**Criteria for identifying issues for collaborative social processes and a list of appropriate topics**

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This document details two types of lists:

1. **A criteria list** formulated at Sheatufim for promoting social issues suitable for cross-sector collaborative processes at the national level.

2. A **list of current, burning social issues** in Israel that can be promoted or resolved through collaborative cross-sector processes at the national level.

Both lists are based on the knowledge gathered by Sheatufim in leading and accompanying collaborative social impact strategies: [Collective Impact](https://sheatufim.org.il/en/subject/collective-impact/) initiatives, particularly [5x2](https://sheatufim.org.il/en/subject/collective-impact/story-5x2-initiative/), [the Prime Minister’s Office Round-table](https://sheatufim.org.il/en/subject/cross-sector-dialog/prime-ministers-office/), additional projects such as the “[Life Shield](https://kll.org.il/he/104)” initiative of the National Initiatives Fund, and “[Hamerhav](https://sheatufim.org.il/en/subject/social-management/hamerhav/)” of the Ethiopian community in Israel.

**List # 1: Criteria for identifying social issues suitable for collaborative cross-sector processes**

The list of criteria is divided into three stages, according to the type of criteria, as detailed below.

**The first stage contains six essential criteria for action in a collective impact model:**

1. A **complex social problem** lies at the core of the issue: No singular solution is apparent; rather, a series of solutions is likely to be required. Moreover, there is no single body (including the government) with the means or capacity to solve it on its own; it is therefore necessary to integrate a variety of stakeholders and points-of-view from all sectors.
2. The issue is of national importance: The issue can harness all the necessary stakeholders and bring them to invest in significant resources, so that a meaningful and lasting impact is ultimately achieved.
3. At the present time, there is no satisfactory solution to the problem: The proposed solutions should be considered from a perspective that aims at the common good and at maximizing shared value. If a problem is already adequately addressed, it is possible to improve or to enhance existing measures. If no satisfactory solution exists, a move to attempt it is more likely to lead to an innovative solution and a substantial contribution.
4. Value can be clearly identified for cross-sector collaboration: Harnessing, creating, and leading a cross-sector partnership is inherently a complex, long-term endeavor that requires many resources and inputs. Therefore, such collaboration should only be undertaken concerning issues and situations where it is clear that this is the necessary—and perhaps only—approach that will yield significant value on the way to solving the problem.
5. The subject is measurable: This includes defining measurable goals and the possibility of making a clear assessment of them over time, in order to ensure that the process will have real and lasting value.
6. Issues that have the potential to harness government ministries’ collaboration and leadership: Though difficult to assess, it is important to identify the willingness and capacity of public sector decision-makers to join a cross-sector process, for government partnership and leadership is a prerequisite for the success of such a process in the long run.

**The second stage comprises three criteria derived from the prerequisites for Collective Impact initiatives. These criteria are relevant to the feasibility and success of a collaborative process at the national level:**

1. A shared sense of urgency: Agreement on the definition of a serious and critical condition that requires immediate action to effect change. Sometimes publishing new research findings that reveal the severity of the situation, or present a new way of dealing with it, can serve as a catalyst for creating this sense of urgency.
2. Engagement of influential leadership: Significant organizations and well-known, influential figures coalesce around the issue, working to promote the initiative and serve as a catalyst for its early-stage inception. Leadership at senior levels in all sectors of the relevant field, or those capable of recruiting senior executives at the rank of CEO, work together and collaborate over a common purpose over time.
3. Potential for fundraising: Resources shall suffice for a planning process incorporating a variety of stakeholders, carried out in a manner that fosters a sense of investment and builds an attractive infrastructure for funders to jointly fund the start-up of the process itself. The process will officially begin with the completion of the planning process.

**At the third and final stage, based on our experience, three criteria exert a decisive influence on the feasibility and success of a collaborative cross-sector process at the national level:**

1. An issue that can be addressed through a realistic scale of resources: In other words, resources that can be mobilized under the given circumstances and that can be used to produce proven and sustainable change.

2. An issue that can be resolved in the medium-term: About 5 to 10 years until the pre-determined measurable change is attained.

3. Preference for non-political and broad consensus issues: Such issues ensure higher feasibility for harnessing and engaging a variety of actors from all sectors of Israeli society.

