

# Thriving Communities

Highlights from 2025 Survey  
for Affiliated Communities

Dec 2025



**RECONSTRUCTING  
JUDAISM**

Deeply rooted. Boldly relevant.

# What we'll cover

- Background
- Congregational Membership and Budgets
- Congregational Profiles
- Educational Models in Congregations
- Service Formats in Congregations
- Engagement with Reconstructing Judaism
- Next Steps

# Survey Participation

- **Responses from 72 out of 92 of affiliates (just under 80%)**
- **Received responses from 94% of large congregations, 86% of medium congregations, and 65% of small congregations**

<b>Membership (Households)</b>	<b>Membership of Survey Respondents</b>	<b>Projected membership of all congregations</b>
Median Membership	129 households	116 households
Average Membership	160 households	152 households

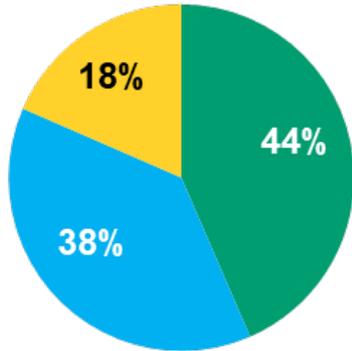
# How to think about this data

- **Snapshot of movement as a whole** – not a granular look at individual congregations
- Not an impact assessment – tracks demographics and trends, not outcomes
- Consider your congregation in the context of larger movement
- Opens door for further inquiry, service offerings, and peer connections

# Congregational Size

## Distribution all Movement Affiliates by Relative Size

■ Small ■ Medium ■ Large



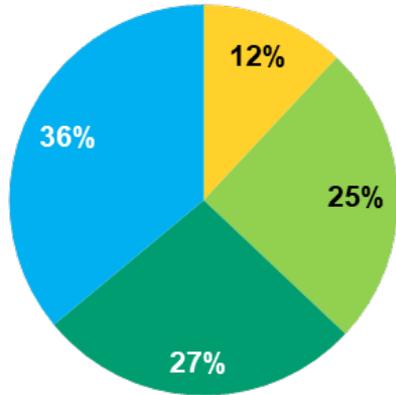
Membership by Relative Size	Number of Respondents	Projected Numbers of all Congregations
Small (100 households or less)	26	40
Medium (101 – 250 households)	30	35
Large (over 250 households)	16	17

# Analyzing Congregational Size

- Median Reconstructionist congregation (116 households) in lower range of mid-sized communities
- Median is smaller than average (152 households) --> **larger communities skew average upwards**
- **59 of 92 affiliates (about 64%) are smaller than the average**

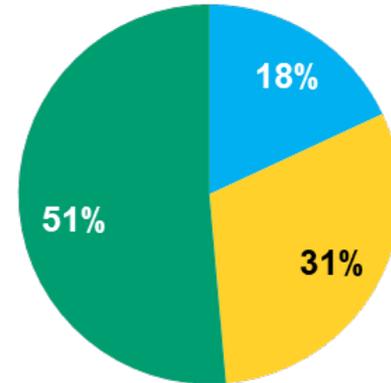
# Trends in Membership

## Membership Trends - COVID-19



- Decreased during pandemic and then returned to pre-pandemic levels
- Decreased during pandemic and has not returned to pre-pandemic levels
- Increased throughout the pandemic and has continued to increase
- No effect on membership

## Membership Trends post Oct. 7, 2023



- Decreased membership
- Increased membership
- No effect on membership

# Analyzing Membership Trends

- **Changes in membership correlated with congregational size**
- Smaller congregations likelier to report decreases (46%) than increases (8%)
- 53% of large congregations and 45% of medium congregations reported increases
- Congregations that grew post-Oct 7 referenced success engaging diverse viewpoints rather than holding one uniform ideology or another

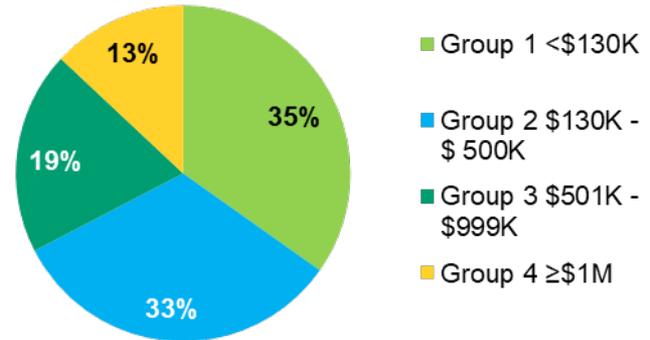
# Congregational Budgets

We have determined four budget groupings to describe a picture of staffing and operations across communities:

