

Press Release:
Is it Worth it to be Polite?
Results from Israel's First National Survey of Politeness
Jerusalem Institute for Market Studies
September 14, 2010, Yom Kippur 5771

On the eve of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), many Jews ask friends and acquaintances for forgiveness, for offences they may have committed during the year. Is this the only time Israelis are considerate? The Jerusalem Institute for Market Studies' national survey of politeness, published today (Tuesday, September 14), reveals for the first time who are the most polite and most impolite among Israelis, and shows that being polite has a large payoff in terms of income (being polite substantially increases one's earnings). Since politeness pays, many of us might want to start asking forgiveness all year long.

"The results of the survey are important because it suggests that the public education system in Israel is making a series of disastrous mistakes," says Professor Robert Sauer, president of JIMS. "The survey shows that there is **no correlation between education and politeness**, indicating that focusing almost exclusively on improving grades and cognitive skills, does not at the same time succeed in improving non-cognitive skills such as manners, self-control, and persistence. And since the survey shows that income substantially increases with politeness, Israeli employers highly value these non-cognitive skills. In other words, the Israeli education system would do well to switch tracks and devote much more attention to fostering politeness and other non-cognitive skills among the student population."

The survey included questions on many aspects of public behavior, including driving, speaking on cell phones, treatment of the elderly, use of foul language etc. Respondents were asked to report on their own behavior and were given a politeness score based on their answers. The average score is 2.94 on a scale of 0-4.0. Interestingly, **a 10% rise in the politeness score is associated with a substantial 5.8% increase in family income**. In all areas, men are less polite than women (their average score is 0.11 lower), and new immigrants are more polite than native-born Israelis (a difference of 0.1). The ultra-orthodox are the most polite group, averaging 3.16. People who defined themselves as religious, Masorti (traditional), or secular received lower scores. No correlation was found between marriage, number of children in the household or education and politeness.

JIMS also asked where Israelis encounter rude behavior, and compared the findings to a similar survey conducted in the US. The percent of respondents who encounter rudeness in stores and shopping centers (31%), at work (13%), in the airport (13%) or in one's close environment (9%) is similar or lower than the percentage reported in the US. But **when dealing with government agencies, the percent of Israelis reporting rudeness (28%) is 1.5 times the reported rate in the US (19%)**.

Respondents were also asked how frequently they encounter different expressions of rudeness. **The most frequent phenomenon is loud talking on cell phones in public, an occurrence that 78% of respondents reported to encounter often or all the time**. 71% reported encountering aggressive and inconsiderate drivers with the same frequency.

Rudeness, based on the results of the survey, seems to be a significant social problem for which no one seems to take responsibility. "The Ministry of Education should take responsibility and adapt its curriculum so that it gives students important social skills in addition to the ability to pass matriculation exams," Professor Sauer claims.

The survey was conceived by JIMS and conducted by the Dahaf Institute. It included 992 adults representing the Jewish population in Israel. The maximal margin of error is 4.5%.

More information on the survey and its results can be found on JIMS' website: www.jims-israel.org or by phone: Yarden Gazit 054 588 7769.