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Annual Survey



Haredi-secular tension. Most difficult conflict in Jewish Israeli society Photo: Gil Yohanan

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61% of Israelis: Separate State, religion

On eve of Jewish New Year, Hiddush association's Religion and State Index shows half of public believes religious-secular tension is most serious conflict in Israeli society. About two-thirds support opening businesses on Shabbat, 62% are in favor of recognizing all types of marriages – but 61% would rather get married in Rabbinate

Kobi Nachshoni

The past Jewish year included an ongoing attempt to [draft yeshiva students](#), emotionally charged [Chief Rabbinate elections](#), the [exclusion of ultra-Orthodox parties](#) from the government, an attempt to impose the [core curriculum](#) on haredi schools, a dramatic High Court decision against the [operation of businesses on Shabbat](#) and an [unprecedented ruling](#) by the Jerusalem District Court in favor of the liberal Women of the Wall organization.

As one of the most eventful years in [Israel](#) in terms of state-religion relations comes to an end, a majority of the public asserts that it's time to separate between the two.

The Hiddush association's Religion and State Index, in cooperation with Ynet – a comprehensive annual research published for the third time – shows that the number of Israeli in favor of separating religion from the State reached a new high in Jewish year 5773, standing at 61% (including 84% of seculars) – a 9% rise from last year.

Thirty-nine percent are against separating religion from the State (83% of ultra-Orthodox Jews, 73% of religious Jews and 54% of traditional Jews).

Most difficult conflict in Jewish society

According to the survey, 51% of the public believe the tension between haredim and seculars is the most difficult conflict in the Israeli society. Right-Left relations came in second, at a huge gap – 23%.

Fourteen percent chose the relations between the rich and poor, 4% said Mizrahi-Ashkenazi relations and 1% chose the tensions between new immigrants and veteran citizens as the most difficult conflict in society. The rest did not respond.

Seventy-five percent of haredim, 80% of seculars, 79% of religious Jews and 58% of traditional Jews mentioned the secular-haredi conflict as one of the two most difficult tensions.

Eighty-three percent of those with an opinion believe the State of Israel must allow its citizens freedom of religion and conscience (95% of seculars and 73% of traditional Jews, and even 64% of religious Jews and 77% of haredim), and 17% are opposed.

Accordingly, 62% support the State's recognition in all types of marriages – religious and civil (including 92% of seculars and 53% of traditional Jews), and 38% are against (96% of haredim and 73% of religious Jews).

However, in any event, 61% would rather see themselves or their children get married in a religious-Orthodox ceremony (100% of haredim, 95% of religious Jews, 78% of traditional Jews

Grim Picture

'Israel like Iran' in freedom of marriage / Ynet

Hiddush association project reveals Jewish state ranks among some of Islamic world's most fundamentalist countries due to severe restrictions that limit options for legal marriage, discriminate against certain populations [Full story](#)

and 33% of seculars). Twenty-one percent prefer a civil marriage (39% of seculars), 13% a Reform or Conservative ceremony (20% of seculars), and 5% are in favor of living together without getting married.

Types of conversion Israel should recognize

Respondents were asked which types of conversion the State of Israel should recognize. Thirty-nine percent were in favor of preserving the Orthodox monopoly (100% of haredim, 80% of religious Jews and 46% of traditional Jews), 36% would open the door to any conversion – including non-religious (56% of seculars), and 25% are in favor of every religious ceremony in Israel and abroad.

As for public transportation on Shabbat, 41% said they support its operation on the day of rest to a limited extent (including 53% of seculars and 40% of traditional Jews), 23% want it to operate as it does on weekdays, 21% settle for the current situation (39% of religious Jews and 36% of traditional Jews), and 15% would cancel that too.

Addressing the opening businesses on Shabbat, 67% were supportive of the operation of shopping centers outside cities on the day of rest (94% of seculars and 57% of traditional Jews) and 33% were opposed (100% of haredim and 69% of religious Jews).

As for kiosks, convenience stores and minimarkets, 59% were in favor of keeping them open on Shabbat (87% of seculars) and 41% were opposed (100% of haredim, 81% of religious Jews and 57% of traditional Jews).

