

**POLICY PAPER SERIES**

THE 2010 SOCIAL SURVEY

Dalit Nachshon-Sharon and Nachum Blass

Policy Paper No. 2011.14

**הסקר החברתי 2010**

דלית נחשון-שרון ונחום בלס

נייר מדיניות מס' 2011.14

\*\*\*

*Dalit Nachshon-Sharon is a Researcher at the Taub Center. Nachum Blass is a Senior Researcher at the Taub Center. All errors are the authors' own. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel.*

*Short sections of text, not to exceed two paragraphs, may be quoted without explicit permission provided that full credit is given to the source.*

# The 2010 Social Survey

---

---

Dalit Nachshon-Sharon and Nachum Blass\*

## *Abstract*

---

*The Taub Center's annual social survey offers an indication of multi-year trends in the public's feelings and attitudes on social issues and in relation to social policy. The past year has seen a trend towards an improvement in the "Social Confidence Index," that is tempered by population differences. The survey found that in Israeli society, not surprisingly, the individual's income and educational level impact to varying degrees the differences in feelings with regard to social confidence as well as other societal areas. There are also differences by level of religious observance where the ultra-Orthodox are clearly differentiated from the "secular." Overall public opinion is that social gaps are continuing and even widening, although this feeling does not bring widespread support for policies of affirmative action for weak populations. Within Israeli society, three groups stand out, each distinguished by its value system and its approach to central problems on the social economic agenda – Arab Israelis, the ultra-Orthodox, and the immigrants from the former Soviet Union.*

---

---

\* Dalit Nachshon-Sharon, Researcher, Taub Center.

Nachum Blass, Senior Researcher, Taub Center.

We thank Ayal Kimhi and Joel Blankett for their comments on the latest version of the chapter. Many thanks to Yulia Cogan for her comments, data analysis, work on the figures, and assistance in preparation of this chapter. Special thanks to Kyrill Shraberman for his statistical analyses and significance tests of the survey results.

## 1. *Introduction and Summary*

The Taub Center's Social Survey gauges the Israeli public's sense of well-being and social confidence, and its attitudes regarding a variety of social issues.<sup>1</sup> The survey presents another dimension of the social situation and completes the other chapters in this Report.

The survey sheds light on Israelis' perception of, and satisfaction with, the way in which social services are being developed – both generally and regarding those services that they themselves receive. It also illuminates the public's assessment of Israel's social situation as a whole, awareness of social disparities, attitudes regarding desirable national priorities for governmental policy, and opinions on existing policy in these areas. This year, as in previous years, the survey covered topics that have recently been on the public agenda. New survey questions relate to policy regarding support for disadvantaged populations, support for families with children via allowances, wage disparities, and issues of equality and access in education and health.

The present survey, like those in the past, included several questions phrased identically to those of previous years in order to obtain an indication of multi-year trends or attitudinal changes on topics covered regularly by the survey. Six questions directly addressing 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 can be obtained

---

<sup>1</sup> The Taub Center's public opinion survey, the Social Survey, has been conducted in a similar manner for over a decade (since 1999). Data collection for processing the survey results was performed by *Smith Consulting – Data for Decision Makers Ltd.* This year's survey was conducted in September on a representative sample of Israel's adult population – Jews and Arabs, aged 18 and over – 1,038 men and women. The sampling error was 3.0 percent.

from responses to individual questions.<sup>2</sup> The Index is calculated for different population groups, and thereby points to attitudinal differences based on income and educational level, as well as differences between major groups in the Israeli population (see Section 2 for further discussion).

This year's Taub Index for the population as a whole exceeded 65 points, and was the highest score since calculation of the Index began in 2001. The upturn reflected in this year's Index – reversing a three-year downward trend – characterized the entire population, though in differing degrees for different groups.

When one compares the picture painted by the survey with “objective” quantitative information on Israel's socioeconomic situation, one finds that the Israeli public has a strong awareness of the way in which resources are being allocated for social services and their development, as presented throughout the present chapter and as reflected over the years in the Taub Index. However, some of the findings point to the existence of a major discrepancy between what the “experts” think and what the Israeli public believes. This is true, for example, regarding the government's gap-closing efforts, efforts to eliminate inequities in the health sphere, the degree of importance attached to scholastic performance and disparities, and elsewhere.

### *1.A. The Overall Picture*

The overall improved sense of social confidence is shared by all subgroups in the Israeli population (Section 2 discusses this in depth). Although the survey indicates that a large proportion of the population subsists on an income too low for basic necessities, particularly at the low end of the socioeconomic spectrum, even these weaker population

---

<sup>2</sup> 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). Yulia Cogan is responsible for computing the Index based on the survey results.

segments experienced a change for the better relative to previous years also in terms of their expectations for the coming years.

This general upward trend in perceived standard of living was, however, accompanied by major concerns regarding financial security during the post-retirement years: half of the respondents stated that pension arrangements are entirely inadequate or adequate only to a small degree; a similar percentage responded that their own personal pension arrangements are entirely inadequate (30 percent) or adequate to only a small degree (17 percent).

Most Israelis have expressed, as in past years, that social disparities are widening, and that government policies intended to narrow social gaps conflict with policies aimed at encouraging growth. This stance paralleled attitudes on a similar issue that of limiting wage differences. However, perceptions of the severity of existing disparities do not translate into sweeping support for affirmative action: nearly half of the respondents felt that the weaker population segments about which it was asked (Arabs and the ultra-Orthodox) should be given no priority at all.

The Taub Center Social Survey affirms on a yearly basis what might, on the face of it, appear self-evident: that individual income and educational levels may be associated, to one degree or another, with differences in social confidence levels and in attitudes toward various social issues. Over the course of this chapter the major differences rooted in these two factors become apparent. Additionally, the survey findings point clearly to yet another dividing line in Israeli society: response differences were found in accordance with level of religious observance. On the one hand, there are areas in which the ultra-Orthodox and the secular strongly differ; on the other hand, on certain issues the findings point to an observance-based spectrum, rather than to a dichotomy.

### *1.B. Major Groups in Israeli Society*

The survey provides a glimpse of Israeli society as a whole, its values and attitudes towards social issues. Against this general background, three particular groups of Israeli society stand out – populations that are distinct one from the others in terms of their value systems and approach to the major issues on Israel's social economic agenda: Arab Israelis, the ultra-Orthodox, and immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU). Although an in-depth study of the attributes of these various groups lies beyond the scope of this chapter, one cannot but be struck by several survey findings that distinguish each of these groups from the others – findings that, at times, contradict what is generally thought about them.

- **The Arab Israeli** population is characterized by its low socioeconomic status. Numerous objective criteria support this characterization, which is also reflected in the responses of Arab Israeli survey participants to questions regarding their standard of living. The proportion of those unable to purchase basic necessities is particularly high in the Arab Israeli sector – nearly half (46 percent), versus one fifth (22 percent) of the Jewish sector. Arab Israeli concerns regarding the possibility of future economic distress are high; however, in contrast to what might be expected, this population is optimistic about the future.

Arab Israelis are less critical of the government regarding the way in which it addresses disparities. Moreover, they display consistently positive attitudes regarding social solidarity and express satisfaction with existing social services. Their support for affirmative action is higher than that of Jews, and encompasses other less affluent groups in Israeli society. For example, they support preferential treatment for the ultra-Orthodox population and strongly advocate limiting wage disparities; they also are relatively strong in their support of increased education budgets for less affluent populations.

Their high degree of satisfaction with health services is particularly striking in light of objective data that point to inequities in health inputs

and expenditures in those parts of the country more densely populated by Arabs, e.g. northern and southern Israel<sup>3</sup> (see Epstein, Horev, 2007).

- **Former Soviet Union (FSU) immigrants**, according to the survey, subjectively view their standard of living as inadequate and unsatisfactory (the percentage of those reporting inability to meet basic needs is relatively high); they also express a lack of optimism regarding the near and distant future. Despite their strong fear of falling into economic distress due to unemployment or post-retirement difficulties, they are avid supporters of the “free market.”

FSU immigrants as a group are strongly opposed to affirmative action for both Arabs and the ultra-Orthodox (80 percent and 72 percent, respectively). Regarding wage disparities, a particularly high percentage responded that they should be subject to no limitations at all.

FSU immigrants also differed from the rest of the population with regard to education: most feel that teacher caliber and salaries are the major problems facing the education system, rather than violence. However, they do not, as a group, advocate diverting additional resources in order to raise teacher salaries. Regarding health services, FSU immigrants do not feel that there has been a deterioration, nor do they frequently refrain from seeking necessary medical treatment due to its cost.

- **The ultra-Orthodox.** The ultra-Orthodox are commonly thought to occupy the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder, and numerous objective indicators – e.g., household income data and poverty rates – bear this out. However, ultra-Orthodox survey interviewees, in their responses to questions about standard of living, do not portray themselves as less able to meet their basic needs than anyone else, nor do they appear

---

<sup>3</sup> Health services are not organized separately by population sector (Israeli Jews and Arabs), in contrast to education services. Primary medical and preventive services are provided to the population within the locality and residential area frameworks, and the degree of segregation between the sectors at the local level is exceedingly high.

to feel that their situation has deteriorated in recent years. While it is true that the definition of “basic needs” may differ by population group, the survey is meant to reflect subjective perceptions. This sector also displayed a relatively low degree of concern regarding future economic distress, and was the most optimistic of all of the sectors regarding the possibility of improvement.

A particularly high percentage of the ultra-Orthodox, 70 percent, responded that social disparities are widening, and when asked about governmental policy priorities, a relatively high percentage responded that preference should be given to “reducing poverty and narrowing social disparities.” However, their social solidarity relates primarily to their own sector: a significant percentage of the ultra-Orthodox support affirmative action “for themselves,”<sup>4</sup> but strongly oppose it for Arab Israelis (only the FSU immigrants oppose affirmative action for Arabs in higher percentages). Regarding State support for families with children, the findings for this group were readily anticipated: 95 percent responded that the support should be increased.

As regards the education system, a particularly high percentage (45 percent) of the ultra-Orthodox feel that budgets for disadvantaged populations should be increased; however, the aforementioned findings raise the question of which populations they would regard as “disadvantaged.” On the core curriculum issue, the ultra-Orthodox position is unequivocal: 80 percent feel that the State should not require core secular subjects to be taught; a similar percentage support school admission based on family lifestyle criteria (figures for the other population sectors are much lower). Ultra-Orthodox respondents express a high degree of satisfaction with their health services, despite also displaying a higher-than-average tendency to forgo necessary medical

---

<sup>4</sup> As noted earlier, the ultra-Orthodox were defined, for the relevant question, as an “economically weak population.”

treatment because of the expense (21 percent versus 13 percent).<sup>5</sup> The ultra-Orthodox have notably high rates of support for the provision of dental care to children, an attitude that likely reflects this population's urgent needs in the area of dental health.

