposition to affirmative action in favor of the ultra-Orthodox (54 percent) than for Israeli Arabs (45 percent). Also it is interesting to note that while the rate of Israeli Arabs opposing affirmative action for the ultra-Orthodox is 22 percent, the rate of ultra-Orthodox opposed to affirmative action for Israeli Arabs is more than threefold – 72 percent.

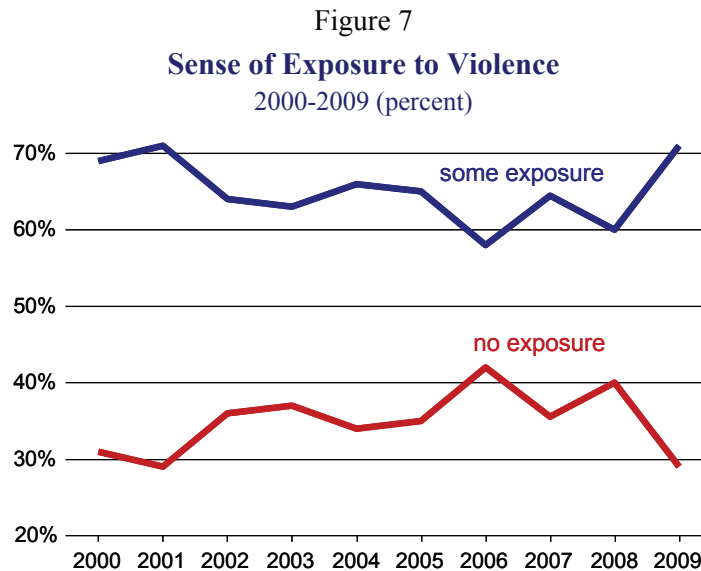
4. Exposure to Violence and Level of Personal Safety

In light of the current growing public discourse about violence and personal safety in Israeli society, a cluster of four survey questions was dedicated to the issue of violence in order to examine the public's feelings in relation to personal safety as well as the possible options for dealing with it. The importance of violence on the public's agenda emerged also from the education cluster of questions (see next section below), since this year responses showed overwhelmingly that dealing with violence is the main problem which the education system has to cope with today.

4.A. The Extent of Public Exposure to Violence

The first question in the violence cluster is included in the Taub Index of Social Confidence and was asked in most past surveys. As shown in Figure 7, the sense of exposure to criminal violence increased compared to recent years. Almost half of survey participants said they feel exposed to violence, from “somewhat” to “very much” (47 percent), and a total of

about 70 percent reported that they are exposed to violence to some degree. Conversely, less than 30 percent responded that they are “not at all” exposed to violence. Over the decade there were some fluctuations in the range of exposure to violence, from 60 to 70 percent, and those who report no such exposure fluctuated accordingly. Outcomes from the past four years indicate a consistent trend – an increase in exposure to violence from 58 to 71 percent with a concomitant decline in non-exposure, from 42 to 29 percent. These findings are alarming and reflect a distinct decline in quality of life. Although the high percentage may be affected by increasing public and media discussion of violence in Israeli society, it may also stem from the feeling that violence has come close to every family in Israel. However, it should be noted that high rates of exposure to violence in 2009 are similar to rates that characterized the early part of the decade.



Source: Taub Center, Social Survey, various years.

Regarding distinctions between population groups, older people, more than younger ones, report that they feel exposed to violence to some degree (75 percent on average among those aged 30 or more compared with less than 60 percent among 18 to 29-year-olds). This finding was somewhat surprising and does not reflect the common impression about exposure to violence among young people in Israel. The elderly (aged 65+) reported more exposure to violence than any other age group, although differences stand out when segmented by the degree of exposure: the elderly reported a sense of being exposed to violence “to a very great degree” at higher rates than the average, 12 versus 7 percent, and conversely they report a lower rate of “not at all” – 22 versus 29 percent on average.

The sense of exposure to violence does not correlate to the level of education of survey participants, although university graduates reported a high sense of exposure to violence (at any level) compared with other education groups – 78 versus 67 percent for others. When segmenting the outcomes by degree of exposure it was found that “very much” exposure is higher among those with low education (elementary or partial secondary) – 16 versus 7 percent on average (there may be correlation of this age with old age).

