Arabs in Hi-Tech: From Diversity to Inclusion

العرب في الهايتك: من التنوّع وحتّى الإحتواء

A Research Study for the Tsofen Organization

Conducted by NAS-ناس Research & Consulting, August 2023

מחקר וייעוץ
أبحاث والاستشارة
Research & Consulting

NAS

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Tsofen 15 YEARS ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Dear Readers,

This research study symbolizes a significant milestone for Tsofen, a pioneer nonprofit organization founded by Jewish and Arab hi-tech professionals and economists.

Since 2008, Tsofen has been actively working to integrate Arab society into Israel's hi-tech industry. It has been directly responsible for placing over 3,500 Arab engineers in employment positions at Israel's leading companies, a number constituting more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of all Arab engineers in the industry today.

In the past year, the number of Arab engineers in Israel crossed the 10,000 mark for the first time. Upon reaching this historic achievement, we conducted our first-ever comprehensive study aimed at examining the impact of high-tech employment integration on the population of Arab engineers in Israel, with the goal of examining the organization's achievements over a 15-year perspective and identifying the challenges that remain before us, as part of a process for refining our future strategy. This is the first time that a study of this kind has been performed at a national level, as well as the first study to provide a realistic, in-depth picture of Arab professionals in Israel's hi-tech industry.

The study raises several noteworthy findings. First, the hi-tech industry workplace is an optimal platform for integrating young people from Arab society, on both a professional and social level. The research shows that there is a place for Arab engineers in Israel's hi-tech industry. They are a sought-after professional resource and the abilities and skills they bring with them are of great importance, as is their "friend brings a friend" approach, since the hi-tech industry is an integrative workplace. From Tsofen's experience over the years, this is especially true for global companies that have already implemented values of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI). Most of the Arab engineers who participated in the research are employed by global companies which, from our experience, operate in accordance with values of DEI, including setting diversity goals, offering pathways for integrating talents from diverse backgrounds, and creating an environment that creates space for cultural diversity. A smaller number of Arab engineers who participated in the study work for Israeli hi-tech companies which, from our experience, still have a way to go in terms of implementing target goals of DEI. In general, the study also shows that Arab female engineers are still lagging in the hi-tech industry, in terms of integration, professional advancement, and salary.

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The research findings raise three central points for our future activity:

1

Entry stage:

Although young Arab professionals' readiness to join the hi-tech employment market has improved over the years, intervention is still necessary for removing ongoing barriers to integration. This is true in a variety of ways, especially at the level of of the employment candidate.

2

Integration, advancement, and networking:

Most of the survey respondents expressed a desire to belong to a community. Therefore, alongside employment integration, we also see a need for greater investment in engineers – in terms of optimal social and professional acclimation and career advancement, as well as to foster a strong community of experienced engineers and organic leadership growth.

3

From diversity to inclusion:

We see great importance in supporting hi-tech companies to promote an integrated workplace policy, on an everyday basis and across all ranks in the company.

 Maisam Jaljuli
 CEO
 Tsofen – High Technology Centers

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This unprecedented study was conducted for the Tsofen organization during the months of March-June 2023, as part of an introspective research process carried out for the organization's 15th anniversary. Over the course of these years, the organization placed approximately 3,500 Arab engineers in employment positions across many companies in Israel's hi-tech industry. As part of the research, Arab hi-tech employees' perceptions regarding their place and integration in the hi-tech industry – as shaped by their daily experiences in the companies where they are employed – were examined for the first time.

Main Findings

1

To this end, the responses of over 400 Arab hi-tech professionals who responded to a quantitative survey were analyzed; Tsofen alumni who have been integrated into the hi-tech industry were interviewed; and representatives of companies in the industry that employ Arab employees were interviewed.

> We need to make more of an effort because we are Arab [...] in other words, if an Arab and a Jew enter the same position, the Arab will need to make more of an effort, both socially and professionally.
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

The study shows that the process for Arabs entering hi-tech has changed significantly over recent years, and that many of the barriers that Arab candidates experienced in the early days of Tsofen have been removed. Today, many Arab candidates have more exposure to information, as well as the skills, knowledge, and tools necessary to find employment. There has also been a significant return on employing companies' willingness to take steps to increase their employees' integration. However, the study shows that despite the changes, many gaps and barriers still exist for Arab employment candidates and hi-tech professionals in the stages of job search and integration in the industry, and a significant number of them are the only – or one of only a few – Arab employees in their work environment.

44% of the respondents work in an environment where there are few Arab employees, or they are the only Arab employee in their workplace. All the interviewees indicated special difficulties acclimating to the work environment due to them being Arab, as well as difficulty integrating on both a professional and social level.

2

The research findings show that a considerable portion of the Arab hi-tech professionals who responded view the industry to be a meritocratic industry that rewards employees on a professional basis alone – and in accordance with this, the majority reported that they rely on the "friend brings a friend" mechanism to help other Arab candidates advance professionally. At the same time, some indicated that being Arab has a negative effect on their professional life. One expression of this is the still small proportion of senior Arab management in the industry.

75% of survey respondents feel that being Arab has <u>no effect</u> or has a <u>positive effect,</u> from a professional perspective.

> " The differences are noticeable. There is no [Arab] representation in senior management, even in line with [their overall] representation in the company. "
>
> **Hi-Tech Company Representative**

3

The research shows that social integration has a direct effect on the daily experience of Arab employees in the workplace, and a direct and indirect effect on their professional integration and advancement. It was found that the feeling among Arab hi-tech professionals is that being Arab also plays a role in social integration, and that this is more significant than the professional aspect. The majority feels comfortable expressing Arab cultural signs and report pleasant conversations surrounding topics such as culture, holidays, and traditions, but on the other hand also report frequent feeling of foreignness and social alienation.

68% of the respondents <u>feel comfortable</u> expressing cultural signs in the workplace (to a high degree or to a very high degree).

53% feel that being Arab has <u>no effect</u> or has a <u>positive effect,</u> from a social perspective.

> " Conversations between Jews and Arabs are about culture. We have many conversations about food and weddings. The atmosphere in these kinds of conversations is pleasant. "
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

4

The issue of Diversity & Inclusion occupies a central place among a growing number of companies in the hi-tech industry. However, it was found that many Arab hi-tech professionals still feel uncomfortable expressing themselves culturally, especially in terms of identity and politics, and that some even fear that such an expression will harm them socially or professionally. It was found that the employing companies are taking actions in various channels to increase responsiveness to Arab employees' needs, often stemming from the Arab employees themselves raising the issues and requesting a response to their needs. However, it appears that there is still a long way to go in this matter.

56% of respondents reported that they do not have conversations about identity, belonging, and/or Jewish-Arab relations with their Jewish colleagues, or that they rarely have them.

" I don't initiate [political conversations] because I am afraid of losing my job [...] I don't share on social media either [...] because we've seen many cases of people who shared posts and it cost them their job. "

Hi-Tech Employee

We would like to thank the interviewees – Arab hi-tech professionals and company representatives – who generously shared their knowledge and insights with us in the in-depth interviews and quantitative survey, as well as the non-profit organization **itworks** for helping us distribute the survey.

Rationale & Methodology

Research Rationale

This research was carried out as part of an introspective process conducted by Tsofen. It seeks to support future strategic directions, including broadening the scope regarding work with graduates.

The organization is currently celebrating 15 years of activity. During this time, Tsofen placed approximately 3,500 Arab engineers in employment positions at hundreds of companies across the hi-tech industry.

This study examined Arab hi-tech professionals' perceptions regarding their place and integration in the hi-tech industry, as shaped by their daily experiences in the companies that employ them.

The study focused on Arab engineers who are integrated into the hi-tech industry and have benefited from Tsofen services since its inception. The research sought to examine their feelings regarding the quality of their integration as Arabs in the hi-tech industry, as well as obtain their insights about Tsofen's services.

This research focused on two populations: 1) Arab hi-tech professionals; and 2) representatives of the companies that employ them. This enabled a wider examination of the complex picture.

Data regarding the hi-tech professionals was collected using two complementary methods: 1) a survey, which allowed for a relatively large sample; and 2) interviews with a smaller number of respondents (defined by varying characteristics, including gender, type of company, years of experience, position in the industry, etc.), which allowed for a more in-depth perspective of the same topics examined in the survey.

In addition, 7 representatives from 5 companies (defined by varying characteristics, including size, location, ownership, number of Arab employees, etc.) were interviewed, which enabled insight into employers' perspective regarding their employees' integration.

Methodology

Project Duration

March – June 2023

Research Method

Quantitative Survey and Qualitative Research

Target Audience of Research

Arabs employed in Israel's hi-tech industry (with an emphasis on Tsofen alumni) and hi-tech companies.

The Quantitative Survey

- The survey included 27 questions, including three open-ended questions (responses optional).

- 656 respondents responded to the survey, 410 of whom met requirements for the study's target population – hi-tech professionals currently employed or previously employed in the hi-tech industry. The majority (338) are graduates of Tsofen programs.

- Respondents currently employed in the hi-tech industry were asked to answer the survey according to their current workplace. Participants previously employed in the hi-tech industry were asked to answer according to their most recent workplace. Survey results were compared to the total population in relation to whatever data was found.

The Qualitative Research

- 6 interviews were conducted with Tsofen alumni currently employed in the hi-tech industry. Graduates were asked about their path to working in the industry; their interaction with Tsofen; their integration in the workplace; and their personal, social, and professional experiences.

- 7 interviews were conducted with representatives of hi-tech companies that employ Tsofen alumni and are in contact with the organization. This included professionals responsible for the issue of Diversity & Inclusion in general, and the integration of employees from Arab society in particular, as well as mid-level or senior managers who have an affinity for the issue.

- By its nature, qualitative methodology – especially when it includes only a small number of interviewees – does not allow for generalizations or firm conclusions. Rather, its purpose is to allow a glimpse into the interviewees' world, as well as a deeper understanding of the quantitative data that emerged from the survey.

" Quote from an Arab hi-tech employee. "

" Quote from a hi-tech company representative. "

More

Link to additional data in the Appendices section.

Background – Diversity & Inclusion in Hi-Tech Companies

In most companies, the HR department is responsible for Diversity & Inclusion in the workplace, and their policies on this issue are usually directly derived from local and global company management policies (when relevant).* However, each company's HR department has the freedom to act according to practices it develops over time.

The research shows that some companies have a dedicated function assigned to this issue, and that the Arab population is a focal point for many companies. Some companies even have measurable goals that they set for themselves in this context. In all the companies interviewed, the Arab population is one of several underrepresented target populations, alongside women and – to a varying extent, depending on the company – ultra-Orthodox, people with disabilities, etc.**

> " Diversity must happen on the ground. If you are not there and don't talk to the people and don't see the gaps and don't understand the barriers, then it is impossible to understand or make necessary adjustments. "
>
> **Hi-Tech Company Representative**

According to the company representatives interviewed, the work involved with promoting Diversity & Inclusion can be divided into several categories, some of which overlap:

Recruitment

Working vis-à-vis social organizations (Tsofen, itworks, etc.); employer branding focused on Arab society (job advertisements in Arabic, billboards in Arab communities, etc.); and more.

Welfare

Offering a response to employees' needs (dedicated prayer room, adjusted work hours during Ramadan, etc.), and adapting benefits (gifts, activities, etc.) to all populations.

Ongoing Work

Relating to the minority groups employed in the company, managers, and all employees – including examining compliance with numerical goals; ensuring fairness in matters of salary and promotion; increasing visibility of underrepresented groups (in publications and company events); roundtables with underrepresented populations that enable them to voice their needs; etc.

Community Work

See below.

* The accepted term in the field is D&I – Diversity & Inclusion. In some companies, the term DEI is used because the word Equity is also added.
** The company representatives interviewed used both the terms "underrepresented populations/groups" and "minority groups".

Diversity & Inclusion efforts for underrepresented employees might include working with that population within the context of their wider community – and not just vis-à-vis the company's own employees or potential employees. Community work of this kind might include, for example, encouraging employees to volunteer (instead of regular workdays and/or with the support of company resources); hosting groups at the company's offices; partnership and sponsorship of organization events; and/or matching donations to social organizations that promote these populations.

The study shows that there are several reasons for this policy:

Social perception of the company's responsibility for reducing gaps and promoting equal opportunities.

Example: Organization of tech competitions for youth from the periphery.

A way of exposing potential employees to the company.

Example: Open days and training days for Arab students in relevant degrees.

Fostering interaction between the majority group and minority group in order to promote inclusion within the company.

Example: Participation of Jewish employees in mentoring programs.

Understanding that inclusion of employees from underrepresented populations involves ensuring they have a place in all levels of the company's activities.

Example: Allowing Arab employees to volunteer in their own communities.

" When you mentor [Arab] students, you create potential [for company employees] and grow it, and at the same time you create engagement for Arab and non-Arab employees. [This] gives [volunteers from the company] a sense of belonging and meaning, as well as closer familiarity with candidates from Arab society. In this way, they are exposed to individual barriers and gain a sense of familiarity."

Hi-Tech Company Representative

" We are always looking inwards [to the company] and outwards [outside the company]. "

Hi-Tech Company Representative

Mechanisms for Promoting Diversity & Inclusion in the Workplace: ERGs

Some hi-tech companies promote volunteer groups called Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), consisting of employees who share a common characteristic: gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, lifestyle, or interest. The groups are designed to promote issues of Diversity & Inclusion in the workplace by ensuring that the company is meeting the needs of group members, thus enabling support for personal and/or professional development and the creation of a safe space where employees can express themselves. ERGs are usually established by employees yet receive formal recognition from the company's management and are sometimes even allotted a budget for their activities.

In Israel, most large global companies have an ERG for Arab employees which, in addition to Arab employees, sometimes also includes Jewish employees who wish to take part in activities related to Arab society and/or make an impact on what is happening in the field.

In some companies, a "sponsor" is appointed – a member of the company's senior management who works in cooperation with the ERG to represent the group and its members vis-à-vis management.

The study shows that the nature of ERGs for Arab employees varies from company to company.

Among other things, their activities include community building; promoting responsiveness to Arab employees' needs and requesting policy changes vis-à-vis the company's management; initiation and management of employees' external volunteer work in the Arab community; cultural-social events and lectures intended for Arab employees and/or all company employees; and more.

> There is a [ERG] leadership that consists of about ten people who formulate an agenda and make plans [...] and they meet once a month and talk about how to advance the issues, what people are turning to them about, communicate with external organizations [...] During Ramadan [the ERG members] assembled a kit that was sent to management.
>
> **Hi-Tech Company Representative**

Field Study – Characteristics of Participating Population

6 In-Depth Interviews

with Arab hi-tech professionals who graduated from various Tsofen programs and are employed in a variety of companies.

656 people responded to the survey, from whom the answers of

410 Arab Hi-Tech Professionals

currently employed or previously employed in a tech role in the industry were analyzed.

7 In-Depth Interviews

with representatives of 5 different companies who hold positions related to Diversity & Inclusion policies and practices.

Data from respondents who have never worked in hi-tech were not processed, except for one question relating to their education.

pikisuperstar on Freepik

Characteristics of Survey Sampling:
Total Respondents, Distribution by Gender

Survey respondents were divided into two groups: 1) those who currently work in the industry or have worked in the industry in the past; and 2) those who have never worked in hi-tech (but have studied in the field and are therefore members of Tsofen's target audience).

Worked or work in hi-tech [N=41]

26%

74%
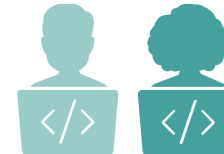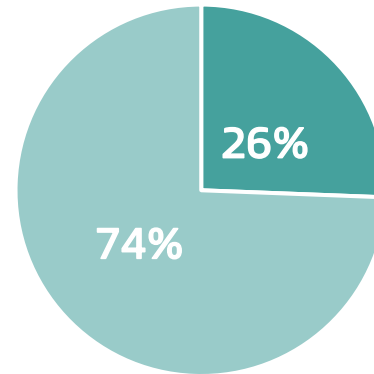
Never worked in hi-tech [N=246]

38%

62%
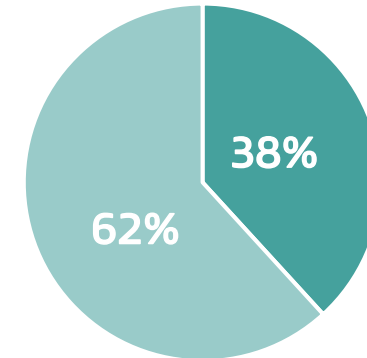
▶ Among those who have never worked in the industry, the distribution of women is significantly greater than their distribution among those who previously worked or are currently working in industry (38% vs. 26%).

