

Nishma Research

The Successes, Challenges, and Future of American Modern Orthodoxy

November 4, 2019



*Sponsored by
the Micah
Foundation*

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Preface

Our Goal

Nishma conducts independent research in the Jewish community. Our goal is to ask the questions that are on the minds of the community – including difficult questions that had not previously received attention – irrespective of preconceptions or agenda, and without judgment. While there has been a fair amount of research in the community, the types of broad, issues-oriented communal studies that Nishma does are quite new. We view the fact that researchers are starting to provide and share information, in support of thoughtful discussion, to be a positive development.

Research Objective

Nishma's 2017 survey of American Modern Orthodoxy showed a complex and diverse portrait: a community with many strengths, concerns, a strong sense of cohesiveness, but also fragmentation around certain views and issues. The findings (<http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html>) were presented at approximately two dozen shuls and feedback suggested areas for further research, including: (1) The future of Modern Orthodoxy and how it can continue to thrive in, and confront the challenges of, secular society, and (2) A deeper understanding of the journeys and experiences of baalei teshuvah.

This report presents findings relating to the first topic and a concurrently released report presents findings relating to the second topic.

Thank You

- To the study advisory group (see page 89), a group of Orthodox leaders that provided guidance to this effort to create impartial, fair and thoughtful research.
- To the Rabbinical Council of America, for notifying and encouraging the support of their approximately 1,000 member rabbis; and to all the shul rabbis who expressed enthusiasm for this survey, and who helped us to reach thousands in the Orthodox community.
- To the community members who took the time to share their thoughts. We hope you enjoy reading this report and reflecting on the findings.

Sponsorship

This study is sponsored by a grant from the Micah Foundation. The foundation is directed by members of the Orthodox community, with the mission of promoting and enhancing Jewish religious life.

Disclaimer

Nishma Research is solely responsible for conducting this research, the questions asked, the analysis, and reporting. The advisory group participated in developing the survey questions and advised on the analysis. Rabbis and shuls throughout the US helped by informing their members of the survey, but were not involved in the analysis or reporting of this independent effort.

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Method Statement

Seeking to reach the broad community of Modern Orthodox (MO) Jews, the study contacted synagogues, reaching their rabbis and members via communication through the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA). As shul affiliation is virtually universal among the Orthodox, we see this as an effective way to reach the community. We received 2,629 responses, of whom 1,817 self-identified (survey research about Jewish communities in all their variety, like survey research in general, relies on self-identification) as Modern Orthodox residing in the US, and the findings presented in this report are primarily based on these respondents. Some had self-identified as charedi¹, Conservative and other non-Modern Orthodox, even though they are members of shuls whose rabbis are RCA members, and appendices include data for 174 US-based charedi Jews and 130 Israel-based Modern Orthodox Jews.

Among the respondents were 888 whom we classified as baalei teshuvah (having become Orthodox at bar/bat mitzvah age or later), and who responded to several dozen questions aimed specifically at them and their experiences. Of these, 744 are Modern Orthodox in the U.S., and a separate, concurrently-released report (The Journeys and Experiences of Baalei Teshuvah) presents the findings.

The extent to which these samples are representative of the overall populations from which they derive is not knowable, as no demographic profile of the community exists. Such profiles exist for larger denominations of American Jewry (via community, Federation, and Pew² studies), but Orthodoxy – and particularly the Modern Orthodox and baalei teshuvah – are quite small segments, and this small size has implications for researchers. For example, Pew made over 71,000 phone calls to reach Jewish households, of which only

134 were synagogue-attending Modern Orthodox Jews.)

Reaching and obtaining adequate samples from among small segments is challenging, and that is why we chose the route of reaching the community through the RCA synagogue rabbis.

Based on comparisons with the Pew sample, our respondents appear roughly equivalent with respect to regional distribution, median age, liberal/conservative political balance, and the percentage that are baalei teshuvah. Our sample appears to report somewhat higher levels of education and income. This survey asked respondents to identify where they fall within the spectrum of Modern Orthodoxy (left/center/right) – see page 10, “Where Modern Orthodox Jews See Themselves” – but a baseline measure has never been developed for the entire MO population. A community demographic profile including this measure and others would be useful for stratified sampling and weighting³ and one Orthodox communal organization has expressed interest in creating such a resource for future surveys.

We follow the guidance of AAPOR⁴ (American Association for Public Opinion Research) that opt-in surveys are not ideal but may be the best approach, lacking other options.

As is true for all surveys, sample respondents should be viewed with appropriate understanding and caution. The researchers and study advisors are not coming to this research totally ignorant of the population at hand, and existing knowledge may be reflected in some of the commentary. Appropriate statistical tests are applied in comparing respondent segments⁵.

We hope this research will further communal dialogue.

¹ Respondent verbatim comments are italicized in this report. Non-English words (e.g., charedi, baalei teshuvah, etc.) are not italicized.

² See Pew Research “A Portrait of Jewish Americans,” <https://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>

³ For a basic explanation of stratified sample weighting methodology, see for example: <http://www.applied-survey-methods.com/weight.html>

⁴ https://www.aapor.org/AAPOR_Main/media/MainSiteFiles/AAPOROnlinePanelsTFReportFinalRevised1.pdf

⁵ In surveys of this type, statistical analysis is more germane in comparing respondent sub-groups. For example, we compare men vs. women, older vs. younger, those living in large cities to those in smaller communities, etc. Overall margins of error are less or not meaningful in a web (opt in) survey (see <https://www.aapor.org/Education-Resources/Election-Polling-Resources/Margin-of-Sampling-Error-Credibility-Interval.aspx>). However, as some readers ask, the figures $\pm 2\%$ and $\pm 4\%$ for the Modern Orthodox and Baal Teshuvah reports, respectively. The number of responses to each question (denoted as “n”) is shown in a footnote accompanying the question text.

Introduction

The Nishma Research 2017 Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews was the first broad survey ever done in the segment. It covered a wide range of topics, including religious beliefs and practices, views on the importance of Orthodox observance as a part of one's life, the role of shuls, Jewish study, women's roles within Modern Orthodoxy, children's education, sexuality, Israel connection and advocacy, and views relating to Modern Orthodoxy's overall successes, opportunities and challenges. A summary of the 2017 study may be found in the appendix (pages 61-72). Nishma also conducted a large-scale study in 2016, exploring people who have left Orthodoxy. A summary report detailing the findings among those who had previously identified as Modern Orthodox is presented in the appendix (pages 73-79). We may refer to those studies in a few instances in this report.

Some of the past research dealt with respondents' personal relationship with their Orthodoxy and with the Modern Orthodox community. In probing the responses, it became clear that secular society is

having an impact on Modern Orthodoxy. This is not particularly surprising, as Modern Orthodoxy's Ethos of Torah U'Madda supports an interactive relationship between Jewish and secular knowledge and, more generally, between the Jewish and secular worlds (i.e., Torah Im Derech Eretz, as articulated by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch in the 19th century). This worldview is specific to Modern Orthodoxy, and stands in contradistinction with that of the insular Charedi world and the non-Orthodox community.

This current research explores the benefits and challenges to Modern Orthodoxy overall, and specifically as they derive from this worldview.

In addition to reporting the finding for all 1,817 Modern Orthodox in the U.S. (with some other groups explored in the appendix), we examined for some key questions whether differences exist between male and female respondents, by age, by religious orientation (i.e., left of center / center / right of center within Modern Orthodoxy) and by community size (larger cities vs. smaller communities).

Summary of Key Findings *(Page 1 of 3)*

Orthodox Beliefs, Practices and the Importance of One's Orthodox Observance

- The vast majority (85%) of Modern Orthodox respondents say their Orthodox observance is an important part of their lives, and a significant majority are fully or mostly comfortable with key aspects of day-to-day Orthodox life.
- But Modern Orthodox Jews are far from uniform in their beliefs, attitudes and practices. While 42% say they are “centrist,” a majority say they are either to the left or to the right, and almost one in five (18%) says they are primarily “Shabbat Orthodox.” Women skew slightly more to the left (liberal) than do men.
- There is strong agreement that Modern Orthodoxy is “Jewishly authentic” and lets people think about ideas intellectually and critically. But pluralities only somewhat agree that Modern Orthodoxy is spiritually inspiring, and there are mixed views on whether religious observance in the Modern Orthodox community is where it should be. Specifically, fewer than half (43%) agreed that “religious observance within the Modern Orthodox community is where it should be.”
- A majority of respondents are concerned that too many Modern Orthodox communal leaders come from right-leaning segments, with only about half agreeing that Modern Orthodox schools have an adequate supply of Modern Orthodox educators.
- A large percentage of respondents (42%) identifies as baalei teshuvah. (This survey contained many questions aimed specifically at those respondents, examining their decision to become Orthodox, the challenges, journey, etc. The findings are contained in a separate concurrently released report.)

Summary of Key Findings *(Page 2 of 3)*

The Future of Modern Orthodoxy

- Modern Orthodoxy's worldview involves melding Jewish observance with secular knowledge and participation, and 88% experience positive interactions between their Orthodoxy and secular society – most often simply by taking advantage of opportunities to create a positive impression with non-Orthodox or non-Jews.
- However, interaction with secular society can create conflict, with 88% of respondents having experienced such a conflict. While half (51%) stand firm in their religious practice, a substantial minority (37%) compromise at some level – most often in areas of kashrut and Shabbat.
- Modern Orthodoxy experiences constant and often conflicting pressures to change. While a slight majority (53%) feels there is an appropriate balance between making changes vs. “drawing lines” to prevent change, more than one-third (35%) see Modern Orthodoxy as too focused on “drawing lines” to prevent what they see as needed changes.
- The top issues raised by those who want changes within Modern Orthodoxy are increased roles for women and acceptance of LGBTQ. But the same two issues (with dissenting views) are at the top of the list among those opposed to change and who think tradition is not being sufficiently preserved. Thus, Modern Orthodoxy is being stretched by what are seen as both positive and negative views and values of secular society.
- More than one-third (34%) believe “there is no longer a single, cohesive Modern Orthodox community. Modern Orthodoxy should acknowledge this and would perhaps be better off splitting into separate camps.”
- Despite the pessimism about cohesiveness, respondents are mildly optimistic about Modern Orthodoxy's future religious strength and growth in numbers.

Summary of Key Findings *(Page 3 of 3)*

Modern Orthodoxy's Youth and Schools

- 55% of respondents agree that their Orthodox community school systems are successful in creating committed Orthodox Jews, while 34% disagree.
- But the historic near-universal attendance at Orthodox Jewish day schools seems to be slipping, as 31% of respondents say they might consider public school as an option.
- Modern Orthodox parents hope their children will be religiously observant. More than three-fourths want their children to be typical Centrist Modern Orthodox Jews (58%) or more observant than that (18%). One in eight (13%) say their child's religious preferences are not so critical or relevant to them.

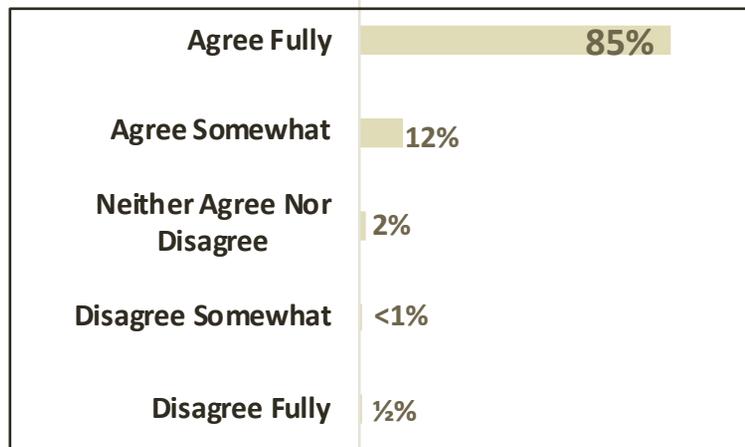
People Leaving Orthodoxy

- There is widespread concern about people leaving Orthodoxy (63%), and even more concern that communal leaders are not adequately addressing the issue (67%).
- (In reaction to Nishma's 2016 survey of people who have left Orthodoxy, we have experienced leeriness among shuls and communal organizations about discussing the topic. However, while it is a difficult and often uncomfortable topic, people want it to see it addressed.)
- Nishma has estimated (based on the 2017 profile of the MO community) that 9% are at risk of leaving, and we have seen that 15% MO do not fully agree that their Orthodoxy is an important part of their life. The reasons why people leave Orthodoxy are complex and while we have some suspected indicators (lack of strong belief, liberal mindset, religious "disconnects" within a family, etc.), it is ultimately an individual and often unpredictable decision.

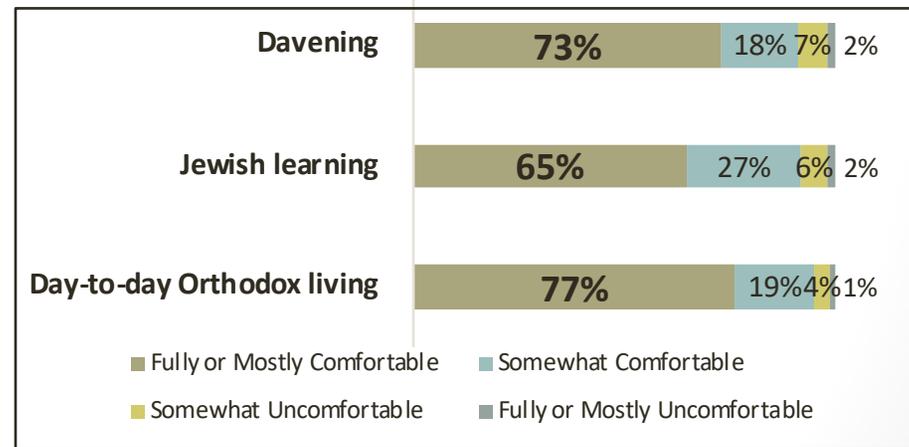
The vast majority (85%) of Modern Orthodox (MO) respondents say their Orthodox observance is an important part of their lives, and a significant majority are fully or mostly comfortable with key aspects of day-to-day Orthodox life.

- Modern Orthodox (MO) Jews’ observance is, nearly universally (85% fully agree), a very important part of their lives, and this as true for women (86%) as it is for men (85%).
- Respondents state that are comfortable with day-to-day-Orthodox living (77%) and davening (73%), although a bit less comfortable with Jewish learning (65%). While men are more comfortable with davening than are women (77% vs. 66%), the genders are equally comfortable in areas of Jewish learning and day-to-day Orthodox living. Young people (ages 18-24) are less comfortable with davening (54%)

Being an Orthodox / Observant Jew is an Important Part of My Life



Comfort with Key Aspects of Orthodox Religious Life



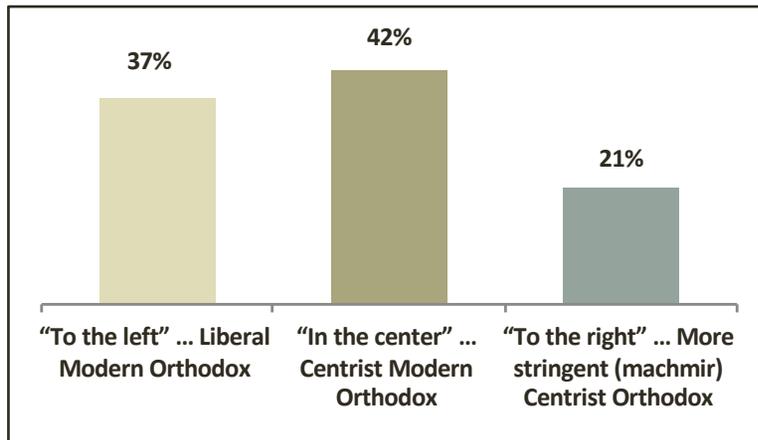
Q. Do you agree with the following statement? Being an Orthodox / Observant Jew is an important part of my life. Response Scale: Agree Fully; Agree Somewhat; Neither Agree nor Disagree; Disagree Somewhat; Disagree Fully; Don't Know. n = 1,414 (excludes less than 0.5% who responded "Don't Know").

Q. How religiously comfortable are you with ... Davening; Jewish learning; Day-to-day Orthodox living? Response Scale: Fully or Mostly Comfortable; Somewhat Comfortable; Somewhat Uncomfortable; Fully or Mostly Uncomfortable. n = 1,697.

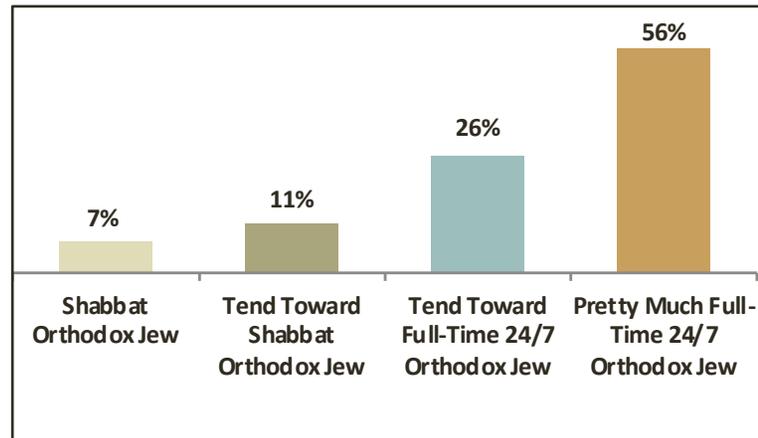
Modern Orthodox Jews are far from uniform in their beliefs, attitudes and practices.* While 42% say they are “centrist,” a majority say they are either to the left or to the right, and almost one in five (18%) says they are primarily “Shabbat Orthodox.” Women skew slightly more to the left (liberal) than do men.

- MO respondents overall skew more left of center (37%) than right of center (21%), although a plurality describe themselves as “Centrist.”
- More women say they are left (35%) than do men (29%), perhaps a result of feelings relating to expanded women’s roles, a position that women more often support.
- 3% overall say they often use a smartphone on Shabbat, and 9% do so often or sometimes. The hypothesis that such usage (sometimes called “Half Shabbat”) is mainly among young people was not supported by the data, as the highest usage (12%) was by those ages 35-54.

Where Modern Orthodox Jews See Themselves



“Full-Time Orthodox” vs. “Shabbat Jew”



* See also <http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html> > Full Report - 2017 Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews (Pages 18-28, etc.)

Q. (Asked of those who identified as “Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox”) Where do you see yourself within the range of Modern/Centrist Orthodoxy? ... “To the left” ... Liberal Modern Orthodox; “In the center” ... Centrist Modern Orthodox; “To the right” ... More stringent (machmir) Centrist Orthodox. n = 1,771.

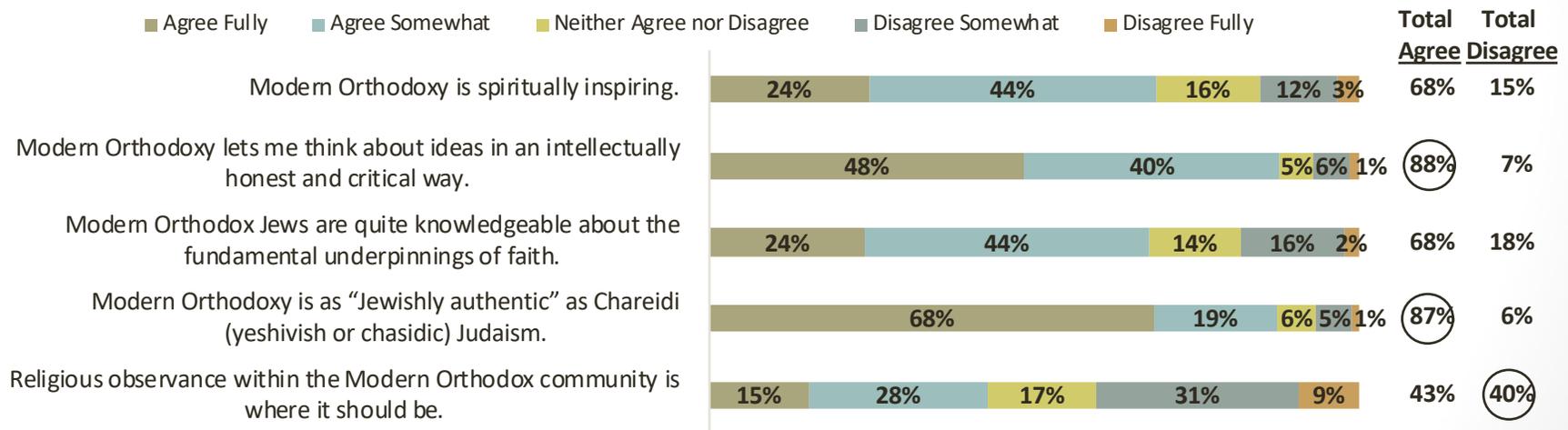
Q. Where do you see yourself in terms of religious practice? ... I am pretty much a “Shabbat Orthodox Jew.”; I tend toward being mostly a “Shabbat Orthodox Jew.”; I tend toward being a “Full-time (24/7) Orthodox Jew.”; I am pretty much a “Full-time (24/7) Orthodox Jew.” n = 1,688.

Q1. There has been some discussion about people using smartphones on Shabbat, e.g., for texting (not in a professional capacity, such as physicians, but for social reasons). Do you ever do this? ... Often; Sometimes; Seldom; Never. n = 1,548.

Q. (Asked of those who identified as married) Would you say that your spouse is ... At about the same level of religious observance as you are; More religious (observant) than you are; Less religious (observant) than you are; Don’t Know. n = 1,122 (excludes less than 1% who responded “Don’t Know”).

There is strong agreement that Modern Orthodoxy is “Jewishly authentic” and lets people think about ideas intellectually and critically. But pluralities only somewhat agree that Modern Orthodoxy is spiritually inspiring, and there are mixed views on whether religious observance in the Modern Orthodox community is where it should be.

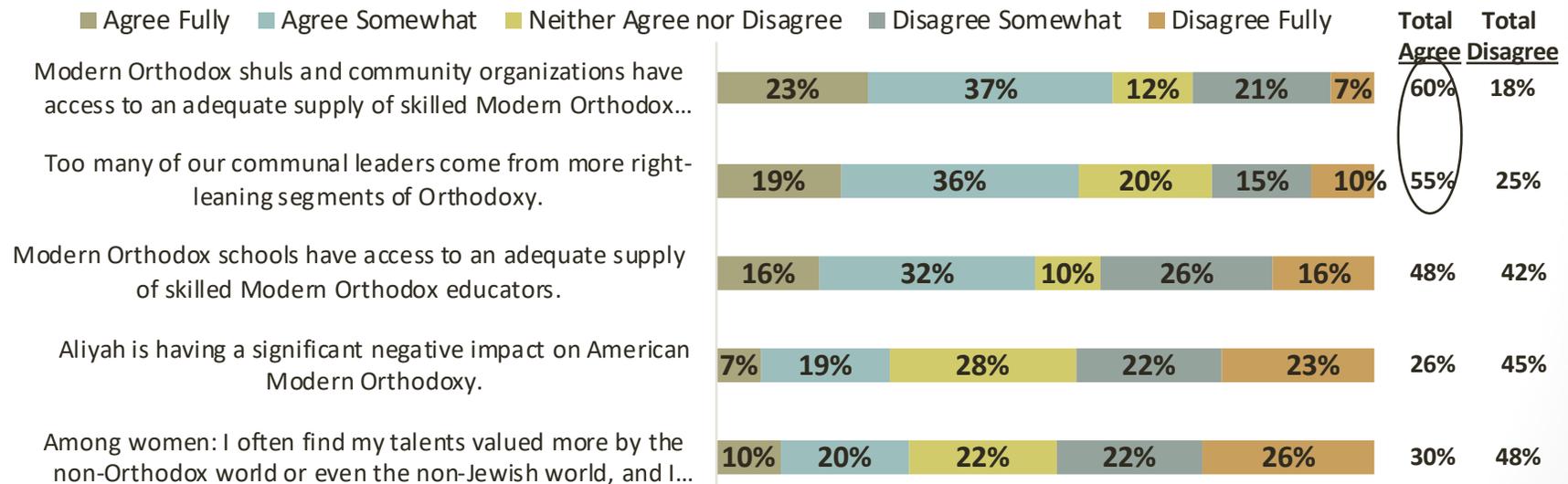
- 48% fully agree (88% fully or somewhat agree) that Modern Orthodoxy lets them think about ideas in an intellectually honest and critical way.
- While more than two-thirds (68%) fully agree that MO is as Jewishly authentic as Charedi Judaism, but only one in four (24%) agree fully that MO is spiritually inspiring, and that MO Jews are quite knowledgeable about the fundamental underpinnings of their faith.
- Few (15%) agree fully that religious observance in the Modern Orthodox community is where it should be, but closer to half (43%) agree fully or somewhat.



Q. (Asked of those who identified as “Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox”) Do you agree with the following statements? ... Modern Orthodoxy is spiritually inspiring.; Modern Orthodoxy lets me think about ideas in an intellectually honest and critical way.; Modern Orthodox Jews are quite knowledgeable about the fundamental underpinnings of faith.; Modern Orthodoxy is as “Jewishly authentic” as Charedi (yeshivish or chasidic) Judaism.; Religious observance within the Modern Orthodox community is where it should be. Response Scale: Agree Fully; Agree Somewhat; Neither Agree nor Disagree; Disagree Somewhat; Disagree Fully; Don’t Know. n = 1,686 (excludes 1% who responded “Don’t Know”).

A majority of respondents (55%) are concerned that too many Modern Orthodox communal leaders come from right-leaning segments, with only about half (48%) agreeing that Modern Orthodox schools have an adequate supply of MO educators.

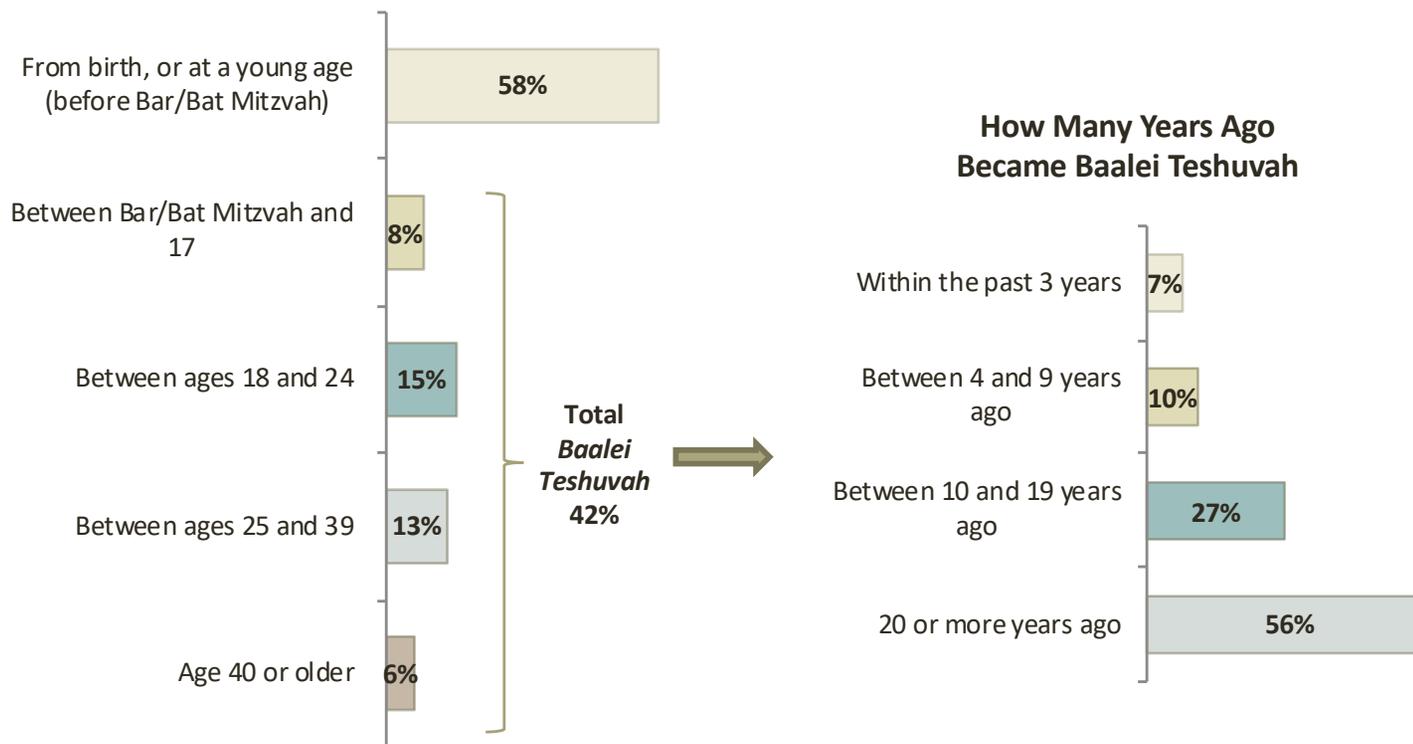
- 60% agree that Modern Orthodoxy has an adequate supply of MO leaders, but 55% agree that too many MO leaders come from right-leaning segments. This seeming contradiction perhaps implies that respondents see a lack of real (“home-grown”) leaders.
- Nearly one in three women indicate that they have directed more of their energies towards non-Orthodox or non-Jewish communities, because they found their talents valued more in those communities.
- People sometimes mention a “brain drain” ... the data suggest that the impacts of aliyah and of reduced involvement by women may both be reducing communal resources.