The rates of “some” exposure to violence are similar among Israeli Arabs and Jews, but rates of “much” or “very much” exposure to violence is higher among Israeli Arabs – 28 versus 18 percent. Rates of exposure to violence of immigrants are higher than the rest of the population. 87.5 percent of them reported “some” exposure to violence.

It is further interesting to note that there is an inverse correlation between reporting exposure to violence and level of religious observance. Rates of reporting any exposure to violence rises from 52 percent among the ultra-Orthodox, to 66 percent among the religious, 70 percent among traditional and 78 percent among the secular. The ultra-Orthodox stand out on the “protected” side, compared to the rest of the population, with very low rates among them who report exposure to violence. It seems that the Orthodox have the highest sense of personal safety.

4.B. Does the Fear of Violence Affect Behavior?

Following the impression of the sense of exposure to violence, we examined whether fear of violence affects the public's behavior at two levels: one, *“Have you refrained from making a comment to someone about inappropriate behavior out of fear of a violent reaction?”* The other was, *“Have you avoided visiting certain places out of concern for your personal safety?”*

The survey shows that fear of violence affects the behavior of the Israeli public. Two-thirds of respondents noted that they refrained from commenting to others on inappropriate behavior for fear of violent reaction; one-fifth of all respondents (19 percent) refrained many or very many times; 44 percent refrained once to several times. Conversely it was found that only 36.5 percent of the public responded that they had never refrained from making a comment when they felt it was appropriate.

Certain differences between specific population groups were also found. On the one hand, the ultra-Orthodox and new immigrants stood out in that they demonstrated less than average levels of concern about a possible violent reaction to their comments – 57 percent of new immigrants and 52 percent of ultra-Orthodox said they had never refrained from making a comment and relatively low rates – 10 and 7 percent – stated that they had avoided making comments many times. An interesting contrast between the two groups is between their levels of exposure to violence – which is higher than average for the new immigrants and lower than average for the ultra-Orthodox.

For ultra-Orthodox, the answers match the high sense of personal safety in the responses to the previous question. Most likely, their high degree of confidence may be ascribed to their lifestyle in an insulated community with clear and controlled boundaries and codes of conduct. They have different mobility and entertainment habits than the rest of the population, and their insulation is often enhanced by geographical boundaries, whether segregated neighborhoods or “closed” communities. These conditions may explain their relative high sense of security.

The second question was about avoiding certain places out of personal safety concern. This is a much more universal question by nature, but here, too, there is a unique Israeli context: in the reality of our lives such avoidance may be linked to the security aspect, which is inseparable from the issue of personal safety (the survey did not make a distinction between avoiding a certain place due to criminal violence or violence related to the national conflict; responses reflect the interpretation of respondents).

More than half of the public indicated avoiding certain places out of concern for personal safety, of which 15 percent stated that they avoided them “many times” or “very many times,” and another 42 percent stated that they avoided them “several times,” or “once or twice.” On the other hand, 43 percent of participants stated that they had never avoided visiting certain places out of fear for their safety. The responses to this question are correlated with the responses to the previous question, about the sense of “freedom” to make comments to others. Here, too, a higher rate than average of the new immigrants and the ultra-Orthodox responded that they had not avoided particular places.

Incidentally, in the 2005 survey the issue of personal safety was introduced in several questions, one of which was, “*Have you or any member of your family changed his behavior to avoid being exposed to displays of violence?*” At that time 65 percent of respondents stated they had not changed their behavior or habits to avoid such exposure. This is not comparable to current responses where 36.5 percent responded that they were never hesitant to make comments to others, and 43 percent responded that they had never avoided certain places out of fear for their safety.

The last question in this cluster examined respondents’ thoughts about “*What needs to be done to reduce the level of violence in society?*” Respondents were given five options. The vast majority was split between two main solutions: more severe sentencing by the courts (37 percent), and increasing education for tolerance and violence prevention (36 percent). It is interesting to note that strengthening the police force

(which is centralized on the national level in Israel) did not find much support (15 percent), nor did the option of creating municipal police forces reporting to the heads of the municipal authorities (10 percent). Perhaps this reflects the public's view that the courts are the weakest link in social enforcement.

5. Problems at the "Heart" of Education

In this year's survey a series of questions were dedicated to education, and asked about the public's opinion on two central issues. One was the key issue with which the education system must cope, and to which goals more resources should be directed. The second had to do with the introduction of a core curriculum in the basic areas taught in schools.