Characteristics of Survey Sampling:
Education and Employment Status

Academic Institute – previously worked / currently work in hi-tech [N=410]

Academic Institute – never worked in hi-tech (not included in research) [N=246]
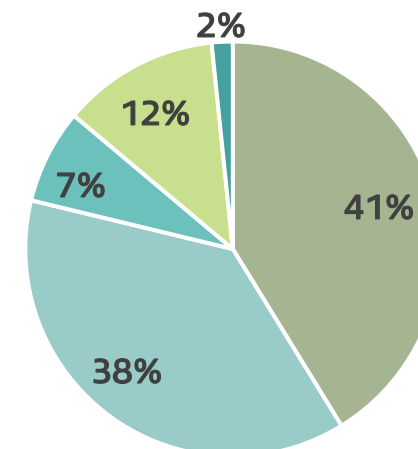
Legend:
- University in Israel
- Academic college in Israel
- Academic institute outside of Israel
- College for Technological Engineering in Israel
- Other

Chart 1 (N=410):
- 59%
- 30%
- 6%
- 3%
- 2%

Chart 2 (N=246):
- 41%
- 38%
- 7%
- 12%
- 2%

Other: Individual study or bootcamp, no relevant degree in the field, college course or other, two degrees from different places, etc.

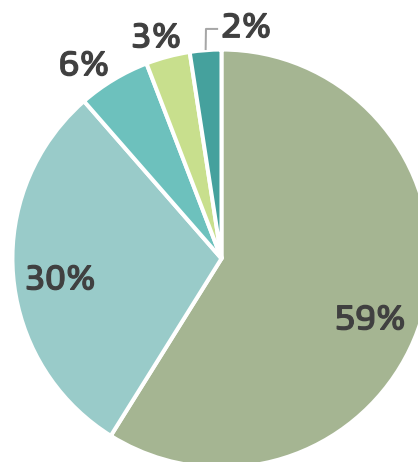▶ Note: Tsofen participants were the main target audience of this survey and a significant number of them are, by definition, job seekers in the industry. As such, respondents who have never worked in hi-tech are likely to work in hi-tech in the future.

The research shows that when it comes to hi-tech employment, students and graduates of universities have an advantage over students and graduates of academic / practical engineering colleges. According to a Ministry of Economy report, this pattern is particularly true among Arab graduates; among Jewish graduates, there is only a small difference between university and college graduates when it comes to sought-after professions – and for less sought-after professions, Jewish college graduates even have an advantage.

Source: Gilad Cohen Kovacs, Integrating, but slowly: Trends in the employment of ultra-Orthodox, Arab, and other groups in the hi-tech industry, Employment Branch, Ministry of Economy and Industry, 2022.

Characteristics of Survey Sampling:
Education and Employment Status

Respondents currently not employed in the hi-tech industry were asked if they had worked in the industry in the past. Those who answered "yes" were asked to complete the survey questionnaire in relation to their most recent company of employment, in order ensure that answers obtained were most relevant to the study.

Employment status
[N=410]

- Employed in the hi-tech industry or a tech position
- Currently unemployed, looking for work
- Employed, but not in the hi-tech industry or a tech position
- Unemployed and not looking for work

90% · 8% · 2% · 0.5%
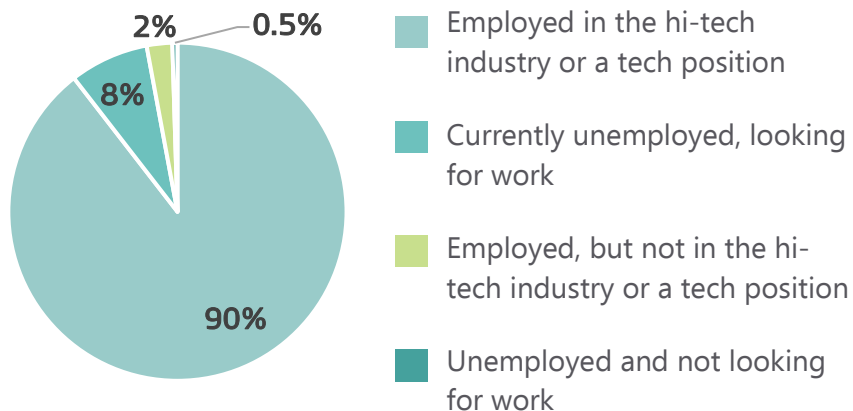
Reasons for not working in hi-tech
[N=41]

Respondents who do not currently work in the hi-tech industry, but have in the past

- I resigned/was let go and haven't managed to find work in the field
- I chose a career change
- I have family or personal obligations
- The project ended
- I started a Master's Degree

71% · 17% · 7% · 2% · 2%
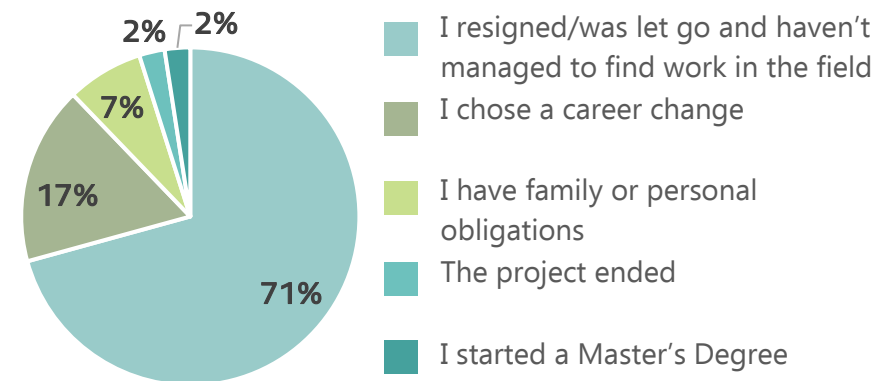
▶ Among respondents who were unemployed at the time they answered the survey, most (71% – 29 respondents) have not given up on a hi-tech career but are rather in the process of looking for a job.

▶ When segmented according to gender, there were no significant differences found between men and women regarding the reasons they are currently not employed in the industry.

Note: at the time that this study was conducted, many hi-tech companies were experiencing layoffs and new hirings were at their lowest level in years.

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Characteristics of Survey Sampling:
Gender, Company Type, Position

Respondents: 410 Arab Hi-Tech Professionals
who currently work
or previously worked
in a tech position in the industry
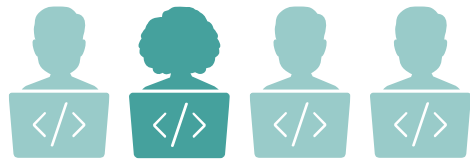
About ¼ of them
are **women**

72% Global hi-tech companies

15% Start-up companies

6% Hi-tech companies operating only in Israel

6% * Tech departments in companies not in the hi-tech industry

54% Software Development

7% Hardware

13% Management Roles **

10% QA / Automatization

According to Innovation Authority statistics:
- In 2022, Arab women comprised approximately 23% of Arab hi-tech employees.
- 76% of hi-tech employees in Israel work in locally-owned companies while 24% work in foreign-owned companies. Although this definition does not completely overlap with our survey categories, it can be concluded that Arab hi-tech employees have a significantly higher representation in global companies.

Characteristics of Survey Sampling:
Experience

	Women	Men	Total Respondents
Average years of experience in industry	3.8	6.5	5.8
Average years of experience in company	2.3	3.6	3.3
Experience of 5 years or <u>less</u>	80%	62%	67%

▶ The respondent with the most seniority has 40 years experience in the industry.

▶ The youngest respondents only recently began working in the industry.

▶ 64% of respondents have up to two years experience in their current workplace.

Overall, respondents have relatively low seniority in the hi-tech industry. This can be explained both by the large increase of Arab hi-tech employees in recent years, as well as the target audience of Tsofen participants, many of whom are only now entering the field.

There is a significant gap in average years of experience between male respondents and female respondents.

Salary & Professional Advancement

Acclimation

Arab employees report that they have a higher "burden of proof" during the acclimation phase in the workplace and/or when moving to another department, both socially and professionally, in comparison to their Jewish counterparts.*

" We put in more effort because we are Arabs [...] In other words, if an Arab and a Jew enter the same position, the Arab must put in more effort, both socially and professionally. "

Hi-Tech Employee

" The training I was given when I first began working [at the company] was not good in comparison to what the new Jewish employees received. "

Hi-Tech Employee

" When I first began working [at my company], I felt like there was one employee who was ignoring me. She would email all the other employees and leave me out [...] So I talked to the team manager about it and he addressed the issue. "

Hi-Tech Employee

" I do feel like Arab hi-tech workers must put in more effort than their Jewish counterparts. "

Hi-Tech Employee

*This issue came up in the interviews with hi-tech professionals but was not included in the survey questionnaire.

Survey respondents were asked about increases to their salary in terms of percentages, in relation to their first position in the industry. For ⅓ of the respondents – this is their first position in the industry, and thus responses to questions regarding professional advancement refer only to the remaining ⅔.

"Arab employees feel that they deserve a raise, but we do not initiate or ask for it. We wait for the manager to initiate the conversation. I think that hi-tech companies should know that Arab employees do not take the initiative and ask for a raise, especially Arab women."

Hi-Tech Employee

"Compared to my first position in the industry, my salary today has…" [N=268]

Decreased

Remained the same

Increased up to 10%

Increased between 10%-40%

Increased more than 40%

60%

25%

11%

1%

4%
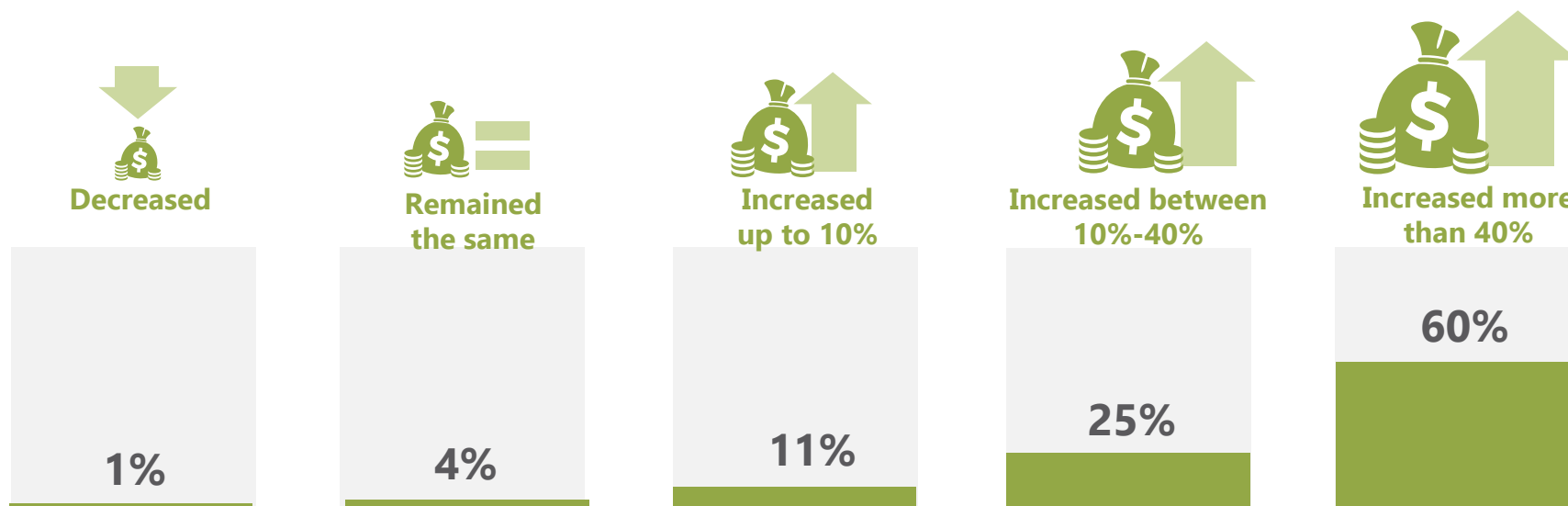
▶ Of respondents whose current job isn't their first in the industry, most reported **more than a 40% wage increase** compared to the salary they received in their first position.

Amongst those with more than 4 years of experience in the industry, this figure stands at 73%.

Studies show wage gaps between Arab and Jewish hi-tech employees. Respondents were therefore asked how they *perceive* their salary in relation to their Jewish counterparts.

"In your opinion, when compared to Jewish colleagues in similar positions, your salary is..." [N=308]

Most respondents perceived their salary to be similar to that of their Jewish counterparts.

When segmented according to experience and position, no significant differences were found in perceived wage gaps vis-à-vis Jewish colleagues.

32% — Lower

59% — Similar

9% — Higher
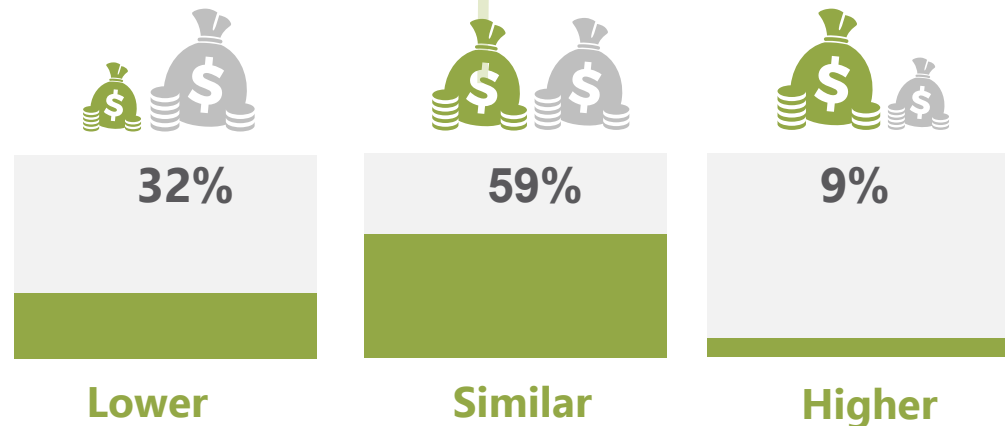
Excluding respondents who said: "I don't know".

▶ According to a Ministry of Economy study, data on 2019 salaries indicate significant wage gaps between Arab and non-Orthodox Jewish hi-tech employees.

▶ When examining the average salary for hi-tech employees ages 25-35, salaries of Arab women are **26% lower** than their non-Orthodox Jewish counterparts. Salaries of Arab men are **18% lower** than their non-Orthodox Jewish counterparts.

More

Source: Gilad Cohen Kovacs, Integrating, but slowly: Trends in the employment of ultra-Orthodox, Arab, and other groups in the hi-tech industry, Employment Branch, Ministry of Economy and Industry, 2022.

"In your opinion, when compared to Jewish colleagues in similar positions, your salary is..." Men [N=227]

"In your opinion, when compared to Jewish colleagues in similar positions, your salary is..." Women [N=81]

Most of the men perceive their salary to be similar to that of their Jewish counterparts. **Approximately ¼ perceive their salary to be lower.**

Approximately half of the women perceive their salary to be similar to that of their Jewish counterparts, and **approximately half perceive it to be lower**.
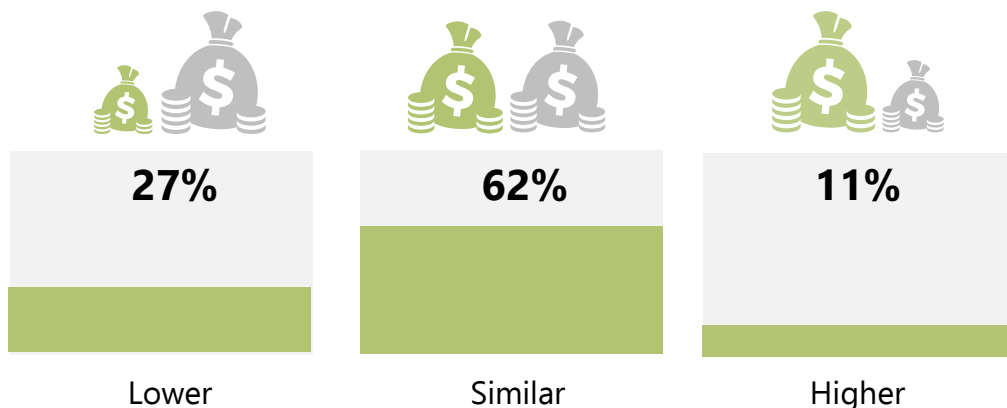
27%	62%	11%
Lower	Similar	Higher

Excluding respondents who answered: "I don't know".