Beyond these three distinct groups, the survey findings in certain areas reveal differences dependent on respondent age – a phenomenon noted throughout the survey. However, some of the responses obtained from the survey's young-adult (aged 20-30) respondents – i.e., Israeli society in the not-too-distant future – are worth noting. In their responses, these young adults, show a lack of ideological consistency, even a degree of what might be termed “confusion.” Although they are, as one would expect, optimistic relative to the other age groups, their fear of unemployment is not inconsequential. Young Israelis take particularly extreme stands on affirmative action towards Arabs; with regard to wages, they agree more strongly than do others that “there is no need for wage limitations.” It is worth remembering that this group's responses are likely influenced by its demographic composition (a higher percentage of ultra-Orthodox and Arabs), and by the relative nearness of young (non-ultra-Orthodox) Jews to their period of military service.

The topics addressed by this chapter are presented in the following order: Section 2 presents the findings of the Taub Index of Social Confidence; Section 3 presents findings regarding attitudes toward disparities and toward social solidarity. Sections 4 and 5 are devoted to the two main social service areas, with Section 4 focusing on the education system and Section 5 on health care. Section 6 presents the survey findings on standard of living, employment security, expectations regarding standard of living after retirement, and housing. Section 7 addresses changes in the Israeli public's confidence level regarding violence in society.

---

<sup>5</sup> In this chapter, a “significant” difference means that the survey results were found, on statistical examination, to be statistically significant with a 95 percent level of confidence.

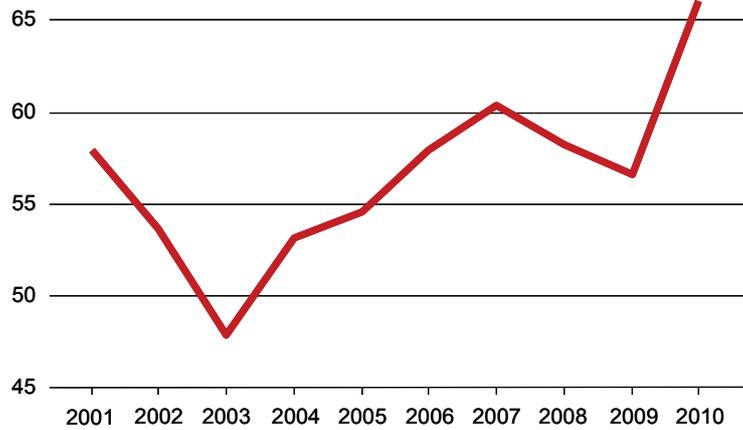
## *2. The Taub Center Social Confidence Index*

The Taub Index provides an aggregate score for a group of survey questions that address fundamental components of social well-being. The answers to these questions provide a basis for comparing population subgroups at a single point in time, and for comparing a given population group against itself over time – with regard to perceptions of change in standard of living, sense of exposure to violence, sense of economic confidence, and fear of unemployment. The Index uses a scale of 0 to 100, with 100 denoting the optimal situation and 0 the worst. The numeric score serves as an indicator of changes in Israeli public opinion, one that is more comprehensive than the responses to individual questions.

The overall Taub Index for 2010 reached an all-time high of 65.6 points, nine points above last year's Index and the highest score obtained in all the years that the Center has been conducting the survey. In its most general sense, the 2010 Taub Index indicates a rise in the Israeli public's social confidence level. The Index's variability reflects, to a great degree, prevailing economic and security situations during different periods – 2003 saw the start of an expansion process that was disrupted to a certain degree in 2008 and 2009 due to the global crisis; 2010 witnessed a return to growth and a sense of having emerged from the crisis.

The Index scores calculated for the various population groups reflect, on the one hand, differing levels of social confidence and, on the other hand, inter-group similarities in response to changes in the economy.

Figure 1  
**The Taub Index of Social Confidence**  
 2001-2010



**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

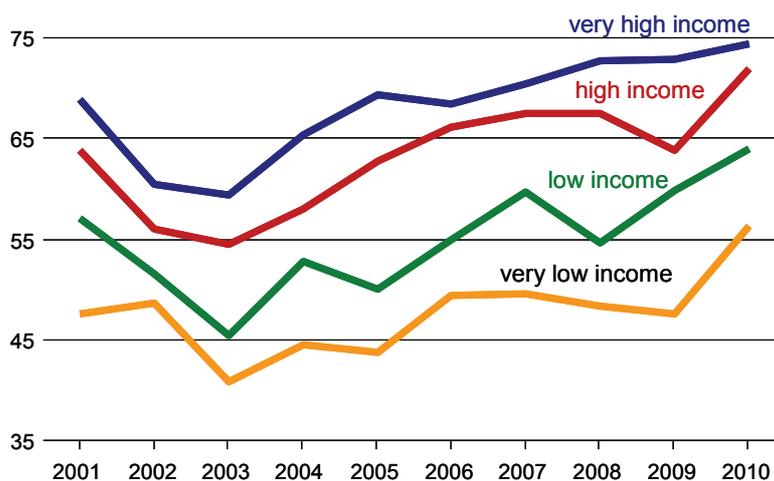
Dividing the population by income level reveals clear inter-group differences as seen in the trend lines of one above the other and point to income-linked disparities between the groups with regard to their sense of well-being (Figure 2). However, it should be noted that the Index trend lines are consistent with this year's rise in the Index for all income groups. Interestingly, the most modest rise was for those with incomes much higher than the average, although their score was still the highest of all groups, reaching an all-time high of 74.4 points, compared with 72.6 points in 2009.

The Index for the group with incomes slightly higher than average, rose this year nearly to the level of those with much-higher-than-average incomes: 72 points versus 61 points last year (a meaningful and significant rise). These findings hint that the "shrinking middle class" phenomenon that has garnered so much media attention may be less

prevalent than previously thought, or that the shrinking process decelerated last year, at least as perceived by the population in question.

At the other end of the spectrum are those with much-lower-than-average incomes, whose Index score rose to 56 points after several years of stability in the low 47 to 49 point range. This year's Index is the highest ever measured for this group; the gap between it and the much-higher-than-average-income group narrowed *vis-à-vis* 2009, from 25 to 18 points. It is interesting to note that this year's Taub Index for this group is higher than the lowest score ever measured for the slightly-above-average-income group (2003) and nearly equal to the lowest score ever measured for those with much-higher-than-average incomes.

Figure 2  
**The Taub Index of Social Confidence**  
 by income level, 2001-2010



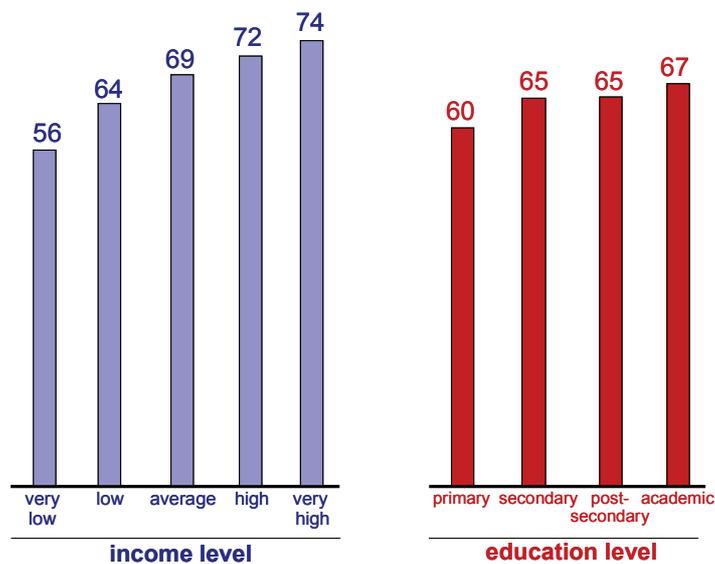
Source: Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

Education level has a less decisive impact on the Index than does income level, and is less strongly linked to social confidence differences (Figure 3). The 2010 Index for those with academic degrees, the highest ever surveyed, is 67 points, versus 60 points for those with the lowest level of education, and close to the overall population average of 65.6.

Figure 3

### The Taub Index of Social Confidence

by level of education and income, 2010



**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

The Taub Index scores for the Arab Israeli, FSU immigrant and ultra-Orthodox populations support and confirm the findings for these groups presented at the beginning of this chapter. The 2010 Index score for the ultra-Orthodox is relatively high, rising this year to 68 points – higher than in earlier years and relative to the mean score. The Index for the

Arab Israeli sector is much lower – 61 points. Although this represents a significant rise over last year, it is nevertheless lower than the overall mean. The FSU immigrant score is also low. Despite the fact that it is higher than last year's score, there is a discrepancy between it and the Index scores for the economically stronger segments of Israeli society (Table 1).

Table 1. **Taub Index, total and selected population groups**  
2001-2010

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>66</b>
Ultra-Orthodox	56	60	50	58	58	57	64	60	59	68
Arabs	51	50	44	46	50	55	55	53	51	61
FSU immigrants	54	47	50	49	48	55	57	51	51	61

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

The survey also includes a direct question about socioeconomic confidence: “*In general, how would you rate your and your family’s sense of socioeconomic confidence?*” Responses to this question provide additional support for the Index findings: the percentage of those reporting a high or very high level of confidence came to 48 percent this year, versus 39 percent for the last two years (2008-2009); while those reporting a “not good at all” or “not so good” level of confidence was 14 percent this year, compared with 17 to 19 percent in the previous two years.

Table 2. Responses to the question: *“In general, how would you define your and your family’s sense of socioeconomic confidence?”* 2007-2010 (percent)

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Good or very good	42	39	39	48
Fair	43	42	44	38
Not so good or not good at all	15	19	17	14

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

Income level is the dominant influence on the reported ratings; education influences respondents in similar directions, but more weakly. For instance, 87 percent of respondents with a much-higher-than-average income report a good or very good level of confidence, versus just 24 percent of respondents with incomes much lower than average. For those at the other end of the spectrum, those in the groups reporting a “not-good” level of confidence, the results were also highly differentiated – 34 percent for those with below-average incomes versus just a few percentage points for high-income respondents (the differences were statistically significant).

### ***3. Policy Regarding Disparities and Social Solidarity***

Every year the survey includes public opinion questions on topics related to welfare policy, government policy and priorities in the social sphere. The responses to these questions, by their very nature, reflect various dimensions of the value systems and ideologies embraced by the survey respondents, as well as the respondents’ assessments of government policy in these areas.

