

THE RABBINIC CRISIS IN AMERICA'S HEARTLAND

What 397 non-Orthodox congregations in the Midwest, South, and Mountain West report about finding, hiring, and keeping rabbis

THE COLLEGE FOR CONTEMPORARY JUDAISM

94%

of congregations searching since 2020 encountered at least one **major or minor** challenge or skills deficiency

77%

said their **geographic location** was a challenge

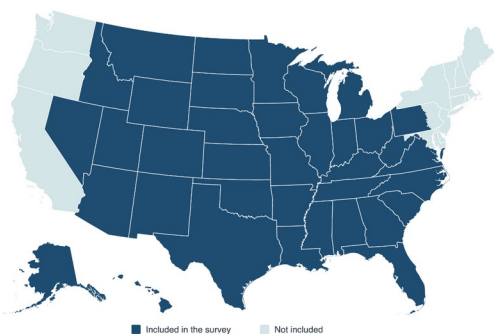
77%

had **too few viable applicants** in searches since 2020

39%

of applicants to Reform congregations since 2020 (**26% of all**) came from the now-closed **HUC–Cincinnati**

About this document. This is the most comprehensive public presentation of the 2026 Rabbinic Search Survey, commissioned by the College for Contemporary Judaism in Cincinnati, Ohio. It is intended for reporters, researchers, congregational leaders, and anyone who wants to see the data behind the headlines. Every figure is drawn directly from the survey tabulations prepared by the study's author, Dr. Ira M. Sheskin of the University of Miami.



States included in the survey (navy)

Study author: Ira M. Sheskin, Ph.D., Director of the Jewish Demography Project, Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies, and Professor, Department of Geography and Sustainable Development, University of Miami

Commissioned by: The College for Contemporary Judaism (CCJ), Cincinnati, Ohio · www.ccjudaism.org

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Press contact: Noah Sachartoff, noahs@miller-ink.com

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The first study of its kind

To our knowledge, the CCJ Rabbinic Search Survey is the first comprehensive study focused specifically on congregations' experiences searching for and hiring rabbis.

Until now, most discussion of the rabbinic pipeline has come from seminaries, placement offices, and rabbis themselves. This study sought the congregations' unique perspectives. It documents how synagogues in the American heartland, a region home to nearly 40% of American Jews, search for rabbis, the number of rabbinic applicants they attract, what stands in their way, and what they believe rabbis need to lead effectively today. It builds on Atra – Center for Rabbinic Innovation's November 2025 report, *From Calling to Career*, by adding a congregational perspective to some of the key questions the report raised.

How the survey was conducted

Dr. Sheskin compiled a distribution list of every non-Orthodox congregation that could be identified in all U.S. states except California, Washington, Oregon, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, the District of Columbia, eastern Pennsylvania, and New England: a total of 787 synagogues across the Midwest, South, and Mountain West.

The questionnaire was administered online via Qualtrics from July 7 to August 14, 2026, with advance notice and three follow-up reminders. Congregations that had not conducted a rabbinic search since 2010 completed a brief set of questions about their congregation; those that had searched completed the full set. When more than one person from a congregation responded, the most complete response was retained.

Sample and weighting

The final data set includes 397 congregations, representing a 50% response rate, which is exceptionally high for a survey of institutions. The sample comprises 212 Reform, 115 Conservative, and 70 other non-Orthodox congregations (Reconstructionist, Renewal, Humanist, independent, and others). Given a sample size of 397, the margin of error (MOE) is only 3.46% since we are sampling from a population of only 787. The denominational mix of respondents matched the population and required no weighting; modest weights (0.65 to 1.5) were applied to ensure the distribution of congregation sizes matches that of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) and United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ) congregation lists.

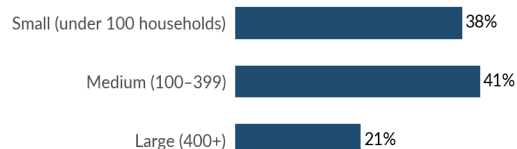
Throughout this document, "searches since 2020" refers to congregations whose most recent rabbinic searches occurred in 2020 or later (weighted $n \approx 209$). "All searches" refers to congregations that have searched since 2010. Percentages are based on respondents to each question and may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

A portrait of Jewish life in the heartland

The responding congregations are predominantly small and mid-sized. Nearly four in ten have fewer than 100 member households, and more than one in five have under 50 member households.

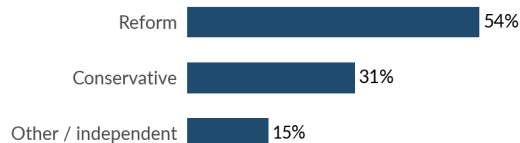
Congregations by size

Number of member households, weighted



Congregations by denomination

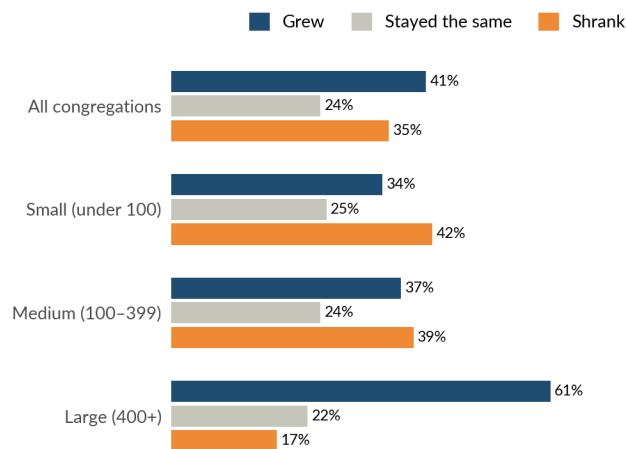
Primary affiliation



Respondents were most often the congregation's rabbi (50%), a board member (21%), or an executive director (19%), with many holding multiple roles. Overall, 80% of congregations own their building, but only 62% of small congregations do. The rest rent, share space with another Jewish or non-Jewish congregation, or meet in members' homes.