**List # 2: Topics/ issues/ social problems suitable for collaborative cross-sector processes**

Based on the criteria presented in List #1 above, we have identified 10 issues that could be appropriate for a collaborative national initiative in Israel, involving players from all sectors: government, businesses, the non-profit sector, and philanthropy. These appear in List #2, below.

All of the topics in this list fully meet the first-stage criteria, but more detailed examination is required for each criterion listed. This will be addressed as needed. In addition, there may well be issues that do not appear here that may be suitable for multi-sectoral action at the national level. It is therefore recommended that the list be considered as a non-binding initial framework whose value is primarily to identify a range of options relevant for action in the near future.

All the topics on the list are in line with the agenda adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, embodied in its 17 goals and objectives set for 2015-2030 - the **Sustainable Development Goals** or **SDGs**. This agenda outlines the actions of many governments and actors from all sectors. While the Israeli government has not adopted these objectives as a comprehensive framework for action, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Environmental Protection are nevertheless working to promote the issue with the government ministries and other government agencies. In addition, the business sector and the non-profit sector in Israel are also working to promote the sustainable development goals of the UN, and are guided by them[[1]](#footnote-1).

**UN Goals for Sustainable Development in Israel**



**The following are suitable topics for collaborative cross-sector processes in Israel**

1. Preventing violence and increasing personal safety

A. Gender violence

B. Violence in Arab society

2. Promoting employment in marginalized communities

A. The ultra-Orthodox sector

B. Arab society

C. Secondary household earners

3. Reducing poverty rates in Israel

A. Families in poverty / children in poverty

B. The working poor

4. Promoting quality of life and health for senior citizens

A. Alleviating loneliness

B. Claiming rights and services

5. Promoting environmental quality and sustainability issues

A. Protection, development, and conservation of marine environments - beaches, streams, and reservoirs

B. Reducing pollution in Haifa Bay and treating the resulting damage

6. Development of extensive early childhood services

7. Advancing the Bedouin population

8. Promoting food security - prevention of excess and deficiency through healthy nutrition

9. Developing skills and expertise for the future labor market

10. Promoting quality of life and accessibility for persons with disabilities

**The following pages provide brief explanations of each of the topics**

**1. Preventing violence and increasing personal safety**

1. **Murder of women and gender violence in the family**
2. **Violence in Arab society**

According to the National Violence Index released in 2014, about 600,000 cases of violence occur each year, of which two-thirds are unreported. The figures also show that, between 2003 and 2013, the number of violent offenses declined while their severity increased. The volume of offenses is similar to the average in the OECD. The problem of non-reporting indicates lack of trust in the police, as revealed by an Israeli Democracy Institute survey which found that over half of respondents expressed little or no trust in the police. On the other hand, the number of applications to help centers for victims of sexual violence has risen in recent years: about 55% of victims of sex offences are minors, with an increase in juvenile sex offender incidents. According to the personal security survey, 13.8% were harmed by a violent offense in 2013. 60% of domestic violence cases opened in 2015 were shelved, and 76% of sports-related violence investigations were shelved between 2011 and 2014. In 2009, the National Council for the Prevention of Violence in Sports was founded, but the State Comptroller found that it did not develop a work plan or collect data to assess the extent of the phenomenon.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Murder of women and gender violence in the family [[3]](#footnote-3)

According to a report by the Knesset Research and Information Center, in the nine years between 2007 and 2016, 126 women were murdered by their current or former spouses. According to data from project "Tizkor" (Her Memory), in 2008-2018, 218 women were murdered for gender-related reasons, not all of them by their spouses. According to police data, between 2013 and 2016, 113 women were murdered on criminal grounds in Israel, 51% of whom were murdered by their spouses or another relative. 53% of all the murder victims were not Jewish, a proportion significantly higher than the general proportion of non-Jewish women in the Israeli population. About a third of women killed by their spouses had complained to police about violence in the family prior to the incident.

While murder constitutes an extreme case of violence, many women in Israel suffer violence of varying degrees and types. It is widely estimated that around 200,000 women in Israel are victims of physical violence. However, given insufficient data on the number of women who are affected by *other types* of violence—economic, legal, psychological, and other, and in light of the fact that only a quarter of the victims of violence notify the authorities, it is reasonable to assume that the actual number is higher.

