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Housing, Transit Mobility, and Fertility:

Differences Between Haredi Households in Israel's Periphery and its Center

Pavel Jelnov*

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Abstract

In recent years, the relocation of the Haredi (ultra-Orthodox Jewish) population from Israel's center to the country's periphery areas has been increasing, primarily in response to surging housing prices. This study examines how this migration is related not only to economic changes, but also to mobility patterns and family decisions, with an emphasis on the link between transportation, employment, and demography. The dispersion of the Haredi population from the center to the periphery raises the question of whether a Haredi household in the periphery differs from a Haredi household in the center in its characteristics, the composition of its income and expenditures, and its fertility rate.

The study's findings indicate that among Haredi families that change their area of residence – both from the center to the periphery and from the periphery to the center – the women are relatively more educated. It was also found that the income of young Haredi households in the periphery is lower than that of Haredi households in the center, but their housing expenditures are lower, while their transportation expenditures are higher. The average Haredi family in the periphery tends to have fewer children than the average Haredi family in the center. The fertility gap is partly related to vehicle ownership: a Haredi family with a car has fewer children than a family without a car, and in the periphery, more Haredi families own cars. In addition, an increase of 6,000 NIS in government benefits is found to be associated with one additional child in a Haredi household.

A key conclusion from this analysis is that in some respects, including fertility, the gap in various characteristics between Haredim in the periphery and the non-Haredi population is not quite as large as the one between Haredim in the centers and the general non-Haredi population.

Introduction – Migration to the Periphery

The results of local elections in February 2024 heightened public discussion about the growing influence of the Haredi population on the periphery. For example, Dr. Ariel Finkelstein from the Israel Democracy Institute noted: "From election to election, one can see the strengthening of the Haredim in local government in the periphery. Not everyone can live in Bnei Brak and Jerusalem, and slowly they migrate out."[1] The migration of the Haredim to the periphery

[1] https://www.zman.co.il/468951/popup

is a trend related to demographic and economic processes, driven primarily by the high growth rate of the Haredi population and the sharp increase in housing prices in traditional Haredi population centers, primarily Jerusalem and Bnei Brak.

This research examines the differences between Haredi households in the periphery and the center (in this study, Israel's population centers are grouped together and will be referred to as "center", as are the periphery areas that will be referred to as "periphery"), focusing on the interdependence between transportation mobility, income, expenses, and fertility. The hypothesis tested here is that Haredim in the periphery have lower incomes than those in the center, and that migration to the periphery has consequences on fertility rates and the composition of expenses. Specifically, fertility and the composition of expenses correlate with two factors: lower housing expenditures and the need to travel longer distances for various purposes such as work, education, and family visits. A close examination of the processes affecting the Haredi society is important given their influence on Israel's core socioeconomic challenges.

The first challenge is demographic. Israel is already one of the most densely populated OECD countries (preceded only by the Netherlands and South Korea), and demographic forecasts for the next two decades and beyond place Israel's future congestion far above all developed countries. This poses challenges for the housing market, burdens infrastructure, lengthens travel times, heightens stress on education and healthcare systems, jeopardizes environmental sustainability, and affects many other quality of life aspects (Ben-David, 2018).

The high fertility of Haredi families – unparalleled in developed countries – contributes to Israel's growing population density, with Haredim doubling their share in the population every 25 years – i.e. every generation (Ben-David, 2021). According to demographic forecasts, in about 40 years, half of Israel's children ages 0-14 will be Haredim (Ben-David, 2021; CBS, 2017). These forecasts lead to the second challenge, which is the ability of the Israeli education system to ensure a competitive economy and future quality advantage that guarantees Israel's survival.

While achievement levels of Israel's entire education system in international exams (in math, science and reading) are near the bottom of the developed world, the Haredi education system – which is rapidly growing – does not even teach this material to most boys to prepare them for the modern labor market (Ben-David, 2019). Not only are about half of working-age Haredi men not employed (according to official data), but the lack of preparation for a competitive global economy results in a working Haredi man's income being only about half that of a non-Haredi Jewish man (Karlinsky, 2021; Gordon, 2022).

The employment rate among young Haredi men is particularly low. When they do join the workforce, it is at an age and family status that makes the acquisition of education and integration in knowledge-intensive sectors nearly impossible. Consequently, the combination of demographic trends and an education that does not provide the necessary tools for a modern labor market means that a group whose weight in the population doubles every generation is largely excluded from the productive core of the Israeli economy and is located mostly at the bottom of the income ladder.

Demographic trends directly affect Haredi society itself, including in the area of housing options. A sharp increase in housing prices over the last fifteen years has led many households in Israel to move to peripheral towns. The price of average-sized apartments (four rooms)[2] during the 2014–2022 period in Israel rose by 37% overall,[3] alongside growing disparities in prices between districts. For example, while the average price of a four-room apartment sold in the Jerusalem district rose by about 710,000 NIS over the period, prices of four-room apartments in the Northern district increased by about 321,000 NIS, and in the Southern district by about 485,000 NIS. Regarding price changes in specific cities during 2017–2022, prices of four-room apartments rose by 680,000 NIS in Jerusalem and 463,000 NIS in Bnei Brak. Price increases in more peripheral cities were more moderate: 367,000 NIS in Ashdod, 252,000 NIS in Haifa, 221,000 NIS in Ashkelon, and 107,000 NIS in Be'er Sheva.

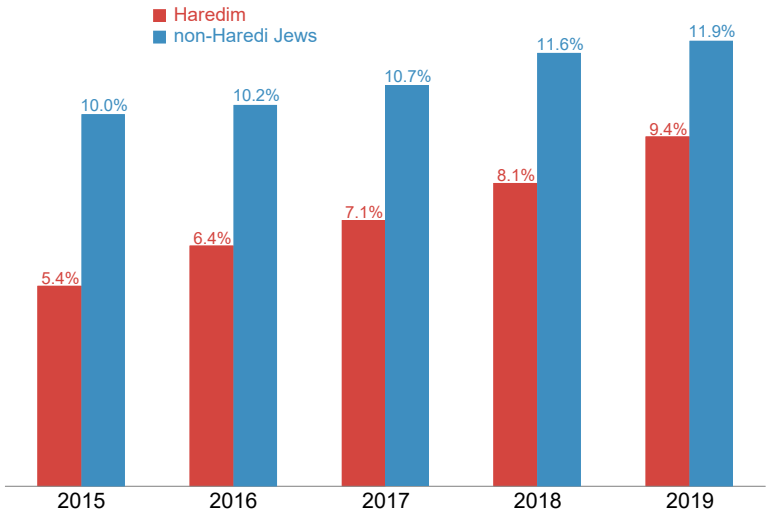
[2] The data below refer to 3.5–4 room apartments.

[3] Transaction data as presented in Table 2.2 of the publication "Index and Average Prices from the Housing Market", the Central Bureau of Statistics' monthly housing price report, various years.

At the same time, during the five years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (2015–2019),[4] the share of Haredi households in the periphery increased by three-quarters, from 5.4% to about 9.4% (Figure 1).[5] In contrast, the corresponding growth rate among non-Haredi Jewish households was about one-fifth, from 10% to 11.9%. Table 1 presents marketing data for apartments designated for the Haredi population in six towns with a particularly high percentage of Haredim during 2014–2017 compared to 2016–2018.

Figure 1

Share of households in the periphery



* Three-year moving average

Source: Pavel Jelnov, Shoresh Institution for Socioeconomic Research
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics

The table also presents the peripherality cluster of each city. This index was developed by the Central Bureau of Statistics to rank all Israeli towns and villages by their peripherality, where 1 is the most peripheral cluster and 10 is the most central one. In the three most central cities (Jerusalem, Bnei Brak, and Elad), sales of new apartments in projects targeted at the Haredi population fell by 56% in 2016–2018 compared to first-time purchases by Haredi households during the preceding period, 2014–2017 in those cities. This followed

Table 1

Apartment sales in predominently Haredi locations*

Municipality	Periphery cluster (2020)	Sales to Haredim 2014-2017	Sales to Haredim 2016-2018	Change in sales between two periods
Municipalities that are centers				
Bnei Brak	10	1,606	1,183	-26%
Jerusalem	9	2,292	603	-74%
Elad	7	326	83	-75%
Total		4,224	1,869	-56%
Municipalities in peripheries				
Beit Shemesh	6	816	7,363	802%
Rechasim	5	160	592	270%
Beitar Ilit	5	479	1,838	284%
Total		1,455	9,793	573%

* Data from 2014-2017 is from Table B12 in Regev & Gordon (2020), Data from 2016-2018 is from Table 1.2 in Ministry of Construction and Housing (2019). Determination of municipalities by periphery clusters from Central Bureau of Statistics (2022b).

