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# Labor Migration in the Public Eye: Attitudes Towards Labor Migrants in Israel

by Rebeca Raijman<sup>1</sup> and Moshe Semyonov<sup>2</sup>

## *Zusammenfassung*

*Die Schwerpunkte dieses Artikels sind (1) Einstellungen, Normen und Wertschätzung gegenüber Wanderarbeitern von außerhalb Israels sowie (2) die Abhängigkeit der Einstellungen von demografischen wie sozioökonomischen Merkmalen israelischer Bürger. Die Daten weisen darauf hin, daß Israelis deutlich negative Einstellungen gegenüber Arbeitsmigranten äußern. Diese werden in kultureller, sozialer und politischer Hinsicht ausgegrenzt. Die soziale Ausgrenzung manifestiert sich in sozialer Distanz und der Unterstützung diskriminierenden Verhaltens (besonders wenn es zu einem Eindringen in die Privatsphäre kommt). Darüber hinaus werden die Gastarbeiter häufig nicht nur als Konkurrenten auf dem Arbeitsmarkt gesehen, sondern auch als eine Bedrohung in anderen sozialen Bereichen wie Wohlstand, Ausbildung, Gesundheit und Wohnen. Steigender Wettbewerb um knappe Ressourcen führt zu einer größeren Fremdenfeindlichkeit. Die meisten Israelis scheinen Einwanderern soziale und politische Rechte vorenthalten zu wollen. Ein Teil der verwendeten Items dieser Untersuchung wurde aus dem ALLBUS 1996 übernommen.*

## *Abstract*

*The major goal of the present paper (1) is to describe attitudes, norms and values toward migrant workers, and (2) to evaluate the extent to which attitudes toward migrant workers are related to demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the citizens of Israel. The data indicate that Israelis have substantial negative attitude toward labor migrants. These are perceived as outsiders in the cultural, social and political spheres. The social exclusion is manifested through feelings of social distance and the support for discriminat-*

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*ing behavior (especially when it comes to intrusion in citizens' private lives). Furthermore, foreign workers are often viewed not only as competitors in the labor market but as a threat in other social realms (welfare, education, health and housing). Increased competition over scarce resources, generates greater hostility toward outgroup members - the foreign workers. Most Israelis seem to be willing to deny them social and political rights. Part of the items was taken from the ALLBUS 1996.*

## **Introduction**

Labor migration is a recent phenomenon in Israeli society. During the 1990s an increasing number of migrant workers (both documented and undocumented) were recruited and incorporated into the Israeli labor market, amounting to approximately 8 percent of the labor force. Their presence is growingly felt as they seem to be changing not only the labor market composition, but the ethnic fabric of the Israeli metropolis as well (*Bartram*, 1998; *Borowski* and *Yanay*, 1997; *Schnell*, 1999; *Kemp* et al. 2000). The influx of migrant workers has produced a challenge to the ethno-national nature of the state and its traditional definitions of membership (*Kemp* et al. 2000). The incorporation of labor migrants within the Israeli society raises the question how non-Jewish labor migrants are perceived in a country that encourages Jewish immigration while actively discourages non-Jewish immigration. Although the number of migrant workers have increased considerably, very little research has been done on the impact of such migration on attitudes and behavior toward foreign workers in Israel, see *Bar-Tzuri* (1996, 1999) and *Pedahzur* and *Yishai* (1999) for an exception. The major goal of the present paper, though, is to describe the social climate towards labor migrants in Israel. More specifically our goal is twofold: (1) to describe attitudes, norms and values towards migrant workers, and (2) to evaluate the extent to which attitudes toward migrant workers are related to demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the citizens of Israel.

This paper proceeds as follows. After presenting the Israeli case (Section II), the theoretical background (Section III), and the methodology (Section IV) we proceed to the data analysis (Section V). More specifically, we focus on the attitudes respondents hold with regard to the following issues: (1) discriminating behavior, (2) expressed preference for social distance, (3) labor market consequences of foreign workers presence, (4) perception of competition over socio-economic resources, and (5) attitudes towards socio-economic and political rights of labor migrants. In the conclusions (Section VI) we summarize the main findings and discuss the implications for the status of foreign workers in Israel.

### The Israeli Setting

Israel is a country inhabited by Jewish immigrants from practically every continent of the world. Jews arrived in Israel in a sequence of waves. The first arrived at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century mainly from Eastern European countries. During the first decade after statehood (1948) the population of Israel tripled, mainly due to massive immigration of refugees from Moslem countries in Middle-Asia and North-Africa along with survivors of the holocaust. Immigration during the three decades that followed was more scattered and less systematic, and characterized by a slow but constant stream of immigrants from North and South America as well as immigrants from South Africa, Eastern Europe, Ethiopia and Iran. The most recent flow of massive migration started in 1989 following the fall of the former Soviet Union.

Unlike other immigrant-receiving societies, Israel is committed to the successful absorption of its (Jewish) immigrants. According to the law of return (1950) and the law of nationality (1952) every Jew has the right to settle in Israel and immigrants can be awarded Israeli citizenship upon arrival. The country relies on the system of pure *jus sanguinis* to determine the citizenship status of immigrants and their descendants. Unwillingness to accept non-Jewish immigrants is expressed through exclusionary immigration policies (especially limitation of family reunion and refusal to secure residence status), restrictive naturalization rules and a double standard: exclusionary model for non-Jews vis-a-vis “acceptance-encouragement” model for Jews. Thus, Israel can be viewed as an immigrant-settler society based on an ethno-nationalist structure, defined both ideologically and institutionally (*Smooha*, 1990).