On the one hand, in the last forty years there has been significant progress in the state’s handling of violence against women and violence in the family in Israel, through progressive legislation on the issue, ongoing involvement of government committees, and extensive, pioneering civil society activity, which has led to significant public sector moves. Nevertheless, many of the gaps shown in various reports from the past few decades are repeating themselves. It appears that the right way to solve existing problems has not yet been found. It is also evident that the appropriate resources are not being invested in dealing with the issue.

Violence in Arab society[[4]](#footnote-4)

While Israeli Arabs make up about 20% of the total population, 45% of all homicides in Israel are carried out in Arab society; 42% of the serious attacks in Israel are carried out within Arab society; and 65% of women murdered by their spouses in Israel are from the Arab sector.

The Knesset Research and Information Center figures show that in 2014-2016, the murder rate per 100,000 people in the non-Jewish sector was five times higher than the rate in the Jewish sector; 57% of indicted murder suspects were non-Jews; and of the 397 victims of attempted murder, 212 (about 53%) were non-Jews.

Between 2014 and 2015, the proportion of victims of attempted murder per 100,000 people in the non-Jewish sector was three times higher than the rate among Jewish victims. In 2016, this gap grew fourfold: about half of the victims and suspects in offenses causing serious bodily harm were from the non-Jewish sector; about one-third of the victims of serious assault and assault of a public servant on duty were non-Jews; three of the weapons offenses with the highest number of publicized cases involved the purchase or possession of unlawful weapons; carrying or transporting unlawful weapons; manufacture, import and export of weapons without permission - the proportion of non-Jews in the publicized cases ranged between 64% and 84%; in charges of neglect of shooting weapons, the proportion of non-Jews in the publicized cases was 14%.

**2. Promoting employment among marginalized communities**[[5]](#footnote-5)

**A. The ultra-Orthodox sector**

**B. Arab society**

**C. Secondary household earners**

The Israeli labor market has shown a positive trend in the past decade: an increase in labor force participation and a concurrent decline in unemployment. In 2013, the employment rate in Israel in the 25-64 age range was 74.5%, compared with the average among OECD countries, which was 71.3%. Despite the encouraging picture, gaps remain in employment patterns among particular groups in Israel. In 2014, only about 33% of Arab women aged 25-64 were employed, compared to about 71% of all women in this age group. Among men, approximately 45% of ultra-Orthodox men of these ages were employed, a much lower figure than the overall employment rate of men of these ages, which was approximately 83%. In light of demographic developments, by 2059, the ultra-Orthodox and Arab populations are expected to constitute 48% of the population aged 25-64, the primary working years, as compared to 26% today. This process, along with continued disparities in employment patterns among the population groups, could lead to a decline in the overall employment rate in the economy, which would harm growth and increase the incidence of poverty.

Employment in the Arab sector[[6]](#footnote-6)

The employment rate among Arabs aged 25-64 is 52.7%, compared with 81% among Jews. The rate of Arab participation in the labor force is 55.6%, compared with the corresponding figure for Jews in the labor force, which stands at 85.1%. The negative effect of population growth alongside differing proportions in labor force participation is clear, and impacts the entire Israeli economy both now and in the future. However, in recent years, employment rates have been rising among both young people and women in Arab society.

Sources of employment in Arab communities tend to be industry-specific. As of 2013, the majority of Arab men (58%) worked in three industries - construction, industry, and commerce. This contrasts with the majority of Jewish men who worked in industry, business services, public administration, transportation, and communications (57%). The majority of employed Arab women (70%) worked in a number of industries - education, health care, welfare and social services, and commerce, in comparison to Jewish women, who worked in education, health care, welfare and social services, business services, and commerce (68%).

The implications of the gaps in education, infrastructure, and employment also lead to poverty. The percentage of poor Arab families rose from 51.7% in 2013 to 52.6% in 2014. Moreover, the figures show that 37.4% of the poor in Israel are Arab, while their share of the population is, as mentioned, only slightly more than 20%.

Employment among the ultra-Orthodox[[7]](#footnote-7)

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, the employment rate of ultra-Orthodox women in the third quarter of 2018 was 75.5% - 12% above the government's employment target for this population. In contrast, the employment rate of ultra-Orthodox men is 47.8%, while their employment target for 2020 is 63%. For both populations, the wage gaps relative to the overall Jewish population in Israel are still high: In 2016, the average monthly salary and average hourly gross wage for all ages in the 25-64 range were NIS 11,068 and NIS 63.2 respectively: 48.7% and 18.6% higher, respectively, than the averages in the ultra-Orthodox population, which stood at NIS 7,443 per month and NIS 53.3 per hour. The average monthly wage and average hourly gross income of all men aged 25 to 64 were 60.1% and 30.5% higher than for ultra-Orthodox men; the average monthly salary and average hourly gross income of all women aged 25 to 64 were 29.3% and 3.7% higher, respectively, than for ultra-Orthodox women.