### 3.A. Widening Social Disparities

The first question in this area was, “*In your opinion, have socioeconomic gaps widened, narrowed or remained the same over the past year?*”<sup>6</sup>

Table 3. “*In your opinion have the socioeconomic gaps widened, narrowed or remained the same over the past year?*”  
2000-2010 (percent)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2008	2009	2010
Widened	61	67	75	82	75	71	63
No change	24	17	8	11	19	21	28
Narrowed	15	16	17	7	6	8	9

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

Most Israelis responded that disparities have grown (63 percent). This finding is a constant over the years that the survey has been conducted. This “insight” has become part and parcel of a public “body of knowledge” regarding trends in the development of Israeli society. The Israeli public is aware of existing inequities; most Israelis feel, as indicated in their responses to the following question, that the growing disparities are not being adequately addressed by government policy. It is interesting to note that the percentage of those who felt that disparities were widening was higher in the past – exceeding 80 percent of the entire Israeli public in 2003. However, alongside those who feel that the gaps are widening is a growing percentage of Israelis who believe that the disparities have not changed (28 percent versus 21 percent last year). This change in public perceptions of socioeconomic gaps may reflect the sense

<sup>6</sup> It should be emphasized that this question was intended to elicit the Israeli public’s overall “sense” of the situation, not its “stand” on the issue. Thus, one should not assume that all respondents who feel that disparities have widened view the phenomenon negatively. Later as well, with regard to the government’s role in widening or narrowing disparities, one should bear in mind that the respondents may view this role as either desirable or undesirable.

of an improved standard of living and rise in optimism as noted previously.

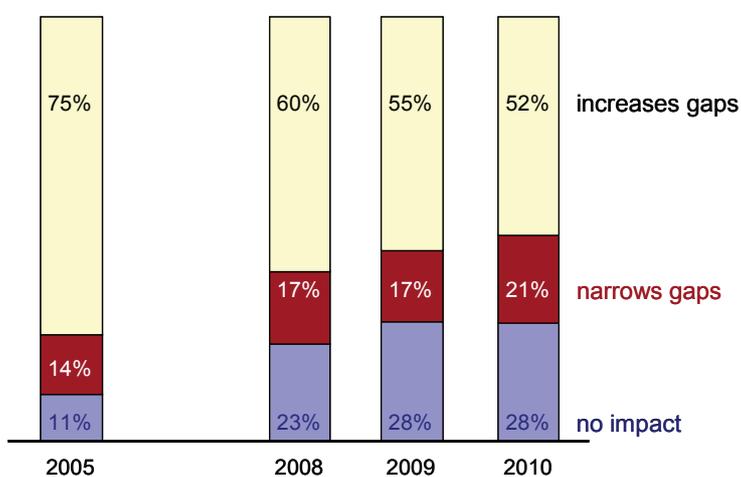
Respondent assessments of the degree to which disparities are widening are differentiated by population group; ratings are influenced by respondent socioeconomic status. Educational level influences responses in rising proportions: a higher percentage of those with academic degrees feel that disparities have widened in recent years, while a concomitantly lower percentage of the academically-educated feel that the gaps have narrowed (this year's percentages are lower than last year's by several points for all educational levels).

The ultra-Orthodox and the secular do not differ in their assessments of the degree to which disparities have widened, but a difference was found between Jews and Arabs (Arab Israelis); a higher percentage of Jews than Arabs feel that the gaps have widened (66 percent versus 46 percent, respectively). The much lower percentage of Arab Israelis who feel that gaps are widening is consistent with the fact that the weaker segments of society are, by and large, more "moderate" in their perception of widening gaps. This finding also corresponds to the various groups' responses to a follow-up question regarding the impact of government policy on disparities.

The survey findings regarding perceived governmental influence on socioeconomic disparities indicate that the Israeli public does not regard governmental policy in this area as effective, although there has been a steady decline over the years in the percentage of Israelis who believe that the government has a hand in widening the gaps (Figure 4). In the latest survey (2010), 52 percent of the public stated that government policy is widening the disparities, versus 55 percent in 2009, 50 percent in 2008 and 75 percent in 2005. On the other hand, this year 21 percent of Israelis felt that government policy does help to narrow disparities – compared with 17 percent in past years. This finding is interesting in light of Central Bureau of Statistics and National Insurance Institute reports to the effect that the gaps are continuing to widen. Are there, in fact, discrepancies in this area between "public opinion," "expert" or

policymaker opinion, and the “reality?” It is interesting to note that other findings of the survey indicate that “public opinion” in the areas of economic and employment security reflect actual changes in the Israeli economy with a high degree of accuracy. By calling attention to the discrepancy between “public opinion” and “expert opinion,” there is no intention to declare one of the parties “right.” This is simply to highlight an interesting phenomenon, one apparently that is not unique to Israel.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 4  
**Impact of government economic policy on social gaps**  
 2005-2010



Source: Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

<sup>7</sup> Prof. Brian Rowan of the University of Michigan’s School of Education, the principal guest at this year’s Van Leer conference, mentioned the discrepancy between “expert opinion” and “public opinion” in his lecture at the conference (Van Leer Education Conference, November 2010).

Another notable finding in this context is that a significantly higher proportion of the weaker population group believes that the government is helping to narrow disparities – higher than average percentages in this area were found for young adults up to 29 years of age, those with low levels of education (up to 12 years of schooling), the ultra-Orthodox, Arab Israelis, and those with below-average incomes. For example, a fourth of those with low levels of education (up to 12 years of schooling) feel that the government is helping to narrow gaps, versus 16 percent of those with academic degrees; 27 percent of the ultra-Orthodox versus just 13 percent of the secular; 30 percent of Arab Israelis compared with an average of 19 percent of Jews; and 26 percent of those aged 20-29 versus 19 percent of all other adults (aged 30+). Is this more positive, or less critical, attitude toward the government displayed by the “weaker” groups based on their subjective impression or on an overall attitude toward government policy? Does the perspective shown by respondents from the more affluent segments of society offer a different outlook on reality?

### *3.B. Public Attitudes Toward Wage Disparities*

The question of wage disparities in the economy as a whole, and in the public sector, is one that comes up from time to time in the media, in public debate, and in legislative activity. Preoccupation with this issue intensified during the global economic crisis, when numerous economic systems, some of them characterized by substantial wage disparities, collapsed. Internationally, Israel is one of the countries ranked “highest” for wage disparities, particularly compared with the European countries to which Israel is usually compared in terms of its economic performance and the socioeconomic status of its population.

In past years, survey participants were asked what an acceptable level of wage disparity should be in the public sector generally (see Blass and Nachshon-Sharon, 2010). The question posed this year related to the entire economy and focused on the ratio between the maximum and minimum wages paid. It was found that 60 percent of the Israeli public

supports wage restrictions, with 35 percent (of all respondents) stating that the maximum wage should be limited to ten times the minimum, while another 15 percent responded that it should be limited to 50 times the minimum. Another ten percent of the entire respondent group was divided between two options that would limit wages in relation to the lowest salary paid in a given workplace, rather than in relation to the minimum wage mandated for the marketplace as a whole.

On the other hand, 40 percent of Israelis responded that there is no need to limit the maximum wage paid in the economy as a whole, versus just nine percent who said that no restrictions should be placed on wage differences in the public sector. There is no real way of explaining this dramatic change. The question, as noted earlier, was indeed phrased differently, but is the discrepancy between public opinion regarding public-sector wage differences and that regarding wage disparities in the economy as a whole, as large as it appears to be?

Differences between population groups regarding not restricting the maximum wage were quite moderate, with percentages ranging close to the mean (40 percent); however, respondents with much-higher-than-average salaries were noteworthy for choosing this category – 66 percent. Those with much higher than average incomes constitute a relatively small group among the survey participants, in accordance with their representation in the general population; however, this finding was a distinct and statistically significant one.

### *3.C. Priorities in Government Policy*

In the context of the discussion of socioeconomic disparities and wage gaps, and the government's role in narrowing disparities, it is interesting to consider what issues, in the opinion of the Israeli public, should be placed at the top of the government's policy agenda. The recurring question, "*Which of the following areas should be the top priority of the government?*" was included in this year's survey.

Table 4. *“In your opinion, which of the following areas should be the top priority of the government?”*  
2006-2010 (percent)

	2006	2007	2009	2010
Reducing poverty and social gaps	41	32	33	36
Defense	34	47	35	36
Economic growth	13	13	16	12
Reducing unemployment	9	5	13	8
Other	3	0	4	8

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

The Israeli public considers two main areas as the government priority – responsibility for security and responsibility for defense, as reflected in the option “reducing poverty and social disparities.” This year, 36 percent chose each one of these areas. Another 12 percent accorded priority to “economic growth,” a lower percentage than last year but similar to the figures obtained in 2006-2007. With regard to reducing unemployment, the percentage choosing this option declined this year. This finding may indicate a sense that the threat of unemployment is now lower. What is the meaning of this choice? While the answers to questions about social and economic gaps and about the impact of governmental policy do not necessarily reflect an ideological stance, responses to the present question do indicate that, at least at the declarative level, narrowing gaps is a major issue for a third of the Israeli public, one comparable in importance to that of security.

Breakdowns by population group shows that support for prioritizing “economic growth” increases along with income, from nine to 20 percent, and is also high among those with academic backgrounds. Arabs and Jews were found to differ regarding the level of preference that they assign to “reducing unemployment” (14 percent for Arab Israelis versus six percent for Jews). The difference was found to be statistically

significant, and may be indicative of a “real” difference in the unemployment rates that characterize the two population groups.

Proceeding from this question, which posed a choice between two options, respondents were asked if, in their opinion, policies that strive to narrow gaps contradict those that encourage economic growth.

Table 5. *“There are those who claim that there is a distinct contradiction between a policy that strives to narrow social gaps and one that encourages economic growth”*  
2003-2010 (percent)

	2003	2005	2006	2007	2010
There is a contradiction and the priority should be narrowing gaps	34	33	30	27	32
There is a contradiction and the priority should be economic growth	30	26	22	21	25
There is no contradiction between the two policy lines	36	41	49	52	43

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

Most Israelis (57 percent) believe that there is a contradiction between these two policy lines. Thirty-two percent (of all respondents) feel that priority should be given to narrowing gaps, while 25 percent would give preference to growth. The proportion who said that there is a conflict and that narrowing gaps should be the priority amounts to about a third of the Israeli public for most of the survey years. Those who responded that there is a conflict and that economic growth should be preferred amount to about a quarter of the Israeli public. To complete the picture, 43 percent of Israelis said this year that there is no contradiction between the two policy lines. This is a significant proportion of the public; at some points over the last few years, the proportion has been even higher.

No major differences were found between different age group, educational level (although the university-educated stand out somewhat for their relatively high percentage responding that no contradiction

exists), religious observance or income level. By contrast, Jews and Arabs were found to differ in their responses to this question. Arab Israelis display a notable preference for economic growth over the narrowing of disparities, a finding consistent with the fact that they rate current gap-narrowing activity and related governmental policy more “positively” than do Jews. The higher Arab Israeli unemployment rate may be an influencing factor here, as economic growth would be seen as a potential solution to this problem.

### 3.D. *Social Solidarity*

The strength or weakness of Israeli social solidarity may be seen in the responses to a variety of survey questions – those aimed at eliciting respondent expectations of the government in terms of its priorities as well as other questions.