Following the six days war in 1967, Israel has begun to rely on non-citizen Arab workers from the West Bank and Gaza strip to perform mostly menial, low status, manual jobs (mostly in construction, agriculture and services) comprising about 8 percent of the Israeli labor force by the late 1980s (*Semyonov* and *Lewin-Epstein*, 1987). After the beginning of the Palestinian uprising in 1987 (intifada), daily commuting of Arab workers from the West Bank and Gaza was curtailed. As a result, economic sectors in which Palestinian workers had been concentrated suffered from labor shortages.

The temporary solution sought to overcome labor shortages was import of overseas labor migrants. By 1987 the number of permits accorded by the Israeli Ministry of Labor was 2,500, and it increased gradually up to 9,600 in 1993 when Israel began importing large numbers of overseas migrant workers primarily from Romania (construction sector); Thailand (agriculture sector) and Philippines (geriatric care, nursing and domestic services). In 1996, the total number of work permits valid was estimated in circa 103,000 (see *Bartram* 1998: Table 3). From those, 72 percent working in the construction industry, 16 percent in agriculture, 7 percent in nursing and geriatric care, and 5 percent in the service sector

(*Lerer*, 1996). In Israel, unlike other Western European countries work permits are given to employers, but not to employees, thus transforming documented workers into a de-facto „captive labor force“ (*Calavita*, 1992; *Rozenhak*, 1998).

Similarly to other labor importing countries, Israeli official figures do not reflect the real number of labor migrants in society. To reach accurate figures one needs to take into consideration the number of undocumented labor migrants (working without permits or illegal workers) in Israel whose number has dramatically increased in recent years. Indeed, lack of valid data makes it difficult to estimate the current number of undocumented workers that live and work in Israel. Although official sources estimate a conservative figure that ranges between 80,000 and 100,000 illegal workers (Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998; State Comptroller Office 1996: 490; Ministry of Labor and Welfare, 2000) other sources suggest up to a maximum of 300,000 undocumented migrants living and working in Israel (*Ha'aretz*, 1996). Undocumented non-Jewish labor migrants come from literally every corner in the world: Ex-USSR (25%); South Asia (20%); East Europe (15%); Latin America (15%); Africa (14%) and Arab countries (11%) (Ministry of Interior, 1996).

As in most Western European countries, migrant workers in Israel are considered an import of temporary workers and not prospective citizens. They are deemed outsiders in the cultural, social, and political spheres (*Baldwin-Edwards* and *Schain*, 1994; *Schnapper*, 1994). Their presence has become a major public issue around which much debate between different state and non-state actors takes place. The explicit position of the Israeli State regarding labor migration is that Israel is not an „immigration“ country but rather an „Aliya“ (Jewish immigration) country. As such, its jurisdiction extends to labor migration policy (work permits, deportation) rather than to labor migrants' needs. Conversely, non-state actors like various Non Government Organizations, advocacy groups and the local government of Tel Aviv (where the majority of the undocumented labor migrants live) are pushing towards a recognition of labor migrants' socio-economic rights (*Kemp* and *Raijman*, 2000). The purpose of our research is to provide a descriptive overview regarding attitudes toward foreign workers in Israel. By doing so, we provide additional source of information regarding the social climate and the emergence of public perception of labor migrants in Israeli society.

### **Theoretical Background**

Social scientists have long studied attitudes and actions toward ethnic minorities to better understand sources and mechanisms underlying discrimination, socio-economic inequality, and ethnic antagonism. The ever growing literature on the topic uniformly suggests that the relative position of an ethnic group in a society is strongly influenced by public attitudes and government actions both comprising the context of reception (*Portes* and *Rumbaut*, 1990; *Baldwin-Edwards* and *Schain*, 1994).

Studies on ethnic relations agree that the normative context of society as reflected by attitudes, beliefs and actions, is greatly influenced by the conception of citizenship and nationality (*Hoskin*, 1991; *Brubaker*, 1992; *Castles* and *Miller*, 1993; *Edwards-Baldwin* and *Schain*, 1994; *Soysal*, 1994). Thus, researchers tend to differentiate between basic models of incorporation ranging between the exclusion (folk or ethnic) model on one end of the continuum, to foreigners inclusion (multicultural) model on the other end of the continuum (*Castles* and *Miller*, 1993; *Faist*, 1994).

The exclusion – folk or ethnic – model is typical of ethnically homogenous societies. In such societies membership is based on common descent, language, and culture. Migrants are likely to be denied social membership and citizenship, hence, non-ethnic are excluded from social, civil and political rights. The multicultural model is typical for countries where there is a formal recognition of cultural and ethnic differences and membership in the community is granted to foreigners. In such societies the community is based on constitution, laws and citizenship. While the US, Canada, Australia and Sweden represent the latter model, Germany and Israel are examples of the former-exclusion-model.

