

Work in Discontent: Occupational Instability, Partial and Temporary work, and Low Wages in the Israeli Third Sector

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Recent decades have seen considerable growth in the size, scope and importance of the third sector in Israel. Third sector organisations are faced with increased complexity and are expected to confront problems on an ever-growing scale and scope. Consequently, their role in the Israeli labour market and importance as employers is becoming evident. Nevertheless, to date there has been very little research on employment and wages in the Israeli third sector. Studies worldwide show that the third sector provides temporary and part-time employment as well as relatively low wages, but some argue that this is a feature only in certain fields in which third sector weight is relatively large. Studies in the US and the EU also reveal consistent wage and fringe benefit gaps between different groups of workers in the third sector, and particularly gendered gaps.

This study examined selected parameters in the composition and nature of Israel's third sector workforce in the last decade (2000-2009) for which data is available - stability and continuity of employment, part-time and temporary work, and wages. Examination was conducted on the basis of the widest data possible, and encompassed all hired employees in the third sector. This dataset was obtained by integrating employment figures from the Income Tax Commission datasets, data on nonprofits from the Israeli Center for Third-Sector Research (ICTR) database, and the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics 2008 Census.

The findings indicate that employment in the third sector is characterised by high employee turnover, part-time or seasonal jobs and low wages. Evident are also significant wage gaps between different workers, particularly a smaller group of full-time and steady employees and employees in non-standard employment, and between men and women. These findings are consistent throughout the decade and

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remain the same in 2008-2009. They indicate that this troublesome employment picture is stable and is not the result of the 2008 economic crisis.

The findings raise questions about the ability of the third sector to play its role as an employer and provider of social services that complement the dwindling services of the Israeli welfare state.