5.A. The Primary Problem of the Education System

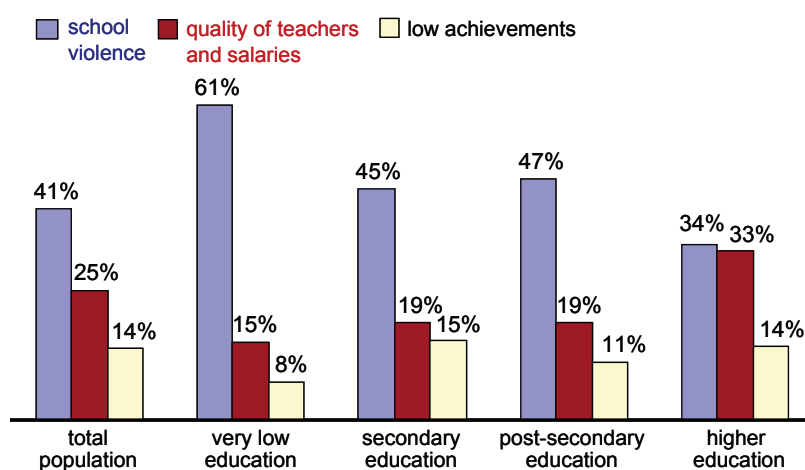
The first question examined the attitudes of respondents in the survey toward the main problem to be dealt with in education. The public responded that the main issue is violence (41 percent of the population). When the percentage of respondents who believe that the main problem is the quality of life at school (10 percent) was added, more than half the public believe the main issue is not low achievement (only 13 percent) or large academic disparities (9 percent), nor even the salaries and quality of teachers (25 percent). This finding stands out in view of the recent public attention given to Israeli pupil achievement on international tests. This may be a reflection of the relatively low importance attributed to this issue by parents, and the discrepancy between the concern of those who head the educational system (low achievements and large disparities) and the general public. There is a kind of displacement of emphasis from what is naturally perceived as the primary role of schools – to provide knowledge and skills – to a real concern for the safety and well-being of the children. It seems that the public directs its helplessness in the face of increasing violence in society toward the educational system.

It was also found that the respondents' level of education has an impact on their choice of the main problem to be handled in the educational system (see Figure 8). First, an inverse relationship between the percentage of those who believe that violence is the main problem and the education level of respondents was found: from 61 percent among those with low education to 34 percent among university-educated people. It was also found that the share of those who believe that it is necessary to raise teachers' quality and salaries increases as respondents' education level rises. Most college-educated respondents have indicated two major problems to be handled in the educational system: violence and improvement of the quality of teachers' and their salary levels (67 percent).

Figure 8

The Education System's Primary Problem*

by education level, 2009



* With the categories "large academic disparities" and "quality of life at school" the distribution totals 100.

Source: Taub Center, Social Survey, various years.

The problem of improving the quality of teachers and the level of their remuneration had a significantly higher priority among people with much higher than average income, 40 percent of whom indicated improvement of teachers' quality and pay as the most urgent problem in need of a solution. Only 25 percent of them indicated the problem of violence as the most urgent problem to handle. This, as well as the pattern of respondents' priorities according to education level, indicates that socioeconomic background has a strong impact on the priorities in allocating resources for raising teaching quality and wages. In other words, the quality of teachers and their wages were perceived as an urgent problem requiring attention more by respondents with a higher socioeconomic status than by those of medium or low socioeconomic status. This finding can be linked to an interesting connection found in another study recently undertaken by the Taub Center between the evaluation of teachers and their social status (prestige) and the socioeconomic status (by rating of residential community) of the respondent (Blass, Romanov, 2010, in preparation).

Interestingly, the option to handle violence also differed by income levels, similar to differences between levels of education. An inverse relationship was found between income level and the share of those who chose violence as the primary problem to handle, but less intensely (compared to level of education) – rates range from 45 percent among those with much lower income to 26 percent among those with much higher than average income.

These findings may reflect the fact that different population groups are responding to schools in different environments; that is, children of more prosperous and well educated families attend schools where the level of violence is lower than schools serving weaker pupil populations. Another possibility is that when problems of violence arise in schools attended by children from well-established population groups, the parents are more aware of this and believe that they can cope with them in collaboration with the schools' educational staff.