Against this background, the two following survey questions examine public attitudes toward two groups generally regarded as economically weak – Arab Israelis and the ultra-Orthodox. Both questions appeared in similar form in last year’s survey. *“The Arab and ultra-Orthodox populations are on the whole socioeconomically weak. In your opinion should there be a policy of affirmative action for these populations in order to narrow the gaps?”*

A very large proportion of the public, over 40 percent, felt that no affirmative action should be taken on behalf of these two population groups. The overall percentage is slightly higher with regard to Arabs – 47 percent – versus 42 percent for the ultra-Orthodox. However, over 50 percent of Israelis (with regard to both populations) say “yes” to affirmative action under certain circumstances. It is interesting that the percentages favoring unconditional affirmative action are similar for both Arabs and the ultra-Orthodox, amounting to a quarter of the Israeli public. Last year these figures were in the 18-20 percent range.

Table 6. *“The Arab Israeli/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?”* 2009 and 2010 (percent)

	Arab Israelis		Ultra-Orthodox	
	2009	2010	2009	2010
Yes, in all areas of government services and National Insurance allowances	18	26	20	25
Yes, but only in providing government services (education, health, etc.)	10	6	7	4
Yes, but only in the areas of employment and providing jobs	12	9	9	12
Yes, provided that they agree to participate in National Service	18	12	26	17
No, there should not be affirmative action for Arabs/ultra-Orthodox populations	43	47	39	42

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

When a distinction was made between Jews and Arabs, it was found that 54 percent of Jews feel that affirmative action should not be implemented for Arabs, compared with 45 percent for ultra-Orthodox Jews. Figures for the secular Jewish population are 44 percent and 56 percent respectively. Thus, secular Jewish opposition to affirmative action on behalf of the ultra-Orthodox is greater than this population's opposition to affirmative action on behalf of Arabs (statistically significant findings). It is worth noting in this context that while just 19 percent of all Jews support affirmative action for Arabs in all service areas (with secular Jews showing the greatest level of support at 25 percent), some 54 percent of Arabs support affirmative action for the ultra-Orthodox in all service areas.

The younger survey participants (ages 18-22) are noteworthy for their opposition to affirmative action on behalf of Arabs – 59 percent. Significantly high figures were also obtained for the broader young-adult

group, those aged 18-29, 52 percent of whom oppose affirmative action for Arabs. Young Israelis oppose affirmative action for Arabs in greater numbers than they do for the ultra-Orthodox – 33 percent. This finding is interesting in comparison with the altogether contrary finding obtained for the “secular” population. This may reflect a rise in the proportion of religious/ultra-Orthodox among the younger population groups.

Immigrants from the former Soviet Union display the strongest opposition toward affirmative action for Arabs – 80 percent of this group responded that it would not support any form of affirmative action. However, the FSU immigrants are also strongly opposed to affirmative action for the ultra-Orthodox, at a relatively high rate of 72 percent. This degree of opposition may reflect a philosophical distaste for affirmative action as such, rather than antagonism toward Arabs or the ultra-Orthodox. The ultra-Orthodox and (Jewish) religiously-observant groups also oppose affirmative action for Arabs (70 percent, versus 44 percent of the secular). These attitudes are not influenced by income or educational level. Arab respondents’ support for affirmative action on behalf of their own population group is, of course, greater.

Respondent willingness to aid the ultra-Orthodox is inversely related to educational level and degree of religious observance. It is interesting that the reverse is true for income level – opposition to affirmative action increases as income rises.

### 3.E. *Support for Families with Children via Transfer Payments*

Although from time to time the Israeli public expresses opposition to the idea of child allowances, and despite the tendency to blame transfer payments for encouraging people not to go to work, most Israelis (61 percent) feel that the State should increase its level of support for families with children, while another 28 percent feel that the status quo should be maintained. Only a small percentage advocates decreasing or terminating assistance to families with children. The Israeli public does not feel,

though, that support for large families should be increased through larger allowances for children whose place in the family birth order is later.

Support for increasing the payments is higher among young people, women, those with low levels of education (percentages in favor decline as educational level rises), and the ultra-Orthodox. Support rises dramatically as level of religious observance rises. Arabs also advocate child allowances at a much higher rate than do Jews – 81 percent versus 57 percent.

Support for child allowances declines as income levels rise – from 77 percent of those with incomes much lower than average to 68 percent for those with incomes slightly below average, 60 percent for those with average incomes, and 40 percent for those with higher-than-average incomes.

Regarding allowance distribution: a substantial majority of 64 percent feel that allowances of equal value should be given for each child regardless of birth order, while another 21.5 percent feel that a higher allowance should be given to the first child and a lower amount paid for the last child in the family. Support rates for giving preference to the eldest over the “last” child decline as level of religious observance rises.

#### *4. Problems at Education's "Core"*

Educational issues constitute a major “cluster” within the Taub Center Social Survey, which includes questions on priorities and government policy in the educational sphere. As in previous years, this year’s survey first sought to determine what the Israeli public views as the main problem affecting the education system. Respondents were then asked what goals they felt should be given highest priority if additional funding would be allocated to the education system. The next topic addressed was that of instituting a core curriculum of basic subjects to be taught in the schools, with particular attention to the manner in which failure to include these subjects in the school curriculum should be dealt with. The

third set of questions dealt with public opinion regarding school admission based on various criteria: prior pupil performance, lifestyle of the pupil's family, and parental payment beyond that authorized by the Ministry of Education (three separate questions).

#### *4.A. The "Main Problem" and Education System Priorities*

Israelis attach little importance to the issue of "scholastic achievements" (13 percent), while an even lower percentage attach importance to that of "large scholastic disparities" between population groups (five percent) – despite the attention given to these issues by leading figures in the Israeli education system, by academics, politicians, and the media. The public feels, as it did last year, that the main problem facing the education system is that of violence. Nearly half of the survey participants (46 percent) expressed this view. An additional eleven percent responded that the main problem is that of school quality of life. Taken together, these two options show that a majority of nearly 60 percent of Israelis feel that the main problem faced by the education system lies in the area of school climate and educational values, rather than in the area of scholastic achievement or disparities.<sup>8</sup> The issue of "teacher salaries and quality," (attracting higher caliber teaching staff which is generally thought to be linked to teacher salaries, as well as to the degree of prestige enjoyed by teachers), was ranked by just a quarter of the respondents as the "main problem" facing the Israeli education system (similar to last year's percentage).

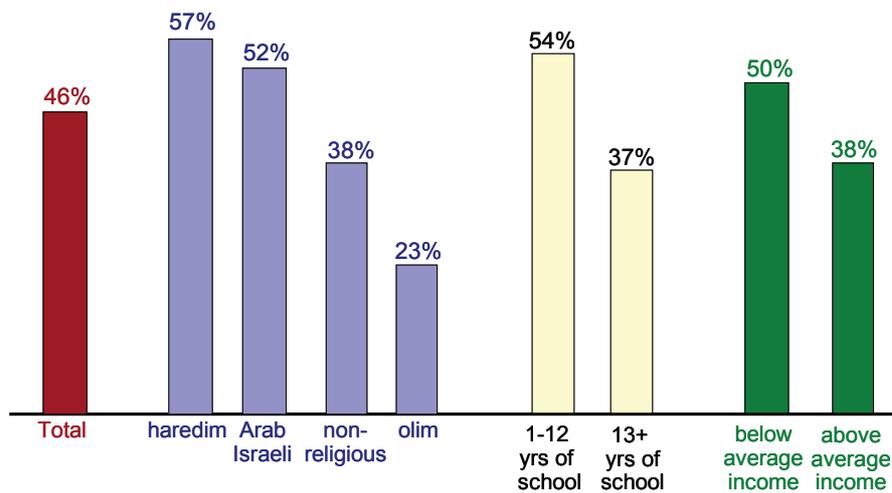
These findings are notable against the background of the ongoing debate over pupil achievement measures, both over time and through comparative, international exams.

---

<sup>8</sup> School violence and climate is a painful issue, one that generates considerable discussion. Numerous studies have addressed the issue in depth: see Harel-Fish, Koren, Fogel-Greenwald, Ben-David and Naveh (2009); Erhard and Brosh (2008); Benbenishty, Khoury-Kassabri and Astor (2006); and Dan Sharon (2006).

Do the various population groups differ in their choice of the main problem facing the education system? The survey findings offer several interesting answers to this question: “violence” was chosen as the main problem by a higher percentage of those with low educational levels (over 50 percent of respondents with 12 or fewer years of schooling, versus 37 percent of those with academic degrees) and those with below-average incomes (50 percent, versus 38 percent of those with above-average incomes). However, violence was identified as the “main” problem by all of the groups – a finding consistent with those of previous years (Figure 5).

Figure 5  
**Rate of those who feel that violence  
 is the main problem in the education system**  
 2010



Source: Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

The group that stood out in this regard was that of the FSU immigrants, of whom just a relatively small percentage chose violence as the main problem facing the education system (23 percent versus a mean score of 46 percent). This group differs from the rest of the population in its selection patterns: most of the immigrants responded that the main problem with the education system is low teacher salaries – 39 percent, a significantly higher percentage compared with all of the other groups.

Level of religious observance was a differentiating factor in the choice of a central problem with the education system: “violence” was selected in higher percentages as religious-observance level rose, from 38 percent of the secular to 57 percent of the ultra-Orthodox. The picture is reversed for the second-largest category, “teacher salaries and quality,” which was chosen in smaller numbers as the level of religious observance decreased (from 35 percent of the secular to 17.5 percent of the ultra-Orthodox). The great emphasis placed on violence by the ultra-Orthodox as the most urgent problem facing the education system was discussed in the past (Blass and Nachshon-Sharon, 2010). The finding is noteworthy in light of the relatively low degree to which this group fears violence generally, as the ultra-Orthodox have the lowest degree of exposure to violence within the Israeli population as a whole (see further discussion below). The finding appears to reflect ultra-Orthodox criticism of the Israeli education system, of which they do not consider themselves a part, rather than the actual state of affairs in the ultra-Orthodox schools. On the other hand, it may be that violence within the ultra-Orthodox schools – violence exhibited by pupils, by teachers, or in response to any religiously-unacceptable behavior – though invisible to the public at large, is indeed reflected in the ultra-Orthodox responses to the survey question.

The Arab Israeli survey participants stand out for the emphasis that they place on violence and school quality of life; a slightly smaller than average percentage of them chose scholastic achievement, despite the high degree to which this problem afflicts the sector.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> One of many studies on this topic, that of Kennet-Cohen et al. of the National Institute for Testing and Evaluation, shows the attainment level of Arab pupils

Regarding the issue of raising teacher quality and salaries, the findings show that support for this option rises along with respondent educational and income levels. Arab Israelis also respond as expected for their socioeconomic level (on average) with regard to teacher quality and salaries. That is, the percentage of them who feel that this is the main problem facing the education system is much lower than that of the Jewish respondents. This finding corresponds to another study recently conducted by the Taub Center on the topic of teacher position relative to other salaried workers in terms of the socioeconomic ranking of their home localities. The study also looked at the influence of this position on teachers' social status (Blass and Romanov, 2010).

The following question in the education cluster enables respondents to indicate the goals to which priority should be given in terms of resource allocation, on the assumption that the system is going to be infused with additional resources. On the face of it, this question makes it possible for those who previously chose a particular "main problem" to select the area to which first priority should be given for additional resource allocation. Indeed, a relative high percentage of respondents prioritized resource allocation for the purpose of reducing class size – 42 percent. This choice may be regarded by the Israeli public as a solution to the problem of increasing violence, and also as a potential solution to the "scholastic achievement" problem and as a promoter of scholastic success generally. Consequently, over a quarter of Israelis would choose to allocate greater resources to pupils from the weaker population groups (28 percent), a higher percentage than those who emphasized "strengthening weaker populations" in their responses to the question about the main problem faced by the education system. Here, as well, the option chosen may have been seen as a potential solution to the violence problem that so concerns the public. Another quarter of the respondents chose improving teacher

---

to be lower than that of Jewish pupils on nearly all of the over fifty tests considered.

work conditions and salaries (23 percent), a distribution very similar to that of last year's survey findings.

Only a very small percentage of respondents would choose to increase budgets for outstanding pupils (four percent). This finding apparently reflects the relatively low degree of importance attached by Israelis to scholastic achievement generally, as indicated by the survey results to the previous question. This finding is certainly surprising, and of interest in light of the considerable public attention garnered by Israeli scores on international exams, as well as principal reports of high parental interest in scholastic achievement, as reflected in the 2006 and 2009 PISA data (OECD, 2007; OECD, 2010).

Choice patterns in the education cluster reveal significant differences by gender: women chose reducing class size in higher percentages than did men – 46 percent versus 38 percent, and they were less supportive than men of increasing teacher salaries – 19 percent of women versus 27 percent of men. On the one hand, this finding is surprising in light of the teaching profession's strong gender identification; however, it may reflect the fact that women's salaries are low overall, and that teacher salaries are thought by women to be relatively high.

FSU immigrants who felt that the main problem facing the education system is that of low teacher salaries (39 percent as noted previously – a high and noteworthy percentage compared with the other groups) did not, in this question, assign priority to the issue of teacher salaries. It is possible that FSU immigrants do not regard teacher quality as a function of salary; the finding may also reflect the respondents' own place on the salary scale (see, in this context, the previous question and the discussion of socioeconomically weak populations' attitudes toward salaries and teacher status, compared with those of stronger populations). As with other groups, the FSU immigrants gave priority to class size reduction (48 percent); a relatively high percentage of them also chose the option of allocating additional resources for outstanding pupils. This finding confirms the feeling that "choosing to reduce class size" is linked with the choice to "improve scholastic achievements" – in accordance with the

fact that FSU immigrants chose, in higher-than-average numbers, to address the problem of low scholastic achievement in the Israeli education system.

The effect of educational level is evident in a tendency to support reducing class size: support rises (significantly) with educational level, from 37 percent for the lower-level groups (up to 12 years of schooling) to 48 percent for those with academic backgrounds. The influence of educational level is also strongly evident in the degree of support for raising teacher salaries – 26 percent of those with an academic degree favored teacher salary increases, versus 19 percent of those with 12 or fewer years of schooling. On the other hand, the percentage of those giving preference to budgets for weak populations declines as educational level rises – from over 30 percent for those with low educational levels to just 20 percent for those with academic degrees. In this context, other “strong” populations, such as the higher-income groups, also display relatively low rates of support for budget increases on behalf of weaker populations – support rates decline as income level rises, from 38 percent of below-average-income respondents to 20 percent of those with incomes higher than average (similar to the figure for those with academic degrees).<sup>10</sup> If these findings truly reflect the outlook of the educated and the affluent, then one would have to be pessimistic about the government’s ability (and perhaps its desire) to adhere to affirmative action policies on behalf of the weaker populations. In this regard, one may find some reassurance in the fact that young people feel, in greater percentages that budgets for weaker populations should be increased (39 percent versus a mean figure of 29 percent). However, this finding may

---

<sup>10</sup> This finding may also reflect a public “fatigue” with affirmative action policies, particularly in light of numerous publications arguing that the efforts and resources that have been invested in affirmative action have failed to bear fruit, that there is no connection between resource allocation and scholastic achievement, and that the “weaker groups are largely to blame for their situation.”

also reflect the growing proportions of Arab Israelis and ultra-Orthodox within Israel's young adult population.

#### *4.B. The "Core" Curriculum and School Budgeting*

The question of a "core" curriculum is a major one on Israel's educational agenda today; it is related to the issue of the State's responsibility toward all of its citizens in the areas of education, equality, labor, and citizenship. The core curriculum issue touches on the broader question of what unites and what divides Israeli society. It exposes the degree to which different segments of the population actually constitute, or may come to constitute, distinct societies in their own right; it also raises the question of to what degree different population groups should be allowed to educate their children exclusively in accordance with their own worldviews. The "core curriculum" refers to the material taught in the schools operated by the State of Israel, which views itself as part of the free, modern, developed world; it has implications for the degree to which the State can ensure the future of its younger generation and that generation's preparedness for life in the modern world.

Last year's survey findings were presented regarding support levels for the institution of a core curriculum (Blass and Nachshon-Sharon, 2010). In general, 41 percent of the survey respondents felt that the State should institute a mandatory curriculum amounting to no less than 75 percent of all instructional hours, while another quarter of the respondents supported a mandatory curriculum for no less than 50 percent of all instructional hours. Less than a quarter of the respondents felt there was no need for the State to institute a core curriculum for basic subjects. This year respondents were asked only about sanctions against schools that fail to teach basic subjects; the question was phrased as it was last year.

Table 7. *“In your opinion, what steps should the government take in the case of schools that do not teach basic subjects, like mathematics and English, as part of their curriculum?”*  
2007 and 2010 (percent)

	2007	2010
Revoke their accreditation	22	33
Reduce their government financing	24	24
Stop their government financing	26	24
The government should not insist on the teaching of basic subjects	28	19

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

A third of the survey participants responded that schools that fail to teach core subjects should have their accreditation revoked. This was 50 percent higher than last year’s percentage. A no less important finding – in light of the ongoing debate – is that another 50 percent of Israelis support imposing financial sanctions on schools that do not implement the core curriculum (complete withholding of budgets, or budget cuts). These findings were complemented by findings in the opposite direction: the percentage of those who felt that “the State should not intervene with regard to basic subjects” declined from 28 percent to 19 percent. Although it is true that two-thirds of the Israeli public would refrain from “closing these schools,” a quarter of Israelis felt this year, as last year, that the schools’ budgets should be completely withheld by the State, while another quarter supported cutting State funding for schools that refuse to implement the core curriculum.

Level of religious observance has a strong influence on response patterns with regard to the core curriculum: the percentage of those in favor of “revoking accreditation” declines as religious observance level rises, from 41 percent of the secular to three percent of the ultra-Orthodox. These figures reverse themselves when respondents are asked whether the State “should impose no requirements at all” – 78 percent of

the ultra-Orthodox and just seven percent of the secular gave positive answers to this question. Support for maintaining accreditation but withholding funding for schools that fail to implement the core curriculum also increases as religious observance level declines, from four percent of the ultra-Orthodox to 30 percent of the secular.

#### *4.C. Equal Access to Schools for Israeli Pupils*

The equality of access issue touches on the idea of Israel's education system as a public, general, non-selective system. Against this background, and against the background of criticism frequently leveled against the system, this year's survey included several questions aimed at eliciting the level of public support for the institution of admissions criteria to schools in Israel's education system.

Survey participants were asked about pupil "screening" for admission to schools or, as formulated in the survey, making admission "conditional" on several factors: 1) the pupil's prior scholastic achievement; 2) the lifestyle of the pupil's family; and 3) parental willingness to pay more than the amount authorized by the Ministry of Education – this latter step amounting to systematic exclusion of pupils whose parents cannot meet the required funding level.

The responses to the first question are as follows:

Table 8. *"In your opinion, should a school in Israel be permitted to restrict entrance on the basis of previous grades and if so, at what stage of studies?"* 2010 (percent)

It should not be permitted at any level of education	50
It should be permitted for entrance to post-primary school	22
It should be permitted for entrance to primary school	3
It should be permitted at all levels of education	25

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

Half of the Israeli public is completely opposed to the idea of making pupil admission conditional on prior scholastic achievement, at all educational levels. That is, Israelis are not in favor of “maintaining” or “guaranteeing” a particular level of school achievement by rejecting pupils who do not meet a given school’s criteria. In other words, all pupils should be able to find their place in, and have their educational needs met by, all schools. At the other end of the spectrum, however, are the quarter of Israelis who support pupil selection based on scholastic achievement at all grade levels. Should this be considered a large or a small percentage? The answer, of course, is in the eye of the beholder. To complete the picture, it should be noted that 22 percent, or nearly an additional quarter of the respondents, favor allowing schools to screen pupils by scholastic achievement at the post-primary level. The fact that only three percent support making admission conditional only at the primary level indicates overwhelming opposition to the idea of admissions criteria for the lower grades.

Educational level has some degree of impact on the response patterns: although the findings are not fully consistent, the percentage of those who chose the “permit selection at the post-primary level” option rises along with educational level, while the percentage of those favoring “selection at all levels” declines as educational level declines. That is, those with academic backgrounds tend to “permit” selection at the post-primary level, although most of them – 51 percent – still insist that selection at all grade levels should be “strictly forbidden.” In this context, it is interesting to note that the percentage of those who would strictly forbid pupil screening rises as one advances along the ultra-Orthodox-to-secular scale, from 42 percent to 52 percent; however, the no-screening approach is still the dominant one among the ultra-Orthodox.

With regard to Arab Israelis, opposition to selection based on scholastic performance is lower; this group also has the highest level of support for selection at all grade levels – 37 percent. This finding may perhaps be regarded as consistent with a growing trend in the Arab sector – one that was noted in last year’s publication – toward seeking

admission to elitist and selective schools (Blass, 2010). The phenomenon may also testify to a dissolution of solidarity in Arab society, as described by Dr. Khaled Abu-Asba in a discussion held in the framework of the Taub Center's Education Policy Program (on 17 November 2010) – a trend that influences attitudes toward educational issues within the Arab public.

With regard to the second question, that of parental payment as a selection criterion, the responses were much less ambiguous. A large majority of Israelis oppose pupil selection based on parental ability to pay. In this regard the public does not differentiate between primary and post-primary education – a very interesting and important finding. Nevertheless, 16 percent of all Israelis feel that selection based on parental ability to pay should be permitted at all grade levels. Respondent breakdown is as follows:

Table 9. *“In your opinion, should a school in Israel be permitted to restrict entrance on the basis of payment beyond what is allowed by the Ministry of Education and if so, at what stage of studies?”* 2010 (percent)

It should not be permitted at any level of education	78
It should be permitted for entrance to post-primary school	4
It should be permitted for entrance to primary school	2
It should be permitted at all levels of education	16

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

Regarding differences between population groups: rates of opposition to selectivity are higher among the middle-aged and the elderly than among the young; they are also higher among the Arab sector than the Jewish sector. Here, as well, this may reflect a waning of social solidarity, as seen previously in the area of Arab education. While the opposition percentages are high and quite similar across all income levels, those with much-higher-than-average incomes exhibit higher rates

of support for selection according to parental ability to pay, at all grade levels. Regarding family lifestyle as a criterion for school admission – the survey results are as follows:

Table 10. *“In your opinion, should a school in Israel be permitted to restrict entrance on the basis of a certain lifestyle in the student’s family and if so, at what stage of studies?”*  
2010 (percent)

It should not be permitted at any level of education	69
It should be permitted for entrance to post-primary school	2
It should be permitted for entrance to primary school	2
It should be permitted at all levels of education	26

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

The Israeli public overwhelmingly opposes pupil selection based on family lifestyle – 69 percent; however the degree of opposition is lower than that for making school admission conditional on parental ability to pay (beyond the officially-authorized level) – 78 percent, as noted previously. Interestingly, the remainder of the respondents, 26 percent, support this kind of selectivity, with no difference for primary or post-primary schooling.

Do the responses differ by population groups? There are slight age-based differences; support for strictly forbidding this kind of selectivity rises with age, from 54 percent of the very young to 65 percent of those aged 23-29, 72 percent of the middle-aged, and 75 percent of those aged 65+. The figures reverse themselves for the “permit at all grade levels” category. This fact may reflect a rise in the proportion of religious respondents in this age group; however, it might also reflect growing social trends favoring increased diversity in the school system. When the responses are examined by educational level, the most firm opposition to family-lifestyle screening among those with academic backgrounds (74 percent), while a clear response pattern emerges according to level of

religious observance – opposition rates rise as religious observance declines, from 16 percent of the ultra-Orthodox to 80 percent of the secular. One finds, of course, the reverse regarding the option to “permit pupil selection according to family lifestyle at all grade levels.”

## **5. Health Issues**

### **5.A. Satisfaction with Health Services**

Survey respondents’ satisfaction with healthcare services in general, and with the health services available to their families in particular, rose this past year. This year, 41 percent of respondents feel that there has been an improvement in the level of health services provided to the Israeli public, while 84 percent are satisfied, to varying degrees, with the services that they and their families receive. However, 17 percent of all Israelis feel that there has been a general decline in the level of health service provision, while a similar percentage state that they are dissatisfied with the services provided to them and to their families. The continuous rise in public satisfaction with health services contradicts media reports and research findings – including a recent Taub Center study – regarding growing inequality and deteriorating service levels in the Israeli health system. This inconsistency is similar to that noted with regard to the issue of educational priorities.

The health services “basket” to which Israelis are entitled by law has been guaranteed for a decade and a half by the National Health Insurance Law. Residents of Israel are entitled to health fund services, including the right to choose and switch health funds. The overall health status of Israelis is considered high in international comparison. Since the law’s enactment, access to health care has increased and the services available to portions of the population have expanded, particularly those delivered via the health funds to the Arab and ultra-Orthodox sectors. The responses on this issue over the last few years testify to a relatively strong sense of improvement among these two groups.

Since the first Taub Center survey was conducted in 1999, public satisfaction with health services has been measured at both the general and the individual/familial levels; this is an area in which impressions are reinforced through the findings from continuous monitoring of public sentiment. When one looks at the results obtained over the years, one finds that this year's satisfaction levels are at their peak. The percentage of those who feel that health services have "improved significantly or somewhat" has risen from 24 percent in 2004, to 31 percent in 2007, 32 percent in 2009 and 41 percent in the most recent survey (2010). By contrast, figures for the "no change" category have remained virtually the same, in the 40 percent range; consequently, percentages for the "worsened significantly or somewhat" category have declined.

Table 11. Distribution of responses to the question: *"In comparison to the situation a year or two ago, in your opinion has there been a difference in the level of healthcare services in Israel?"* 1999-2010 (percent)

	1999	2000	2004	2009	2010
There has been a considerable or some improvement	36	47	23	32	41
There has been no change	44	41	40	44	42
There has been some or a considerable worsening	20	10	37	24	17

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

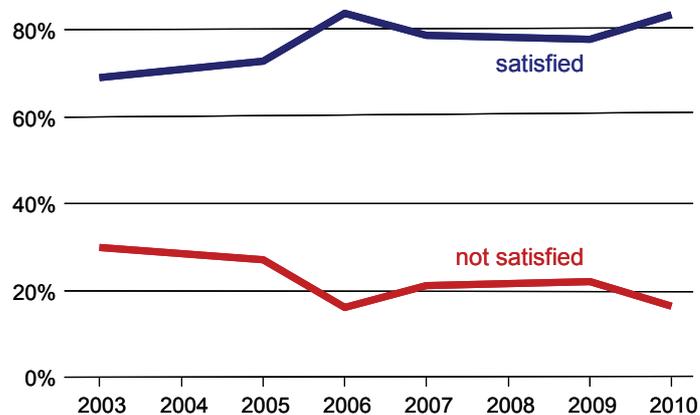
Is this sense of improvement shared by all population sectors? The ultra-Orthodox and Arab Israeli sectors stand out for the high percentages in which they report improvement – 61 percent of the ultra-Orthodox and 59 percent of Arabs (much higher than the mean figure for Jews – 38 percent). This discrepancy relative to the rest of the population was found in previous years as well. No other Israeli population group reports improvement in healthcare in such high numbers. The findings may be

assumed to indicate real improvement in the services currently accessible to the ultra-Orthodox, and on the latter sector's high degree of willingness to utilize the services offered to them by the health funds. This may be seen as proof that policies can indeed lead to real improvement in the status of large populations. In general, this year's survey also points to a correlation between level of religious observance and the sense of improvement or deterioration in existing health services – the percentage of those reporting improvement declines as level of observance drops, from 61 percent among the ultra-Orthodox to just 33 percent of the secular (a very clear and statistically significant difference).

Respondent age, an important trait with regard to health service needs and utilization, influences satisfaction levels and the degree to which services are felt to have improved or worsened. The survey results indicate a significant age-related decline in the percentage of those perceiving an improvement (from 45 percent of the younger respondents to 32 percent of those aged 65+), as well as a corresponding age-related rise in the percentage of those stating that health services have deteriorated (from five percent of young people to 25 percent of those aged 65+).

The second question in this cluster looked at the survey participants' satisfaction with the services that they receive from their health funds. As noted previously, satisfaction is relatively high, and it is also high compared with previous years (Figure 6). The total percentage of those reporting satisfaction rose this year to 84 percent, versus 78-79 percent in 2009 and 2007; those who are satisfied to a high or very high degree rose this year to 51 percent, versus 40 percent last year and much lower figures during the middle and early parts of the last decade. By contrast, at the "dissatisfaction" end of the spectrum, this year's percentage was lower than last year's (a figure that had remained stable over 2007-2009), reaching the lowest level ever obtained during all the years in which the survey was conducted – 16.5 percent.

Figure 6  
**Satisfaction with the health service**  
 2003-2010



Source: Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

Regarding differences between population groups, no significant decline was found in satisfaction levels as age level rises, as in the earlier, general question. The percentage of those dissatisfied with their health services among the elderly is actually lower than the mean, indicating that this age group's responses to the previous question do not reflect dissatisfaction with the services that it receives, but rather constitute an overall assessment. This finding has been consistent in the Taub Center surveys over the years.

The ultra-Orthodox, whose rates of satisfaction with health services as a whole are notably high, are also highly satisfied with the services that they and their families receive (56 percent); the percentage of ultra-Orthodox who report dissatisfaction with these services is low. The finding affirms the sense of real improvement noted with regard to the health services being delivered to this population sector. The percentage

of Arab Israelis who expressed a “high degree” of satisfaction was also higher than that of the Jewish population (as a whole), although the Arab sector also has a high percentage of those expressing dissatisfaction. Perhaps this points to the existence of disparities in the health services provided to the Arab population in different parts of the country.

#### ***5.B. Failure to Utilize Essential Medical Services Due to the Required Co-payment – Access to Medical Care***

Failure to utilize essential medical services due to the required co-payment is a worrisome issue for the Israeli healthcare system, due to its detrimental effect on health status, particularly among populations groups that feel threatened or beset by economic difficulty. Rates of going without essential health services have become a recognized indicator of utilization patterns, especially with regard to the degrees of access and equity available in the Israeli health system. This question has appeared in the Taub Center survey in most years, formulated thus: “*In the past year, have you or any of your family members refrained from seeking a necessary medical service, such as a doctor visit, medication or medical equipment purchase, etc., due to the price you were required to pay for the service?*”

The failure-to-utilize rate for the population as a whole has been quite stable over the years, with 20 percent of Israelis reporting that they had refrained with varying degrees of frequency, from utilizing a medical service during the year prior to the survey, due to the need for co-payment. This year the mean percentage for the population as a whole declined to 13 percent – the lowest figure obtained for all of the survey years (Table 12).

Of the various population sectors, several weaker groups have generally stood out for the high rates at which they have refrained from seeking medical services or purchasing medications: these populations consist primarily of those whose educational level is low, those with very low incomes, Arab Israelis and the ultra-Orthodox. However, this year

the populations in question also showed a decline in their rates of forgoing healthcare, as may be seen in Table 12. The table highlights inter-group rate disparities for forgoing medical services by income, educational level, nationality and level of religious observance.

Table 12. **Forgoing necessary medical services (at least once): selected population groups, 2003-2010 (percent)**

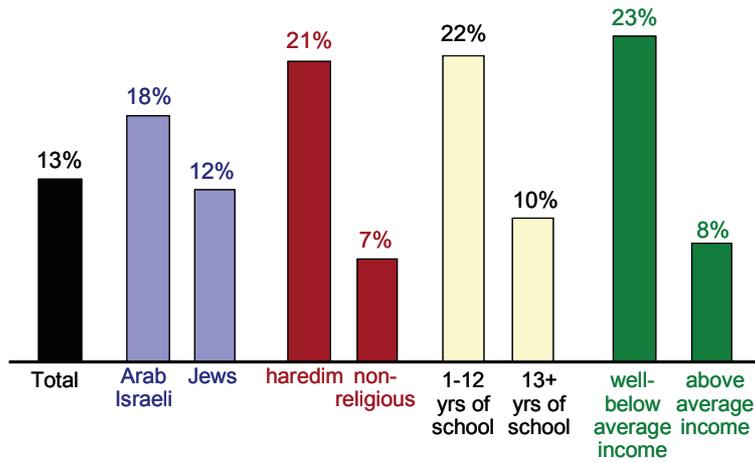
		2003	2006	2009	2010
<b>Total</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Age</b>	65+	29	24	19	10
<b>Education level</b>	Primary-partial				
	Secondary	37	35	41	22
	Academic	16	17	16	10
<b>Religious observance</b>	Ultra-Orthodox	20	39	24	21
	Secular	18	15	12	7
<b>Sector</b>	Arabs	28	22	32	18
	Jews	19	20	17	12
<b>Income level</b>	Far below average	31	33	30	23
	A little below average	24	24	17	11
	Around the average	18	15	18	11
	A little above the average	10	15	16	8
	Far above average	6	5	8	8

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

It is interesting to note that, based on the survey findings, rates of forgoing healthcare have declined drastically for those aged 65+, from 29 percent in 2003 to ten percent this year. Rates of forgoing care for low-income respondents, which had been high throughout the survey years, dropped this year to 22 percent – a figure that, however, is still much higher than the mean. This population may be assumed to include a high

proportion of the very old, and of Arabs. The rate for Arab Israelis declined, but is still significantly higher than that of Jews (Figure 7).

Figure 7  
**Rate of those who forgo a necessary medical service**  
 at least once, 2010



**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

The percentage of ultra-Orthodox who forgo essential medical care is higher than the average, while the rate for those with very low incomes is also relatively high (the ultra-Orthodox likely constitute a significant proportion of this latter group), although the percentages have declined from 30 percent or more to 20 percent. These figures point to the ongoing difficulty experienced by low-income groups in making the co-payments required for various medical services.

It is worth pointing out, with regard to the downward trend in these rates indicated by the Taub Center Social Survey over the years, that the phenomenon came to light in Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute health service function surveys as early as 2007 (Gross, Brammli-Greenberg, Waitzberg, 2008). The decline was found for forgoing medical care, failure to purchase prescription medications, and both, especially among the elderly. The findings of a more recent survey have yet to be published.

### 5.C. *Priorities in the Health Sphere*

Survey respondents were asked this year about their priorities for resource allocation in the health sphere. The distribution by response option is as follows:

Table 13. *“If the basket of health services given to the public under the National Health Insurance were to be enlarged, to which area would you give first priority in the allocation of resources?”* 2010 (percent)

Enlarging the basket of medicines and/or new technologies	53
Enlarge hospitals’ abilities for intake of new patients (more hospital beds)	19
Nursing care for the elderly	15
Dental care for children	9
Mental health care	4

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

The overwhelming majority of respondents gave preference to expanding the medication basket and to allocating resources for the introduction of new technologies into the health services system. This finding is interesting against the background of several severe shortages known to affect the system, such as the hospital bed shortage that is rediscovered on a yearly basis and never fails to “shock” the system’s

leadership. In the Taub Center survey only 20 percent of the respondents chose this as an area needing to be urgently addressed. Another interesting finding is the low percentage who chose “children’s dental care” – this against the background of the decision taken this year to transfer funds from the medication basket to dentistry, in particular for children’s dental care. The overwhelming preference for the “medication basket” is even more striking in light of the decline that was found in the percentage of those reporting failure to purchase medications due to their cost. The exceptionally low level of priority given to mental health by the Israeli public, despite the current crisis in this area and the lack of a clear decision regarding service arrangements for those in need of mental health care, is also surprising. The findings for this survey question lead one to ask whether the response patterns are driven by awareness of major crises actually affecting the medical sphere, or whether they are biased in favor of certain issues that the media have chosen to emphasize from among the array of current concerns in the healthcare system.

## *6. Standard of Living and Expectations Regarding Retirement*

The Taub Index, whose dramatic rise this year has been noted, aggregates the responses to a set of questions regarding changes in quality of life, basic economic confidence, fear of unemployment, and sense of exposure to violence. This section breaks down these various issues and indicates the areas in which major improvements have occurred, as well as those in which a sense of distress still prevails among the Israeli public.

### *6.A. Israelis’ Standard of Living*

The first question in the “standard of living” cluster looked at survey participants’ ability to meet their basic needs. In contrast to the overall score, the responses to this question do not indicate any real improvement over last year (although a relative improvement over 2003-2005 is

evident). Twenty-eight percent of Israelis (less than a third) remarked that their income enables them to meet their basic needs without difficulty; when taken together with those who feel that they can meet their basic needs “to a reasonable degree,” one reaches a figure of 76 percent of all respondents. However, as the issue at hand here is that of “basic needs,” it is worth calling attention to the 26 percent of Israelis who felt, at the end of 2010, that their income did not enable them, or enabled them only with difficulty, to meet their basic needs.

Table 14. Distribution of responses to the question: *“To what degree does your income allow you and your family to meet your basic needs?”* 2003-2004 (percent)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Without major difficulty or with no difficulty at all	22	23	23	27	29	30	27	28
Reasonably well	47	43	41	41	47	45	47	48
With difficulty or not at all	31	34	37	32	24	25	27	26

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

Specific population groups perceive much greater difficulty in meeting their basic needs: noteworthy in this regard are the Arab Israelis at 46 percent; those with low educational levels (up to 12 years of schooling) at 33 percent; and, FSU immigrants at 33 percent.

Income level is the most obvious explanatory variable for differences in the ability to meet basic needs, as reflected, not surprisingly, in a rising scale; however, educational level also has a clear influence on the responses. Percentages are much higher for those with very low educational levels (primary only), half of whom (49 percent) responded that their income is insufficient to meet basic needs. Nevertheless, 19 percent (nearly a fifth) of those with an academic level education also gave this response. This is a higher percentage than that of the higher-

than-average-income group (ten percent). The difference is not surprising, inasmuch as the academic-educated group includes many professionals, such as teachers and social workers, whose incomes are relatively low, as well as FSU immigrants, who in many cases are not employed in their fields of academic training. Still, one may call attention to a certain upward trend, corresponding to a rise in educational level, in the percentage of those able to meet their basic needs without difficulty.

The responses are also ranked by level of religious observance: 20 percent of the ultra-Orthodox and religious stated that their income enables them to “manage without difficulty,” versus nearly twice the percentage of secular (37 percent). At the other end of the spectrum – inability to meet basic needs: higher percentages were found for the ultra-Orthodox and traditional (28 percent), while the percentage for the secular was relatively low (17 percent).

The second question in the standard of living cluster sought to compare respondents’ current standard of living with their standard of living during the past two to three years. For this question a great change was evident this year, with 28 percent of respondents reporting an improvement over the past two to three years. The percentage is higher than in 2009, and constitutes an upturn relative to 2007 and 2008 as well. Those reporting that their standard of living had worsened also declined in number this year, to 24 percent on average, versus 37 percent last year and about a third of the respondents in 2008. The percentage reporting that their standard of living had worsened over the past year was lower this year than for any other period since the Taub Center began conducting its survey, while the percentage reporting improvement was the highest ever obtained.

Table 15. Distribution of responses to the question: *“If you compare your standard of living and your family’s today against the past two or three years...”* 2003-2010 (percent)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Improved	8	12	19	21	26	26	19	28
No change	34	38	43	46	49	42	44	48
Worsened	58	50	38	34	25	33	37	24

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

Regarding the third question in the standard of living cluster, that dealing with respondent expectations that their economic situation would change in the near future, a stronger sense of well-being and economic confidence was found. The percentage of the population as a whole who anticipate that their situation will improve significantly or somewhat is higher this year than for all previous years – 46 percent of respondents. A similar percent of respondents (47 percent) feel that there will be no change, while only seven percent believe that their situation will worsen somewhat or significantly. This is the lowest percentage obtained in years – dropping for the first time below the ten percent level. Optimism within the Israeli public is thus on the rise; the question is whether everyone shares this feeling.

Table 16. Distribution of responses to the question: *“Do you expect that your situation and that of your family will change in the coming year?”* 2004-2010 (percent)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
It will worsen	13	16	13	14	21	15	7
There will be no change	58	58	47	57	54	56	47
It will improve	29	26	40	29	25	29	46

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

Expectations of improvement are much higher among the younger age groups, including the middle-aged, compared with older respondents (the percentage is over 50 percent for those aged 20-49, 38 percent for those aged 50-64, and 24 percent for those aged 65+ – statistically significant differences). Optimism rises in parallel with level of religious observance: the “optimism” rate is 40 percent for the secular (statistically significant differences), 45 percent for the religious/traditional, and 62 percent for the ultra-Orthodox.

The fourth question in the cluster relates to the fear of falling into poverty. The improvement found this year is notably shown in a declining percentage of those who expressed a great deal of fear of falling into poverty (“greatly or very greatly concerned”).

Table 17. *“Are you concerned about the possibility that you or your family will fall into poverty or economic distress?”*  
2004-2010 (percent)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Concerned or very concerned	31	27	18	18	20	18	12
A little concerned or somewhat concerned	43	43	49	24	28	29	34
Not at all concerned	26	30	31	58	52	53	54

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

The degree to which respondents fear falling into poverty is closely and positively correlated with educational level; in other words, a higher educational level confers a higher level of economic confidence on those who have reached it. The percentage of those wholly unconcerned about falling into poverty is high among the academically-educated (75 percent), while the percentage of the academically-educated who are greatly concerned is significantly lower (nine percent) than that of all other education level groups.

The clear connection with income level continues to be evident this year, in the form of discrepancies between the individual's degree of "immunity" and his/her level of concern about falling into poverty or distress. The percentage of those who are greatly or very greatly concerned about falling into poverty declines as income level rises, from 29 percent of those with very low incomes to single-digit percentages for those with above-average incomes. The percentage of those somewhat or slightly concerned is also income-linked, as is the percentage of those "not concerned at all," which rises from 35 percent of those with very low incomes to over 65 percent of those with higher-than-average incomes. Here, as well, one finds a certain narrowing of gaps. The gap between Jews and Arabs regarding choice of the "greatly concerned" or "very greatly concerned" options narrowed relative to last year, although levels of concern expressed by Arab Israelis remain higher: 19 percent for Arabs versus ten percent for Jews. Another notable phenomenon is the very high degree of concern among FSU immigrants: a third of those who arrived in Israel from the FSU since 1990 are greatly or very greatly concerned that they will fall into poverty or economic distress.

### *6.B. Sense of Employment Security*

The fear of losing one's job and of being unemployed is relatively low this year, testifying to a certain rise in employment security. This is reflected both in a moderate decline in the percentage of those "greatly" or "very greatly" concerned (to 18 percent this year), and in percentages of those "slightly" or "not at all" concerned – a high of nearly 60 percent. The finding is consistent with, and presumably is a contributing factor to, the overall rise in the Taub Index. The sense of improvement in this area is shared by nearly all population groups, although it should be noted that Arab Israelis continue to express concern in higher numbers than do Jews. Moreover, income level has a significant and continuous influence on response patterns: low-income respondents are greatly or very greatly concerned in higher percentages (27 percent versus nine percent of

higher-income respondents), while the percentage of those concerned slightly or not at all is relatively low – 44 percent versus 75 percent of those with high incomes, and versus the overall figure of 60 percent.

Table 18. **The measure of concern of losing one’s job and becoming unemployed**, total and selected population groups\*  
2006-2010 (percent)

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Greatly or very greatly concerned</b>					
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Sector</b>					
Jews	24	17	20	19	17
Arabs	34	22	28	38	28
<b>Income</b>					
Much lower than average	43	34	33	29	27
Very much lower than average	10	13	11	6	9
<b>Somewhat or not at all concerned</b>					
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Sector</b>					
Jews	51	57	55	45	61
Arabs	49	40	47	29	48
<b>Income</b>					
Very much lower than average	33	37	39	30	44
Somewhat or not at all concerned	69	67	73	82	75

\* The category “somewhat concerned” brings the distribution to 100.

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

### 6.C. *Expectations Regarding the Post-Retirement Years*

This year the survey included two questions regarding pension arrangements: the first sought to clarify Israeli public opinion regarding “pension arrangements for the population as a whole,” while the second addressed respondent pension arrangements. The overarching goal was to

form an impression of the standard of living that Israelis believe awaits them on their retirement.

The survey findings for this subtopic of economic confidence are worrisome indeed. Half of all respondents felt that current Israeli pension arrangements do not insure an adequate standard of living at retirement age, while another 40 percent stated that an adequate standard of living is insured only “to some degree.” Just ten percent of all respondents concurred, to a high or very high degree, that Israeli pension arrangements are “good.”

Compared with 2003, when an identical question was included in the survey, the percentage of those who feel that pension arrangements are adequate actually declined from 19 percent to ten percent. However, the percentage of those who feel that pension arrangements are inadequate remained more or less stable at around 50 percent of the population.

Table 19. *“To what extent do the government pension arrangements insure a reasonable standard of living for the pension age population?”* 2003 and 2010 (percent)

	2003	2010
Well or very well	19	10
Somewhat	27	40
Only partially or not at all satisfactorily	54	49

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

The following question sought to look at the state of the respondents’ “specific pension arrangements,” over and above their general assessment, as explained above. In many areas addressed by the Social Survey, when one looks at respondents’ answers to questions about themselves specifically, one finds a more positive picture than the general one. However, with regard to the pension-arrangement issue this is not the case. The personal predictions regarding standard of living at retirement indicate that arrangements are inadequate for about half of the

population (46 percent). There can be no doubt that, as the proportion of retirees in the population as a whole rises, this issue will receive greater and greater weight. The fact that so high a percentage of the survey participants feel that existing pension arrangements do not insure an adequate standard of living at retirement – even after the changes introduced in recent years to Israeli pension legislation and arrangements – should serve as a warning sign for social policy makers.

Table 20. *“To what extent do your pension arrangements satisfy your pension age needs?”* 2000 and 2010 (percent)

	2000	2010
Well or very well	28	20
Somewhat	28	34
Only partially or not at all satisfactorily	44	46

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

#### 6.D. *Housing Crisis*

Housing patterns are one of the most important aspects of well-being and a measure of respondent socioeconomic confidence. Home ownership is the primary housing pattern in Israel, with 70 percent of families residing in privately-owned apartments. This entails tremendous efforts on the part of all those seeking to make homes for themselves. Public debate about the ongoing rise in Israeli apartment prices, and the sense that “the dream is beyond many people’s grasp,” also led the Taub Center to reintroduce the issue in this year’s survey. Although this issue was addressed at the personal level, general attitudes were also sought by phrasing the question in terms of “people in your situation.”

The question was intended to elicit respondents’ opinions regarding the possibility of finding suitable housing. Responses were compared to those on an identical question posed by the survey at the beginning of the decade:

Table 21. *“In general, what do you think are the possibilities for someone in your socioeconomic situation of finding an appropriate housing solution?”* 2000 and 2010 (percent)

	2000	2010
Good or very good possibility	32	28
Reasonable possibility	33	28
Little or no possibility at all	35	44

**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

Most Israelis (56 percent) responded that the possibility of securing suitable housing is “reasonable to very good,” but this means that 44 percent of respondents feel that finding appropriate housing is “altogether impossible” or highly unlikely. This percentage is higher than that obtained by the survey at the beginning of the decade (35 percent). Pessimism is stronger among the poorer segments of the population; the most striking finding, beyond the high percentage of ultra-Orthodox in the “pessimistic” category, is the ranking by income level. Income level dictates ability and expectations regarding the “securing” of suitable housing: the percentage who chose “altogether impossible” declines from 71 percent among those with very low incomes (much lower than average) to just seven percent of those with much-higher-than-average incomes.

The ultra-Orthodox, again, stand out for having the highest level of pessimism in this sphere – 75 percent of them responded that it is “altogether impossible” to obtain appropriate housing. The percentage is also high among Arab Israelis (56 percent). These findings may be consistent with the general sense of a housing crisis. They may also reflect a specific problem facing these population sectors: the kind of housing that is appropriate for them does not exist in sufficient quantities to meet growing needs.

## *7. Exposure to Violence and the Sense of Personal Safety*

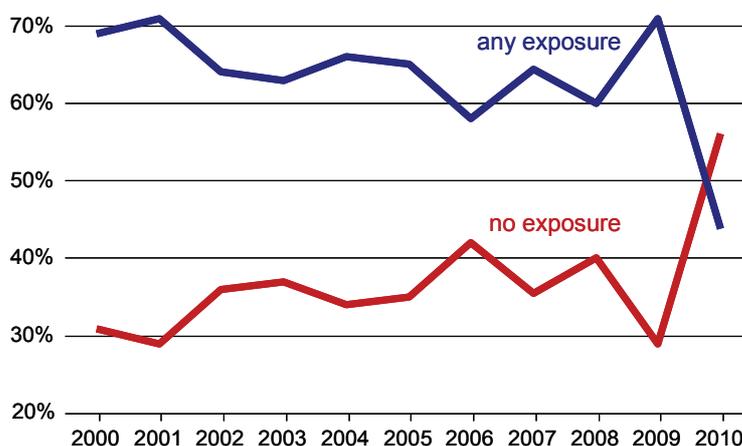
Violence and personal safety issues regularly feature on the Israeli public agenda. This year's Social Survey again included several questions aimed at tapping Israelis' sense of personal safety, and their opinions regarding options for addressing the problem.

### *7.A. Level of Exposure to Violence*

One of the present survey's most surprising findings was that of an improvement in the Israeli public's sense of exposure to violence, despite the considerable ongoing attention paid by the media to incidences of violence in the domestic, educational and public spheres.

Level of exposure to violence and criminal activity has been treated by the Taub Center surveys as an element of individual socioeconomic confidence and as an important component of the Taub Index. Over the last few years, levels of exposure to violence have trended upward, reaching a peak last year when 70 percent of respondents testified to some degree of exposure to violence. This year marked a major turning point: 56 percent of respondents stated that they were "not exposed in any way to violent crime or to criminal acts." The "exposed to some degree" category declined to 44 percent, most of it falling into the "to a small degree" (24 percent of the total) and the "to a moderate degree" categories (13 percent of the total). Interestingly, this year's findings differ from those of all other years in the decade, when rates of exposure to violence (in some degree) ranged from 60 percent to 70 percent.

Figure 8  
**Feelings of exposure to violence**  
 2000-2010



**Source:** Taub Center, Annual Social Survey, various years.

The percentages of those with some degree of exposure to violence are similar for Arabs and Jews, although Arab respondents testified to a high or very high degree of exposure in significantly higher percentages – a finding consistent with last year’s results, although a decline in the level of exposure to violence was registered for both groups. The percentage of Arabs reporting “no exposure at all” or exposure “to a small degree” is also significantly lower than the corresponding figure for Jews (74 percent versus 81 percent of Jews). A negative correlation was also found between reported level of exposure to violence and level of religious observance, with the ultra-Orthodox standing out for their sense of personal safety compared with all of the other population groups; a very high percentage of them report exposure to a small degree or not at all (a

statistically significant difference, with figures of 91 percent for the ultra-Orthodox versus 79 percent for the secular).

### *7.B. Does the Fear of Violence Affect Behavior?*

Survey respondents were asked: “Have you or has anyone in your family changed his/her behavior in order to avoid being exposed to violence?” Of the respondents, 74 percent stated that they had not changed their behavior “at all,” while others chose options reflecting the degree to which they had changed their behavior (ranging from “to a great degree” to “to a small degree”). The question is whether the quarter of the Israeli public, on average, who reported having changed their habits or behavior in order to avoid exposure to violence constitutes a large or a small proportion of the populace as a whole. A comparison with 2005, when an identical question was asked, points to a rise in the percentage of those who “have not changed their behavior at all,” from 65 percent five years ago to 74 percent this year. This response also indicates a change for the better. It is worth considering whether the sense of safety reported this year is related to the great improvement in the Israeli security situation, that is, whether the drastic decline in terrorist attacks has affected Israelis’ sense of personal safety. The change, it should be noted, has not been adequately accounted for and merits follow-up in next year’s survey so that developments in this area can be monitored and the existence of a real trend established.

## References

### Hebrew

- Benbenishty, Rami, Mona Khoury-Kassabri, Ron Astor (2006). *Violence in the Education System in Israel – 2004: Final Report*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, School of Social Work.
- Blass, Nachum and Dimitri Romanov (2010). *On Uniformity in Teacher's Salaries and their Status Relative to Other Salaried Employees*. Jerusalem: Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel (October).
- Epstein, Leon and Tuvia Horev (2007). *Inequality in Health and in the Healthcare System*. Jerusalem: Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel (September).
- Erhard, Rachel and Ziva Brosh (2008). "From 'no problem' to a 'special suit.' How the education system deals with pupil violence." *Pages, 46* (2010).
- Gross, Revital, Shuli Brammli-Greenberg, Ruth Waitzberg (2009). Public opinion on the level of service and performance of the healthcare system in 2007 and in comparison with previous years. Research paper. Jerusalem: Myers-JDC-Brookdale, Smokler Center for Health Policy Research, DM-09-541.
- Harel-Fish, Yossi, Liat Koren, Haya Fogel-Greenwald, Yifat Ben-David, and Shani Naveh (2009). *Youth in Israel, Health, Emotional and Social Well-Being and Patterns of At-Risk Behavior*. The Fifth National Summary of Research Findings (2006), Trends Analysis Between 1994 and 2006 and International Comparison. Bar-Ilan University in conjunction with the Ministries of Health and Education (December).
- Kennet-Cohen, Tamar, Yoav Cohen and Carmel Oren (2005). A comparison of achievements in the Jewish and Arab sectors in different stages of the education system: a collection of findings. Jerusalem, National Institute for Testing and Evaluation.
- Sharon, Dan (2006). School violence: characteristics, causes and ideas. Jerusalem: Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel, Policy Paper (July).

Taub Center. "The Annual Social Survey." In Kop, Yaakov (Ed.). *Israel's Social Services*, various years. Jerusalem: Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel.

### **English**

Blass, Nachum (2010). "Israel's Education System – A Domestic Perspective." In Ben-David, Dan (Ed.). *State of the Nation Report: Society, Economy and Policy in Israel 2009*. Jerusalem: Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel.

Blass, Nachum and Dalit Nachshon-Sharon (2010). "The 2009 Social Survey." In Ben-David, Dan (Ed.). *State of the Nation Report: Society, Economy and Policy in Israel 2009*. Jerusalem: Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel.

OECD (2007). *PISA 2006, Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World*. (Volume I: Analysis).

— (2010). *PISA 2009 Results: What Students Know and Can do –Students Performance in Reading, Mathematics and Science* (Volume I). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264091450-en>.

— (2010). *PISA 2009 Results: What makes a school successful?* (Volume IV).