

SOCIAL SECURITY

Journal of Welfare and
Social Security Policy



Published by

THE NATIONAL INSURANCE INSTITUTE OF ISRAEL

July 2015

No. 97

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Summaries of the Main Articles

Assessment of Policy Effects on Households' Welfare in the Last Decade

Yuval Mazar¹

As documented in numerous research studies and reports, Israeli governments changed their welfare and taxation policies over the past decade, such that they decreased the direct effect on reducing inequality in the distribution of income. This reflected the government's declared policy of reducing the economic burden on taxpayers and allocating sources to the business sector while encouraging employment. The policy resulted in a decline, between 2001 and 2010, of about 3.5 percentage points in the share of primary civilian public expenditure in GDP, while there was a concurrent decrease in the tax burden by reducing direct tax rates. Altogether, the government's effect on the distribution of income in the economy declined by about one-third. This study finds that the policy benefited the welfare of high- and medium-income earners, and exacerbated the welfare of low earners. The greater the benefit that households derived from government social expenditure, the more the difference between income quintiles was blurred, in terms of the effect of the policy on their welfare. In addition, the study examines the effects of economic policy on welfare, through a theoretical function that assumes that welfare increases with income and decreases as inequality increases. This function indicates that in order for the policy that increased inequality to increase total welfare as well, the increase in inequality must lead to income that is higher by about 30%-45%.

1 Bank of Israel.

Conditional Cash Transfers in Latin America

Tal Levi¹ and Arie Melnik²

Many developing countries have adopted conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs as a main pillar of their social policy. In most of these programs, the government first determines who is eligible for the transfer and then offers cash benefits conditional on compliance with several educational and health requirements. CCT programs are the main social assistance form in Latin American countries (LAC), covering 120 million individuals in 18 countries. The programs are diverse but they share a key characteristic: payment of cash for observed behaviour in the education and health of young children. In this presentation we analyse the experience of several countries and identify some main features of CCT programs. We provide tentative analysis of the implementation problems of CCT's. In particular we focus on the budget requirements at the national level and operational foundations such as targeting beneficiaries, monitoring and evaluation.

1 School of Social Work, University of Haifa.

2 Department of Economics, University of Haifa.

The Development of Social Policy Research in Israel

John Gal¹ and Roni Holler¹

The study of social policy in Israel has undergone major changes both since its initial steps during the 1950s and since the early 1970s, a period during which the first significant steps to institutionalise it as an academic field took place. Based on a theoretical perspective that regards the scientific system as a social arena, this article seeks to identify the trends that have characterised this development as they are reflected in journal publications, both Israeli and international, over the past four decades. The findings indicate that social policy research has become a vibrant academic field over this period and that a number of key trends related to both the intra-institutional and the intra-scientific aspects of this development, can be identified.

1 Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and Social Welfare, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Israeli Arabs in Health and Welfare Professions: An Ethnic and Gender Oriented View of Representation and Employment

Ariela Popper-Giveon¹, Yael Keshet,² and Ido Liberman²

Employment of ethnic minority members in the health and welfare professions (hereafter: HWP), especially medicine, embodies two major benefits: First, these professions offer feasible and prestigious career paths to members of ethnic minorities. Second, minority employment in HWP helps increase variety in professional staffing, enabling provision of culturally-competent treatment to minority members in a multicultural society. The study focuses on intersecting ethnic and gender aspects of representation in the medical professions, seeking to assess the percentage of Arabs in Israel employed in HWP – especially medicine – and the meaning of such employment for them. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies was used, analysing data derived from two surveys conducted by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics in 2011 (*Labor Force Survey* and *Social Survey*), as well as in-depth interviews with ten Arab physicians employed at public hospitals in Israeli cities with mixed Jewish-Arab populations. HWP was found to be a preferred employment path for Arabs in Israel. Most employees in these professions are women, but fields requiring rigorous academic training, such as medicine, primarily attract Arab men. It was found that academically educated Arab women are less inclined to opt for HWP and more likely to seek employment in education than their Jewish counterparts. The Arab population's overall underrepresentation in medicine with regard to physicians in Israel is thus largely the result of severe underrepresentation of Arab women in this field compared with both Jewish women and Arab men. Arab women in Israel experience dual marginality – as women and as Arabs. They are barred from reaching senior positions in HWP and are especially underrepresented in medicine.

1 David Yellin Academic College, Jerusalem.

2 Western Galilee Academic College.

This finding demonstrates how processes of selective modernisation engender a combination of ethnic and gender disparities in the medical profession and how this affects treatment of Arab women in Israel. The study concludes with practical recommendations aimed at increasing the number of Arab women physicians.

Considerations in Choosing Social Work as a Profession and Professional Preferences of Retraining Students Compared to Regular Program Students

Ahuva Even-Zohar¹ and Ateret Gewirtz-Meydan²

The current study examines differences between 56 retraining program students of social work, and 69 regular program students, in their final year of studies. Retraining program students attributed greater importance to the contribution of the choice of profession to personal development, satisfaction, and interest in treating people, while for regular program students working conditions were more important. The retraining program students also preferred to engage in individual therapy and policy practice. In addition, there were several differences between the groups' preferences regarding types of populations, services and sectors. Correlations were found between various preferences of populations, services and field work training. In addition, a higher percentage of retraining program students compared to regular program students, expressed their intention to work as social workers when they completed their studies. The main conclusion of the study is a recommendation to review the retraining program curriculum and adapt theoretical studies and practical training to the needs of contemporary social work.

1 School of Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ariel University.

2 The Louis and Gabi Weisfeld School of Social Work, Bar-Ilan University.