New immigrants from the former Soviet Union responded differently to this question than the rest of the population. First, a much smaller share of them indicated violence as the main problem that must be handled (12 versus 41 percent in the overall population). Second, a relatively high percentage of them chose the issue of low achievement (about 25 percent) as the major issue, a higher share than all other groups. The majority of this group responded that the main issue in the education system is low teachers' salaries (42 percent), a share surpassing all other groups and much higher than the overall average (25 percent) (a similar ratio to that of people with much higher income than average).

Regarding respondents' level of religious observance, the main finding is that 59 percent of the ultra-Orthodox view violence as the main problem of the educational system. This is especially remarkable in view of the relatively low level of concern they show about violence in general, and their relatively low sense of their own exposure to violence. This, of course, raises the question of whether they are referring to violence in their own schools, violence in general or violence in the State system. The answer to this question is not obvious, but in view of the detachment of this population group from whatever lies outside it, it seems reasonable that they are referring to violence in State schools and not their own. Unlike the ultra-Orthodox, secular Jews regard school violence as less important, although 30 percent of them see it as the main problem. Finally, it is interesting (and maybe somewhat unexpected) that the group that chose gaps in the educational system as the most severe problem is the much higher than average income group (21 percent), who showed much less uniformity in responses to other questions (see below).

The next question in the education cluster refers to ways to solve the problems in the educational system. This year a very high rate of respondents chose to prioritize allocating more resources to reducing class size (44 percent), about one-quarter chose to allocate more resources to weak student populations (26 percent), and another quarter chose to improve teachers' working conditions and wages (24 percent). Interestingly, only a very small percentage chose to increase budgets for

programs for outstanding students (4 percent). This finding seems to be consistent with the relatively low importance attributed to academic achievements by the Israeli public as reflected in the results of the survey. In this area, incidentally, young people aged 18-22 stood out in giving a higher priority to supporting programs for exceptional pupils (13 percent).

This question was asked in the past, but in slightly different phrasing, and so the results are not comparable. The alternatives of improving teachers' wages, reducing class sizes and giving preference to allocations to students from weak population groups appeared in all years, but there were changes in other alternatives offered in the question that also make the responses non-comparable to the past. Having said that, the Israeli public attributed great importance to these three areas. In 2006 and 2007, for example, the options were given in the same way, and the choices indicate that more than one-quarter preferred to improve teachers' wages and working conditions (26 and 29 percent in the two years, respectively), one-fifth (20 and 21 percent) prioritized the reduction of class sizes and 15 percent chose the allocation of resources for students from weak populations. But in both those years about 22 percent pointed to the need to change the curriculum and another 13-21 percent indicated allocating resources to reducing violence. As noted, this issue corroborates the Taub Center findings this year that the public considers violence as the main problem of the education system in need of attention.

Table 12. *“Assuming that the education budget is increased significantly, to which of the following areas would you give first priority in allocating the supplement?”* (percent)

	2002	2004	2005	2006	2007	2009
Improve teacher’s wages and employment	31	21	20	26	29	24
Reduce class size	25	14	16	21	20	44
Increase budgets for weak population groups	–	–	–	11	15	26
Change educational content and programs	20	23	23	22	22	–
Reduce school violence	–	31	21	21	13	–
Increase budgets for outstanding pupils	–	–	–	–	–	4
Other (improve physical conditions, long school day)	23	10	–	–	–	2

– means that this option was not offered that year.

Examining the responses by population groups, the differences found in the current survey are interesting. The established population and new immigrants from the former Soviet Union are the lowest supporters of allocating resources to weaker populations (15 versus 26 percent on average). The ultra-Orthodox and Israeli Arabs, by contrast, stand out in their significant support of resource allocation for the weaker populations (43 and 34 percent, respectively). In this context it is disappointing to find that support for increasing budgets for weaker population groups decreases as income increases, from 30 percent among those with much-lower-than-average income, to 15 percent among those with much-higher-than-average income, even though this is the group that pointed to the issue of disparities as the most serious. People with low income also give more support than average to raising teachers’ wages, but this is the case only in the Jewish sector; Israeli Arabs support for increasing

teachers' salaries is relatively low. This finding is consistent with another finding, described in the chapter on education, indicating that teachers' wages in weak communities (including the Israeli Arab communities) is higher than wages in other occupations, including professions requiring university education. It is not surprising, therefore, that their support for raising wages is low.

