

Press Release

Taub Center:

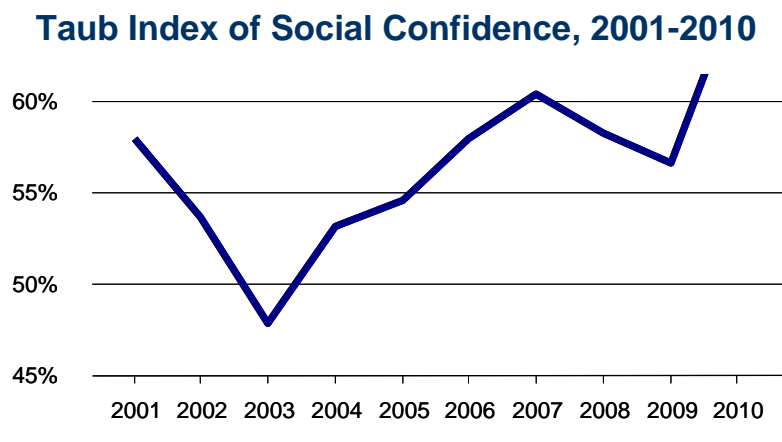
- **In 2010 there was a surprising rise of 17% in the social confidence of Israelis according to the annual Taub Index.**
- **46% of Israeli Arabs reported having difficulty meeting basic needs versus 22% amongst Jews.**
- **Social confidence among *Haredim* is higher than among people with academic degrees and similar to those with average incomes.**

The Taub Index of Social Confidence, which is based on the Taub Center's Annual Social Survey, is close to 66 points in 2010 – the highest Index rating since the Center began measuring it in 2001. This year a sharp change was noted and the downward trend of the past three years was replaced by a rise of 17%.

The Taub Index has examined feelings of social confidence in Israeli society for a decade. The measure is based on questions relating to changes in standard of living, exposure to violence, basic economic security, and fears of unemployment. It has a range of 0 to 100 points, where 100 represents the optimal situation.

In 2010, the Index hit an all time high of 65.6 points, 9 points higher than the previous year and higher than any year since measurement began (Figure 1). In 2003, social confidence began to rise. With the world economic crisis of 2008 and 2009, social confidence slipped as well. In 2010 along with a strengthening of the feeling that the crisis was passing came a jump in the Index score that returned it to the previous long-term trajectory.

Figure 1



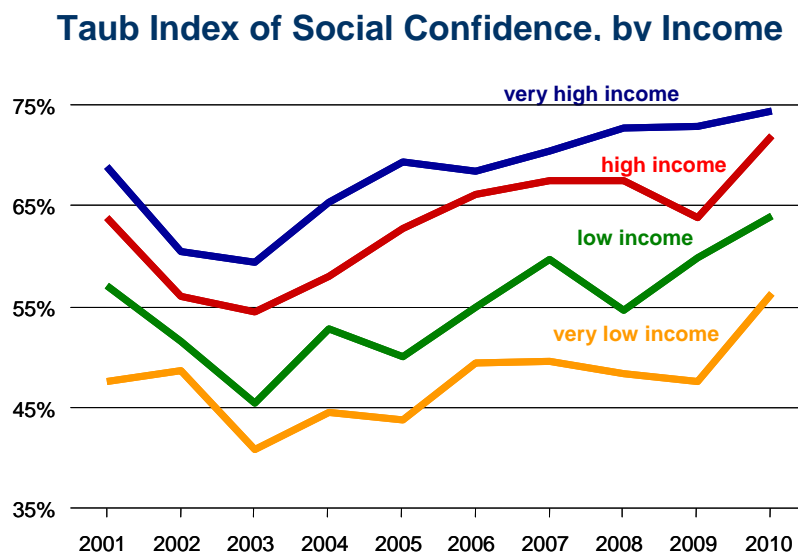
Source: Taub Center, analysis of Social Survey data, various years.

The Taub Center reports that when the population is divided by income levels, clear differences are found, although the paths are similar. On the one hand, the trajectories expose gaps in confidence experienced by different income groups; on the other hand, the gaps are stable and the rise in 2003 began amongst all income groups (Figure 2). The greatest differences in trend changes between groups were in 2010.

The more moderate rise was amongst those with much higher than average incomes, though their average Index score is still relatively high and reached a peak of 74.4 points versus 72.6 in 2009. The score for those with incomes slightly higher than the average rose to 72 points versus 61 points a year earlier (an increase of 18%). These findings suggest that any middle class erosion that may be occurring is not being expressed in the social confidence of the various income groups, as reflected in the Index.

The score of those with low incomes increased to 56 points after staying stable for several years and hovering at around 47-49 points. The gap between groups also narrowed in 2010, from 25 to 18 points (Figure 2).