Source: Pavel Jelnov, Shoresh Institution for Socioeconomic Research
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics

[4] Peripheral and very peripheral localities according to the CBS classification.

[5] Based on the Household Income and Expenditure Survey and the self-identification of the head of household as Haredi. The data represent a three-year average.

government decision 1823, concerning construction of Haredi-oriented housing. Meanwhile, in the three more peripheral cities (Rechasim, Beit Shemesh, and Beitar Illit), sales of such apartments rose by 573%. These figures follow a sharp decline in marketing in Jerusalem and Bnei Brak and a much sharper increase in marketing in more peripheral towns, primarily Beit Shemesh and Beitar Illit.

The migration of Haredim to the periphery is not only a side effect of rising housing prices but also a result of deliberate policy. As noted, the Haredi population is growing rapidly and its weight in the population is doubled every generation (Ben-David, 2019). Fertility in the Haredi community stands at about six and a half children per woman, far above any other population group. For comparison, fertility among religious Jews is about four children, about three children – and falling – among Muslims, while it is roughly two and a half children among traditional (i.e. lightly religious) Jews, and around 2 children among secular Jews, Christians, and Druze (CBS, 2022a, 2022c). Housing shortage is an emerging problem among the Haredim and is one of their leadership's main concerns.

A notable example of decision-makers' discussion of possible housing solutions for the Haredim surrounds the establishment of the city of Kasif near Arad. In 2007, the government decided to construct the city. Despite significant investments in planning, the Haredi housing minister Yaakov Litzman decided in 2020 to postpone the establishment of Kasif, preferring to advance the construction of another Haredi town, Shafir, near Kiryat Gat and closer to the Israeli center.[6]

The case of Kasif and Shafir indicates the tension involved in the migration of the Haredi population to the periphery. For two reasons, migration to remote towns may lead to a more modern and independent lifestyle among the Haredi population, such as the use of private cars. First, life in the periphery – either in a new town or in a new neighborhood of an existing town – forces the household to find solutions for commuting to work, studies, shopping, and family visits.

[6] In a 2021 interview, Litzman claimed that the establishment of Kasif had not been taken off the agenda, but would come in addition to the establishment of Shafir.

Second, new towns and neighborhoods in the periphery are likely to provide a less developed infrastructure than the one in the central cities. These difficulties not only challenge the migrants, but also present them with an opportunity for entrepreneurship in establishing educational, commercial, and community institutions in the new location.

However, migration to the periphery relocates an already weak population to areas where labor markets and educational opportunities are even more limited than in the center. There is some research evidence (albeit from non-Haredi Jewish populations) that intergenerational economic mobility is lower in the periphery than in the center (Batz and Krill, 2022) and that the return on education is lower (Ben-David and Kimhi, 2020). Therefore, migration to the periphery may influence the lifestyle of the Haredi migrants, but also – either immediately or in the long term – worsen their economic status and isolate them from the modern core of the Israeli economy. Hence, the move to the periphery has implications that go beyond the housing question alone, affecting a broad set of everyday and family decisions relating to mobility, employment, and time allocation.

Data

This research uses Household Expenditure Surveys of the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) for the years 2014–2020, in which Haredi households are identified based on self-definition by interviewees. This differs from other studies that identify Haredim by the last educational institution attended (e.g., Regev, 2017). Identification based on the last educational institution substantially underestimates the Haredi population compared to self-identification (Tirosh, 2016).

The first finding is that household income, whether Haredi or not, as well as housing expenditures, are lower in the periphery (Figure 2). Two important differences between Haredim and non-Haredim (hereto for, the term “non-Haredim” will refer to non-Haredi Jews) can be seen. First, among non-Haredim, income is higher in the center than in the periphery at all age groups of household heads. Among Haredim, income in the center is higher at younger ages and lower at the 40+ age group. Moreover, income gaps between Haredim and non-Haredim are particularly

large among young households in the center, but almost nonexistent among middle-aged households in the periphery. Second, there are significant differences between Haredi and non-Haredi households not only in income levels but also in their composition. Among non-Haredim, the share of income from work is higher, and the combined share of income from work and capital in middle-aged households exceeds 90% among households up to age 40 and is almost 90% among the 40+ age group. An important takeaway is that among older households in the periphery, there is no big difference in income and its components between Haredim and non-Haredim, unlike in the center where the gaps are very large in favor of non-Haredi Jews.

Furthermore, income gaps between Haredim in the center and the periphery cannot be explained by differences in the extent of employment. Table 2 shows the number of earners and hours worked by the average household among Haredi and non-Haredi Jewish households in the center and periphery, by age of the household head. Haredim have about 1.3-1.5 earners both among young and middle-aged households, whereas among non-Haredi households the number of earners declines from 2 among young adults to about 1.7 earners in the middle ages, when some women with young children do not work.

Table 2
Extent of work by households
by population group and age of household head

age of household head	Jewish pop. group	Number of weekly work hours		Number of earners in household	
		Periphery	Center	Periphery	Center
18-29	Haredim	44.5	42.1	1.5	1.3
	non-Haredim	89.0	80.7	2.2	2.1
30-39	Haredim	44.6	43.2	1.4	1.3
	non-Haredim	70.5	70.0	1.7	1.7
40-49	Haredim	46.6	49.3	1.4	1.5
	non-Haredim	76.5	75.4	1.8	1.8

Source: Pavel Jelnov, Shoresh Institution for Socioeconomic Research
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics

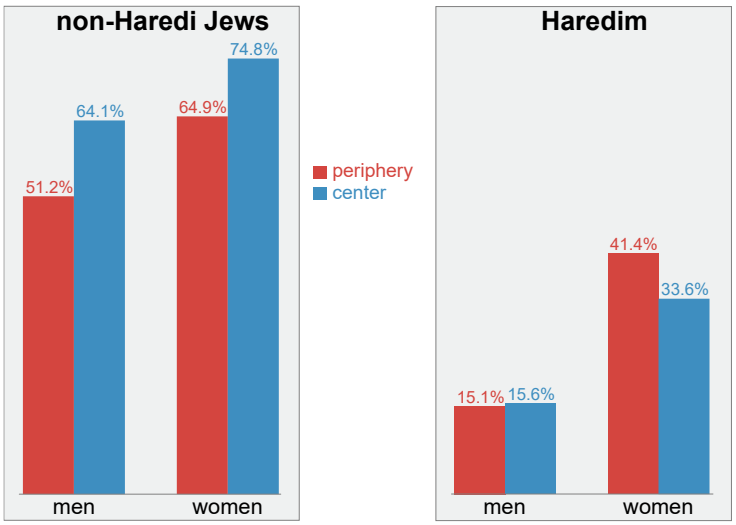
Young households in the periphery, both Haredi and non-Haredi, have slightly more earners than in the center (a gap of about 5-10%), whereas in the middle age group, the gap shrinks among Haredim, while among non-Haredim there are about 10% more earners in the center than in the periphery. In addition, middle-aged Haredi and non-Haredi households are similar to each other in terms of the number of earners relative to young households.

Working hours of Haredi households in the center and periphery and among young and middle-aged households are similar. Hours worked by non-Haredi households are substantially higher than those worked by Haredi households in all age groups

Moreover, the education gaps between Haredim in periphery and center do not explain the income gaps. Figure 3 presents the share of 18-39-year-olds holding a matriculation certificate (Bagrut) or an academic degree, by gender and region (periphery vs. center). Among non-Haredim, the education level is considerably higher in the center (about 13 percentage points higher for men and about 10 percentage points higher for women). Among Haredi men, there is no difference between the periphery and center (about 15% hold either a matriculation certificate or an academic degree in both regions). However, Haredi women are more educated in the periphery – 41.4% hold a matriculation certificate and/or a degree compared to 33.6% in the center. The finding that Haredi women in the periphery are more educated than in the center, yet household income from work is lower in the periphery, may be related to the relatively low return to education in the periphery (Ben-David and Kimhi, 2020).

