Hasidic Educational and Economic Outcomes in New York

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YAFFED
YOUNG ADVOCATES FOR FAIR EDUCATION

This report illustrates the economic limitations that result from a systemic lack of adequate education in the Hasidic community. The community operates as an enclave economy that provides some degree of a safety net for its members but this safety net results in an extraordinarily high rate of public assistance, limited income opportunities for members, especially men, and an unfair burden on women in the community.

YAFFED's mission is to advocate for stronger educational standards and outcomes in the Hasidic community. We do this to strengthen the community and ensure its longevity. We believe members with an education will more easily remain in the community and that schools can provide it using culturally sensitive teaching practices and curricula. We believe that the Hasidic community benefits from better education, that its members will **thrive more readily upon being better educated**, and that the **current course**, which is heavily dependent on government funding for individuals and families, **is unsustainable.**

Our opponents speak of lawyers and accountants and the deep education in the Torah and Talmud that their students gain at Hasidic yeshivas. Yet, they do not acknowledge that those lawyers and accountants had to attend quality schools that prepared them for graduate level education in the fields of law and finance. They do not mention that the Talmudic education that students receive leaves them with few skills to enter the job market or even adequate English language proficiency to communicate with healthcare professionals for example.

The data is clear, Hasidic men are nearly twice as likely to be underemployed than non-Hasidic men and their median income is thirty percent lower. In general, Hasidic families are far more likely to be poor, receiving food stamps, and be on Medicaid than non Hasidic families. These are the trends that YAFFED seeks to end. **Education is a foundation to opportunity.** To deny anyone access to an education is not just illegal, it is counter-productive to the goals of a self-sustaining community.

Adina Mermelstein Konikoff, Executive Director

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Introduction

Hasidic male education has been in the spotlight over the last decade as advocates for improved education point to educational deficiencies in the Hasidic yeshiva system and demand greater accountability and enforcement of education standards. In response to these efforts, defenders of the status quo in yeshiva education have pointed to the stellar outcomes of yeshiva graduates, their low crime rate, familial stability, and economic successes.

This report documents trends in Hasidic educational and economic outcomes in New York over the 5-year-period of 2018-2022 to bring clarity to this debate. Are Hasidic males making it financially? Are they finding employment? Or are they suffering economically for their inadequate education?

The data analyzed in this report comes from the American Community Survey (Ruggles et al., 2025). The American Community Survey is a national survey conducted annually. Individuals selected are required by law to respond to the survey (Title 13, U.S. Code, Sections 141, 193, and 221). This protects against the self-selection bias and assures an unbiased sample.

This report looks specifically at Hasidim for whom Yiddish is their primary language. It is in yeshivas catering to Yiddish-language-speaking Hasidim that education deficiencies are most pronounced. Hasidim for whom English is their primary language (including many in the Chabad community and some of the smaller Hasidic sects) are not included in this report.

Hasidic Yeshivas

Hasidic schools are typically gender segregated, with different buildings, teaching staff and curricula for boys and girls. Hasidic boys in New York tend to receive a very limited secular education (see, for example, Finkelman, 2011; Heilman, 2006; Winston, 2006; Berger, 2014B).

Until recently, through age thirteen, most Hasidic boys received one and a half hours per day of basic English and math (Moster, 2017). After age thirteen, most Hasidic boys no longer received secular instruction at all and instead would devote as many as fourteen hours per day to religious studies (Moster, 2017). Some Hasidic yeshivas have made improvements over the last decade in response to advocacy efforts.I In the coming years we will probably have a clearer picture of the scope of those improvements.

Hasidic girls, however, typically receive a better secular education than their male counterparts. Most New York Hasidic girls' schools do not offer their students a regents curriculum, but they do provide instruction in subjects such as English, math, history, and a religiously-sensitive science curriculum. Girls are thus more likely to be literate in the English language as well as to speak the English language amongst themselves, while their male family members might not be able to communicate functionally in the English language (see Fader, 2001).

On the other hand, Hasidic boys are privileged to a copious religious education that includes the study of Talmud and other religious texts, while Hasidic girls receive a more limited religious education. Perhaps ironically **Hasidic boys can engage with texts in multiple languages (in ancient Hebrew, Yiddish, and Aramaic)** despite being functionally illiterate in the English language. *Hasidic girls, by contrast, are often bilingual in Yiddish and English. The language deficiency suffered by the boys will often inevitably lead to difficulty entering the job market.

* We use the phrase "functionally illiterate" rather than the term "illiterate" when describing Hasidic boys' English language abilities for the following reason: someone who is illiterate is one who cannot speak/read/write in the language at all. Hasidic boys do learn some English in their schools and are not illiterate. "Functional literacy," on the other hand, denotes that individuals have enough skills in the English language to function in their society – to secure employment that requires basic English language skills, for example. That is where Hasidic men are lacking. While they have some English speaking and reading abilities, most do not have the proficiency in the English language that would be required of them to hold down a job among English language speakers.

Method

This report analyzes data from the American Community Survey over the 5-year period of 2018-2022 to document demographic trends among Yiddish-speaking Hasidic New Yorkers to shed light on the relationship between Hasidic yeshiva education in Yiddish-speaking communities and various measures, including: English language proficiency, higher educational attainments, employment, income, and poverty. This report compares Hasidic male outcomes to Hasidic female outcomes, and Hasidic male outcomes to the outcomes of non-Hasidic male New Yorkers. This set of five years was selected as it was the most recent data available at the time the data was analyzed for this report. The five years also allow for a larger sample size and more accurate results than relying on data for the single most recent year.*

This report uses the variable Yiddish Language as a proxy for Yiddish-language-speaking Hasidim. The variable "Language" in the ACS dataset identifies the language spoken in the respondent's home. In analyzing the data for this report, frequency weights were used for greater accuracy. Frequency weights make adjustments from the sample so that the conclusions drawn reflect the total population. Throughout this report, percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. (In some cases this means that a total will add up to just over or just under 100.)

Note: The five-year sample 2018-2022 included the Covid pandemic year. Most metrics in this report were not affected by the pandemic. In those cases, all five years of data were used. The one metric most affected by the pandemic was employment: unemployment went up across New York in 2020, likely due to pandemic-related shutdowns. When looking at unemployment in this report, 2020 data is omitted. For the other items measured, 2020 data was included.

* This report uses ACS data from 2018-2022 with the exception of the section on industries of employment. For this section, data was analyzed from the 15-year period spanning 2009-2023. This yielded a greater sample and allowed for more accurate results in industries where less than 2% of the population were working.

The Ethnic Enclave Economy

This report puts Hasidic socioeconomic outcomes in the context of the Hasidic ethnic enclave economy, an economy that functions differently than the mainstream economy. The nature of the Hasidic economy comes with unique strengths and weaknesses that set it apart from the mainstream economy.

In an ethnic enclave economy, members of the ethnic group work for each other or in related lines of work; live near each other in ethnic neighborhoods; establish cultural institutions like schools in their communities; have a high degree of social cohesion; and work near each other (see Bonacich, 1973; Waldinger, 1993; Goldscheider, 1986 ; Nee and Sanders, 1987; Portes, 1981). *The Hasidic economy exhibits the features of the ethnic enclave economy: many Hasidim work for Hasidic employers; many work in lines of work where other Hasidim are clustered (for example, in Amazon businesses; in wholesale; in education; in electronics); and Hasidim live near each other and often work near each other as well.

The Benefits and Detriments of the Ethnic Enclave Economy

Ethnic enclave economies offer many benefits to members of the ethnicity but this economy also has some drawbacks. Members benefit from participating in their ethnic enclave economy because it offers them employment options they would not have in the outside economy, whether due to discrimination against members of the ethnic group or to their underqualification for jobs in the mainstream economy **(often due to a lack of proficiency in the English language)**. Additionally, working in the same line of work as co-ethnics can lend members of the group a business advantage as members share knowledge and support each other in the industries where they cluster. In financially successful ethnic enclave economies, ethnic businesses are often integrated with each other rather than in competition with one another (Wilson and Martin, 1982).

Despite (legitimate) contentions that Hasidic poverty is a result of their inadequate education, members of the Hasidic community also do suffer real discrimination. **Participating in the enclave economy protects Hasidim from discriminatory practices in the outside economy.

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* Bonacich introduced the concept of the middleman minority, the theoretical precursor of the ethnic enclave economy. His theoretical contributions are included here under the heading of the ethnic enclave economy.

** Hasidim, in 1984, were designated a “disadvantaged minority” by then President Reagan, entitling them to certain benefits reserved for specific ethnic minorities with that status (for more on this, see Kranzler, 1995; see also Deutsch and Casper, 2021). Though in part their disadvantage stems from the deficiencies in their education, research on former Hasidim has highlighted the discrimination they felt in the outside economy when they dressed conspicuously Hasidic compared to after they stopped wearing Hasidic garb; or when they went by a Hasidic name compared to after they anglicized their names (see Moster, 2024).

While it offers them the benefit of employment without discrimination, sometimes that comes at the expense of a higher status job they might have been qualified for in the outside economy (see Portes, 2010). Ethnic enclave economies provide some employment over unemployment (see Portes & Shafer, 2007), though some argue that members of ethnic enclave economies are trading unemployment for underemployment (see Light et al. 1994). In other words, they have jobs, but those jobs are less likely to be full-time, limiting their earning potential.

