

## Press Release

### Taub Center: Israelis aren't waiting for the shortened work week legislation:

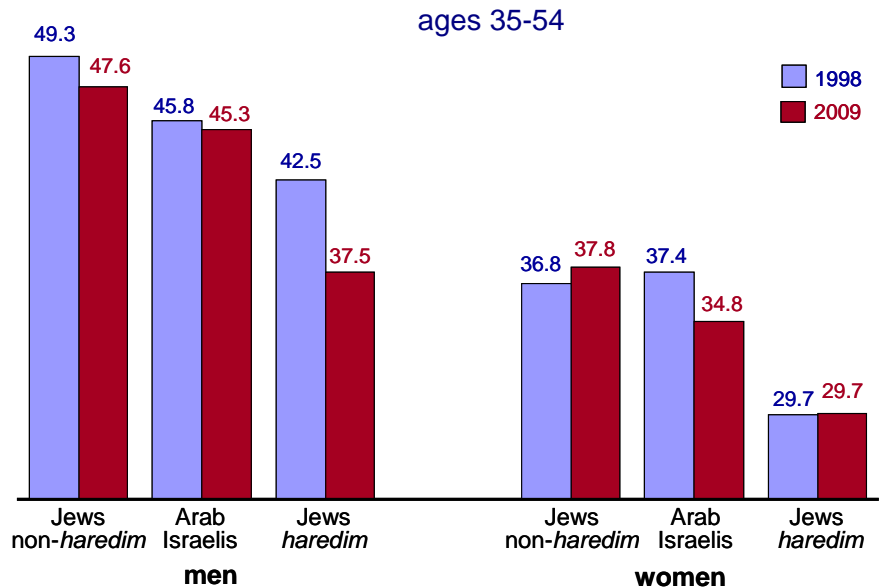
- Men have reduced their work hours by 3.4% over the past decade.
- *Haredi* men work 20% fewer hours per week than the national average – and have the largest decline in work hours.

While the government of Israel is debating whether the work week should be shortened and considering whether to add Sunday to the Israeli weekend, a recent Taub Center study shows that Israelis are not waiting for the government to reduce their work week. In fact, not only have employment rates among men declined – as recent Taub Center studies have shown - but the trend among Israeli men is also towards fewer weekly work hours today than a decade ago.

In a study to appear in the upcoming *State of the Nation Report 2010*, Taub Center Deputy Executive Director, Professor Ayal Kimhi, finds that non-*haredi* Jewish men worked an average of 49.3 hours a week in 1998. By 2009, their average work week fell to 47.6 hours. Weekly work hours among Arab Israeli men were lower to begin with, and also declined, though moderately, from 45.8 hours a week in 1998 to 45.3 hours in 2009.

*Haredi* men not only have very low rates of employment, but those who work do so for considerably fewer hours per week than the other groups. In 1998, weekly hours of work for *haredi* men were 7% less than for Arab Israelis and 14% less than for non-*haredi* Jews. In the past decade, the number of weekly work hours declined for all groups, and especially for *haredi* men – where the weekly number of hours of work declined by five hours or 12 percent. Prof. Kimhi: "Even among those relatively few *haredi* men who are employed, they worked fewer hours a week in the past than the other groups, and they reduced their weekly work load by far more over the past decade."

### Weekly work hours, 1998 and 2009



Source: Ayal Kimhi, forthcoming in the *State of the Nation Report 2010*.

Data: Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics.

As a result of the diverging work norms among *haredim* and others, it is not surprising that an increasing share of *haredi* families are falling below the poverty line.

*Haredi* children represent one-fifth of all primary school pupils in Israel today, with an increase in enrollment of 51% over the past decade alone – compared to a decline of 3% during this same decade in the State non-religious schools. The rapid growth of this segment of population, coupled with the fact that most *haredim* refuse to allow their children to study core curriculum subjects at levels that could facilitate their integration into a modern and competitive economy, has discouraging implications for future labor productivity growth.

The combined result of problematic employment habits and inadequate education for the modern job market is that there are increasing pressures for raising overall government assistance to these families, with the tax and welfare implications that this has for the rest of Israeli society. Prof. Dan Ben-David, Executive Director of the Taub Center: "The ability and willingness of the *haredi* population to be engaged in a modern competitive society has become a major issue that needs to be reckoned with by Israeli society and its leadership."

The Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel, headed by Professor Dan Ben-David, is an independent, non-partisan institution for socioeconomic research based in Jerusalem. The Center provides decision makers, as well as the public in general, with a big picture perspective on economic and social areas. The Center's interdisciplinary Policy Programs – comprising leading academic and policy making experts – as well as the Center's professional staff conduct research and provide policy recommendations in the key socioeconomic issues confronting the State.

**For details or to arrange an interview please contact Yitzhak Rabihiya, 054-799-9209.**