Q. (Asked of those who identified as “Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox”) Do you agree with the following statements? ... Modern Orthodox shuls and community organizations have access to an adequate supply of skilled Modern Orthodox leaders.; Modern Orthodox schools have access to an adequate supply of skilled Modern Orthodox educators.; Too many of our communal leaders (rabbis, teachers, organizations) come from more right-leaning segments of Orthodoxy.; Aliyah (Jews moving to Israel) is having a significant negative impact on American Modern Orthodoxy (i.e., what has sometimes been called a “brain drain”). (Asked of those who identified as female) I often find my talents valued more by the non-Orthodox world or even the non-Jewish world, and I therefore direct more of my energies towards those communities. Response Scale: Agree Fully; Agree Somewhat; Neither Agree nor Disagree; Disagree Somewhat; Disagree Fully; Don’t Know. n = 1,341 for options 1-4; 661 for option 5 (asked of women); (excludes 6% who responded “Don’t Know”).

Consistent with what was found in the 2017 study of Modern Orthodoxy, a large percentage (42%) identifies as baalei teshuvah. *(This survey contained many questions aimed specifically at those respondents, examining their decision to become Orthodox, the challenges, journey, etc. The findings are contained in a separate report.)**

Stage in Life When Began to Identify as Observant Orthodox

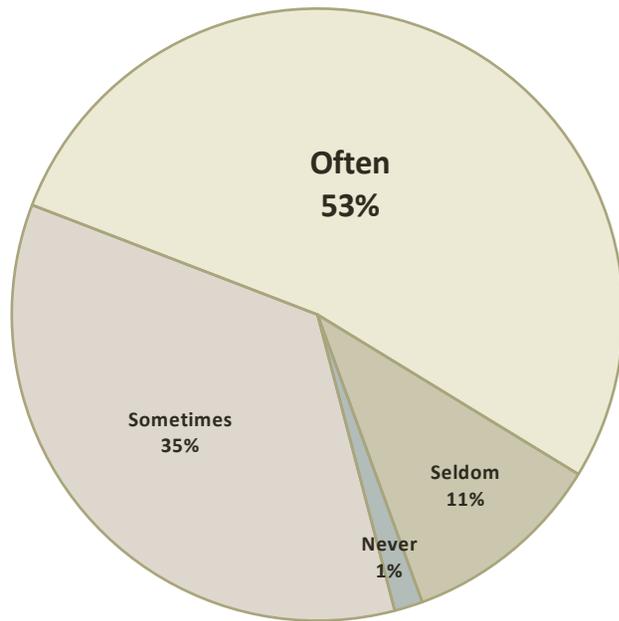


* See <http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html> > 2019 Nishma Research – The Journeys and Experiences of Baalei Teshuvah

Q. At what stage in your life did you begin to identify yourself as being an observant Orthodox Jew? ... (Asked of Males) From birth, or at a young age (before Bar Mitzvah); (Asked of Females) From birth, or at a young age (before Bat Mitzvah); (Asked of Gender Non-conforming) From birth, or at a young age (before Bar or Bat Mitzvah); (Asked of Males) Between Bar Mitzvah age and 17; (Asked of Females) Between Bat Mitzvah age and 17; (Asked of Gender Non-conforming) Between Bar or Bat Mitzvah age and 17; Between ages 18 and 24; Between ages 25 and 39; Age 40 or older. n=1,791.

Modern Orthodoxy’s worldview involves melding Jewish observance with secular knowledge and participation, and 88% experience positive interactions between their Orthodoxy and secular society – most often simply by taking advantage of opportunities to create a positive impression with non-Orthodox or non-Jews.

Frequency of Positive Interaction Between Orthodoxy and Secular Society



Sample Verbatim Responses

Examples of positive interactions:

- *As an orthodox Jew and a professional woman, I find that often one can create a positive impression of orthodoxy.*
- *Active support for policies I view as consistent with Jewish values, such as taking care of the stranger and support political candidates who embrace those values.*
- *Judaism has core values and principals that are of interest to non-Jews, and those principals guide me every day and help me be centered and productive in a world that is anything but centered. They keep me grounded in truth and focused properly.*
- *Religious values and commitment ground me and help me to act with integrity in the secular world. Non-Jewish coworkers appreciate my sincerity and willingness to respond to their inquiries about religion. I where it proudly and see myself as an ambassador for Orthodox Judaism that is also willing to treat them with respect.*
- *Maybe not secular society -- but within world of non-Orthodox Jews. I feel that I present myself as an open-minded Orthodox Jew, which is sometimes new to Jews who have only met judgmental Orthodox Jews.*
- *Science and secular research inform my religious views, and my religious views allow me to think critically about secular issues.*

Reasons for lack of positive interaction:

- *Few opportunities, and the secular world does not expect me to behave in any particularly Jewish way.*
- *I try not to bring my Orthodox Life issues into work. I do not hide what I do or don't do but I do not have interest and many of my co-workers are not interested in my Orthodox life.*

(See additional verbatim responses in the Appendix, pages 40-41)

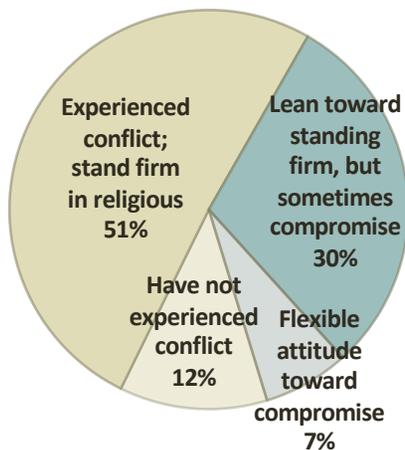
Q. (Asked of those who identified as “Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox”) The goal of Modern Orthodoxy is to meld religious life with participation in society. How often do you personally experience any positive interactions between your Orthodoxy and your participation in secular society? ... Often; Sometimes; Seldom; Never. n = 1,596.

Q. (Asked of those who responded “Often or Sometimes”) Can you give an example or two of how your Jewish Orthodox life and your participation in secular society interact in a positive way? (Open-Ended) n = 806 provided a response.

Q. (Asked of those who responded “Seldom or Never”) Why do you think your Jewish Orthodox life and your participation in secular society do not more often interact in a positive way? (Open-Ended) n = 125 provided a response.

However, interaction with secular society can create conflict, with 88% of respondents having experienced such a conflict. While half (51%) stand firm in their religious practice, a substantial minority (37%) compromise at some level – most often in areas of kashrut and Shabbat.

How Conflict Between Orthodoxy and Secular Society is Handled



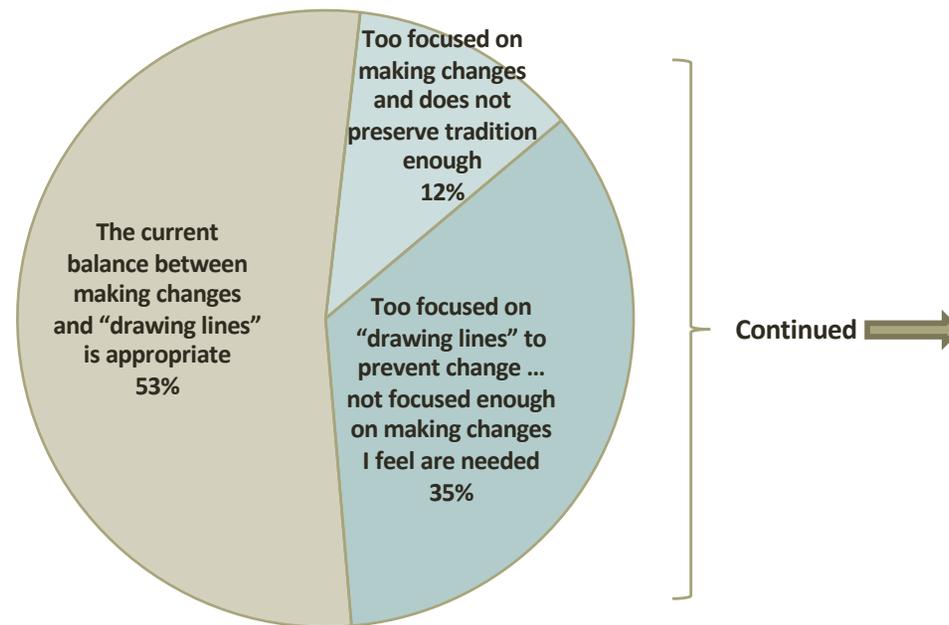
Area	%	Sample Verbatim Comments (See additional verbatim responses in the Appendix, page 42)
Kashrut, work-related	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nibbling at foods at a work event that are not strictly kosher. Business meetings at non-kosher restaurants. Kashrut is the biggest challenge, interacting with society and work colleagues.
Kashrut, family, socially, in general	18%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My family is not religious, they buy kosher meat but I eat off their dishes. Non-kosher restaurants in order to satisfy family obligations.
Shabbat, driving or other violation	11%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driving when family drives to religious events, such as shul or a faraway seder. Early breaking of Shabbos to participate in social engagements.
Shabbat, actions not in proper spirit	8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spend Shabbos somewhere to attend a work function that spills into Shabbos. Not necessarily breaking Shabbos but definitely compromising the spirit.
Shabbat, working	6%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obligations to serving clients sometimes gets me home late on a Friday. Conferences over weekends made keeping Shabbat impossible.
Head covering	6%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May leave yarmulke off for certain meetings. Stopped covering my hair ... it was just weird to wear a hat every day.
Working on chag	3%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes do not observe the second day of yontif (due to job). Two-day chagim are difficult to observe in the business world.
Ideological compromise	3%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have a gay (relative); attended his wedding. Legal views (comment by an attorney) in conflict with my Orthodox beliefs.
Hiding one's Orthodoxy	3%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being less vocal about my Judaism, taking the attention away from myself. Generally not wanting to appear Jewish in work-related circumstances.

Q. Do you ever experience conflict between your Orthodoxy and your participation in society? If so, how do you generally resolve it? ... I have not experienced any such conflict.; I have experienced such conflict but stand firm in my religious practice.; I lean toward standing firm in my religious practice, but I sometimes need to compromise.; I have a flexible attitude toward compromising. n = 1,553.

Q. (Asked of those who responded above "I lean toward standing firm ..." or "I have a flexible attitude ...") Can you give an example or two of a time that you needed to compromise your religious practice? (Open-Ended) n = 340 provided a response.

Modern Orthodoxy experiences constant and often conflicting pressures to change. While a slight majority (53%) feels there is an appropriate balance between making changes vs. “drawing lines” to prevent change, more than one-third (35%) see Modern Orthodoxy as too focused on “drawing lines” to prevent what they see as needed changes.

Modern Orthodoxy’s Focus – Making Changes vs. Preventing Changes



Q. (Asked of those who identified as “Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox”) Because Modern Orthodoxy interacts with society, it needs to deal with change. Which of the following statements best reflects your views on this? ... Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on “drawing lines” to prevent change ... and not focused enough on making changes that I feel are needed.; The current balance between making changes and “drawing lines” is appropriate.; Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on making changes that I feel are not desirable ... and does not preserve tradition enough. n = 1,475.

The top issues raised by those who want changes are increased roles for women and acceptance of LGBTQ. But the same issues (with dissenting views) are at the top of the list among those opposed to change and who think tradition is not being sufficiently preserved.

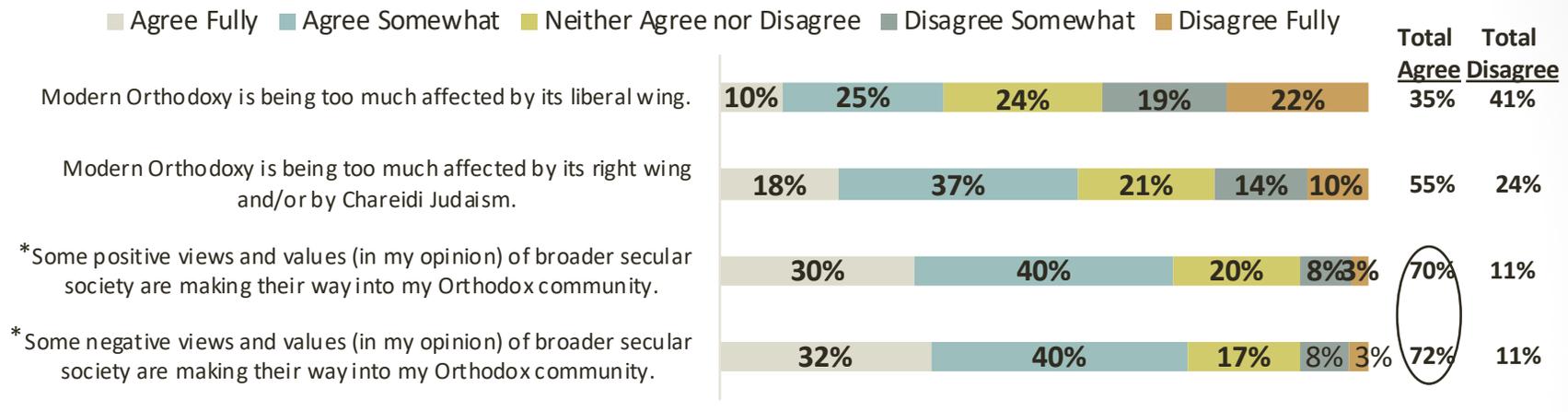
	Area	%	Sample Verbatim Comments (See additional verbatim responses in the Appendix, pages 43-44)
Changes That Are Desired	Role of Women ↑	52%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Many more women in clergy and leadership positions, more honest conversations about sexism and racism in the community and how to educate against them, compassion and welcoming toward LGBT members of our community, more focus on spirituality ... a more world-centric focus toward the very real problems humanity is facing right now.</i> • <i>Our women (and men) are crying out for female leaders. Our current (male) leaders are (more) obsessed with figuring out what titles female leaders should have ... than in serving the needs of Orthodox women and girls.</i> • <i>I don't believe Modern Orthodoxy's "halachic leadership" has a coherent plan on any women's issues, especially since none of them are women.</i>
	LGBTQ	17%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>More accepting of LGBTQ Jews. It's not our place to judge them. We need to support these members of our community.</i>
	Agunot	6%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The agunah problem should have been resolved years and years ago.</i>
	General Thoughts		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The halachah needs to be seen as a living document that changes in response to the times. Our poskim need to understand the enormous social trends occurring in our society and change our standards accordingly.</i> • <i>It's about respecting diversity of opinions within Orthodoxy and not trying to always define people as in or out.</i>
Changes Viewed as Not Desirable	Role of Women	14%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The role of women as "clergy" ... more equality for women. A liberal agenda similar to the secular liberal agenda.</i> • <i>It's great to have women role models, and Yoatzot for women, and women that other women can turn to, but the official labeling of Rabbi's and having them as pulpit figures, I think is going a bit far.</i>
	LGBTQ	5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Celebration of LGBT activity (we must accept everybody ... but not celebrate that which is prohibited)</i>
	Tzniut	2%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tzniut -- low necklines, high hems, cap sleeves -- in shul, no less!</i>
	The Move to the "Left" in General		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There is a general understanding that the communal norms of Modern Orthodoxy are more important than the Mesorah and minhag, in strong contradistinction with the thought of the Rav.</i> • <i>Letting secular values dictate how we decide halacha (feminism, homosexuality, etc.) instead halachic process.</i> • <i>Children going to public school is too accepted as a norm. Dressing modestly is not seen as a value.</i>

Q. (Asked of those who responded to the preceding question "Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on 'drawing lines' ...") You indicated that Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on "drawing lines" ... and not focused enough on making changes. What changes do you feel are needed? (Open-Ended). n = 378 provided a response.

Q. (Asked of those who responded to the preceding question "Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on making changes ...") You indicated that Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on making changes and does not preserve tradition enough. What changes do you feel are not desirable? (Open-Ended). n = 114 provided a response.

The base for percentages in the table above is the combined 492 respondents (changes desired or changes not desirable)

Modern Orthodoxy is being stretched, and respondents see it is being affected by both positive and negative values of secular society. Further, a majority (55%) feel it is too much affected by its right wing or by Chareidi, while one-third (35%) feel it is too much affected by the liberal wing. More than one-third (34%) believe “there is no longer a single, cohesive Modern Orthodox community. MO should acknowledge this and would perhaps be better off splitting into separate camps.”



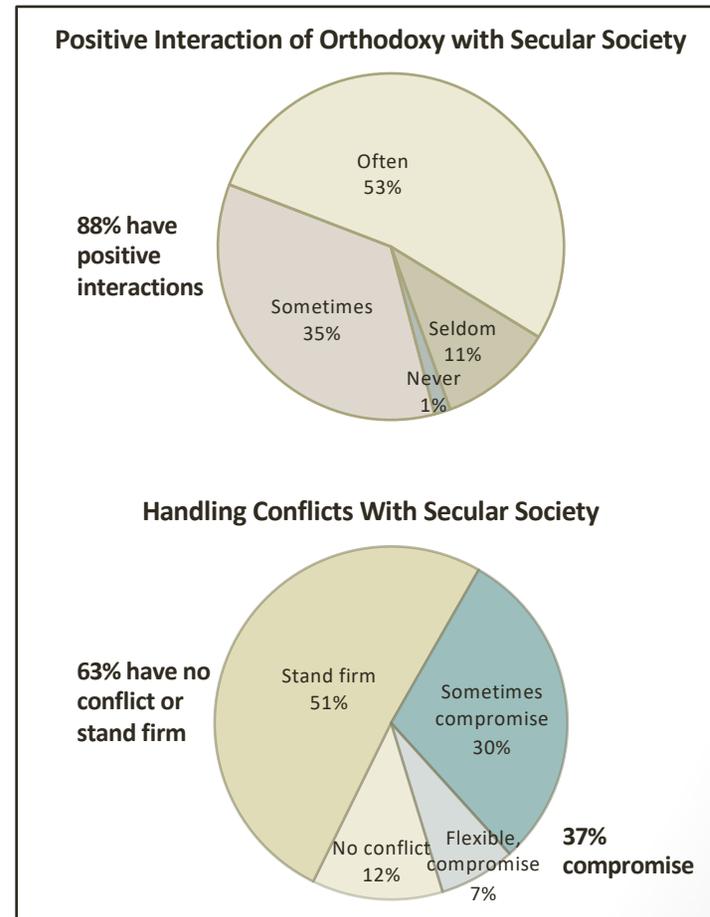
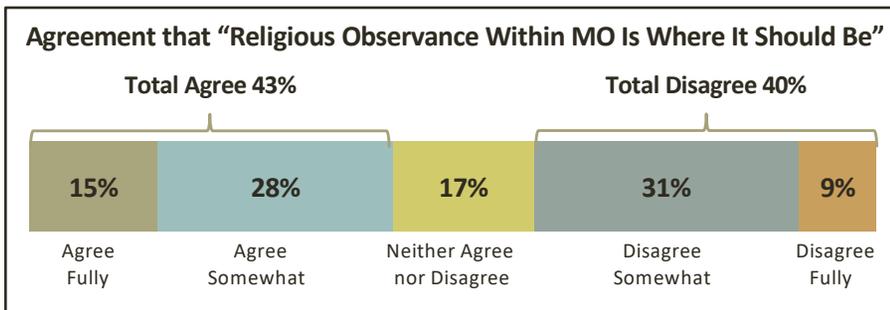
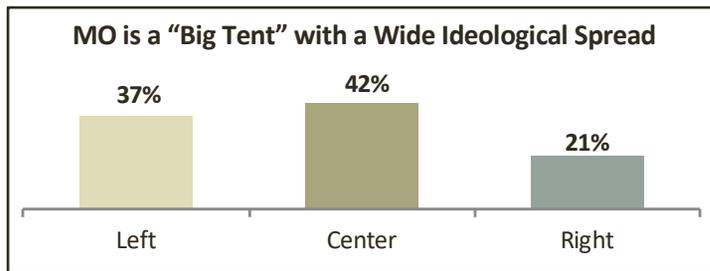
* A follow-up question was asked: “Can you provide some examples (of what you see as the positive / negative views)? Verbatim responses are shown in the Appendix, pages 45-46).

Q. (Asked of those who identified as “Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox”) Do you agree with the following statements? ... Modern Orthodoxy is being too much affected by its liberal wing.; Modern Orthodoxy is being too much affected by its right wing and by *Chareidi* Judaism. Response Scale: Agree Fully; Agree Somewhat; Neither Agree nor Disagree; Disagree Somewhat; Disagree Fully; Don’t Know. n = 1,453 (excludes 3% who responded “Don’t Know”).

Q. Do you agree with the following statements? ... Some positive views and values (in my opinion) of broader secular society are making their way into my Orthodox community.; Some negative views and values (in my opinion) of broader secular society are making their way into my Orthodox community. Response Scale: Agree Fully; Agree Somewhat; Neither Agree nor Disagree; Disagree Somewhat; Disagree Fully; Don’t Know. n = 1,357 (excludes 4% who responded “Don’t Know”).

Q. (Asked of those who identified as “Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox”) Do you agree with the following statement? There is no longer a single, cohesive Modern Orthodox community. Modern Orthodoxy should acknowledge this and would perhaps be better off splitting into separate camps. Response Scale: Agree Fully; Agree Somewhat; Neither Agree nor Disagree; Disagree Somewhat; Disagree Fully; Don’t Know. n = 1,324 (excludes 5% who responded “Don’t Know”).

In summary, Modern Orthodoxy supports Torah U'Madda, but the relationship with outside society is ambivalent and conflicted. Individuals enjoy interaction with secular culture (88% say they often or sometimes experience positive interactions) but they confront challenges that often lead to compromise (37% compromise their religious observance at least sometimes). (continued on next page)



See question text on pages 10-11, 15-16.

Additionally, the exposure of Modern Orthodoxy to secular values provides many with joy and meaning, but also creates dissension and potential for schism. This is particularly contentious because what the left sees as the most important and desirable changes are the same issues that the right sees as the most undesirable and non-halachic losses of tradition. And a worrisome minority sees Modern Orthodoxy as perhaps being at a point of fracture.

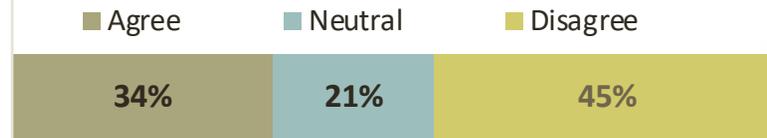
“Many more women in clergy and leadership positions, more honest conversations about sexism and racism in the community and how to educate against them, compassion and welcoming toward LGBT members of our community, more focus on spirituality and a direct relationship with God, a more world-centric focus toward the very real problems humanity is facing right now.”

Top Areas Where Change is Sought by the “Left” – Expand role of women, accept LGBTQ, agunot

Top Areas Where Adherence to Tradition is Sought by the “Right” – Traditional role of women; LGBTQ, Better adherence to halachah

“The blurring of the roles between men and women is disturbing. Just because something is not outright forbidden doesn't make it appropriate. G-d made Jewish men and Jewish women and each should appreciate and fulfill their respective role.”
‘Halakha, for any observant Jew, needs to deal with change. If ‘interacting with society’ requires more change than that allows, that is an undesirable level of interaction.

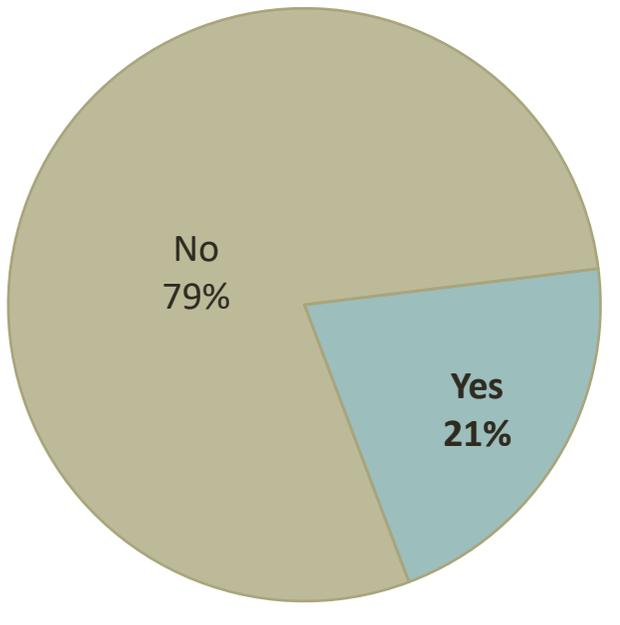
There is no longer a single, cohesive Modern Orthodox community. Modern Orthodoxy should acknowledge this and would perhaps be better off splitting into separate camps.



See question text on pages 17-18.

One in five (21%) respondents has moved from one community to another for religious reasons, most often relating to Jewish education or being near a shul.

Incidence of Moving to Another Community for Religious Reasons



- **Reasons most often given are:**
 - **School / Jewish education (26%)**
 - **Shul (22%)**
 - **Generally wanted a more religious community (10%)**
 - **Wanted a larger Jewish community (10%)**
 - **Better place to raise children (9%)**

Why Moved for Religious Reasons – Sample Verbatim Responses

- *Larger shomer Shabbat kids community, more school choices.*
- *After becoming orthodox moved from small community to very large one to have more social and educational opportunities .*
- *Every move we made was made for professional reasons but with a firm focus on the religious life in the potential communities - resources, peer groups and opportunities for our children's religious education.*
- *I moved because the community was too far to the right for me.*
- *I moved because I found that, due to population size and density, we lacked sense of Jewish community.*
- *For a better chance of finding a partner that wants to live a Jewish life similar to mine*
- *Wanted established community with choices of shuls, schools, food establishments, etc.*
- *We moved because the cost of housing and day schools was not affordable.*

(See additional verbatim responses in the Appendix, page 49)

Q. Have you ever moved from one community to another for “religious reasons”? ... Yes – Can you briefly explain?; No. n = 1,384. Of the 294 “Yes” responses, n = 265 provided a further verbatim response. n = 1,384. n = 265 verbatim responses.

Respondents are evenly split on whether Modern Orthodoxy’s national communal organizations are meeting the community’s needs; although a majority agree the organizations should take stands on “political and/or social issues.”

■ Agree Fully
 ■ Agree Somewhat
 ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree
 ■ Disagree Somewhat
 ■ Disagree Fully



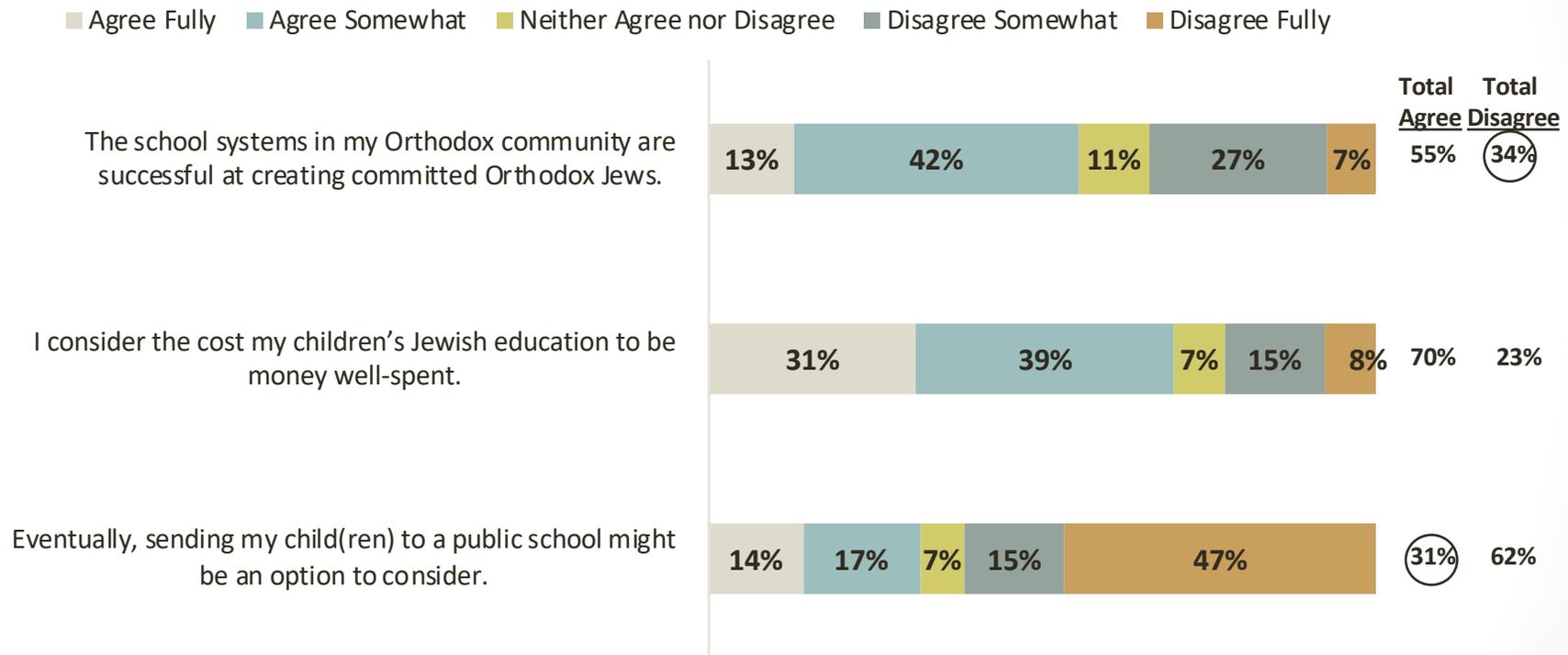
Q. (Asked of those who identified as “Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox”) Do you agree with the following statements? ... Modern Orthodoxy’s national communal organizations provide religious leadership that meets the community’s religious needs.; Modern Orthodoxy’s national communal organizations provide leadership on key issues that meets the community’s needs in areas of internal and societal interactions, and policy advocacy.; Modern Orthodox communal organizations should take stands on political and/or social issues. Response Scale: Agree Fully; Agree Somewhat; Neither Agree nor Disagree; Disagree Somewhat; Disagree Fully; Don’t Know. n = 1,383 (excludes 5% who responded “Don’t Know”).