The last three decades show a trend of continuous increase in anti-immigrant sentiments and ethnic tension in many Western Countries. Research conducted in North America, Western Europe, and Australia, reveal (mostly) negative anti-immigrants and anti-ethnic attitudes (e.g. *Miller* et al. 1984; *Polinard* et al., 1985; *Goot*, 1991; *Suarez-Orozco*, 1992; *Espenshade* and *Calhoun*, 1993; *Simon* and *Alexander*, 1993; *Gaasholt* and *Togebly*, 1995; *Espenshade* and *Hempstead*, 1996) or ambivalent in several cases (e.g. *Harwood*, 1986; *Cornelius*, 1992a; *Cornelius*, 1992b). Even in countries that are latecomers to the import of foreign workers (i.e. Greece, Spain, Italy) anti-immigrants sentiments are evident (*Baldwin-Edwards* and *Schain*, 1994).

The degree of ethnic hostility and anti-immigrants attitudes is likely to vary with socio-economic status, employment status, education, and age (*Miller* et al., 1984; *Polinard* et al., 1985; *Hoskin*, 1991; *Hernes* and *Knudsen*, 1992; *Espenshade* and *Calhoun*, 1993; *Espenshade* and *Hempstead*, 1996; *Bar-Tzuri*, 1996, 1999). In general, poor people, unemployed, and individuals with low levels of education are more likely to reveal hostile attitudes toward ethnic immigrants. In addition, cultural and personal traits are found to be associated with attitudes toward ethnic immigrants. For example, traditional orientation, religiosity, and political orientation are likely to increase distance between groups and antagonism toward immigrants (*McAllister* and *Moore*, 1991; *Ruefle* et al., 1992; *Enoch*, 1994; *Quillian*, 1995, 1996; *Pedahzur* and *Yishai*, 1999). Conservative views may encourage natives to oppose labor migration and therefore to exclude them from any kind of rights. Finally, individuals with vulnerable positions in the labor market (i.e. subordinate ethnic minorities) tend to hold negative attitudes toward immigrants. The antagonism expressed by persons of lower socio-economic status, is apparently a result of perception of

threat to livelihoods and standard of living, and of competition for scarce resources (*Miller et al.*, 1984; *Polinard et al.*, 1985; *Simon and Alexander*, 1993; *Gaashlot and Togeny*, 1995).

### **Methodology**

The analysis reported here is based on a survey of the adult Israeli population based on a stratified sample of 1,100 respondents conducted in Israel during the second half of 1999. A questionnaire containing attitudes and beliefs toward immigrants and labor migrants was modelled after instruments developed in the following studies: Eurobarometer Survey (Western Europe), the General Survey of the Social Sciences – ALLBUS – (Germany), and the survey organized by the Canadian Institute for Public Opinion. In addition the questionnaire contains data on demographic, socio-economic and labor force characteristics of respondents. The interview was conducted face-to-face and lasted about 40 minutes. The rate of response was 50 percent which is typical in the Israeli society.

The citizens of Israel can be divided into three major distinct geo-cultural groups: Jewish immigrants from Europe and the Americas (mostly Ashkenazi) at the top of the ethnic hierarchy; Jewish immigrants who arrived from Asia and North Africa (mostly Sephardic); and non-Jews (mostly Arabs who lived in the region for generations and are at the bottom of the social ladder (e.g. *Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov*, 1993). The split between Jews and Arabs is much more pronounced than the differences between the two Jewish ethnic groups.

In Appendix 1 we provide a socio-economic profile of the adult population included in the sample for Jews and Arabs, respectively. Arabs are oversampled to provide large number for statistical analysis. Jewish respondents were classified in two ethnic categories (Asian-African or European-American according to their place of birth (for foreign-born) or by father's place of birth (for native-born). Over 55 percent of the Jewish population are of European-American origin, while 45 percent are of Asian-African descent.

Differences between Jews and Arabs are evident with regard to most characteristics displayed in the table. Jews are characterized by higher levels of formal schooling (28 percent hold an academic degree versus 14 percent among Arabs) and are overrepresented in the high status occupations. Jews and Arabs also differ in their political orientation (which has implications regarding the position towards the Arab-Israeli conflict) and degree of religiosity. The majority of the Israeli Arab population reported being political left-oriented compared to only 27 percent among Jews. Whereas half of the Jewish population defined itself as secular circa 40 percent of the Arab population (most of them Moslem) reported being Orthodox oriented towards religion. Overall our sample adequately represents the Israeli adult population.

## Data Analysis

The presence of migrant workers in Israel is of special interest because it challenges the basic definition of Israeli society which encourages permanent settlement of Jewish immigrants and discourages settlement of non-Jews. Thus, we expect Jews and Arabs to differ in their support of Jewish and non-Jewish migration.

Before proceeding with the analysis, it seems in order to present public attitudes toward migration in Israel. Appendix 2 displays respondents' support regarding entrance of three different groups to Israel: labor migrants, Palestinians from the Occupied Territories and new (Jewish) immigrants. The attitudes towards different types of immigrants vary according to ethnicity. As expected Jews still embrace Jewish immigration as a national goal thus displaying favorable attitudes toward „new immigrants“. Almost two-thirds support their unrestricted entrance opposed to only 8 percent of Israeli Arabs. However, a certain level of hostility toward Jewish immigration exists even within the Jewish population as one-third of both citizens of European-American origin and Asian-African origin support restricted entrance of „new immigrants“. It is interesting to note that the consensus regarding the relevance of Jewish migration has eroded over time, especially since the beginning of the massive flow of migration from the former Soviet Union (*Leshem*, 1998).