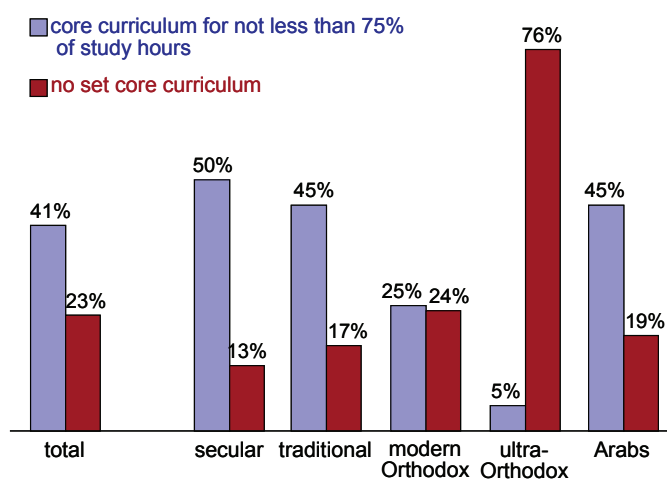
5.B. Introducing a Compulsory Core Curriculum in Basic Areas

This year two questions were asked concerning the introduction of a core curriculum in study areas of the education system, an issue that periodically resurfaces in the public agenda. The responses are rather interesting: 41 percent of the respondents think that the State should set a compulsory curriculum of no less than 75 percent of the hours of schooling, and about another one-quarter of the respondents support a compulsory core program of no less than 50 percent. Conversely, only 23 percent found it unnecessary for the State to set a core curriculum in the basic areas. This was consistent with the position regarding sanctions to be imposed on schools that do not follow the core curriculum. About three-quarters of the respondents believe that sanctions should be imposed – from a full ban to operate the school to budgetary reductions.

The relationship between Jewish respondents' level of religious observance and their responses was as expected. Support for a core curriculum of no less than 75 percent of hours of schooling decreases with the rise in the level of religious observance, from 50 percent among those who consider themselves secular, to 45 percent among traditionally observant, 25 percent among the modern-Orthodox and 5 percent among the ultra-Orthodox. While the ultra-Orthodox community's overwhelming objection (76 percent) to a core curriculum is not surprising, still one-quarter of this population group supports, in varying proportions, the introduction of a core curriculum into the education system.

An interesting phenomenon is that the percentage of Israeli Arabs who support the introduction of a core curriculum is similar to that of traditionally observant Jews (45 percent) (see Figure 9). This support is higher than the overall average (and it is higher among secular Israeli Arabs than among religious Israeli Arabs – 56 versus 40 percent, respectively). This support goes to a core curriculum of no less than 75 percent of the curriculum. This is a very important finding in light of widespread public sentiment that this population group tends in recent years to highlight its distinction from the Israeli society.

Figure 9
Support for Core Curriculum*
 by level of religious observance, 2009



* Two more categories were offered in the question: core courses will be no less than 50% of the hours and – no less than 1/3 of the hours.

Source: Taub Center, Social Survey, various years.

Another interesting point is the connection between strong support of introducing the core curriculum and respondents' age: support for a core curriculum increased with the rise in age, from 32 percent among young people (up to age 29) to 55 percent among people aged 65+. It was also found that younger respondents are more likely to object to sanctions against schools that do not teach the core curriculum.

No relationship was found between support for introducing a core curriculum and level of education, although there was a relationship with rising levels of income. Perhaps the reason for greater support for the core curriculum within population groups with higher-than-average income is a higher proportion of secular Jews in this group.

6. A Question of "Health"

The health services basket to which the public in Israel is entitled has been set in the National Health Insurance Law about 15 years ago. Israeli residents are entitled to healthcare services from sick funds and have the freedom to choose and switch between funds. The level of healthcare is considered relatively high by international standards. In recent years, however, the public was increasingly required to participate in the cost of services such as specialist consultation, some essential services and various medical equipment. Also, there was a significant increase in the co-payment for medications

Since the first survey conducted by the Taub Center in 1999, the public's level of satisfaction with healthcare services has been examined both on an overall satisfaction level (the assessment level of healthcare services provided to the public in general) and on the personal and family level (the level of individual satisfaction with the services for the respondent and his family). These questions were phrased consistently

over time.⁶ In addition, respondents were asked about their avoidance of using essential services due to the required co-payment. The rate of affirmative responses to this question indicates a worrying phenomenon in the area of public health, with a serious impact on the deteriorating level of public health.