Messages that survey respondents would like to communicate to Modern Orthodoxy’s national communal organizations deal primarily with their overall scope, religious standards, religious issues, political advocacy, and the role of women.

Area	Sample Verbatim Comments (See additional verbatim responses in the Appendix, page 47)
Organizations’ overall role and scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What communal organizations are you referring to? What function do / should they serve? Do we need them and why?</i> • <i>Overall, these organizations generally need to focus more on communities outside the New York area.</i> • <i>Be more accommodating of a big tent Modern Orthodoxy. Not every issue is or should be schismatic. There can be machlokes within our community. Even for some issues which some poskim fiercely oppose, we should remember that there are other poskim who endorse.</i> • <i>Don't condemn individual communities for varieties of practice you may not agree with.</i>
Setting and promoting religious standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Recognize that our way of life, as it should be, is just as legitimate as any other orthodox denomination. However we must be more serious about Halachic observance and Talmud Torah.</i> • <i>Be firmer on halacha and less flexible on things like the role of women.</i> • <i>More engaging Jewish study. Gemarah study should include Agaddah as well as Halacha. Tanach should include later prophets, Eyov, etc. Kabbalah and musar as well. Broad Jewish learning is a pillar on which our world should stand.</i>
Address issues in religious life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cost of day school needs to be dealt with. Cost of living in a MO neighborhood needs to be dealt with.</i> • <i>Deal with issues impacting the community: very high cost of Orthodox life, yeshiva education and affordability of housing.</i> • <i>Make it clear to shuls and schools: they need to communicate the goals of shul and Jewish day school attendance.</i>
Political advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Stands on political issues ... need to be weighed against the values of our community.</i> • <i>Where a political/social issue is a legitimate halachic point, yes. But when it's just echoing talking points from a movement that is utterly disconnected from halachic frameworks, based on a generally loose political alliance, we're doing ourselves great harm in the public sphere, and alienating many of our own in the process.</i> • <i>They should focus more on expressing values of hesed and tzedeq in caring for the vulnerable, instead of joining fundamentalist Christian culture wars that don't even come close to the multivocal nuances of halakha and mahhshava our tradition teaches.</i> • <i>Ask their communities what their positions are on various issues. Without this, we have institutions that represent us, but don't truly represent us, because they are not elected!</i>
Issues relating to women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Accept women's leadership in all areas, focus more on giving the rabbis autonomy over their synagogues.</i> • <i>Try to solve the agunah problem.</i> • <i>Think critically about ... how to get women more excited about communal participation.</i>

Q. (Asked of those who identified as “Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox”) If you would like to make any suggestions to our Modern Orthodox national communal organizations, what would they be? (Open-Ended) n = 584 verbatim responses.

55% of respondents agree that their Orthodox community school systems are successful in creating committed Orthodox Jews, while 34% disagree. But the historic near-universal attendance at Orthodox Jewish day schools seems to be slipping, as 31% of respondents say they might consider public school as an option.*

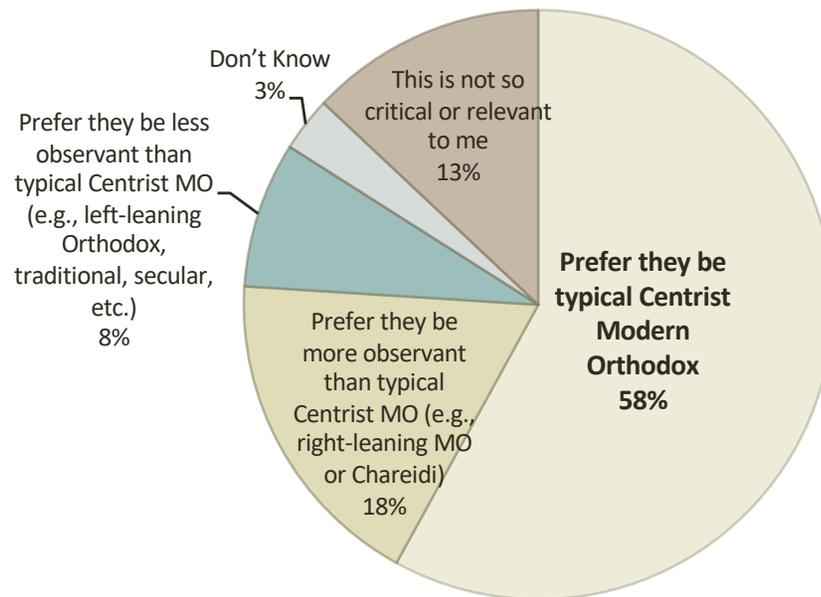


* See also <http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html> > Full Report - 2017 Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews (Page 58), which showed 83% attending an Orthodox Jewish day school, 8% a community or non-Orthodox Jewish day school, 7% public or non-Jewish school and 2% other.

Q. Do you agree that: ... The school systems in my Orthodox community are successful at creating committed Orthodox Jews.; (Asked of those with one or more children in grades K-8) I consider the cost my children’s Jewish education to be money well-spent; (Asked of those with one or more children in grades K-8) Eventually, sending my child(ren) to a public school might be an option to consider. Response Scale: Agree Fully; Agree Somewhat; Neither Agree nor Disagree; Disagree Somewhat; Disagree Fully; Don’t Know. n = 1,339 for the first item (excludes 5% who responded “Don’t Know”); and 355 for items 2-3 (excludes 2% who responded “Don’t Know”).

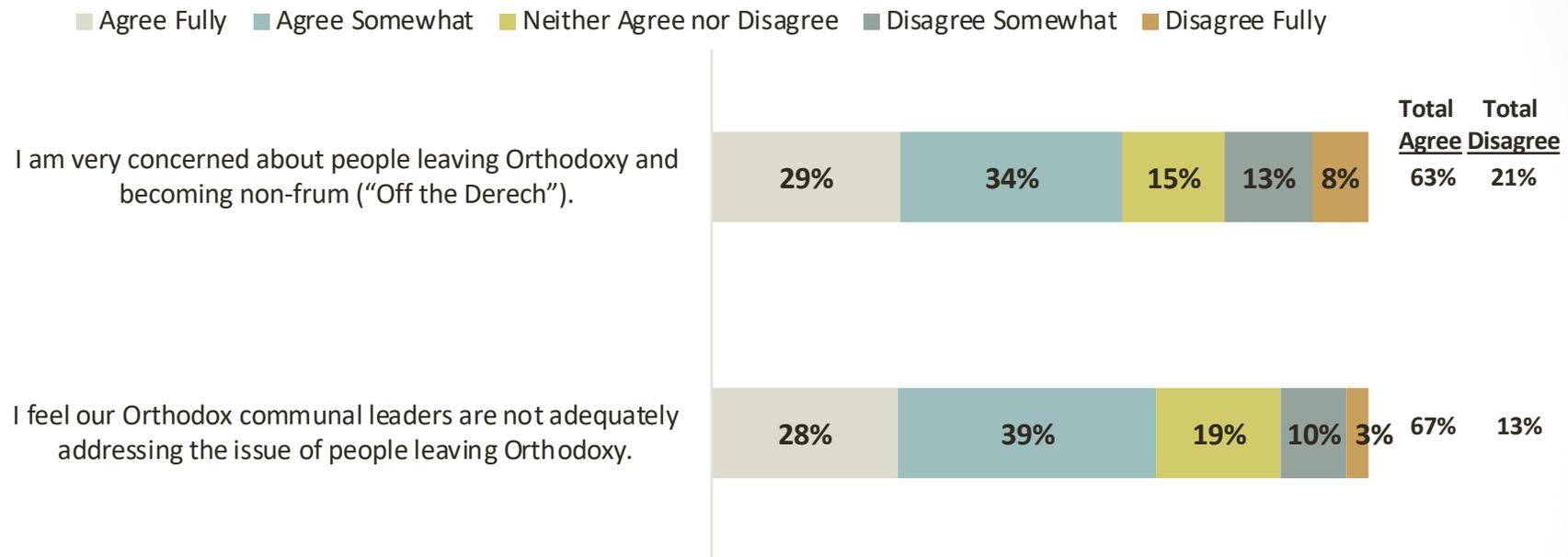
Modern Orthodox parents hope their children will be religiously observant. More than three-fourths want their children to be typical Centrist Modern Orthodox Jews (58%) or more observant than that (18%). One in eight (13%) say their child’s religious preferences are not so critical or relevant to them.

Modern Orthodox Religious Preferences For Their Children



Q. (Asked of those who identified as “Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox” and have one or more children in grades K-8) How religious, in general, do you want your children to be? ... I prefer that they be typical Centrist Modern Orthodox Jews; I prefer that they be more observant than the typical Centrist Modern Orthodox Jew, e.g., right-leaning Modern Orthodox, or *Chareidi*; I prefer that they be less observant than the typical Centrist Modern Orthodox Jew, e.g., left-leaning Orthodox, traditional, secular, etc.; Don't Know; This is not so critical or relevant to me – Please explain (Open-Ended). n = 1,135; Open-ended n = 109 verbatim responses (see Appendix, page 48).

There is widespread concern about people leaving Orthodoxy (63%), and even more concern that communal leaders are not adequately addressing the issue (67%).*



* In reaction to Nishma’s 2016 survey of people who have left Orthodoxy, we have seen quite a bit of leeriness among shuls and communal organizations about discussing the topic. While it is a difficult and often uncomfortable topic, people want it to be much better addressed.

Q. Do you agree with the following statements? ... I am very concerned about people leaving Orthodoxy and becoming non-frum (“Off the Derech”); I feel our Orthodox communal leaders are not adequately addressing the issue of people leaving Orthodoxy. Response Scale: Agree Fully; Agree Somewhat; Neither Agree nor Disagree; Disagree Somewhat; Disagree Fully; Don’t Know. n = 1.395 (excludes 3% who responded “Don’t Know”).

The 2017 survey estimated that 9% of Modern Orthodox are at risk of leaving,* and we have seen* that 15% MO do not fully agree that their Orthodoxy is an important part of their life. The reasons why people leave Orthodoxy are complex and while we have some suspected indicators (lack of strong belief, liberal mindset, religious “disconnects” within a family, etc.), it is ultimately an individual and often unpredictable decision.

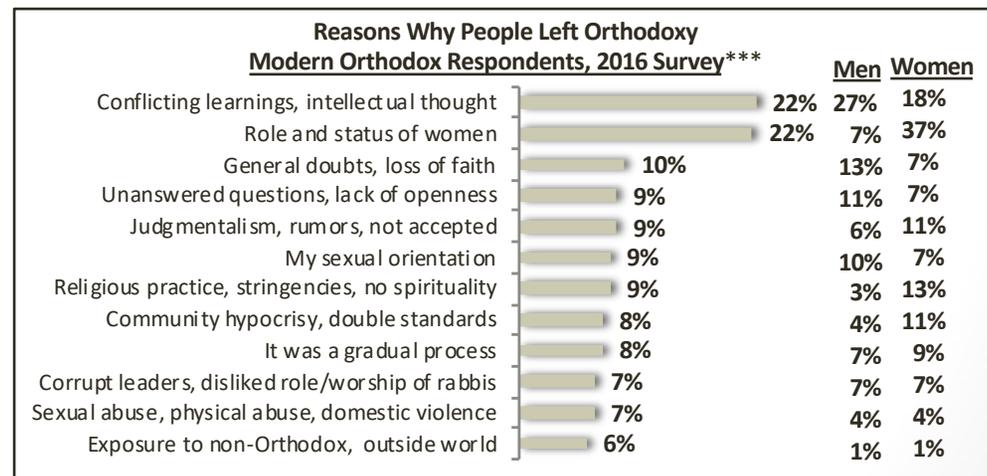
As shown on the prior page, there is strong concern about observant Jews leaving Orthodoxy and even stronger concern that communal leaders are not addressing it.

Nishma’s 2016 study*** found that about one-fourth (26%) of Modern Orthodox who say they have left in terms of their beliefs and practices (i.e., they are no longer “frum”) still identify as being part of the community. They are leading a “double life” (outwardly still a member of the community in terms of appearances and visible actions, but internally they no longer view themselves that way). Of these, 37% said it is very likely or somewhat likely they will leave the community at some time in the future.

The question “Being an Orthodox / observant Jew is an important part of my life” may indicate the extent of one’s connectedness to their Orthodoxy. We have seen (page 9) that 85% agree fully with this statement. For the purposes of the following brief and very basic analysis, let us assume that the 15% who do not agree with this statement are more likely to leave Orthodox observance. Who are they?

- They include a few more men (55%) than women (45%).
- They identify very strongly toward the liberal end of the Modern Orthodox spectrum (72%).
- A majority (55%) tend toward being “Shabbat Orthodox,” i.e., there is much less observance in their lives during the week.
- Among marrieds, half say their spouse is at the same level as them in terms of observance; 30% say their spouse is more observant and 20% say their spouse is less observant.
- The cost of Jewish education concerns them, and 63% say they would consider public school.
- They are ambivalent about their children’s Orthodoxy: 20% prefer that they be “left-leaning Orthodox, traditional, secular” and more than a third (35%) have nothing to say on this or say that it is not critical or relevant to them.

There is really no way to predict who will leave Orthodoxy (or in some cases, to know who already has checked out). It is ultimately an individual decision. The 2016 survey did shed some light on this topic, and we present findings in the chart to the right.

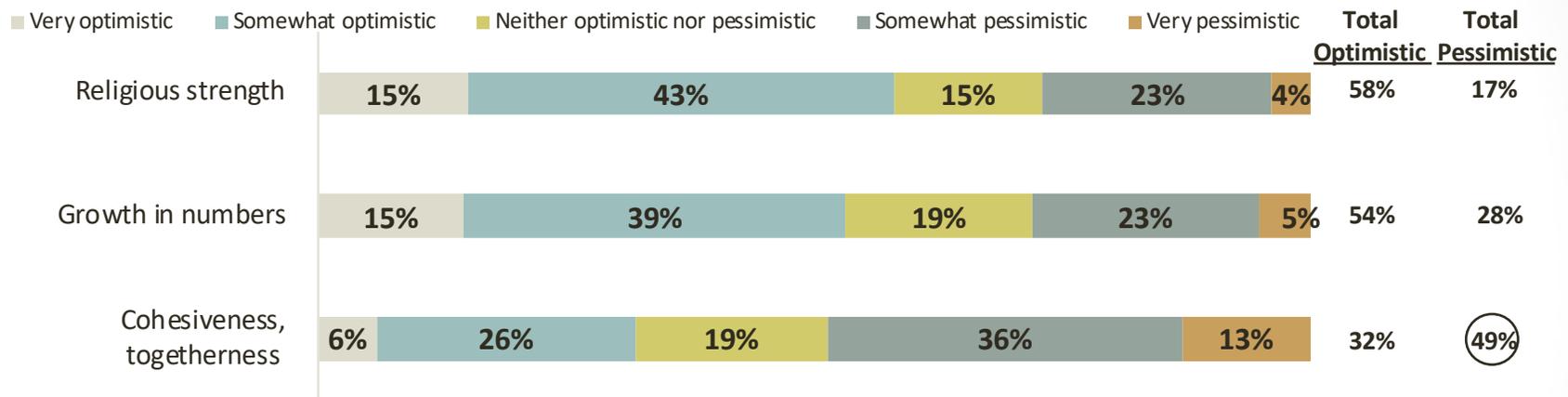


* See pages 86-88.

** See page 9.

*** See <http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html> > Report - Modern Orthodox - Survey of Those Who Have Left Orthodoxy - July 2016 . In order to avoid asking leading questions, we posed this as a fully open-ended question: “Please think back to when you started moving away in belief or practice from the Orthodox community in which you were raised. What were the key things that caused your beliefs and practices to change?” Therefore, what the data represent are “top of mind” recollections ... the factors that come to people’s minds in thinking back about their experiences.

Respondents are mildly optimistic about MO's future religious strength and growth in numbers, but quite pessimistic about its cohesiveness.



Q. What future do you foresee for Modern Orthodoxy over the next few decades, in areas of ... Religious strength; Growth in numbers; Cohesiveness, togetherness. Response Scale: I am very optimistic; I am somewhat optimistic; Neither optimistic nor pessimistic; I am somewhat pessimistic; I am very pessimistic; Don't Know. n = 1,356 (excludes 3% who responded "Don't Know").

Respondents offer many suggestions for the future of Modern Orthodoxy, most frequently: seek unity, maintain Torah values, enhance spirituality, define and hold the center, expand the role of women, address children’s educational issues and overall communal costs.

Do you have any suggestions for approaches that the Modern Orthodox community should consider over the next few decades in order to strengthen itself?
Sample Verbatim Responses – See additional verbatim responses in Appendix, page 50

Strive for Unity, Be Welcoming and Accept Diversity

- *Avoid machloket. Focus on areas of agreement. Avoid politics.*
- *Tone down the rhetoric. We need to agree to disagree. We need to accept people without necessarily approving of their choices.*
- *Open conversations on important issues, even politics. Don't be so afraid to air differences and questions in a well-structured context ... our shuls (should) help us confront the issues.*
- *Be more welcoming! Some communities do a great job at this and others fall so short it is horrendous.*
- *For Orthodox LGBTQ Jews, acceptance. The aim should be to prevent OTD and leaving our communities.*
- *More hospitality and involvement in worldly causes. More optimism.*
- *Accept people with different values and be able to lean into the discomfort. If we can't do that, then there is no sense of being cohesive.*
- *Establish UNITY as the number goal. All members in the tent need to express a willingness to compromise and accept other views.*

Maintain Torah Values, Adhere to Halachah, Enhance Spirituality

- *Stick to Torah values of caring about each human being as created in tzelem Elokim. Don't compromise this.*
- *Infuse a deeper spiritual and intellectual framework for a vibrant Jewish life. We need better rabbinic and non-rabbinic leaders to embody that... engaging intellectually with Jewish life that extends beyond Talmud study alone.*
- *Don't compromise on halacha. Congregants will respect you more.*
- *The importance of limud Torah.*
- *Without halacha as a cornerstone, Modern Orthodox communities are large collections of culturally Jewish people, some of whom incidentally understand Jewish philosophy and halacha. Without focused learning (encouraging sedarim of learning, etc.) even that passing level of knowledge will fade.*

Define and Hold the Center

- *Address the tensions between modern and Orthodox into a synthesis that retains spiritual/traditional values.*
- *Separate itself from left-leaning Rabbis, shuls, schools.*
- *Strengthening modern orthodox values and halacha ... creating an internal culture that doesn't need to just cannibalize from secular and Charedi culture*
- *Stick to increasing textual knowledge and being confident that the approach of Torah commitment combined with respect for secular studies/values is authentic Judaism.*
- *Not look over its left and right shoulders.... The current behavior gives the impression that modern orthodoxy is living in a state of siege.*
- *Focus more on being intellectually consistent and able to answer the hard questions people might have.*

Expand the Role of Women

- *Find more substantive, less patronizing, ways to harness contributions of women.*
- *Not being afraid to embrace and nurture the leadership and involvement of the majority of the Modern Orthodox population, i.e., women and girls.*
- *For Orthodox women, more leadership and learning opportunities.*

Address Children’s Educational Issues and Overall Communal Cost

- *Lower the monetary and social barriers to entry.*
- *Education is the most important thing in the world for a community that wishes to transmit its values. But for education to take place, the community has to know what its values are and how to successfully transmit them.*
- *The modern orthodox community should figure out a long term plan for the cost of day school tuition.*
- *Provide a safe place for young kids/ teenagers to feel comfortable to ask personal and broad questions.*

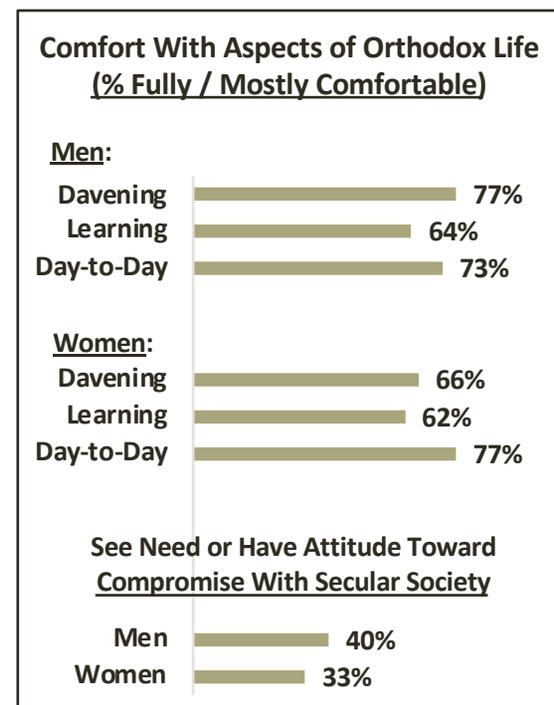
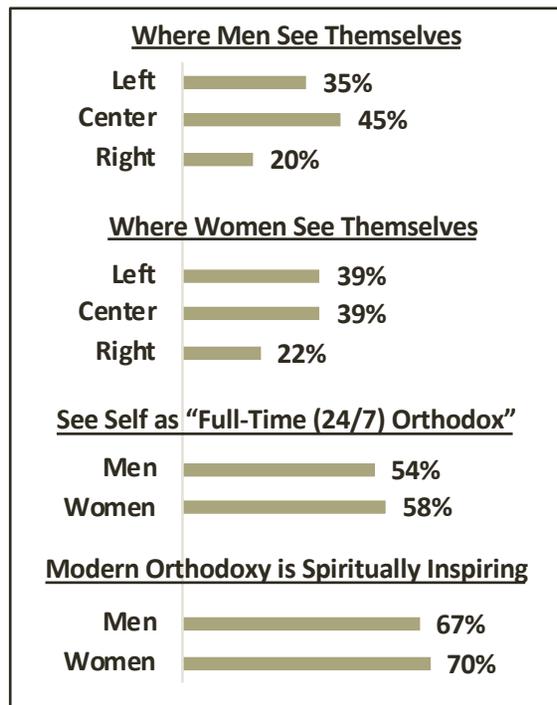
Q. (Asked of those who identified as “Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox”) Do you have any suggestions for approaches that the Modern Orthodox community should consider over the next few decades in order to strengthen itself? (Open-Ended) n = 553 verbatim responses.

Segment Analysis & Demographics

- **Differences Between Men and Women**
- **Differences By Respondent Age**
- **Differences By Orthodox Orientation Within Modern Orthodoxy**
- **Differences By Community Size**
- **Demographics – US Modern Orthodox Respondents**
- **Comparisons to US Charedi and Israeli Modern Orthodox**

Men and Women – Women see themselves as slightly more religiously liberal, but more of them say they are “full-time (24/7) Orthodox” and women find Orthodoxy more spiritually inspiring than do men.

- In 31% of couples, the husband and wife are at different levels of religious observance. (See further analysis on the next page.)
- While men are significantly more comfortable with davening, men and women are equally comfortable with Jewish learning and women are more comfortable with day-to-day Orthodox living.
- Perhaps because of employment, men more often face situations that might lead to an attitude of compromise with secular conflicts.
- Women find Modern Orthodoxy a bit more spiritually inspiring.



See question text in preceding section. Overall n = 923 males, 877 females.

(continued)

Men and Women (Continued) – In nearly one in three marriages (31%), the partners are not religiously “in sync.” Men in such marriages more often see their Orthodoxy as a less important part of their lives.

Most couples are “at about the same level of religious observance” but some are at differing levels:

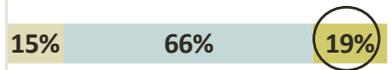
- US Modern Orthodox Jews – 69% of couples have both partners are at about the same level; 31% at different levels.
- US Charedi Jews – 80% at about the same level; 20% at different levels.
- Modern Orthodoxy has many more couples than do the Charedi, with the partners at different levels of observance

■ Less Observant ■ About the Same ■ More Observant

How Men See Their Wives



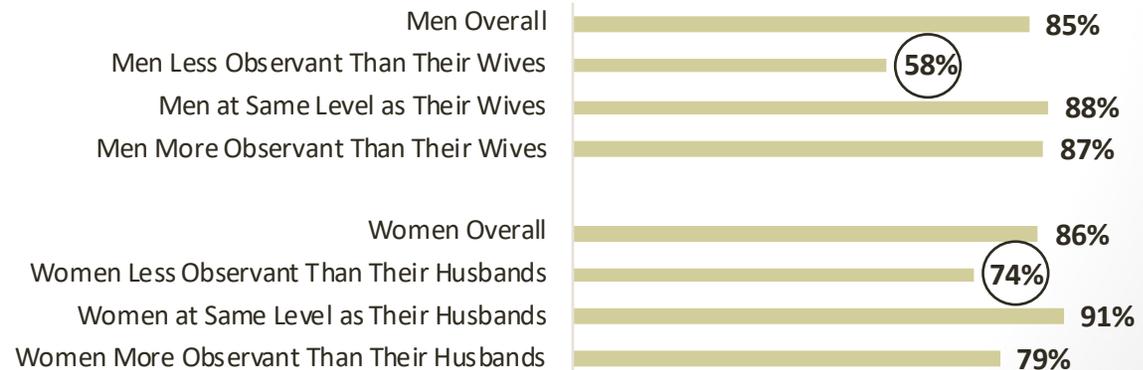
How Women See Their Husbands



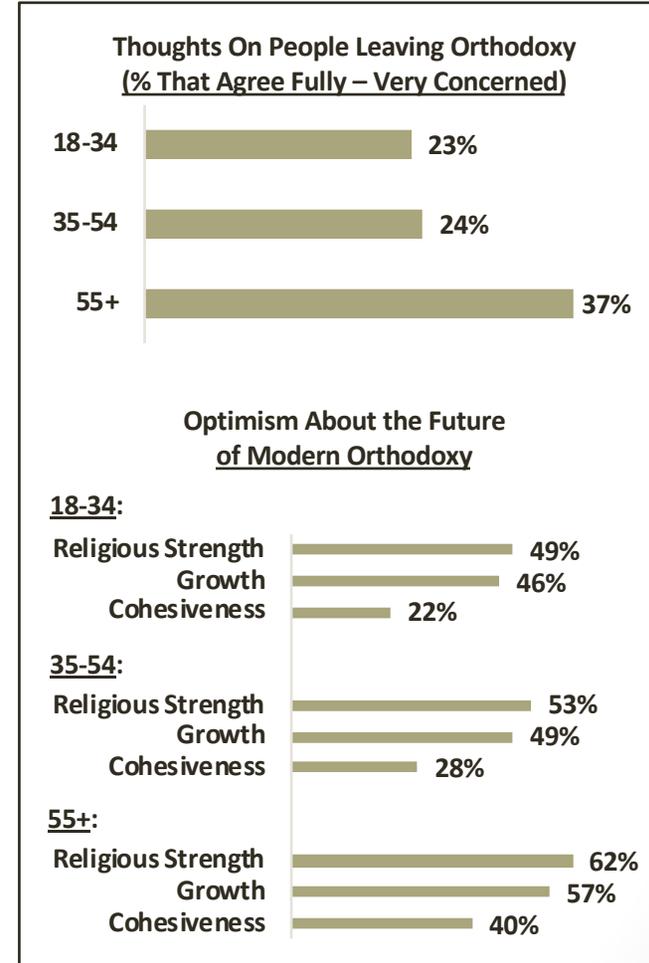
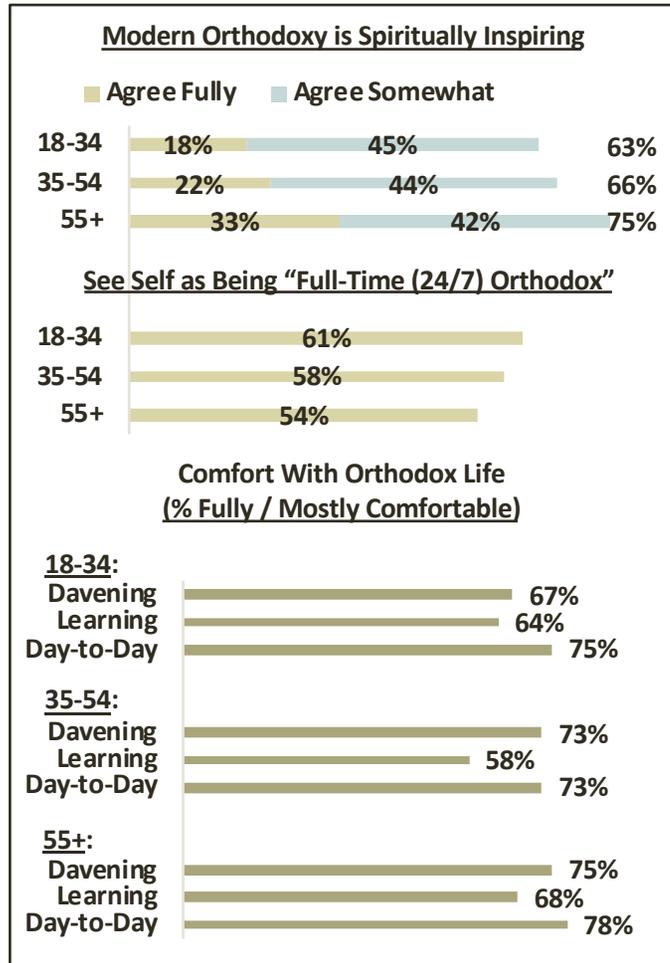
- One in five husbands (19%) sees their wife as less observant than they are, while an identical one in five wives sees their husband as more observant than they are.
- Of course, we have not defined “more” or “less” religiously observant. Is it affected by ideology (e.g., liberal views are “less observant”)? Practice - do the day-to-day activities of men (e.g., davening with a minyan, etc.) somehow mean they are more observant?