Figure 3

Share holding matriculation certificates and/or academic degrees



Source: Pavel Jelnov, Shoresh Institution for Socioeconomic Research
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics

The question arises whether the education gap between Haredi women in the periphery and center is due to selective migration or differences in educational attainment among those born in the periphery vs. center. Population registry data analyzed by the CBS Research Department identify individuals who have not moved between periphery and center since 1995, and those who moved from center to periphery or vice versa (see details about this data source below).

Among Haredi women aged 25-39 who have continuously lived in the periphery since 1995, about 37% hold a matriculation certificate or an academic degree, while among those living continuously in the center the rate is 34%. Among those who moved from the periphery to the center, the rate is 49%, and among those who moved from the center to the periphery the rate is 44%. Put together, Haredi women migrating from the periphery to the center tend to be more educated than those who do not migrate, or migrate from the center to the periphery. Women who do not migrate are more educated in the periphery than in the center.

The picture is different among men. Approximately 26% of Haredi men aged 25-39 who have continuously lived in the periphery since 1995 hold a matriculation certificate or an academic degree, while among those living continuously in the center the rate is only 18%. However, among those migrating from the periphery to the center, the rate is even lower – only 15%, and among those migration from the center to the periphery, the rate is 16%. Consequently, migration is selective among women, with educated women more likely to migrate in either direction, but is not selective among men who move from the center to the periphery. In fact, the education level of Haredi men migrating from the periphery to the center is considerably lower than that of the Haredi men who grew up and remained in the periphery.

Expenditure Patterns of Haredi Households

Figure 4 shows the breakdown of expenditure of Haredi households by age of the head of household and region (periphery vs. center).[7] Haredi households in the periphery spend much less (about 30-40%) on housing than those in the center. Food expenditure is similar in center and periphery across all age groups.[8] This pattern also holds for non-Haredi Jewish households (discussed below). Expenditure on education and culture is similar in center and periphery at ages 18-29, but is lower in the periphery than in the center at ages 30+. The same holds for housing

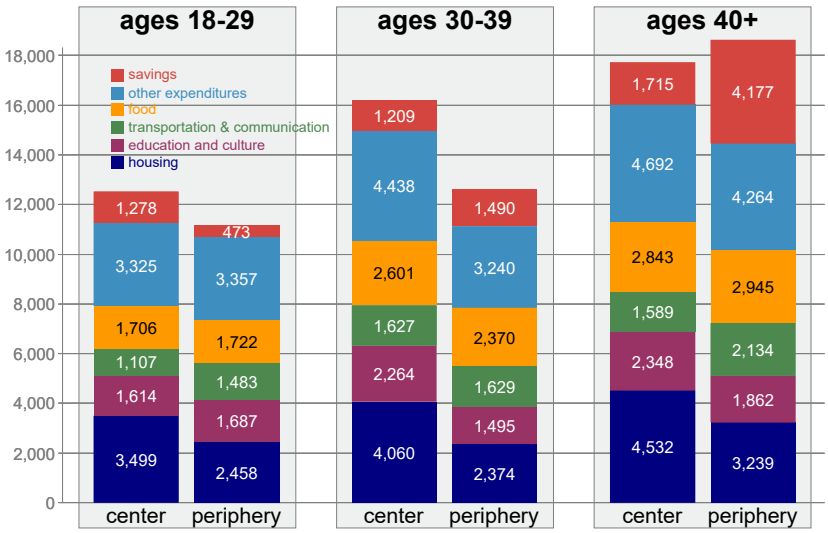
[7] The columns in Figure 2 represent gross monetary income (economic income + benefits and transfers), and are therefore higher than the total uses of disposable (net) income shown in Figures 4–5 below.

[8] A gap of approximately 200 NIS observed in the middle age groups is not statistically significant.

Figure 4

Expenditures and savings in Haredi households

by age of household head, 2014-2019



* Excluding 2020 data due to Covid 19 impact

Source: Pavel Jelnov, Shoresh Institution for Socioeconomic Research
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics

expenses. In contrast, expenditure on transportation and communication is higher in the periphery than in the center. The largest gap between periphery and center is in savings, which is 23% and 144% higher in the periphery than in the center at ages 30-39 and 40+, respectively.[9]

The conclusion from Figure 4 is that the gap in housing expenses explains the overall expenditure gap between households in center and periphery. At ages 40+, Haredi households in the periphery save almost 2.5 times more than those in the center – this is due to both lower housing expenses and higher income in the periphery than in the center for this age group. The question raised by these data is whether young Haredi households in the periphery, particularly those who moved from the center, will also have relatively high income at older ages.

[9] Despite the large average gap in savings, the standard deviation of savings is on the same order of magnitude as the average, indicating a high degree of variation in the level of savings among Haredi households.

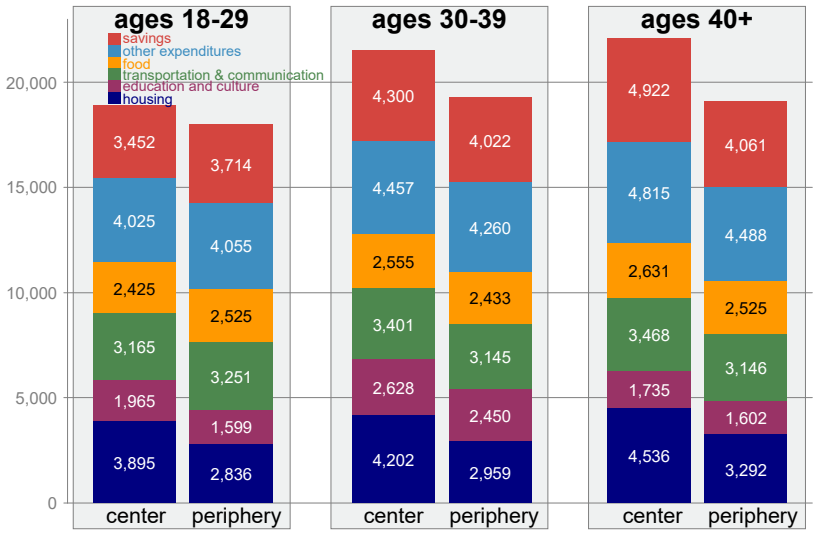
Comparison to non-Haredi Jewish Households

Figure 5 presents expenditure composition for non-Haredi Jewish households. non-Haredim spend more than Haredim in all categories, reflecting their higher incomes. The largest gaps are in transportation and communication. Non-haredim also save more. Among non-Haredim, the periphery-center gap is notable only for housing and education/culture. In other categories, the periphery-center gaps among non-Haredim are small, and the disposable income gap transfers mostly into a large savings gap in favor of the center. Overall, expenditure gaps between center and periphery are similar for Haredim and non-Haredim, except for expenses on education and culture among households headed by individuals aged 30-39. Expenditure on education and culture by non-Haredim is similar in center and periphery, differently from the Haredi households.