Membership is shrinking for many, especially small congregations

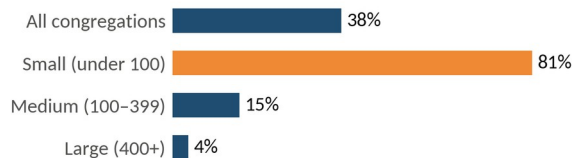
Change in households over the past five years



Households compared with five years ago.

Most small congregations have no full-time rabbi

Share with no full-time paid rabbi



Share of congregations with no full-time paid rabbi on staff.

Across all congregations, 38% have no full-time paid rabbi and 19% have no rabbi serving them on a regular basis: 11% have none at all, and the rest bring in a rabbi only for the High Holidays or occasionally. Among congregations under 100 households, 40% have no regular rabbi and 37% rely on a part-time one. The picture at the other end is very different: nearly every large congregation (96%) has at least one full-time rabbi, and 86% have two or more rabbis (counting full-time, part-time, volunteer, and emeritus rabbis).

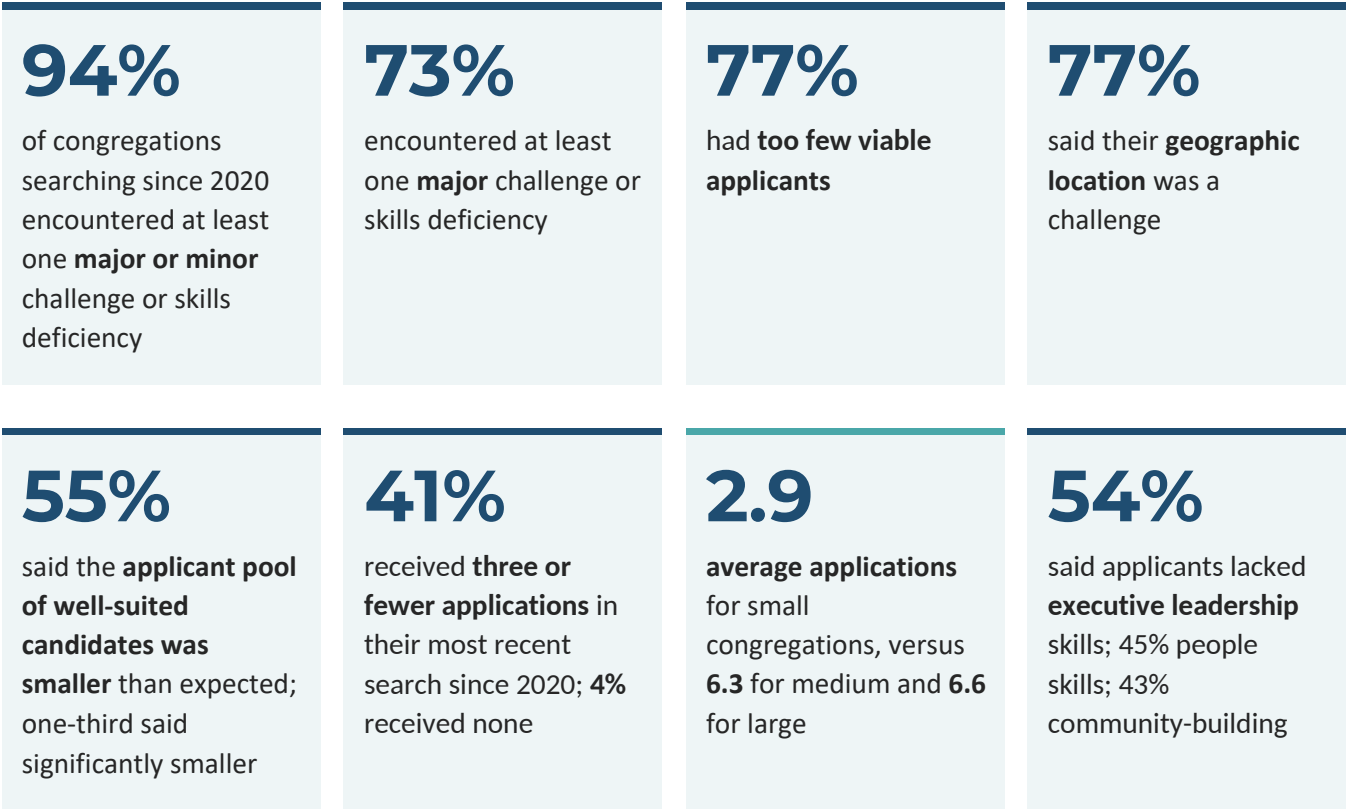
19%

of congregations in the region, **nearly 1 in 5**, have no rabbi serving them on a regular basis.

KEY FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

A constrained market, felt more acutely farther from the coasts

Since 2020, heartland congregations searching for rabbis have faced a highly constrained market. Although almost all searches ended in a hire, many congregations reported choosing from a small pool of applicants, often ones who did not match their needs. Successful hiring, in other words, rarely meant having a strong range of choices.



Seven key findings

- 1. The pipeline is thin.** Three-quarters (77%) of congregations searching since 2020 had too few viable applicants. A majority (55%) found the pool of viable candidates smaller than expected, and one-third (33%) were dissatisfied with its quality; only 21% were very satisfied.
- 2. Geography is the defining obstacle.** Location was cited as a challenge as often as the shortage of candidates (77%), and when congregations were asked, unprompted, to name their single biggest hiring challenge, more than a third cited geography, more than any other issue.
- 3. Small congregations bear the brunt.** Seven in ten congregations with fewer than 100 households received three or fewer applications, and one in nine received none. They are also far more likely to struggle with compensation and with attracting younger candidates.
- 4. HUC-Cincinnati was the region's leading source of candidates.** Since 2020, graduates of the now-closed HUC-Cincinnati campus have accounted for 39% of applicants to Reform congregations and 26% of applicants to all congregations. Measured another way, 65% of Reform congregations and 44% of all congregations received at least one application from an HUC-Cincinnati graduate, more than from any other seminary. The campus ordained its last class of rabbis in May 2026.
- 5. Congregations want a broader skill set.** The skills applicants most often lacked were executive leadership, administration, people skills, and community-building, each cited more often than pastoral, ritual, or Hebrew skills.
- 6. Lay leaders see the shortage more starkly than rabbis themselves.** Lay and staff respondents were nearly twice as likely as rabbi respondents to identify the shortage of qualified applicants as a major challenge (41% vs. 23%).
- 7. The need is recurring.** 52% of congregations that desire rabbinic leadership expect to conduct another search within the next five years, and 18% said their most recent search was unplanned.