The ethnic enclave economy also offers social benefits: when an ethnic group's businesses and institutions are in geographic proximity to each other, these spaces will often come to serve multiple functions, including social functions (see Zhou and Cho, 2010, p. 91). In the Haredi community, many schools double as social halls and wedding halls; and office buildings double as makeshift synagogues where employees can pray together during the workday. In this way, the ethnic enclave economy strengthens social ties within the ethnic community (see Zhou and Cho, 2010). In a world facing a loneliness epidemic, the ethnic enclave economy can be a bastion against loneliness.

Benefits

Employment opportunities

Protects against discrimination

Room for growth and upward mobility

Business advantage through ethnic networks in specific industries

Strengthens social ties within the group

Detriments

Underemployment

Lower pay

Missed opportunities in other sectors due to lack of qualifications (education/language)

People's businesses and economic stability can suffer if they are shunned by the ethnic group

Key Findings

English language speaking ability:

Hasidic male youth have poorer English language speaking skills than both Hasidic female youth and other New York youth for whom English is not the language spoken at home. Seventy percent of Hasidic male youth did not speak English “very well” compared to 50% of Hasidic girls and 20% of non-Hasidic youth.

Employment and Labor Force Participation:

Hasidic males are marginally more likely to participate in the labor force and to be employed than their non-Hasidic counterparts. However, Hasidic employed males were more likely to be underemployed (working fewer than 35 hours per week) than their non-Hasidic male counterparts. Thirty percent of Hasidic males were employed fewer than 35 hours per week compared to about 15% of non-Hasidic males.

Sectors of Work:

Most Hasidic males work for salary or wages in the private sector. Among the remaining Hasidim working outside of this sector, Hasidim are overrepresented in the non-profit sector, and they are significantly less likely to work for the government.

Industries of Work:

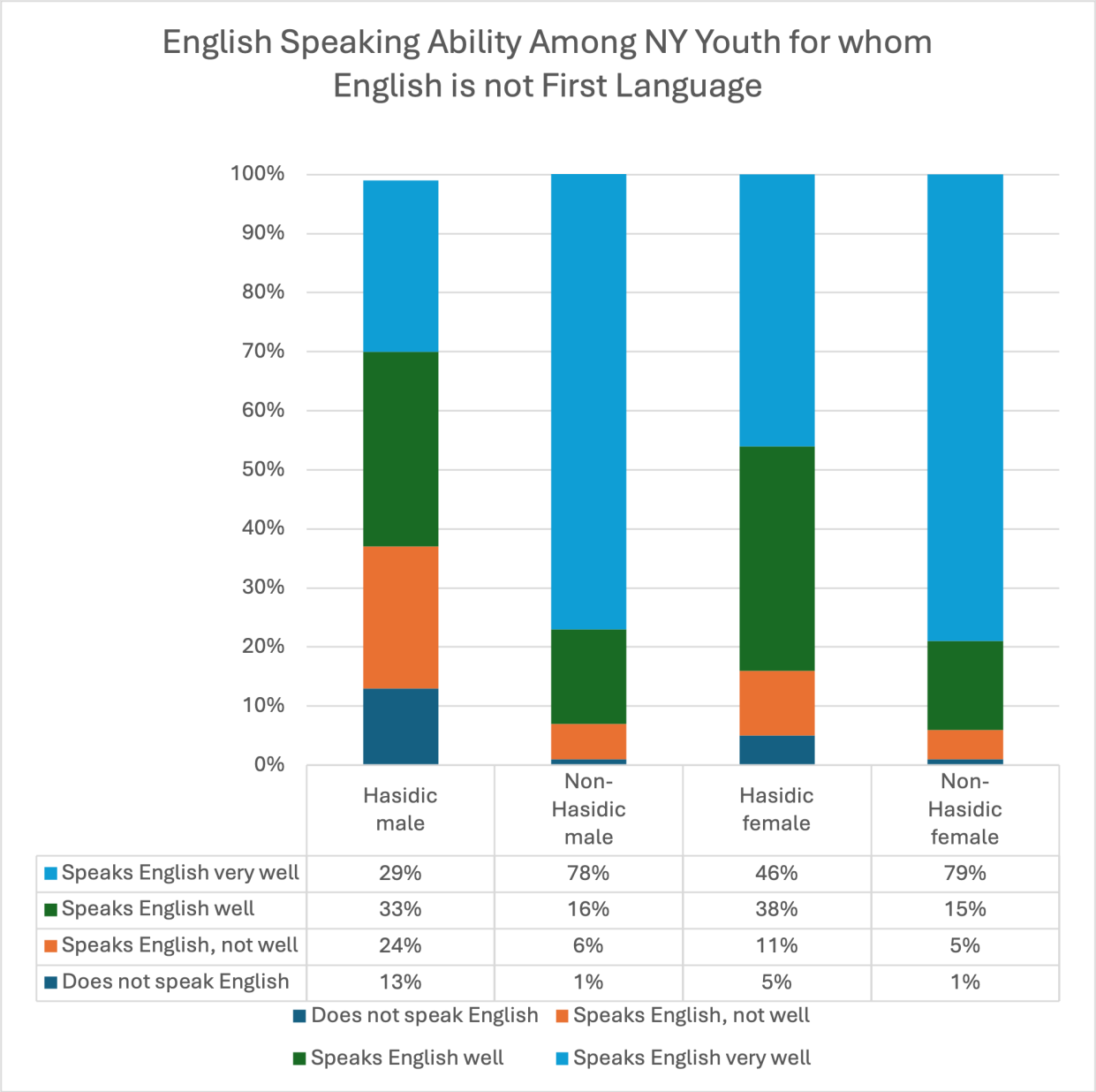
Ironically given their overall low levels of education, Hasidic men are overrepresented in the education services industry compared to their non-Hasidic counterparts. They also cluster in the healthcare, retail, wholesale, and manufacturing industries. Hasidic men are underrepresented in the legal professions and in medicine (among doctors, specifically), though they are equally represented in the accounting and auditing industry compared to their non-Hasidic male counterparts, and are overrepresented in the clergy and religious work compared to non-Hasidim.

Income and Poverty:

Hasidic male median income is 30% lower than that of their non-Hasidic counterparts. Hasidic households are far more likely to be poor or near poor; to be receiving food stamps; and to be on Medicaid, than non-Hasidic households in New York.

English Language Speaking Proficiency

The chart below looks at English speaking ability among New York youth (ages 5 to 18) for whom English is not their first language. The data is limited to those of school age, and excludes very young children (under age 5) who are still learning to speak.



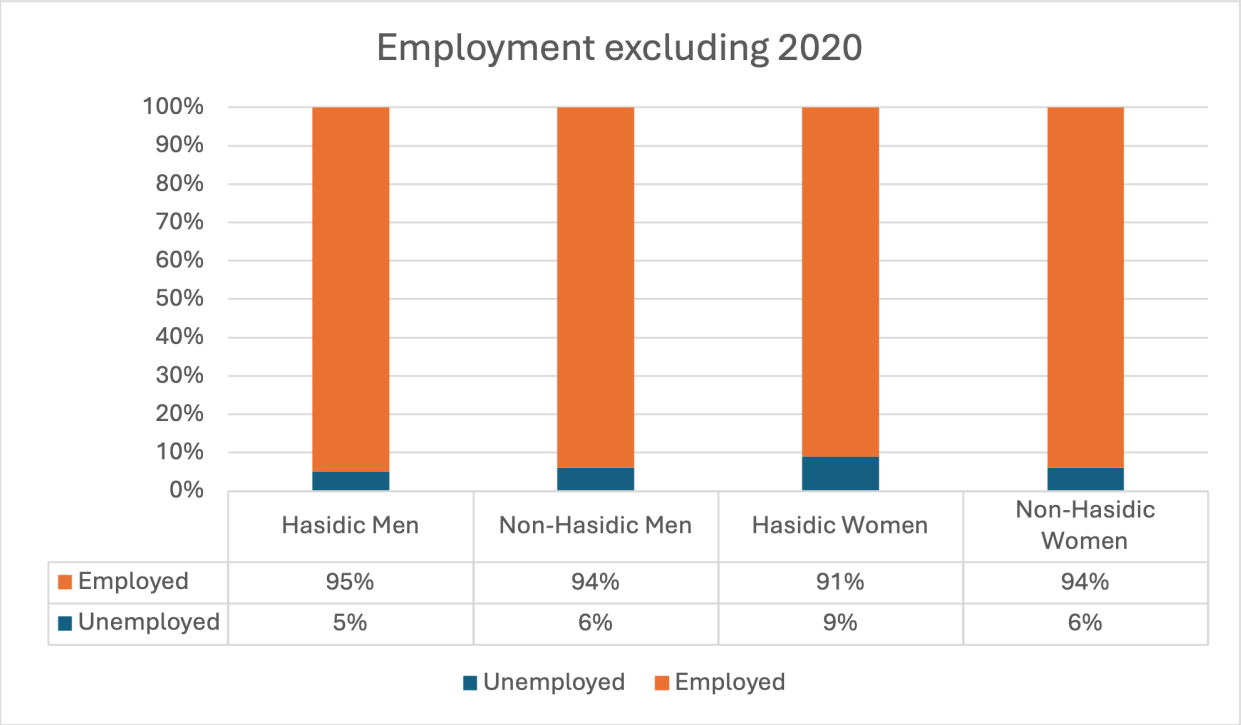
	Hasidic male	Non-Hasidic male	Hasidic female	Non-Hasidic female
Speaks English very well	29%	78%	46%	79%
Speaks English well	33%	16%	38%	15%
Speaks English, not well	24%	6%	11%	5%
Does not speak English	13%	1%	5%	1%

Hasidic males have the lowest levels of English language proficiency compared to all three comparison groups: Hasidic females, and non-Hasidic males and females. Roughly 70% of Hasidic boys did not speak English “very well” compared to about 50% of Hasidic girls, and about 20% of non-Hasidic boys and girls. Journalist and author Joseph Berger once noted, along these lines, that his Hasidic interviewee’s English speaking skills indicated to him that being raised in the Yiddish-speaking community of Borough Park “can be the equivalent of growing up in a foreign country” (Berger, 2014A, p. 110]).