- Men who are less observant than their wife have the weakest “connection” to their Orthodox observance – significantly weaker than that of women who are less observant than their husband.

% Agreeing: “Being an Orthodox / Observant Jew is an important part of my life.”



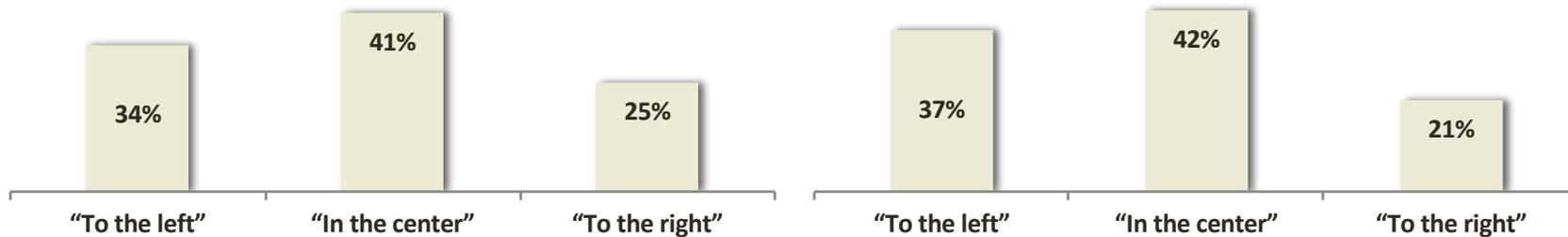
Respondent Age – Respondents age 55+ are less often “24/7 Orthodox” but more often find it spiritually inspiring, and more comfortable with day-to-day Orthodox living. The younger (18-34) are more pessimistic about the future of Modern Orthodoxy.



See question text in preceding section. Overall n = 344 ages 18-34, 473 ages 35-54, 571 ages 55+.

Left/Right Orientation - Modern Orthodoxy’s “big tent” encompasses people at differing levels of belief and practice. Respondents’ “denominational distribution” is somewhat a bell-shaped curve ... with a plurality in the center.

In the 2017 Nishma Research Profile of the American Modern Orthodox community, those who self-identified as Modern Orthodox were given the opportunity to describe their orientation across five labels covering the spectrum of Modern Orthodoxy. In the current survey, we simplified the categories describing respondents’ left-to-right orientation within Modern Orthodoxy, narrowing them down to three. The results for the two surveys are shown below.



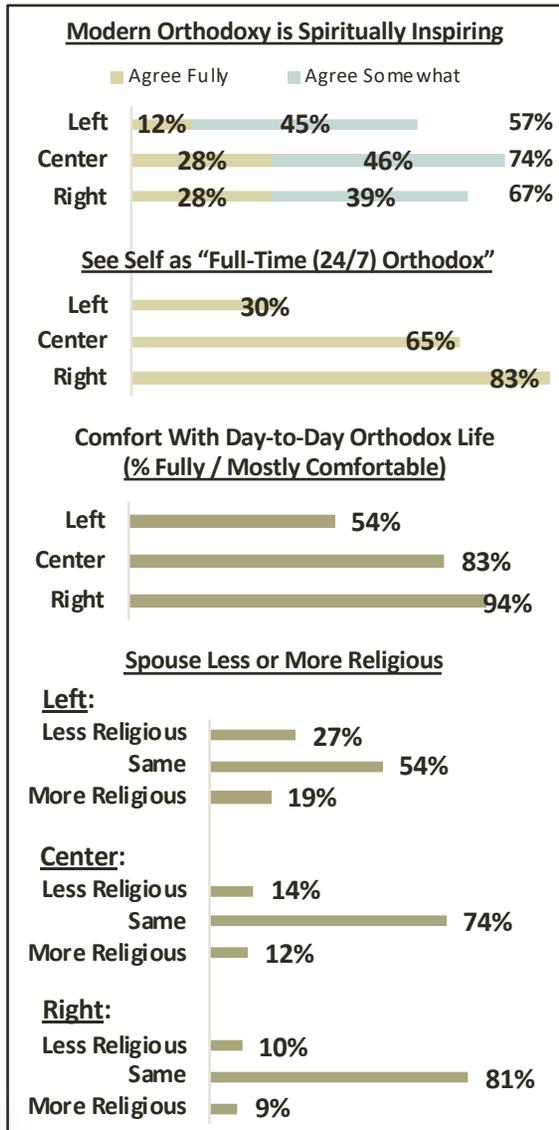
Source: 2017 Nishma Research profile of the American Modern Orthodox Community
 “To the left” was defined as the sum of Open Orthodox (12%) and Liberal Modern (22%); “In the center” was defined as Modern Orthodox; “To the right” was defined as the sum of Centrist Orthodox (14%) and Right-Centrist (tending toward Yeshivish (11%).

Source: Nishma Research 2019 Survey of the Orthodox Jewish Community (this report)
 “To the left” was defined as “Liberal Modern Orthodox”; “In the center” was Orthodox Centrist Modern Orthodox; “To the right” was defined as “More stringent (machmir) Centrist Orthodox

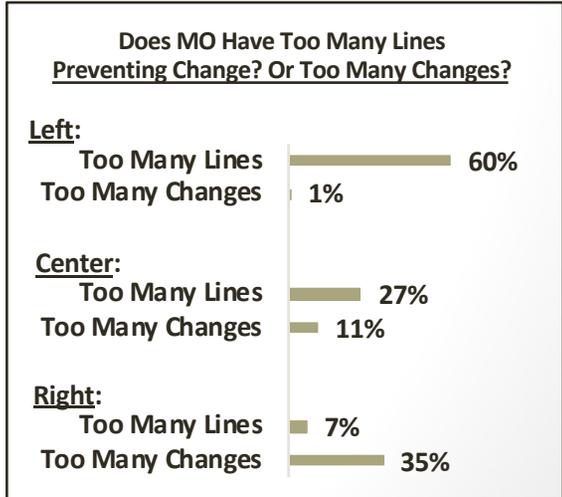
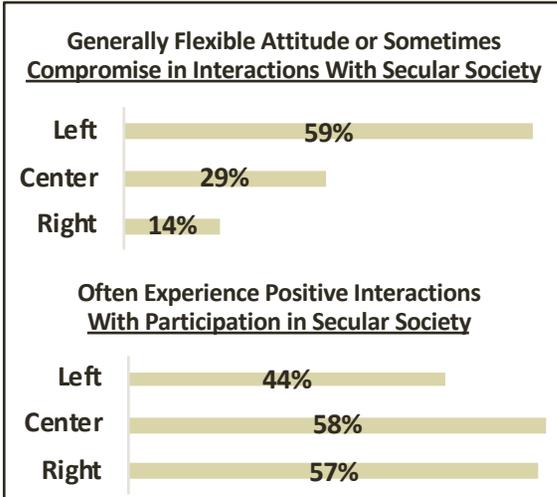
- **Survey responses show differing beliefs and practices across these groups. Thus, we see ... and the following are just a few examples from the 2017 survey:**
 - **Going from left to right, 29% / 46% / 57% agree fully that “The tefillah (prayer) experience is meaningful to me.**
 - **Again from left to right, 94% / 73% 45% support women being eligible to serve as shul presidents.**
 - **The issue of women serving in shul clerical positions showed the greatest variation from left to right, of any survey question. Agreement that “Looking at my Orthodox community overall, women should have the opportunity ... for expanded roles in the clergy” was 69% / 27% / 9%.**
- (continued)*

See question text above. Overall n = 659 to the left, 743 in the center, 371 to the right.

Left/Right Orientation (Continued) – The divide between MO’s left and right is quite wide, especially in their views of future desired directions.

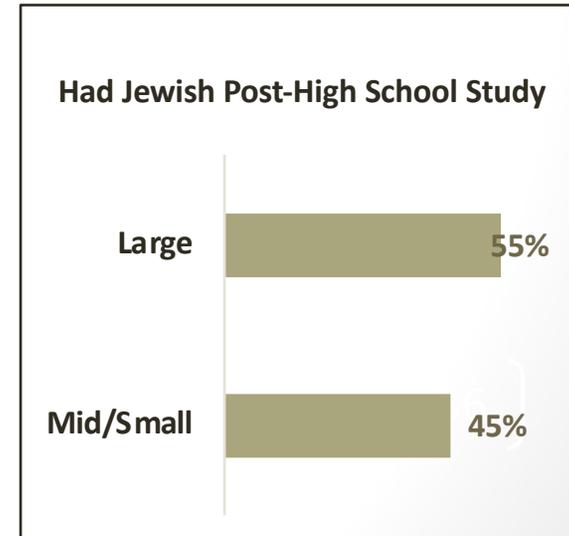
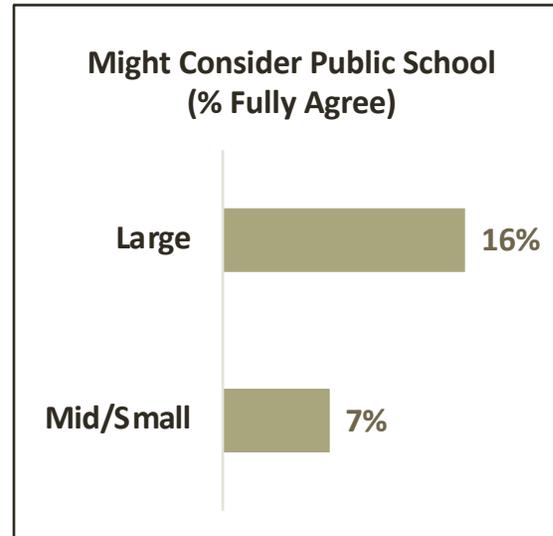
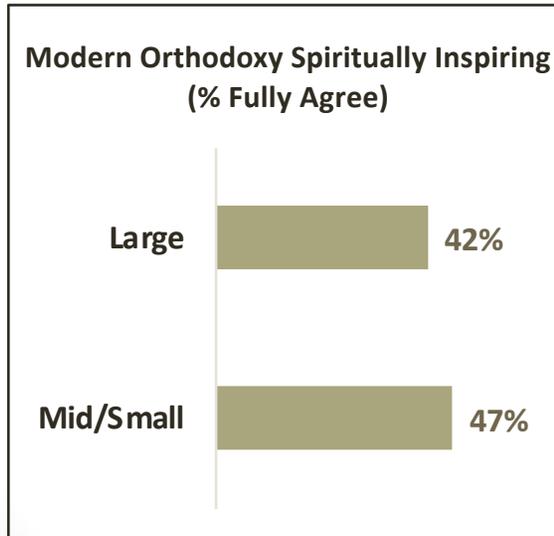


- Those who view themselves on the “left” of Modern Orthodoxy find it less spiritually inspiring, far less often see themselves as “full-time Orthodox,” and are far more willing to compromise in their interactions with secular society.
- The left is far less comfortable with day-to-day Orthodox living and has an overwhelming view that Modern Orthodoxy is unwilling to change, in sharp distinction with the right, which overwhelmingly sees Modern Orthodoxy as making too many changes!
- Also perhaps affecting views is the extent to which couples are “on the same page”(see prior discussion on page 32). While 81% of right-leaning respondents’ spouses were seen as being at the same level religiously, this was true for only 54% of right-leaning respondents. More than one in four of the left-leaning respondents’ spouses are less religiously observant than their spouse.



Community Size – Respondents in the larger and smaller communities were generally more similar than different.

- Among our survey respondents, 73%, 10% and 17%, respectively, lived in large (200,000+), mid-sized (50,000 to under 200,000) and small (under 50,000) Orthodox Jewish communities. Questions about differences between larger and smaller communities are sometimes raised.
- No notable differences were found in: respondents' religious orientation (percentages of respondents on the left/center/right of Modern Orthodoxy); the extent to which they say they are "full-time (24/7) Orthodox"; their positive interactions with or extent to which they are willing to compromise with secular society.
- While the similarities between larger and smaller communities far outweigh the differences, a few notable differences were found: (In the charts below, given the sample sizes, we show the mid/small combined.)
 - People in smaller communities found Modern Orthodoxy to be a bit more spiritually inspiring
 - Those in larger communities more often are willing to consider public school as an option for their children.
 - Those in smaller communities have lower levels of formal Jewish education.



See question text in preceding section. Overall n = 1,017 large community, 283 mid-sized/small community.

Demographics – US Modern Orthodox Respondents

Gender	%
Male	51%
Female	49%

Q. What is your gender? (<0.5% responded "Non-Conforming").
n = 1,803.

Age	%
18-24	7%
25-34	18%
35-44	17%
45-54	17%
55-64	18%
65-74	17%
75+	6%

Median Age = 49

Q. What is your age?
n = 1,388.

Education	%
High school graduate	1%
Some college, no degree	5%
Two-year Associate's Degree	1%
Four-year Bachelor's Degree	21%
Some post-grad., professional	10%
Post-grad., professional degree	62%

Q. What is the highest level of schooling you have completed? n = 1,407.

Formal Jewish Studies	%
None	6%
Talmud Torah	18%
Some Jewish elementary	3%
Jewish elementary graduate	4%
Jewish high school	16%
Jewish post-high school study	53%

Q. What is the highest level of formal Jewish studies you have completed? n = 1,400.

Marital/Relationship	%
Married	78%
Single	13%
Divorced	4%
Separated	<0.5%
Widowed	3%
Living with partner	2%

What is your current marital/relationship status? n = 1,447.

No. of Children	%
None	21%
One	8%
Two	23%
Three	26%
Four	15%
Five or More	7%

Do you have any children? If so, how many? n = 1,442

32% have child(ren) in grades 1-8

Are any of your children in grades K to 8 (the just-completed school year)?
n = 1,140

Jewish Community Size	%
Large (200K+)	73%
Mid-Size (50K-199K)	10%
Small (<50K)	17%

Q. Thinking of the Jewish community in which you currently reside, would you say it is a ... Large Jewish community of 200,000+ Jews (e.g., New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, Greater DC, Philadelphia.); Mid-size Jewish community of 50,000 to 199,999 Jews (e.g., Atlanta, Miami, San Diego, Cleveland, Denver, etc.); Smaller Jewish community of under 50,000 Jews (e.g., Pittsburgh, Minneapolis, Hartford, Cincinnati, etc.). n = 1,400.

Respondent Geographic Location

Responses received from 31 states.

- New York 34% (New York City 27%)
- New Jersey 18%
- New England: Mainly MA-CT 13%
- California 12% (Los Angeles (10%))
- Mid-Atlantic: Maryland, VA, DC 9%
- Florida 4%
- Pennsylvania, Delaware 2%
- Illinois 2%
- Georgia, Michigan, Ohio, Texas, Colorado, Wisconsin 1% each
- Each with <1% - AZ, IN, KS, MN, MO, NC, NV, OK, OR, TN, UT, WA.

Comparisons to US Charedi and Israeli Modern Orthodox

Comparative Profiles of Survey Respondents	U.S. Modern Orthodox	U.S. Charedi	Israel Modern Orthodox
Number of Respondents	1,817	174	130
Being an Orthodox / Observant Jew is an Important Part of My Life (% Agree Fully)	85%	94%	92%
Pretty much a “full-time (24/7) Orthodox Jew”	71%	85%	71%
% fully/mostly comfortable with day-to-day Orthodox Life	77%	92%	84%
Modern Orthodoxy is spiritually inspiring:		Not Asked	
• % Agree Fully	24%		14%
• % Agree Fully or Somewhat	68%		67%
Sending child to public school might be an option			
• % Agree Fully	14%	2%	6%
• % Agree Fully or Somewhat	31%	6%	18%
Very concerned about people leaving Orthodoxy			
• % Agree Fully	29%	45%	34%
• % Agree Fully or Somewhat	63%	80%	70%
Optimistic about Modern Orthodoxy’s future:		Not Asked	
• Religious strength	57%		39%
• Growth	51%		38%
• Cohesiveness	31%		20%
% Baalei Teshuvah	42%	38%	38%
% Male / % Female	51% / 49%	56% / 44%	44% / 56%
Median Age	49	40	43
% Married / Among marrieds, average number of children	78% / 2.3	77% / 3.0	70% / 1.6
% with Post-High School Jewish Study	53%	68%	83%

Data above are based on respondents’ self-identification. While this report is based on US-based Modern Orthodox, there were also a notable number of US-based Charedi (174) and Israeli Modern Orthodox (130). There were very few Israel Charedi respondents. In addition, there were a total of 73 Orthodox respondents from 21 other countries, led by Canada (22) and the United Kingdom (15). This is due to the fact that the RCA has some member rabbis outside the US. Many of the survey questions were not posed to Charedi.

Appendix I – Sample Verbatim Responses to Open-Ended Questions

- This study contained many open-ended questions, affording respondents a broad opportunity to share their thoughts in their own words. We recommend the reading of verbatim comments as important to fully understand respondents’ thoughts across the wide range of issues covered in this study.
- The body of this report contains samples of verbatim comments that are representative of and aligned with key themes that emerged. In this appendix, we provide additional and lengthier sample of verbatim responses.*

* The verbatim comments provided in this appendix are unedited (spelling, typos, upper case, etc. ... they are shown as received in the survey) and were randomly selected. Responses to each question were sorted using a randomization process and then every nth comment is shown. This process was adopted in order to provide a relatively brief but random snapshot of respondents’ comments, i.e., the comments included were not selected with any particular bias. To maximize the value of this appendix, we tend to not include those that are markedly short (e.g., one or two not very informative words). Additionally, any verbatim responses that contains possibly identifying information (e.g., names of individuals, synagogues, locations, etc.) have been edited to retain anonymity.

Sample Verbatim Responses – Can you give an example or two of how your Jewish Orthodox life and your participation in secular society interact in a positive way?

- *I see how interacting between faiths and cultures and Judaism commands to "be kind to the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."*
- *It's hard to separate me from being Jewish orthodox. Whenever I interact with secular society, I'm doing it as an orthodox Jew.*
- *I volunteer at the local hospital visits.*
- *I cover my hair in public with a hat or tichel, so I feel I'm always pretty identifiable as Orthodox, and I hope my conduct reflects well on that.*
- *Going to the office with clear values and goals of what a decent Jew is. Learning from rabbis whose perspective of Jewish and non-Jewish life is broad.*
- *Conversations with non-Jewish co-workers*
- *My non_Jewish colleagues are totally aware that I am a traditional Orthodox Jewess and are respectful.*
- *Kosher food available in many venues ie sports arenas cruises some large corporations cafeterias Companies allowing for leaving early on short Fridays*
- *I am the mental health provider at a Chareidi elementary school. My principal and colleagues tend to be "chareidi," but are joined with me in a unified care for the psychological and social well-being of the children, informed by secular science and standards. My moral sensibilities are connected to my religious sensibilities and my professional goals (the well-being and morally upright development of children, leading to social justice in society.)*
- *I often advise people on the religious ethical solution to situations they experience in everyday life.*
- *People tell me it's a good thing I'm doing but it's not for them.*
- *Actng in a moral and and ethical manner while doing anything publically, from shopping to working..*
- *Social action and supporting israel*
- *I taught in a school that had a broad range of people and I felt like a role model to those around me.*
- *Work life issues are easy to manage. It is easier to live as a frum Jew then it was when I was younger*
- *Involvement in the larger community activities/events/ work/friendships*
- *My career is in secular literature, and I constantly find overlap between my study of literature and my religious life. In my teaching (at an Orthodox day school), I am invited regularly to share my studies of non-Jewish art and find resonances with my students and colleagues in Judaism.*
- *I am a leader in a major secular institution. My colleagues comment with respect and admiration at the way modern Orthodox Jews conduct themselves and inspire their families.*
- *My life is guided by my Jewish knowledge, beliefs and practices. My professional life is in the secular realm, but is guided by who I am and my beliefs and practices. Jewish texts teach me much about my day to day life.*
- *My entire way of living is intertwine between my Orthodoxy and the secular. I have friends, family members, from all parts and sides of the society spectrum.*
- *My Orthodox life is how I live my life, I generally have positive social interactions - usually in a secular setting. I where a kippa and tzitzit to work, eat kosher, behave with good middot (try to at least).*
- *my work is informed by my religion as a nurse practitioner; I am also "the" orthodox jew that my nonreligious Jewish and non Jewish friends know*
- *I am respected at work for sticking to my beliefs.*
- *We have many clients in our CPA practice who are Orthodox so work interacts with people in our community. I run into these clients often at Shul and often we become friends and socialize together on Shabbat and holidays.*
- *Whenever I go to the doctor, bank, or place that isn't a solely Orthodox Jewish space, I am a representative of Orthodox Judaism. When I hold myself in a positive way, that is a positive interaction between my religious life and society. In general, I subscribe to R Yosef Dov Soloveitchik's philosophy that what when being part of the "secular," bigger world, that is part of my avodat Hashem.*
- *Being openly observant of Shabbat/kashrut/etc leads to genuine curiosity from non-Jews and interesting areas of common ground with people of other faiths.*
- *being known in not-Jewish social groups as religious, and answering questions about aspects of religious life, like when the eruv went up, and i was able to explain what it was and why it made a difference to people who had no idea*

Q. Can you give an example or two of how your Jewish Orthodox life and your participation in secular society interact in a positive way? 806 provided a response.

Sample Verbatim Responses – Why do you think your Jewish Orthodox life and your participation in secular society do not more often interact in a positive way?

- *Few opportunities, and the secular world does not expect me to behave in any particularly Jewish way.*
- *they are just not compatible*
- *I don't think the worlds collide in any ways besides basic day to day ways. Maybe on a deeper, fundamental level they interact and I'm not even aware. But for the most part on a whole scale the biggest way they interact is day to day food shopping and planning my life around Shabbat and holidays.*
- *Because the basic premise of Orthodoxy is to follow the laws of Halacha which are wonderful for fostering community, but since the practice separates the Jew from other it makes it difficult to also engage in the issues of secular society.*
- *I'm scared of antisemitism.*
- *My current living situation doesn't meld well as it isn't an area where people are familiar with Orthodox Judaism in a positive light, and it's hard to find similar minded others.*
- *gender*
- *I'm not really sure what the above question is asking. Though I will say they are often at odds with each other or require one or the other to be compromised. Hard for them to coexist.*
- *Restaurants are hard! And my secular society things are often unwelcoming to Judaism.*
- *different goals*
- *I keep my religious practice to myself, which is appropriate for my work environment, other than holiday absences and late winter Friday afternoon absences*
- *Being observant often makes my secular life harder - limited in where I can entertain clients or in the days / times I can work*
- *too many conflicts regarding weekend activities and holiday restrictions*
- *Attitude is mostly mutual respect but not imposing one upon the other*
- *Completely separate*
- *religious considerations lead me to be wary of secular undertakings which may lead to halakhically-compromising situations*
- *we live in a bubble*
- *I'm not sure of the mentality or what the idea of synthesis (looks or feels) is like*
- *work life is totally separate from home/shul/Jewish life*
- *I work for the Jewish community, so I have few significant interactions outside of the Jewish community.*
- *Because secular society and observant Jewish life are not in harmony.*
- *I find the values within many of the modern orthodox communities I interact with to be out of balance with my secular values*
- *Usually, they are in opposition to each other. I take off work for holidays etc. Also, being religious is looked at as kind of weird in our secular society today.*
- *I try not to bring my Orthodox Life issues into work. I do not hide what I do or don't do but I do not have interest and many of my co workers are not interested in my Orthodox life.*
- *I do not look to actively have my orthodoxy interact with the secular world. I go through my day, and occasionally it comes up*
- *Maybe because I have no role models of it interacting in a positive way. The Rabbi and other shul leaders seem to model, separation. Children sent to Jewish Day schools, no mention of secular culture, etc.*
- *I struggle to maintain an orthodox Jewish identity in a professional setting as I find that Jewish practice (tsnius, kashrut, etc) often come into direct conflict with relationship-building work activities. Also most of my co-workers are non Jews who have never met an orthodox person before and i tire of explaining it to them or being an object of fascination.*
- *Not sure I understand the question. Examples would have helped.*
- *I cannot sometimes relate to non Jews and their practices and or participate in their social events*
- *In many ways, Jewish Orthodox life is a barrier to participation in secular society, especially as so much of any society revolves around eating together (and yes, i realize this is why kashrut laws were made so stringent by rabbinim).*
- *Being different is hard. Having a community of people with shared values and identity gives me a place in history make it worth it, but navigating regular logistics of kosher and shabbat are always a challenge*

Q. Why do you think your Jewish Orthodox life and your participation in secular society do not more often interact in a positive way? 125 provided a response.

Sample Verbatim Responses – Can you give an example or two of a time that you needed to compromise your religious practice?