44%	52%	4%
Lower	Similar	Higher
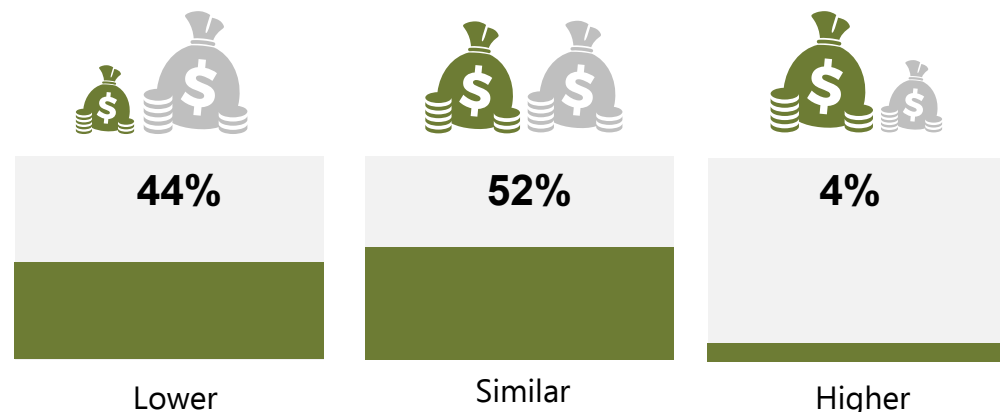
Excluding respondents who answered: "I don't know".

A Ministry of Economy study shows that differences in age, hi-tech employment experience, place of residence, and high school achievements fully explain the wage gap between Arab engineers/academic STEM graduates and non-Orthodox Jews, but that an unexplained gap (of 20-25%) remains among female college/university graduates who are employed in medium/low-demand professions.
It was also found that living in the periphery has a negative effect on wages, but there is no difference in this effect between Arabs and Jews. It was found that the survey respondents are indeed aware of these gaps:
44% of the women estimate that their salary is lower than that of their Jewish counterparts, while amongst men the figure stands at 27%.

Source: Gilad Cohen Kovacs, Integrating, but slowly: Trends in the employment of ultra-Orthodox, Arab, and other groups in the hi-tech industry, Employment Branch, Ministry of Economy and Industry, 2022.

Respondents were asked about their professional advancement, in relation to their first position. Answers include only those respondents for whom this is not their first job in the industry.

"How would you describe your employment situation today, compared to your first position in the industry?" [N=268]

> **54% of respondents advanced in a professional or managerial capacity**

" I feel like they try to help me advance even more than they try to help the other Jews in the team to advance. **"**

Hi-Tech Employee

" The differences are noticeable. There is no [Arab] representation in senior management, even in line with [their overall] representation in the company. **"**

Hi-Tech Company Representative

- 41% — I have advanced in a professional capacity (ex. Senior Engineer).
- 26% — I made a horizontal change (ex. new team, different technology, etc.)
- 18% — I remained in the same position/level
- 13% — I have advanced in a managerial capacity
- 2% — Other

Excluding respondents for whom this is their first position.

Compared to men, women are less likely to advance in a professional capacity and are more likely to make a horizontal change or remain in the same position/level.

" As an Arab and as a women, I had to put in more effort from a professional perspective. "

Hi-Tech Employee

"How would you describe your employment situation today, compared to your first position in the industry?", according to gender. [N=268]
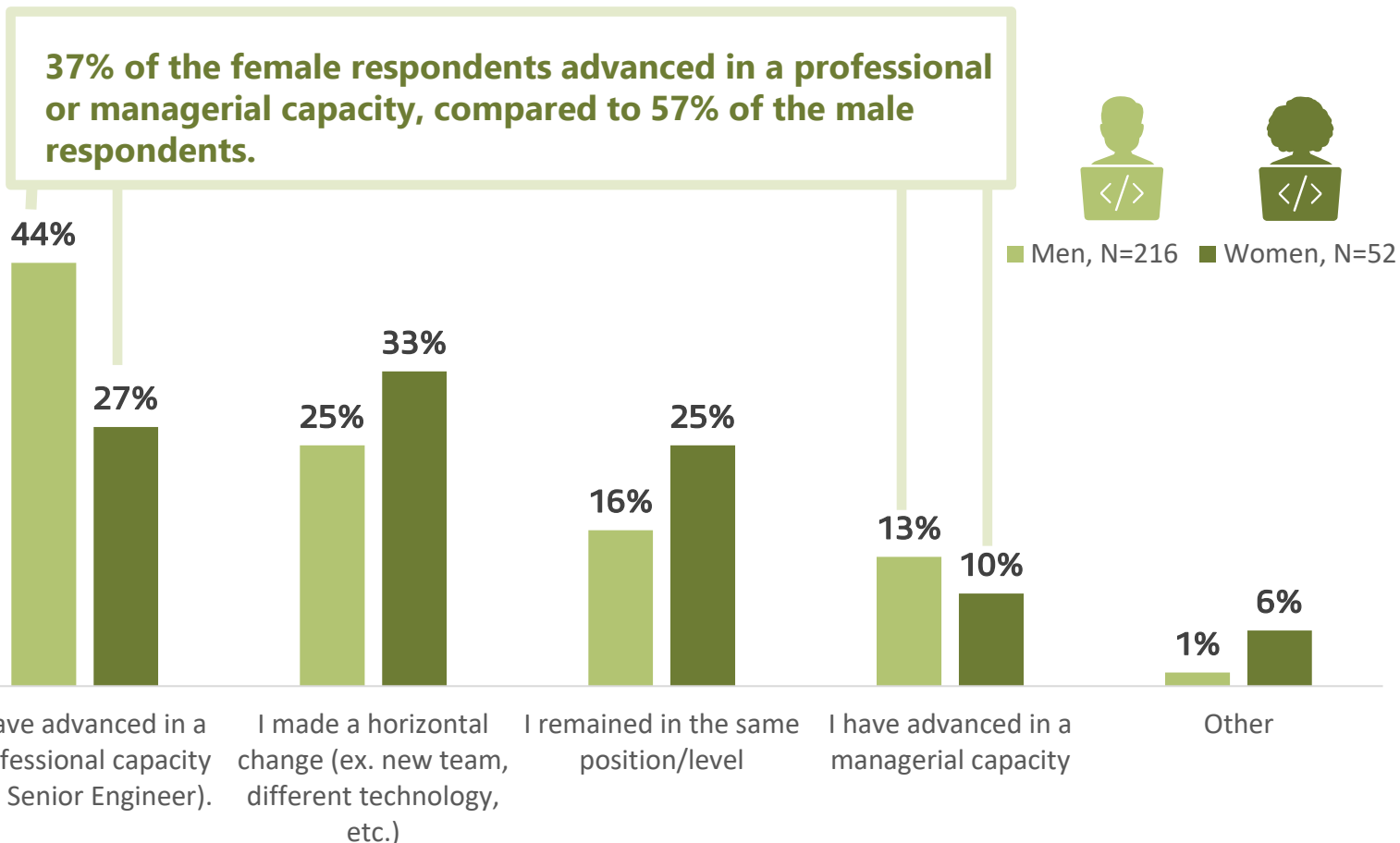
37% of the female respondents advanced in a professional or managerial capacity, compared to 57% of the male respondents.

■ Men, N=216 ■ Women, N=52

	Men	Women
I have advanced in a professional capacity (ex. Senior Engineer).	44%	27%
I made a horizontal change (ex. new team, different technology, etc.)	25%	33%
I remained in the same position/level	16%	25%
I have advanced in a managerial capacity	13%	10%
Other	1%	6%

Excluding respondents for whom this is their first position.

28

The interviews with company representatives show that, for some companies, the issue of Diversity & Inclusion is considered in processes for promotions and salary increases – managers are required to check that they are being fair to underrepresented populations throughout these processes. However, it seems that the measurable objectives refer mainly to the gender issue – and only in one company whose representatives were interviewed did the indicators also apply to Arab employees.

In other words – there is an understanding that these are key processes for integrating and including underrepresented employees, but the practice is still in its nascent stages and does not apply to the population of Arab employees. This may be due to Arab employees' relatively low representation in companies (absolutely and compared to women).

In some hi-tech companies, promotion (both in terms of salary increases and in terms of professional advancement) depends to some extent on the employee's explicit demand for a raise/promotion before his managers and/or self-advertising and self-promotion. The interviewees (hi-tech employees and company representatives alike) indicated that, in general, Arab employees often behave in a more "modest" manner and do not usually make use of these practices, thus adversely affecting their chances for promotion.

"Employees complete a self-evaluation once every few months. Arab employees tend to be more modest, and it takes a manager with high self-awareness to extract the good things they didn't write."

Hi-Tech Company Representative

Work Environment & Organizational Culture

Arab Colleagues

There is an underlying assumption that the number of Arab employees in the workplace impacts the Arab employee's work experience. Respondents were therefore asked about the number of Arabs in their daily work environment.*

N=409

29% report that there is a **majority or significant number** of Arab employees in their workplace and that they have daily contact with them.
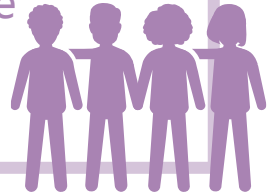
27% chose the response: **"There are additional Arab employees in my workplace."**
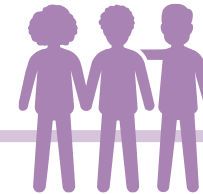
44% of respondents report that they have daily contact with **few or no Arabs**.

Almost half of the Arab hi-tech employees have few to no other Arab colleagues in their daily environment.

* It was virtually impossible to formulate an objective question relating to the proportion/number of Arab employees in the company due to the varying nature of the companies (small or medium-sized companies vs. global companies with many locales/sites), as well as some of the respondents' lack of accessibility to this information. As a result, the question regarding the number of Arab employees in the workplace was formulated in relation to the respondents' daily environment.

" The initial challenge was to integrate into the workplace and connect with people who come from a different background from me and speak a different language than I do [...] I felt that I was cut off, and there were almost no other Arab employees there, other than two Arab engineers. It was very difficult socially. "
Hi-Tech Employee

More

This question aimed to examine the subjective experience of Arab hi-tech employees regarding the attitude of the company in which they are employed.

"To what degree do you feel that your workplace addresses Arab employees' various needs? (Ex. holidays, religious/prayer needs, gifts and entertainment suited to all employees, etc.)" Prevalence, reported on a scale between 1 ("not at all") and 5 ("to a very high degree") [N=410]

" Diversity & Inclusion is an important aspect of the company [where I work]. "
Hi-Tech Employee

" My Jewish colleagues and managers are very considerate of events that are important to me, like fasting on Ramadan, Muslim holidays, strike days in the Arab sector due to [High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel] decisions, and more. "
Hi-Tech Employee

" Unfortunately, Arabs are a discriminated minority in the State of Israel. Even when they come to work in a global company, they have very low expectations regarding inclusion. "
Hi-Tech Company Representative

When segmented by **type of company** (global, start-up, etc.), there were **no significant differences** found in the degree to which Arab employees perceived their needs were being addressed.

54% of respondents reported that **their workplace addresses Arab employees' needs "to a high degree" or "to a very high degree".**

7%	15%	24%	31%	23%
1 - Not at all	2 - To a low degree	3 - To a moderate degree	4 - To a high degree	5 - To a very high degree

Workplace's Attitude to Employees' Needs
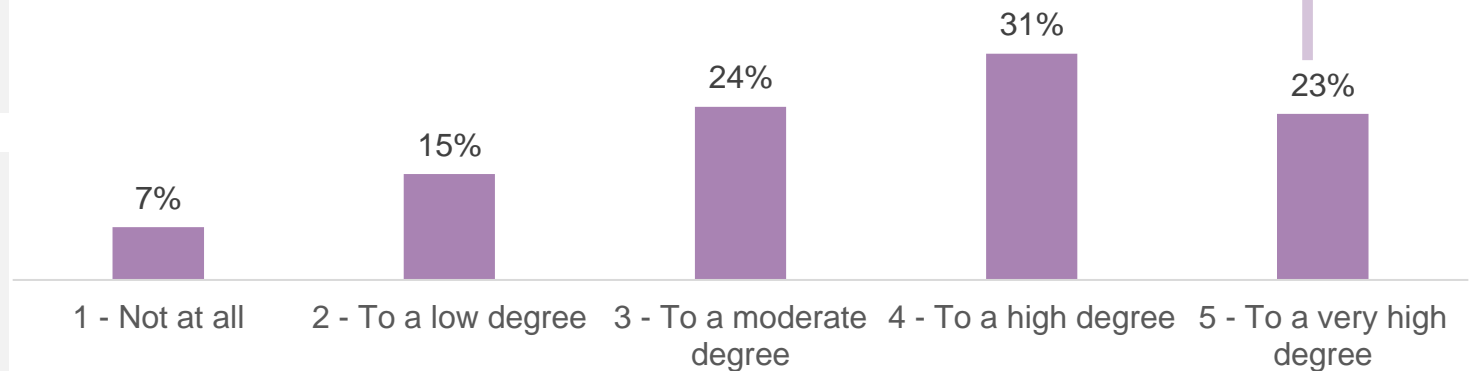
After examining the perceived degree to which the workplace addresses Arab employees' needs, we examined how this perception varies depending on the number of Arab employees in the work environment.

"To what degree do you feel that your workplace addresses Arab employees' various needs? (Ex. holidays, religious/prayer needs, gifts and entertainment suited to all employees, etc.)" **according to the number of Arab employees in the workplace.** Prevalence, reported on a scale between 1 ("not at all") and 5 ("to a very high degree") [N=40]*

Degree to which Arab employees perceive their needs are being addressed

3.1	3.7	4.3
I am the only Arab - there are only a few Arabs	There are additional Arabs - there is a significant number of Arabs	The majority of employees are Arab

The findings show that **as the number of Arabs in the workplace increases**, respondents **feel the company is more attentive to their needs**. More details further on.
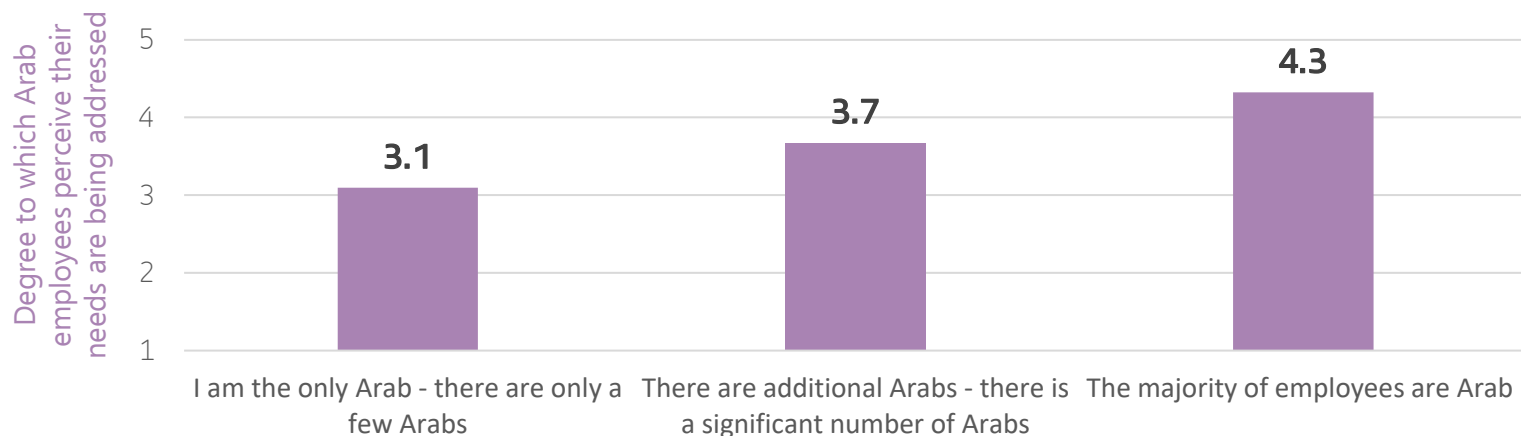
" [The company gave] an explanation about Ramadan, an Iftar celebration for the whole company, gifts for Eid al-Adha, special hours during Ramadan for Muslim employees, [we work] two hours less. "

Hi-Tech Employee

" I feel comfortable using one of the rooms for praying [..] after I checked with HR. "

Hi-Tech Employee

*Significant statistical differences were found (p<.05).