These disparities are likely a result of the inferior quality of English language education Hasidic boys receive in their schools. Hasidic boys and girls are raised in the same households, and yet the boys have a poorer command of the English language than their female counterparts.

Employment

Hasidic unemployment overall from 2018-2022 was generally comparable to non-Hasidic unemployment rates. The exception was in year 2020, during the pandemic. *Excluding year 2020, Hasidic males were slightly less likely to be unemployed than their non-Hasidic counterparts:



	Hasidic Men	Non-Hasidic Men	Hasidic Women	Non-Hasidic Women
Employed	95%	94%	91%	94%
Unemployed	5%	6%	9%	6%

Among non-Hasidim, men and women had equivalent rates of employment. In contrast, Hasidic male unemployment was marginally lower than that of non-Hasidim, while Hasidic female unemployment was somewhat higher.** Overall, the vast majority of Hasidic men are employed, and they are employed at rates comparable to, if not marginally surpassing, non-Hasidim.

* In 2020, Hasidic unemployment rose to 12% compared to the non-Hasidic unemployment rate of 8% (these numbers include both men and women). For Hasidic men, unemployment in 2020 was 10% compared to an unemployment rate of 8% for non-Hasidic men that year.

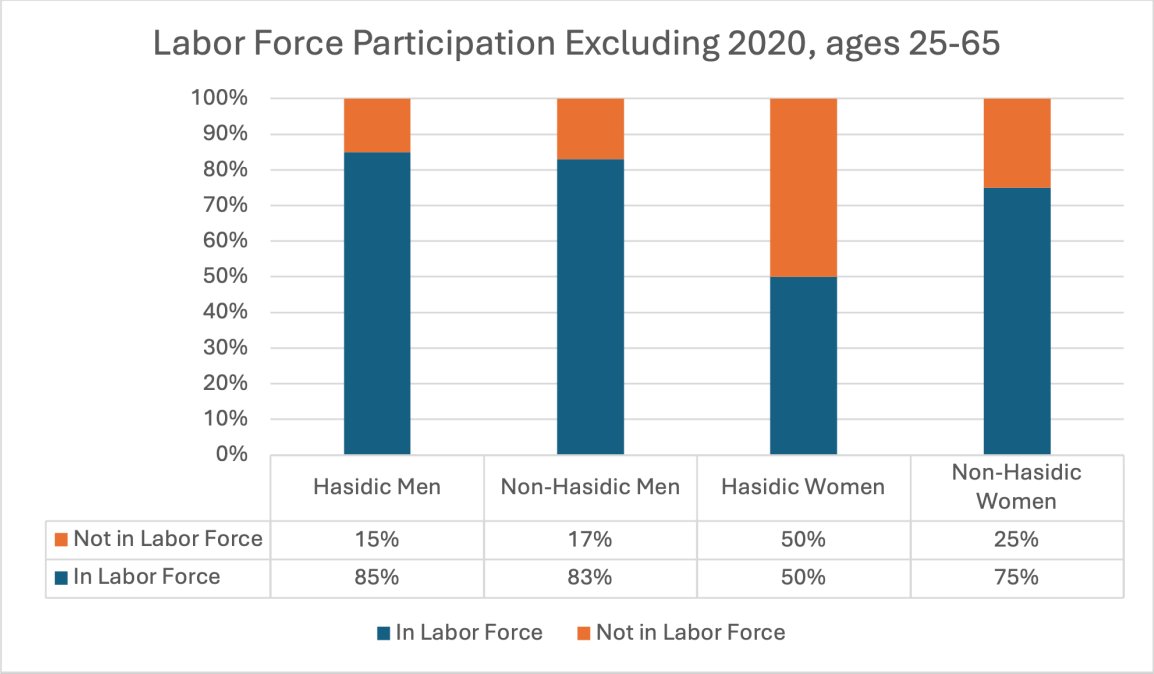
** More research should be done to understand why Hasidic males and females have discrepant rates of employment, but some possibilities include: 1. Hasidic females having a harder time re-integrating into the workforce after having children; 2. Preferential hiring of males; and 3. More job openings within the enclave economy for the kinds of work Hasidic men desire over the kinds of work Hasidic women desire.

Labor Force Participation

Employment rates paint only a partial picture of the proportion of working vs. non-working members of a society because employment rates only calculate the number of individuals working out of the total number seeking work. If a portion of the population is neither working nor desiring to work, they would be excluded from that total number. Labor force participation fills that gap.

Retirees, stay-at-home-moms, and students are members of a population who would not be included in the labor force at all. Others who are eligible to work, and of an age and life stage when most people work, but who choose neither to work nor to seek work would similarly be excluded from the labor force and would not have been included in the unemployment rate. How do Hasidim compare to non-Hasidim in terms of their labor force participation?

The graph below includes only those between the ages of 25 and 65 to exclude those most likely to be out of the labor force because either they are students (under age 25) or because they have already retired (over age 65). The reason for these exclusions is that the Hasidic population skews younger than the non-Hasidic population and limiting the data to this age range allows for less of an age bias in the sample.

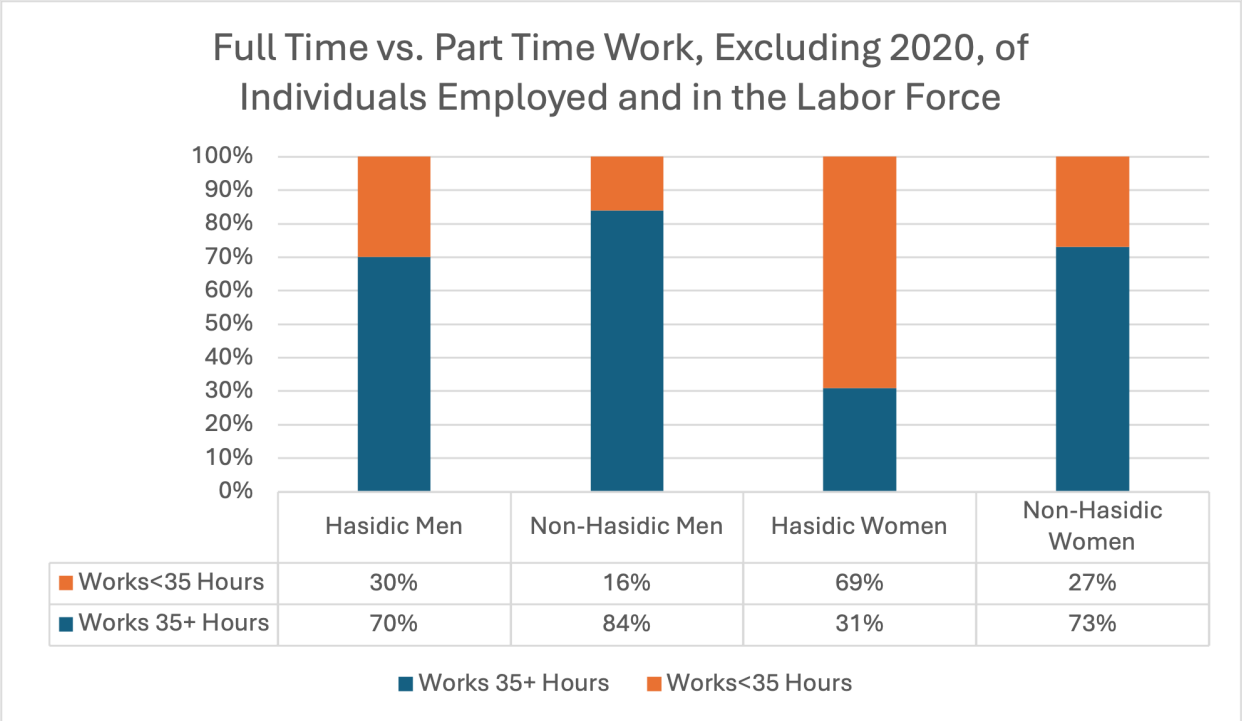


	Hasidic Men	Non-Hasidic Men	Hasidic Women	Non-Hasidic Women
Not in Labor Force	15%	17%	50%	25%
In Labor Force	85%	83%	50%	75%

Hasidic men are marginally more likely to be in the labor force than non-Hasidic men of working age: 85% of Hasidic men were in the labor force compared to 83% of non-Hasidic men In contrast, Hasidic women are drastically less likely to be in the labor force (only 50% of Hasidic women were in the labor force).

Non-Hasidic women similarly had lower labor force participation rates than their male counterparts, though they had higher labor force participation rates than that of Hasidic women. Among non-Hasidic women, 75% participated in the labor force. Women's lower rate of labor force participation compared to men is likely related to women's roles as mothers: many women, both Hasidic and non-Hasidic, retreat from the work force when they have children, both for personal reasons and preferences, and because of the well-documented "motherhood penalty," the cost incurred on women's ability to obtain employment and their ability to find fair compensation for their work, once they become mothers. Hasidic women's low rate of labor force participation is likely related to the high birth rate in the Hasidic community and the young age at marriage and young age of motherhood, leading more Hasidic women to retreat from the labor force or to do so at a younger age than their non-Hasidic counterparts.