Israeli Jews do not endorse free entrance of either foreign workers or Palestinians. Nevertheless, they were more likely to support restricted entrance of foreign workers and more likely to prohibit the entrance of non-citizen Palestinian workers. Compared to Jews, Israeli Arabs display a more negative attitude towards foreign workers. Almost 60 percent of Arabs supported “prohibition of entrance” compared to roughly one-quarter among Jews.

Arab attitudes are divided regarding the entrance of Palestinian workers into the Israeli labor market. Although two-thirds support their entry (either unrestricted or restricted), 28 percent support the prohibition of labor migration from the Occupied Territories. Jews however, are more supportive of prohibition of Palestinian workers entrance with 54 percent among Asian-Africans and 36 percent among European-American.

## Social Distance

Responses to five questions are used to measure social distance from foreign workers. Each question pertains to how close one would allow a foreign worker to approach one or one's family. The results classified by ethnicity, education and income levels are presented in Table 1.



**Table 1:** Social Distance by Ethnicity, Education and Earning . \* P<.05

	Would it be unpleasant if your neighbor was a foreign worker	Would it be unpleasant that a foreign worker marries someone in your family	Would it be unpleasant that your child studies in the same classroom with a child (born to foreign workers)	Would it be unpleasant to have a foreign worker supervising your work
	% Unpleasant (-1 to -3)	% Unpleasant (-1 to -3)	% Unpleasant (-1 to -3)	% Unpleasant (-1 to -3)
<b>By Ethnicity</b>				
Jews Europe-America	38.5%*	76.1%*	29.5%*	57.9%*
Jews Asia-Africa	50.7%*	86.3%*	43.9%*	67%*
Arabs	81.3%*	91.9%*	70.6%	78.6%*
<b>By Education</b>				
Less than high school	69.4%*	89.9%*	57.9%*	75.9%*
High school	53.9%*	85.6%*	43.8%*	69.6%*
Higher than high school	45.6%*	78.8%*	39.7%*	59.7%*
<b>By Earning</b>				
Low	56.9%*	86%*	50.5%*	69.8%*
Middle	56.4%*	81.6%*	45.8%*	65.2%*
High	43.6%*	82.4%*	34.5%*	60.6%*
Total	54.3%	83.8%	45.6%	66.6%

An overview of the respondents' attitudes toward foreign workers reveals a relatively consistent pattern of negative and prejudicial attitudes. About 84 percent of respondents found it unpleasant if a foreign worker was to marry a member of the family. Over 66 percent of the respondents said that it would be unpleasant to have a foreign worker as supervisor at work. About 46 percent of respondents reported it as unpleasant if foreign workers' child shares the same classroom with respondents' child. And, 54 percent said that it would be unpleasant if a foreign worker was a neighbor.

The data reveal significant association between ethnicity, educational level, and level of income to the perception of social distance. Jews (and more so European-American Jews) reported lower levels of unpleasantness than Arabs on all four items. That is, "unpleasantness" is likely to rise with level of ethnic subordination. Similarly, respondents of lower socio-economic status (education and income) tend to express stronger feelings of social distance (i.e. greater level of unpleasantness).

### Attitudes toward Discrimination of Foreign Workers

A series of questions were used to measure attitudes of the Israeli population concerning discriminating behavior towards labor migrants. The items were taken from ALLBUS and translated into Hebrew. Respondents were asked about their personal opinion with regard to three situations. The patterns of response (means and standard deviations) by ethnicity, education and income are presented in Table 2. A four-step scale was used (1=just fine through 4=not fine at all). Analysis of variance was conducted in order to establish whether the mean scores on each attitude differed significantly by ethnicity and by levels of education and income.

**Table 2:** Attitude toward discrimination by Ethnicity, Education and Earning .  
Means and (Standard Deviations). \* P<.05

	A restaurant owner refuses to serve a foreign worker	Parents forbid their 17-year-old daughter from pursuing a friendship relationship with a foreign worker	A factory owner that has to down-size, fires foreign workers first
<b>By Ethnicity</b>			
Jews Europe-America	3.63 (0.71)	2.04* (1)	2.21 (0.97)
Jews Asia-Africa	3.58 (0.8)	1.72* (0.97)	1.84* (0.93)
Arabs	2.05* (0.97)	1.52* (0.74)	2.2 (1.07)
<b>By Education</b>			
Less than high school	2.77* (1.17)	1.68 (0.96)	2 (1.07)
High school	3.18* (1.11)	1.72 (0.97)	2.03 (1.01)
Higher than high school	3.39* (0.93)	1.9* (0.92)	2.18* (0.95)
<b>By Earning</b>			
Low	3.06 (1.1)	1.77 (0.97)	2.08 (1.04)
Middle	3.16 (1.1)	1.82 (0.94)	2.11 (1)
High	3.61* (0.76)	1.93 (0.97)	2.12 (0.93)
Total	3.17 (1.08)	1.79 (0.95)	2.09 (1.01)

The findings are in line with the theoretical expectations. In general respondents of European-American origin (the superordinate group), with higher education and with higher levels of income were less likely to support discriminatory conduct. However there are meaningful differences in the degree respondents objected or accepted discriminatory behavior. Respondents express more liberal attitudes in situations related to the public sphere (when a restaurant owner refuses to serve a foreign worker) and in the labor market area (when a factory owner has to downsize) than in the private sphere (intimate relationships within the family).