33

Company representatives indicated that the company's attitude towards the needs of their employees often comes from the ground – from Arab employees in the company who express that their needs are not being adequately met. In some cases, reports about something specific leads the company to develop an orderly procedure – for example, allocating a prayer room or setting reduced work hours during Ramadan.

In other cases – such as, for example, the issue of alcohol at company events, which was raised by several company representatives – there is awareness of the problem, but the company avoids explicit and unequivocal instructions on the subject and allows decisions to be made ad hoc at the staff or departmental level, if at all.

The survey results indicate that there is a connection between the number of Arabs in the workplace and the extent to which the company responds to the needs of its Arab employees. From the interviews with company representatives, it appears that responsiveness to needs is often a result of demands from the Arab employees themselves.

Although it is not possible to make a causal conclusion, it can be assumed that a workplace that has higher regard for the needs of Arab employees may be perceived as more attractive in the eyes of Arab job seekers – and thus actually increase the number of Arab employees who choose to work in the company.

All of this points to a "positive cycle":

Arab employees' demand for a response to their needs
Increases

Degree to which Arab employees perceive their needs are being addressed
Increases

Attractiveness of the company in the eyes of Arab candidates
Increases

Number of Arabs in the workplace
Increases
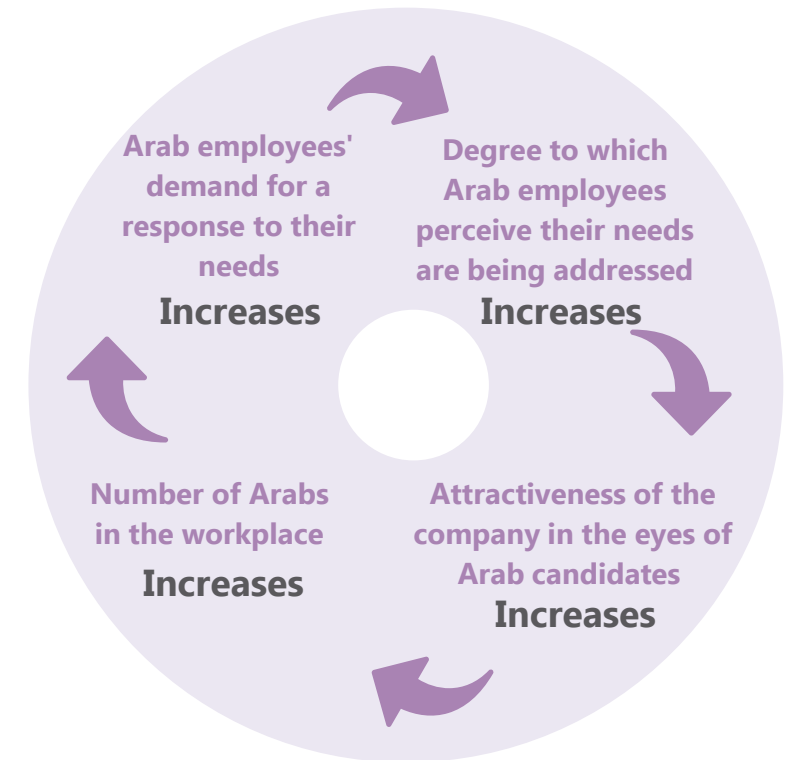
" When there are many [...] Arab employees, there are also expectations, they have standards. They don't just say 'thank you for giving me a job'. Employees expect that things like this will be taken into consideration. "
Hi-Tech Company Representative

" The employees are the ones who initially pushed for it and management cooperated."
Hi-Tech Company Representative

Workplace's Attitude to Employees' Needs:
Feelings of Discrimination

Some respondents provided examples of where they felt they encountered discrimination. These can be grouped into overt vs. covert experiences, as well as into various levels of interaction within the workplace.

Although these are the interviewees' subjective feelings and interpretations of situations they encounter daily, the examples are numerous and include many common characteristics. These kinds of subjective feelings pose a challenge for creating constructive relationships between employees and their workplace.

> With time I have begun to feel that I am the one doing the dirty work while others are developing very nicely in their fields.
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

> [...] When I moved to a different department, I felt that the staff did not accept or support me. Whenever I would send emails asking for advice, they would either ignore me or send an answer two days later... a Jewish employee moved to the same department at around the same time, and he was well-received and treated positively.
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

	On the company level	On a daily management level	On the part of Jewish colleagues
Covert Layer		A feeling of inequality in the distribution of tasks.	A feeling of being ignored, silenced, delayed responses.
Overt Layer	Small percentage of Arab employees in management positions; planning of company events not suitable for Arab employees.	A feeling that Jewish employees are given preference for leading projects and receiving promotions/raises.	Encountered racist comments.

> Company events always include alcohol, without a second thought given to people who do not drink, such as myself.
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

> In my yearly evaluations, I am given compliments but not raises. This is not comparable to my Jewish colleagues, who receive options and significant salary increases [...] There is inequality when it comes to employment opportunities, salaries, promotions, and general attitude.
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

> [...] I heard [people say] that 'Arabs kill during Ramadan because they are hungry'.
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

More

The hi-tech industry usually works around quantifiable goals, schedules, and periodic measurements of achievement. The issue of Diversity & Inclusion is no different. Companies that define Diversity & Inclusion as a central issue tend to translate their policies into measurable parameters.

In this context, two central problems were identified:

- **Defining and measuring:** While "representation goals" (ex. representing employees who share specific characteristics; equal representation in different departments/levels of the organization; fairness in terms of promotions, salaries, and benefits) are goals that can be measured with relative ease, evaluation and measurement of "inclusion goals" is a more complex process, because it also includes examining employees' subjective experiences, as well as addressing sensitive issues, such as discrimination and tensions in the workplace.

- **Implementing policies:** There is a certain difficulty involved with bringing policies and practices to all levels of the organization. Even when there are measurable goals, employees in tech positions, including managers, do not perceive the issue to be at the core of the organization's activities (since it is not part of the "business"). As such, it is often not present on the daily agenda of many managers or employees.

❚❚ If you don't make [Diversity & Inclusion] a goal, it will remain lip service. But when a manager is required to show the differences between men and women and use it as a measuring stick, it becomes an integral part of the work. ❚❚
Hi-Tech Company Representative

❚❚ One of the first things I did was work according to measurable targets. Our ultimate goal is to ensure an adequate representation of Arabs [in the company] – 21%. ❚❚
Hi-Tech Company Representative

❚❚ There are tutorials for how to interview – I don't think I heard any tutorials that emphasized different types of employees [...] I didn't see anything special for Arabs. ❚❚
Hi-Tech Company Representative

❚❚ This [inclusion of Arab employees] is not a wound we dig into. We don't do surveys, roundtables, [or have] one-on-one meetings to ask how it feels to be an Arab in the company. ❚❚
Hi-Tech Company Representative

Expression of Culture, Identity, & Politics in the Workplace

Expression of Cultural Markers

To examine the degree to which Arab hi-tech employees feel comfortable in their workplace, respondents were asked about how comfortable they feel expressing cultural markers in the workplace.

"To what degree do you feel comfortable expressing cultural markers in the workplace (ex. speaking Arabic, listening to Arabic music, etc.)?"
Prevalence, reported on a scale between 1 (not at all) and 5 (to a very high degree) [N=410]

68% of respondents reported that **they feel comfortable expressing cultural markers in the workplace "to a high degree" or "to a very high degree".**

" I feel comfortable expressing my religion and identity without hurting others. Over time, you also learn what the limit is, as well as the company's policy regarding what is possible – or not possible – to express. "
Hi-Tech Employee

" I don't always feel comfortable speaking Arabic with my Arab colleagues. Sometimes I get 'joke' comments about it. "
Hi-Tech Employee

1 - Not at all	2 - To a low degree	3 - To a moderate degree	4 - To a high degree	5 - To a very high degree
4%	10%	18%	38%	30%

Expression of Cultural Markers

To examine the way employees' comfort expressing cultural markers varies depending on the specific characteristics of the workplace, "feeling of comfort" is divided into:
- The workplace's attitude towards its Arab employees' needs.
- The number of Arab colleagues in the workplace.

"To what degree do you feel comfortable expressing cultural markers in the workplace (ex. speaking Arabic, listening to Arabic music, etc.)?",
by number of Arab colleagues in the workplace.
Averages, reported on a scale between 1 (not at all) and 5 (to a very high degree) [N=409]

Degree of comfort expressing cultural markers

I am the only Arab - there are only a few Arabs	3.4
There are additional Arabs - a significant number of Arabs	4.1
The majority of employees are Arabs	4.2

Reported number of Arabs in the workplace

"To what degree do you feel comfortable expressing cultural markers in the workplace (ex. speaking Arabic, listening to Arabic music, etc.)?",
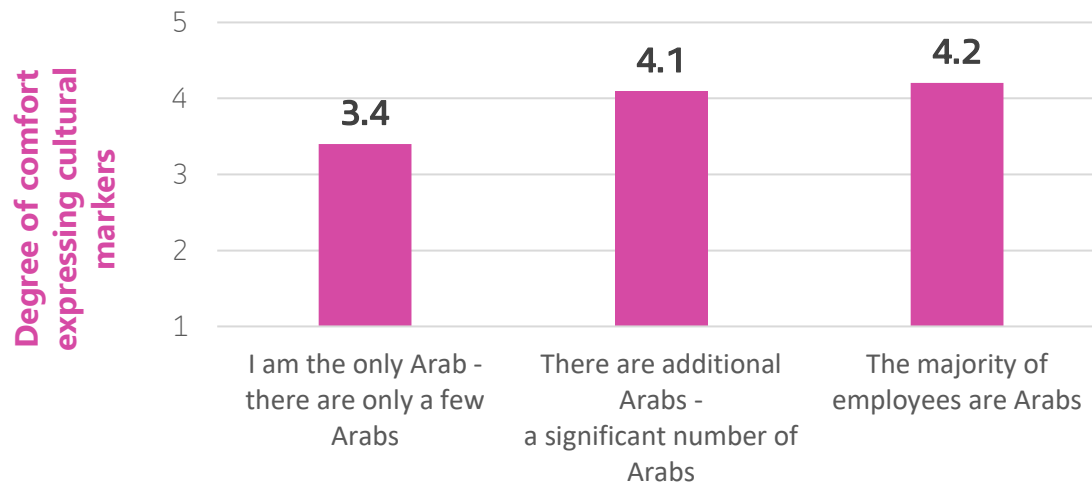**by the perceived degree of consideration for Arab employees' needs.**
Averages, reported on a scale between 1 (not at all) and 5 (to a very high degree) [N=410]

Degree of comfort expressing cultural markers

Not at all - to a low degree	2.9
To a moderate degree	3.6
To a high degree - very high degree	4.2
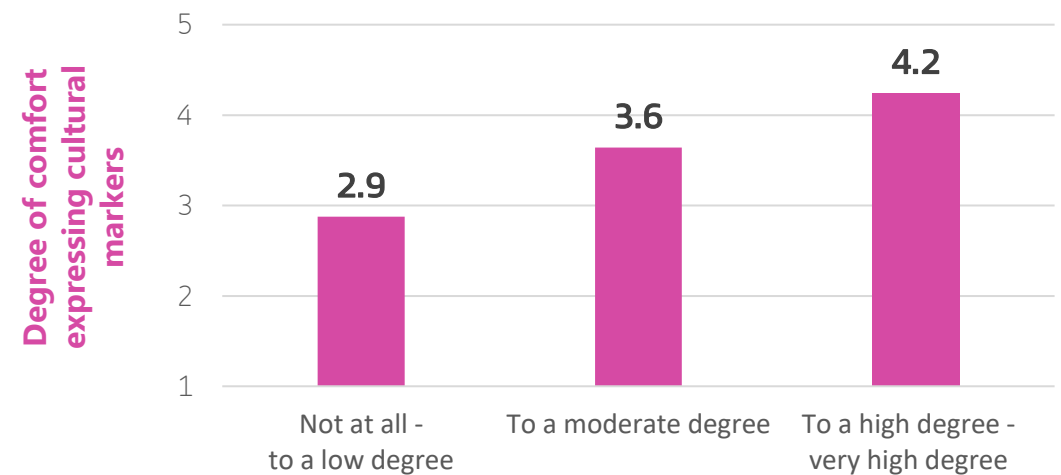
Perceived degree of consideration for Arab employees needs

* All differences between the groups are significant at a significance level (p<.05), except for the differences between the "There are additional Arabs – a significant number of Arabs" and "Most of the employees are Arab" groups; significant statistical relationships were found between the measurements, at a significance level of p<.05.

Expression of Cultural Markers

From the distribution above, it appears that:

The above findings emphasize the significant role the company plays in designing a work environment that allows for cultural expression. Company policies that take Arab employees' needs into consideration, and companies that work to increase the number of Arab employees, lead to an increase in the individual's feeling of comfort publicly expressing cultural markers of their Arab identity.

The research shows that this feeling of comfort reduces the employee's feeling of alienation, enabling them to present themselves "as they are" without feeling the need to hide components of their identity.

As

Perceived degree of consideration for Arab employees' needs* and **Number of Arabs in the workplace***
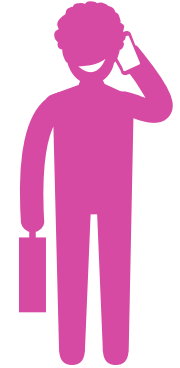
increases

Feeling of comfort expressing cultural markers of Arab identity

increases

*A statistically significant relationship was found ($p < .05$).

Expressions of Politics and Identity

In addition to "expression of Arab cultural markers", we examined another level of personal expression, relating to topics that are likely to be more explosive in an interaction between Jews and Arab – identity and Jewish-Arab relations.

" An Arab who criticizes the State of Israel – this does not go over well. A Jew is allowed to criticize, an Arab is not. "

Hi-Tech Employee

" Especially during wartime, it felt like all the Jews could speak freely but we had no place to express ourselves. It was forbidden. They only accept us if we are like them, but the moment we think differently or are connected to our identity, it becomes a challenge. It made it very difficult to be at work and that's one of the reasons why I resigned. I'm tired of nullifying myself and I'm tired of being in an atmosphere like that. "

Hi-Tech Employee

"How often do you have conversations with Jewish employees in the workplace about identity, belonging, and/or Jewish-Arab relations?"
Prevalence, reported on a scale between 1 (not at all) and 5 (to a very high degree) [N=410]

More than half **(56%)** of the respondents reported that they **rarely or never have conversations with their Jewish colleagues about identity, belonging, and/or Jewish-Arab relations**.

18%

Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
5%	13%	26%	33%	23%

Expression of Identity and Politics
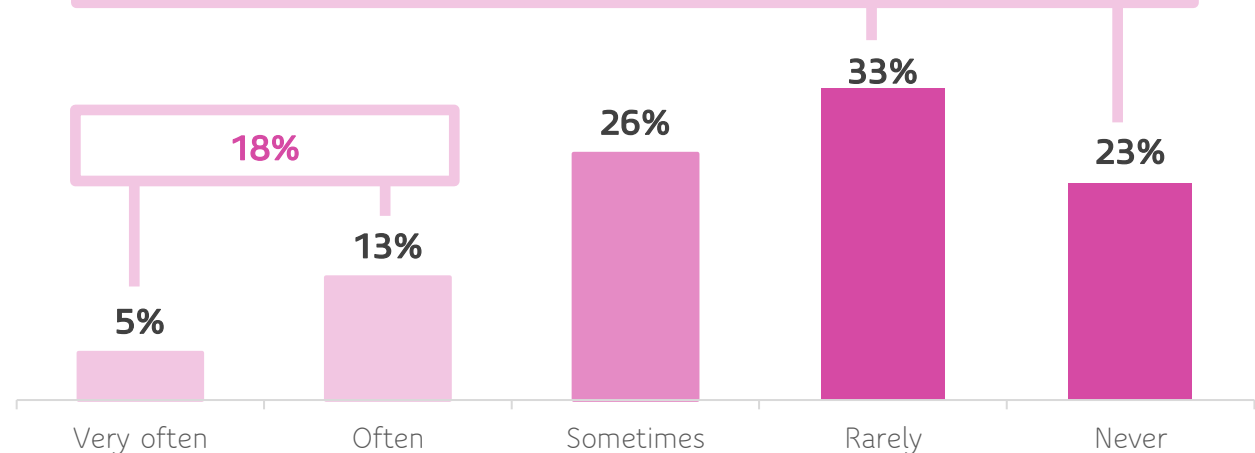
After examining the degree to which conversations about identity, belonging, and Jewish-Arab relations take place between Arab and Jewish employees, we examined the relationship between the frequency of these conversations and the degree to which the workplace addresses the needs of its Arab employees.