Under-Employment

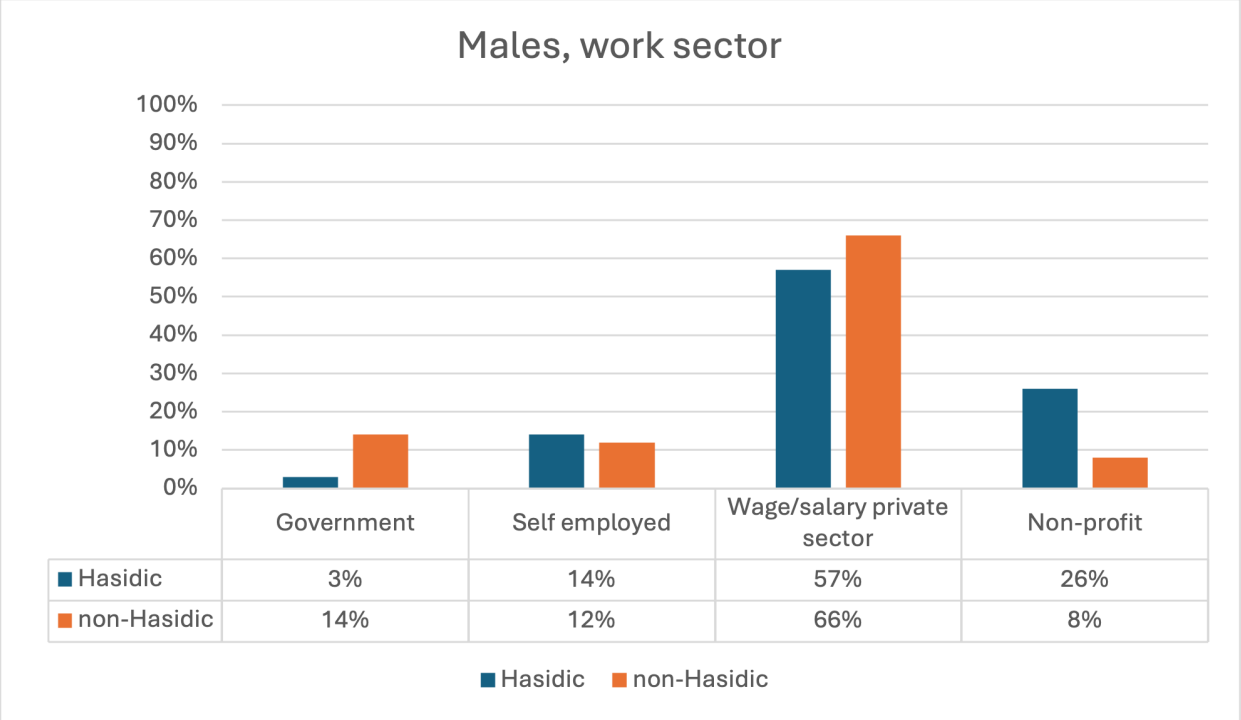


	Hasidic Men	Non-Hasidic Men	Hasidic Women	Non-Hasidic Women
Works<35 Hours	30%	16%	69%	27%
Works 35+ Hours	70%	84%	31%	73%

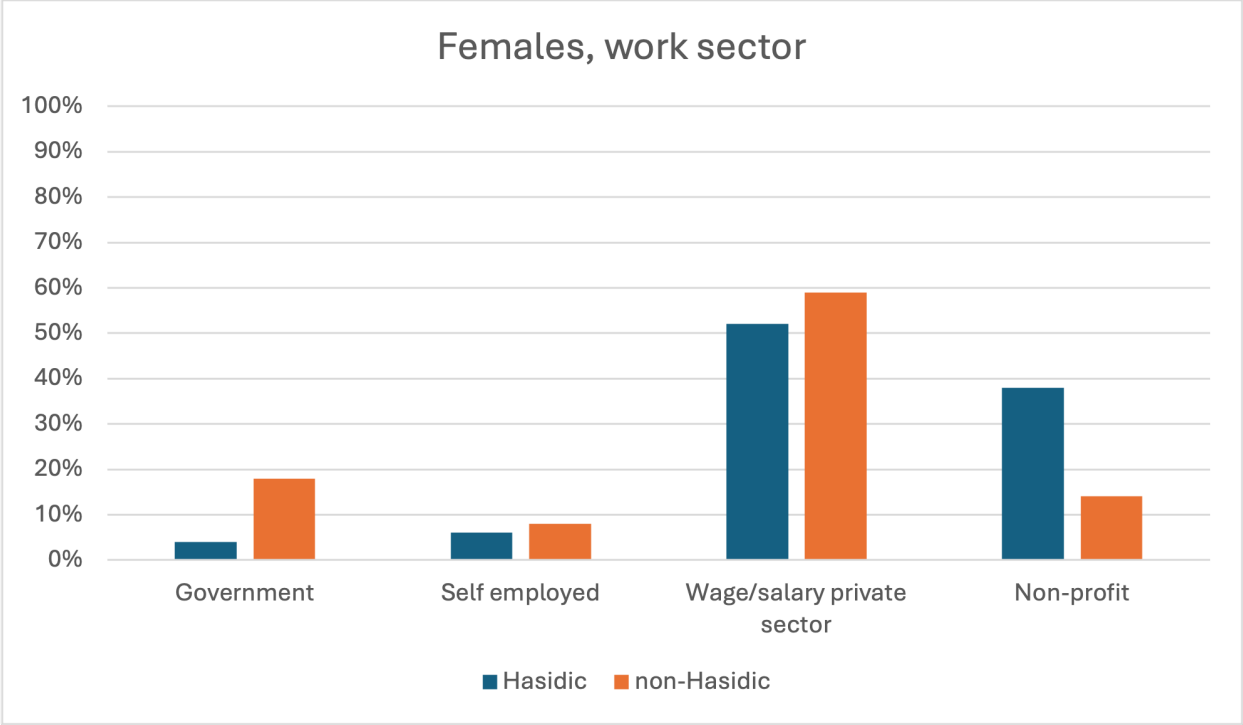
Though Hasidic men are marginally more likely to participate in the labor force and to be employed than their non-Hasidic counterparts, they are far more likely to be underemployed. Thirty percent of Hasidic men worked fewer than 35 hours per week, compared to 16% of non-Hasidic men. Both Hasidic women and non-Hasidic women were more likely to be underemployed than their non-Hasidic counterparts (again, likely related to both the motherhood penalty and to women's preference for part time work so as to have time for the responsibilities of motherhood). However, whereas around 30% of non-Hasidic women worked fewer than 35 hours each week, nearly 70% of Hasidic women did.

Underemployment is a feature of the ethnic enclave economy. While the ethnic enclave economy offers employment opportunities to members of the group who might not be able to secure employment in the outside economy, sometimes the employment opportunities it offers are for part-time work. For the individual, underemployment has inherent risks and often leads to barriers to obtaining health insurance and an overreliance on Medicaid for example.

Sectors of Work



	Government	Self employed	Wage/salary private sector	Non-profit
Hasidic	3%	14%	57%	26%
non-Hasidic	14%	12%	66%	8%



	Hasidic Men	Non-Hasidic Men	Hasidic Women	Non-Hasidic Women
Government	3%	14%	4%	18%
Self-Employed	14%	12%	6%	8%
Wage/salary private sector	57%	66%	52%	59%
Non-Profit	26%	8%	38%	14%

While both Hasidim and non-Hasidim work predominantly in the private sector (more than half of all employees are in this sector), Hasidim are slightly less represented in this sector than their non-Hasidic counterparts. Among the remaining sectors, Hasidim (both men and women) are under-represented in the government sector and overrepresented in the non-profit sector compared to their non-Hasidic counterparts. Roughly 25% of Hasidic males and nearly 40% of Hasidic females work in the non-profit sector, compared to about 10% of non-Hasidic men and around 15% of non-Hasidic women.