- *Eating at close friends/ family who aren't shomer kashrus. Going to sporting events.*
- *I am a physician in General Surgery residency who is required to work on the Sabbath in my training*
- *Having to work on Shabbes; going to lunch at a non-kosher restaurant.*
- *Not fasting, as per medical advice, despite my rabbi indicating I should fast anyways.*
- *I have attended "Holiday Parties" (that were renamed to accommodate me) that were really Christmas parties, though no religious music was played and (again to accommodate me) that included 2 rounds of Hora dancing and KOSHER potato pancakes! So I ate the latkes, danced the hora, and felt lucky to work with such well-intentioned people.*
- *Something ran into Shabbat and I stayed late but walked home*
- *When traveling - difficult to daven. In social situations, may have to relax strict kashrut standards (e.g. eating vegetarian)*
- *When I began to practice kashrut I realized I could not eat in my folks' apartment, but also realized that on, say, Thanksgiving, it's important for families to be together; my solution was to prepare my own food (sometimes kosher chicken or turkey, sometimes baked salmon) and carry it to their apartment, along with disposable utensils. Sometimes I also bake cookies to bring to them. I could cite one other situation but it appears I'm out of space.*
- *Eating in a non-kosher area. Not able to make minyans in the A.m.*
- *Eating out in non kosher restaurants when i did not bring my own food to work.*
- *I occasionally participate in meetings on Shabbat when they are in person*
- *Going to a friend's gay wedding.*
- *My current scientific research position requires me to wear pants, something I had to adjust to.*
- *As a resident doctor I am required to work on shabbos. I try to keep as much as possible during those hours but must make sacrifices in my observance for the sake of patient care*
- *I've started eating out dairy/vegan again, after 10 of being really strict about keeping kosher.*
- *Eating fish or fruit/salad in a non kosher place*
- *Working mostly. I work at a hospital and some weekends I'm on call and have to go in on Shabbat.*
- *I may eat in someone's home that may not b shiner Shabbat. I invite ppl to Shabbat meals knowing that they drive to me.*
- *Brought up in era when orthodox married women didnt necessarily cover hair. Marrying late and working put me in that category. Now wear hat with hair showing ,in public bunotat home, where except for shabbos feel guilty when making brachas*
- *I was in a business where I had to pay the non-Jewish help on Shabat. I tried to avoid doing so, but when it could not be avoided, I did it.*
- *My husband is a convert. His family is Catholic and have idols all over their houses. I hate visiting his family for this reason. I should not be around avoda zara. However, I go when necessary and keep my eyes peeled to the floor when need be and avoid places with the crosses, nativity scenes, Jeezer paintings and what not.*
- *Lectured at a ... meeting on a Saturday morning.*
- *Injury that required Shabbat drive in order to attend family simcha*
- *I have no problem shaking hands or even hugging women.*
- *I am lenient on kashrus with my non-observant family.*
- *Consulting a Rav about being Shomer Negia in a professional setting*
- *I wouldn't describe this as a need, but rather a choice: If on vacation on Shabbat, we will use electricity in hotel rooms, use plates/etc. provided by the hotel, eat dairy/vegetarian if no kosher option.*
- *I am a complete feminist in my non-orthodox life but compromise on these principles in my Orthodoxy*
- *I'm a piano teacher and though I officially don't teach on Shabbes or even close to shabbes, there have been periods where I became less observant that I relaxed this.*
- *Our family is not shomer shabbos so we need to work hard at staying with them during Shabbos, not a perfect system*
- *1)I go to movies and listen to mainstream music and read. While there is no Issur D'Oreita, it is not preferable from a Rabbanic perspective. However, for my sanity, this is keep about me. 2) During the 9 days or sefira I only abstain from live music, truly, I could not cope without music in my life.*

Q. Can you give an example or two of a time that you needed to compromise your religious practice? 340 provided a response.

Sample Verbatim Responses – You indicated that Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on “drawing lines” ... and not focused enough on making changes. What changes do you feel are needed?

- 1. Woman's leadership. Shul president's should be easily female. Yotzaot Halacha should be fairly standard in any community over a certain size. 2. MO needs to stop looking over its right shoulder. 3. Woman's education in Jewish schools should be the same as mens 4. MO needs to work toward having 100% of Jewish studies being MO. 5. MO needs to work on making sure that its community funds go first toward MO causes before funding other sects. 6. MO needs to start to see itself not only as equally legitimate to Haredi Judaism, but *superior*
- Women should be allowed to read the Megillot; ie Eicha, Kohelet along with men readers.
- More inclusion of women in leadership positions; greater tolerance of deviants; welcoming LGBT members on their own terms; more collaboration with non-orthodox members and groups and treating them as equal partners in the Jewish people and religion
- Increasing involvement of women in all levels of practice and community.
- More female participation in the rabbinate and congregational leadership. Solving the agunot problem
- The two big issues in my mind are women's participation and interaction with LGBT individuals. For the former, I don't think the current reality is so bad, but it needs to be reframed and better explained (i.e. women not having a Chiyuv because men sinned and not them and a clearer definition of where women do stand in Modern Orthodox practice). For LGBT issues, there have been some interesting Halachic approaches that I've seen recently (e.g. viewed homosexuality as a sin rather than LGBT people as sinners) that have potential if they gain wider acceptance.
- Women still take a back seat, even with things that are halachically permissible. It's very hard to get men to agree to allow women to do things that are permitted but not necessarily "traditional."
- Acceptance of women into normative practice.
- Flexibility and acknowledgement that not everyone is a cookie cutter Perfect Model of Orthodox Peoplehood. LGBTQ, gender nonconforming, singles by choice, etc. - are all people that really have no place within the Orthodox community. And it drives many out because there is just no spiritual allowance for it, by and large.
- There need to be high-quality schools that provide a MO environment with kosher food and Jewish learning, but not with a full dual curriculum. The typical Jewish day school spends far more time and money on Judaic studies than many families want. Help the kids love and practice Judaism. DO NOT make them learn biblical Hebrew every year, learn Talmud starting in middle school, spend half the day "learning" Judaism. Judaism is a religion, a belief system, a way of life. It is not an intellectual pursuit that requires exams. Baba Metziah even says the first Temple was destroyed because people treated Torah learning as an intellectual exercise and not as a labor of love. So many MO kids lose religion in college because they aren't studying it anymore, just like they aren't studying geometry anymore. Judaism is not a subject in school; it needs to be lived, not learned. The community needs institutions that cater to all sects of orthodoxy, not institutions that promote an all-or-nothing approach.
- Women need to be more involved within the confines of halacha. I think its easier for people to say that that getting women involved but also following halacha isnt possible...but its also not true.
- There needs to be more room for discussion of doubt and less "We don't ask such questions ." Simply relying on dogma and dogmatic responses is insufficient.
- Female leadership in every Shul
- Acceptance and celebration of women in the rabbinate. Acceptance and welcome of same-gender couples. Better treatment, inclusion of older singles.
- That's tough. We're striking a balance between honest halakhic innovation and the need to avoid alienation of other sections of the Orthodox & Hareidi world.
- Giving up on 2 days of Chag when we know for a fact when the moon rises
- The YU version of Modern Orthodoxy tends to try to respond to women's needs to be recognized by squeezing women into their view of where women "belong" rather than really providing women with proper forums.
- Making space for women and LGBTQ members of our society.

Q. You indicated that Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on “drawing lines” ... and not focused enough on making changes. What changes do you feel are needed? 378 provided a response.

Sample Verbatim Responses – You indicated that Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on making changes and does not preserve tradition enough. What changes do you feel are not desirable?

- *Truly, I don't like any of the above distinctions. There are areas of MO that need to protect tradition, and there are areas of MO that need to embrace change. If it isn't assur, time to rethink WHY we don't do it as we are losing members that go OTD. This struggle is seen in my next two answers. I feel the pull to the left and the pull to the right. My arms hurt.*
- *Again -- the problem is MO. I agree that OO is too focused on change. I think certain people in YU are too focused on drawing lines. There is no ONE MO. Tough question. Even in (name of small-to-mid sized community) -- there are many strands of MO.*
- *Women rabbis*
- *I still have a problem including very open gay/lesbian couples at Shul. I don't mind if they are discrete and don't flaunt it. But shul is still a place that should have H-shems values and He has stated it's not something He likes.*
- *I believe that the importance of training women as Rabbis and integrating them into shul leadership is critical. There are deep and significant differences between men and women's experience which could be examined to deepen women's presence. Changes like Partnership minyan seem a good deal less productive and weaken existing communities.*
- *I feel that in true modern orthodoxy women know how powerful they are and don't need to bend the rules or find the loopholes in how we can be more proactive in leadership roles in a shul or need to be counted in a minyan. Things of the sort*
- *changes are usually led by ignorant members of the community rather than rabbanim. Judaism needs innovation, but it's a shame that innovation is typically led by the ignorant and followed by rabbanim. Once some idiotic practice is established as "minhag" even the most charedi rabbi will accept it.*
- *The changes that the open orthodox crowd are trying to push*
- *Female rabbis singing during service. Females in general leading services.*
- *Everything. Sexual standards, use of bawdy language/jokes, use of internet/TV, lax attitude to davening and observance, etc.*
- *acceptance of homosexual lifestyle desire to elevate women to contrived leadership positions*
- *There's a huge focus on getting students into good colleges and well paying jobs. While this is incredibly important, I think our children lose sight of the fact why it's important to learn Torah (e.g. in high school, it's just another class with grades).*
- *The role of women as "clergy". The need to offer more equality for women. Taking on a liberal agenda that is similar to the secular liberal agenda.*
- *tending to go either too to the left or too to the right without taking into account family traditions and customs*
- *Laxness in modest dress and the lack of communal emphasis in learning*
- *The use of electronic devices in the name of safety is not balanced with the conformity of halacha. eg. Drivign on shabbos to put out a fire in a non-jewish area (not life-saving).*
- *Political thought should not influence religious practice. As an example, it's absolutely right to love our homosexual friends, relatives and neighbors as equals, that doesn't mean that we say what they do is OK. However, it would be equally wrong to shun homosexuals, but accept those who break shabbat (barring the usual exceptions: doctors, security, cholim etc.).*
- *Some MO folks are moving too far to the right politically. GOP does not equal Judaism. Other MO folks are too accepting of LGBT and intermarriage.*
- *"Including" women more. Halachically minimalist kashrut hashgachot -- these and other 'let's not be too strict' initiatives are meant to make observance easier, but also make it (and communal participation) harder for those who aren't comfortable with the kulot. I.e., if JLIC continues to dial back kashrut requirements in college dining because some kids are going to go to a school whether or not there's kosher food, they push the kids/families who aren't comfortable with the lower standards to the right fringe, potentially expanding the group who don't go to secular colleges. So much for engagement in society.*
- *The acceptance of LGBTQ to the point of ignoring the Torah. Using phones on Shabbat. Not standing with Israel if they don't like Bibi.*

Q. You indicated that Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on making changes and does not preserve tradition enough. What changes do you feel are not desirable? 114 provided a response.

Sample Verbatim Responses – You agreed that some positive societal views and values are making their way into your Orthodox community. Can you provide some examples?

- *Respecting and having friends of all religious and political persuasions*
- *1. women are realizing a more equal status. 2. inclusion of gay and lesbian folks is good*
- *Respect for LGBT people. More equality for women. More acceptance of disabilities and mental health care*
- *Speaking more about mental health and other previously taboo subjects, including more women*
- *feminism, LGBT issues*
- *Women's place in the home and society at large.*
- *Inclusiveness and outreach to people who are not traditionally Orthodox or are not capable of being completely Orthodox.*
- *Generally speaking, tolerance and respect for others is one example of a positive American value. I don't know that these are "making their way" present tense. But they have certainly had a positive affect on the Orthodox community.*
- *Acceptance of LGBT jews.*
- *More acceptance of differences in individuals...*
- *higher education, respect for women, recognition of the abilities of women*
- *The secular education system in our hebrew day schools has been working on improving. Modern psychological methods have infiltrated many areas of orthodox life and have had an impact on many areas including teaching better parenting skills.*
- *The question of women's participation. Political liberalism. Education.*
- *Openness to the marginalized groups like LGBT.*
- *We have a TV that scrolls through pictures and schedules running on Shabbos. We have barbecues and men's retreats that are fun and not solely focused on learning. We take down part of the Mechitzah for certain things such as Brit Milah or speeches*
- *Social justice issues*
- *In my community, in particular, there is an increased focus on accessibility for people with disabilities and sensitivity toward how men interact or speak to women.*
- *More openness to people of different backgrounds*
- *Acceptance of people who are different than the "norm" who follow trends in fashion, hair color, etc*
- *LGBTQ acceptance in Orthodox synagogues and schools. Inclusion of women in davening where it is halachically permissible.*
- *My Grandparents explained the world to me as consisting of Jewish and Gentile. Appreciation makes us more intelligent. Modern Orthodoxy helps to look at the concentric area(s) between secular and religious daily life.*
- *Social justice*
- *Women's issues although Agunah issue still remains to be dealt with*
- *Acceptance of people of color and disdain for racism. Embracing homosexuality, rejection of pedophiles.*
- *Acceptance of diversity in women's roles*
- *A greater sense of our connection to the rest of humanity, to other individuals across continents and cultures, valuable for their individual identities and lifestyles as well as their communal ones. Less fear of independent thought and more curiosity. More sense of responsibility for our neighbors and our shared future outside of specifically Jewish concerns. Better inclusivity of people with special needs, of people of different means. Inclusivity of LGBTQ members of the community.*
- *Abuse awareness*
- *A greater sense of tolerance for people who are different. I think that MO has a greater understanding of and support for minorities and gays than in the past. That tolerance was not generated internally.*
- *Allowing men and women who identify as homosexual to remain in the orthodox world.*
- *Social justice issues, LGBTQ inclusion, understanding women's issues and including us in appropriate ways in community leadership, appreciating value of Interfaith and Interfaith work, etc.*
- *Terrific opportunities for mixed classes*
- *Kindness, acceptance of others, inclusion of people with disabilities, acceptance of diversity, reduced xenophobia.*
- *The idea that women have something more to offer than child rearing and cooking. Professional educators might know more about education than Rabbi's. That commitment to social issues beyond just the Jewish community is worthwhile, as it has been in the past.*
- *I believe the internet is a powerful tool for good and has connected the Jewish community like nothing prior to its existence. The amount of Torah materials, lectures and shiurim is profoundly greater than ever before.*

Q. You agreed that some positive societal views and values are making their way into your Orthodox community. Can you provide some examples? 501 provided a response.

Sample Verbatim Responses – You agreed that some negative societal views and values are making their way into your Orthodox community. Can you provide some examples?

- *people are dressing less tznius people are valuing money too much-
influenza*
- *Trumpian "us vs. them" // disrespecting immigrants*
- *Racism, elitism, disinterest in helping the poor.*
- *Being a victim is an ideal to strive for; making LGBT people into heroes;
blaming school or child's friends instead of teaching children responsibility
and how to speak up for themselves*
- *More liberal practices are seeping in such as texting on Shabbat.*
- *Social media. Gaming. Materialism. The immediate availability of
everything. Immoral behavior (sex, substance abuse). Increasing
raunchiness of tv shows Helicopter parenting.*
- *homosexuality, attitudes towards relationships*
- *Immigration issues . Gender issues*
- *Support for Trump*
- *"Disney" = marriage no boundaries in relationships inappropriate sexual
material*
- *Some people within modern orthodoxy are pushing for more participation
for women than the current Yoetzet Halacha. I don't support this.*
- *Liberalism*
- *Making it too easy to convert and Acceptance of alternative lifestyles that
are counter to Torah*
- *Lack of tznius, acceptance of same sex relationships*
- *A sense of entitlement by younger members, thinking that others do it".*
- *left leaning cultural values that are specifically prohibited by the Torah but
embraced by liberal*
- *With the good, comes the bad. The internet has been a haven for negative
material permeating our society - especially our youth. From pornography
to violence and even the glorification of drugs and alcohol, the internet can
be extremely destructive to our youth. I do not believe kids today should
have exposure to unfiltered internet and, if possible, to the internet at all. I
also think the liberal and socialist wing of politics today has created a
dumbed down society which lacks a proper work ethic, amongst other
problems. It manifests itself in our insular Orthodox community as well.*
- *Drugs, smoking*
- *television, movies, pop culture, and social media is educating our kids
negatively.*
- *Right wing politics. Specifically Trumpism.*
- *Divisiveness Obsession with Internet and Cell Phones Hedonism
Homosexuality and transgender as in-line with Orthodox Jewish thought.
Women clergy. (Notice how women's role comes up in both positive and
negative)*
- *Cruelty, bigotry, materialism, sexuality without limits, hostility towards
science*
- *Lack of moral compass. Alignment with particular political parties*
- *Texting on shabbos. Twitter- which I don't use but I think is a deadly
gossip force.*
- *Leftist progressives are a blight on the modern orthodox community. Much
of their positions are in complete disagreement with Torah and Israel.*
- *News that portrays more religious Jews negatively is becoming ingrained in
the Modern Orthodox world.*
- *Some Orthodox people think there is nothing wrong with premarital sex.*
- *pre-occupation with business and money; provincialism*
- *drugs (youth, high schools) materialism, socio-economic divide*
- *Trans and abortion activism*
- *moral relativism*
- *Society is becoming polarized and too reliant on social media for
communications. The anonymity that comes with the internet especially
with shidduch websites has allowed orthodox Jews to say things they
should not. People communicate best face to face, not over the internet.*
- *I think secular values such as acceptance of the LGBT community have
found their way into MO society without any halakhic input.*
- *Adherence to orthodox tenets is shifting due to influx of conservative jews
and converts*
- *Technology has made it easier for things such as gambling and
pornography to be more accessible thereby creating a more widespread
issue than we've had previously. Additionally with the secular acceptance
of homosexuality we are beginning to see more open homosexuality within
the religious community with a focus on I Was Born This Way versus
adhering to Total values.*

Q. You agreed that some negative societal views and values are making their way into your Orthodox community. Can you provide some examples? 557 provided a response.

Sample Verbatim Responses – If you would like to make any suggestions to our Modern Orthodox national communal organizations, what would they be?

- *They are stuck in an old narrative and are detached from the community*
- *1. Fix the get crisis 2. Do not allow erasure of women to seep into our communities. 3. Accept gay ppl 4. Stand up for morality. I'm horrified that the majority of my community voted for Trump. He's amoral and in the end the racist hatred comes for the Jews. 6. Yes it's personal, but please allow Cohanim to attend funerals of (at the very least) their wives immediate family. We're all tamay anyway 6. Again, morality. Someone who cheats and steals should get penalized somehow. Don't take the money! Don't give the Aliyah or Chatan bereishit! Don't perform the marriage between the person and his mistress! Don't allow them to speak at the alumni gala! Don't honor them at the school dinner!*
- *Religious organizations should stay away from politics and loathsome, corrupt politicians, and should focus more, for example, on how to enable women to experience a more complete spiritual life.*
- *Help young people and young families — both Baal teshuva and those who are drifting from a more stringent practice / upbringing — find modern orthodoxy as a non-fanatical yet substantive, meaningful home for their religious orientation and observance. Encourage them to relocate to communities other than the east coast, Los Angeles, and Chicago. Much of the Midwestern United States is a vibrant part of the county modern Orthodox Jews could help resettle and grow, starting with a focus on the young population who might relocate with proper assistance.*
- *Focus on Israel, religious needs of the orthodox. Do not be partisan. Our world is too complex to be siding with one political spectrum only. I agree with Trump's stand on Israel but despise his treatment of women, minorities etc.*
- *Don't pander to or adopt the political views of non-Orthodox organizations.*
- *They should focus more on expressing values of hhesed and tzedeq in caring for the vulnerable, instead of joining fundamentalist Christian culture wars that don't even come close to the multivocal nuances of halakha and mahshava our tradition teaches which can be applied to hot-button social issues*
- *National Council of Young Israel should stop making divisive political statements in our name.*
- *Try to state your opinions intelligently and fair to other opinions.*
- *being "modern" orthodox, does not inherently make me conservative or liberal in my social outlook*
- *It would have been helpful to provide examples of some Modern Orthodox national communal organizations. I don't know which organizations you mean.*
- *Support Israel and the Charedi communities*
- *Train women to be rabbis or at least lay leaders. Take a stand against racism in the Jewish community.*
- *Get back to Torah u Mada.*
- *Stop pandering to the hareidim.*
- *When there is a problem deal with it, don't do everything in secret and not solve it. ie. abuse*
- *Deal less with general (non-Jewish) political issues, as long as they are not affecting Jewish life directly.*
- *People need more help than communal leaders realize. Often these leaders are paid, and hesitate to help outside the scope of their job description.*
- *take a stand on social issues to address LBGTQ and women's roles*
- *I think of them like I think of my mom, who has gotten totally pro-Trump right wing brainwashed...*
- *NCYI — which really cannot call itself modern orthodox in any sense — is a failed organization that should spare the US community of it's continued existence. Other major organizations should exert some influence to stop the continued public embarrassment NCYI brings upon our communities*
- *Stop taking political positions which alienate many Orthodox Jews and are inappropriate in any case*
- *More inclusivity of marginalized groups within the community.*
- *I'm afraid it is a rule of life that when Jews of all stripes lean politically, even by accident, they lean left. It is certainly true of most Modern Orthodox leadership. If they can't be politically conservative, I wish they would just keep quiet.*
- *Be more confident and not look over ones right shoulder for legitimacy*
- *Take truly Modern Orthodox positions. Many/ most of the Poskim that the modern orthodox rely upon are not really "modern "*

Q. If you would like to make any suggestions to our Modern Orthodox national communal organizations, what would they be? 584 provided a response.

Sample Verbatim Responses – How religious, in general, do you want your children to be? (Explanations by those who replied “This is not so critical or relevant to me”)

- *My children should be who they want to be*
- *I want them to find their own authenticity*
- *I want him to fear Hashem and love his neighbors and the stranger. The rest is extra.*
- *I want them to find their own Jewish path.*
- *I don't cpmtro;l where they end up*
- *I want them to be happy and find fulfillment in whatever they choose*
- *Although I would prefer that they are "Modern Orthodox", as long as they marry Jews and raise a Jewish family, I'm OK if they consider themselves Conservative/Conservadox like I was growing up.*
- *Want them to find their own path*
- *I prefer they be comfortable with their Jewish observance*
- *My children will choose their own paths. I provide them with the Orthodox education, but it is up to them to decide where they fit in. Most Orthodox jews do not fit into a box.*
- *Unfortunately*
- *As long as they're happy they should be what they want to be.*
- *As long as they are orthodox, it doesn't matter if they lean to the left or right.*
- *They are grown and are all observant*
- *Their choice!*
- *Kids are adults- TOO LATE*
- *they need to choose what they want*
- *I prefer they be good people. How they choose to be Jewish is their decision.*
- *When they are adults they should make their own choices.*
- *I want them to be proud Observant Jews. I think the labels will change and what i think right or left is today is not applicable to them.*
- *they have to be spiritual & find their own way.*
- *my children are adults*
- *they shoud have an honest comitment to Judaism*
- *I want my children to be happy and have a strong Jewish identity. They should be as "religious" as they want to be. If what I present as my personal "religiosity" isn't appealing to them, I have no one to blame but myself. I put no expectations on them.*
- *i raised 2 teenagers so far. If i learned anything, it's that if i get invested in what they are, i'm doomed to unhappiness.*
- *I just want them to find their own paths. My daughters are adults and both are more religious than I am. My son is a teenager and struggling a lot right now, and I'm praying he just stays religious!*
- *My desires don't matter. I will try my best to share with my children what I believe to be Truth, but it's their lives, their souls- they will need to find their own "mishkan".*
- *Would like them to be traditional/observant but am flexible as to the specific path the are comfortable with.*
- *I want them to be jews and proud to be jews - religious observance is up to the individual*
- *I want them to be Jewish in a way that is meaningful to them. I want them to be Orthodox, but they can decide "what flavor."*
- *I would like them to have the knowledge, background, skill and love of Torah Judaism to live a fulfilling jewish life of their choosing.*
- *I want them to be happy in their choice, but not so religious that my home isn't kosher enough for them.*
- *My children are adults, married with families*
- *They need to make this decision for themselves.*
- *I prefer they be fully observant egalitarian Jews who are comfortable in both institutions that have Orthodox in the label and those that don't. And in Israel, where they have attended public schools.*

Q. How religious, in general, do you want your children to be? 109 responded “This is not so critical or relevant to me” and provided an explanation.

Sample Verbatim Responses – Have you ever moved from one community to another for “religious reasons”? (Explanations by those who responded “yes”)

- *to be near yeshiva for our early (kollel) years*
- *I moved to (large city) from a smaller community in order to find a Jewish spouse. I also moved from an area of town that did not have a large Orthodox community to an area that has a large Modern Orthodox community.*
- *from one area of (large city) to another, to be in walking distance of an Ortho shul*
- *I moved to a place that was somewhat more observant*
- *We moved from downtown ny to to be part of larger community*
- *We moved from (small city) which only had a Chabad community into (larger city) with a much more diverse community.*
- *Chasidim moved into my community which changed the dynamic so a lot of modern orthodox people including me left to other bigger modern orthodox communities*
- *Better Hebrew education for my children.*
- *We moved to LA from a smaller community due to limitations in the availability of quality religious schools in our former community.*
- *Trying to find the community where we best fit in*
- *After becoming orthodox moved from small community to very large one to have more social and educational opportunities*
- *Moved from a place with no frum community to a place with one.*
- *Moved to Teaneck my to be in a modern orthodox environment/schools/Shula/shiur*
- *I moved from the south to NY after college to be a part of a large orthodox community.*
- *NJ to (other community) because better religious values*
- *I moved from (area of NYC) to the Upper West Side because i wanted to be part of a more frum community, with a larger religious population and more shul options*
- *(Large city in CA) to (larger city in CA) so my kids could go to a Jewish high school. Looking back, big mistake.*
- *Every move we made was made for professional reasons but with a firm focus on the religious life in the potential communities - resources, peer groups and opportunities for our children's religious education*
- *I moved from a small community to a larger one because it was so hard to get kosher food*
- *Was raised charedi, but rejected it*
- *We lived in a very small Jewish community (25 families) and knew we would want a larger community when our children were ready to start school.*
- *Coose to live in my current community based on the availability of educational opportunities for children*
- *NYC for shidduch purposes*
- *moved out of Monsey. Was too constraining and sheltered. (and the small modern community was too left wing)*
- *Moved from (large community in the South) to NYC for larger Jewish community and amenities*
- *from conservative to chabad--we didn't like the obligations and overall vibe in the conservative community*
- *Moved from (small community) to Teaneck. Stronger day schools, better for women, and Modern Orthodox rather than right-wing Orthodox hashkafa.*
- *I am currently in the process of moving down to (mid-Atlantic community) to begin a job there. One of the reasons I picked to work (there) is because it has a decent sized Jewish community.*
- *moved from city to suburbs, but chose specific town due to 'out of town feel' and diversity in community members*
- *We left (NYC neighborhood) in search of a more cohesive, centrist, open-tent community. We found one -- after quite a bit of searching -- in (NJ community).*

Q. Have you ever moved from one community to another for “religious reasons”? 299 responded “Yes” and provided an explanation.

Sample Verbatim Responses – Do you have any suggestions for approaches that the Modern Orthodox community should consider over the next few decades in order to strengthen itself?

- *Just continue with the idea that you can live life within a secular world and maintain logical, factual Jewish practice.*
- *Commit to learning, commit to kindness to each other*
- *Better practical education*
- *Stop moving to the right. Make members feel they are part of a living religion. Stop emphasizing the costumes and focus on the behaviors. Recognize that science has enabled us to pinpoint dates. There is no real American Orthodox leadership. Why do we still observe two days Yom Tov when in E"Y that observe one? Answer: because American leadership does not exist. There are no authorities recognized by all.*
- *It needs a clear definition, direction, comprehensive position. Without this there has been too much room for people to spread out in all directions to the point that you can have have 2 individuals who both claim to be modern-orthodox while objectively not really resembling each other at all. There should be no question of liberal, central, or machmir modern orthodoxy - it should just be modern orthodoxy, and people can pick and choose what they want to do or not do while acknowledging that it may not be the best thing.*
- *Slow down the pace of davening in Shul.*
- *Education, commitment to serving Hashem, and intellectual integrity are 3 pillars upon which modern orthodoxy as a ideological and communal conception stand, in my opinion. I think humility is a thread that links all 3 and is somewhat lacking in my experience.*
- *They must be strong in their opinions and values. Modern orthodoxy must MEAN something, not be an organization in name only. It will make some leave but will strengthen those who stay and give them an identity.*
- *Left-leaning "open orthodoxy" needs to admit that they are just re-packaging Conservative methods of mis-interpreting halachah. Kids need to stop riding scooters and bikes on Shabbat. Other Orthodox shuls need to be warmer and more friendly. All shuls could make more accommodations for people with disabilities.*
- *Emphasize youth and, especially college, programs.*
- *Reaching-out to the needs of those who are on the fringes and possibly leaving the torah observant world. ex: couples that are childless, singles, couples with a special needs child.*
- *The "next few decades?" We've had 578 decades and there are only 22 left! We need to get our act together.*
- *Raising kids with a love for their community and religion is key for future generations*
- *Learning. But overall the system feels stifling*
- *Don't leave all the education to the parents and schools. Teach our kids more about how to daven, how to defend Israel, how to learn, etc. Be less "event based" and more "issue based."*
- *I think MAYBE in an effort to seem more legitimate (or maybe it was always like this), MO can be way too cerebral and "ivory tower" and academic a lot of the time an I think being open to more spiritual/theology convos would be beneficial.*
- *Understand that variation in halachic practice is acceptable under the MO umbrella*
- *We need stronger MO Leaders and vocal leadership We need more and more MO educators who are learned in MO Philosophy that can teach our children and lead our schools*
- *I wish that I did*
- *With the influence of all forms of extremism- right and left- i don't see a future. (Unfortunately for me and my children.) It's either become super right or not observant at all.*
- *Figure out a way to take clear and cohesive steps towards inclusion of female clergy. For people (like me) who are cannot comprehend why we are still not accepting female clergy (which is a gray issue in halacha) on a larger scale, and only tapping into 50% of the our population for communal roles, where we lack in both quality and quantity, there really is no way to feel anything other than resentment and disappointment in modern orthodox leadership.*
- *I think Modern Orthodoxy should avoid becoming Charedi, but many parts of Modern Orthodoxy already are.*
- *Make more of an effort to find jewish spouses for the unwed. My synagogue truly welcomes converts. Needs to be more of this*
- *More programs that we can agree on bringing us together.*
- *Keep social values from the Torah regarding dress and sexuality.*

Q. Do you have any suggestions for approaches that the Modern Orthodox community should consider over the next few decades in order to strengthen itself? 553 provided a response.