The results show that the more respondents feel that their company is responsive to their needs, the more they have conversations about belonging, identity, and Jewish-Arab relations with their Jewish colleagues.

▶ **No significant statistical relationship was found** between the number of Arabs reported in the workplace and the frequency of conversations between Arab and Jewish employees.

" I do not avoid talking about hot topics. "

Hi-Tech Employee

" I gave a presentation about the Nakba. "

Hi-Tech Employee

" We hardly ever discuss these topics with other employees. And if we do, it would be very general, about music, language, etc. – only the positive stuff. "

Hi-Tech Employee

" I intentionally do not discuss these topics. It creates an uncomfortable, unpleasant situation and I'm worried it will negatively impact my social status in the company [...] "

Hi-Tech Employee

Expression of Identity and Politics

As with the survey findings, most of the hi-tech interviewees reported that they avoid having political conversations with Jewish colleagues in the workplace. They say that their avoidance stems from various reasons: from the feeling that these discussions will lead to a dead end; from their fear that such discussions will cloud the social atmosphere between themselves and their Jewish colleagues; and even from the fear that they will might lose their jobs.

However, the interviews reveal that the work environment is not completely void of political conversations. Instead, the interviewees report that Jewish employees do talk about politics in the presence of Arab employees, while Arab employees have political conversations only with their Arab colleagues.

With that said, many of the hi-tech employees report that they do have conversations with their Jewish colleagues about cultural issues, such as weddings, food, holidays, etc., and that these conversations are held in a good spirit.

> " I don't initiate [political conversations] because I'm afraid of losing my job [...] I don't post about it on social media either [...] because we've seen many cases of people who shared posts and it cost them their jobs. "
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

> " Conversations between Arabs and Jews are usually about culture. We have many conversations about food and weddings. The atmosphere in these kinds of conversations is pleasant. "
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

> " We may talk [about charged political issues] in small groups, but not around Arab employees. "
>
> **Hi-Tech Company Representative**

> " Arab engineers are afraid to talk about political issues because [they worry that it] may negatively impact their professional future. "
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

More

Expression of Identity and Politics

Amongst those companies whose representatives participated in the study, there is no regulated policy regarding political discussions in the workplace. However, some representatives reported that during particularly tense periods (ex. May 2021), management tends to send an email to staff members with a general directive to maintain a politics-free workplace and continue treating each other with respect.

" During the events of May 2021, I worked at [company name], a company that strongly believes in and actively works to promote all areas of diversity. At the time, I encountered racism from some of the Jewish employees [...] So the managers called all of the Arab employees in for a meeting to discuss the situation, and they tried to convey to us a message of 'try not to talk to your Jewish colleagues about political issues and try not to be aggressive'. I thought to myself, 'ok I have no problem not being aggressive, but why is it okay for the other side to be aggressive towards me?!' "

Hi-Tech Employee

" There isn't a formal directive telling us that we can or cannot discuss politics. It's not something we talk about. The CEO sent an email saying that we should continue to maintain respectful dialogue and accept everyone as they are. "

Hi-Tech Company Representative

" When there was a strike [in the Arab society], they [the Arab employees] called in sick. They knew that we understood but they tried to approach it elegantly. There have been several such cases. "

Hi-Tech Company Representative

Cultural Markers and Expression of Identity and Politics

When comparing "feeling of comfort **expressing cultural markers"** with "frequency of conversations on topics of **identity, belonging, and Jewish-Arab relations",** a significant gap can be seen.

In other words, it appears that most of the Arab hi-tech respondents feel comfortable dealing with cultural issues in the workplace, either "passively" (Arabic writing on clothing, listening to Arabic music) or "actively" (discussing holidays and lifestyle with Jewish colleagues). However, when it comes to more controversial and/or explosive issues (such as politics, Arab identity, attitudes about the security situation, etc.), they feel much less comfortable.

In some cases, the research shows that Arab employees prefer to downplay their Arab identity in the workplace.

44% engage in conversations about identity, belonging, and Jewish-Arab relations with their Jewish colleagues ("sometimes", "often", or "very often").

44%
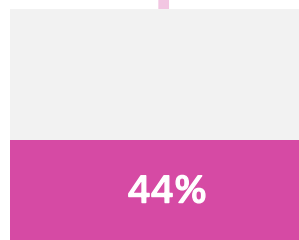
" I tried to recruit an Arab manager in our company to join the ERG, but he didn't do anything. He didn't really want to be a part of it; he didn't want to identify himself as an Arab vis-à-vis the company. "

Hi-Tech Employee

68% feel comfortable expressing cultural markers in the workplace ("to a high degree" or "to a very high degree").

68%
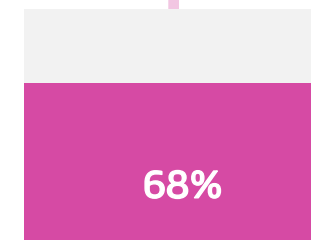
" The [Arab] employees themselves downplay the fact that they belong to a different religion/nationality. "

Hi-Tech Company Representative

Professional Identity

To examine the component of Arab identity in relation to professional identity, respondents were asked about the degree to which they feel that being Arab impacts them professionally.

> From both a professional and social standpoint, there is no difference between Arabs and Jews in the company where I work. As far as the managers are concerned, being an Arab is neither an advantage nor a disadvantage. The only thing that matters is the employee's performance and attitude.

Hi-Tech Employee

> From a professional standpoint, being Arab is sometimes an advantage. Many people have wanted to interview me. They tried to show that there are Arab employees, including and especially women.

Hi-Tech Employee

> It's harder to advance professionally because they prefer Jews.

Hi-Tech Employee

Feel that being Arab **is sometimes an advantage** and **sometimes a disadvantage**.

Feel that being Arab **makes it challenging for them** or **holds them back**, **from a professional standpoint**.

Feel that being Arab **has no impact** or **has a positive impact**, from a **professional standpoint**.

- 10%
- 22%
- 67%

More
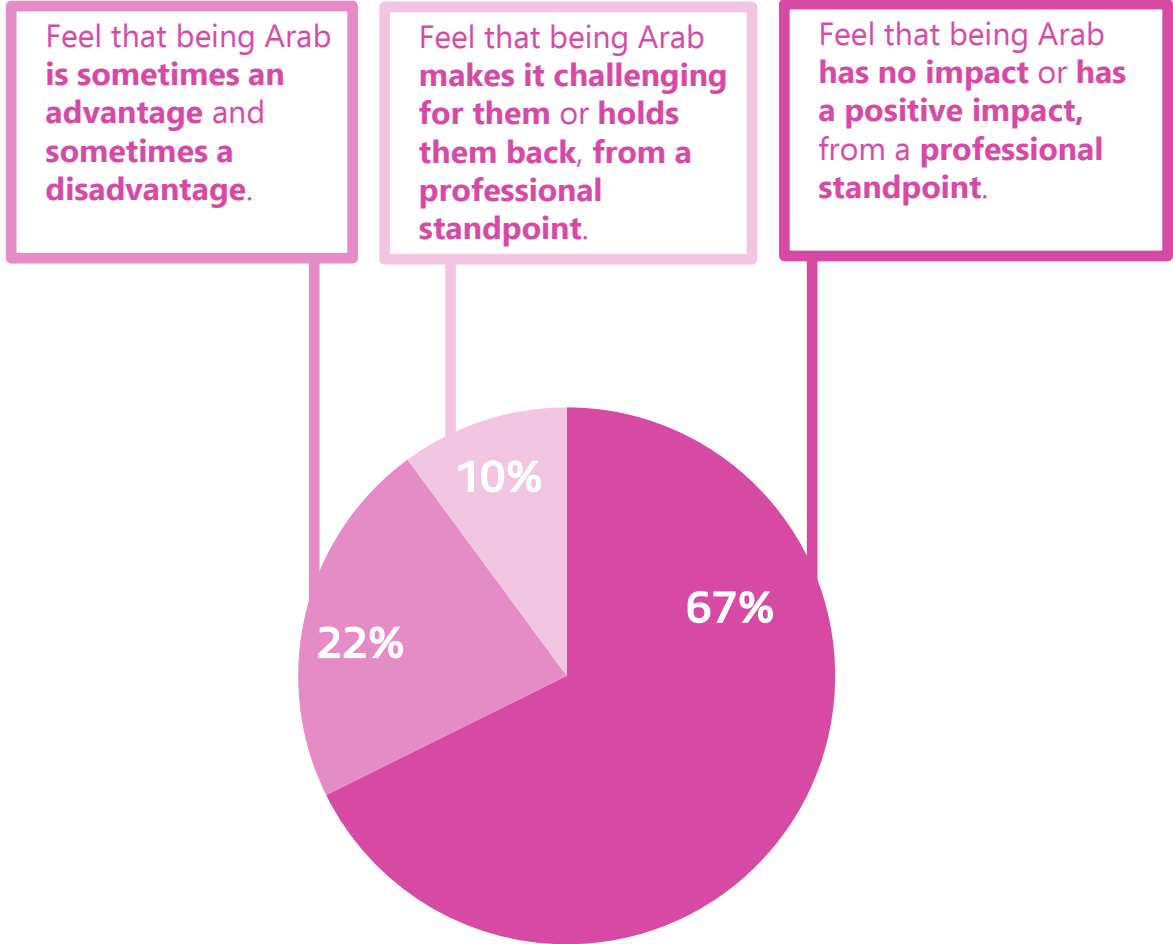
Professional Identity

Most of the survey respondents (57%) replied that being Arab does not impact them professionally. In other words, their professional treatment is based solely on their job performance.

However, in the in-depth interviews, all six interviewees mentioned that they feel they must put in more effort professionally than their Jewish counterparts.

❝ I have had colleagues who feel that because I am Arab, I should be grateful to the company for hiring me – even when I excelled in my role. ❞

Hi-Tech Employee

❝ A few times, and on a few occasions, [being Arab] has held me back from moving forward, in terms of management, even though I was better [than my colleagues]. ❞

Hi-Tech Employee

❝ I don't see that there is a difference or that [my being Arab] affects anything. ❞

Hi-Tech Employee

❝ [The] Arab culture is more modest. [There is] less self-promotion and sometimes, in a large company, when there is competition for jobs, this is [an] important [factor]. ❞

Hi-Tech Company Representative

In addition to examining how the component of Arab identity impacts Arab hi-tech employees from a professional standpoint, we also examined the degree to which they feel that their Arab identity impacts them from a social standpoint.

Feel that being Arab **is sometimes an advantage** and **sometimes a disadvantage**.

Feel that being Arab **makes it challenging for them** or **holds them back**, **from a social standpoint**.

Feel that being Arab **has no impact** or **has a positive impact,** from a **social standpoint**.

> It's harder to connect with people. We have less in common, opposing values, and sometimes even a parallel version of history. I do not participate in national religious ceremonies of any kind. There is always an elephant in the room, an elephant of Jewish supremacy, of Arabs being the enemy. It isn't simple.
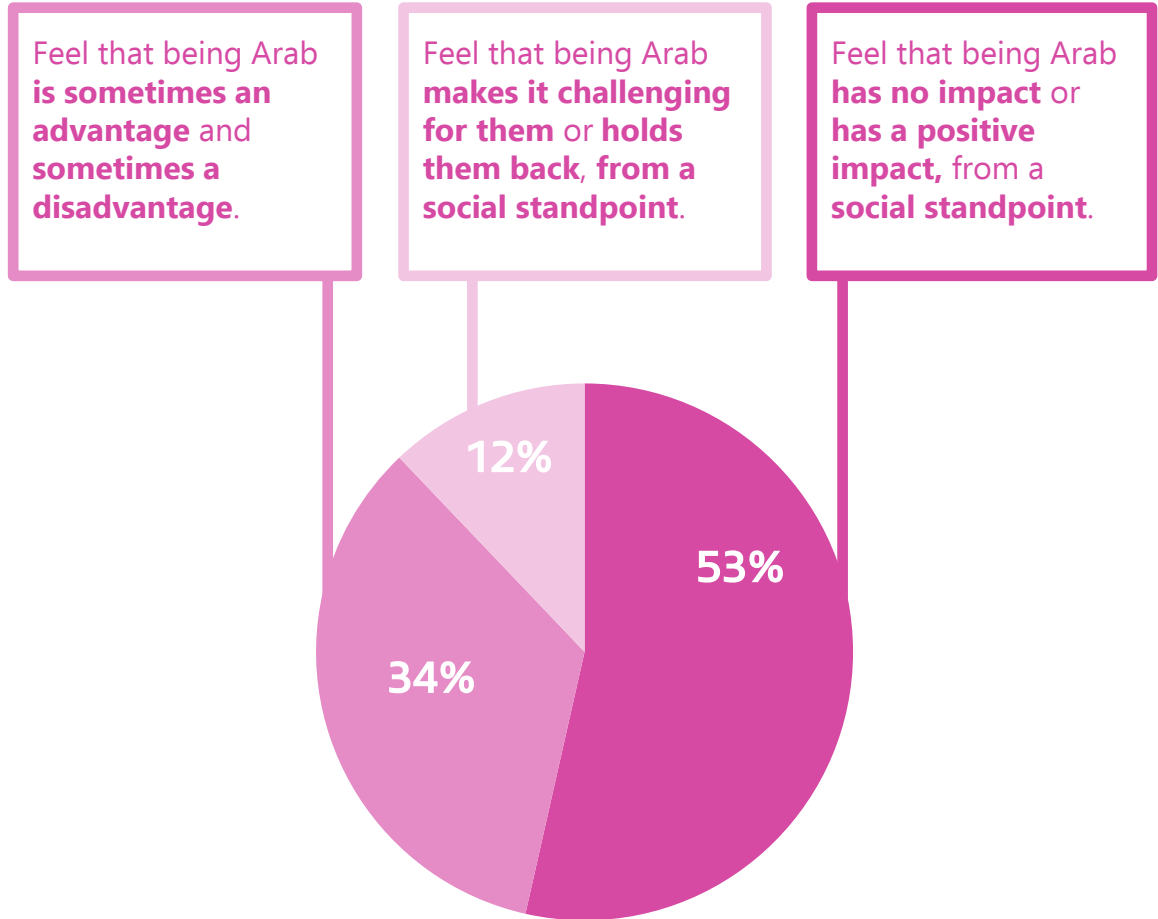>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

> I can't recall anything negative. They [the Jewish colleagues] are actually quite interested and very nice.
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

53%

34%

12%

More

Social Integration

In terms of social integration, a wide variety of attitudes emerged, spanning all ends of the spectrum.

Common to most of the attitudes is that respondents feel that being an Arab in the workplace is significant.

Although several respondents indicated that it has a positive impact, this significance is, for the most part, negative – ranging from difficulty making small talk to overt manifestations of racism and discrimination.

There is a distinction between the company's positions and policies and the Arab employees' daily experiences. The research shows that these experiences are mainly influenced by colleagues in their immediate work environment.

> I feel like I can't talk to them about a number of issues because of our differences in culture, language.
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

> [I feel] endless respect and inclusion from my Jewish colleagues.
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

> I am highly valued by all employees, regardless of my identity. This is not something I take for granted.
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

> I have encountered racism from [Jewish] employees. It has nothing to do with the company itself, or its policies. I have never felt that I would not be hired or promoted because I am Arab. The problem lies with the colleagues, not [with] the company itself.
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

> From a social standpoint, I have very few things in common with the Jewish employees and this is something that impacts our connection [as well as] the time it takes us to connect.
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

Relationship between Professional and Social

? An examination of the professional impact vs. the social impact reveals a considerable gap:

Among hi-tech employees, being Arab impacts them socially more than professionally.

The research shows that there is a connection between these two aspects, since the social environment in the workplace also affects the professional aspect.