Industries

The chart below looks at the top 8 industries predominated by Hasidim and compares their representation to those of non-Hasidic men and women in those industries:

	Total		Men		Women	
	Hasidic	Non-Hasidic	Hasidic	Non-Hasidic	Hasidic	Non-Hasidic
Education Services	27%	11%	22%	7%	34%	15%
Healthcare and social	13%	17%	8%	8%	20%	26%
Retail trade	12%	10%	14%	10%	9%	10%
Finance, insurance, r	8%	7%	8%	8%	8%	7%
Professional, scientist	7%	8%	7%	9%	6%	8%
Manufacturing	5%	6%	8%	8%	2%	4%
Arts, entertainment	5%	10%	5%	10%	5%	10%
Wholesale trade	5%	2%	7%	3%	3%	1%
Percent of population engaged in above-listed industries, total	82%	71%	79%	63%	87%	81%

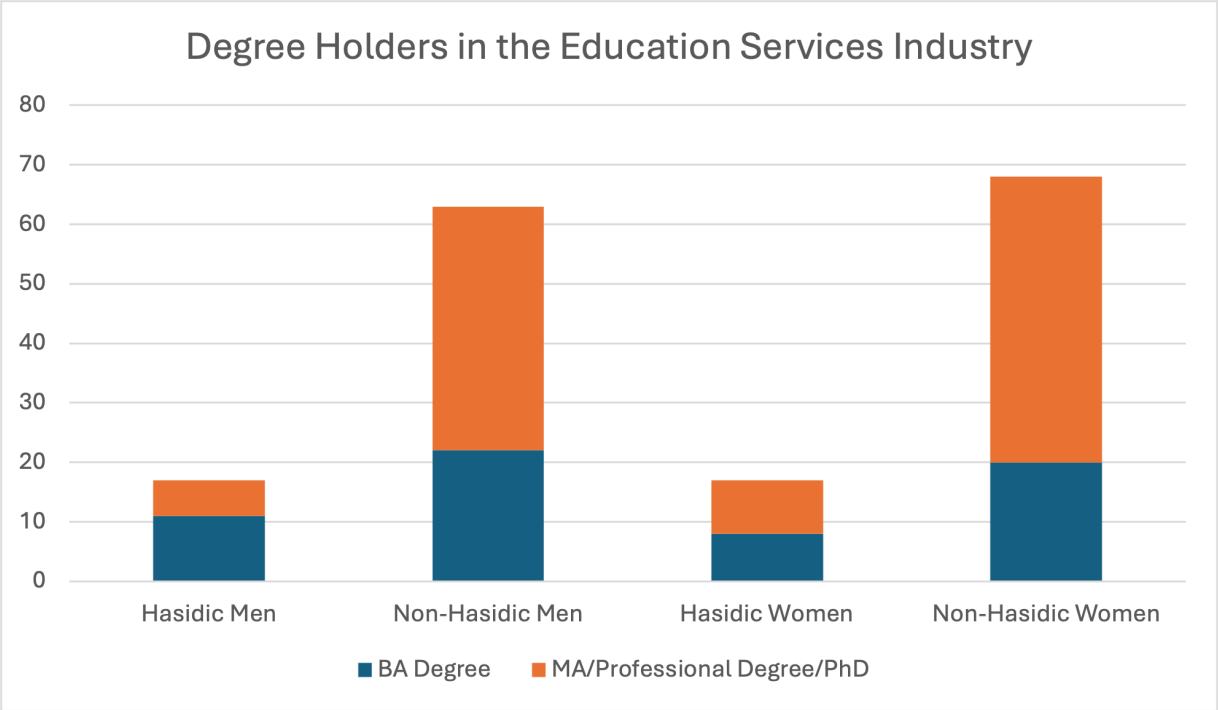
Certain industries stand out for their disproportionate share of Hasidim.

Notably, around 25% of Hasidim are employed in the education services sector, compared to only about 10% of non-Hasidim. Over 20% of Hasidic men and over 30% of Hasidic women work in education services, compared to 7% of non-Hasidic men and 15% of non-Hasidic women.

Around 70% of Hasidim working in education services indicated that their work is in the non-profit sector, compared to around 20% of non-Hasidim. This likely reflects the fact that Hasidim working in education services are working in their parochial schools, many of which have non-profit status, while non-Hasidim are more likely to work within the public school system.

Among those working in education services, the majority of both Hasidim and non-Hasidim worked in primary and secondary schools, though a more sizable share of non-Hasidim worked in higher education – at post-high school institutions such as colleges and universities (around 30% of non-Hasidim worked in post-high school institutions compared to 5% of Hasidim, a number that for Hasidim might include post-high-school yeshiva institutions).

While Hasidic men and women are more heavily clustered in education services than non-Hasidim, they are far less likely to hold Bachelor's or Master's degrees than their non-Hasidic counterparts working in this sector:



Excluding those working in post-high school educational institutions, over 60% of non-Hasidic men and women working in education services held a Bachelor or more advanced degree, compared to 17% of Hasidic men and women.

Within the enclave economy, hiring is often based more on trust than on credentials. On the one hand, this allows talented individuals to obtain employment opportunities with fewer hurdles; but on the other hand, **this may also mean that they enter their jobs with less training and are less prepared; and that they command lower salaries for their work.**

While degree attainment is not a requirement for teaching at the primary and secondary school levels, schools should invest in pedagogical training and professional development to make up for this apparent lack.

Other notable industries: Hasidic men are more likely to work in retail and wholesale compared to non-Hasidim. These categories likely include the many Hasidim running Amazon businesses (see Berger, 2019). Some estimate that as many as 15% of Amazon's third-party businesses are run by Orthodox Jews (Miranda, 2019).

Occupations: 2009-2023*

	Representation in Professional Work of Employed Males Age 25 and Above	
	Hasidic	Non-Hasidic
Doctors	0.5%	1%
Legal (lawyers/judges)	0.4%	1.7%
Accountants/Auditors	1.7%	1.4%

Doctors

This category includes dentists, optometrists, physicians, surgeons, podiatrists, audiologists, and other healthcare diagnosing or treating practitioners. Hasidic men were underrepresented in this line of work.

Legal

This category includes lawyers, and judges, magistrates, and other judicial workers. Hasidic men were underrepresented in this occupation.

Accountants/Auditors

Hasidic men and non-Hasidic entered were employed in this occupation at roughly the same rates. **This is in part a testament to the success of religiously sensitive programs in the Hasidic community, like COPE and divisions of Touro college, that offer training to Hasidic men to be accountants.

* A larger dataset spanning 2009-2023 was used for this measure to ensure the results would be statistically significant. Hasidic men were underrepresented in the legal professions and among doctors beyond the margin of error. The difference between Hasidic and non-Hasidic representation in accounting and auditing was within the margin of error.

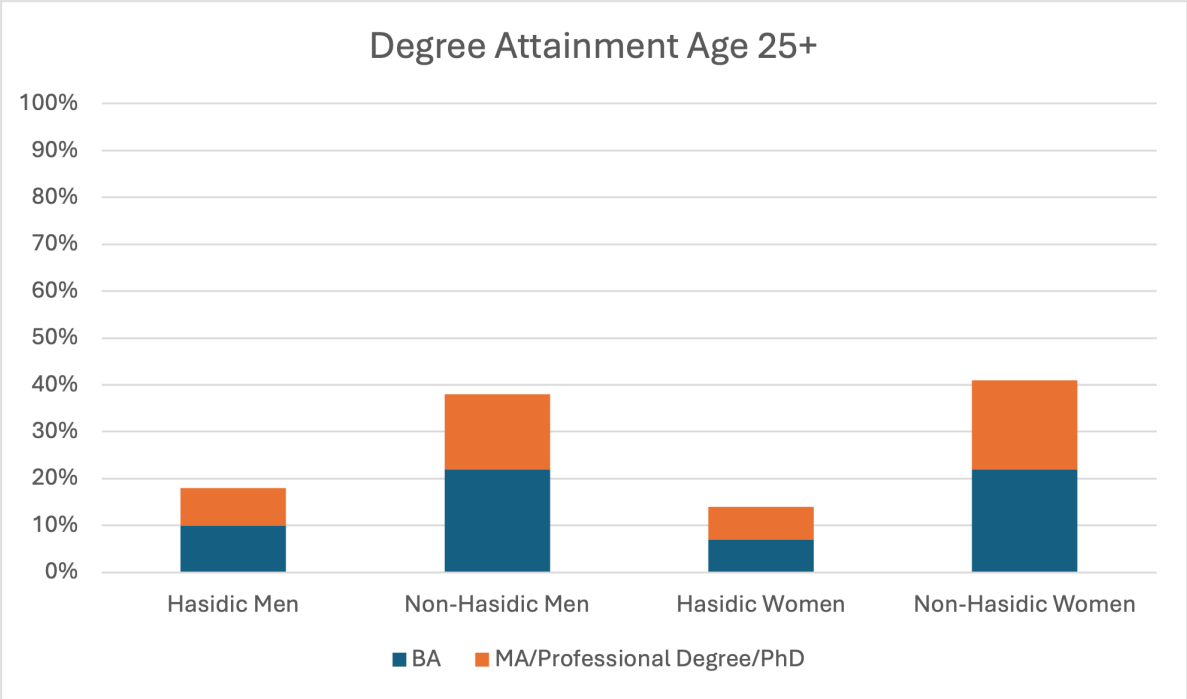
** Hasidic men were marginally overrepresented in this occupation in the sample, though the difference was within the margin of error.

Clergy and Religious Work

Employed males age 25 and above		
	Hasidic	Non-Hasidic
Clergy/religious activity or education director/religious services	3%	0.4%

Hasidic men were overrepresented in the clergy or in other religious work compared to non-Hasidic males. While Hasidim were more likely to find employment in religious work than their non-Hasidic counterparts, the vast majority of Hasidim find work in other occupations.

College Education



In New York, non-Hasidic men and women are more likely to obtain a college degree than their Hasidic Yiddish-speaking counterparts. Under 20% of Hasidic men had a college degree compared to nearly 40% of non-Hasidic men; and roughly 15% of Hasidic women had a college degree compared to around 40% of non-Hasidic women.