Employment of secondary household earners[[8]](#footnote-8)

A study conducted by Dr. Michael Sarel, former research director at the Ministry of Finance, found that as the number of household earners grows, the percentage of poor families declines: the poverty rate in households without earners is 62.3%, compared to 21.8% in households with one earner, and only 2.9% in households with two or more earners. The percentage of poor wage-earning families with one earner was 20.8%, while in families with two or individuals earning a salary, the poverty rate dropped to only 2.5%. Among Jewish salaried families with one earner, the percentage of poor families was 12.7%, and with two or more earners - only 1.7%, accounting for statistical variance.

In ultra-Orthodox families with one earner, the poverty rate reached 47.6%, due to a low level of earning, but the poverty rate dropped to only 9.6% with two earners. In Arab families, the poverty rate with one earner was highest in the Israeli economy - 48.1%; that rate dropped to 10.6% with two or more earners.

**3. Reducing poverty rates in Israel[[9]](#footnote-9)**

**A. Poor children / poor families**

**B. The working poor**

A study based on National Insurance data shows that in Israel today there are 189,000 poor families with a single earner and 67,000 poor families with two earners. The percentage of poor families rose from 9.4% in 1999 to 13.3% in 2015. The number of poor families with a single earner was 105,000 in 1999, while in 2015 it was 189,000. In 1999, the number of poor families with two earners was 13,000, while in 2015 it rose to 66,000. While the Consumer Price Index has climbed 24% over the past decade, average monthly wages rose by only 5.9% during that period, and the minimum wage climbed only 10.5%. In other words, the cost of living has risen, but salaries have risen far less. A family considered poor is made up of parents with three children, where both parents work and their combined wages amount to less than NIS 9,475 a month.

According to data from the National Council for the Child, in 2016, 10% of children in Israel reported that they were going to bed hungry. In 2015, there were 839,377 children living in poverty (including East Jerusalem), and 30% of children lived below the poverty line - four times the number in 1980. Arab children are poorer: In 2015, 65.6% of them lived below the poverty line, compared to 19.8% of Jewish children.

**4. Promoting quality of life and health for senior citizens[[10]](#footnote-10)**

**A. Alleviating loneliness**

**B. Claiming rights and services**

While life expectancy is growing, this trend is accompanied by a number of social and economic challenges. These include impaired economic performance due to the increase of non-workers, frequent morbidity, and multiple falls in old age requiring assistance and even hospitalization. There is a concern about the inadequacy of the number of nurses to meet the needs of disabled patients and the resources they require. Many seniors suffer from loneliness and depression and are lack a social safety net. All of this increases the burden on the social and health care systems.

The number of people aged 65 and over in Israel today is approximately 940,000, accounting for about 11% of the population. By 2035, this population group is expected to grow significantly, reaching an order of 1.66 million people. Already, it is a very significant force in the Israeli economy and its accelerated growth is expected to have a significant impact on it, and of course on the quality of life of these individuals and of their family members. The proportion of senior citizens in Israel (women over 60 and men over 65) who are below the poverty line after welfare payments and taxes is 21%: this is **the highest rate among OECD countries**.

While retirement age marks a landmark in the career and life of senior citizens, in practice when they reach that age, they are generally expelled from the world of employment. At this point in their lives, big changes are expected: There is greater concern for their health at an advanced age; the search for purpose and new goals takes center stage; and sometimes changes occur in social life and interpersonal relationships to which they have become accustomed. Many older citizens have difficulty coping with the new reality, which from an economic standpoint often leads to a sharp decline in the quality of life and in related socio-economic conditions. Sometimes, the new reality can impair the ability of older citizens to subsist adequately.