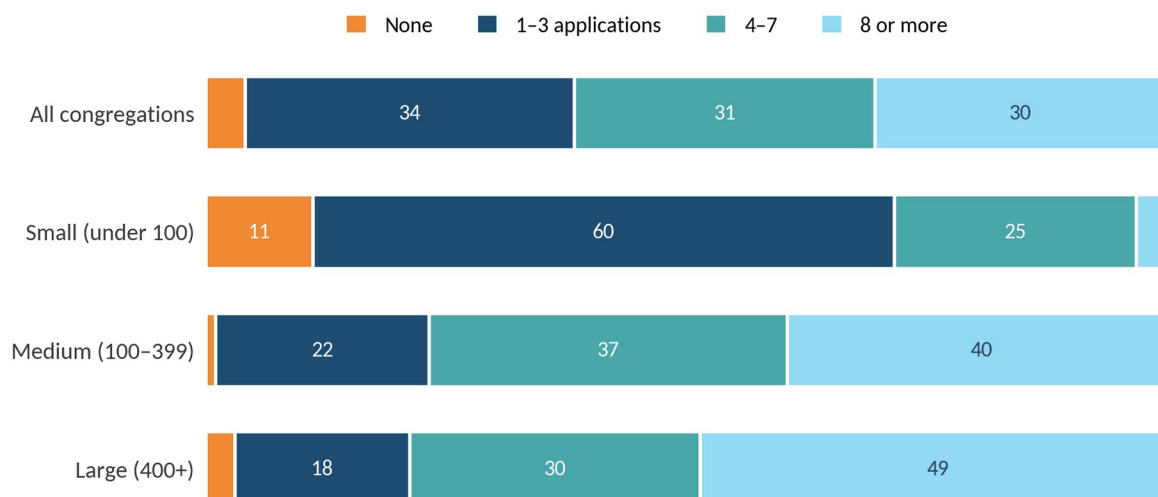
1. THE APPLICANT POOL

Few applicants, even fewer viable ones

The number of applications a congregation receives is closely tied to its size. Small congregations typically choose from a small handful of candidates, or from none.

Applications received in the most recent search, by congregation size

Percent of congregations

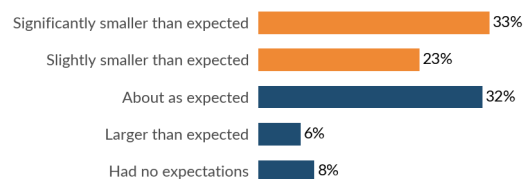


Average applications received: 5.3 overall; 2.9 for small congregations, 6.3 for medium, and 6.6 for large (responses of “10 or more” counted as 10).

Applications are only the beginning. Congregations typically interviewed two or three candidates by phone or video and about two in person; a quarter of small congregations conducted no in-person interviews at all. In 82% of searches, exactly one offer was made, and in 18% of searches, at least one candidate turned down an offer, most often, respondents said, for a larger community, a higher salary, or a more desirable location.

Was the number of viable applicants what you expected?

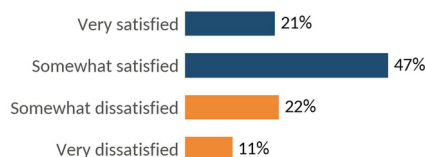
Searches since 2020



Searches since 2020. "Larger" combines slightly and significantly larger.

How satisfied were you with the quality of the pool?

Searches since 2020



Searches since 2020.

One-third of congregations (33%) were dissatisfied with the quality of their applicant pool, and only 21% were very satisfied: a sobering result given the central role a rabbi plays in the life of a congregation.

“

There were not enough candidates to choose from, and not all of the candidates we did get were viable options. It became [which] ‘one of these candidates would work’ rather than ‘we have a tough decision to make.’

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

“

The primary issue was volume, not just fit: the applicant pool was too small to allow for meaningful comparison. With so few candidates in the pipeline, we didn’t have the luxury of being selective.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

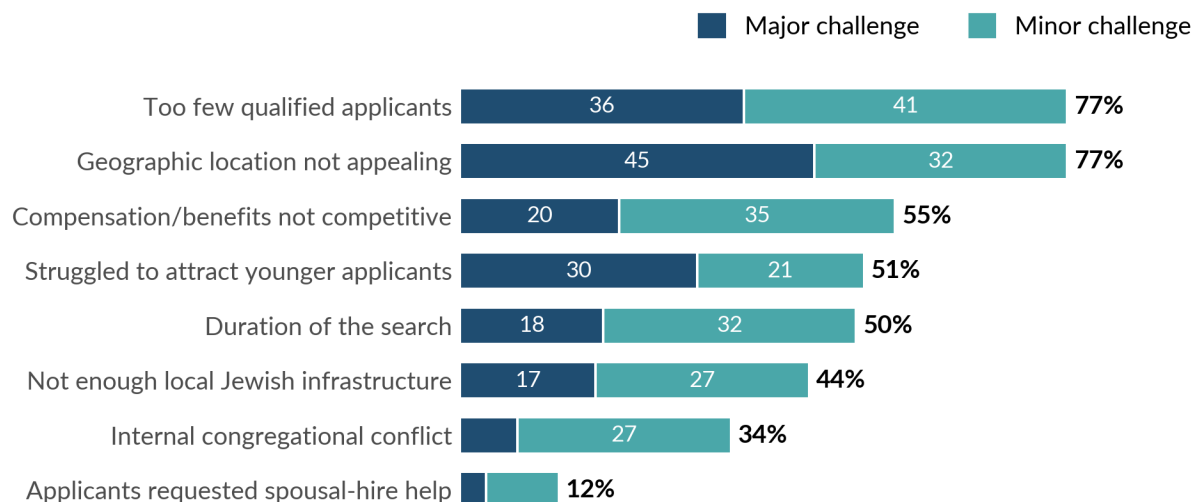
2. THE CHALLENGES CONGREGATIONS FACE

Too few candidates, and too few willing to leave the coasts

Congregations rated eight potential challenges affecting their rabbinic search. Two stand far above the rest.