Figure 5

Expenditures and savings in non-Haredi Jewish households

by age of household head, 2014-2019



* Excluding 2020 data due to Covid 19 impact

Source: Pavel Jelnov, Shoresh Institution for Socioeconomic Research
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics

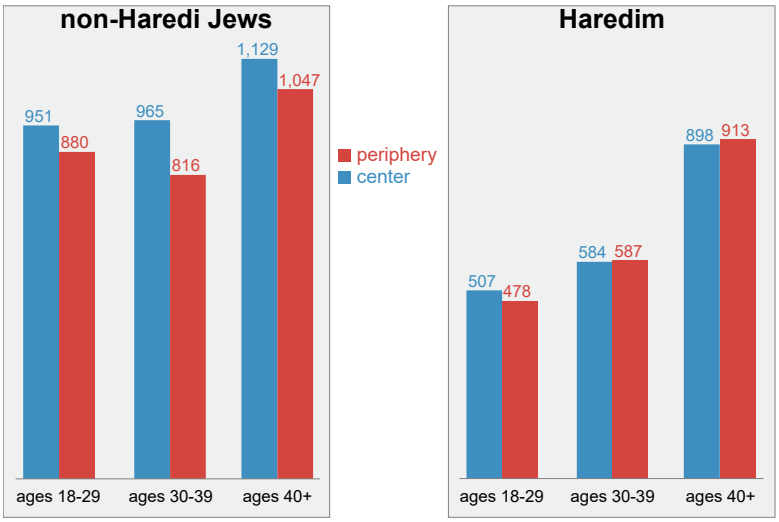
Food Expenditure

The similarity in food expenditure between periphery and center is intriguing, because the household size in center and periphery is different. Figure 6 shows food expenditure per standard household member.[10] There is a clear similarity between Haredi households in periphery and center, whereas among non-Haredim, especially from age 30 on, the food expenditure is substantially higher in the center.

Figure 6

Monthly food expenditure

per standardized person, by age of household head, 2014-2019



* Excluding 2020 data due to Covid 19 impact

Source: Pavel Jelnov, Shoresh Institution for Socioeconomic Research
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics

Transportation

While in Haredi areas in central Israel, it is possible to maintain daily life with limited reliance on private vehicles, the move to the periphery fundamentally changes mobility conditions. Greater distances, relatively lower availability of public transportation, and a wider dispersion of institutions make the private car a central component for managing daily life. This shift in transit mobility is not merely a technical outcome of geography, but has broad implications for work patterns, leisure time, and family conduct. Living in the periphery requires longer commuting distances for work, studies, family visits, leisure, shopping, etc. However, public transport accessibility is lower in the periphery than in the center (State Comptroller, 2019; Bank of Israel, 2018).

Mobility in the periphery is especially important for the Haredi population, which is relatively poor, making the purchase and maintenance of a private car a more significant financial

[10] The number of standard persons, based on the actual number of household members, is calculated according to the following scale: 1 = 1.25, 2 = 2, 3 = 2.65, 4 = 3.2, 5 = 3.75, 6 = 4.25, 7 = 4.75, 8 = 5.2, 9 = 5.6, each additional person = an additional 0.4.

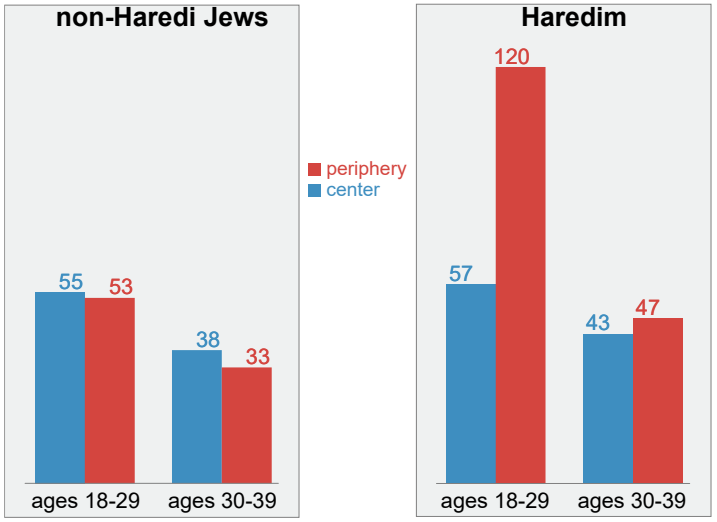
burden than for the non-Haredi population, but simultaneously, Haredim tend to have larger families requiring transport of many family members.

Figure 2 showed that income of Haredi households in the periphery is lower than in the center, and Figure 4 showed that their housing and education expenditure is lower. However, young Haredi households in the periphery spend more than Haredim in the center on transportation and communication. Figure 7 shows monthly expenditure per standard household member on public transportation. Among non-Haredim and among Haredim aged 30-39, there is no difference between households in the periphery and the center. However, among young Haredim, expenditure in the periphery is considerably higher: 120 NIS in periphery vs. 57 NIS in center (110% difference).

Figure 7

Monthly public transportation expenditure

per standardized person, by age of household head, 2014-2019



* Excluding 2020 data due to Covid 19 impact

Source: Pavel Jelnov, Shoresh Institution for Socioeconomic Research
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics

Car Ownership

Another significant difference between Haredim living in the periphery and center is the car ownership rate. Figure 8 shows the share of households owning at least one car. Among young non-Haredi households, car ownership is 2 percentage points higher in the periphery than in the center (73% vs. 71%). However, in the middle-aged groups (households headed by individuals

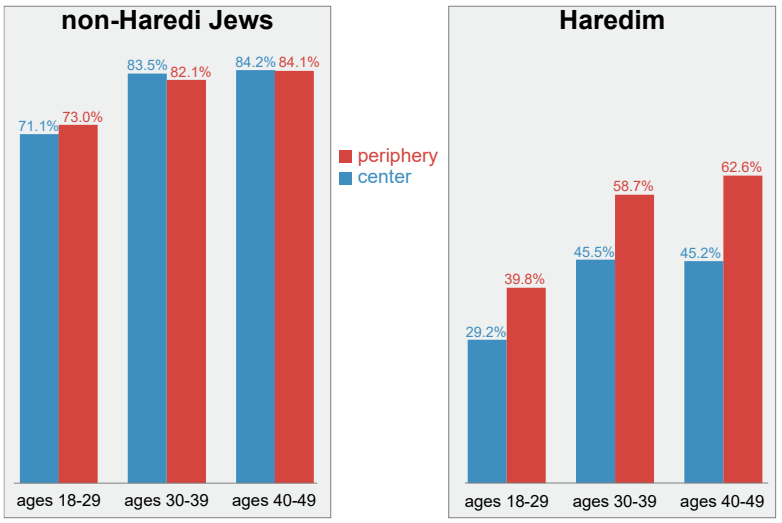
aged 30-39 and 40-49), the difference is very small, such that around 80% of non-Haredi households own a car in both the center and the periphery.

As opposed to the non-Haredim, Haredim living in the periphery have substantially higher car ownership rate than those in the center, and the gap grows with the age of the household head. This observation is notable given the generally low car ownership rate among Haredim. Among young Haredi households, car ownership rate in the periphery is about 11 percentage points higher than in the center (40% vs. 29%), growing to a 13-point gap among middle-aged households (59% vs. 46%), and expanding further to a 17-point gap among households in the 40-49 age group (63% vs. 45%).

Figure 8

Share of households with car

by age of household head, 2014-2020



Source: Pavel Jelnov, Shoresh Institution for Socioeconomic Research
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics

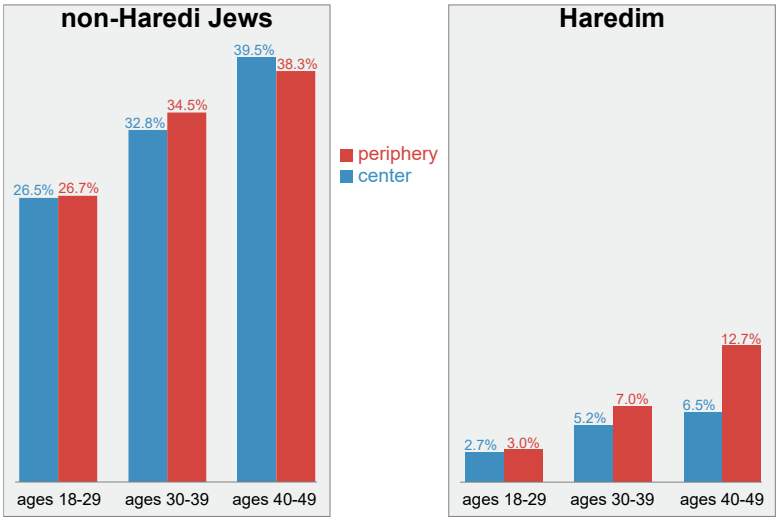
Multiple Vehicle Ownership

Figure 9 shows the share of households owning two or more cars. Among non-Haredim, the percentage owning two or more cars is relatively high and quite similar in the periphery and in the center.