- Group 1 – Annual operating budget under \$130K
- Group 2 – Between \$130k and \$500K
- Group 3 – Between \$501K and \$999K
- Group 4 – \$1M and over

Metric	Number
Average	\$447,429
Median	\$269,449

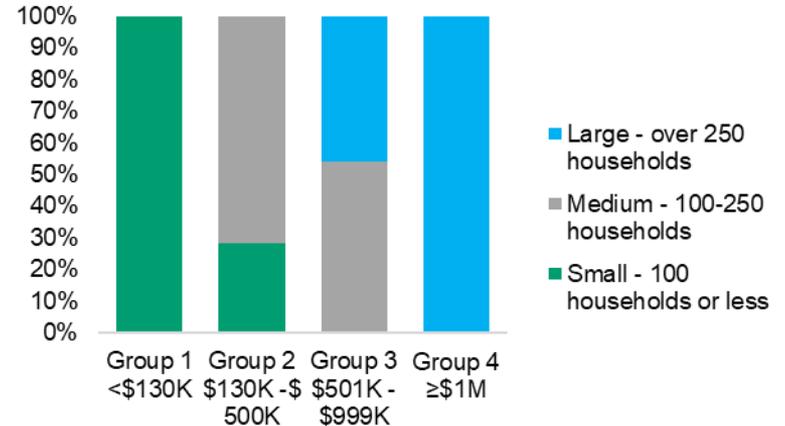
Distribution of all Movement Affiliates by Budget Group



# Congregational Budgets and Membership

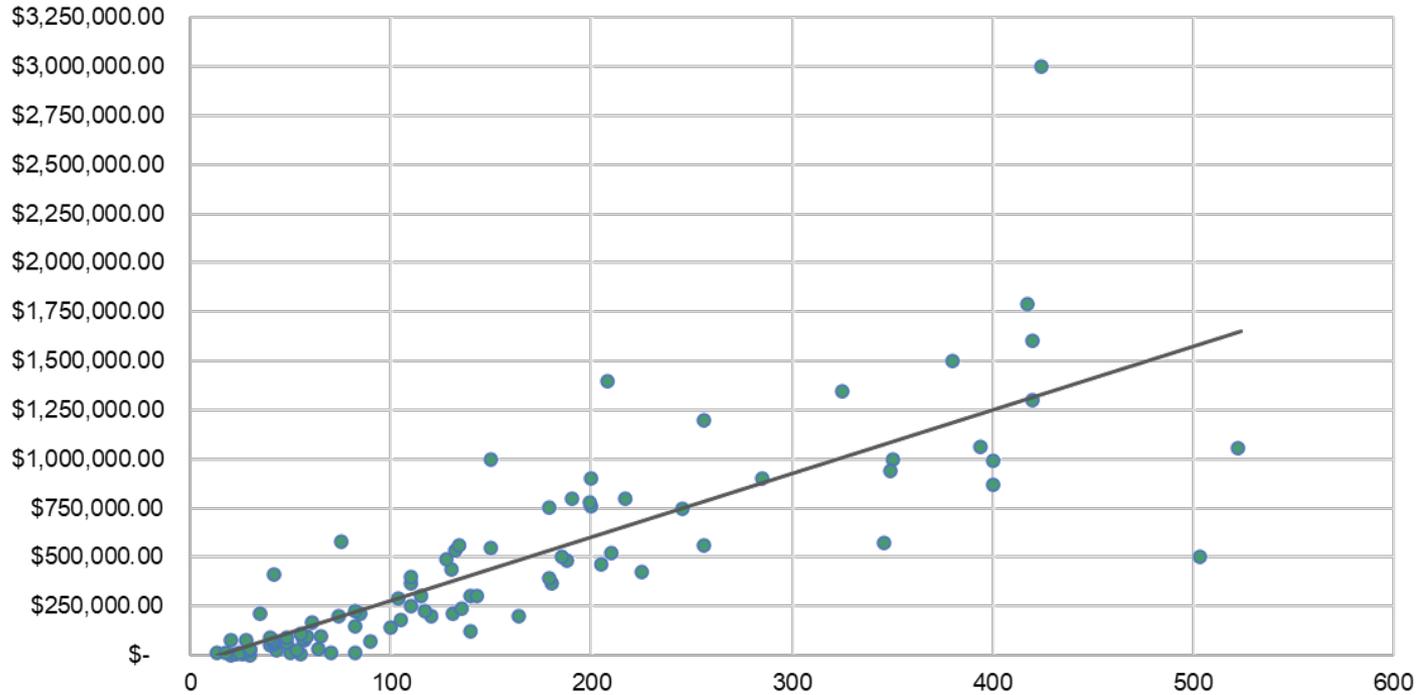
Budgets compared to Membership Size	Average Budget Size	Average Membership Size (Households)	Average Spending Per Household
Group 1 <\$130K	\$48,657	47	\$1,035
Group 2 \$130K - \$ 500K	\$308,002	136	\$2,264
Group 3 \$500K - \$999K	\$728,863	232	\$3,142
Group 4 - ≥\$1M	\$1,437,239	356	\$4,037
All	\$447,429	152	\$2,935