Figure 2



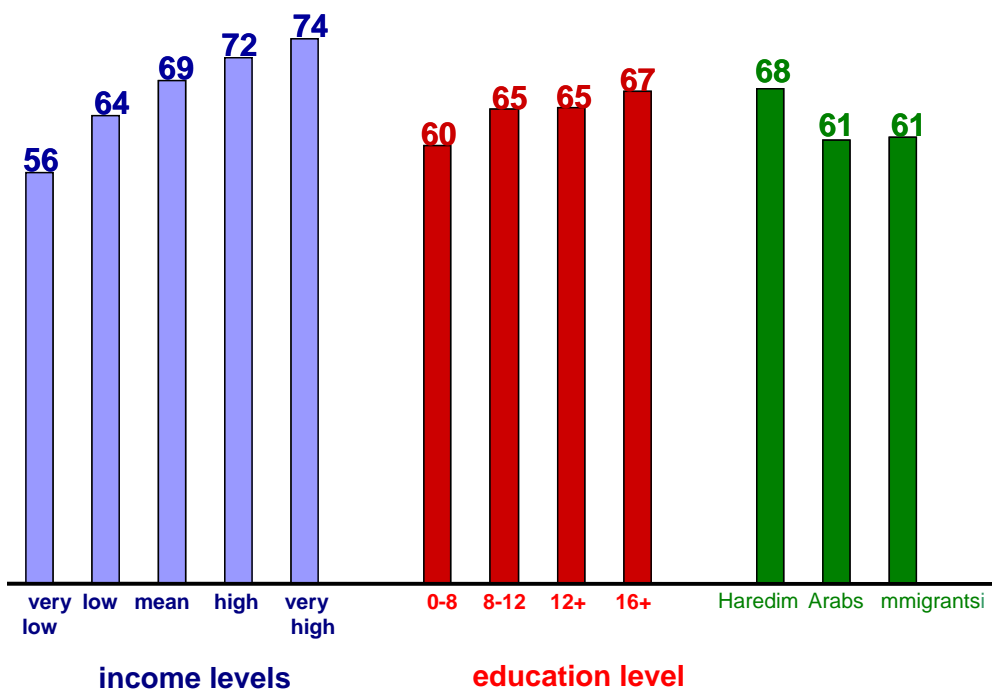
Source: Taub Center, analysis of Social Survey data, various years.

The Taub Center stresses that the large differences between the various income classifications are not observed between groups with differing education levels (Figure 3). For example, academics have an average Index score of 67 points; those with a high school and higher education have a score of 65 points; and, those with low education measured 60 points. It is interesting to note that the Index score for academics is only slightly higher than the average score for the population as a whole which was 65.6.

Despite a significant rise, the Index for the Israeli Arabs stands at 61 points, roughly at the level of the lowest education group and among the levels of the two lowest income groups. The concerns among the Israeli Arab population are especially noticeable in answer to survey questions regarding their standard of living: the number of respondents expressing difficulty in meeting basic living needs is especially high amongst the Israeli Arabs where almost half said they experienced such difficulty (46%). Amongst this population, the concern of even greater economic problems was particularly high: 19% of Israeli Arabs versus 10% of Jews expressed a great deal of concern and 22% versus 16% respectively expressed some concern. What is more, 15% of Israeli Arabs versus 6% of Jews felt that their situation was likely to worsen over the coming year.

Figure 3

Taub Index 2010: Selected Population Groups



Source: Taub Center, analysis of Social Survey data, various years.

The Index score for *haredim* rose to 68 points, higher than in previous years and also higher than the national average. These findings are particularly interesting in light of the fact that *haredim* are in general considered to be among the weaker socioeconomic population groups. Nevertheless, in the Taub Center Social Survey *haredim* do report that they have difficulty affording basic living needs or feel that their situation has worsened over the past years. Also, their concern of a decline in their economic situation is relatively low and they express a greater optimism than other groups in society that their situation will, in fact, improve. Since the Social Survey is meant to tap into subjective feelings, it could well be that certain groups in society define basic living needs differently or assign less importance to the variables examined. It is also possible that the *Haredi* population, in particular, have other means of income – whether from work or alternate sources – that influence their sense of socioeconomic confidence.

Immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU) are characterized by a low social confidence score – 61 points – that is equivalent to Israel's Arabs. This score also represents an increase from previous years although it is considerably lower than the average. Immigrants expresses feelings that their standard of living is not sufficiently high and is unsatisfactory (the rate of those reporting economic difficulties is relatively high) and they do not feel optimistic about the future.

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 publicist Yitzhak Rabihiya, “Rav Tikshoret,” cellular phone 054-799-9209.