### **Labor Market Consequences of Foreign Workers Presence**

Labor market consequences of labor migration can be summarized in two models: the competition and the complementarity hypothesis. The *Labor Market Complementarity Model* suggests that labor migrants do not compete with native workers over the same jobs; they take the jobs natives are not willing to perform. Conversely, the *Labor Market Competition model* refers to the frequent complaint about immigrants taking jobs away from native workers, contributing to higher rates of unemployment, and driving down wages and working conditions in a series of occupations. Thus, it is expected that minorities and persons of low socio-economic status (who are more likely to compete with foreign workers) would be more hostile and antagonistic toward foreign workers while persons of higher status would be more tolerant towards the presence of foreign workers in the labor market.

A series of questions were presented to respondents with regard to the presence and impact of foreign workers in the labor market. Respondents were asked to express their agreement on a seven-step scale (1=don't agree at all; 7= completely agree). Analysis of variance was conducted in order to establish whether the mean scores on each attitude differed significantly by ethnicity, education, and income, respectively (see Table 3). Items in columns 3, 4 and 5 were taken from ALLBUS and translated into Hebrew.

**Table 3:** Attitudes to Foreign Workers and Labor Market Consequences by Ethnicity, Education, Earning. *Means* and (Standard deviations). \* P<.05

	„Pre-eminence of Employment should be given to Israelis“	„Foreign workers should be allowed to work only in specific occupations“	„In a state of unemployment in the labor market foreigners should be sent back to their countries of origin“	„Foreign workers take work from Israeli citizens“	„Foreign workers in Israel do the work that Israeli citizens do not want to“	„Israeli citizens deserve higher wages than foreign workers“
<b>By Ethnicity</b>						
Jews Europe-America	6.41* (1.43)	4.14 (2.49)	4.72* (2.2)	3.76* (2.41)	5.86 (1.85)	4.36* (2.56)
Jews Asia-Africa	6.78* (0.97)	4.14 (2.49)	5.55 (2.06)	5.03* (2.35)	5.65 (2.03)	5.36 (2.27)
Arabs	5.69* (1.8)	4.61* (1.91)	5.81 (1.66)	5.75* (1.8)	4.62* (2.14)	5.37 (1.88)
<b>By Education</b>						
Less than high school	6.24 (1.56)	4.4 (2.34)	5.86* (1.81)	5.64* (1.97)	4.88* (2.29)	5.55 (2.08)
High school	6.44 (1.38)	4.26 (2.43)	5.53* (2.01)	5.08* (2.31)	5.56 (1.96)	5.24 (2.24)
Higher than high school	6.29 (1.5)	4.21 (2.37)	4.79* (2.15)	3.98* (2.42)	5.7 (1.92)	4.45* (2.45)
<b>By Earning</b>						
Low	6.32 (1.49)	4.29 (2.38)	5.47* (2.07)	4.97* (2.39)	5.11* (2.24)	5.14* (2.34)
Middle	6.29 (1.51)	4.18 (2.28)	5.22 (2)	4.6 (2.35)	5.55* (1.95)	4.86 (2.28)
High	6.49 (1.33)	4.24 (2.54)	4.94 (2.26)	4.25 (2.45)	6.02* (1.69)	4.64 (2.46)
Total	6.32 (1.48)	4.28 (2.37)	5.29 (2.07)	4.96 (2.34)	5.45 (2.06)	4.73 (2.38)

Regardless of ethnicity, education and earnings level, there is a general agreement that pre-eminence of employment should be given to Israelis. Although less strong, there is also a general consensus regarding the issue of sending back labor migrants in case of unemployment. Israelis also tend to support the view that citizens deserve higher wages than foreign workers and that these workers should be allowed to work only in specific occupations (although not as strongly). Subordinate ethnic groups and respondents in low status positions are more likely to express more discriminatory attitudes toward guest workers. Conversely, respondents with higher levels of education and earnings are more likely to express liberal attitudes.

Respondents of European-American origin were more likely than others to support the view that “foreign workers take the jobs Israelis are not willing to do” (complementarity hypothesis). Conversely, Asian-African Jews and even more so Israeli Arabs were likely to support the view that foreign workers compete, take work and opportunities from Israeli citizens (the competition hypothesis). This is not surprising, in light of the fact that subordinate ethnic groups are overrepresented in the low-status and low-skilled occupations where they are more likely to compete directly with foreign workers.

Education and earnings levels also explain variation in attitudes towards labor market consequences generated by labor migration. Perception of economic competition is associated with lower levels of education and earnings whereas the idea of complementarity is strongly sustained by those respondents with the higher levels of education and earnings.

### **Perception of Competition over Socio-economic Resources**

Perceived threat from foreign workers might affect the way citizens think about the presence of foreigners in the host society. Increased competition over scarce resources, is likely to generate greater hostility toward outgroup members because outgroup members are often perceived as a threat to ingroup prerogatives. To measure the perception of competition over socio-economic resources respondents were asked „to what extent foreign workers in Israel“ affect their housing, health, education, social benefits, wages and employment opportunities. A seven-step scale was used where ‘1’ means *don't agree at all* (low competition) and 7 means *I completely agree* (high competition). The means and standard deviations of respondents' attitudes by ethnicity, education and income levels are presented in Table 4. Analysis of variance was conducted in order to establish whether the mean scores on each attitude differed significantly by the categories of the independent variables.