**Distribution of Relative Congregation Size within Relative Budget Size**



# Budget vs Membership Size

Budget Size by Membership Size



# Analyzing Congregational Budgets

- Larger congregational budgets skew average (~\$450K) significantly higher than median (~\$270K)
- A supermajority (68%) of congregations have budgets of \$500K or less
- Larger budgets mean more money to spend per household (\$1 million+ spend nearly twice as much as \$130K-\$500K)
- **Demands on congregations with budgets between \$130K-\$1 million are quite significant relative to resources**

# Profile: Group 1 - <\$130K

- Part-time clergy, lay-led, or volunteer spiritual leader
- Half have clergy manage all ritual, pastoral care, and education needs
- Half have part-time administrative staff
- Religious schools run by clergy, part-time director, or volunteer director
- Most do not own their building
- Nearly half of Group 1 communities report having an endowment—an interesting finding that will inform future inquiry

# Profile: Group 2 - \$130K - \$500K

- **All have clergy on staff:** half have full-time clergy, remainder part-time (none are lay-led)
- Most communities have a part-time administrator (some full-time)
- Majority have 1+ religious school teachers and/or volunteer teachers
- Half of religious schools have part-time education director (remainder have full-time director, volunteer director, or clergy overseeing school)
- Most communities own their building
- Many have an endowment (slightly lower percentage than Group 1)

# Profile: Group 3 - \$501K - \$999K

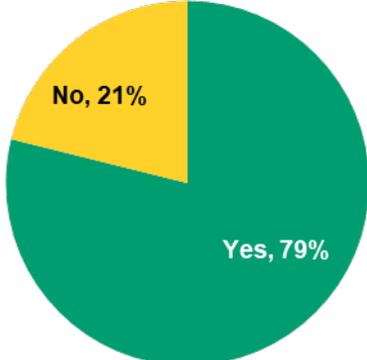
- **Nearly all have full-time clergy**; some have full- and part-time clergy on staff
- Nearly all have a full-time administrator; some have additional part-time admin staff
- Most have part-time religious school teachers; a few have full-time teachers or volunteer teachers. No religious schools operate solely on volunteers
- Half have a part-time education director; a quarter have a full-time director; remainder led by a rabbi-educator or lay people
- Nearly all own their building
- Half have an endowment

# Profile: Group 4 - \$1M or more

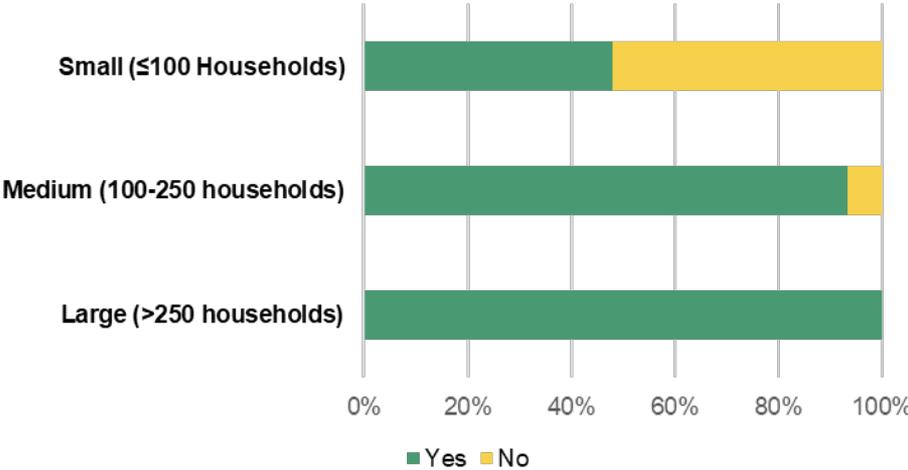
- **All have at least one full-time clergy on staff**; nearly half also have part-time clergy; half have two full-time clergy
- All have full-time administrator; half have part-time administrative staff
- All have part-time teachers (a quarter have full-time teachers). No religious schools operate solely on volunteers
- Over half have full-time education directors. Rest have part-time director, rabbi with education responsibilities, or these combined with lay-leadership
- Nearly all own their building
- A majority have an endowment