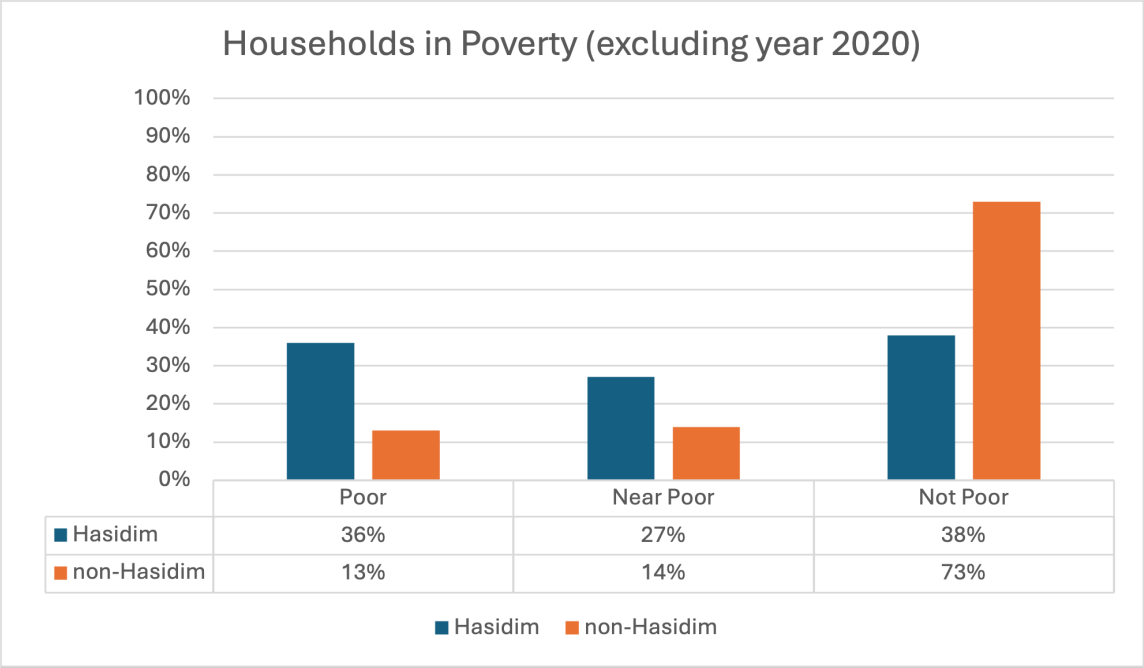
There are several possible contributing factors to Hasidic men's low levels of college degree attainment:

- Many Hasidim may object to the pursuit of a college degree for religious reasons
- Hasidic yeshiva education does not prepare boys to pursue a college degree
- College credentials are unnecessary for many kinds of employment within the Hasidic enclave economy that Hasidic men pursue

While some may reject college degrees on religious grounds, there are several colleges that cater specifically to the Hasidic population, offering college courses and degrees in gender segregated environments with religious sensitivity.

While Hasidic girls' primary and secondary education might leave them with superior English speaking skills and more college-ready than their male counterparts, they are nonetheless slightly less likely to obtain a college degree than Hasidic males. This is likely related to the different roles Hasidic men and women take on within their families. Hasidic women begin to have children at a young age and many retreat from the labor force or reduce their work hours to part time so that they can care for their children, rendering a college degree less relevant to their pursuits. Additionally, some college programs accept yeshiva education credits toward their degrees, and Hasidic women have fewer years of post-high-school religious education to potentially apply toward a degree than their male counterparts.

Poverty



Poverty Measure: Poor denotes that the household is under 100% of the poverty threshold; near poor denotes that the household falls from 100-199% of the poverty threshold; and not poor denotes that the household falls above 199% of the poverty threshold

Poverty rates were marginally higher for Hasidim during the pandemic. Year 2020 is therefore omitted from this sample.

Over 60% of Hasidic households among Yiddish language speakers were poor or near poor, compared to under 30% of non-Hasidic households in New York. *

* UJA's 2023 community study of New York found that 53% of Haredi households were poor or near poor. Their inclusion criteria was more expansive than the criteria used here (the UJA counted as poor those under 150% of the poverty line, and as near poor those between 150% and 250% of the poverty line). The 63% in or near poor in the ACS sample is somewhat higher than the UJA's finding (and when inclusion criteria is expanded to align with the UJA, the number rises to 69% of the Hasidic population in or near poor, and 34% of the non-Hasidic New York population). This discrepancy likely has to do with the UJA's study including non-Hasidic-Haredim and non-Yiddish-language-speaking-Hasidic-Haredim in their sample. These would include Yeshivish and Litvish Haredi populations, and Hasidim who speak English at home. These individuals tend to be strictly Orthodox but are more likely to have gone to schools, and to send their children to schools with a stronger secular studies curriculum and where English is the spoken language, all factors that would make them less likely to be poor or near poor.

Income

Hasidic male median income is lower than that of non-Hasidic males. Some have suggested that rates of poverty in the Hasidic community are not a valid measure of their financial wellbeing compared to the non-Hasidic population as poverty level also takes into account family size and certain household expenses. Hasidims' large family size and their concentration in high cost of living and high cost of housing areas might make them more likely to live in poverty than their non-Hasidic counterparts with similar earnings. Another contention is that the Hasidic population skews younger than the non-Hasidic population and that, if it takes a decade or more in the workforce to reach peak earnings, lower Hasidic income may reflect their lower median age.

Below, median income is disaggregated by age brackets to protect against those confounding factors. **Hasidic males consistently underearn compared to their non-Hasidic counterparts.** The data below spans the five years of 2018-2022 and is adjusted for inflation and presented in 2022 dollars. The data is limited to those who were employed (excluding the unemployed and those not in the labor force) so that the higher Hasidic unemployment during the pandemic would not affect the data.

Median Income of Employed New York Males (Rounded to nearest thousand dollars)		
Age Ranges	Hasidic males	Non-Hasidic males
20-34	35,000	44,000
35-49	49,000	70,000
50-64	46,000	72,000
65+	76,000	78,000
All ages 20+	43,000	61,000

Among employed males, Hasidim consistently underearn compared to their non-Hasidic counterparts. While Hasidic men earn more with age, their median earnings never reach those of non-Hasidic men. In fact, the earnings gap increases: Hasidic men age 20-34 earned 20% less than their non-Hasidic counterparts; Hasidic men age 35-49 earned 30% less than their non-Hasidic counterparts; and Hasidic men age 50-64 earned about 35% less than their non-Hasidic counterparts. Overall, the Hasidic male median income was 30% lower than that of non-Hasidic males. The earnings gap grew in higher age brackets with the exception of those age 65 and above. This is likely a feature of the sample selected: this sample was limited to those who were employed.Once they reach retirement age, only those with high income are motivated to continue working, as those with lower income at that life stage will opt for retirement and their social security benefits. (Among all males ages 65 and above, including those who are no longer part of the labor force, Hasidim had a median income of $32,000 compared to a non-Hasidic median income of $38,000.)

Median Income among employed males age 25+			
Degree Holders (BA/MA/PhD)		No College Degree	
Hasidic	Non-Hasidic	Hasidic	Non-Hasidic
76,000	98,000	41,000	50,000

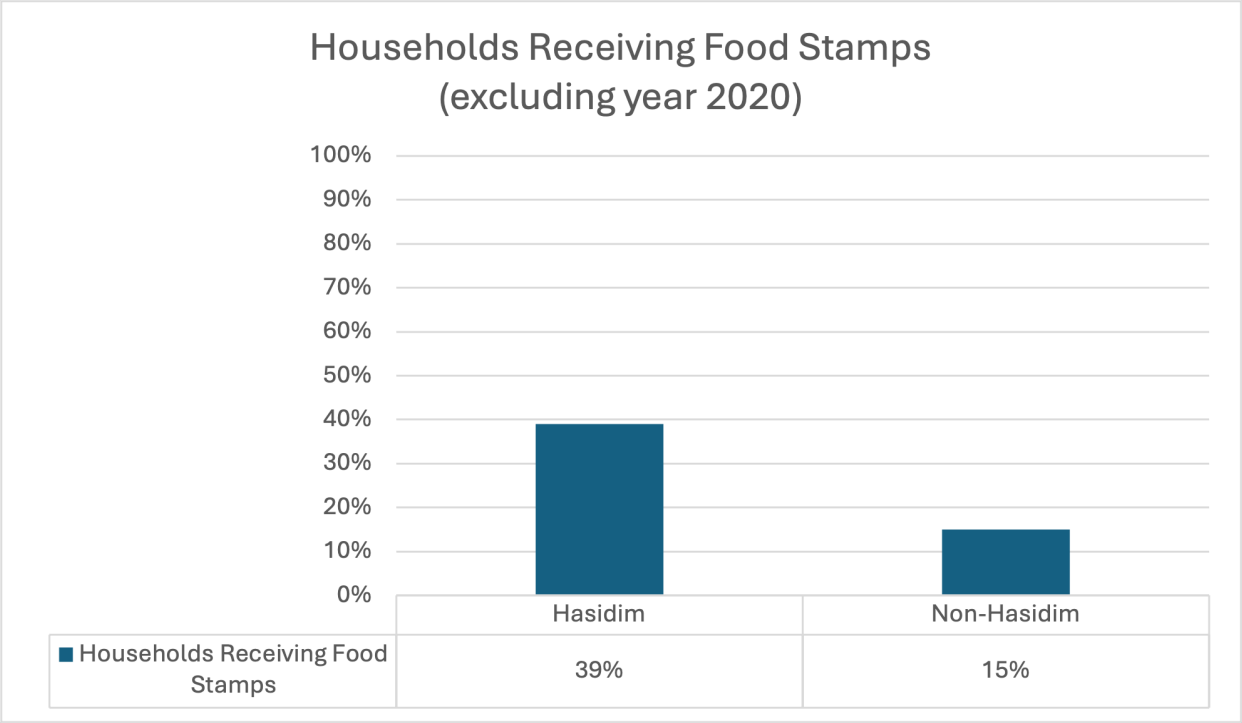
Hasidic men with college degrees earned just over 20% less than their non-Hasidic counterparts; and Hasidic men without college degrees earned just under 20% less than their non-Hasidic counterparts. Among the male population that is gainfully employed, Hasidim consistently underearn compared to their non-Hasidic counterparts, regardless of whether or not they held a college degree. However, compared to Hasidic men without a college degree, Hasidic men with a college degree earned almost twice as much. Degrees significantly increase Hasidic men's median income, though not to the levels of degree-holding non-Hasidim.