The first and more general question was “*Compared to one or two years ago, do you think the level of healthcare services given to the Israeli public has changed?*” Responses in the latest survey indicate that about one-quarter of the public believe that it had deteriorated, another 44 percent believe that there was no change, and about one-third believe that it had improved over the last years. If we compare the answers with previous years, we can see a trend of improvement at the beginning of the decade, but it stopped in the middle of the decade.⁷ In 2004 the rate of those who believed that it had worsened was exceptionally high and reached a peak. In comparison, this year the rate of those who believe that it had improved increased and the rates of those who believe it had worsened remained stable (see table below).

⁶ The question about health care services appeared in all the survey's years, but in the years 1999-2002 and 2004 the phrasing was about health care services in general, and in the years 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007 and this year (2009) we referred in the question to the survey interviewee's health care services specifically, i.e. the services provided to him and his family.

⁷ It is interesting to note that in the past we presented an international comparison of satisfaction with health care services that showed higher satisfaction level in Israel compared to Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Canada (see: The Taub Center, 2005 – Health Care Chapter, p. 153). However, a similar comparison with those countries today would probably not indicate that the health care system stood up to the challenge of maintaining the relatively high level of satisfaction.

Table 13. Responses to the question: *“Compared to one or two years ago, do you think there was a change in the level of health-care services given to the Israeli public?”* (percent)

	1999	2000	2002	2004	2009
They improved significantly or somewhat	36	47	46	23	32
They have not changed	44	41	35	40	44
They have declined significantly or somewhat	20	10	23	37	24

It is interesting to examine the differences between population groups, as there are probably different assessments due to disparities in accessibility to healthcare services. However, the general evaluation of services may not be the product of personal experience alone, as we shall see below. Apparently, the sense that healthcare services have generally worsened increases with the age of respondents, from 13 percent among young people (aged 20-29) to 28 percent among the elderly. Presumably, despite the fact that the question refers to healthcare services in general, responses are affected by their sense about services accessible to them or those close to them, and thus the heavier users of healthcare services respond more than others to a deterioration.

A sense of improvement is reported in particularly high rates by the ultra-Orthodox: 51 percent believe that services have improved compared to 32 percent on average for the entire population. This result was noted in past surveys, and presumably it indicates a real improvement in the services that are accessible today to the ultra-Orthodox population, as well as their greater openness to using services offered by the sick funds. Overall the survey indicates a relationship between degree of religious observance of respondents and changes in healthcare services: the rate of those who report improvement declines with the increasing levels of religious observance, from 51 percent, as stated, among the ultra-Orthodox, to 31 percent among modern-Orthodox religious and

traditionally observant and to only 26 percent among the secular community.

More Israeli Arabs than Israeli Jews have the impression that health-care services have improved (on average). Most likely, the finding reflects a real improvement in accessibility to healthcare services to this sector in recent years as was found with the ultra-Orthodox. These two populations assessed that there was an improvement in healthcare services in general, despite the trend of increasing disparity in the healthcare system expressed by a rise in household participation in paying for healthcare services.

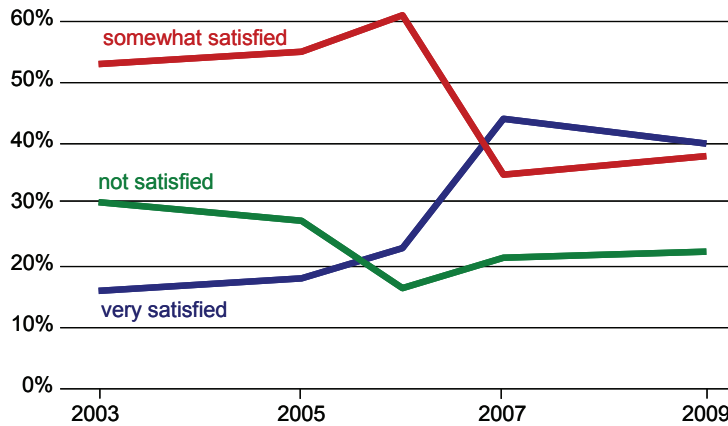
The second question in the cluster examined the satisfaction of survey participants and their family members with the services they receive from their sick fund (this year we asked both questions, but, as stated, not so in all previous years). A certain difference emerges from the responses when passing from their general assessment of the healthcare services to the personal and family level of services.