Challenges encountered in rabbinic searches since 2020

Percent of congregations rating each a major or minor challenge



Searches since 2020, weighted n ≈ 141 answering. 72% reported at least one of these eight challenges as major; 94% reported at least one major or minor challenge or skill deficiency. (Including skills deficiencies, 73% reported at least one major issue.)

Location was the item most often rated as a major challenge (45%), ahead of the shortage of qualified applicants (36%). Across all searches since 2010, more than half of congregations (54%) rated at least one of those two as a major challenge. Compensation, the difficulty of attracting younger candidates, and the sheer length of the search each troubled roughly half of congregations to some degree. By contrast, internal conflict and spousal-hire requests were rarely serious problems.

When congregations were asked, in an open-ended format, to name their single biggest hiring challenge, **more than a third cited geography**, more than any other issue: a small city, a rural area, a Western, Midwestern, or Southern location, and distance from other Jewish clergy and institutions. Money was the next most common theme, usually mentioned alongside size.

“

Convincing people to come to a mid-sized Midwestern community was our biggest challenge.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

“

The number of rabbis being ordained from HUC has declined. We are in the middle of the country, not considered a desirable location...

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

“

Location — the search and the Jewish world — is really centered on the coasts.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

“

Four were offered on-site interviews, and all canceled before the interview date because they accepted other positions, all in larger cities.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

Implication. Where rabbis train impacts where they are willing to serve. For heartland congregations already struggling to attract candidates, a seminary in the region, along with the student pulpits and relationships it creates, is a vital part of the pipeline.

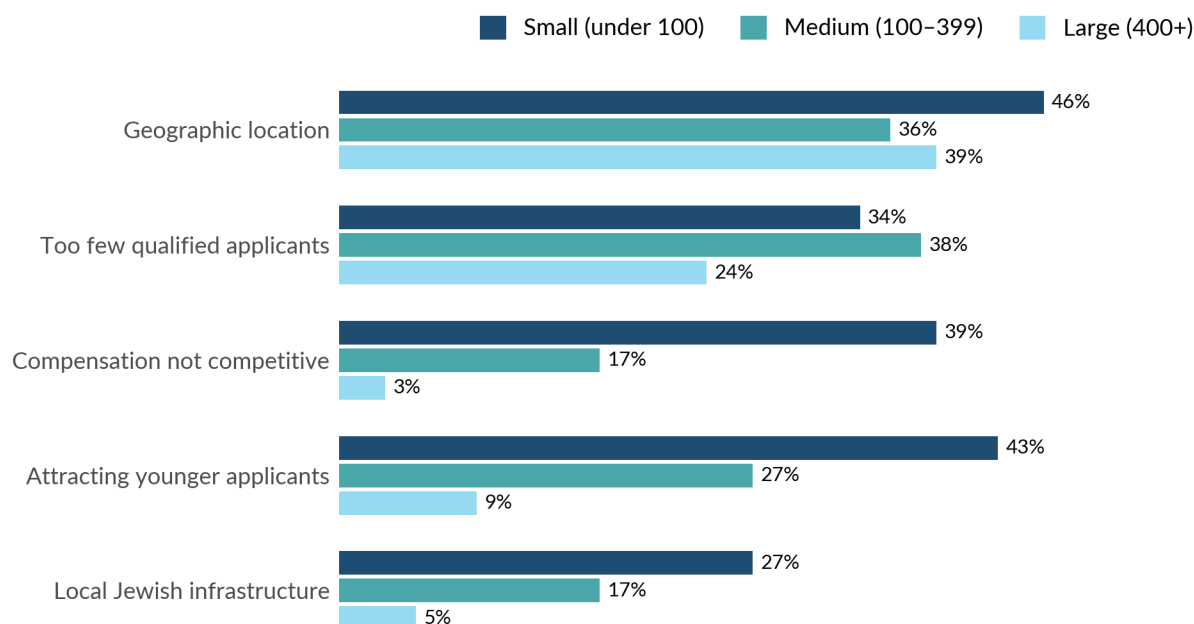
3. SMALL CONGREGATIONS, BIGGER OBSTACLES

The smaller the congregation, the steeper the climb

Geography challenges congregations of every size. The smaller applicant pool hits small and medium-size congregations the hardest. Everything else falls hardest on the smallest.

Major challenges by congregation size

Percent rating each item a major challenge



Share rating each item a MAJOR challenge, all searches since 2010.

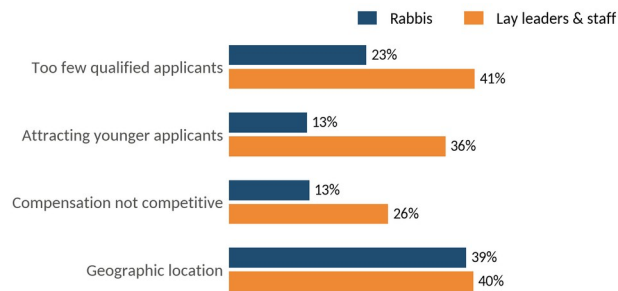
All searches since 2010.

Among congregations with fewer than 100 households, 39% cited uncompetitive compensation as a major challenge, compared with 3% of large congregations. Forty-three percent of small congregations struggled seriously to attract younger candidates, versus 9% of large ones. Small congregations were also five times as likely as large ones to say a lack of local Jewish infrastructure (day schools, a JCC, kosher food) was a major deterrent.

Small congregations are overwhelmingly searching for part-time rabbis (69% of their searches, versus 4% of medium and 1% of large). Three-quarters of their offers were under \$75,000. When a small congregation is between rabbis, members themselves take on that role more than half the time.

Lay leaders see the shortage more acutely than rabbis

Percent rating each a major challenge, by respondent



Rated a MAJOR challenge, by who completed the survey.

Half of all surveys were completed by the congregation's rabbi, and half by a lay leader or staff member, yet their perceptions differ sharply. Lay and staff respondents were far more likely to cite the applicant shortage, the difficulty of attracting younger candidates, and compensation as major challenges; on geography, the two groups agree almost exactly.