Figure 9

Share of households with more than one car

by age of household head, 2014-2020



Source: Pavel Jelnov, Shoresh Institution for Socioeconomic Research
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics

The Haredi population reflects an opposite pattern. Although the share of Haredi households owning two or more cars is very low, the gap is in favor of the periphery, reaching 6 percentage points at ages 40-49. That is, not only do a larger share of Haredi households in the periphery own cars, in comparison to Haredim in the center, but they also tend to own more cars. Furthermore, there has been no change over time in the rate of car ownership among Haredi households in periphery and center. Thus, the gap in car ownership between center and periphery is observed not only among those Haredim who migrated recently but also among those who have not moved. The primary takeaway here is that characteristics of Haredi migrants are not the main reason for the difference in car ownership rates between center and periphery.

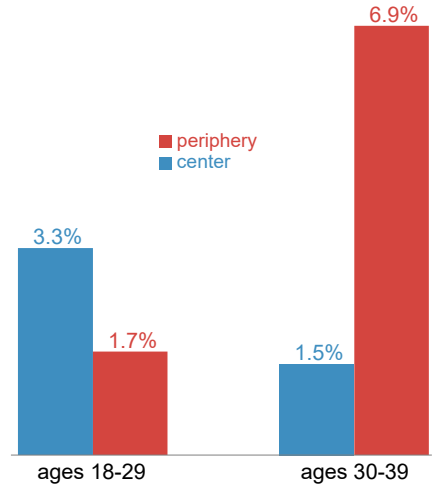
Lifestyle Indicators

Is the higher car ownership rate among Haredim in the periphery an exception, or are there other indicators suggesting a more modern lifestyle among Haredim in the periphery compared to the center? One notable characteristic of the Haredi population is the low rate of television ownership. The overall television ownership rate among Haredim is low, but there is a significant gap between the periphery and the center. Figure 10 shows that few young Haredim own televisions, and the 1.6 percentage point gap favoring the center is not statistically significant. However, among middle aged households, the gap is about 5.5 percentage points (6.9% vs. 1.5%) in favor of the periphery, with statistical significance close to 5%. This means that more Haredim in the periphery than in the center maintain a relatively modern lifestyle, particularly, with regard to television ownership.

Figure 10

Share of Haredi households with television

by age of household head, 2014-2020



Source: Pavel Jelnov, Shoresh Institution
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics

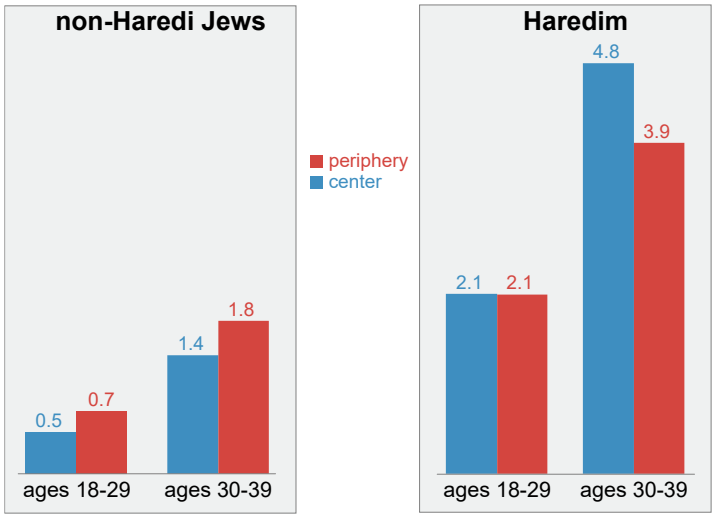
Fertility

Is there a difference in fertility rates between the center and the periphery? The Central Bureau of Statistics' Household Expenditure Survey allows us to focus on the number of children (up to age 18) in the household.[11] Figure 11 shows the average number of children in a household by the age group of the household head. Among non-Haredi Jews, the number of children is slightly higher in the periphery than in the center, and this holds for both young and middle-aged households. The gap is about half a child. Among young Haredim however, there is no difference in the number of children between the periphery and the center. This changes at ages 30-39, when Haredim in the periphery have nearly one child less on average than those in the center: about 4 children in the periphery versus 5 in the center.

Figure 11

Number of children per household

by age of household head, 2014-2020



Source: Pavel Jelnov, Shoresh Institution for Socioeconomic Research
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics

Hence, Figure 11 presents a notable difference between Haredim in the periphery and center and between Haredim and non-Haredim. Non-Haredi Jewish households in the periphery have more children than those in the center, whereas Haredi households in the periphery have fewer children than those in the center. Yet this difference appears only at middle ages. The conclusion is that young Haredi family growth is similar in the center and periphery, but Haredim living in the periphery reach a lower number of children by age 40 compared to those living in the center.

[11] Since the data refer to households, the figures represent the total number of children under the age of 18 born to the female members of the household. However, in approximately 99% of households, there is only one woman with children under 18. Therefore, the fertility measured here reflects the number of children per woman.

To gain an understanding of the factors driving the difference in fertility between Haredim living in the periphery and those in the center, this study estimates the fertility gap between periphery and center, while controlling for household characteristics.[12] The analysis uses data from the Household Expenditure Surveys for 2014-2020 and focuses on households where the age of the household head is 18-39, since households with older heads may have children over 18 that are not reported in the data.[13]

The analysis was also limited to households located in localities with populations under 100,000.[14] The reason for this limitation is that all localities defined as peripheral have populations under 100,000, so the appropriate comparison is between peripheral and non-peripheral localities of similar size. The sample includes 915 Haredi households.

The number of children may depend not only on the variables included in the model but also on omitted ones. There may also be reverse causality between the number of children and the explanatory variables. Therefore, the results indicate correlation only and do not necessarily reflect a causal effect. The regression models can explain about 40% to 45% of the variance in the number of children in Haredi households. These figures are higher than for non-Haredi households, which were also analyzed. That is, Haredi fertility can be predicted with higher accuracy than is possible for the non-Haredi Jewish population.

Figure 12 presents the main results of the analysis, while the full results are reported in Table A1 in the Appendix. The bars in the figure indicate the gap in the number of children between the periphery and the center on the basis of different factors. The displayed periphery-center fertility gaps are net of the effect of the socio-economic characteristics of the household.

[12] Methodological details can be found in Appendix A.

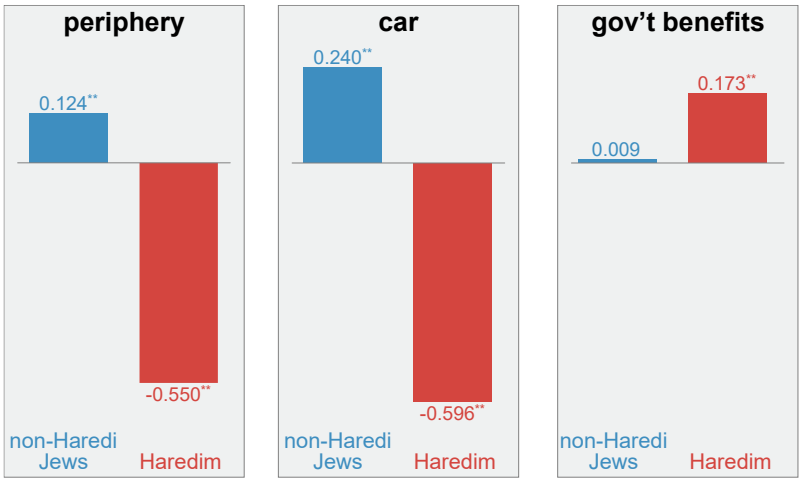
[13] In the Household Expenditure Survey, age is grouped. It is likely that in the 35–39 age group there are children who have already turned 18 and are therefore excluded from the analysis, as they are not reported in the expenditure survey. This introduces a certain bias. However, removing the 35–39 age group from the dataset would result in an even greater bias, as the number of children excluded would be higher.