Favorite “Jewish Book” – This question was asked as much “in fun” as to get a sense of what most resonates with Modern Orthodox. Responses show a wide range of interests, with “religious texts” mentioned more four times as much as non-religious books.

“Jewish Book”	#
Jewish Texts/Canonical or Commentaries:	
• Chumash / Torah	60
• Gemara / Talmud	45
• Pirke Avot	44
• Tanach	42
• Rambam / Commentaries	30
• Rabbi Sack / Commentaries	26
• Siddur	25
• Other Torah Commentaries	22
• Tehillim	20
• Megillat Esther	12
• Megillat Ruth	10
• Kohellet	10
Other Books:	
• The Chosen, by Chaim Potok	35
• As A Driven Leaf, by Milton Steinberg	25
• Books on Jewish History	14
• Exodus, by Leon Uris	13

Q. What is your favorite “Jewish book”? It could be a sefer (religious book), Jewish study, commentary, biography, fiction, etc., and you can define “Jewish book” any way you like. Tell us the first one that comes to mind. (Open-Ended). n = 1,118 provided a response.

Appendix II – Survey Questionnaire

The 2019 Nishma Research Study utilized a single survey questionnaire to address the two topics – the future of Modern Orthodoxy and baalei teshuvah. Logic within the questionnaire determined which questions were presented to which respondents. The survey questionnaire shown on the following pages is the entire document.

Survey Questionnaire (Page 1 of 7)

Nishma Research Survey of The Orthodox Jewish Community – July 25, 2019

Survey instructions and related notes are shown in red

INTRODUCTION Section titles are not shown in the online survey

What are the views of the Orthodox Jewish community? What do you think about the major questions facing Jewish life, your community, your family and yourself? This survey addresses these and related questions, and further explores issues raised in our past surveys of the Orthodox community (available at <http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html>). **Note that there are sections of questions included in this survey which are aimed at baalei teshuvah (those who did not grow up Orthodox); this will be the largest quantitative community survey ever done of this group.**

The survey is conducted by Nishma Research and is sponsored by The Micah Foundation. The study researchers, foundation benefactors and members of its advisory group are members of the Orthodox community; the foundation's mission is to promote and enhance Jewish religious, cultural and communal life.

This survey is for all individuals age 18 and older. Among couples, we encourage spouses to take the survey separately. The survey takes about 18-20 minutes to complete. (Each screen has a "Save and Continue Later" option that you may click at the top if you do not have the time to complete the survey. If you use this option, please return to complete the survey within three days.

This survey is 100% confidential. At the end of the survey, you will have the opportunity to get the results sent directly to you. Additionally, you'll be able to sign up for a **chance to win one of five \$50 Amazon Gift Cards.**

The survey results will be clearly communicated to synagogue rabbis, leaders, congregants and the Orthodox community, and will be made publicly available and downloadable.

If you have any questions about the survey, please email Mark Trencher of Nishma Research at mark@nishmaresearch.com.

ORTHODOX DENOMINATION AND BACKGROUND

Mandatory Response

Q1. **Note:** This is the only survey question with a mandatory response. We do, however, encourage you to respond to all the other questions as well.

Regardless of your synagogue affiliation, which of the following categories best describes your approach to Judaism? Are you:

- Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox
- *Yeshivish / Litvish / Agudah*
- *Chasidic, Chabad*
- Not Orthodox – **Display Message and Terminate**

Q2. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- **Non-conforming**, other

Q3. At what stage in your life did you begin to identify yourself as being an observant Orthodox Jew?

- **Asked of Q2 = Male** From birth, or at a young age (before Bar Mitzvah)
- **Asked of Q2 = Female** From birth, or at a young age (before Bat Mitzvah)
- **Asked of Q2 = Non-conforming** From birth, or at a young age (before Bar or Bat Mitzvah)
- **Asked of Q2 = Male** Between Bar Mitzvah age and 17 *
- **Asked of Q2 = Female** Between Bat Mitzvah age and 17 *
- **Asked of Q2 = Non-conforming** Between Bar or Bat Mitzvah age and 17 *
- Between ages 18 and 24 *
- Between ages 25 and 39 *
- Age 40 or older *

* **These respondents are, for the purposes of this survey, viewed as baalei teshuvah.**

Ask of Baalei Teshuvah per Q3

Q4. How many years ago did you begin to identify yourself as an observant Orthodox Jew?

- Within the past 3 years
- Between 4 and 9 years ago
- Between 10 and 19 years ago
- 20 or more years ago

PERCEPTIONS OF MODERN ORTHODOXY & DAY-TO-DAY RELIGIOUS LIFE

In this survey, when we refer to "Modern Orthodox" we are including all those who identify themselves as **Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox** ... and not *Charedi (yeshivish / Agudah / Litvish or Chasidic / Chabad)*.

Additionally, when we use the term "*baal teshuvah*" to refer to someone who made a transition to Orthodoxy, to simplify things we are using the same term for men and women.

Asked of Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox

Q5. Where do you see yourself within the range of Modern/Centrist Orthodoxy?

- "To the left" ... Liberal Modern Orthodox
- "In the center" ... Centrist Modern Orthodox
- "To the right" ... More stringent (*machmir*) Centrist Orthodox

Survey Questionnaire (Page 2 of 7)

Asked of Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox

Q6. Do you agree with the following statements?

- Modern Orthodoxy is spiritually inspiring.
- Modern Orthodoxy lets me think about ideas in an intellectually honest and critical way.
- Modern Orthodox Jews are quite knowledgeable about the fundamental underpinnings of faith.
- Modern Orthodoxy is as “Jewishly authentic” as *Charedi* (*yeshivish* or *chasidic*) Judaism.
- Religious observance within the Modern Orthodox community is where it should be.

Scale:

- Agree Fully
- Agree Somewhat
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Fully
- Don't Know

Q7. Where do you see yourself in terms of religious practice?

- I am pretty much a “Shabbat Orthodox Jew.”
- I tend toward being mostly a “Shabbat Orthodox Jew.”
- I tend toward being a “Full-time (24/7) Orthodox Jew.”
- I am pretty much a “Full-time (24/7) Orthodox Jew.”

Ask of Baalei Teshuvah per Q3

Q8. You indicated that you became Orthodox at or after Bar/Bat Mitzvah age. How do you view yourself at this time?

- In my mind, I still think of myself mainly as a *baal teshuvah*.
- I think of myself as “just a member of the Orthodox community” but am quite conscious of still being a *baal teshuvah*.
- I think of myself as “just a member of the Orthodox community” and do not really still view myself as a *baal teshuvah*.

Asked of Q8 = Option 2 or 3

Q9. Was there a particular point in time (an event, milestone, accomplishment, etc.) when you felt that you had “arrived” in Orthodoxy (i.e., you no longer thought of yourself mainly as a baal teshuva)? **Open-Ended**

Asked of Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox

Q10. The goal of Modern Orthodoxy is to meld **religious life** with **participation in society**. How often do you personally experience any positive interactions between your Orthodoxy and your participation in secular society?

- Often
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

Asked of Q10 = Often or Sometimes

Q11a. Can you give an example or two of how your Jewish Orthodox life and your participation in secular society interact in a positive way? **Open-Ended**

Asked of Q10 = Seldom or Never

Q11b. Why do you think your Jewish Orthodox life and your participation in secular society do not more often interact in a positive way? **Open-Ended**

Q12. Do you ever experience conflict between your Orthodoxy and your participation in society? If so, how do you generally resolve it?

- I have not experienced any such conflict
- I have experienced such conflict but stand firm in my religious practice.
- I lean toward standing firm in my religious practice, but I sometimes need to compromise
- I have a flexible attitude toward compromising.

Asked of Q12 = Option 3 or 4

Q13. Can you give an example or two of a time that you needed to compromise your religious practice? **Open-Ended**

Q14. How religiously comfortable are you with:

- Davening
 - Jewish learning
 - Day-to-day Orthodox living
- Scale:
- Fully or Mostly Comfortable
 - Somewhat Comfortable
 - Somewhat Uncomfortable
 - Fully or Mostly Uncomfortable

Q15. There has been some discussion about people using smartphones on Shabbat, e.g., for texting (not in a professional capacity, such as physicians, but for social reasons). Do you ever do this?

- Often
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

Survey Questionnaire (Page 3 of 7)

Q16. How do you rate your Orthodox community in terms of its acceptance of baalei teshuvah in general?

- Very accepting
- Somewhat accepting
- Somewhat not accepting
- Not accepting
- Don't Know

Ask of Baalei Teshuvah per Q3

Q17. As a *baal teshuvah*, what advice would you give to your Orthodox community in terms of what they need to better understand and appreciate about *baalei teshuvah*? **Open-Ended**

Asked of Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox

Q18. Because Modern Orthodoxy interacts with society, it needs to deal with change. Which of the following statements best reflects your views on this?

- Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on “drawing lines” to prevent change ... and not focused enough on making changes that I feel are needed.
- The current balance between making changes and “drawing lines” is appropriate.
- Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on making changes that I feel are not desirable ... and does not preserve tradition enough.

Asked of Q18 = “Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on ‘drawing lines’ ...”

Q18a. You indicated that Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on “drawing lines” ... and not focused enough on making changes. What changes do you feel are needed? **Open-Ended**

Asked of Q18 = “Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on making changes ...”

Q18b. You indicated that Modern Orthodoxy is too focused on making changes and does not preserve tradition enough. What changes do you feel are not desirable? **Open-Ended**

Asked of Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox

Q19. Do you agree with the following statements?

- Modern Orthodoxy is being too much affected by its liberal wing.
- Modern Orthodoxy is being too much affected by its right wing and by *Charedi* Judaism.

Scale:

- Agree Fully
- Agree Somewhat
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Fully
- Don't Know

BAALEI TESHUVAH AND THE JOURNEY TOWARD ORTHODOXY

Ask of Baalei Teshuvah per Q3

Q20. You indicated that you became Orthodox at or after Bar/Bat Mitzvah age. Which of the following best describes how you viewed yourself Jewishly before becoming Orthodox?

- Conservative or Orthoprax
- Reform, Reconstructionist, Renewal, or other denomination
- Traditional, cultural, ethnic Jewish (or “just Jewish”)
- Secular/Humanist Jewish
- Not Jewish
- Other – Please describe **Open-Ended**

Ask of Baalei Teshuvah per Q3

Q21. What sparked your transition to Orthodoxy? Please check up to five factors that were most important in your decision to become Orthodox.

[Up to 5 responses]

- I was Influenced by a friend.
- I was influenced by my spouse or other partner relationship (fiancé, boyfriend, girlfriend, etc.).
- I was influenced by my child(ren).
- I was influenced by my parent(s).
- I was influenced by other relative(s).
- I was Influenced by *kiruv* (outreach) professional(s) or organization(s).
- I was intellectually attracted to or curious about Orthodoxy; or interested because of religious knowledge that I had acquired.
- I saw Orthodoxy and the Torah as more truthful.
- I saw Orthodoxy as a more authentic kind of Judaism than existed in my prior Jewish community.
- I wanted to better connect to my Jewish roots and heritage.
- I was generally dissatisfied with my life.
- I disliked the type of morality I saw in secular society/culture.
- I was searching for more meaning in my life.
- I wanted more structure in my life.
- I felt isolated and had a desire for community.
- I was influenced by society's and Orthodoxy's views relating to the role of women. – Please briefly explain **Open-Ended**
- Other – Please identify **Open-Ended**

Survey Questionnaire (Page 4 of 7)

Asked of Q21 = "I was influenced by a *kiruv* (outreach) ..."

Q22. Which *kiruv* (outreach) professional(s) or organization(s) influenced you to become Orthodox? Please check up to three. [Up to 3 responses]

- NCSY
- Other Orthodox youth program (Bnei Akiva, etc.)
- Other youth program (BBYO, USY, etc.)
- Chabad Lubavitch
- Hillel or other college / campus program (excluding Chabad)
- Neve Yerushalayim
- Aish HaTorah
- Ohr Somayach
- Oorah
- NJOP (National Jewish Outreach Program)
- MJE (Manhattan Jewish Experience)
- JWRP (Jewish Women's Renaissance Project – Momentum)
- Gateways
- A synagogue or synagogue program – Please identify Open-Ended
- Birthright or other Israel trip
- Summer camp
- A rabbi or other mentor/personality
- Other – Please identify Open-Ended

Asked of one or more responses selected in Q22

Q23. Thinking of the *kiruv* approaches that influenced you, how would you rate them overall in terms of their:

- Effectiveness at the time you moved toward Orthodoxy.
- Effectiveness since that time, i.e., their follow-up and lasting impact.

Scale:

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Don't Know

Ask of Baalei Teshuvah per Q3

Q24. What were the main challenges you faced at the time you moved toward Orthodoxy?
Open-Ended

Ask of Baalei Teshuvah per Q3

Q25. Are there things you have "held onto" from your pre-Orthodox life, i.e., things of value to you personally, which are not commonly found in the Orthodox world? These could include views – religious, social, political, etc. – beliefs, practices, objects, etc. Open-Ended

COMMUNAL ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES

Asked of Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox

Q26. Do you agree with the following statements?

- Modern Orthodoxy's national communal organizations provide religious leadership that meets the community's religious needs.
- Modern Orthodoxy's national communal organizations provide leadership on key issues that meets the community's needs in areas of internal and societal interactions, and policy advocacy.
- Modern Orthodox communal organizations should take stands on political and/or social issues.

Scale:

- Agree Fully
- Agree Somewhat
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Fully
- Don't Know

Asked of Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox

Q27. If you would like to make any suggestions to our Modern Orthodox national communal organizations, what would they be? Open-Ended

Asked of Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox

Q28. Do you agree with the following statements?

- Modern Orthodox shuls and community organizations have access to an adequate supply of skilled Modern Orthodox leaders.
- Modern Orthodox schools have access to an adequate supply of skilled Modern Orthodox educators.
- Too many of our communal leaders (rabbis, teachers, organizations) come from more right-leaning segments of Orthodoxy.
- *Aliyah* (Jews moving to Israel) is having a significant negative impact on American Modern Orthodoxy (i.e., what has sometimes been called a "brain drain").
- **Asked of Q2 = Female** I often find my talents valued more by the non-Orthodox world or even the non-Jewish world, and I therefore direct more of my energies towards those communities.
- **Asked of Q3 = Baal Teshuvah** As a *baal teshuvah*, my Orthodox community sometimes asks me for advice that I might be in a position to offer, given my background.

Scale:

- Agree Fully
- Agree Somewhat
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Fully
- Don't Know

Survey Questionnaire (Page 5 of 7)

Q29. What is your current marital/relationship status?

- Married
- Single
- Divorced
- Separated
- Widowed
- Living with a partner or in a long-term relationship

Asked of Q29 = Married

Q30. Would you say that your spouse is:

- At about the same level of religious observance as you are
- More religious (observant) than you are
- Less religious (observant) than you are
- Don't Know

Ask of Baalei Teshuvah per Q3 and Q29 = Married

Q31. Is your spouse also a baal teshuvah?

- Yes, my spouse is a baal teshuvah (or a convert)
- No

Q32. Do you have any children? If so, how many?

- None
- One
- Two
- Three
- Four
- Five or More

Asked of Q32 = Has One or More Children

Q33. Are any of your children in grades K to 8 (the just-completed school year)?

- Yes
- No

Q34. Do you agree that:

- The school systems in my Orthodox community are successful at creating committed Orthodox Jews.
- **Asked of Q33 = Yes (Has Children in Grades K-8)** I consider the cost my children's Jewish education to be money well-spent.
- **Asked of Q33 = Yes (Has Children in Grades K-8)** Eventually, sending my child(ren) to a public school might be an option to consider.

Scale:

- Agree Fully
- Agree Somewhat
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Fully
- Don't Know

Asked of Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox and Q32 = Has One or More Children

Q35. How religious, in general, do you want your children to be?

- I prefer that they be typical Centrist Modern Orthodox Jews.
- I prefer that they be more observant than the typical Centrist Modern Orthodox Jew, e.g., right-leaning Modern Orthodox, or *Charedi*.
- I prefer that they be less observant than the typical Centrist Modern Orthodox Jew, e.g., left-leaning Orthodox, traditional, secular, etc.
- Don't Know
- This is not so critical or relevant to me – Please explain **Open-Ended**

RELIGIOUS TRENDS AND WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

Q36. Do you agree with the following statements?

- I am very concerned about people leaving Orthodoxy and becoming non-*frum* ("Off the Derech").
- I feel our Orthodox communal leaders are not adequately addressing the issue of people leaving Orthodoxy.

Scale:

- Agree Fully
- Agree Somewhat
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Fully
- Don't Know

Asked of became Baal Teshuvah 10+ years ago (options #3-4 in Q4)

Q37. You indicated that you became Orthodox 10+ years ago. Think about your "early Orthodoxy" (3 or so years after you became Orthodox) and compare it to where you are today. Which of the following is most accurate?

- I am at about the same place religiously now as I was at that time.
- I am more religious/observant now than I was at that time. – Can you briefly explain? **Open-Ended**
- I am less religious/observant now than I was at that time. – Can you briefly explain? **Open-Ended**

Survey Questionnaire (Page 6 of 7)

Q38. Do you agree with the following statements?

- Being an Orthodox / Observant Jew is an important part of my life.
- Some positive views and values (in my opinion) of broader secular society are making their way into my Orthodox community.
- Some negative views and values (in my opinion) of broader secular society are making their way into my Orthodox community.
- **Asked of Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox** There is no longer a single, cohesive Modern Orthodox community. Modern Orthodoxy should acknowledge this and would perhaps be better off splitting into separate camps.

Scale:

- Agree Fully
- Agree Somewhat
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Fully
- Don't Know

Asked of agree (fully or somewhat) with Q38 option #2 ("Some positive views...")

Q38a. You agreed that some positive societal views and values are making their way into your Orthodox community. Can you provide some examples? **Open-Ended**

Asked of agree (fully or somewhat) with Q38 option #3 ("Some negative views...")

Q38b. You agreed that some negative societal views and values are making their way into your Orthodox community. Can you provide some examples? **Open-Ended**

Q39. What future do you foresee for Modern Orthodoxy over the next few decades, in areas of:

- Religious strength
- Growth in numbers
- Cohesiveness, togetherness

Scale:

- I am very optimistic
- I am somewhat optimistic
- Neither optimistic nor pessimistic
- I am somewhat pessimistic
- I am very pessimistic
- Don't Know

Asked of Q1 = Modern Orthodox or Centrist Orthodox

Q40. Do you have any suggestions for approaches that the Modern Orthodox community should consider over the next few decades in order to strengthen itself? **Open-Ended**

DEMOGRAPHICS

Q41. What is your age?

- 18 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 or older
- Prefer not to answer

Q42. Are you and/or either of your parents a convert to Judaism (*geirim*)? Please check all that apply.

- I am a convert
- One or both of my parents is a convert

Ask of Converts per Q42

Q43. As a convert, what advice would you give to your Orthodox community in terms of what they need to better understand and appreciate about converts? **Open-Ended**

Q44. What is the highest level of schooling you have completed?

- Less than high school graduate
- High school graduate
- Some college, no degree
- Two-year associate degree
- Four-year Bachelor's degree
- Some postgraduate or professional schooling, no postgraduate degree
- Postgraduate or professional degree, including master's, doctorate, medical or law degree

Q45. What is the highest level of formal Jewish studies you have completed?

- None
- Talmud Torah (e.g., a Sunday or weekday evening Jewish studies program run by a synagogue)
- Some Jewish elementary school (did not graduate)
- Jewish elementary school (8th grade)
- Jewish high school
- Jewish post-high school study

Survey Questionnaire (Page 7 of 7)

Q46. Thinking of the Jewish community in which you currently reside, would you say it is a:

- Large Jewish community of 200,000+ Jews (e.g., New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, Greater DC, Philadelphia.)
- Mid-size Jewish community of 50,000 to 199,999 Jews (e.g., Atlanta, Miami, San Diego, Cleveland, Denver, etc.)
- Smaller Jewish community of under 50,000 Jews (e.g., Pittsburgh, Minneapolis, Hartford, Cincinnati, etc.)

Q47. Have you ever moved from one community to another for “religious reasons”?

- Yes – Can you briefly explain? **Open-Ended**
- No

Q48. For our final question, let's have a little fun. What is your favorite “Jewish book”? It could be a sefer (religious book), Jewish study, commentary, biography, fiction, etc., and you can define “Jewish book” any way you like. Tell us the first one that comes to mind. **Open-Ended**

THANK YOU SCREEN

Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts. Your response is very important to us.

Q49.

- Please check here if you would you like to get a free report of the survey results.
- Please check here if you would you like to be entered into the raffle for a chance to win one of five \$50 Amazon Gift Cards.

Show if either box in Q49 is checked

Please let us know your email address, so that we can contact you as appropriate. Your email will be totally confidential. It will not be used for any other purposes and will not be attached to your survey responses. **Small Text Box, formatted for email address**

SHARING OF SURVEY LINK

This survey has been widely distributed, but not everyone may be received it. So feel free to share this survey with your Orthodox family, friends or colleagues. Just provide them with the link: bit.ly/Orthodox-Survey-2019.

END OF SURVEY

Appendix III – Related Prior Research

- **The 2017 Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews** – Religious beliefs and practices, views on the importance of Orthodoxy as a part of life, shul life, Jewish study, women’s roles, children’s education, sexuality, Israel connection and advocacy, overall successes, opportunities and challenges – Summary Report
- **The 2016 Nishma Study of Those Who Have Left Orthodoxy** – Starting a Conversation: A Pioneering Survey of Those Who Have Left the Orthodox Community – Summary Report of those who had previously identified as Modern Orthodox
- **Articles Based on Nishma Orthodox Community Research**

The Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews Summary Report

Religious beliefs and practices, views on the importance of Orthodoxy as a part of life, shul life, Jewish study, women's roles, children's education, sexuality, Israel connection and advocacy, overall successes, opportunities and challenges

September 28, 2017



*Sponsored by
the Micah
Foundation*

The full report is available at:
<http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html>

Summary of Key Findings – The 2017 Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews

Introduction

This profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews was conducted and supported by Modern Orthodox researchers, including an advisory group comprised of sociologists, educators, community leaders and rabbis.

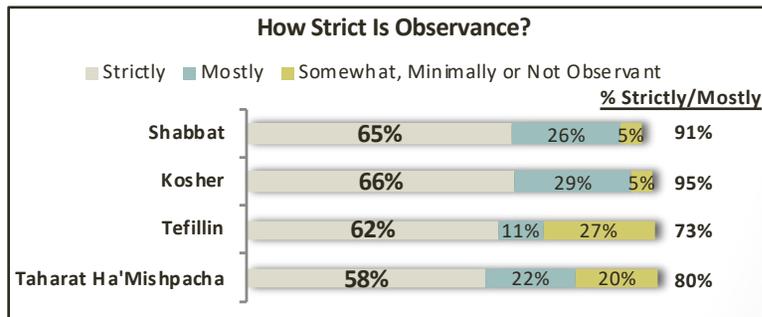
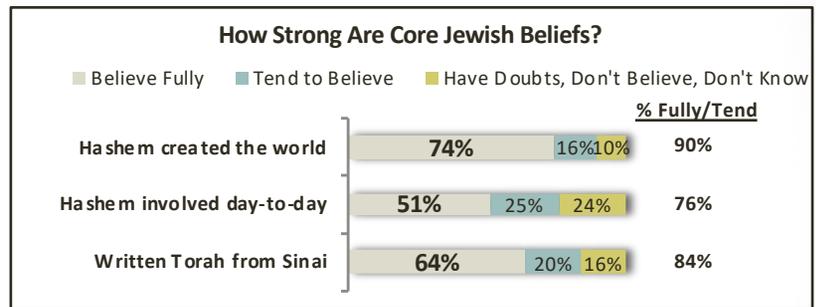
With 3,903 respondents in the US, this is the largest broad survey of the Modern Orthodox community. The community represents only about 4% of all American Jewry, with about 220,000 Modern Orthodox adults in the US (according to Pew Research*). This survey’s sample size yields stronger statistical reliability than those of the relatively small Modern Orthodox segments contained in large-scale national studies of the Jewish population. Additionally, the questions asked in this study are not those that are typically asked of all American Jews (e.g., Conservative, Reform, unaffiliated, etc.), but are specifically focused on the issues most relevant to today’s Modern Orthodox Jews.

This section of the report summarizes many of the key findings. The full report has much more detail on the topics explored. Additionally, the survey generated a wealth (over 130,000 words) of verbatim responses that shed great additional insight on the enormous diversity and passion of people’s views, and will inform the reader in ways that go beyond the statistics.**

Beliefs and Observance

90% believe fully or tend to believe that *Hashem* created the world, but one in four (24%) have doubts or disbelieve in *Hashem’s* involvement in the world’s day-to-day activities.

- About two-thirds are strictly Shabbat and *kashrut* observant, and 90%+ are strictly or mostly observant.
- There is less strict observance of *taharat ha’mishpacha* among marrieds (58%) and less strict observance of *tefillin* among men (62% overall and 56% among men ages 18 to 44).



It is interesting to note that the levels of belief and observance are not dissimilar to what Pew found among American Modern Orthodox Jews.

* A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews, October 1, 2013

** Large samples of verbatim responses are in downloadable “Verbatim Responses” documents available at <http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html>.

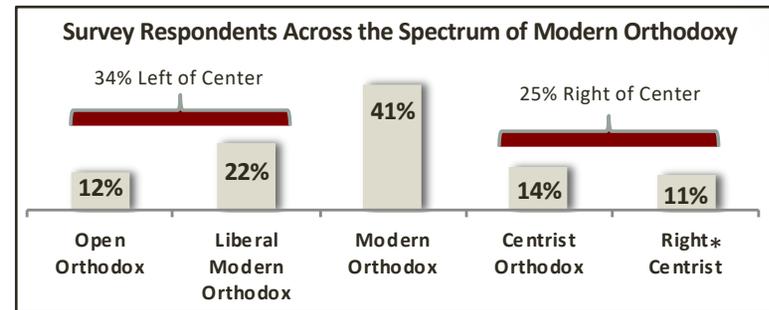
Summary of Key Findings – The 2017 Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews (Continued)

Fragmentation Within Modern Orthodoxy

Modern Orthodoxy is the branch of Judaism that attempts to synthesize traditional Jewish values and observance of *Halacha* with the secular, modern world.

One of the issues that has been increasingly raised in recent years is that of the alleged fragmentation within Modern Orthodoxy. Some have spoken of a “schism” that could result from broadening differences in beliefs and attitudes.

To start exploring this issue, we asked respondents to position themselves across the spectrum. The “denominational” self-identification we obtained resembles a bell curve (see chart to the upper right), a plurality (41%) are in the middle, 34% on the left and 25% on the right.



As we explore the question of fragmentation, we will examine variations in views by age, gender and denominations (see, for example, the chart to the right) across a wide range of issues, including some where strong disagreements have been voiced (e.g., the role of women, an area of particular contention).

Wider variations of views suggest that it might be more difficult for the community to consider whether and how to address the differences.

We will also explore whether Modern Orthodoxy is shifting in observance “to the left or to the right,” whether the left and right are drawing further apart, and the implications of such shifts.

Variations in Belief and Observance – Across Modern Orthodoxy

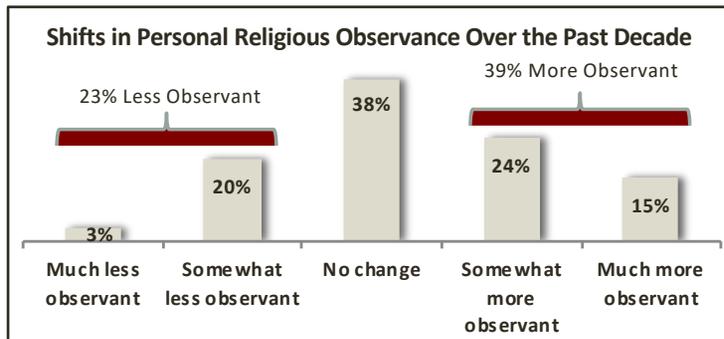
	Open Orthodox	Liberal Modern Orthodox	Modern Orthodox	Centrist & Right-Centrist
Hashem created the world (% believe fully or tend to believe)	75%	80%	95%	98%
Written Torah from Sinai (% believe fully or tend to believe)	58%	70%	92%	96%
Shabbat (% strictly or mostly observant)	82%	83%	95%	99%
Tefillin (% strictly or mostly observant)	45%	53%	76%	90%

* The survey questionnaire labeled the “right-most” segment as “Right-wing Centrist Orthodox (e.g., tending toward Yeshivish).” For brevity, we refer to it in this report as “Right Centrist.” Additionally, we may use the informal vernacular terms “to the right” or “to the left” as abbreviated ways to denote directions across the denominational spectrum.