Rabbis, often themselves the successful candidate, may see only the outcome, while board members and search chairs remember the process.

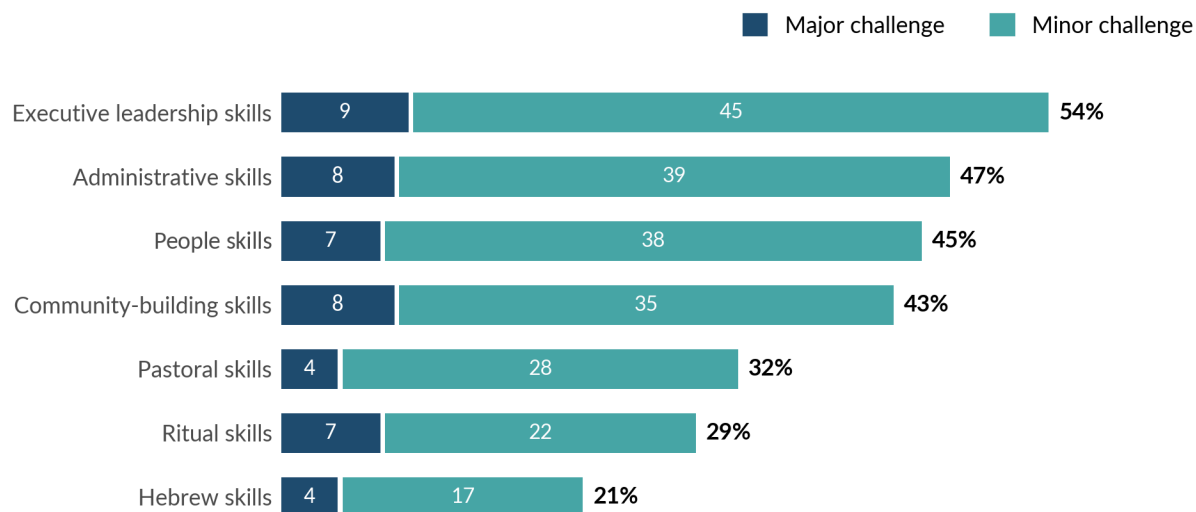
4. THE SKILLS GAP

Congregations want rabbis who can lead, manage, and connect

Congregations rated seven skill areas in which applicants may have fallen short. The traditional core of rabbinic training (Hebrew, ritual, pastoral care) was rarely the problem.

Skills applicants lacked, searches since 2020

Percent of congregations citing a deficiency (major + minor)

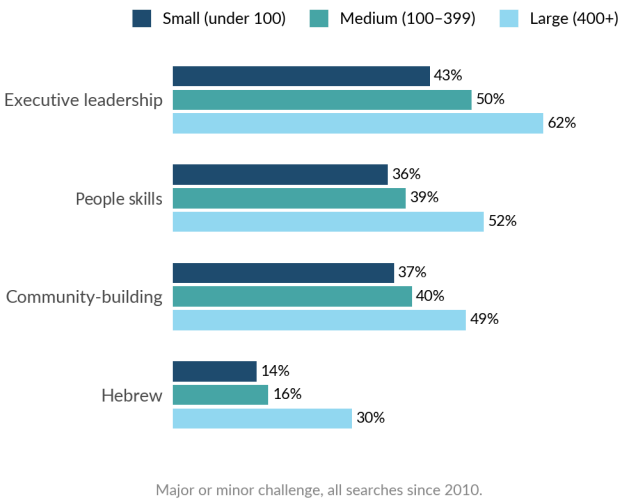


Darker segment: rated a major challenge. Lighter segment: rated a minor challenge. Bar total = major + minor. 65% reported at least one skill lacking as a major or minor challenge; 18% as a major challenge.

Executive leadership tops the list: 54% of congregations searching since 2020 said applicants lacked it. Administrative skills (47%), people skills (45%), and community-building (43%) follow. Congregations reported deficits in pastoral skills (32%), ritual skills (29%), and Hebrew (21%) far less often. In other words, survey respondents were generally satisfied with their rabbis' Hebrew, liturgical, and ritual abilities. What congregations increasingly need (the capacity to run an organization, build relationships across generations, and grow a community) is where candidates most often fall short.

Larger congregations report the gap most often

Percent reporting applicants lacked the skill, all searches since 2010



Large congregations, which hire leaders for complex, multi-staff institutions, were most likely to report applicants lacking executive leadership (62%) and people skills (52%).

~80%

Asked what qualities matter most for rabbis entering the field today, roughly 80% of respondents cited **people skills** or closely related qualities (empathy, warmth, listening, the ability to connect with every demographic), often explicitly ranking them above Hebrew or Jewish education.

5. WHERE APPLICANTS COME FROM

HUC–Cincinnati was the heartland’s leading source of candidates

Congregations were asked which seminaries their applicants attended. For searches since 2020, one campus stands out, and as of May 2026, its rabbinical program closed.

Graduates of Hebrew Union College’s now-closed Cincinnati campus made up **39% of all applicants to Reform congregations** searching for a rabbi since 2020, and **26% of applicants to all congregations**: fully one-third of applicants to small congregations, and 22–24% of applicants to medium and large ones.

SHARE OF THE APPLICANT POOL

39% / 26%

of all **applicants** to Reform congregations / to all congregations since 2020 were HUC–Cincinnati graduates.