**Table 4:** Perception of Competition over Socio-economic Resources by Ethnicity , Education and Earning . *Means* and (Standard Deviations). \* P<.05

To what extent for-foreign work-ers in Israel affect your ...	Social Benefits	Wage levels	Employ-ment Chances	Level of Health Services you are entitled to	Level (quality) of Educa-tion of your chil-dren	Chances of finding decent housing	The Hous-ing condi-tions in your area of resi-dence
<b>By Ethnicity</b>							
Jews	2.7*	2.96*	2.68*	2.18*	2.66*	2.14*	2.9
Europe-America	(2.24)	(2.47)	(2.39)	(2.03)	(2.3)	(2.03)	(2.42)
Jews Asia-Africa	3.54	3.92*	3.73*	2.69	3.36*	2.97	3.87*
	(2.52)	(2.64)	(2.74)	(2.34)	(2.57)	(2.54)	(2.69)
Arabs	3.48	4.69*	4.66*	2.82	3*	3.3	2.75
	(2.22)	(2.43)	(2.58)	(1.96)	(1.96)	(2.29)	(2.12)
<b>By Education</b>							
Less then high school	3.71	4.62*	4.67*	3.04*	3.22	3.2	3.32
	(2.5)	(2.57)	(2.68)	(2.33)	(2.32)	(2.49)	(2.52)
High school	3.38	4.09*	3.98*	2.67*	3.16	3.08	3.54
	(2.43)	(2.62)	(2.69)	(2.25)	(2.39)	(2.47)	(2.58)
Higher then high school	2.77*	3.02*	2.67*	2.14*	2.71*	2.25*	2.86*
	(2.15)	(2.42)	(2.37)	(1.85)	(2.24)	(2.03)	(2.35)
<b>By Earning</b>							
Low	3.44	4.26*	4.06*	2.73	3.26*	3.05	3.18
	(2.42)	(2.61)	(2.7)	(2.26)	(2.43)	(2.47)	(2.53)
Middle	3.16	3.71*	3.54*	2.48	2.86	2.73	3.2
	(2.32)	(2.56)	(2.63)	(2.04)	(2.18)	(2.25)	(2.45)
High	2.57*	2.6*	2.3*	2.12*	2.64	1.85*	2.78
	(2.03)	(2.32)	(2.29)	(1.86)	(2.22)	(1.78)	(2.29)
Total	3.18	3.75	3.56	2.52	2.98	2.73	3.17
	(2.36)	(2.61)	(2.68)	(2.13)	(2.32)	(2.33)	(2.48)

Perception of competition is most evident at the economic level. This perception is most apparent among subordinate groups (Asian-African origin and most strongly Israeli Arabs) who tend to feel that the presence of foreign workers in the country has detrimental consequences for both their employment opportunities and wage levels.

Perception of competition over resources such as social benefits, health services, education and housing is not as pronounced as the perception of labor market competition. It is interesting to note that migrant workers are not entitled to receive any of the services (health and housing) granted by the state to their citizens. Nevertheless, a substantial portion of respondents in the sample (circa 20 percent) perceive that the presence of labor migrants in society negatively affect their housing, education and welfare rights. Here too, significant differences in attitudes are evident by ethnicity, education and earnings. Arabs and Jews of Asian-African origin and individuals with low education and earnings tend to perceive a greater threat and competition generated by foreign workers than others. Somewhat surprising are the findings regarding perception of competition over social resources among Israeli Arabs. Although the majority of the Arab population live in segregated communities and thus, are the least likely to be affected (especially in housing and schooling) by foreign workers, they still express negative attitudes concerning the impact of foreign workers on the neighborhood and school.

### **Attitudes towards Socio-Economic and Political Rights of Foreign Workers**

In this section we focus on public opinion towards socio-economic and political rights of labor migrants. Respondents were asked “to what extent do you agree that foreign workers should have the same rights as Jews” regarding socio-economic and political rights. Items in columns 1 and 3 were taken from ALLBUS and translated into Hebrew. A seven-step scale was used where ‘1’ means *don’t agree at all* and 7 means *I completely agree*. The results (by ethnicity, education and income levels) are presented in Table 5. Analysis of variance was conducted in order to establish whether the mean scores on each attitude differed significantly by ethnicity, education and income levels.

A clear-cut picture regarding entitlement of different types of rights to foreign workers in the Israeli society arises depending on the different types of rights (socio-economic, political) and who should provide the specific right (the state or the employer). The data clearly reveal that respondents differentiate between rights provided by the state vis a vis rights that should be provided by employers.