Summary of Key Findings – The 2017 Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews (Continued)

Shifting Level of Observance, Polarization Within Modern Orthodoxy and the Danger of Schism

While some are moving to the left (becoming less observant or leaving the fold and going “off the derech”*), there is a sense and there has been conjecture that Modern Orthodoxy as a whole has been shifting toward greater observance, i.e., “moving to the right.” This survey confirms that to in fact be the case: 39% of respondents say they have become more observant and 23% say they have become less observant – a “net rightward shift” of +16%.



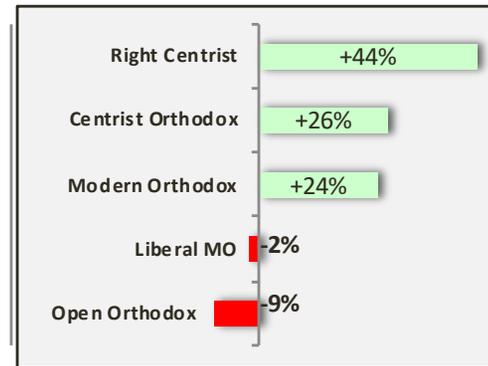
Women (+12%) have shifted to the right less than men (+21%), and elsewhere in this report we shall see areas of dissatisfaction among women. A more noteworthy trend is the differences among denominations: the right and center have shifted strongly further to the right, while the left has moved slightly more to the left (see chart in upper right). *The fabric of Modern Orthodoxy is being stretched.*

What About the Next Generation?

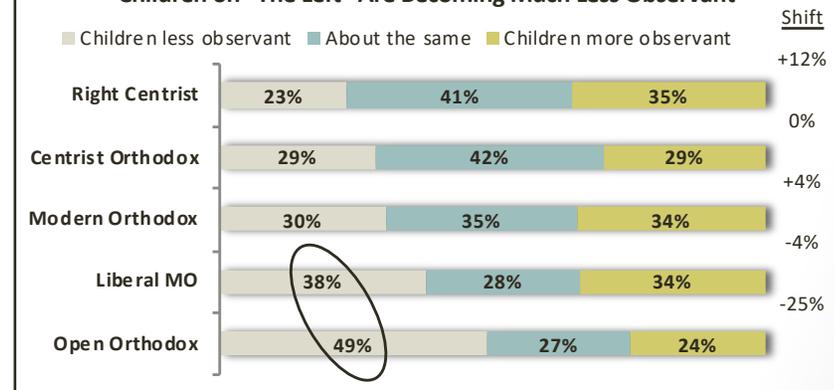
The survey shows that respondents’ children are willing to exercise prerogatives when it comes religion: one-third are less observant than their parents and one-third are more observant. This implies that many Modern Orthodox Jews are likely experiencing some levels of religious changes within their own families, and perhaps this creates an opportunity for people to consider existing attitudes.

Here, again, there are significant differences among denominations, as the liberal segments show a much higher percentage of their children being less observant. *This suggests that polarization will get worse, as well as having implications relating to the number of people leaving Orthodoxy.*

Shifts in Religious Observance Over the Past Decade



Children on “The Left” Are Becoming Much Less Observant



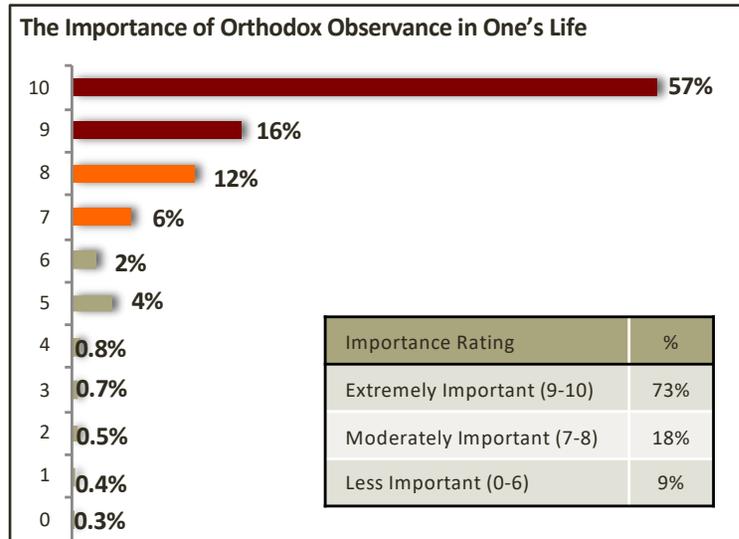
What might greater polarization across Modern Orthodoxy presage? The wide range of identities, beliefs and practices challenges perceptions of near uniformity in normative compliance and may ultimately affect the viability of there being a single camp known as Modern Orthodoxy. In the future, some Orthodox-identifying individuals may well stay within this camp, or they may seek a place in an adjacent “tradition-leaning” community.

* Nishma Research’s “Modern Orthodox - Survey of Those Who Have Left Orthodoxy - July 2016” is available at <http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html>.

Summary of Key Findings – The 2017 Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews (Continued)

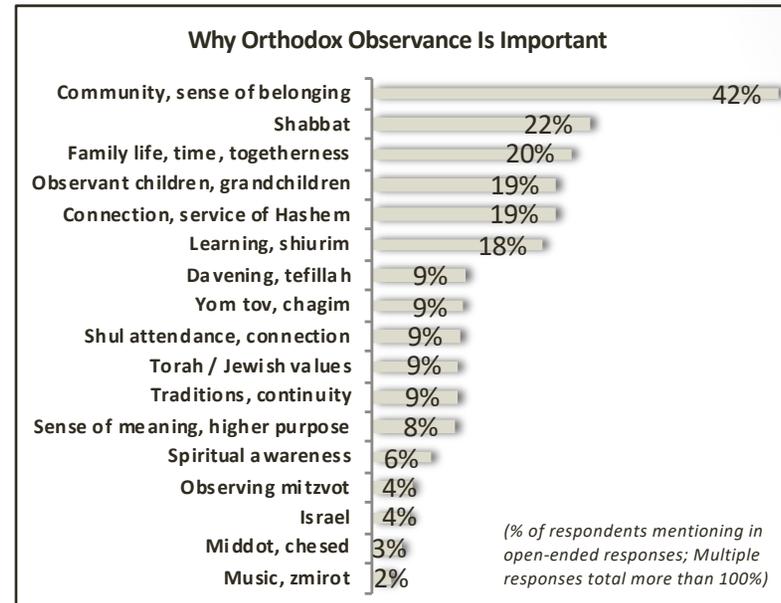
The Importance of Orthodox Observance as a Part of Life

Modern Orthodox Jews see their Orthodox Observance as an extremely important part of their life, with no notable differences between men and women, or by age.

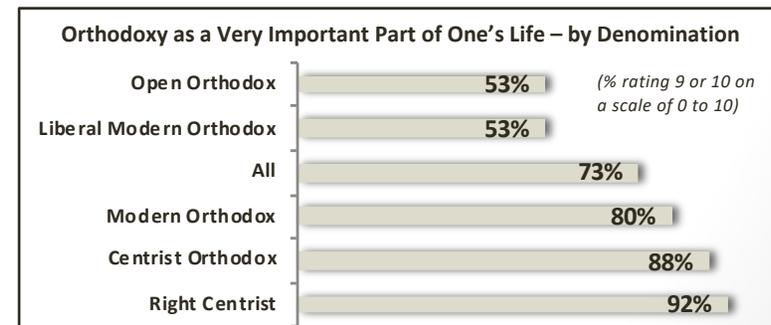


The #1 reason by a wide margin is the sense of community and belonging. Other reasons are Shabbat, family togetherness, seeing observant children, connection to *Hashem* and learning.

Torah Life subsumes many of these components, and the accompanying chart (see upper right) displays what respondents said when they were given the opportunity to explain (in an open-ended question), what gives them the most satisfaction, joy or meaning as Orthodox Jews.



Orthodox observance is a less important part of people's lives at the liberal end of the Modern Orthodox spectrum.



Summary of Key Findings – The 2017 Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews (Continued)

How Modern Orthodox Jews Feel About Shul

Shuls are central to Jewishly observant lives, as places of prayer, learning and community. To what extent do Modern Orthodox Jews avail themselves of what shuls offer, and what are the reactions – positive or negative – to the shul environment, policies and practices?

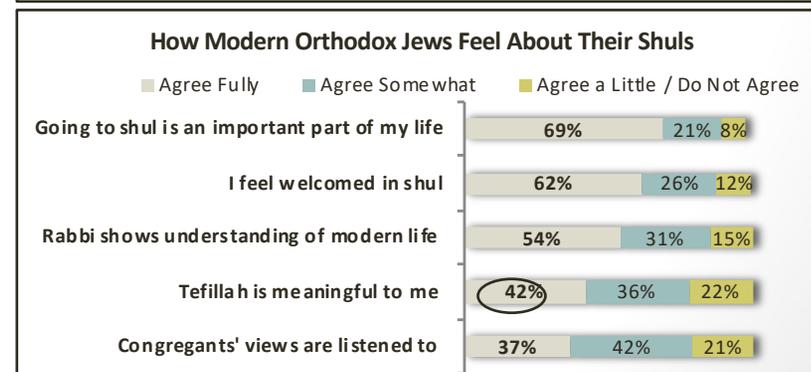
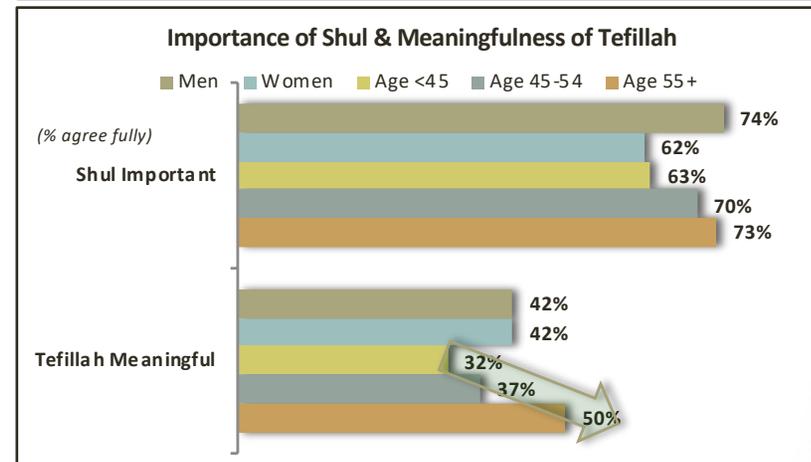
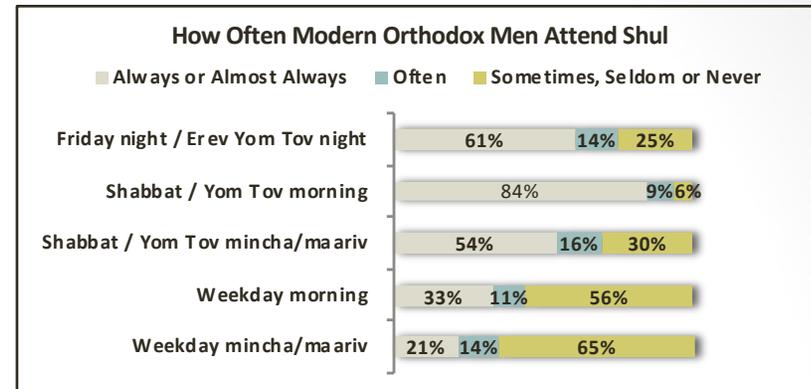
For many, attending shul services is mostly a weekend affair. 84% of men and 52% of women always or almost always attend shul on Shabbat or Yom Tov mornings (few women attend at other times), and 61% of men attend Friday night and Erev Yom Tov night. But men’s attendance during the week is much lower.

While people are comfortable in shul, feel welcomed and more than two-thirds say going to shul is an important part of their lives, fewer than half (42%) agree fully that the tefillah experience is meaningful to them.

Men find shul more important than women, although the two genders find *tefillah* of equally middling meaningfulness. Both importance of shul and meaningfulness of tefillah are lower among the young, and both rise notably with age. The meaningfulness of *tefillah* rises significantly as we move “to the right” (51% among Centrist and 61% among Right Centrist).

Shul Disconnections?

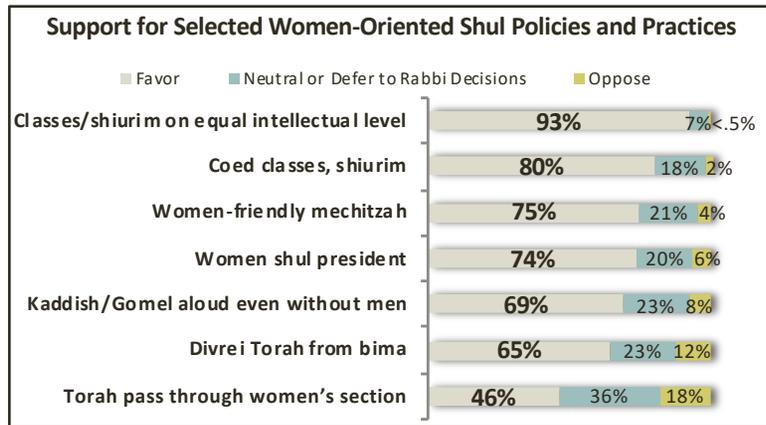
A slight majority (54%) agree fully that their rabbi’s decisions and guidance reflect an understanding of modern life, and fewer than half (37%) agree fully that they are listened to. This suggests that some may feel “disconnection” from their shul and its *hashkafa* (worldview).



Summary of Key Findings – The 2017 Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews (Continued)

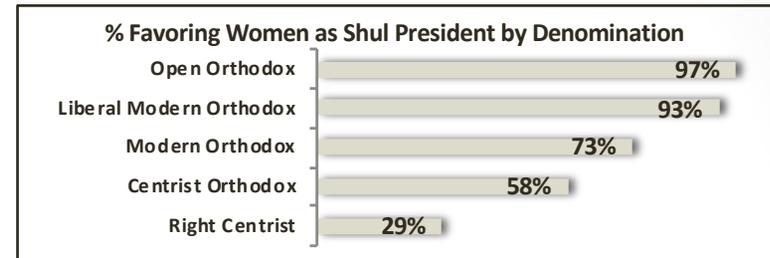
The Role and Status of Women

There is much talk about the role and status of women in shuls, institutions and the community, and there is in fact fairly broad support for a range of women-oriented shul policies and practices. An average of 72% favor the items on a list of seven shul policies and practices (see chart below). However, fewer than half (45% on average) are currently satisfied with where things stand – the progress to date on these policies and practices – in their Orthodox community .



Women as Shul Presidents

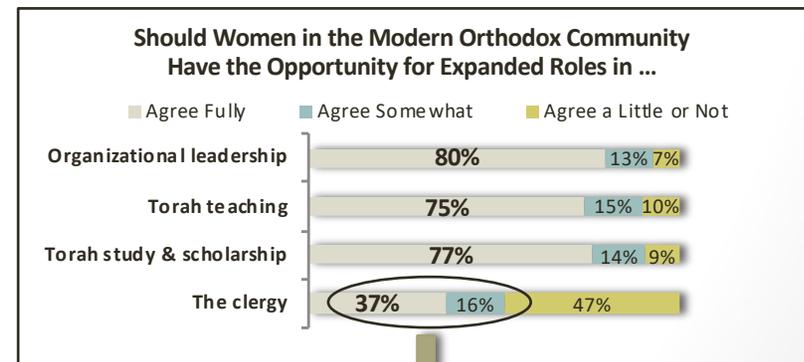
An issue of some recent contention is that of women as shul presidents, and some shuls with women presidents have faced criticism. *We find broad support – across nearly all of the Modern Orthodox spectrum – for women as shul presidents.* Support is below 50% only among the Right Centrist group.



Overall, nearly three-fourths (74%) favor this, including both men (70%) and women (79%). It is highest among the young (79% for ages 18-34).

Women's Opportunities for Other Expanded Roles

Beyond shul presidencies, we solicited views regarding women's opportunities for broader expanded roles, and found strong agreement that women should have the opportunity for expanded roles in organizational leadership, Torah teaching, and Torah study and scholarship.



53% Agree Fully or Somewhat

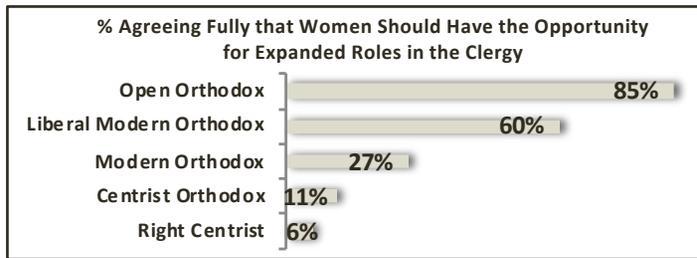
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Summary of Key Findings – The 2017 Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews (Continued)

Views on Expanded Women’s Roles in the Clergy ... and What About Women “Rabbis”?

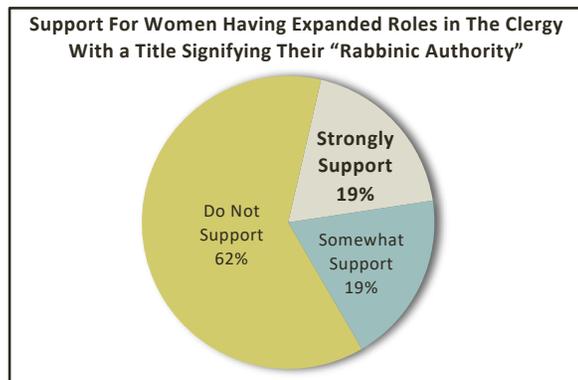
The preceding page showed that 53% of respondents believe that women in their Orthodox community should have the opportunity for expanded roles in the clergy; 37% agree fully and 16% agree somewhat.

The percentage agreeing fully is higher among women (43%) than men (31%), and much higher among women age 18-34 (52%). Support varies quite widely across the denominations.

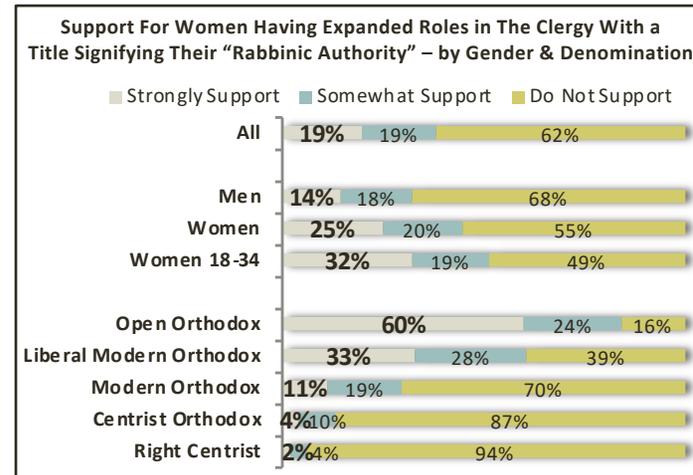


A follow-up question asked if they believe MO women with a role in the clergy should also have a “title signifying their ‘rabbinic authority.’” We did not suggest any specific title (e.g., *rabba*, *maharat*, etc.).

19% of all respondents strongly support Orthodox women in the clergy with a title, and an additional 19% somewhat support the concept (see definitions and methodology on page 49 of the full report).



Here we see differences in support by gender (women support this more than men, 25% vs. 14% ... and 32% among women ages 18-34). But the most striking differences are among the denominations.



The concept of women clergy with a title has 60% support among Open Orthodox, 33% among Liberal Modern Orthodox and 11% among Modern Orthodox. Support drops into the low single digits for the right-most denominations. This is the issue with greatest divide between left and right, no matter where the “dividing line” is placed.

	Open Orthodox	vs.	The 4 Right-Most Denominations
% Strongly Support	60%		14%

	Open & Liberal MO	vs.	The 3 Right-Most Denominations
% Strongly Support	42%		8%

Summary of Key Findings – The 2017 Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews (Continued)

Jewish Study and Learning

Adult Backgrounds and Learning

Modern Orthodox Jews have strong religious educational backgrounds: 47% have had post-high school yeshiva and/or advanced study (54% of men and 39% of women). Younger generations are more educated (68% of those ages 18-34 have had post-high school yeshiva and/or advanced study vs. 54% for ages 35-54 and 30% for ages 55+).

MO Jews take Jewish study and learning seriously, with men on average learning a few times a week and women once a week. Among those who learn, 43% of men learn *gemara* or *daf yomi*, and 10% of women do so. Other topics (*Parsha*, *Tanach*, *halacha*, *mussar* or Jewish issues relating to the modern world) are learned more equally by men and women.

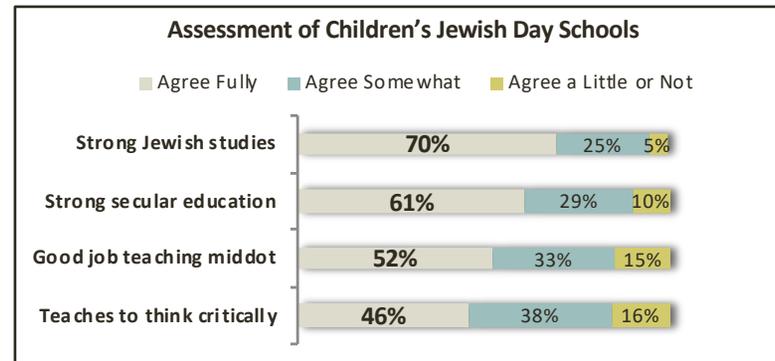
The survey gathered a substantial amount of feedback on what topics interest people (sample responses on page 54 of the full report).



Children’s Education

83% of respondents’ children in grades 1-12 attend an Orthodox Jewish day school, and 75% of the schools are either fully (45%) or partially (30%) coeducational.

Schools are rated generally well – a bit stronger, though, for Jewish studies (70% agree fully) than for secular education (61% agree fully).



Elementary schools (grades 1-8) and high schools are rated equally for their Jewish studies, but high schools are better for secular studies.

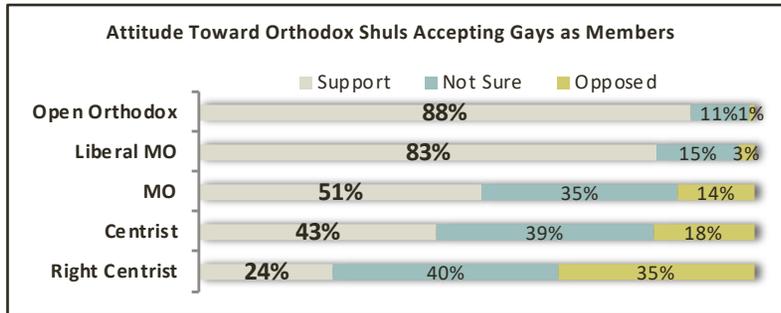
Some the other attributes rated were whether schools encourage college (92% agree fully), teach students to think critically (46%), meet special education needs (32%), teach *tzniut* (modest behavior) (22%) and sex education (22%) – the last two items were asked of parents of age-appropriate students.

Summary of Key Findings – The 2017 Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews (Continued)

Sexuality ... A Trend Toward More Open Attitudes

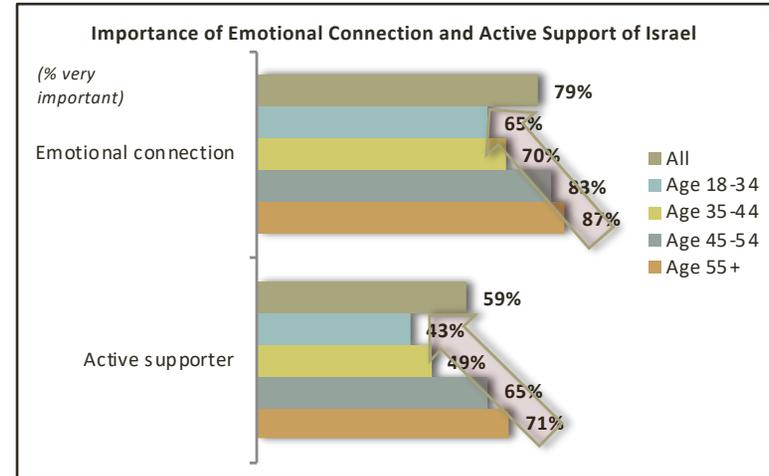
U.S. society has experienced a shift toward greater acceptance of gays. Since a tenet of Modern Orthodoxy is interaction with secular society, it is interesting to see if the secular society attitudes have permeated Modern Orthodoxy. In fact, MO has similarly become more open to gays. Overall, 58% support Orthodox shuls in general accepting gays as members with 12% opposed (29% are not sure).

About one-third have used sex education counseling or information resources, more often using secular than Jewish-g geared resources.



Connections to Israel

Overall, 79% say their emotional connection to Israel is very important, and 59% say it is important for them to actively support Israel. But both (emotional connections and support) are much lower below age 45.



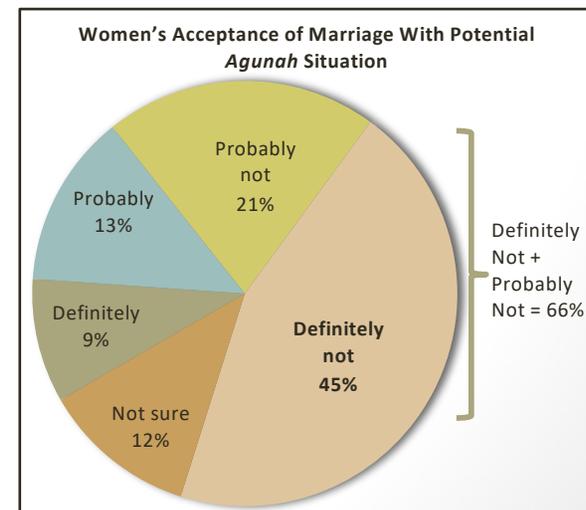
Divorce and Agunot

To see how knowledgeable people are, the survey presented five “halachic statements” relating to Jewish divorce (some were correct and some were not). Overall, an average of 71% correctly understand halachot about a get, remarriage, etc.

Among marrieds, 83% of men and 73% of women say they were aware at the time of their marriage of the conditions around the practice of a get.

There has been much publicity in recent years of the agunah problem, with the result that two-thirds of women, if they were to marry in an Orthodox ceremony, would not agree to an arrangement in which they could become an agunah if their husband did not grant a get.

85% of all respondents say they would definitely prefer that a close female relative of theirs, if to be married, would obtain a halachic pre-nuptial agreement.



Summary of Key Findings – The 2017 Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews (Continued)

Modern Orthodox Successes and Opportunities

Successes

Modern Orthodoxy well achieves its goal of melding the observant Jewish lifestyle with participation in modern society. There are aspects of Modern Orthodoxy that are generally working notably well and may provide examples for the broader community:

- There are strong levels of belief, observance and a very powerful sense of community ... and overall religious observance is becoming *stronger*.
- Levels of Shabbat observance are very high, and respondents greatly value Shabbat for the family connectedness it fosters and for providing a needed break from day-to-day activities.
- Shuls are vibrant and well-attended centers of prayer, learning and community.
- There is a strong focus on Jewish education, both for children – including very high Jewish day school enrollment, a key driver of Jewish continuity – and for adults.
- There is much interest in and study of Jewish topics, and desires to explore an array of topics relating to Torah study as well as Judaism in the modern world.
- There is great value seen in education (61% achieve post-graduate or professional degrees, with commensurately high family incomes) and in participating in society.
- There is much satisfaction and joy in seeing the transmission of Jewish values and practices to children and grandchildren.
- There are strong emotional and activist connections in support of Israel.
- There has been growth in opportunities for women leadership in communal roles, as well as Torah teaching, study and scholarship.