SHARE OF CONGREGATIONS REACHED

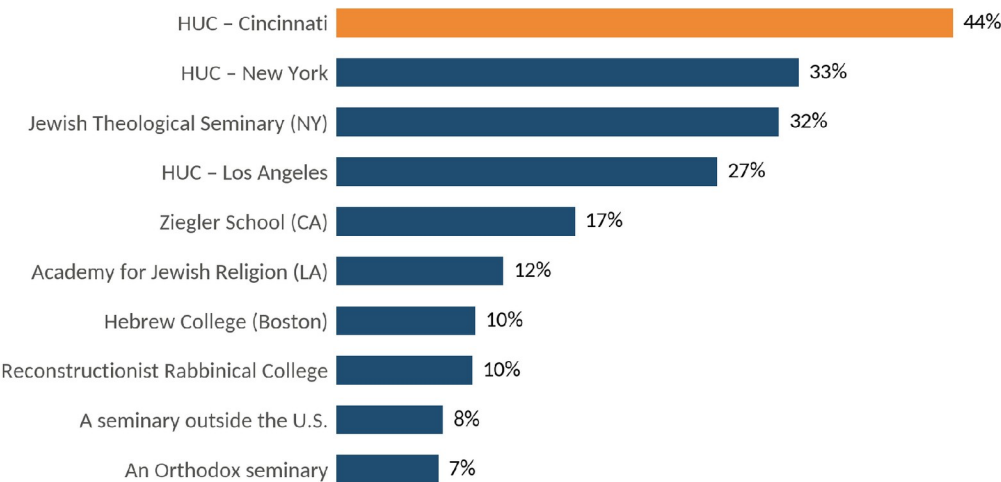
65% / 44%

of Reform congregations / of all congregations received **at least one application** from an HUC–Cincinnati graduate.

The second measure shows how widely that pipeline reached. **65% of Reform congregations and 44% of all congregations** searching since 2020 received at least one application from an HUC–Cincinnati graduate, more than from any other seminary.

Seminaries represented in the applicant pool, searches since 2020

Percent of congregations with at least one applicant from each seminary

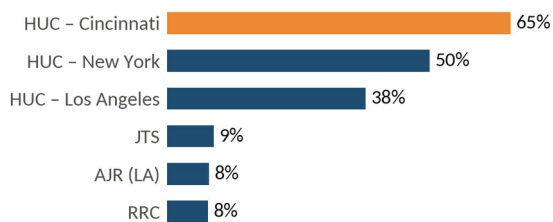


Share of congregations searching since 2020 that received at least one applicant from each seminary. Adds to more than 100%.

Top ten shown; AJR–NY 5%, ALEPH 5%, IIHJ 4%. A congregation may appear under several seminaries; adds to more than 100%.

Among Reform congregations

Percent with at least one applicant from each seminary



Reform congregations searching since 2020.

Hebrew Union College's Cincinnati campus ordained rabbis for 150 years before its residential rabbinical program closed in May 2026.

The campus also supplied student rabbis to small congregations across the region, a pipeline several respondents said they have already lost.

“

With seminaries closing/consolidating, particularly with the closure of my alma mater, HUC in Cincinnati, small congregations in the middle of the country are being abandoned by movements/institutions of US Jewry.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

“

We relied on student rabbis from HUC in Cincinnati. When they closed the program, we were forced to hire a part-time rabbi.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

“

Now that Cincinnati is closed, the number of rabbinic candidates for smaller communities has decreased, as those graduating from HUC LA and HUC NY tend to prefer larger cities/congregations.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

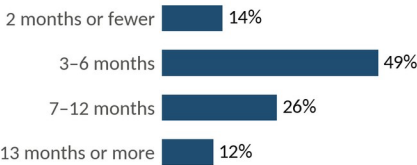
6. HOW SEARCHES UNFOLD AND END

Most searches ended with a hire, eventually

Since 2020, 92% of searches ended with a hire, 4% ended without one, and 5% were still ongoing at the time of the survey. But a hire was not always the one a congregation had hoped for. Although most searches (63%) were completed within six months, more than half (55%) found their pool of viable applicants smaller than expected. Many described choosing from whoever remained rather than from a competitive field.

How long the search took

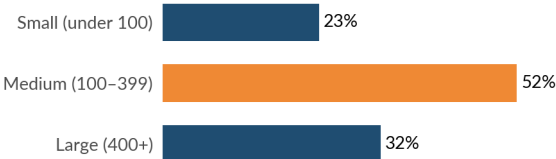
Time from start of search to acceptance of an offer



Time from start of search to acceptance of an offer.

Long searches are most common in mid-sized congregations

Share of searches lasting seven months or longer



Share of searches lasting seven months or longer.

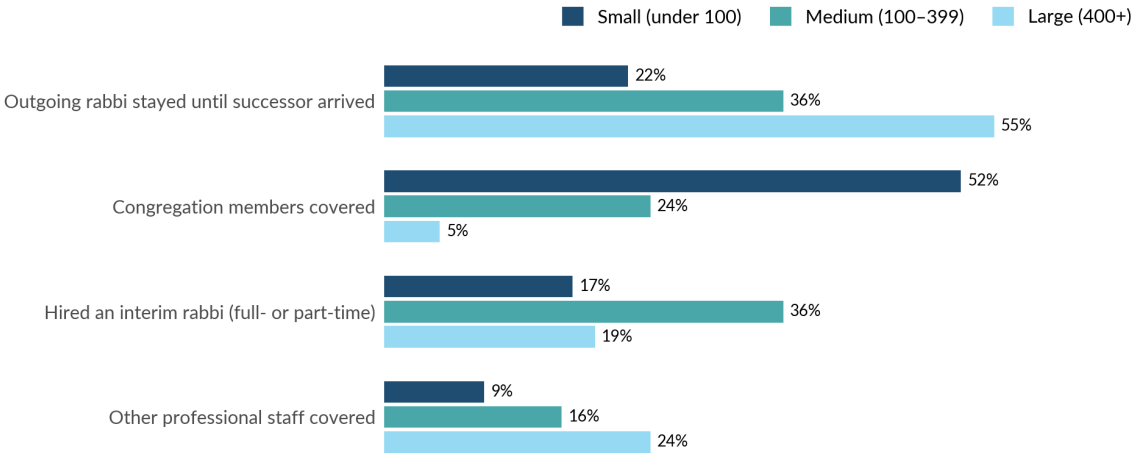
Thirty-eight percent of searches took seven months or longer. Mid-sized congregations, which almost always seek a full-time rabbi but lack the resources and profile of the largest synagogues, were most likely to search for more than a year (20%). Nine in ten congregations (89%) ultimately hired their first choice from the applicant pool, and among hires with contracts of one year or longer, 62% were on three-year contracts.

Why congregations are searching

Retirement accounted for 28% of searches (18% when the rabbi retired and stayed in the community, 10% when the rabbi moved away). More searches followed a parting of ways: 17% by mutual agreement and 13% because the board declined to renew a rabbi’s contract. The end of an interim period accounted for 14%, and 13% were to add rabbinic staff (36% among large congregations). Among rabbis who left for another position, nearly a quarter went to a pulpit in a much larger city, and a similar share to a pulpit in a similarly sized or smaller community.

