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## Nishma Completes Profile of US Orthodox Jewish Community

By JLNJ Staff | March 09, 2023

**Survey finds high levels of fulfillment, increased mainstreaming of views supporting women's roles, heightened priority of dealing with those who commit abuse.**

(Courtesy of Nishma Research) A new survey from Nishma Research explores beliefs, practices, attitudes and priorities across the Jewish community. Mark Trencher, head of Nishma Research, noted that, “Most broad Jewish community studies don’t look at the unique issues that affect and are on the minds of Orthodox Jews, and this survey does so. Additionally, we extended our sample to cover the entire spectrum of Orthodoxy, including the Haredi sectors, and also report summary data for over 1,000 non-Orthodox Jews and Jewish residents of Israel and Canada. We thank Micah Philanthropies for sponsoring this important communal study.”

The following are some summary observations for the U.S. Orthodox respondents:

**There is “Jewish fulfillment” across all of Orthodox Jewry:** Orthodox Jews—across all sectors and equally for men and women— find their lives religiously fulfilling. In total, 65% agree with this strongly, and 93% agree strongly or somewhat. This is among the commonalities that connect Orthodox Jews.

**There is growing support for Modern Orthodox women’s roles, including “clergy-related” positions:** Support for women serving in such positions gained traction across all of Modern Orthodoxy, from 34% who agreed strongly in 2017, to 38%. The percentage that agreed somewhat increased even more markedly, from 22% in 2017 to 31%. As Emerita Prof. Sylvia Barack Fishman of Brandeis University, an advisor to the study noted, “We’re seeing increased mainstreaming within many Modern Orthodox communities, which accept more involvement in learning and public Judaism by women, including leadership roles and roles in ‘clergy-type’ positions.”

**Dealing with those who commit abuse is now a top priority:** This issue shot up in importance, from nearer the bottom of an issues list in 2017, to now being virtually tied (with addressing the cost of Jewish education) as the top priority. 82% cited this as an issue that the community must address in the next decade.

**Israeli politics generates divergent views:** While Modern Orthodoxy's more stringent wing is pleased with the new government by more than a 2-to-1 margin, its liberal wing is concerned by a 6-to-1 margin. In contrast, the Haredi sector as a whole is pleased with the new government by a 12-to-1 margin.

**Davening/Prayer not universally observed:** Some 19% of Haredi men and 34% of Modern Orthodox men say they do not always daven Shacharit. The Haredi figure is surprising, suggesting that a not insignificant number of Haredim are as prone to their own form of "social Orthodoxy" as are Modern Orthodox.

**Modern Orthodoxy: A niche with much internal diversity:** While there is much commonality across the spectrum of Modern Orthodoxy, there are also points of disagreement between the more liberal Modern Orthodox and those who are more centrist or right-leaning. As Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Sociology Samuel C. Heilman of Queens College and the Graduate Center, and an advisor to the study, noted: "Modern Orthodoxy has fragmented into diverse streams and this study is helpful in our understanding precisely what the points are that the various streams agree upon, where divergence among them occurs, and what this might portend about the future. For example, will the center hold?"

Rabbi Dr. Dov Zakheim, Senior Advisor of the Center for Strategic and International Studies and also an advisor to the study, noted: "Relative to other groups – Yeshivish and Chasidish – the Modern Orthodox have strong commonalities and are cohesive, as noted by their attitudes toward both Jewish and secular education, Israel, women's role in religion, even dress." Still, the study found that while a majority (51%) of Modern Orthodox are optimistic about its future, a not insignificant minority (29%) are pessimistic, more often in the right-leaning segment of Modern Orthodoxy.

**Haredi are concerned about OTD (Off the Derech); Modern Orthodox are less concerned:** Despite the lack of quantitative data, conventional wisdom is that more people leave Modern Orthodoxy than Haredi sectors, so the lower concern among the latter is surprising.

**Family planning is common:** Sixty percent of families have done family planning, and nearly half of all families managed (reduced) the number of children they had, although the reasons were seldom financial.

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