# Education – Religious Schools

Affiliates With Religious Schools movement-wide

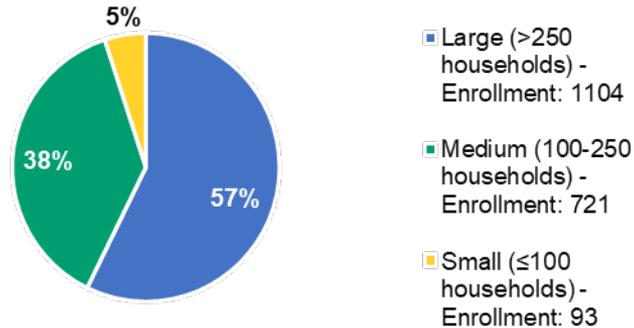


Religious Schools by Relative Membership Size



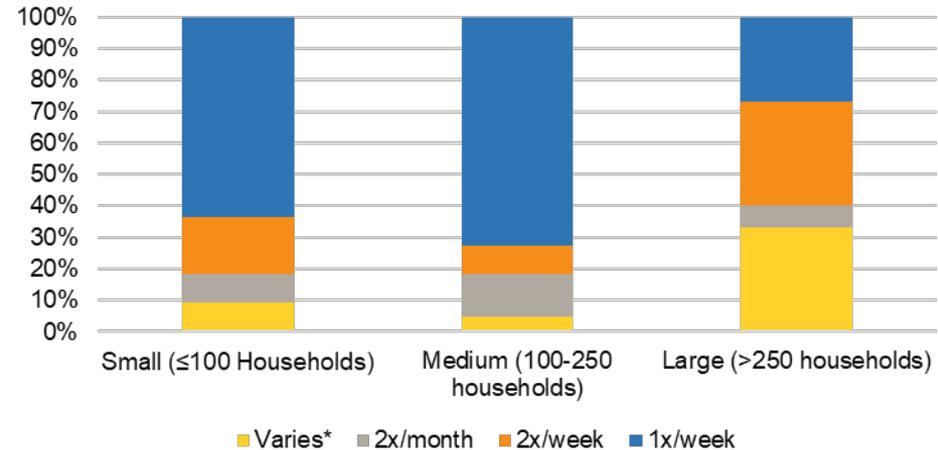
# Education – Enrollment and School Frequency

**Distribution of Enrollment Across Respondents by Relative Membership Size**



Enrollment by Relative Membership Size	Average
Small (≤100 Households)	9
Medium (100-250 households)	33
Large (>250 households)	79
All	42

**Religious School Frequency By Relative Congregation Size**



*\*Varies by age group, and/or includes a combination of weekly and bi-weekly classes*

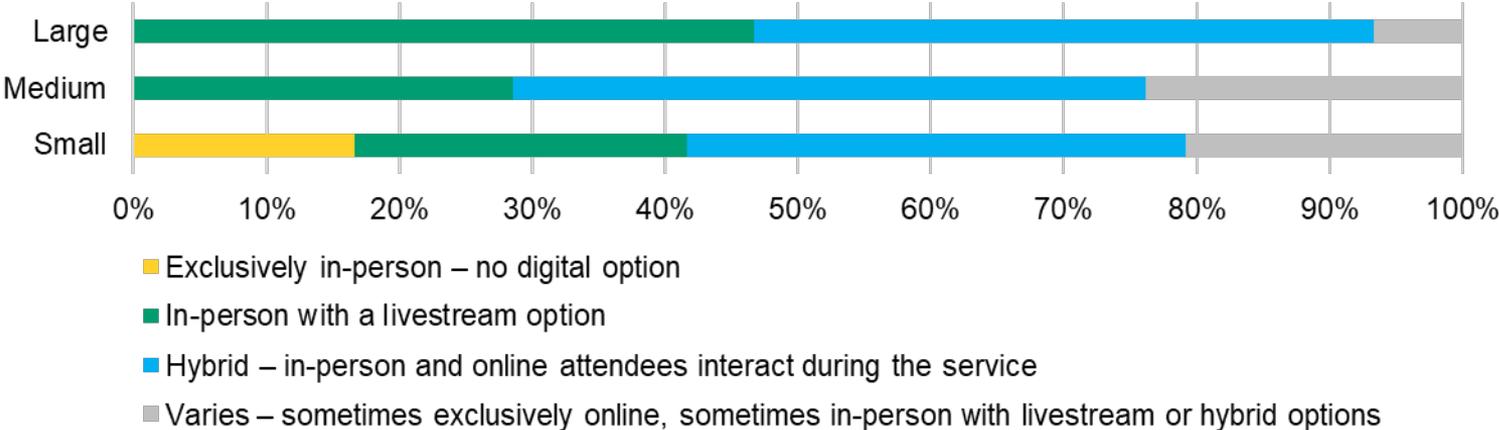
# Priorities for Congregations – Next 3-5 Years