Who covered while the pulpit was vacant

Percent of congregations, by size (adds to more than 100%)



Adds to more than 100%; some congregations used more than one approach.

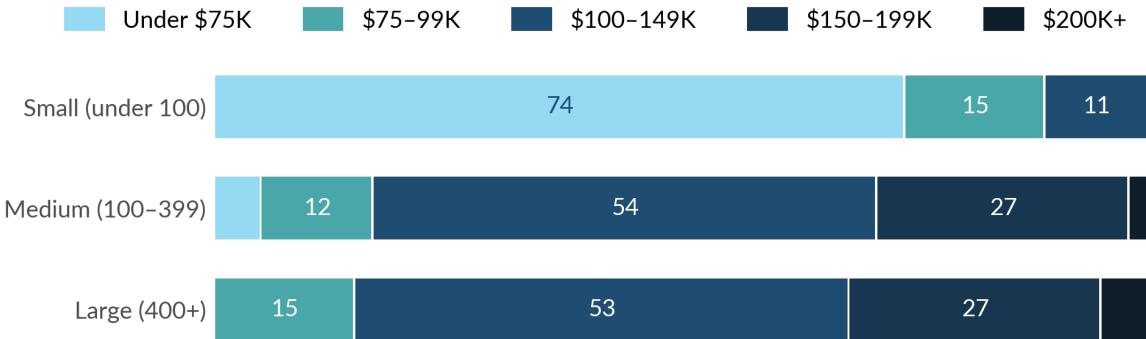
Large congregations most often bridged the gap with the outgoing rabbi or other professional staff. Small congregations most often turned to their own members: 52% covered the rabbi’s duties themselves, while only 14% brought in visiting rabbis or rabbinical students.

7. COMPENSATION AND SEARCH METHODS

What congregations offer, and where they look

Salary range offered, by congregation size

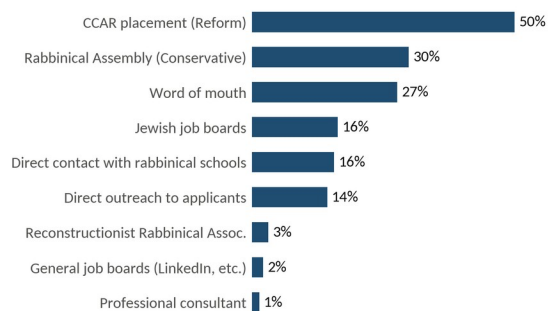
Percent of congregations (offered range, not final agreement)



Three-quarters of small congregations offered less than \$75,000 as a base salary, consistent with the part-time positions most of them seek to fill. Medium and large congregations cluster in the \$100,000–\$149,999 range for base salaries, with a little over a quarter offering \$150,000 or more. Final agreed salaries closely track the offered ranges. Among congregations reporting on benefits, roughly two-thirds offered health insurance, retirement contributions, housing allowances, professional development funds, and moving expenses; only 15% offered sabbatical leave.

How congregations searched

Percent using each method; adds to more than 100%



Multiple methods allowed; adds to more than 100%.

Movement placement systems remain the backbone of the search: 86% of Reform congregations used the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) and 89% of Conservative congregations used the Rabbinical Assembly (RA). Informal channels matter enormously for the smallest congregations, **53% of which relied on word of mouth**, more than used any placement office. Independent and non-movement congregations leaned on Jewish job boards (49%), word of mouth (54%), and direct outreach (40%).

“

Be prepared for the process to take longer than you expect... Be ready to act quickly and make an offer. Do not let your internal hiring processes cause you to lose out on candidates, because that will put you in competition with bigger and wealthier congregations. The biggies suck up the candidates.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

“

In this market, you're not hiring a rabbi so much as you're courting one.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

8. WHAT CONGREGATIONS SAY THEY NEED

In their own words

Hundreds of congregational leaders answered open-ended questions about the qualities rabbis need today, why they were not fully satisfied with their applicant pool, and what advice they would give others. The themes are strikingly consistent.

The rabbi for whom congregations are searching

Congregations still want a rabbi who is learned, skilled in Hebrew and liturgy, and compelling on the bimah. But respondents described a role that has expanded well beyond that of scholar, teacher, and ritual leader. Rabbis are asked to build relationships across generations, develop lay leaders, manage staff and budgets, navigate political division, raise money, and, in small congregations, do all of it alone. The word that recurs more than any other is *people*.

“

People skills are the number one quality needed. The candidate should have proficiency in many of the other areas, but a highly qualified candidate without people skills is ineffective.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

“

Candidates who are genuine, caring, authentic, and curious about the people they will serve are extremely important. They must have strong teaching and interpersonal skills, high EQ [Emotional Quotient], humility, and a capacity for self-reflection and self-awareness.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

“

The modern rabbi needs to be a scholar, spiritual leader, community builder and organizational leader...

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

“

Communication: how to relate to people, Judaic knowledge and proficiency, charismatic teacher, leadership development skills for board training, crisis management, community organizing training to build relational skills.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

“

Willingness to learn on the job and recognize that rabbinical school gives you about 60% of the training you need.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

“

People skills! The rest can be learned.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

Why the pool disappointed

Asked why they were not “very satisfied” with their applicants, congregations first cited numbers. “There was hardly anyone to choose from.” They then cited readiness. Recent graduates were often described as promising but “too green” for a solo pulpit; the more experienced applicants, however, were often nearing retirement age. Many congregations said candidates simply did not want to live in the area where the congregation is located.

“

Would like to see more preparation for leading small congregations in geographic areas with small Jewish populations. The youngest applicants show promise but are not necessarily ready to assume the range of responsibilities that a solo rabbi faces.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

“

No one wanted to come to [a non-coastal] western state.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

“

We lost good candidates to larger markets that paid more.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

“

If you can avoid [a rabbinic search], avoid it. The talent pool is sorely lacking.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

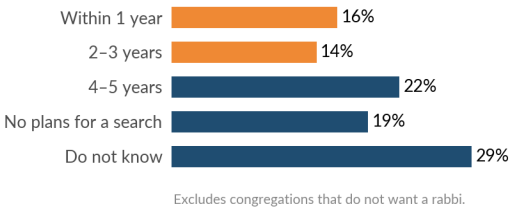
Implication. The expectations of congregational rabbis have expanded. Rabbinic education must prepare graduates for organizational leadership, community building, and relationship building *alongside traditional competencies*, and do so through sustained, in-person practice in real communities, not classroom study alone.