**Table 5:** Attitudes towards Socio-economic and Political Rights of Foreign Workers by Ethnicity, Education, Earning. *Means* and (Standard Deviations). \* P<.05

	“All political activities should be prohibited for foreign workers residing in Israel“	“Foreign workers living in Israel should be given the right to unionize“	“Foreign workers should have the right to vote for the local government“	“The State should provide welfare for the foreign workers“	“The State should provide education for the foreign workers“	“The State should provide decent housing for the foreign workers“	“The employers should be forced to provide insurance against work accidents to their foreign workers“	“Minimum wages for foreign workers should be assured“
<b>By Ethnicity</b>								
Jews Europe-America	5.29 (2.41)	3.96* (2.55)	1.92 (1.81)	3.94* (2.38)	3.97* (2.47)	3.79* (2.46)	6.29 (1.67)	5.69 (2.18)
Jews Asia-Africa	5.88* (2.1)	3.51 (2.59)	1.77 (1.74)	3.27* (2.4)	3.31* (2.5)	3.44* (2.53)	6.22 (1.79)	5.78 (2.11)
Arabs	5.26 (1.78)	3.66 (2.46)	3.01* (2.06)	2.82* (1.66)	2.72* (1.66)	2.97* (1.87)	3.63* (2.24)	3.08* (1.98)
<b>By Education</b>								
Less than High school	5.41 (2.14)	3.04* (2.35)	2.27 (2)	2.86* (2.06)	2.7* (2.04)	3.06* (2.28)	4.98* (2.45)	4.42* (2.53)
High school	5.72* (2.05)	3.73 (2.46)	2.13 (1.97)	3.33* (2.23)	3.3* (2.32)	3.5 (2.44)	5.49* (2.2)	5.12 (2.37)
Higher than High school	5.33 (2.25)	3.98 (2.47)	2.15 (1.88)	3.79* (2.3)	3.87* (2.41)	3.63 (2.33)	5.85* (2.04)	5.24 (2.33)
<b>By Earning</b>								
Low	5.27 (2.29)	3.43 (2.43)	2.25 (1.98)	3.39 (2.24)	3.28 (2.27)	3.33 (2.35)	5.45 (2.23)	5.07 (2.35)
Middle	5.58 (1.99)	3.98* (2.39)	2.34 (1.99)	3.31 (2.18)	3.32 (2.29)	3.41 (2.31)	5.45 (2.25)	4.84 (2.48)
High	5.42 (2.37)	3.74* (2.67)	1.69* (1.59)	3.76* (2.32)	3.89* (2.47)	3.97* (2.44)	6.22* (1.76)	5.58* (2.2)
Total	5.47 (2.17)	3.66 (2.46)	2.18 (1.93)	3.41 (2.25)	3.41 (2.34)	3.45 (2.36)	5.53 (2.22)	4.99 (2.42)



The overwhelming majority of respondents (both Jews and Arabs) strongly supported the denial of *political rights* to foreign workers. A more moderate picture arises with regard to *social rights*. Jews, especially Jews of European-American origin, and respondents of higher educational and income levels are more likely than others to express positive attitudes for granting welfare, education and housing rights to foreign workers.

Support to the right for minimum wage and for the enforcement of insurance policy is more pronounced among Jews than Arabs and is likely to rise with levels of education and income. In general, respondents were more supportive of employment rights for foreign workers to be provided by employers (minimum wage, accident insurance) than political and social rights to be provided by the state.

### **Explaining attitudes towards foreign workers**

In this section we test the extent to which socio-demographic and background characteristics explain different attitudes by estimating several OLS regression models predicting discrimination (Model 1), social distance (Model 2), attitudes towards consequences of labor migration for the local labor markets (Model 3), attitudes towards granting socio-economic and political rights to foreign workers (Model 4), and perception of competition over socio-economic resources (Model 5). Results are presented in Table 6.

The dependent variable in each model is an index constructed by a series of variables listed in Tables 1 to 5. Since ethnicity is related to socio-economic characteristics, it is important to estimate the net effect of ethnicity on attitudes toward migrant workers. The independent variables used in the models are: age, gender (1=male), ethnicity (the omitted category is Arabs), marital status (married= 1), years of formal education, income per capita, occupation (the omitted category is service and blue collar jobs), political orientation (the omitted category is right-wing) and religious orientation (the omitted category is orthodox).

**Table 6:** Coefficients of OLS regression equations (standard errors) predicting attitude toward foreign workers. \* P<.05

	(1) Attitude toward discrimination	(2) Social Distance	(3) Labor Market Consequences	(4) Socio-Economic and Political Rights	(5) Competition over Socio-Economic Resources
Age	-0.0002 (0.002)	-0.009* (0.004)	0.008* (0.003)	0.0004 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.005)
Sex	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.22* (0.09)	-0.06 (0.08)	-0.03 (0.09)	0.07 (0.12)
Marital	0.002 (0.05)	-0.06 (0.09)	-0.004 (0.09)	0.08 (0.09)	-0.07 (0.13)
Education	0.008 (0.007)	0.03* (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	-0.06* (0.02)
Income per capita	0.00002 (0.000)	0.00005* (0.000)	-0.00001 (0.000)	0.00003 (0.000)	-0.0001* (0.000)
Professional and Managerial	0.02 (0.06)	-0.06 (0.13)	-0.162 (0.11)	0.11 (0.12)	-0.36* (0.18)
Sales and Clerks	0.0007 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.11)	-0.2* (0.1)	0.22* (0.11)	-0.09 (0.16)
Unemployed	-0.0004 (0.09)	-0.099 (0.18)	-0.17 (0.16)	-0.08 (0.17)	-0.04 (0.25)
Asian-African Jews	0.56* (0.07)	0.57* (0.13)	-0.16 (0.12)	0.89* (0.13)	-0.35 (0.19)
European-American Jews	0.69* (0.07)	0.7* (0.14)	-0.42* (0.12)	0.99* (0.13)	-0.79* (0.19)
Left	0.26* (0.06)	0.68* (0.13)	-0.38* (0.11)	0.59* (0.12)	-0.39* (0.17)
Center	0.07 (0.05)	0.29* (0.11)	0.01 (0.1)	0.27* (0.11)	-0.15 (0.15)
Traditional	0.24* (0.05)	0.42* (0.1)	-0.07 (0.09)	0.05 (0.1)	0.33* (0.15)
secular	0.28* (0.06)	0.5* (0.12)	-0.4* (0.1)	0.13 (0.11)	0.3 (0.16)
Constant	1.4* (0.13)	-2.38* (0.26)	5.88* (0.24)	1.9* (0.26)	4.69* (0.37)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.240	0.156	0.120	0.158	0.112
N	993	994	994	994	992