Feel that being Arab impacts them from a social standpoint (positively or negatively)

66%

Feel that being Arab impacts them from a professional standpoint (positively or negatively)

42%

" Since there are [only few] Arab employees in the company [...], I feel that my department appreciates that I am Arab and actually makes an effort to express their appreciation for me, on both a professional and social level [...] People are enthusiastic about my being the only Arab woman in their department and social circles. They are curious about me. **"**
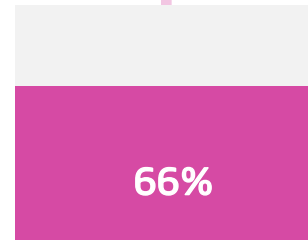
Hi-Tech Employee

" Limited avenues for professional advancement; socially [they have] more interesting conversations and diverse topics. **"**
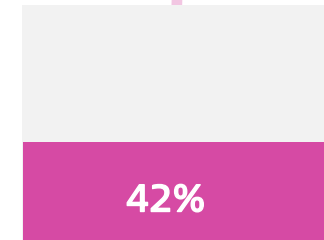
Hi-Tech Employee

" They have more things to talk about socially, so they become better friends. And that makes it easier for them to advance professionally, as well. **"**

Hi-Tech Employee

Impact of Military Service

The issue of military service takes up a lot of space in the lives of many Arab hi-tech employees, in both a professional and social context.

- Conversations about the army and reserve duty, as well as the use of military jargon in the workplace – a language unfamiliar to the Arab employees – leads to a feeling of disconnect.

- From a social standpoint, Jewish employees' previous acquaintance from the army, as well as their belonging to certain tech units, leads to a sense of alienation among Arab employees and presents them with a disadvantage from a professional standpoint.

> [...] I couldn't understand what it was, but I didn't feel comfortable asking. PAKAL*?? PAKAL!! Let's make a PAKAL together! I'm game... no problem....
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

> When my colleagues spend a lot of time talking about their experiences in the army and reserve duty, I feel disconnected and disrespected, especially when it feels like they are trying to convey a message of governance and ownership.
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

> [...] Army talk is very, very common in the hi-tech industry. Almost [everyone in] my team [is] from [names of military units]. Everyone knows each other, and if not personally, then they know each others' commander. And OK, they accept me, they are great people and all, but I always feel like there's something mysterious [going on] that [I am] missing.
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

> The discourse in the company is very political. Most of the company's employees are alumni of specific tech units in the army and it is hard for them to accept someone who is different from them in the team.
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

> In my previous job [...] I felt that people who had served in the army, and [especially in] elite units in the army, had a hard time transferring their knowledge to Arab employees [...] I had no choice but to invest a lot of time and effort and look for sources of knowledge on my own.
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

> I feel like I'm coming from the outside into a relatively cohesive clique of people, some of whom already know each other from their military service [...] and sometimes, from a social standpoint, I just have to play along.
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

*PAKAL, an IDF abbreviation that literally means "Standard Combat Order", is commonly used in Hebrew for anything that is standard or ready-made (e.g. standard morning exercise, a standard kit to make coffee).

Arab-Jewish Relations in the Workplace

Relationships with Jewish Colleagues

To examine the nature of relationships between Arab and Jewish colleagues, the Arab hi-tech employees were asked whether they maintain personal relationships or friendships with the Jewish employees in their workplace.

" I feel a sense of belonging, the people on my team – we are friends, I also have friends from other departments. "
Hi-Tech Employee

" Even though I have good connections and relationships with my Jewish colleagues, I have come to understand that there is still a place, even among liberal Jews, of 'okay you are an Arab and everything's good, but you are still an Arab and I am better'. "
Hi-Tech Employee

"Do you maintain personal relationships or friendships with Jewish employees in your workplace?"
Prevalence [N=410]

Most of the respondents (71%) report that they maintain few personal relationships with Jewish colleagues in their workplace.

Category	Percentage
I do not maintain any personal relationships with Jewish employees	12%
I maintain a personal relationship with one or two of the Jewish employees	24%
I maintain a personal relationship with a few of the Jewish employees	35%
I maintain personal relationships with several of the Jewish employees	25%
There are no Jewish employees in my workplace	3%
Other	1%

Perceptions about Jews

To examine whether an encounter between Arabs and Jews in the hi-tech workplace contributes to a reduction in stereotypes and prejudices, the Arab hi-tech employees were asked whether their perceptions about Jews have changed from the time they entered the hi-tech industry until today.

Although this question examines the personal position of respondents, 68% of respondents (17%) chose to answer the question with: "I don't know".

When segmented with the question regarding "quantity of relationships with Jewish employees", it was found that everyone who reported maintaining many relationships with Jewish employees also reported that their perceptions about Jews had changed positively or not at all.

"Have your perceptions about Jews changed from the time you entered the hi-tech industry until today?"
Prevalence [N=342]

Most respondents reported that their perceptions about Jews did not change.

- Did not change: **68%**
- Changed positively: **28%**
- Changed negatively: **4%**
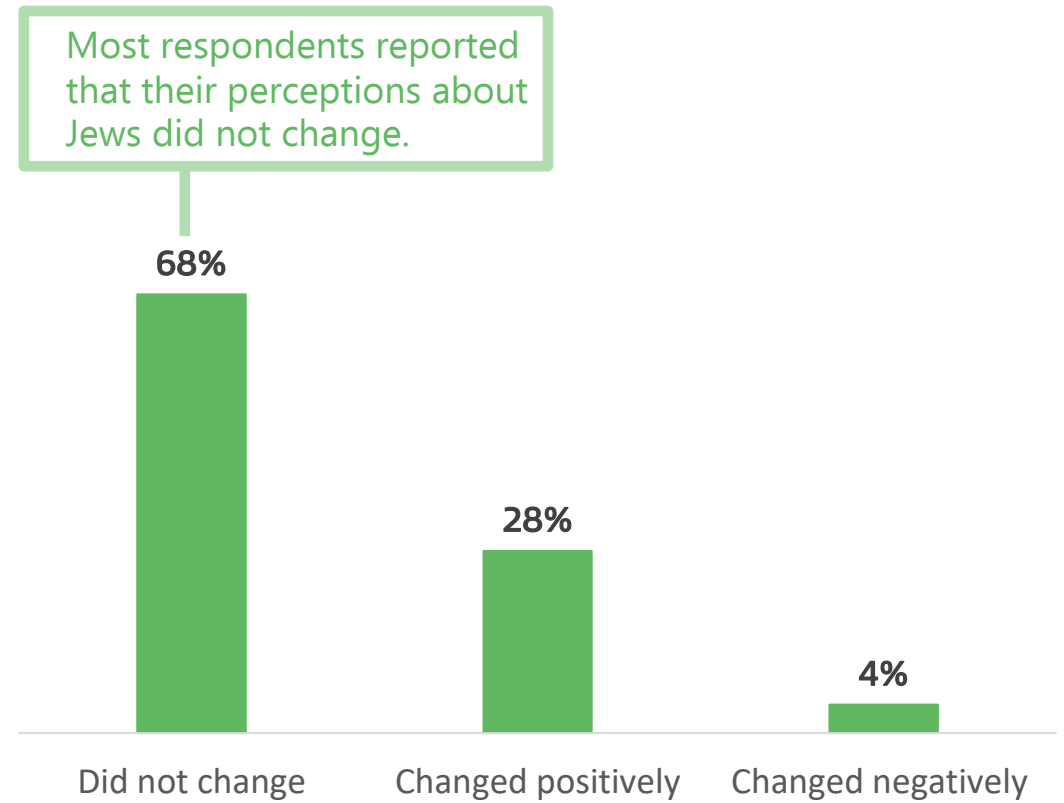
Excluding respondents who answered: "I don't know" (N=68).

Networking Between Arabs in Hi-Tech

"Friend Brings a Friend"

This section examines the extent to which Arab hi-tech employees make use of the "friend brings a friend" mechanism.

> " I submitted several friends' names for open positions. No one was invited for an interview. "
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

> " I am a big believer in the 'friend brings a friend' mechanism. I also actively help people find work and integrate into jobs. "
>
> **Hi-Tech Employee**

"Have you ever recommended an Arab friend or acquaintance for an open position at your workplace? ('friend brings a friend')"
Prevalence [N=410]

81% of respondents have **recommended an Arab friend or acquaintance** for an open position at their workplace.

53%	28%	16%	2%	0.2%
Yes, I make a special effort because I think it's important	Yes, in rare situations	No, I haven't done it yet but I would be happy to do so if the opportunity arose	No, I don't think it falls under my jurisdiction	No, I'm worried that I would be judged according to the quality of that candidate

In this section, we examine whether recommending friends for vacant positions in the company ("friend brings a friend" approach) varies depending on the number of Arab colleagues in the workplace.

A **higher percentage at the center of the scale** in terms of number of Arab employees in the workplace (**"There are additional Arabs / a significant number of Arabs")** invests special efforts in recommending friends **(59%)** compared to the two ends of the scale (**"There are only a few Arabs" (47%)** or **"Most of the employees are Arab" (47%)).**

Most of the employees are Arab

There are additional Arabs / a significant number of Arabs

I am the only Arab / there are only a few Arabs

47%

59%

47%
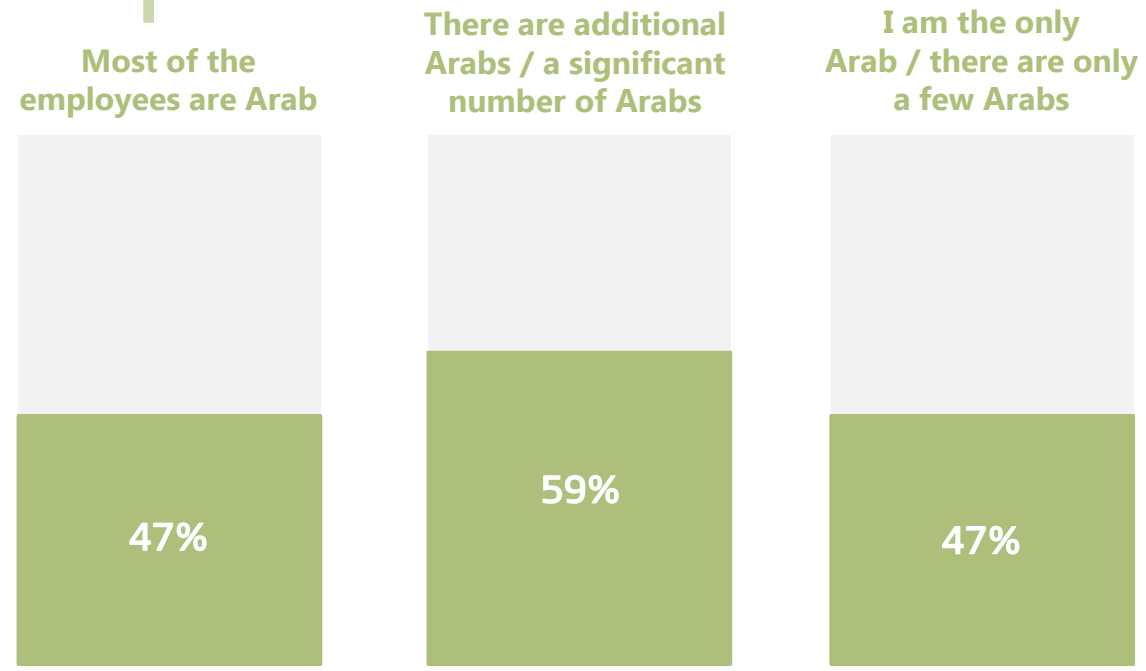
" We do make an effort [to recruit from the Arab population] but in many ways it comes through the front door, 'friend brings a friend', brothers bring each other. "

Hi-Tech Company Representative

"Friend Brings a Friend"

The research shows that a large majority of Arab hi-tech employees utilize the "friend brings a friend" mechanism. About half reported that they make special efforts in this regard.

The Arab hi-tech employees utilize the "friend brings a friend" mechanism in various ways: from submitting CVs to the recruitment department; to active intervention vis-à-vis the recruitment department; to preparing candidates for interviews, offering suggestions, and partaking in discussions about the company and relevant position.

Nevertheless, many hi-tech employees reported feeling disappointment in their employers' level of cooperation (or lack thereof), especially in terms of inviting candidates for interviews.

The widespread use of the "friend brings a friend" mechanism emerges a positive trend – the Arab hi-tech employees seem to view this mechanism as part of the industry's "rules of the game". Moreover, use of this mechanism appears to be an expression of self-confidence and a sense of belonging in the workplace.

" I managed to recruit an Arab friend to my team and then this friend managed to recruit an Arab friend of his. "
Hi-Tech Employee

" In my previous workplace, I referred dozens of Arab candidates for various positions. Unfortunately, over the course of six years, only one friend was offered a job. "
Hi-Tech Employee

" I found a company that interested me. I saw it on the LinkedIn profile of an Arab employee who works there. I sent him my CV and he submitted it for me. To this day, I believe that this is the most effective method, 'friend brings a friend'. "
Hi-Tech Employee

" I referred several friends for vacant positions, no one was invited for an interview. "
Hi-Tech Employee

More

Networking between Arab Hi-Tech Professionals
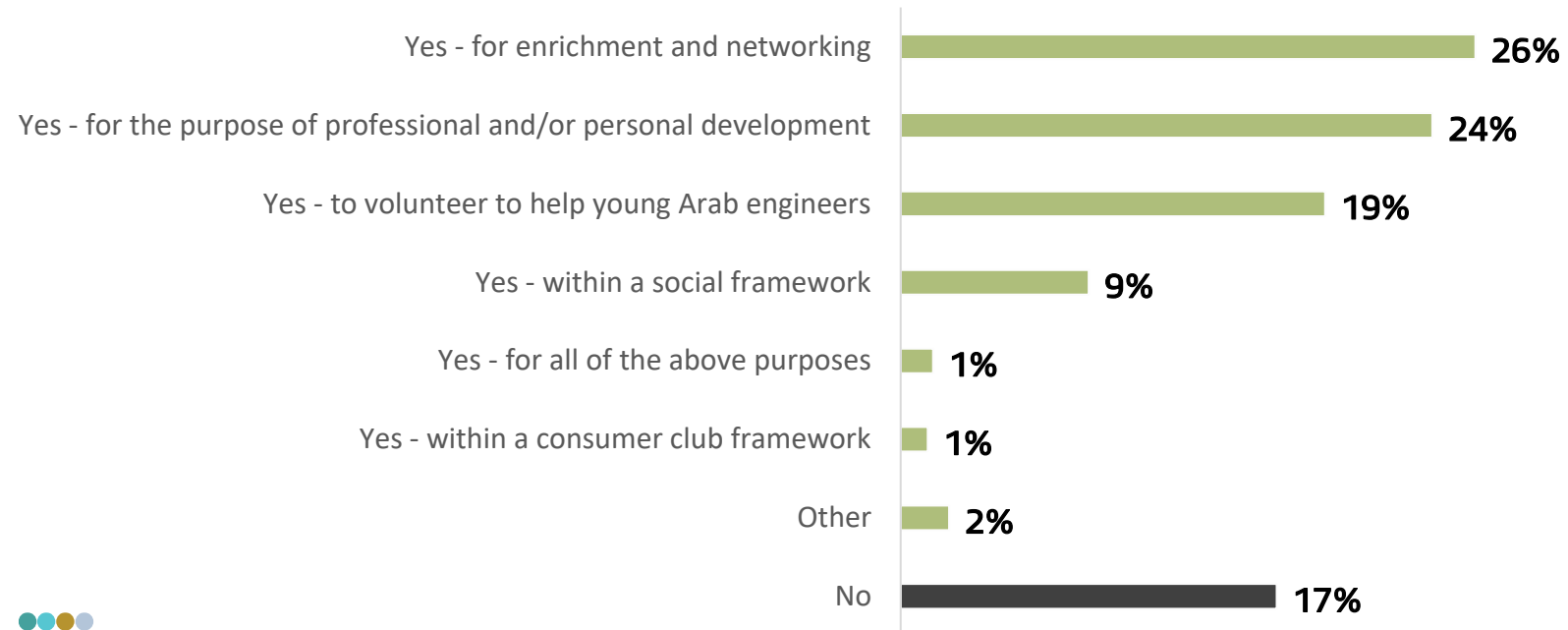
To examine whether there is an interest in networking and creating wide-ranging professional relationships within Arab society, the Arab hi-tech engineers were asked if they would be interested in taking part in activities within the framework of a network for Arab hi-tech engineers and, if so, for what purposes.