It seems that a fairly high proportion, over three-quarters of the public, are satisfied (to various degrees) with the services they receive. This level was stable in the past years as was the number of those who described themselves as “very satisfied” compared to the middle of the decade. 22 percent of those questioned responded that they are not very satisfied or not at all satisfied. While the rate of those dissatisfied rose slightly since 2006, it is lower than 2003-2005 (Figure 10).

Regarding differences between population groups, we did not find a significant decline in satisfaction with increasing age to the same degree as the previous question, and the rate of dissatisfied among the elderly is even lower than average. That means that responses by the elderly to the previous question apparently do not come from the service they receive personally, but express their general assessment. The ultra-Orthodox, who stood out in their positive assessment of the services in general, were also very pleased with the service provided to them and their families, at a slightly higher rate than average, and Israeli Arabs are about average in

the rate of very satisfied but slightly higher in the rate of those not at all satisfied (29 percent) compared with 22 percent on average.

Figure 10
Satisfaction with HealthCare Services
 2003-2009 (percent)



Source: Taub Center, Social Survey, various years.

Similar data were found in a number of other surveys, such as the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) social survey and the Myers-Joint-Brookdale Institute's bi-annual survey (Gross, Brammli-Greenberg, Weitzberg, 2008; various years). In the latest CBS survey for 2007, it was found that about two-thirds of 20-year-olds and older (67 percent) think that the healthcare system in Israel is well functioning as do 89 percent of Israeli Arabs and 63 percent of Israeli Jews (CBS, 2009). A general assessment of the functioning of the healthcare system in the Myers-Joint-Brookdale Institute survey indicates a rise in those who are very satisfied, 63 percent compared with 57 percent in 2005 (op.cit. 2008).

The Myers-Joint-Brookdale Institute findings indicate that the satisfaction rates with the healthcare system are lower than the satisfaction with sick fund services, an annually recurring finding in the Taub Center surveys as well. The same survey also finds that 88 percent of the public report satisfaction with their sick fund (op.cit., 2008), and among Israeli Arabs the rate was above average.

The next question in the healthcare cluster looks into an additional area, and is an accepted indicator of use, accessibility and equity of the healthcare services. Survey participants were asked: *“In the past year, have you or any of your family members refrained from a necessary medical service, such as a doctor visit, purchase of medications or medical equipment, etc. due to the price you were required to pay for the service?”* This question was included in most of the surveys conducted by the Taub Center over the past decade and it shows a stable, consistent and worrying trend: about 20 percent of the public report that they had to forgo a medical service during the past year, in various frequencies, due to the requirement to pay for it.

Especially worrisome is the fact that among the population groups a few weak groups stand out with an even higher rate of forgoing a medical service or the purchase of medication: in particular, the poorly educated population group, where over 40 percent reported that they had to forgo a medical service at least once in the past year (this group constitutes five percent of the sample). Among Israeli Arabs there were especially high rates: 32 percent avoided a necessary medical service, despite the fact that the general satisfaction of Israeli Arabs with healthcare services was similar to the average. Among those with low income this rate reached 30 percent and it declines steadily with income in very clear steps. An interesting finding in the survey is that rates of forgoing necessary medical services due to cost are above average among the very young, 18 to 22-year-olds. (It should be noted that the group constitutes nearly nine percent in our sample, and is not marginal at all.)

A similar question appears in many other surveys. Thus, for instance, the Hebrew University announced recently, on the occasion of the Day

for the Elderly, that 14 percent of 50-year-olds and older in Israel forgo health services due to their high cost (Litvin, Sapir, 2009). The study indicated that this phenomenon is especially prevalent among people in their 50s and 60s, more than those 70 and older, and that it is influenced by their perception of their economic ability. The authors compared their findings with select European countries, and they point out that these proportions are much higher, three- or four-fold, compared to them. The study found that people who experienced economic distress tended more often to forgo health services due to their cost, compared to others. This finding appears again and again, as stated, in different studies conducted in the field.