[14] The cities that were excluded are Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, Rishon LeZion, Ashdod, Petah Tikva, Netanya, Be'er Sheva and Bnei Brak, as well as Jewish cities with populations between 100,000 and 200,000 residents (this list changes annually and, as of 2021, includes Ramat Gan, Holon, Ashkelon, Rehovot, Beit Shemesh, Bat Yam, Herzliya, Kfar Saba, and Hadera).

Figure 12

Impact of select determinants on the gap between periphery and center in number of children per household

2014-2020



* Non-National Insurance Institute (Social Security) benefits in thousands of NIS

** Asterisk indicate statistical significance at the 1% level. All other coefficients are not statistically significant.

Source: Pavel Jelnov, Shoresh Institution for Socioeconomic Research
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics

The first takeaway is that the gap between periphery and center and between Haredim and non-Haredi Jews stands out. Haredi households (with heads aged 18-39) have on average about half a child fewer in the periphery than in the center, while non-Haredi Jews in the periphery have about one-eighth more children than those in the center. Second, car ownership correlates with about 0.6 fewer children for Haredim but nearly a quarter more children for non-Haredi Jews.[15] Third, every 1,000 shekels of benefit payments – excluding National Insurance (similar in its role to Social Security in the U.S.) benefits – especially the "Avrech" stipend, correlates with about one-sixth more children for Haredi households. There is no such relationship among non-Haredim. This finding indicates the possible impact of increasing Avrech benefits on Haredi fertility.[16]

[15] The issue of car ownership and its relation to the fertility gap between center and periphery is discussed extensively in the next chapter.

[16] As an additional robustness check, the analysis was also conducted on a subsample limited to households in peripheral localities compared to those in central localities, excluding localities with a medium level of peripherality. The reduced sample includes 486 households, and the results of the analysis do not differ much from those of the full sample.

The Relationship between Car Ownership and Fertility

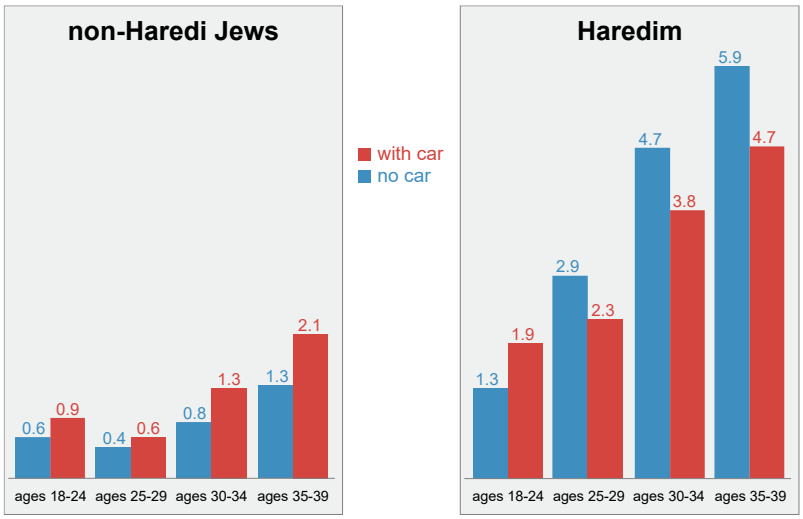
It is also interesting to examine how the difference in transit mobility patterns is connected to demographic decisions. For Haredi households – characterized by large families and a high reliance on community systems – transportation constraints may have a distinctive impact on family size.

The above findings suggest that one of the variables correlated with fertility among Haredim is car ownership. To examine this relationship in depth, Figure 13 depicts the average number of children in households with and without cars by age of household head, comparing Haredi and non-Haredi Jewish populations. As shown, there is a relationship between car ownership and average number of children among Haredim and non-Haredi Jews with household heads over age 25 – but this relationship is completely opposite between the two groups. Among non-Haredi Jewish households (over 80% of which own cars, as shown in Figure 8), households with cars have about half a child more than households without cars. Haredi households at ages 18-24 with cars have about 0.6 more children than those without cars, compared to the gap of 0.3 among non-Haredim. However, at older ages, the pattern reverses, and Haredi households without cars have more children, where the gap is above one child. This finding suggests that for young Jewish non-Haredi families and young Haredi families, car ownership indicates a better ability to raise children, but among older Haredi families, who typically have large families, those owning cars have fewer children.

Figure 13

Average number of children by car ownership and age of household head

2014-2020



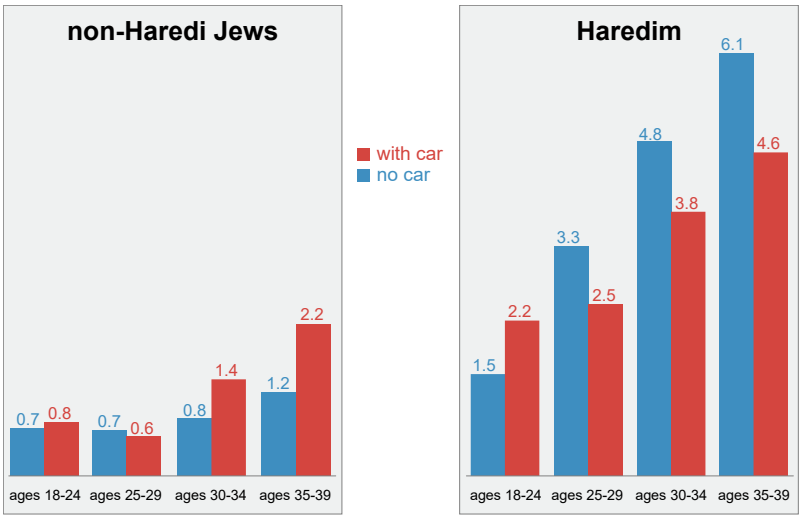
Source: Pavel Jelnov, Shoresh Institution for Socioeconomic Research
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics

To ensure that the relationship between car ownership and fertility rate is not due to other factors such as income, the relationship was tested controlling for many variables (methodological details appear in Appendix A and full results appear in Appendix B). The conclusion is that the findings regarding the fertility gap between periphery and center and the relationship between car ownership and fertility are robust to controlling for socioeconomic characteristics.

Figure 14

Number of children by car ownership and age of household head, after controlling for other explanatory variables

2014-2020



Source: Pavel Jelnov, Shoresh Institution for Socioeconomic Research
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics

Figure 14 shows the predicted[17] number of children controlling for other variables, by car ownership and age of household head.[18] The findings do not differ substantially from those without controls, and fertility gaps between households with and without cars are even slightly larger than without control variables. In particular, Haredi households owning cars have fewer children than similar households without cars. As discussed above, a greater share of Haredim living in the periphery tend to own cars than among Haredim in the center. The results in Figure 14 show the relationship between car ownership and the number of children. Therefore, part of the gap in the number of children between Haredim in the periphery and the center is correlated (although the direction of causality is not clear) with car ownership.

In summary, the results of the analysis show that the relationship between car ownership and fertility among Haredim is positive among young couples (similar to non-Haredi couples) but reverses later in life. Households with heads aged 18-24 owning cars have more children than those

[17] Predicted according to the regression model described in Appendix A.
[18] Full results are presented in Column 2 of Table A1 in Appendix B.

of the same age group without cars. A similar result appears for non-Haredi Jewish families (results are reported in Table A3 in the Appendix). One possible interpretation is that among young couples, the ability to transport children in the family car reduces the logistical burden associated with children and correlates with higher fertility in both Haredi and non-Haredi families.

This result is consistent with previous research showing a causal positive link between car ownership and fertility in China (Liu et al., 2018).[19] However, only among Haredi households does the relationship between car ownership and number of children reverses as the household head ages. In other words, while car ownership and children are positively related among small families, among middle-aged Haredim, who usually have large families, those with cars tend to have fewer children. This finding stands out in particular, compared with the common perception that car ownership reflects a higher standard of living. In the case of Haredi households in the periphery, it appears that the car is not only a means that facilitates mobility, but also a source of logistical burden and daily constraints, which may be associated with more limited fertility patterns.