## **Top 5 Priorities, Ranked by Occurrence:**

- 1. Membership Growth and Retention – 25 mentions**
- 2. Financial Sustainability – 23 mentions**
- 3. Community Building, Culture, and Engagement – 21 mentions**
- 4. Strategic Planning and Leadership Development – 16 mentions**
- 5. Education – 8 mentions**

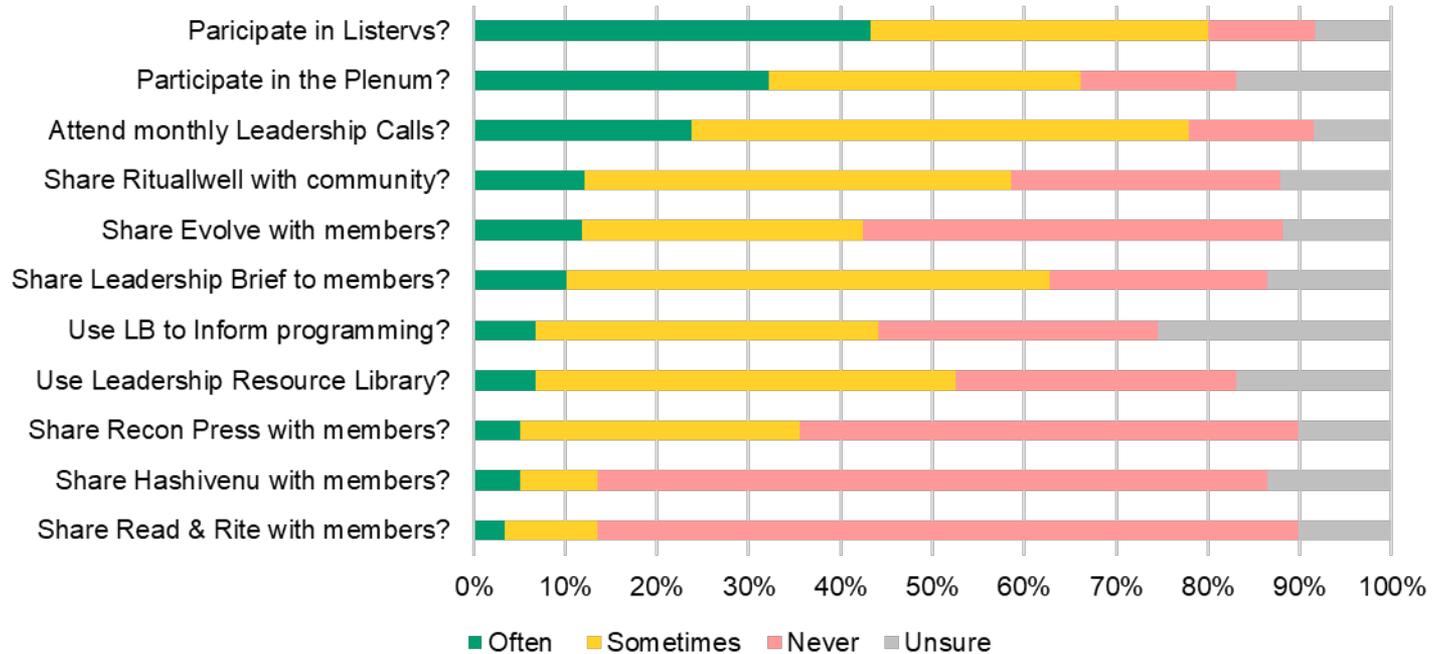
# Service Formats

Service Formats by Relative Congregation Size



# Engagement with Reconstructing Judaism

How often do you...



# Next Steps

- Better align Thriving Communities offerings with different "market segments" (membership and budget size) in the survey
- Sharpen initiatives (and launch new ones) to respond to the priorities shared in the survey (e.g., new mini-courses and resource guides, strategic partnerships)
- Focus groups by membership size, budget size, and priority area to learn more about the needs of different segments
- Explore the implications of dues on congregational finances, different models, etc.
- Help communities identify different "bands of growth" to better assess their trajectories