"Would you be interested in taking part in activities within the framework of a network for Arab hi-tech engineers? And if so – for what purposes?"
Prevalence [N=410]

Category	%
Yes - for enrichment and networking	26%
Yes - for the purpose of professional and/or personal development	24%
Yes - to volunteer to help young Arab engineers	19%
Yes - within a social framework	9%
Yes - for all of the above purposes	1%
Yes - within a consumer club framework	1%
Other	2%
No	17%

Approximately 80% of participants **expressed a desire** to be part of a **network for Arab hi-tech engineers.**

Networking between Arab Hi-Tech Professionals

Hi-tech employees report that they participate (on behalf of their companies) in various employment fairs and forums targeted at Arab students.

Some hi-tech employees report that they reach out to people they don't know in their job search process (or that they contact them on LinkedIn).

It arose that there are effective networking tools and practices used in Jewish society that are not yet used in Arab society.

" Even now, I can reach out to almost anyone on LinkedIn, even if they're not really my friends [...] For the most part, people do help. Many people reach out to me, I answer their calls, talk to them for fifteen minutes, half an hour. "

Hi-Tech Employee

" [...] There are many WhatsApp groups for Jewish professionals where various job postings are listed. In our Arab society, there is no such group. I think that [...] there should be a group tailored towards Arab engineers, both in terms of experience and relevant target audience. "

Hi-Tech Employee

" The lack of networking within Arab society makes it very difficult to find a job. "

Hi-Tech Employee

Relationship with Tsofen
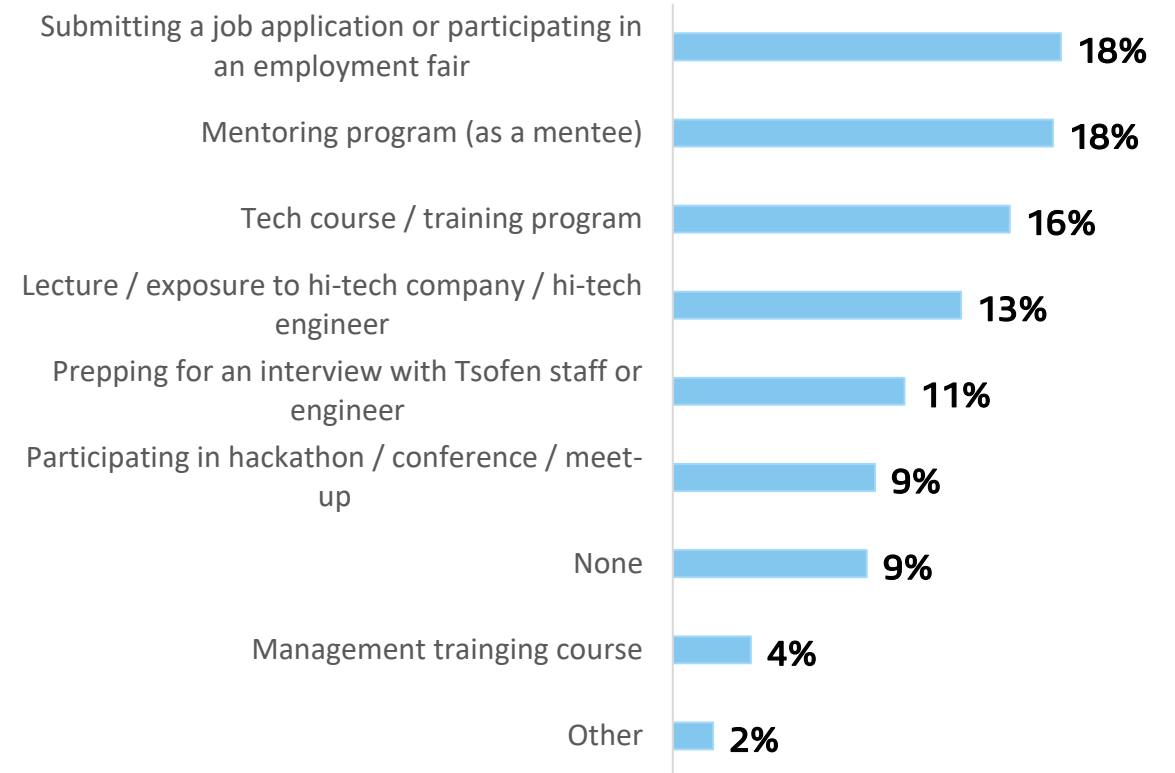
Participation in Tsofen Activities

82% of respondents
participated in Tsofen activities or programs, either when looking for employment in the industry or as volunteers.

"Which Tsofen activities/programs have you participated in?"
Prevalence, multiple choice question [N=794]*

Activity	Percentage
Submitting a job application or participating in an employment fair	**18%**
Mentoring program (as a mentee)	**18%**
Tech course / training program	**16%**
Lecture / exposure to hi-tech company / hi-tech engineer	**13%**
Prepping for an interview with Tsofen staff or engineer	**11%**
Participating in hackathon / conference / meet-up	**9%**
None	**9%**
Management trainging course	**4%**
Other	**2%**

*Percentages are calculated from the total number of responses (N=794).

Tsofen Activities: Needs of Hi-Tech Professionals

Some of the interviewees see Tsofen as a relevant address even after they have integrated into the industry - and voiced a need for guidance and training throughout the job search process, including when switching jobs.

One interviewee stated that when he was looking for a job (not his first position in the industry), he contacted the placement team at Tsofen and submitted job applications through them.

" The challenge is getting to a place where companies are contacting me, because if I do a search today on LinkedIn – there are about 500 vacant positions, I need to know what's suitable for me. "

Hi-Tech Employee

" At first, it was very difficult for me to find a job, both because I have no experience and also because of having to speak Hebrew in the interviews. The language [barrier] sometimes presents an obstacle for me to really speak out and express myself. "

Hi-Tech Employee

" When I left my first job, I felt that I was lost [...] So I contacted Tsofen. I sent the representative all my documents and she helped me prepare for interviews, we did simulations, she also sent my CV to different jobs, until we found the right fit and I was hired. "

Hi-Tech Employee

Effectivity of Tsofen Services

Respondents who participated in one or more of Tsofen's activities were asked about the effectiveness of the services they received.

A significant majority of respondents feel that Tsofen's services are beneficial for integrating into the hi-tech industry "to a high degree" or "to a very high degree". These are hi-tech professionals who are well-integrated in the industry and familiar with its requirements, some of them even managers who interview potential candidates.

" I started Tsofen during my last year of studies. There were trainings, mentoring sessions, lectures, and they walked us through the job search phase. I also participated in the course [...] and thanks to that I began to understand the field better. A Tsofen mentor helped me write my CV. I understood the importance of networking, and the importance of preparing for job interviews [...] they did job interview simulations with me. "
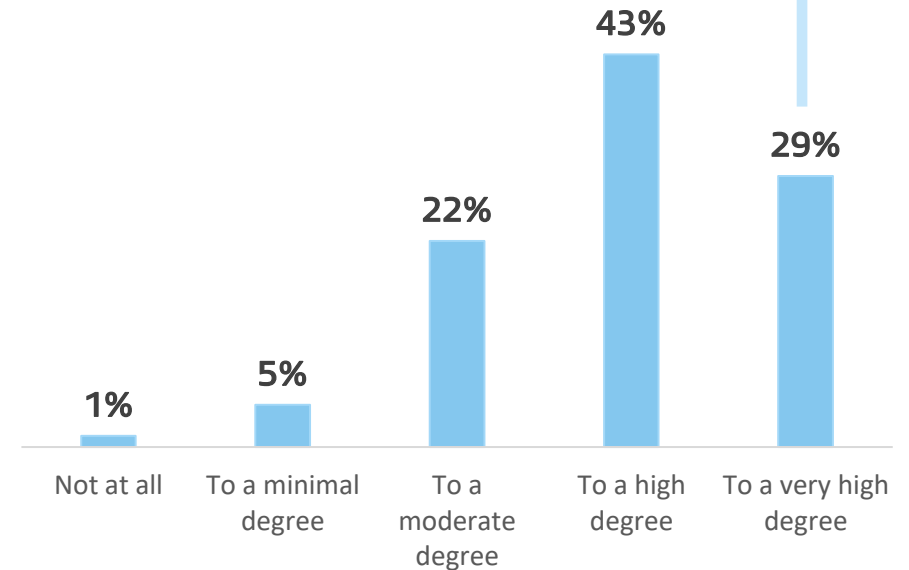
Hi-Tech Employee

"In your opinion, how useful are Tsofen's services for integrating into the hi-tech industry?"
Prevalence [N=327]

72% believe that Tsofen's services are useful for integrating into the hi-tech industry.

1%	5%	22%	43%	29%
Not at all	To a minimal degree	To a moderate degree	To a high degree	To a very high degree

Excluding respondents who did not participate in Tsofen's activities, as well as respondents who answered "I don't know" / "Not relevant" to this question (N=11). There may be an overlap between respondents from the two groups.

Summary

From Diversity to Inclusion

We offer a glimpse into the life of an Arab employee in the Israeli hi-tech industry as "corresponding" with the axis between Diversity and Inclusion.*

Diversity ➤ **Inclusion**

The path from diversity to inclusion passes through several stages of integration that build upon each other. At each level, another aspect is added, from the perspective of both the company and the employee, as follows:

Entry into the field

The hi-tech professional's **entry** into a tech position in the industry parallels diversity – employing individuals from underrepresented groups.
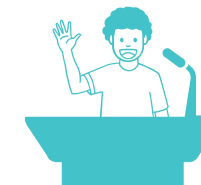
Professional identity and career advancement

Professional identity and career advancement – rising the ladder of professional advancement and development in a fair and equal manner.

The social aspect

Positive **social integration** and a situation in which the employee does not feel alienated or discriminated against due to belonging to a minority group.

Comfort expressing oneself on topics of identity and politics

Comfort expressing oneself, one's culture, and one's identity freely, without fear of consequences or a sense of inferiority.

Belonging, equality, and visibility – an ideal situation of inclusion is a situation in which the employee feels that he belongs to the workplace and is at the same time unique; or, in other words, that his employing company, managers, and colleagues see him and his unique needs, both as an equal employee among peers and as part of a minority.

*Here and throughout, male pronouns are sometimes used for convenience purposes only; however, the information herein pertains to both female and male employees.

Inclusion ————————————————————→ **Diversity**

Entry into the field

The research shows that the process for Arab individuals entering the hi-tech field has changed significantly in recent years. Many barriers experienced by Arab candidates a decade or more ago have been significantly eased and candidates' exposure to necessary knowledge, skills, and tools for seeking employment has increased – as has employing companies' willingness to take steps to increase these employees' integration. Moreover, the study shows that a majority of Arab hi-tech employees makes an effort to 'bring a friend' into their workplace, or the industry in general. At the same time, many gaps and barriers still exist for Arab candidates. Such difficulties are primarily experienced upon entering the industry, largely stemming from the fact that a significant number of Arab hi-tech employees are the only, or amongst the only, Arabs in their workplace.

Professional identity and career advancement

The research shows that a significant number of Arab hi-tech employees view hi-tech as a meritocratic industry that rewards workers based on their professional performance alone. However, the research also shows that some feel that being Arab has a negative impact on their professional lives. This phenomenon is manifested in Arab hi-tech employees feeling that they must invest more effort than their Jewish colleagues in order to gain recognition, as well as the still very small number of senior Arab managers in the industry.

Comfort expressing oneself on topics of identity and politics

Although a growing number of companies in the industry have increased their attention to the issue of Diversity & Inclusion, the study shows that many Arab hi-tech employees still feel uncomfortable expressing themselves culturally, especially in terms of identity and political outlook. Some even fear negative social or professional ramifications if they speak out on these issues. While employing companies are taking various steps to increase responsiveness to Arab employees' needs, there is still a long way to go in this regard.

The social aspect

The research shows that social integration directly impacts the daily experience of employees in their workplace, and directly and indirectly impacts their professional integration and advancement. It was found that amongst Arab hi-tech employees, there is a feeling that being Arab impacts their social integration – an aspect that is even more significant and challenging than the professional impact. The majority feels comfortable expressing Arab cultural signs and engages in pleasant conversations about these subjects; however, many report a feeling of foreignness and social alienation. The research also shows a positive correlation between the number of Arab employees in the company and the company's policies and practices for Diversity & Inclusion.

Job placement and absorption – door is open but still not wide open

There is evidence from both hi-tech employees and hi-tech companies that Arab candidates are integrating into the industry with ease and without special difficulties now more than ever before. However, the research shows that screening and admission processes are still not smooth: Arab hi-tech professionals feel that they have a greater burden of proof at these stages when compared to their Jewish counterparts, and some reported that they did not receive the support they needed.

Professional integration and advancement – meritocracy paved with difficulties

- **Hi-tech employees**: A significant finding of this study is that a large majority of the Arab hi-tech employees reported that being Arab is not an element that impacts their professional status, or that it has a positive impact. Accordingly, a large majority reported that they use the "friend brings a friend" mechanism and even consider it "part of their job". These findings show that
hi-tech employees view hi-tech as a meritocratic and even fair industry that enables them to prove themselves professionally. At the same time, some reported that they feel that being Arab is an obstacle to their professional advancement, and some reported frustration that their recommendations regarding new employees were not accepted.
- **Hi-tech companies**: A cross-reference of the research findings shows that as more Arab hi-tech professionals integrate into the industry (increased diversity), so too increases the need for employers to improve their response to the challenges of inclusion. There is vital professional potential contained within that can be worked on vis-à-vis employers to ensure that it is fully utilized and to ensure that entry to the industry is truly open for Arab candidates, including friends of existing hi-tech employees.

Tsofen's "classic" work – technological training; preparation for job interviews; networking; soft skills; practicing and improving Hebrew and English languages; learning the "rules of the game" – still relevant for some candidates.

Social integration – successful first steps

The research data is encouraging, in that most Arab hi-tech employees feel comfortable expressing Arab cultural signs in their workplace. There was a connection found between work environments where there are more Arab employees and this sense of comfort. That is, the companies themselves play a significant role – which some seem to understand well – in creating a work environment that supports diversity and inclusion. However, it seems that there is still a need to regulate certain working conditions for Arab employees, who are often alone in a Jewish work environment (over 40% reported that there are no or almost no other Arab employees in their immediate work environment).

Discourse about identity and politics – a lot of work still must be done

This was found to be an extremely challenging issue, for both the employing companies and the employees. The research clearly shows that topics of identity, politics, and Jewish-Arab relations are not often discussed between Jewish and Arab employees in the workplace, due to Arab employees feeling uncomfortable and even fearful of negative social and professional ramifications. At the same time, there is no comparative data and it is impossible to know the extent to which these issues are discussed in workplaces that are not diverse, or among the Jewish employees themselves. It seems that in the face of Israel's polarized reality, as well as in the face of increasing diversity in the hi-tech industry, this is an aspect worthy of consideration.

Networking and strengthening current employees

The research shows that a significant portion of Arab hi-tech employees are interested in strengthening networking between them, and that some companies have internal networking mechanisms in the form of ERGs for Arab employees. It seems that there is a significant need in the field to promote this issue, as well as existing groups with whom to work and promote the issue.

New and additional needs arising on the ground – in terms of both Arab hi-tech employees and employing companies that have been around for the last 15 years, and it is necessary to think about how to respond to these needs.

Since its establishment, most of Tsofen's activities have been focused on supporting its beneficiaries during their initial integration into the hi-tech industry. In recent years, there has been an increased focus on promoting Arab hi-tech employees already in more advanced stages of their careers.

We recommend initiating in-depth research focused on Arab hi-tech employees in management positions.

Such research might include: mapping existing routes for advancement; identifying barriers and needs for further advancement and increasing vertical leadership of the Arab hi-tech professionals in the industry; and so on.

The current study focuses on Arab hi-tech employees and their daily experience in the industry.

We recommend initiating a follow-up study that focuses specifically on employing companies.

Such research might include: testing existing models and practices for diversity and inclusion; testing formal and informal functions that are currently leading in the field among companies; identifying best practices in the field; identifying employer needs and the barriers they face, in terms of support, tools, and service; an in-depth examination of several case studies among arrowhead companies in the field; and so on.

According to the study Integrating, but slowly: Trends in the employment of ultra-Orthodox, Arab, and other groups in the hi-tech industry (Employment Branch, Ministry of Economy and Industry, 2022), approximately 45% of Arab women and 48% of Arab men employed in the hi-tech industry did not complete high school with a matriculation exam or did complete high school with a matriculation exam but did not continue to higher education. This is a very significant finding that can provide insight regarding the integration of additional subgroups from Arab society into the hi-tech field, as well as additional aspects of their integration that have not yet been given attention. Since the current study focused on Arab academics, as they are the target audience of Tsofen, there was no in-depth examination of this finding.