Other control variables explain only about 4% of the number of children per age group and car ownership.[20] In particular, controlling for TV ownership (as an indication of household modernity) does not weaken the relationship between car ownership and fertility. That is, car ownership is not just another characteristic of household modernity overlapping with TV ownership. Indeed, car ownership is much more common in Haredi households than TV ownership, especially in the periphery.

To summarize the multivariate analysis results, they support the hypothesis that fertility among Haredi households in the periphery is lower than that of similar households in the center, and that fertility of households owning cars is lower than that of similar households without cars

[19] The study by Liu et al. (2018) is based on the car license lottery in Beijing, used as a "natural experiment" that enables the identification of a causal effect of car ownership on fertility.

[20] It is important to note that the analysis includes only households in localities with fewer than 100,000 residents, and the regression results for the entire Haredi population differ slightly. In the full sample of all cities, the periphery coefficient and the interaction (multiplicative) terms between car ownership and age are smaller by about 0.1-0.3 in absolute value, but their signs remain unchanged.

(except for the youngest group, who have yet to complete their childbearing).[21] The relationship between car ownership and fertility among Haredim is not different between periphery and center. The difference between periphery and center stems from the gap in the rate of Haredi households owning cars, not from a different effect of car ownership.

In addition to the analysis of Household Expenditure Survey data, further examinations were conducted using administrative data at the CBS research room. Administrative data allow for controlling for the individual's family background characteristics. These analyses also show that Haredim in the periphery have fewer children than those in the center. Specifically, even when comparing Haredi couples with the same total number of siblings between both partners, couples in the periphery have fewer children. These analyses are available from the author upon request.

Summary and Conclusions

This research examines whether Haredi households living in the periphery differ from those living in the center in terms of income, expenditure composition, use of transportation means, and family size. This comparison is conducted within the broader contexts of (a) high housing prices in Israel, affecting population dispersal patterns generally and (b) the Haredi population in particular, as more and more Haredim move to live in the periphery. It was found that the income and expenditure composition of Haredim living in the periphery differs from that of Haredim living in the center. At the younger ages, incomes of Haredim living in the periphery are lower, but their housing expenses are also lower. On the other hand, those living in the periphery spend more on public transportation, and car ownership rates among them are higher.

At later ages, Haredi households in the periphery are more similar to non-Haredi Jewish households than young Haredi households do. Income from work and savings of older Haredim in the periphery are similar to those of non-Haredi Jews and higher than among Haredim in the center.

[21] An additional analysis found no evidence of a differential effect of car ownership on fertility between peripheral and central areas.

The main finding is that a Haredi family living in the periphery has, on average, about half a child fewer than a similar family living in the center. The gap is smaller among young households and larger among middle-aged ones. In contrast, among non-Haredi Jews, fertility in the periphery is higher than in the center. The research also documents that young Haredi households owning a car have more children, but among older families, the relationship is opposite, so that a middle-aged Haredi household with a car has about one and a half fewer children than a similar household without a car. This result differs from non-Haredi households, where a positive and increasing correlation between car ownership and fertility is not reversed with age. Among non-Haredi Jews, households with a car have one child more in the middle age group than households without a car.

The migration of Haredim to the periphery is related to the intersection between the housing prices crisis in Israel and the demographic momentum of the Haredi population. The policy of founding Haredi-oriented cities in the periphery, either closer to the center (Shafir) or more remote (Kasif), pushes young Haredim away from integrating into higher education and employment. However, migration to the periphery also presents an opportunity to adopt a more independent and modern lifestyle. The findings point out to higher rates of car and television ownership among Haredi households in the periphery than in the center, as well as to a lower fertility rate. Furthermore, the rate of women with matriculation certificates and academic degrees is higher among Haredim in the periphery than in the center.

The migration of Haredim to the periphery should be accompanied by policies addressing both general issues relevant to all periphery residents – primarily improving public transportation accessibility to educational institutions and workplaces, and improving availability of healthcare services – and issues unique to the Haredi population. This population is characterized by low education levels, high fertility, and reliance on community as a means to bridge income gaps,. It is important that new neighborhoods or towns for the Haredi population in the periphery are integrated with programs encouraging education and employment.

In other words, before a decision is made to establish a Haredi neighborhood or town, the government should clearly answer the question of where its residents will work and study. Moreover, the dispersal of the Haredi population presents an opportunity to create incentives for education acquisition, entrepreneurship, and employment. For example, establishing new neighborhoods and towns should be conditioned on including core curriculum studies in schools. Another possible avenue of incentives should be targeted at employers. These could include tax benefits for creating jobs in businesses producing high economic value in Haredi towns.

An open question is whether young Haredi couples migrating to the periphery are influenced by factors affecting their lifestyle and family size or whether they will maintain the family model from their cities of origin. Sociological and economic literature on migration finds that fertility patterns of migrants are influenced both by the norm from which they come and the norm to which they are integrated (Blau et al., 2013, Marcen et al., 2018). Most Haredim belong to closed communities, which do not willingly adopt new norms. Nonetheless, economic and logistical factors may play some role, such that Haredi migrants to the periphery may have a lower fertility than those remaining in the center.

The study's findings suggest that the relocation of the Haredi population to the periphery is not only a solution to the housing shortage, but a process with broad implications for lifestyle, mobility, and family structure. Understanding the links between space, transportation, and demographic patterns may contribute to a more informed discussion of regional planning, infrastructure, and the integration of populations in the periphery.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Details of the Econometric Analysis

The research employs a linear regression model for the number of children in the household. Full regression results appear in Table A1 in Appendix B. The list of explanatory variables includes the age group of the household head, an indicator for periphery, an indicator for TV, total working hours of the household members, income from work, income from benefits, income from other sources, indicators for being the household head, the partner, or both of them students, indicators for one of the partners or both working in a district different from the district of residence, and indicators for the household head, the partner, or both working in occupations possibly requiring the use of a car.[22] The second regression model includes, in addition, an interaction variable reflecting both car ownership and the age group of the household head. The interaction aims to assess the relationship between car ownership and the number of children across different age groups.

The results, shown in Table A1, indicate that the number of children of Haredim is positively correlated with the age of the household head, but from age 25 onward, it is negatively correlated with the interaction between age and car ownership. In addition, the number of children is positively correlated with income from government benefits (including stipends for Torah scholars). The quantitative meaning of this correlation is that an increase of 6,000 NIS in benefits correlates with one additional child in the household.

The analysis also shows that households where both spouses study have about 0.6 fewer children than other households (conditional on other variables). Income from other sources (not government benefits, child benefits, or work) has a small positive correlation with the number of children. For other variables, including working hours, working in a different district, and income from work, the results show no significant correlation with the number of children. Female work in occupations likely requiring transportation is negatively correlated with fertility, but when both

[22] Practical engineers, technicians, agents, sales and service workers, agricultural workers, machine and facility operators, product assemblers, and drivers.

spouses work in such occupations, the correlation cancels out. However, this applies to only about 6% of households, who may have additional characteristics explaining this offset.

Table A2 in the Appendix presents regression results for the number of children in Haredi households estimated using the extended data file. The number of observations in this dataset is slightly smaller than in the original dataset due to the administrative data limitations. In particular, the data includes only individuals born from 1995. However, since data was collected between 2014-2019, all age groups included in the analysis (18-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39) are represented. Thanks to population registry data, it is possible to accurately measure duration of residence in the periphery rather than only noting residence status at survey time. Therefore, the periphery variable in the extended file indicates the duration of residence of the household head in the periphery since 1995 (without considering the duration for other household members).[23]

For comparison of Haredim with non-Haredi Jewish households, the regression model was estimated for non-Haredi Jewish households (Table A3 in Appendix B). Results differ markedly from those for Haredim in Table A1. First, the explanatory power of the models is much lower than for Haredim, with only about 28% of variation explained. Second, unlike Haredim, who have fewer children in the periphery than in the center, non-Haredim living in the periphery have 0.1-0.2 more children than in the center. Third, car owners have more children, like young Haredim and findings in China (Liu et al., 2018). However, unlike Haredim, most non-Haredi households own cars (as shown in Figure 8).[24]

[23] The coefficient of the variable "tenure in the periphery" estimates the average effect of each additional year the head of household has lived in a peripheral area. The limitation of this variable is that it does not account for the age at which the move to the periphery occurred. It is possible that the effect of tenure in the periphery varies across different age groups. A possible solution could be to include in the model an interaction (multiplicative term) between the age at the time of moving to the periphery and the time elapsed since then – an interaction between two continuous variables. However, the coefficient of such an interaction would be difficult to interpret intuitively, as it would represent the marginal effect of an increase in one continuous variable given the level of another. Another limitation is that the administrative data only include the place of residence since the year 2000, so for those who moved to the periphery earlier, the age at the time of the move is unknown.