9. LOOKING AHEAD

The need is not going away

The rabbinic search is not a once-in-a-generation event. For most congregations it recurs, and it often arrives unexpectedly.

When congregations expect to search again
Percent of congregations



30% of congregations that desire rabbinic leadership expect to conduct a rabbinic search within the next three years, including 16% within a year, and 52% within five years. Nearly one in five (18%) said the need for their most recent search arose unexpectedly. 19% have no plans for another search, a group that includes **congregations that have concluded they can no longer afford or attract a rabbi at all**, and 29% do not know.

Nine percent of all congregations have never searched for a rabbi and do not wish to hire one; another 1% would like to but have not begun, citing affordability.

30% 30% of congregations that desire rabbinic leadership expect to conduct a rabbinic search within the next three years, and more than half (52%) within five, pointing to sustained demand for rabbis across the heartland.

What the findings mean for rabbinic education

Taken together, the findings point to a challenge larger than a shortage of rabbis. **America’s heartland needs a stronger rabbinic pipeline and a model of rabbinic education designed around the realities of contemporary congregational leadership in the middle of the country.**

It begins with who is recruited.

If geography is one of the greatest barriers to attracting rabbis, recruiting future rabbis from the Midwest, South, and Mountain West, and educating them closer to the communities where they may ultimately serve, will likely help build a more sustainable number of rabbinical leaders who are willing and able to serve communities in the American heartland. The closing of HUC–Cincinnati makes rebuilding that pipeline even more urgent.

It requires reconsidering what future rabbis are prepared to do.

Congregations still value the rabbinate's traditional foundations: Jewish learning, teaching, ritual leadership, and spiritual and pastoral care. But they are also asking rabbis to build relationships, create community, develop leaders, manage organizations, navigate conflict, and adapt to change. Rabbinical education must address these realities so that rabbis are better prepared to meet these contemporary needs.

And it has implications for how rabbis are formed.

If relational ability, emotional intelligence, authenticity, and the capacity to bring people together are the qualities congregations value most, those attributes should inform both recruitment and the seminary's rabbinical curriculum. Because these qualities are developed through sustained interaction and experience, rabbinic education should provide meaningful opportunities for in-person learning, relationship-building, and hands-on leadership in real communities.

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At a moment in history when Jews are searching for moral and ethical clarity and leadership, we need more rabbis in the pipeline, and we need the quality of that pipeline to rise to meet the moment.

— STUDY PARTICIPANT

Technical notes and definitions

ITEM	DETAIL
Population	787 non-Orthodox congregations in all U.S. states except CA, WA, OR, NY, NJ, DE, MD, DC, eastern PA, and New England, identified through national directories, URJ and USCJ listings, Jewish federation websites, Jewish newspaper listings, and other sources.
Sample	397 congregations (212 Reform, 115 Conservative, 70 other non-Orthodox); 50% response rate. By size: 152 small (under 100 households), 160 medium (100–399), 84 large (400+).
Fieldwork	Qualtrics online survey, July 7 – August 14, 2026, with advance notice and three follow-ups. Duplicate responses from the same congregation were reconciled by retaining the most complete response.
Weighting	Responses weighted (factors 0.65–1.5) so that the distribution of congregation sizes matches URJ and USCJ listings. No denominational weighting was required.
Margin of error	Given a sample size of 397, the margin of error (MOE) is only 3.46% since we are sampling from a population of only 787.
Question routing	Detailed questions about the search process were asked only of congregations that conducted a rabbinic search since 2010. Bases vary by question; percentages exclude non-responses.
“Since 2020”	Congregations whose most recent search occurred in 2020–2024 or 2025–present (weighted $n \approx 209$; 141–146 answering the challenge and skills items).
Challenge and skills items	Respondents rated eight potential challenges and seven skill areas as “not a challenge,” “minor challenge,” or “major challenge.” Summary figures (“at least one major challenge”) were computed across all items answered.
Seminary figures	Applicant-pool shares (39% of applicants to Reform congregations; 26% of all applicants) are Dr. Sheskin’s tallies of the number of applicants reported per seminary. Congregation-reach figures (65%; 44%) are the share of congregations reporting at least one applicant from a given seminary; a congregation may appear under several seminaries.
Open-ended responses	Quotations are verbatim from written responses, lightly edited for length, with identifying details removed. About 80% of responses on the most important qualities for rabbis entering the field mentioned people skills or a closely related relational quality.

About the College for Contemporary Judaism

The College for Contemporary Judaism (CCJ) is building a new model of rabbinic education to address the critical shortage of congregational rabbis across the American heartland. Based in Cincinnati — the historic cradle of rabbinic education — CCJ will offer full scholarships and living stipends, a rigorous, integrative, and dynamic curriculum, practice-based fellowships, an immersive Israel experience, and direct access to world-class Judaica resources. For more information, visit www.ccjudaism.org.

About the author

Ira M. Sheskin, Ph.D., is Director of the Jewish Demography Project of the Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies and Professor in the Department of Geography and Sustainable Development at the University of Miami. He is an Editor of the *American Jewish Year Book* and the current President of the Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry (ASSJ). He received the 2023 Marshall Sklare Award, presented by ASSJ to a senior scholar for lifetime achievement in the study of contemporary Jewry. He also received the 2026 Distinguished Scholar Award from the Ethnic Geography Specialty Group for his work on the study of American Jews. He has completed more than 50 demographic studies for Jewish federations throughout the country.

Press contact: Noah Sachartoff, Miller Ink · noahs@miller-ink.com · **Suggested citation:** Sheskin, I. M. (2026). *CCJ Rabbinic Search Survey, 2026*. Commissioned by the College for Contemporary Judaism, Cincinnati, OH.