This is a hallmark of ethnic enclave economies: members find employment through their ethnic enclave economy, but their earning potential is hampered compared to what it could be in the mainstream economy.

While within degree categories, Hasidic men earn about 80% of the non-Hasidic median income, it is important to remember that Hasidim are far less likely to earn a degree than their non-Hasidic counterparts. Therefore, their total median income (30% less than that of non-Hasidic-men) reflects their underrepresentation among degree holders.

Nonetheless, Hasidim with degrees do out-earn their non-degree-holding Hasidic counterparts. If more Hasidim were to pursue college degrees, we might see the median income gap between Hasidim and non-Hasidim shrinking even if it does not close entirely. Another factor influencing the lower income of Hasidic degree holders may have to do with the kinds of degrees Hasidim hold and the kinds of work they pursue with their degrees, which differ from the kinds of degrees non-Hasidim are more likely to hold and the kinds of work they pursue with their degrees. **Recall that Hasidim were overrepresented in education services but underrepresented in medicine and law. Doctors and lawyers earn more on average than teachers, though both are professions where individuals are more likely or required to hold degrees.**

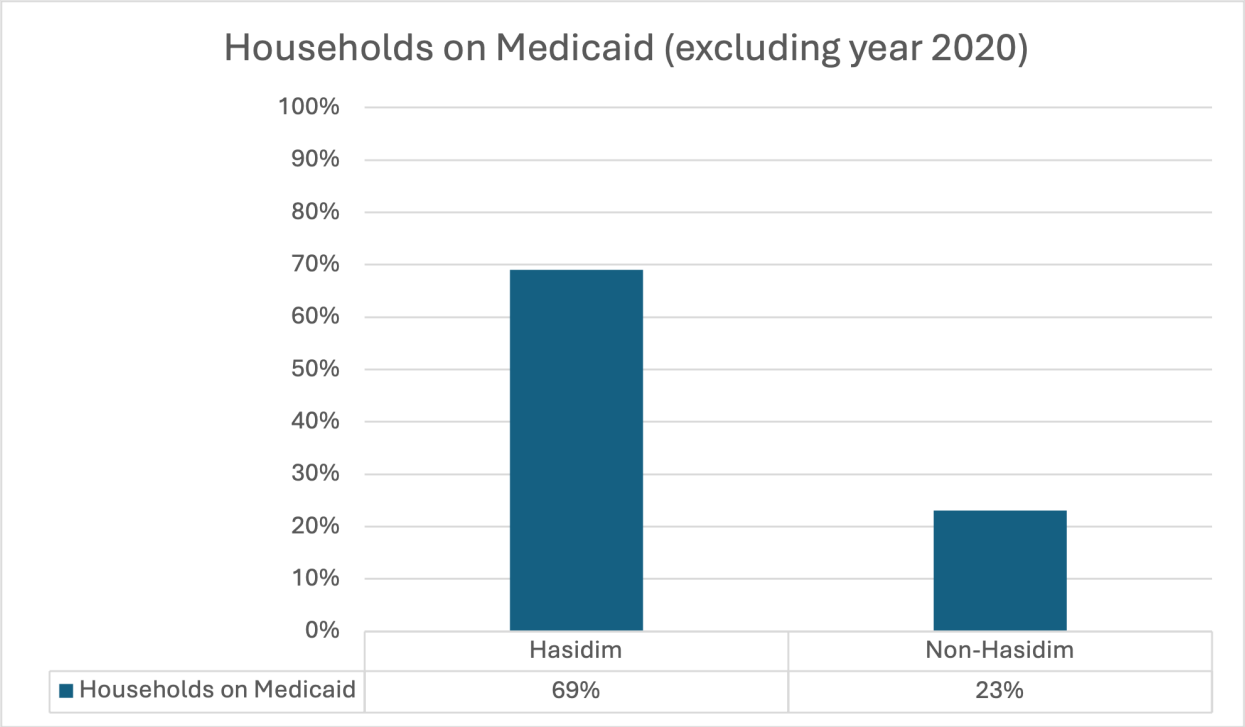
Food Stamps



Nearly 40% of Hasidic households received Food Stamps compared to 15% of non-Hasidic households.

Food Stamps eligibility is based on income, family size, and household expenses. Hasidic households' greater reliance on Food Stamps is in part a function of their larger family size than non-Hasidic New Yorkers' households, and in part a function of their lower median income.

Medicaid



Nearly 70% of Hasidic households received Medicaid compared to just under 25% of non-Hasidic households.

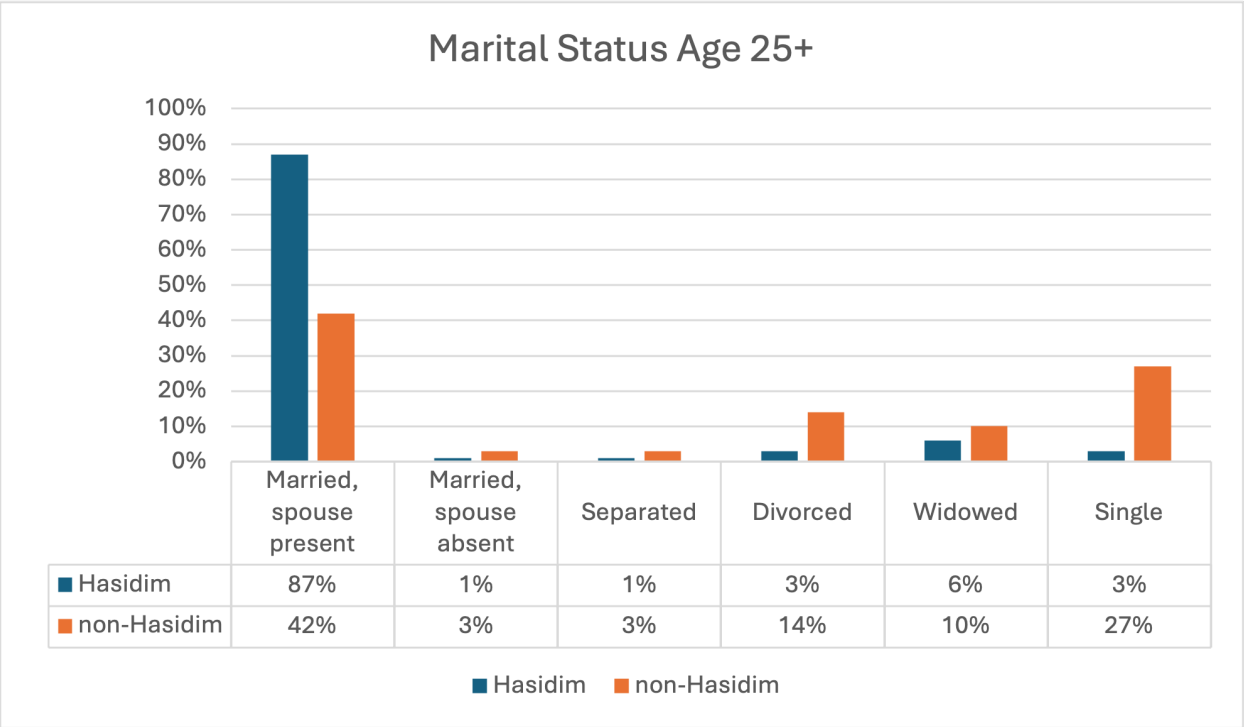
Medicaid eligibility is based on where an individual falls relative to the poverty line but also takes into account their medical needs in determining what poverty level will qualify for this benefit.

As of 2024, individuals ranging from less than or equal to 138% of the federal poverty level to less than or equal to 223% of the federal poverty level could be eligible for Medicaid benefits, depending on their status. For instance, adults under 65 living alone would be eligible if they were up to 138% of the poverty line, while pregnant women and infants would be eligible up to 223% of the poverty line.

That more Hasidim are on Medicaid than are poor or near poor; and that more Hasidim are on Medicaid than are receiving food stamps, reflects this difference in eligibility criteria. Hasidim have larger families than their non-Hasidic counterparts; more Hasidic families have infants; and more Hasidic women are pregnant in a given year than their non-Hasidic counterparts.

Between 2018 and 2022, 9% of Hasidic households had a child under one year old, compared to 2% of non-Hasidic households. In other words, Hasidic households were more than four times as likely to have a baby under a year old in the household than their non-Hasidic counterparts. The greater number of infants in Hasidic households (and pregnant mothers in the nine months leading up to their infancy) makes them more likely to be eligible for Medicaid even if they fall within a higher income bracket, and even if they are neither poor nor near-poor (for those between 200% and 223% of the poverty line). Hasidic eligibility is in part a function of their lower median income, in part a function of their larger family size, and in part a function of the larger share of Hasidim who are pregnant or infants.