[24] Sensitivity tests were conducted using administrative data and including regressions where the dependent variable is the total number of children (including those over age 18) and regressions excluding recent migrants to the periphery since 1995.

Appendix B:

Results of the Econometric Analysis

Table A1

Regression results for haredi households

Dependent variable: number of children up to age 18 born in household[1]

	(1) No interaction with towns with population under 100,000	(2) Interaction with towns with population under 100,000
Periphery	-0.550***	-0.496***
	(0.183)	(0.183)
Age of household head (base group 18-24)		
25-29	1.230***	1.609***
	(0.178)	(0.211)
30-34	2.569***	3.096***
	(0.187)	(0.210)
35-39	3.690***	4.363***
	(0.225)	(0.291)
Household with car	-0.596***	
	(0.149)	
Interaction: car and age of household head		
Base group 18-24		0.648***
		(0.323)
25-29		-1.235***
		(0.378)
30-34		-1.533***
		(0.389)
35-39		-1.880***
		(0.436)
Television in home	-0.640	-0.621
	(0.443)	(0.407)
Weekly work hours	0.004	0.001
	(0.004)	(0.004)
Gross household income (thousands of shekels)		
From work	0.017	0.022
	(0.016)	(0.016)
From government benefits	0.173***	0.162***
	(0.043)	(0.044)
From other sources (excl. child benefits)	0.070***	0.066***
	(0.025)	(0.024)
Household head studying	0.214	0.153
	(0.182)	(0.184)
Spouse of household head studying	0.045	0.057
	(0.148)	(0.147)
Both household head and spouse studying	-0.635**	-0.563*
	(0.316)	(0.313)
Household head working in different region than home region	-0.234	-0.183
	(0.164)	(0.159)
Spouse of household head working in different region than home region	-0.221	-0.094
	(0.280)	(0.289)
Both household head and spouse working in different region than home region	-0.010	-0.068
	(0.544)	(0.515)
Occupation of household head	-0.259	-0.238
	(0.158)	(0.156)
Occupation of household head's spouse	-0.579**	-0.496**
	(0.229)	(0.227)
Occupation of household head and spouse	0.661*	0.629**
	(0.312)	(0.314)
Constant	1.486***	1.161***
	(0.237)	(0.232)
Number of households	915	915
Percent explained	0.416	0.435

1 Standard deviations in parentheses, asterisks denote level of statistical significance (* 1% level, ** 5% level, *** 1% level).

Source: Pavel Jelnov, Shoresh Institution for Socioeconomic Research
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics

Table A2

Regression results for Haredi households using administrative data

Dependent variable: number of children up to age 18 born in household[1]

	(1) Entire sample	(2) towns with population under 100,000	(3) Households whose heads have lived in periphery
Periphery	-0.019**	-0.022***	-0.017
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.011)
Age of household head (base group 18-24)			
25-29	1.497***	1.727***	1.738***
	(0.112)	(0.200)	(0.311)
30-34	3.214***	3.052***	3.334***
	(0.130)	(0.209)	(0.294)
35-39	4.531***	4.452***	3.713***
	(0.171)	(0.267)	(0.410)
Household with car	0.848***	0.739**	0.707*
	(0.203)	(0.297)	(0.363)
Interaction: car and age of household head			
25-29	-1.147***	-1.189***	-1.083**
	(0.229)	(0.355)	(0.474)
30-34	-1.337***	-1.292***	-1.420***
	(0.245)	(0.359)	(0.475)
35-39	-1.642***	-1.563***	-0.598
	(0.273)	(0.401)	(0.578)
Television in home	-1.233***	-1.303***	-1.380***
	(0.176)	(0.203)	(0.356)
Weekly work hours	-0.001	-0.000	-0.003
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Gross household income (thousands of shekels)			
From work	0.015	0.022	0.025
	(0.009)	(0.015)	(0.018)
From government benefits	0.216***	0.183***	0.168***
	(0.031)	(0.050)	(0.047)
From other sources (excl. child benefits)	0.024**	0.070***	0.019
	(0.011)	(0.020)	(0.018)
Household head studying	-0.015	-0.011	-0.545*
	(0.133)	(0.202)	(0.278)
Spouse of household head studying	0.002	0.191	0.160
	(0.093)	(0.151)	(0.198)
Both household head and spouse studying	-0.248	-0.202	0.846*
	(0.210)	(0.345)	(0.499)
Number of persons in household	0.077***	0.068***	0.062***
	(0.007)	(0.011)	(0.014)
Constant	-0.142	-0.099	0.185
	(0.187)	(0.287)	(0.349)
Number of households	2,287	872	473
Percent explained	0.486	0.477	0.433

1 Standard deviations in parentheses, asterisks denote level of statistical significance (* 1% level, ** 5% level, *** 1% level).

Source: Pavel Jelnov, Shoresh Institution for Socioeconomic Research
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics

Table A3

Regression results for non-Haredi Jewish households

Dependent variable: number of children up to age 18 born in household[1]

	(1) No interaction with towns with population under 100,000	(2) Interaction with towns with population under 100,000	(3) Interaction with towns with population under 100,000, excluding intermediate periphery level
Periphery	0.124***	0.122***	0.204***
	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.045)
Age of household head (base group 18-24)			
25-29	-0.221***	-0.056	0.034
	(0.049)	(0.113)	(0.140)
30-34	0.417***	0.128	0.257*
	(0.051)	(0.118)	(0.142)
35-39	1.134***	0.544***	0.666***
	(0.054)	(0.129)	(0.148)
Household with car	0.240***		
	(0.055)		
Interaction: car and age of household head			
18-24		0.016	0.118
		(0.091)	(0.110)
25-29		-0.199	-0.313**
		(0.124)	(0.152)
30-34		0.361***	0.242
		(0.129)	(0.155)
35-39		0.696***	0.582***
		(0.138)	(0.159)
Television in home	-1.005***	-0.995***	-0.929***
	(0.075)	(0.075)	(0.096)
Weekly work hours	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Gross household income (thousands of shekels)			
From work	0.013***	0.012***	0.011***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
From government benefits	0.009	0.010	0.001
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.019)
From other sources (excl. child benefits)	0.012***	0.012***	0.010***
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Household head studying	-0.215***	-0.224***	-0.213***
	(0.055)	(0.055)	(0.067)
Spouse of household head studying	0.190***	0.194***	0.118
	(0.071)	(0.071)	(0.088)
Both household head and spouse studying	-0.313***	-0.305**	-0.197
	(0.121)	(0.121)	(0.155)
Household head working in different region than home region	0.117**	0.108**	0.061
	(0.046)	(0.046)	(0.054)
Spouse of household head working in different region than home region	0.237***	0.218***	0.177**
	(0.066)	(0.066)	(0.074)
Both household head and spouse working in different region than home region	0.020	0.034	0.038
	(0.099)	(0.098)	(0.113)
Occupation of household head	-0.183***	-0.173***	-0.211***
	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.046)
Occupation of household head's spouse	0.232***	0.214***	0.246***
	(0.057)	(0.056)	(0.070)
Occupation of household head and spouse	0.218**	0.217**	0.158
	(0.085)	(0.085)	(0.103)
Constant	1.247***	1.412***	1.216***
	(0.099)	(0.110)	(0.140)
Number of households	6,640	6,640	4,515
Percent explained	0.280	0.288	0.281

1 Standard deviations in parentheses, asterisks denote level of statistical significance (* 1% level, ** 5% level, *** 1% level).

Source: Pavel Jelnov, Shoresh Institution for Socioeconomic Research
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics