



Disadvantaged Women in Israel

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The Institute plays a significant role in monitoring trends and evaluating programs to promote the education and employment of disadvantaged women in Israel.

Demography

- ◆ In 2010, there were 3.85 million women in Israel.
- ◆ Of these, there were 778,000 Arab-Israeli women, 60,000 Ethiopian-Israeli women, and 250,000 Haredi women (estimated).

Israeli Women in International Comparison

Israeli women overall compare favorably with the education and employment situation in other western countries.

- ◆ In 2009, 51% of Israeli women ages 25 to 34 had at least a post-secondary education, compared with 42% of other western countries.
- ◆ In 2010, 57% of Israeli women ages 15 to 64 were employed, on par with the average for other western countries.

Behind these averages, however, lies a very different picture when we look at disadvantaged groups.

Education

There are significant gaps in education of disadvantaged women, although considerable progress has been made.

- ◆ **% not completing high school:** In 2010, 59% of Ethiopian women and 41% of Arab-Israel women did not complete high school, compared with only 5% of all Jewish women. Many of these women had not even finished 8th grade.
- ◆ **% of women who have a post-secondary degree or who are still studying:** In 2010, Ethiopian and Arab-Israeli women had much lower rates than Jewish Israelis: 20% for Ethiopians and 32% for Arab-Israelis, compared with 67% of all Jews.

At the same time, both Ethiopians and Arab-Israeli women made considerable progress between 2001 and 2010—from 12% to 20% for Ethiopians, and 18% to 32% for Arab-Israelis.

- ◆ **Matriculation exams:** Among recent high school graduates, the gaps are declining further. In 2009-10, 43% of Arab-Israeli 12th-grade girls and 35% for Ethiopian 12th-grade girls scored high enough on their matriculation exams to meet university entrance requirements, compared with 65% of all Jewish 12th-grade girls.

Girls from all groups are outperforming boys, particularly among the disadvantaged groups. The matriculation rates among boys were 28% for Arab-Israelis and 18% for Ethiopians, compared with 58% for all Jews.

Employment

The disadvantaged groups face numerous barriers on the road to employment:

- ◆ Very large families
- ◆ Cultural barriers to employment
- ◆ Issues of stereotypes and discrimination
- ◆ Low education
- ◆ Language barriers
- ◆ Limited access to employment opportunities

There are mixed results in overcoming these barriers:

- ◆ In 2009-10, 61% of **Haredi women** worked, significantly up from 47% in 2009-10.
- ◆ The most dramatic growth has been with the employment of **Ethiopian-Israeli women**. In 2001, only 30% of Ethiopian-Israeli women were employed. By 2010, the rate more than doubled to 62%.
 - Even among those with less than 12 years of education, employment rose from 26% to 46%.
 - The low levels of education of Ethiopians contribute to a very large gap in average monthly earnings— 4,000 NIS compared with 6,400 NIS for all Jewish women.
- ◆ **Arab-Israeli women** face the biggest employment barriers, with only 26% of 25-64 years olds employed in 2009-10, up from 19% in 2001.
 - 36% of employed Arab-Israeli women work part time, most of whom cannot find full-time employment.
 - By contrast, employment gaps are very small for women with academic degrees: 77% for Arab-Israeli women and 83% for Jewish women.

Policy and program implications

The Institute works closely with the government and JDC-Israel to identify the most effective solutions and to assist in disseminating them widely.

From the analysis of the gaps in education and employment, a number of important challenges emerge.

Significant efforts are needed to:

- ◆ Integrate Arab-Israeli women into the labor force and bring their employment levels up to par with the rest of Israeli society
- ◆ Enhance the earning capacity of women from all disadvantaged groups, through increased education and training. Opportunities for full-time work should be expanded, and the wage disparities between men and women eliminated.
- ◆ Reap the rewards of higher education by shifting women in higher education away from their historical focuses such as teaching to those sectors in greater demand.

Accomplishing these goals requires us to:

1. Invest much more in training and education
2. Continue to experiment with innovative ways of overcoming barriers
3. Expand employment opportunities and open doors to existing ones

Our research has shown that the right intervention can make a difference.

The large-scale investments to support Ethiopian-Israeli women over the past decade are paying dividends. The extraordinary improvement in Ethiopian women's employment can be related to significant investments in the PACT program for early childhood care and the Eshet Chayil employment program, developed by JDC-Israel.

In working on these and other innovative programs, we have helped to identify the most effective ones and to learn how to adapt them to the needs of different groups.

The government is now committed to expanding these programs nationally. As a result, Israel is on the verge of a new era in the extent of investment in the education and employment of disadvantaged women.

As Israel moves ahead with these new initiatives, the Institute will continue to work very closely with JDC, the government, and other partners to realize the potential of these new opportunities.



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