The data shows that there is a shortage of geriatric nursing beds. According to the Ministry of Health, they have been in decline since the mid-2000s, and approximately 1,000 in-patient hospital beds must be built to keep up with the expected demand. According to the Association of Nursing Homes, as of February 2017, there is a shortage of approximately 6,000 caregivers, with the shortage rising by about 880 caregivers per year. According to the Taub Institute, the contribution of the elderly population to the deficit index will increase from 16% in 2015 to 23% in 2035. Social Security benefits are not generally sufficient and, according to social organizations, 65% of seniors rely on private long-term care insurance. Spending on private long-term care insurance totaled NIS 3.4 billion in 2015. According to the Taub Institute, there has been a 32% increase in the number of old-age pension recipients from 2000 to 2014, with a 66% increase (from 96 to 159,000) in the number of long-term care recipients.

**5. Promoting environmental quality and sustainability issues[[11]](#footnote-11)**

**A. Protection, development, and conservation of marine environments - beaches, streams, and reservoirs**

**B. Reducing pollution in Haifa Bay and treating the resulting damage**

A report by the Ministry of Environment Protection states that significant changes in the Mediterranean basin climate are expected during the 21st century, including an increase in average temperature, and a gradual decline of precipitation by dozens of percentages by 2050. As a result, various sectors of the economy may be affected. The tourism industry, for example, is likely to be affected with respect to beaches and sites located near the sea, due to rising sea levels. The agriculture sector may also be affected by a decrease in rainfall and water quality, as will the energy sector, due to the increased demand for electricity during intensifying periods of cold and heat, which will also negatively affect the cost of energy. In the meantime, we have identified two salient issues that are appropriate for a national cross-sector initiative:

Protection, development, and conservation of marine environments - beaches, streams, and reservoirs[[12]](#footnote-12)

Israel's marine environment constitutes a huge chunk of Israel's territorial area - about 3,950 square km within the territorial waters, and an additional area of about 22,000 square km (!) in the field of economic water. The Mediterranean Sea contains unique biodiversity and provides ecosystem services essential for humans: a food source, aquaculture infrastructure, a source for water desalination, leisure and recreation, energy sourcing, climate regulation, and more. Finding the balance between human use and maintaining the Mediterranean's sensitive environment poses a primary challenge and requires formulating an integrated management policy adapted to international standards. While this policy exists in Israel, its results are far from satisfactory.

Over the past decade, there has been rising pressure to develop the Mediterranean, mainly due to the construction of desalination plants and gas discoveries. The preservation of the sea has transformed from an environmental issue into a matter of national interest. Related pressures have cast a spotlight on a topic that, for years, was out of the public's consciousness, not to mention that of decision-makers and even of most environmental organizations. Despite accelerated development efforts in recent years to utilize sea resources, no system has been forwarded to protect the maritime environment. As of 2018, only 0.3% of the sovereign area of the Mediterranean is protected by declared nature reserves (0% in economic waters); no planning regulations exist for the use of territorial waters; there is no management of maritime resources (e.g. sand); and no legislation exists to regulate state powers in economic waters.

The condition of the beaches and the marine environment in the Mediterranean also affects the condition of the streams that flow into it: A number of national programs for monitoring, supervision, and control exist and operate in Israel in this arena. They are entrusted to several government ministries and state authorities, and involve local authorities as well as environmental organizations and social activists. Yet other types of systemic action may be required here.

Reducing pollution in Haifa Bay and treating the resulting damage[[13]](#footnote-13)

Haifa Bay is one of the major sources of air pollution in Israel due to a large concentration of industrial plants near population centers, heavy transportation, port activity, and other sources of pollutant emissions, combined with topography and climate features that make it difficult to disperse pollutants. Over the years, the Ministry of Environmental Protection has been working to reduce emissions, and in September 2015 it drafted a national plan to reduce pollution and risks in the Haifa Bay for 2015-2020 (Government Decision No. 529), which established a list of actions to achieve this goal.

In practice, however, the June 2019 State Comptroller's report broadly defined the defects in the formulation of this plan--including reporting about its implementation to the public, the extent to which it has met the deadlines for set targets, some of which have not yet been achieved--and listing mandatory issues that are absent from the plan. The findings of the report support the claims of environmental organizations and social activists who have struggled in recent years to stop pollution in Haifa Bay, and present hard data on the rates of pollution and the subsequent damages.