The latest survey by Gross et al. (op.cit., 2008) reports that in contrast to the surveys mentioned above, there was a decline in those who claimed that they had to forgo medical treatment or prescription medications in the past year (12 percent in 2007 compared to 17 percent in 2005, excluding dentistry). In another survey, conducted a year ago for the Medical Union (Degani, A., Degani, R., 2008) several questions about forgoing medical services were asked, while differentiating between different types of services: 10 percent went without a doctor visit; 13 percent had to forgo the purchase of prescribed medications due to their high cost; 6 percent of parents had to forgo or restrict medical treatment for their children; and 13 percent did the same for medical treatment or help for elderly parents. In total, the findings show that 31 percent went without at least one medical service during the year preceding the survey. This proportion was higher in the north, in population groups making minimum wages per family, the poorly educated, Israeli Arabs and ultra-Orthodox.

7. Conclusion

The findings of the Taub Center's social survey and the Taub Index of Social Confidence have been published for over a decade and present, over the years, the sense of welfare and social confidence of the public and of the public's attitude to its standard of living, social disparities, violence in society and various social services. This comes alongside the public's expectations from the government in the areas of social welfare and social services. The Taub Index of Social Confidence which is calculated using a number of fixed questions from the survey, provides a complementary indicator of social well-being when analyzed alongside the Taub Center's annual report

The Social Survey findings add a significant dimension to the other parts of this report on social services and their development, in two ways: one is whether the service recipient feels that he receives the services he expects, or how he assesses his welfare in various areas; the other is how the social situation is perceived by the citizen and what he "knows" about the allocation of resources to the public, in general, and about the development of services. This can provide feedback for decision makers regarding policy planning, taking into account the major emphases that attract the public's attention.

Comparing the picture of the situation provided by responses to the survey and the quantitative "objective data" about the situation shows that the public has a pretty good idea of the allocation of resources for social services and their development. The Taub Index also accurately reflects the socioeconomic developments over the years.

In recent years, a number of indices have been regularly published for quantifying the impression of major social phenomena in Israel. Some of them are based on common social indicators and others come from processing and analysis of regularly conducted public opinion surveys, shedding light on various areas of the social life. We found it necessary to comment briefly on the relationship between the Taub Center Social Survey and some of these surveys and indices.

The various surveys make a great contribution to the enrichment of the public discourse. The publication of quantitative indicators and results of surveys, which can serve to focus public discourse, attract the attention of the public and its leaders – the decision makers – to issues that are of interest and concern to the public.

The Social Strength Index, published since 2003 at the initiative of the Social Security Council and made public in the *Sderot Conference for Society*, helps conceptualize key trends in the strength of Israeli society (See: Reut Institute, 2009). This year the index found, like the Taub Center survey, that violence is the element causing the greatest concern for the Israeli public according to 81 percent of 2009 survey respondents, compared with 73 percent in the previous year. Furthermore, for the first time, violence was ranked first versus government corruption, with the issue of poverty and disparity between rich and poor in third place.

It is interesting to note that on the basis of a wide ranging survey conducted by the Harold Hartog School of Government and Policy at Tel-Aviv University (2006), a Criminal Violence Index was constructed from three sub-Indices: the Index of Concern with Criminal Violence (88 percent in May 2006 versus 85 percent in January 2005 and 83 percent in July 2004); the Index of Personal Injury from Criminal Violence (a stable 12 percent in all three surveys); and the Index of Inefficiency in Handling Criminal Violence. The survey indicated that criminal violence is the issue that concerns the Israeli public most of all, after ranking it highest against 10 other key concerns – 25 percent of the public indicated criminal violence in the Israeli society (versus 20 percent for the security situation (2006), 16 percent for the economic situation, and low percentages for a variety of other issues).

The Social Strength Index this year indicated that social and economic issues were considered more important than security issues. This finding is corroborated by the findings of the Taub Center survey, both in responses to the question about prioritizing the issues on the government's agenda, and in the public's choice of areas for

improvement for which the public is willing to pay more taxes, as presented in this chapter.

The concern with the inability to “age with dignity” surfaces for a number of years in the Taub Center survey, reflected in over 40 percent of respondents stating that they are not guaranteed an adequate standard of living in old age – twice the rate of those who believe that their income at old age will allow them to live with dignity. It is noteworthy that the Social Strength Index showed this year that 60 percent of respondents are concerned with this issue.

It is clear that the social reality in Israel is seen similarly in a large number of surveys. Given the consistency of surveys conducted regularly, and the correlation of findings across surveys conducted by different entities and at different points in time, it is incumbent on decision makers to be aware of the findings from the surveys of the public’s preferences, criticism and assessment of government policy.

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