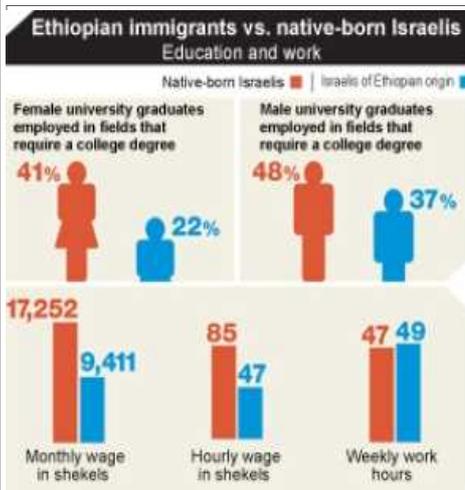


## STUDY: ISRAELI BORN COLLEGE GRADUATES EARN TWICE AS MUCH AS THEIR ETHIOPIAN COUNTERPARTS

**“FULLY A QUARTER OF THE ETHIOPIAN-BORN WOMEN SAID THEIR HOURLY PAY RATE WAS EQUIVALENT TO THE MINIMUM WAGE - NIS 20.70 PER HOUR - OR EVEN LOWER. IN CONTRAST, ONLY 2 PERCENT OF THE NATIVE ISRAELI WOMEN SAID THEY EARNED MINIMUM WAGE OR LESS.”**



Ethiopian immigrants with college degrees earn only half as much as native-born Israelis with similar degrees, even when the immigrants have been living here for 20 years or more, according to a new report prepared by a research institute at the request of the Immigrant Absorption Ministry.

There are currently some 2,000 Ethiopian immigrants with post-secondary education who have lived in Israel for at least 20 years. The study, conducted by the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute, compared a representative sample of 920 of them with existing data on some 580,000 native Israeli Jews with degrees.

The study found that Ethiopian men with college degrees work an average of 48 hours a week and earn an average of NIS 47 per hour, or NIS 9,411 per month. In contrast, native-born Israeli men with degrees work an average of 47 hours a week and earn an average of NIS 85 per hour, for an average monthly salary of NIS 17,252.

A similar gap exists among women: Ethiopian immigrants work an average of 36 hours per week and earn an average of NIS 35 per hour, or NIS 4,646 per month, while native Israelis work the same amount but earn an average of NIS 64 per hour, or NIS 9,981 per month.

Fully a quarter of the Ethiopian-born women said their hourly pay rate was equivalent to the minimum wage - NIS 20.70 per hour - or even lower. In contrast, only 2 percent of the native Israeli women said they earned minimum wage or less.

In fact, for the Ethiopian women, getting a degree did not really pay: Their average monthly pay of NIS 4,646 was only slightly above the NIS 4,114 averaged by Ethiopian women without a degree.

The study also found that only 37 percent of Ethiopian men with degrees had a job that required a degree of any kind, compared to 48 percent of native-born Israeli men. Among women, the gap was even larger: Only 22 percent of Ethiopian women with degrees had a job that required a college education, compared to 41 percent of native-born Israeli women.

Brinesh Omanech, 30, finished her degree in special education two years ago and currently works half-time teaching Ethiopian parents how to care for their babies. She said her two fellow instructors don't have education degrees, yet she earns exactly the same as they do. And her husband's situation is even worse: After finishing a bachelor's degree in human resources and politics and government at Ben-Gurion University, he is currently working as a security guard.

"He's sent out tons of resumes, but they haven't called him in [for an interview] even once," she said. "My nephews, who have finished their army service, don't want to study because they see us, and where it's gotten us."

The researchers said that part of the large wage gap could be attributed to the fact that the Ethiopians are younger, and pay usually rises with age. Only 2 percent of the immigrants in the study were over 45, they noted.

Another factor, they said, was that more of the Ethiopians worked in low-paying

professions like education or welfare.

Haim Sanbeto, 34, has a degree in electrical engineering and work experience to boot, having been accepted into the army's academic reserve (atuda') program, which lets outstanding students obtain a degree before being drafted and then serve in the army in their professional capacity. But for three years, he has been unable to get a civilian job as an engineer, despite sending out dozens of resumes. Now, having finally given up, he is working a minimum-wage job in one of the engineering firms he had hoped to work for as a professional.

"I decided to take this junior position because it was important to me to be in the environment in which I studied, to stay current and not to forget the field," he said. "And perhaps someday, I can move upward from within."

*By Revital Blumenfeld*

### Nishmat Ethiopian Women (N.E.W.) Students:

- 90% gain college acceptance
- According to Myers-JDC-Brookdale study, nationwide only 15% of Ethiopian Israelis with Academic degrees obtain jobs in their fields. In a typical class 60-80% of Nishmat graduates work in their field
- 95% of N.E.W. parents are unemployed or work menial jobs, while N.E.W. students are the first in their family to go to college
- N.E.W. gives young women the tools and understanding to balance their identity as both Ethiopian and Israeli, and go on to be leaders in Israeli society.