**6. Development of extensive early childhood services[[14]](#footnote-14)**

The early childhood education system (from six months to six years of age) is a split system, i.e. there is no single body responsible for education policy, operation, and supervision of early childhood frameworks. Rather, several bodies are involved: Children from six months to three years old are placed in private care—operating without government supervision—and in government-supervised settings. In 2013, 20% to 23% of toddlers (from birth to age three) were in daycare and pre-nursery care groups that sought and received recognition from the Ministry of Economy (i.e. receiving partial subsidy of their tuition by eligibility rules), which supervised these frameworks based on the Daycare Supervision Law, 1965. During the 2013 academic year, around 116,000 children aged six months to three years attended daycare recognized by the Ministry of Economy. Hence, the remaining children in this age group can be assumed to have been at home or in private settings. There is currently no database in Israel about children being cared for in private daycare or about the private settings in which they are cared for.

In 2014, a government decision led to the formation of an inter-agency team— including representatives of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services, and the Ministry of Finance—whose task was to formulate a plan for the establishment of service centers. According to this decision, integrated health services would be provided at preschool centers in the south of the country, in the realms of welfare and education. The inter-agency team formulated a model for a preschool service arrangement, submitted in March 2015. The team members agreed that the project's management at the national and regional levels should be tasked to the National Program for Children and Youth at Risk, an inter-agency platform operating since 2006, as it already carries out joint activities with most of the partnering ministries. However, according to the staff report, changes to the composition and roles of the management platform will need to be implemented to accommodate the new responsibilities.

Additionally, figures published in 2018 show that the State of Israel's budget for preschool children is the lowest among the OECD countries—comprising only about 20% of the accepted budget in developed countries. For every child aged 0-3 in supervised and subsidized daycare centers or in private settings, Israel invests an equivalent of $2,713 per year, compared to an average of $12,400 per year in OECD countries. As mentioned, only a third of children of this age are in state-controlled and subsidized institutions, but OECD data refers to all children of that age, including those in a private setting.

**7. Advancing the Bedouin population[[15]](#footnote-15)**

About 230,000 Bedouin live in Israel, most of them in the Negev, and they are among the most disadvantaged groups in the country. Approximately 72% of them live in government towns and recognized villages. The rest live in unrecognized villages that predate the establishment of the state. In all of the above localities, public services and infrastructure are partial to nonexistent. The Bedouin constitute over a third of Negev residents, but are allotted only 14.2% of the built localities. They suffer from frequent house demolitions as part of the planning bodies’ rigid enforcement policy. The state has long discussed the need to regulate Bedouin settlement and in 2013 the government adopted MK Benny Begin's Prawer Plan. This plan was based on the recommendations of a committee headed by Ehud Prawer, head of the Prime Minister's Office for Policy Planning, which arranges land ownership claims by handing some Bedouin land to a small group of them and evicting tens of thousands of Bedouin from the unrecognized villages to the permanent settlements. The plan sparked a sharp wave of protest and was shelved.

All of the Bedouin communities in the Negev are ranked in the lowest socioeconomic cluster, with large gaps separating them from the rest of the population: In education, the Bedouin average a low number of years of schooling, the lowest rate of matriculation eligibility, and a high dropout rate. The rate of matriculation eligibility is significantly lower than for Jews and non-Bedouin Arabs (30.3% in 2004). About a third of twelfth graders dropped out of school and over half attended school for only eight years.

In employment, most Bedouin earn below minimum wage, the average wage among them being significantly lower than the economic average. Many families rely on a single breadwinner and a high rate of welfare benefits recipients. As of 2013, the gap between the average wage in Bedouin localities and the average wage in Israel ranged from NIS 3,600 to NIS 4,700.

**8. Promoting food security - prevention of excess and deficiency through healthy nutrition[[16]](#footnote-16)**

An estimated 2.8 million people worldwide die from being overweight each year. In Israel, the numbers are estimated to be about 4,085 annually, of whom about 1,410 die from weight-related heart disease, about 530 from weight-related Type 2 diabetes, about 545 die from heart failure, about 445 from stroke, and about 345 from colon cancer. 25% of the adult population in Israel suffers from obesity, as well as over 12% of children and youth—the highest prevalence among European countries. Among seventh graders, this figure is 12.5%. The proportion of people with obesity in Israel rises with age: for example, about a third of those aged 55 and over suffers from obesity. Women have a higher incidence of obesity: 25% on average, compared to 22% on average for men.