Marital Stability

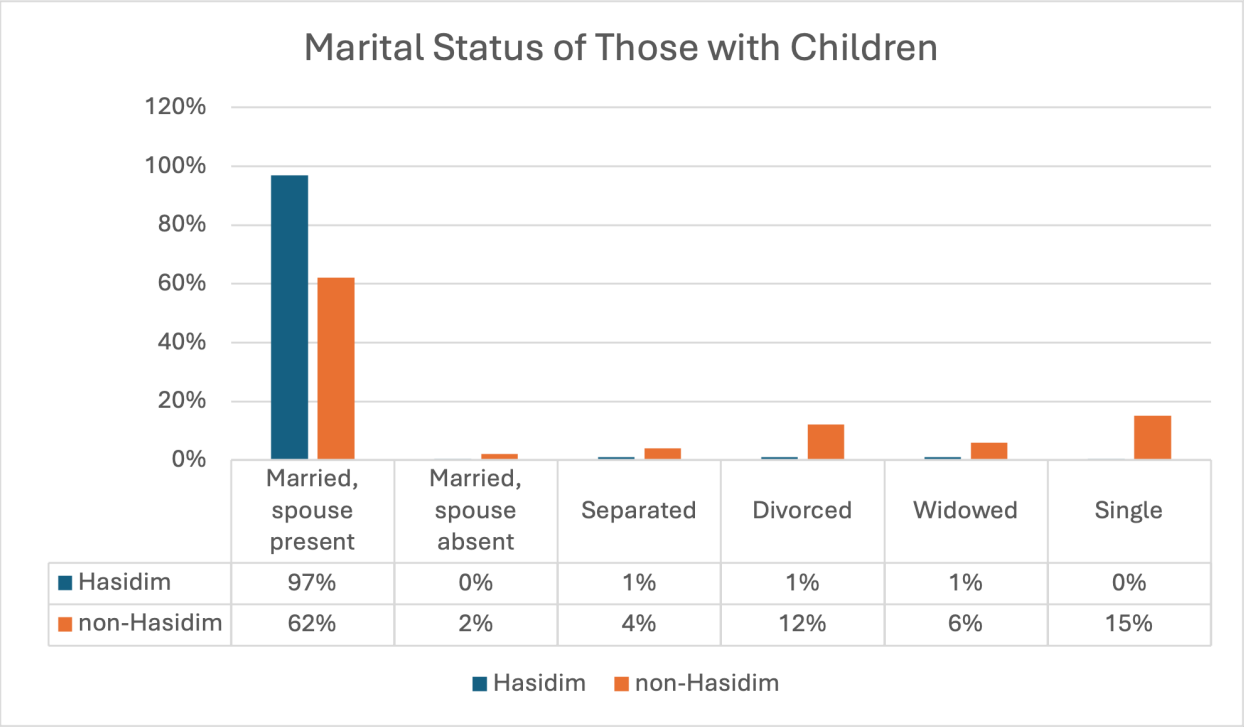


	Married, spouse present	Married, spouse absent	Separated	Divorced	Widowed	Single
Hasidim	87%	1%	1%	3%	6%	3%
non-Hasidim	42%	3%	3%	14%	10%	27%

Among Hasidic households, almost 90% were headed by individuals who were married and living together compared to around 40% of non-Hasidic households. *Hasidim were

* These numbers were computed for head of household so as not to double count husbands and wives in married couples. In other words, each married couple is counted as one marriage even though they are represented by two individuals within the dataset.

also far less likely to be divorced: 3% of Hasidic households were headed by individuals who were divorced compared to almost 15% of non-Hasidic households as of responding to the survey. **



	Married, spouse present	Married, spouse absent	Separated	Divorced	Widowed	Single
Hasidim	97%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%
non-Hasidim	62%	2%	4%	12%	6%	15%

Among Hasidic households with children, 97% were headed by individuals who were married and living together. Nearly all Yiddish-speaking Hasidic children are being raised in two-parent homes. Some of these numbers include divorcees who remarried; and excluded are divorcees with children who drop Yiddish as the language spoken in their home (divorcees have a higher rate of exit from the Hasidic community than their non-divorced counterparts – see for instance Moster, 2024).

Overall, despite their poor English education, their lower median income, and their higher rates of poverty, Hasidim are more likely to maintain two parent homes for their children than non-Hasidic New Yorkers.

** This table looks at the current relationship status of the individuals at the time they responded to the survey. When it comes to something like the percent divorced, note that this is different than computing a divorce rate over the life course. 3% of Hasidim were currently divorced and not currently remarried at the time they responded to the survey. Divorcees who had already remarried are not included in this number; and couples currently married who may get divorced at a later date are not included in this numbers as well.

Conclusion

There has been much debate about the extent of Hasidic economic and professional success and the efficacy of their secular education curriculum in producing adults who are job-ready. This report highlights both the successes and deficiencies in Hasidic outcomes along a range of measures.

Education and English Language Speaking

Hasidic males have low rates of BA degree and graduate degree attainments, and low levels of English language proficiency compared to their non-Hasidic counterparts. These are both factors that are associated with poverty (see for example Chiswick and Miller, 1995; Kieffer, 2008; Tilak, 2002; Awan et al. 2011; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Berg, 2008).

Hasidic male youth have a poorer command of the English language than even their Hasidic female counterparts, likely owing to differences in the education that Hasidic males and females receive. Improvements in the yeshiva curriculum that would grant males a secular education equivalent to that of their female counterparts – for many, their sisters -- would likely result in improved male English speaking abilities, and decrease the odds that they will be in poverty.

Employment, Income and the Enclave Economy

Although many Hasidim benefit from employment in their enclave economy, overall Hasidim suffer from higher rates of poverty than their non-Hasidic counterparts and are more reliant on various forms of government assistance like Food Stamps and Medicaid. In part, Hasidic poverty is ameliorated by community and government support so that Hasidic families do not feel the full impact of their poverty as community-based charities, family members and government benefits pitch in to fill the gap. *

That the community provides safety nets is a virtue, but poverty is a real problem nonetheless. Other non-Hasidic Haredi and Orthodox communities provide a better model for community life that offers robust supports without such high levels of poverty. UJA's community study of 2011, for instance, distinguished Hasidim from other Haredi groups, finding that Hasidim had higher rates of poverty than their non-Hasidic-Haredi counterparts (Cohen et al., 2012).

* Malovicki-Yaffe and Shafir (2025) note the ways these poverty management strategies provide immediate relief while inadvertently reinforcing dependency and hampering economic mobility.

While Hasidic poverty is in part due to their larger family size, their higher cost of living due to living in high-cost neighborhoods, and the larger share of their population that is pregnant or who are infants, income plays a big role as well. Hasidic men had a median income roughly 30% less than their non-Hasidic counterparts. Three possible contributors to their lower earnings are:

1. Hasidim work in industries that command lower salaries than their non-Hasidic counterparts
2. Hasidim lack the higher education credentials to command higher salaries and enter higher paying professions
3. Hasidim are more likely to be underemployed, working fewer than 35 hours per week

The sociologist Herbert Gans (1992) writes about the children of immigrants' improvements in economic condition through the attainment of higher education and through niche upgrading, wherein they upgrade their positions within the industries where their parents worked while outsourcing lower-level work. Similarly, several studies have noted a tendency of the self-employed within ethnic enclave economies to experience upward socioeconomic and educational mobility across generations (see Goldscheider, 1986; Portes & Zhou, 1996). There are clear opportunities for Hasidim to "niche upgrade" within industries where they are already clustered.

Improved education and English language skills may also give Hasidic men greater earning potential in the industries where they currently work. It may also give them skills they can use in the outside economy where they may be able to secure jobs for higher pay or for full-time hours, combatting Hasidic male underemployment. A growing number of jobs in the outside economy allow individuals to work from home, a work environment that may feel more culturally and religiously sensitive to Hasidic men who may feel uncomfortable or who may fear religious discrimination.

As leaders work to redesign Hasidic yeshiva curricula, these are some of the considerations they should have:

- Prioritize English language skills, including reading, writing and verbal expression, in K-12 education. English literacy skills are associated with better economic outcomes.
- Identify the industries where Hasidim already dominate, as well as nascent but growing industries in the Hasidic enclave economy. In successful ethnic enclave economies, members have an economic advantage in those sectors.
- Identify the skills and knowledge areas that would benefit individuals working in those sectors, and incorporate those skills and knowledge areas or the prerequisites for those skills in primary and secondary education.

Hasidic Familial and Communal Stability

Although Hasidim are disproportionately poor, they nonetheless nearly universally maintain stable two-parent homes. Hasidim do not have high rates of divorce or of single-parent homes, both of which are typically associated with poverty, and both of which adversely impact children's outcomes on a variety of measures. On the contrary, Hasidim boast stable two-parent homes for their children and see many of the benefits of this stability in their children's outcomes.

This feature of Hasidic family life (along with the robust community and extended family support system, and government supports) allows Hasidim to maintain a middle-class lifestyle, protecting their children from many of the adverse effects of poverty.

Because the main handicap Hasidim suffer from is the poverty stemming from poor education and poor English language speaking ability, and because they already benefit from stable homes and a middle-class lifestyle, and because Hasidic youth are not further handicapped by the many poor outcomes often associated with poverty, Hasidic school children will likely see great benefits from improvements in their education – benefits that will surpass those of educational investments in poor communities beset by the many challenges that face those in poverty. Improving Hasidic education is a worthwhile investment in Hasidic children and a worthwhile investment in the financial wellbeing of the Hasidic community.

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