Attitudes towards discriminating behavior of migrant workers and social distance (Models 1 and 2 respectively) are explained by ethnicity, religiosity and political orientation. In comparison to Arabs (the omitted category for ethnic contrasts) Asian-African Jews and most pronounced European-American Jews were less likely to express social distance and more likely to oppose discriminating behavior. Secular and traditional, and left oriented respondents were more likely (than their orthodox and right-center oriented counterparts) to condemn discrimination. It is interesting to note that whereas attitudes towards social distance were affected by class positions, income and education bore no statistical relationship to attitudes towards discrimination after controlling for other variables.

The degree of hostility towards labor migrants' presence in the Israeli labor market is affected by age, occupation, ethnicity, religiosity and political orientation (model 3). Negative views tend to increase with age and with low-status positions, that is those respondents who potentially compete with foreign workers in the labor market. Likewise, anti-immigrant sentiments are strongest for subordinate groups (Jews from Asian-African origin and Arabs), politically right-oriented and orthodox religious individuals.

The general perception of competition over socio-economic resources, whether in the labor market or in other areas like education, welfare and housing (model 4) is explained by class position (education, income per capita and occupation). The higher the occupational status, educational and income levels the less likely that respondents feel that immigrants compete with citizens over socio-economic resources.

Perceived threat from foreign workers is higher among Jews from Asian-African origin and Arabs (subordinate groups) that are more likely to depend on welfare and state resources than among Jews from European-American origin (the superordinate group). Finally, negative attitudes towards labor migrants are strongest among politically right-oriented and orthodox religious individuals.

Education, religious orientation, and political affiliation are correlated with support for granting socio-economic and political rights to foreign workers in Israel (model 5). Secular and traditional religious respondents were more likely to have more liberal attitudes towards granting socio-economic and political rights to foreign workers compared to Orthodox respondents (the omitted category). Likewise politically left-oriented respondents were more likely than center and right-oriented respondents (the omitted category) to express positive views regarding concession of rights to labor migrants. These results are not surprising given that religious Orthodox and right-wing oriented people tend to have a higher level of national and Jewish identity (compared to traditional and secular) which in turn affects their attitudes towards non-Jews. Finally, even after controlling for age, marital status, gender, education, income per capita, occupation, religiosity and political orientation, ethnicity retains a significant effect.

## Conclusions

The major goal of the present paper is to provide a descriptive overview of citizens' perceptions of labor migrants in Israel in an attempt to better understand the level of support for or opposition to the new emergent group of residents in Israeli society. Attitudes towards labor migrants has long been considered an important factor in determining the way foreigners adapt to the host society. Public opinion is important for two reasons. First, it sends signals to migrants to whether they are wanted or feared. Second, public sentiments may be contagious, spread to others and accepted as a fact exerting pressure on governments to implement restrictive policies (*Hoskin*, 1991).

The data indicate that Israelis have substantial negative attitude towards labor migrants. They are viewed as competitors in the labor market and in other social realms (welfare, education, health and housing). Most Israelis seem to be willing to deny them social and political rights.

The data reveal considerable differences among respondents in the level of anti-immigrant sentiments. Subordinated groups (Jews from Asian-African origin and Arabs) and persons at the bottom end of the education and income distribution are more likely to express antagonistic attitudes toward foreign workers whether in the labor market or in other arenas. Exclusion is especially evident in the (almost) unanimous support for denial of political and social rights for foreign workers. Respondents are more liberal when it comes to economic rights such as minimum wages and insurance against work accidents as they are not granted by the state but by employers.

Altogether our results show that Israelis (both Jews and Arabs) are resistant to accepting and integrating foreigners into Israeli society. Among Jews this is perhaps because the incorporation of non-Jews challenges the definition of Israel as a Jewish state and poses a threat to the homogeneity of the nation. Among Arabs, this is probably due to threat and competition over resources.

Whatever the reason may be, the denial of access to social, economic and political entitlements creates de-facto a new subordinate group in the Israeli society. Labor migrants can be considered thus, „margizens“, that is a new category of people who, being denied of membership in the host society, remain excluded in legal, social, cultural and political terms (*Martiniello*, 1994; *Kemp* et al., 2000). They have become the new *hewers of wood and drawers of water* in Israeli society.

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