The lower the socioeconomic status, the higher the rate of obesity, with the percentage of obese patients in the center of the country being lower than in the periphery. The issue of obesity is particularly serious among the Arab population in Israel: About half of women aged 50-60 suffer from obesity, compared to about a third of Jewish women.

According to research data by Dr. Gary Ginsberg of the Israel National Institute for Health Policy Research, the economic cost of excess weight and sugar consumption costs the health care system about NIS 7 billion a year. 21% of this amount stem from costs for treating cardiovascular diseases, 21% from diabetes, and 20% from hypertension. Additional costs are incurred from the treatment of a variety of diseases in overweight people, such as stroke, asthma, as well as cancer of the prostate, breast, bladder, pancreas, and ovaries.

In 2018, the Israeli Medical Association (IMA) and the Israeli Association for the Study of Obesity publicly declared that obesity is a disease. In doing so, Israel joined a number of international organizations, including the World Health Organization, the American Medical Association, and the European Association for the Study of Obesity, which define obesity as an illness and even as an epidemic. Obesity is a chronic disease that results from malfunctioning physiological-genetic mechanisms and not from behavioral failure. Recent studies also indicate that lifestyle changes alone are not effective in maintaining weight reduction over time, and that people who have been able to lower their weight have significantly regained most of it, sometimes gaining even more weight than prior to the change.

**9. Developing skills and expertise for the future labor market[[17]](#footnote-17)**

The labor market is dynamic, constantly moving and evolving in the light of globalization, technological innovations, and social changes. A common perception in occupational psychology is that alongside the 'hard' skills (education, experience and training) required in such a labor market, there is also need for ‘soft’ skills related to personality traits, communication and behavior patterns, teamwork and common knowledge management, independent conduct, critical thinking, and digital literacy.

These "flexible" skills are not unique to any given job. There are metrics that try to assess these in a PISA test that examines analysis, inference, and critical thinking capabilities, and a "character strength" test developed by psychologist Jane Smith in which questions assess commitment, responsibility, methodicality, and determination.

The Israeli education system is bound by outdated perceptions of the labor market: there are reasonable grounds to fears that it fails to adequately impart the skills that students need in the future market. Failure to adapt to market demands can seriously harm the economy and the success of individuals in society.

In recent decades, the mix of growth factors in the economy has changed dramatically: Up until 20 years ago, 29% of growth was due to human capital, which fell to 12% in the last decade, with human capital embodied in skills accounting for 21% of the productivity gap between Israel and the leading OECD countries. In digital literacy, there is a lag among Israeli students compared to other OECD countries: 16% of the population has not been tested on a computerized track (compared to 11% in the OECD), and 27% have been rated at high proficiency levels (compared to 31%). One reason is the large gaps between sectors: Secular Jews exhibit good skills, while these are especially low among ultra-Orthodox and Arabs.

**10. Promoting quality of life and accessibility for persons with disabilities**[[18]](#footnote-18)

As of the end of 2016, approximately 1.41 million people who define themselves as having one or more disabilities are living in the State of Israel. The percentage of people with disabilities in the general population of Israel is about 17%. 235,000 people are recognized by the National Insurance as having a 100% disability/ incapacity rate. The annual growth rate of the population of people with disabilities is 2.7%, compared with the growth rate of the general population, which is 1.9%. Naturally, people with disabilities face many barriers to their right to conduct themselves as part of the society and the community around them. One of the significant aspects in this regard is the ability to earn a living, all the more so with dignity. In 2015, there was a 4% reduction in the employment of people with disabilities, and in total only 51% of persons with disabilities were employed. Among the non-working-age population, this figure increased by a few percentages in 2015 to 79%, indicating a widening gap between the populations. In addition to other effects, this aspect causes a 25% lower income in households where people with disabilities are of working age compared to other households. This is without taking into account the fact that in many cases a person with a disability has many more expenses than a person without a disability.

Not all people with disabilities are able to work, but even those wishing to integrate into the labor force face many difficulties primarily stemming from employers’ prejudice and reluctance to accept them. According to the Ministry of Economy, the annual GDP loss to the economy from underemployed people with disabilities is estimated at NIS 5 billion a year. When a person with a disability loses, the Israeli economy and society also lose.

1. [Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs); [Sustainable development indicators of the Israeli Ministry of Environmental Protection](https://www.gov.il/en/Departments/news/government_approved_implementation_of_sdgs), published July 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
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