We recommend initiating a follow-up study for further clarification regarding those employees who are integrated into the industry without higher education.

Such research might examine which positions they work in, what their needs are, and how to help them advance.

Appendices

Salary: Perception of Wage Gap vis-à-vis Jewish Colleagues

"In your opinion, when compared to Jewish colleagues in similar positions, your salary is…" [N=308]

Much lower	Slightly lower	Similar	Slightly higher	Much higher
13%	19%	59%	5%	4%
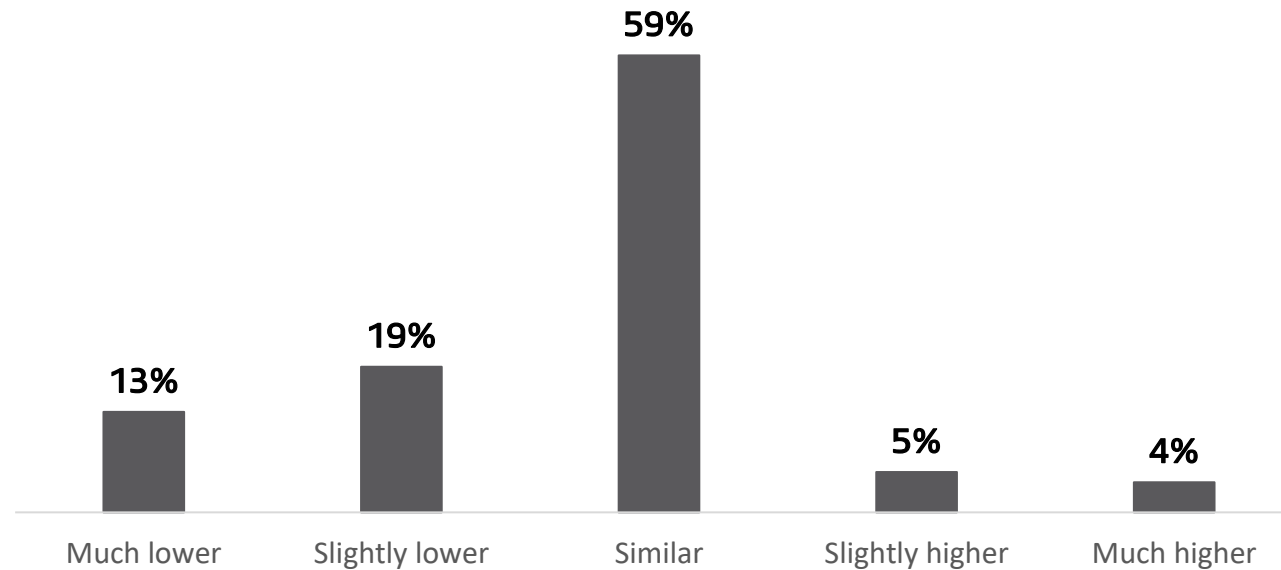
Excluding respondents who answered: "I don't know" (N=102).

Workplace Environment: Arab Colleagues

"Are there Arab employees in your company with whom you have daily contact?"
[N=409]

12%	I am the only Arab employee
32%	There are only a few Arab employees
27%	I work with other Arab employees
21%	There is a significant number of Arab employees
8%	Most of the employees are Arab
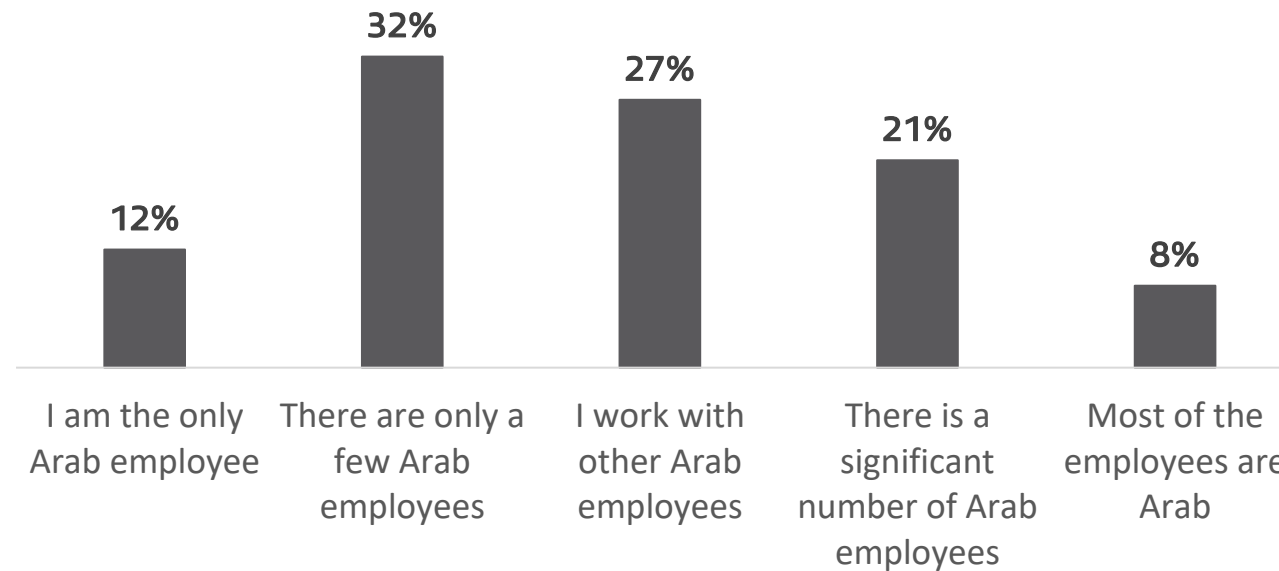
❞ They never even consider the people I recommend. I once tried to refer an excellent woman engineer for a position with us. HR did nothing about it and when I asked why, they told me that it's because she is not a suitable candidate. In the end, I recommended her to one of our company's clients and she got the job. People are happy with her work and it's not clear to me why [my company] didn't even look at her CV.

Another time, I recommended an electrical engineer [for a job at my] company and, of course, no one paid any attention. In the end, I gave his CV directly to the hiring manager. After the hiring manager asked HR to invite my friend for a final interview, he then called me to tell me that since the CV was already in the database, I would not be entitled to the 'friend brings a friend' bonus.

And yet another time, a friend of mine decided to ask a Jewish colleague to submit his CV through the 'friend brings friend' system because he knew that no one would pay attention if an Arab submitted it. In this case, HR invited him for an interview. **❞**
Hi-Tech Employee

❞ During the interview phase and in the first discussions, companies always declare on a formal level that they do not assign importance to nationality, race, etc. But two days after you start a job, and they see that you have knowledge and are making an effort, then you start hearing things like 'I knew you would be different' [or] 'we used to think that all Arabs are in the same circle' [and by circle they mean] careless with quality checks, for example. **❞**
Hi-Tech Employee

❞ [...] [As I am] in the process of completing my BA, I work in a student position [and] find it difficult to receive opportunities for promotion. I am the only Arab on my team and, compared to the tasks and support they receive, I feel very neglected. **❞**
Hi-Tech Employee

❞ I know a girl who felt racist treatment coming from her manager... In the end she left the job [...] She was afraid to talk about [why she left] because she didn't want everyone to know that was the reason. **❞**
Hi-Tech Employee

❞ The company where I worked decided make cutbacks and the Arab employees were at the top of the list [of layoffs]. When I started working [at the company], the training I received was not good compared to [the training that] new Jewish employees [got]. In my annual evaluation, I received compliments but no raise. This is very different from my Jewish colleagues, who were given options and significant raises.

In my last company, I was hired at the same time as a new Jewish employee was hired. I have a PhD and he only has an MA in the same field. I came with 6 years of experience, and he came straight from completing his MA. We were offered the same salary and then his salary very quickly surpassed mine.

There is no use complaining about a Jewish employee who made a mistake, but God forbid if I were to make the same mistake. **❞**
Hi-Tech Employee

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Expression of Identity and Politics

" [There are] conversations [in my workplace] about religious or national holidays, discussions about everyday events that take place. "

Hi-Tech Employee

" My colleagues and I have a very good relationships, so much so that I even taught them some Arabic (a few words). "

Hi-Tech Employee

" My team is open to hearing the opinions of others, so political conversations and Jewish-Arab relations are always conducted in good spirit. "

Hi-Tech Employee

" There are discussions and sometimes there are arguments, but it's all in good spirit. It's no different from the debates between Jews about the [legal] reform. Not unique to Arabs and Jews. The Arabs usually do not say too much in times like that. "

Hi-Tech Company Representative

" We are always having spontaneous conversations about identity and lifestyle. "

Hi-Tech Employee

" In general, I don't feel very comfortable speaking up or expressing myself. I have to be careful. "

Hi-Tech Employee

" I'm not comfortable expressing emotions about identity. "

Hi-Tech Employee

" You can talk openly with people who identify as being on the left side of the political map. It is very surprising that most of the employees are not too familiar with Arab culture, and that everything is based on prejudices or what is being shown in the media. "
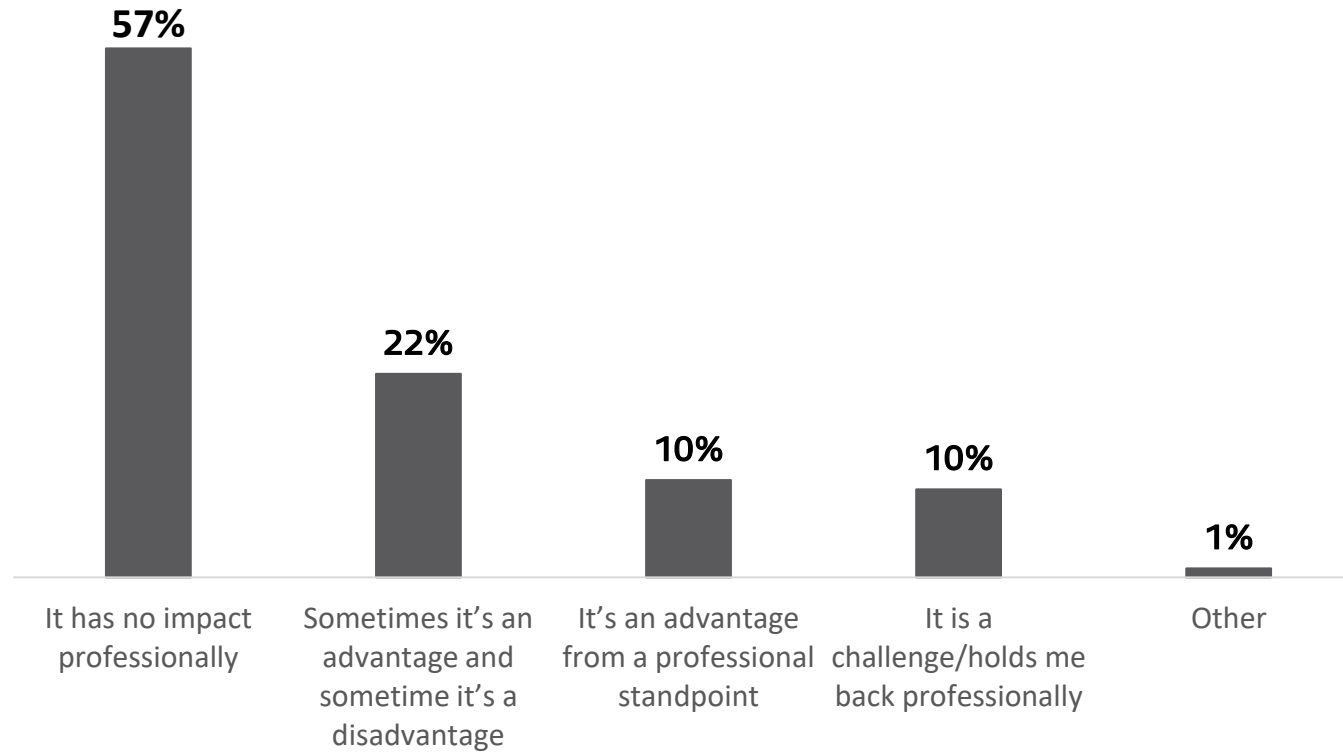
Hi-Tech Employee

" I intentionally do not talk about such issues because it creates an uncomfortable and unpleasant situation. I fear that if I express my opinion [it will have negative ramifications on] my social status in the company. "

Hi-Tech Employee

"From a professional standpoint, do you think being Arab in the workplace is an advantage or a disadvantage?"
Prevalence [N=410]

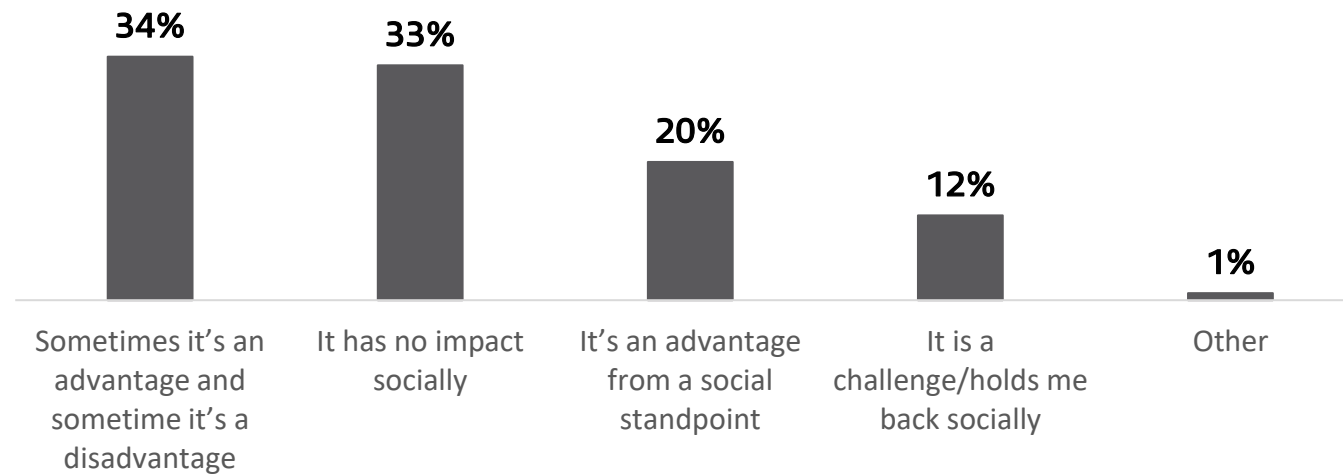|	
57%	It has no impact professionally
22%	Sometimes it's an advantage and sometime it's a disadvantage
10%	It's an advantage from a professional standpoint
10%	It is a challenge/holds me back professionally
1%	Other

Back

"From a social standpoint, do you think being an Arab in the workplace is an advantage or a disadvantage?"
Prevalence [N=410]

34%	**33%**	**20%**	**12%**	**1%**
Sometimes it's an advantage and sometime it's a disadvantage	It has no impact socially	It's an advantage from a social standpoint	It is a challenge/holds me back socially	Other

Back

This is how I got my job. I currently work on the same team as my friend [and about] 6 months after I started this job, I recommended an additional friend. There are currently three of us working on the same team and we are the only Arabs on our team (but there are several other Arabs in other teams).

Hi-Tech Employee

I once brought on an employee who is a friend. It's a little hard when they make trouble because you feel responsible.

Hi-Tech Employee

Its success very much depends on the candidate's qualifications. Unfortunately, no one I have recommended to date has met the requirements.

Hi-Tech Employee

It's part of the job and I receive compensation for it.

Hi-Tech Employee

In my previous job I was able to recruit two [...] I submitted candidates and helped dozens.

Hi-Tech Employee

All the Arabs who worked with me would argue with and cause trouble for the managers and employees. It's a big responsibility and I can't recommend just any friend.

Hi-Tech Employee

At some point, there was a significant development in the company I work for and I managed to recruit some friends through the 'friend brings a friend' mechanism.

Hi-Tech Employee

I haven't had the opportunity, there are very specific job requirements, I don't have any Arab acquaintances with relevant experience.

Hi-Tech Employee

Disappointment [after disappointment]. They never reached out to any of my friends.

Hi-Tech Employee

I work in automation infrastructure, which is a field of information security, and there are not many Arab employees in this field. I try to recommend friends for jobs in the field [but] companies prefer 8200 [special unit] alumni and graduates of military programming units over Arabs who graduated from Israeli colleges.

Hi-Tech Employee

Back