Is there a need for 2 chief rabbis?

Forty percent (56% of traditional Jews) prefer one chief rabbi, either Sephardic or Ashkenazi, 30% (77% of haredim and 43% of religious Jews) prefer two rabbis, and 30% (44% of seculars) believe there is no justification for a rabbinate on behalf of the State.

The Justice Ministry's initiative to declare the exclusion of women as a criminal offense gained the support of 60% (75% of seculars) and the objection of 40% (75% of haredim, 56% of religious Jews and 54% of traditional Jews).

As for Health Minister Yael German's suggestion that organs will be taken for transplantation from any deceased person who failed to sign a refusal, was supported by 54% (71% of seculars) and opposed by 46% (87% of haredim, 62% of religious Jews and 58% of traditional Jews).

Moving on to the plan to advance an equal share of the burden, 35% called for drafting yeshiva students for full regular army service (43% of seculars, 37% of traditional Jews and about 25% of religious Jews), 31% are in favor of forcing yeshiva students to engage in national service (about 25% of religious Jews), 18% agree with exempting yeshiva students whose "Torah is their profession," and 16% are in favor of setting a quota for prodigies who will be exempt from military service - while the rest join the army (about 25% of religious Jews).

However, 53% are opposed to the bill drafted by the [Peri Committee](#) for advancing an equal share of the burden (77% of haredim and about half of seculars and traditional Jews) and 47% support it (55% of religious Jews and about half of seculars and traditional Jews).

Must haredi school teach core subjects?

Seventy-nine percent are in favor of forcing ultra-Orthodox educational institutions to adopt the core curriculum (95% of seculars, 81% of traditional Jews and 57% of religious Jews), and 21% are opposed (91% of haredim).

Among the supporters, 43% are in favor of depriving budgets from institutions which refuse to do so, 37% seek to declare it a criminal offense, and 20% are in favor of providing partial economic support to these institutions.

Seventy-five percent of respondents are in favor of cutting the budget of Torah institutions in a bid to encourage haredi men to go out to work (95% of seculars and 75% of traditional Jews), and 25% are against it (94% of haredim and 54% of religious Jews).

Sixty-four percent are in favor of a government without haredi parties (87% of seculars and

almost half of religious Jews), and 36% are opposed (91% of haredim, 53% of traditional Jews and slightly more than half of religious Jews).

Although such a government has been established, 76% are unsatisfied with its activity in general and with [Yesh Atid](#) party's activity in particular in terms of state and religion issues (an breakdown according to religious definitions found a majority among all groups), while only 24% are satisfied.

Hiddush CEO: Findings 'dramatic'

The Religion and State Index, edited by Hiddush Vice President for Research and Information Shahar Ilan, was conducted by the Smith Institute among 800 respondents – a representative sample of Israel's adult Jewish population (maximum sampling error: 3.5%).

Attorney Rabbi Uri Regev, CEO of the Hiddush - Freedom of Religion for Israel association, said in response to the findings, "There is no doubt that the public is getting tired of the Orthodox monopoly on Judaism, and the demand for freedom of choice in Judaism is increasing.

"Two-thirds of seculars are not interested in an Orthodox marriage. Two-thirds of the entire public are interested in equal rights for rabbis of all streams. These are dramatic results.

"However, it is clear from the results of the index that at least in terms of freedom of religion, a huge gap remains between the public's desire and the government's policy. Indeed, following the elections a civil government was established without haredi parties, as the vast majority of the public wanted, and the coalition's cuts in the system of stipends to yeshiva students in order to get them out to work are gaining the public's wide support and are worthy of all praise.

"Yet the Religion and State Index reveals that the public wants an option for civil and non-Orthodox marriage, wants public transportation on Shabbat, wants recognition in the conversion of all streams, and the government is not doing any of that.

"The coalition parties must take into account that in the next elections religion and state issues will still be at the focus of the public discourse, and they will be required to account for it. At the moment, their record does not meet public expectations. We hope that after the budget is approved, they will also start advancing freedom of religion issues."

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