Opportunities

At the same time, there are opportunities to strengthen the community by building upon what is currently in place. For example:

- There are high levels of observance of *tefillah* – Jewish prayer – but many do not find it to be very meaningful. There is room for creativity in making *tefillah* more meaningful for more people.
- Jewish study is highly valued, and respondents provided a very wide range of suggestions for additional topics of interest.
- There has been growth and acceptance of women in *halachic* roles, and that of the *yoetzet halachah* has been particularly well-received and heavily utilized in communities where available.
- There has been some growth and acceptance of women on shul clergy staffs. While issues relating to such positions and how they are defined still need to be resolved, there are many within Modern Orthodoxy that value this in some form.
- The *halachic* prenuptial agreement has gained acceptance as a way to mitigate the *agunah* problem, and efforts to further its use would be beneficial.
- There is a strong base of education on topics relating to both *bein adam l'makom* (relationships with Hashem) and *bein adam l'chaveiro* (relationships with other people). Given the communal aspects that people cite as problems, there are opportunities to reinforce teachings relating to the latter.
- This Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews shows many areas where differences exist across the spectrum of Modern Orthodoxy. While there are issues that have created divisions, we hope that this study and others will ultimately help to promote respectful dialogue across denominations, spur our community to find commonalities, and help find ways to reconcile differences.

Summary of Key Findings – The 2017 Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews (Continued)

The Biggest Problems Facing Modern Orthodoxy

Respondents were presented with 27 issues facing Modern Orthodoxy, and asked to assess which ones they saw as serious problems.

Overall, finances are seen as the biggest problem. By a wide margin, the cost of Jewish schooling ranks as the #1 problem, and also among the top 10 are the cost of maintaining a Jewish home (#4) and the adequacy of funds to meet community needs (#10).

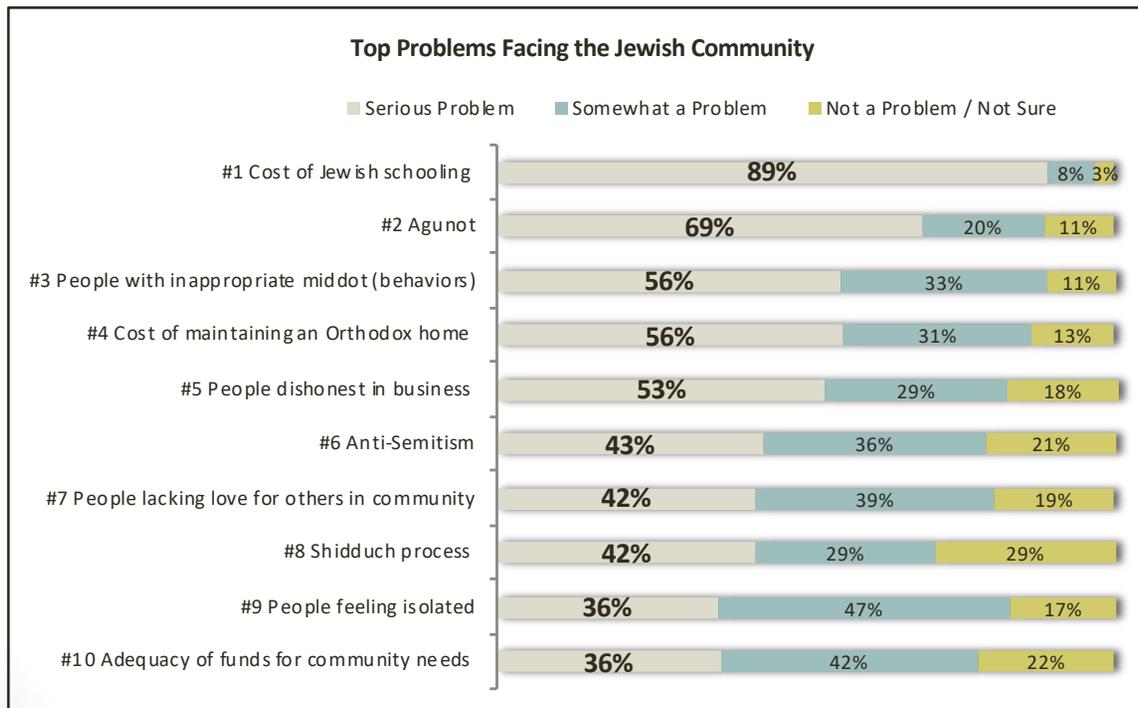
The highly-publicized *agunah* issue ranks as the #2 problem. Several other of the top problems involve interpersonal behaviors, including #3 - religious people not dealing with others with appropriate middot (proper behaviors); #5 - religious people being dishonest in business;

and #7 - people lacking love for others in the community.

There is general consistency of views across gender and age, with a few nominal variations.

Across all issues, women are slightly more concerned on average than men; and the younger (18-34) and older (65%+) are more concerned than those ages 35-64.

There are substantial variations in overall levels of concern across the denominations, with the “right” (Centrist / Right Centrist) groups expressing generally more concern across the 27 issues than the “left” (Open Orthodox / Liberal Modern Orthodox) groups.



The Rest of the List (Issues Ranked #11-27 Overall)

Rank	Issue	Serious
11	Observant lifestyle but little spiritual meaning	34%
12	Availability of special needs education	33%
13	Rabbis opposed to increased women's roles	32%
14	Needs of the elderly	29%
15	Raising children with religious Jewish values	28%
16	Substance abuse	26%
17	Day school / yeshiva admission policies	26%
18	Rising divorce rates	25%
19	Physical or mental abuse	25%
20	People leaving Orthodoxy	25%
21	Poverty	25%
22	People not committed enough to religious growth	23%
23	Technological and cultural threats	20%
24	Modern Orthodoxy becoming less observant	19%
25	Not enough outreach/ kiruv	18%
26	Modern Orthodoxy becoming more observant	16%
27	Rabbis advocating for increased women's roles	7%

Starting a Conversation: A Pioneering Survey of Those Who Have Left the Orthodox Community

*Journeys, practices, beliefs, identity, community and relationships within the
Modern Orthodox Segment*

July 21, 2016



The full report for all respondents and for the
Modern Orthodox segment are available at:
<http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html>

Summary of Key Findings – The experiences, beliefs, practices, community and challenges facing those who have left Modern Orthodoxy

Introduction

Many of us have heard of the phenomenon of people venturing forth from the Orthodox world and trying to find a place in the broader American society. Often scorned by their families and communities for having gone OTD* (“off the derech” - off the path), their stories, as told in a number of recent memoirs, have been gripping.

What has been missing until now is quantitative data on this trend. Nishma Research, a Connecticut-based research firm that focuses on the Jewish community, has just completed the first-ever large-scale survey of this demographic.

With 885 responses from across the Orthodox spectrum, this survey gives voice to a growing segment of the Jewish community. Respondents provided deeply personal and poignant responses about the journey they have taken, their identity, practices, beliefs and relationships. They told us what they went through, what they might have done differently, and gave advice to others who are considering leaving their Orthodox community for a different lifestyle.

Survey Sample

Included in this survey were people who had an Orthodox upbringing, but who no longer consider themselves to fully be a member of the Orthodox community in which they were raised. Analysis was done for all 855 responses and separately for four segments (1) the formerly Chasidic excluding Chabad, (2) the formerly Chabad, (3) the formerly Yeshivish and (4) the formerly Modern Orthodox.

This report presents the results for the 230 Modern Orthodox respondents. Not unexpectedly, the Modern Orthodox responses differed for many questions from those of the Chareidi segments (Chasidic, Chabad and Yeshivish). Those wishing to explore these differences should download the full survey report (which includes all segments), which is available at <http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html>. The survey questionnaire and all study-related documents are available at that site.

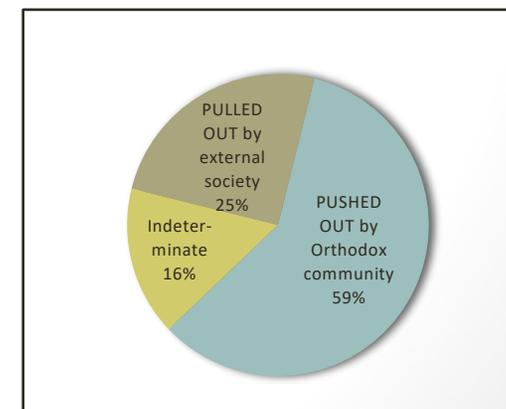
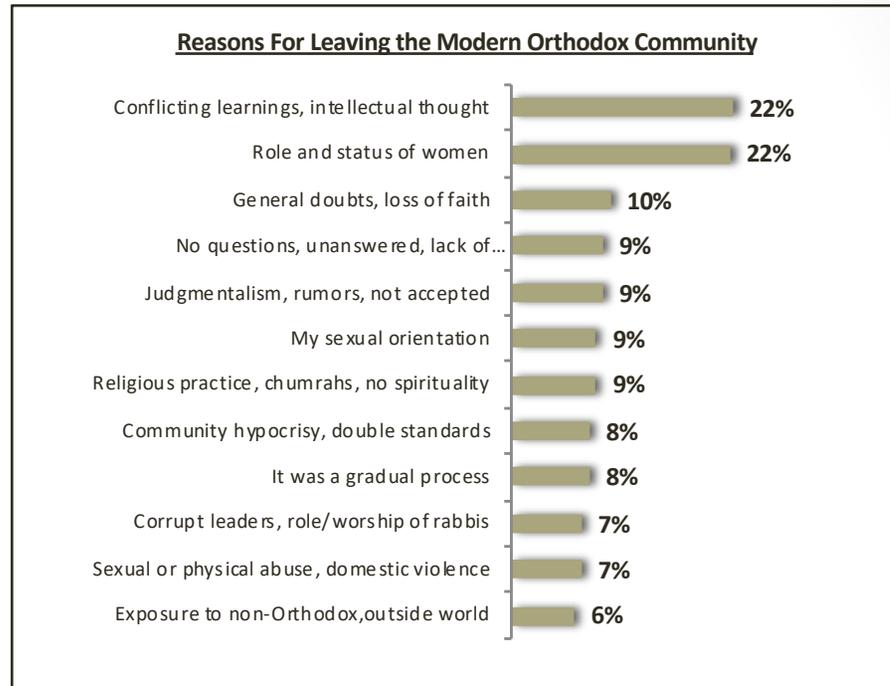
Community of Origin	Responses
Chasidic (excl. Chabad)	216
Chabad	97
Yeshivish	221
Modern Orthodox	230
Other	118
Total	885

* Those who have left Orthodoxy are often referred to as “OTD” and they sometimes refer to themselves that way. Some people like the term and some do not like it so much; but it’s become widely used and so we adopt it in this report as appropriate, as a shorthand appellation.

Summary of Key Findings – The experiences, beliefs, practices, community and challenges facing those who have left Modern Orthodoxy *(Continued)*

Why People Left Their Modern Orthodox Community

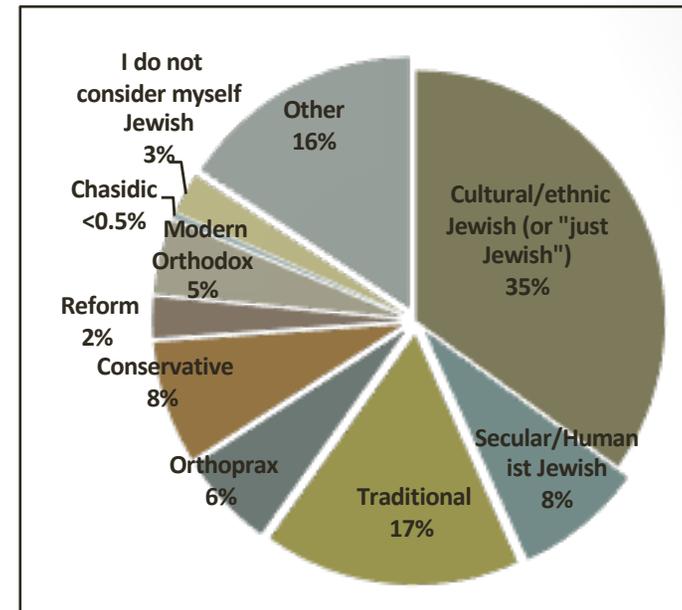
- Rather than having respondents fill out a “checklist,” the questionnaire included an open-ended question asking why people left their community, and giving them as much space as they wanted to tell their stories. The responses (which were often quite lengthy) were analyzed and coded against a list of 50+ reasons that people gave, with many giving multiple reasons.
- Some people were alienated by flaws they saw in the community or its leaders, and it turned out that by significantly more than a 2-to-1 margin in terms of reasons why people left, “community internal factors” were more influential in *pushing* people out than “societal outside factors” were in *pulling* people from the community. For many people, push and pull factors were both at work.
- The two most often given reasons why people left their community were intellectual thinking they had done about religion and the role and status of women, each cited by 22% of respondents. Personal curiosity and openness to the world often created a gradual process of grappling with modernity and knowledge in conflict with previously held beliefs.
- However, women mentioned the role and status of women as causing their beliefs and practices to change much more often than did men (37% vs. 7%).
- Other key factors were communal attitudes toward questioning, judgmentalism, respondents’ sexual orientation, communal “hypocrisy” (an often-used term), and the scope and stringent nature of Judaism as practiced in their community



Summary of Key Findings – The experiences, beliefs, practices, community and challenges facing those who have left Modern Orthodoxy *(Continued)*

How Do They Now Identify Jewishly?

- The formerly Modern Orthodox (M.O.) are “post-denominational,” by which we mean that their Jewish affiliations were more self-defined than conforming to the common denominations: 60% labeled themselves as traditional, secular/humanist, cultural/ethnic or “just Jewish,” and only 15% identified themselves as members of a denomination. In contrast, the 2013 Pew Survey found that 70% of U.S. Jews identified with a denomination.
- A strong majority (78%) stated that being Jewish was very or somewhat important to them. However, women more often said that being Jewish was very important to them, 53% vs. 42%.
- Similarly, a strong majority (77%) stated they had a very or somewhat strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people. Again, women more often said this than men, 56% vs. 47%.
- Interestingly, across numerous survey questions, the formerly Modern Orthodox have retained more positive feelings toward Jewishness than the formerly Chareidi (the Chasidic and Yeshivish branches of Orthodoxy, often collectively referred to as “Ultra-Orthodox”), perhaps because their departure was less traumatic (because they already lived somewhat in secular society, spoke the language, dressed more modernly, etc.). For example, 36% of the Modern Orthodox keep kosher vs. 30% of Chareidi; and 78% of the Modern Orthodox say being Jewish is important to them vs. 59% of Chareidi.



Importance of Being Jewish	All M.O. Respondents	Men	Women	Pew Survey – M.O. Jews
Very Important	47%	42%	53%	N.A.
Somewhat Important	31%	35%	25%	N.A.
Total	78%	77%	78%	89%

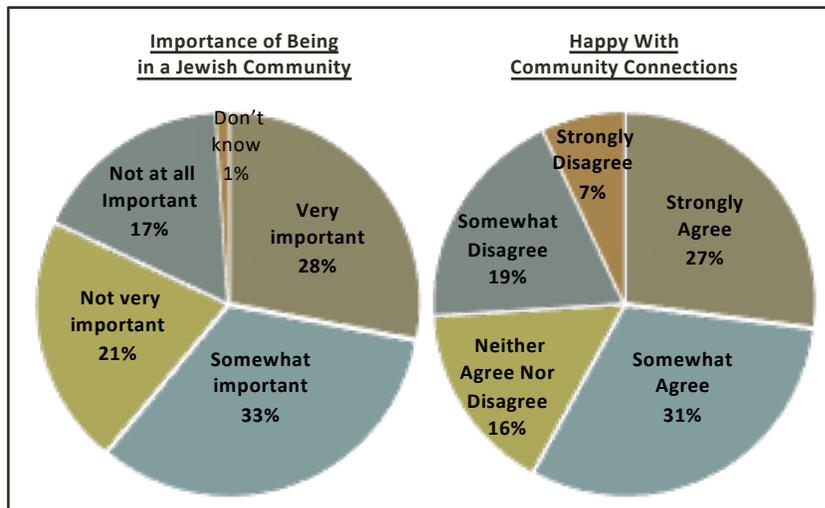
Sense of Belonging to the Jewish People	All M.O. Respondents	Men	Women	Pew Survey – M.O. Jews
Very Strong	51%	47%	56%	N.A.
Somewhat Strong	26%	24%	25%	N.A.
Total	77%	71%	81%	100%

Summary of Key Findings – The experiences, beliefs, practices, community and challenges facing those who have left Modern Orthodoxy *(Continued)*

Jewish Beliefs, Practices and Connections

- Our survey respondents are not strong believers in God. But they like to keep connections to Jewishness and they maintain some practices at levels not very dissimilar from those of other groups of U.S. Jews.
- For example, 36% keep kosher, a level that is much lower than that of all Modern Orthodox Jews (83%), although in line with that of Conservative Jews (31%).

	All M.O. Respondents	Men	Women	Pew – Modern Orthodox / Conservative / Reform
Believe in God (% strongly)	21%	17%	24%	77% / 41% / 29%
Light Sabbath candles (% regularly/sometimes)	52%	51%	53%	78% / 34% / 10%
Keep kosher (% strictly/mostly)	36%	34%	33%	83% / 31% / 7%

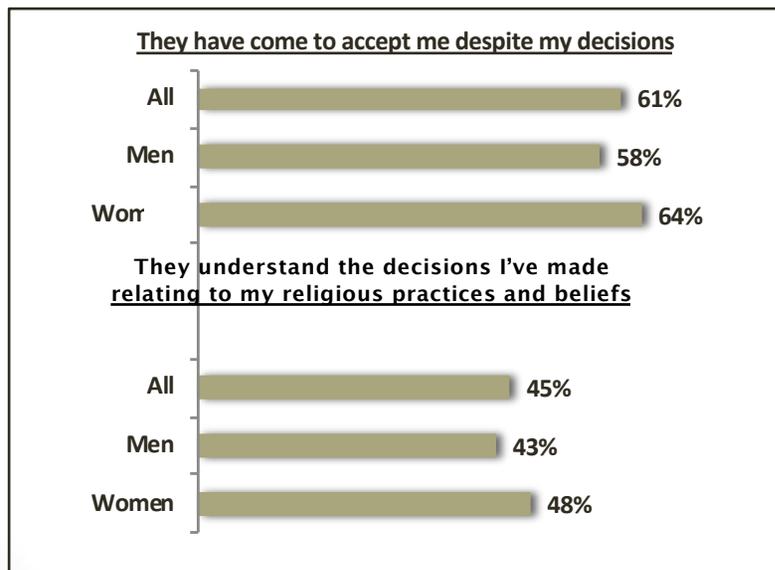
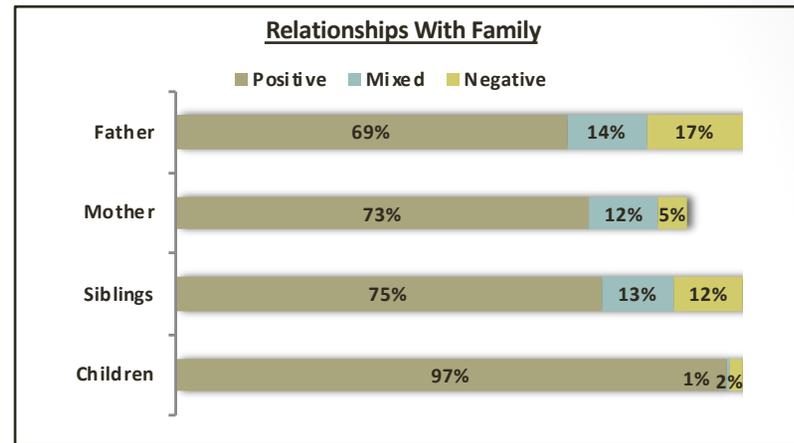


- In terms of their feeling of connection to various types of communities, more than half (61%) feel it is important to be part of a Jewish community, and more than half (58%) are happy with their community connections overall.
- Only 33% still feel connected to the Orthodox community where they grew up, while 53% feel connected to a different Jewish community and 47% feel connected to a non-Jewish community.
- Women are happier with their community connections than are men, 64% vs. 51%.

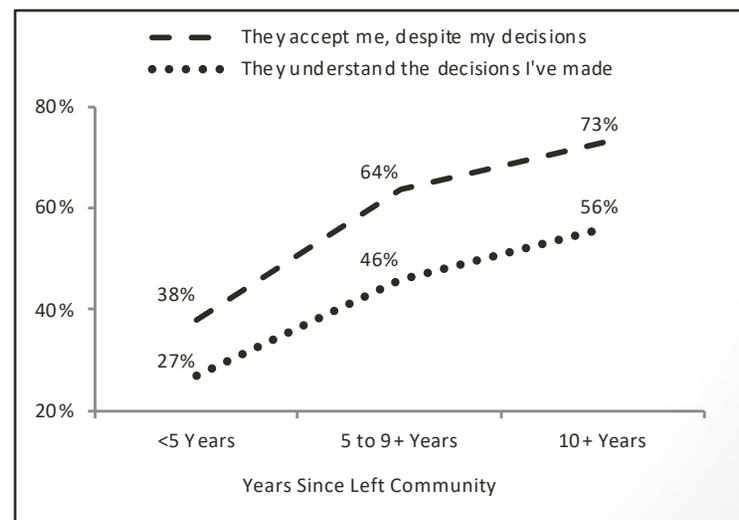
Summary of Key Findings – The experiences, beliefs, practices, community and challenges facing those who have left Modern Orthodoxy *(Continued)*

Family Relationships and Acceptance

- Family relationships are challenging, but a majority have a positive relationship with their families (69% with their fathers, 73% with their mothers and 75% with siblings).
- Men have better family relationships with parents than do women: better with their father (73% vs. 63%); and with their mother (78% vs. 68%). Relationships with siblings and children are about the same for men and women.
- A significant majority (61%) say their families have come to accept them, but fewer than half (45%) say their families understand the decisions they have made relating to their religious practices and beliefs. Men's and women's responses to these statements did not vary significantly.



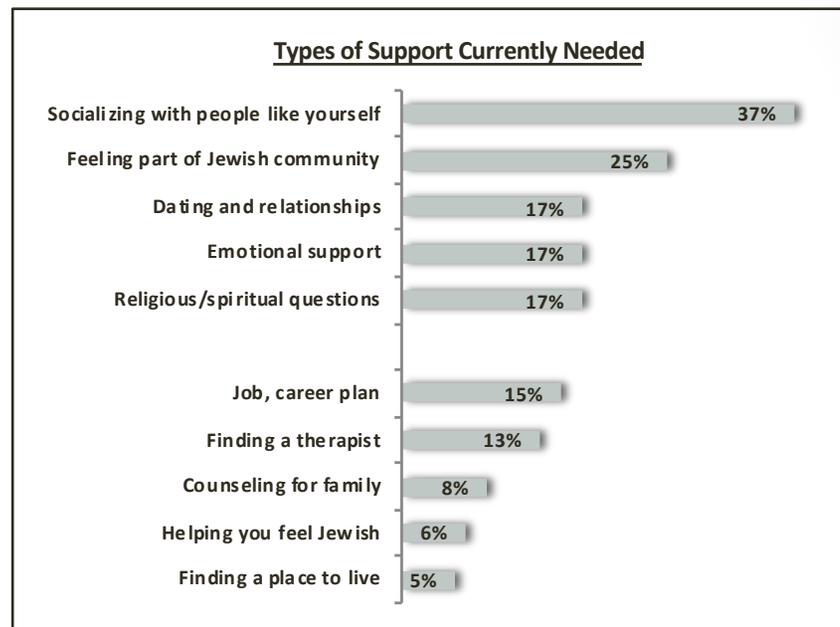
- Both families' understanding and acceptance do grow substantially over time.



Summary of Key Findings – The experiences, beliefs, practices, community and challenges facing those who have left Modern Orthodoxy *(Continued)*

Support Needs

- Those who have left the Modern Orthodox community continue to face challenges. The most often expressed needs were in areas of socializing with people like themselves (37%), feeling themselves a part of the Jewish community (25%), dating and relationships (17%), emotional support (17%) and religious questions (17%).
- One area where there was a significant difference between men and women was in their seeking help to feel part of the Jewish community. 30% of women cited this as a need vs. 18% of men.
- The most frequent sources of past support have been friends (53%), Facebook groups or other social media (24%), relatives (22%) and community leaders and rabbis (16%).



Articles Based on Nishma Orthodox Community Research

- “Is Orthodoxy without God Sustainable?” - The Times of Israel, November 24, 2017
- “Is American Modern Orthodoxy Facing a Schism?” - The Times of Israel, December 13, 2017
- “Survey Highlights Risk of Modern Orthodox Going ‘Off the *Derech*,’” - The Times of Israel December 20, 2017

“Is Orthodoxy Without God Sustainable?” - *The Times of Israel*, November 24, 2017

“Is Orthodoxy Without God Sustainable?” – By Mark Trencher, Nishma Research

Surveys of the American Modern Orthodox community have consistently shown a lack of uniformity in beliefs. The Pew Research Center found in 2013 that 77% of American Modern Orthodox Jews “believe in God with absolute certainty,” and Nishma Research found in its broad 2017 survey of the American Modern Orthodox community that 74% believe fully that “*Hashem* (God) created the world.” While these are fairly high percentages of normative belief, they also suggest that somewhere around one-fourth of Modern Orthodox do not rely on belief in God, the divinity of the Torah or the obligations of *Halakha* for religious inspiration.

Social orthodoxy – as it is now labeled – has been much debated since Jay Lefkowitz wrote “The Rise of Social Orthodoxy: A Personal Account” (Commentary, April 2014). As Lefkowitz noted, Modern Orthodox Jews are “much less doctrinaire” than the ultra-Orthodox (*Haredi*), but they are also “more engaged in broad Jewish communal life than either the *Haredim* or the less observant and much more numerous Conservative and Reform communities... Many self-identifying Modern Orthodox Jews, despite being more ‘Modern’ than ‘Orthodox,’ are living intensely Jewish lives... (and) ... their dogma-averse approach to theology and to *halakha* ... is the essence of Social Orthodoxy.”

Not surprisingly, Lefkowitz’s article drew a strong and often critical reaction. Typical of the generally dubious reactions, his rabbi, Haskel Lookstein, in a Shabbat sermon a few weeks after the article was published, asked: “Can Social Orthodoxy actually produce generations of committed Jews? ... Doesn’t (the) effort and consistency (required of a committed Jew) rest on a foundation of God, a divinely authored *halakha* and, therefore, a required set of observances, not just a reasoned, voluntary performance of rituals?”

The recent Nishma Research survey posed a wide range of questions about attitudes covering many subjects. Those most often highlighted in media coverage dealt with the role of women in orthodoxy and the high cost of Jewish education. But the survey also provides some empirical data that shed a bit more light on the fundamental question: Is social orthodoxy sustainable? Will the children of practicing but non-believing Jews stay within this broadened fold?

To answer this question, we examined Modern Orthodox Jews who are fully and visibly observant: (1) they are strictly observant of *shmirat Shabbat* (keeping Shabbat); (2) they are strictly observant of keeping kosher; and (3) they have a high level of shul attendance (men who always or almost always attend Shabbat / Yom Tov morning services, and women who always, almost always or often attend Shabbat / Yom Tov morning services).

We then divided these “observant in practice” Jews into two groups: Full Believers (those who believe fully that Hashem created the world), and Non-Believers (those who responded that they have doubts, do not believe this or don’t know).

(Continued)

“Is Orthodoxy without God Sustainable?” (Continued)

Not surprisingly, there were many differences between the two groups. Just a few examples: Full Believers spend more time engaged in the study of Jewish topics: 66% do so two or more times weekly, compared to 42% of Non-Believers. High percentages of both groups send their children to a Jewish day school, although more of the Full Believers do so (88%) than the Non-Believers (81%). And the Non-Believers skew more left within Modern Orthodoxy: 44% are Open Orthodox, compared to 12% of Full Believers.

But the ultimate measure of the effectiveness of Social Orthodoxy may be in the transmission of observance to the next generation. Among Full-Believers, 28% report that their children are more observant than they are and an equal 28% report that their children are less observant ... essentially a status quo. Among Non-Believers, 18% report that their children are more observant than they are and 41% report that their children are less observant ... a loss of 23%. (Due to the relatively smaller sample of Non-Believers, this 23% figure is statistically significant at the 90% level, which is lower than the general guideline of 95% significance, but noteworthy nonetheless).

It is difficult to speculate as to the reasons, and there are insufficient data to say exactly how and why the children of Non-Believers are less observant than their parents. (For one thing, there is the other parent, who may be less religious than the respondent.) Some people offered explanations: “He doesn’t *daven* except for Shabbat/holidays,” “Judaism is not as central to her life as it is to me,” “Religious practices not important,” “more liberal towards adherence to *mitzvot* and can be non-observant of prohibitions,” “Doesn’t *daven* during the week, only on Shabbat,” “Formal involvement is not as important (e.g. going to shul).”

The sociologist Prof. Steven M. Cohen of HUC-JIR has found in his research that any “blemish” in Orthodox upbringing was associated with diminished *frumkeit* among children, and being a non-believer in *Hashem* can certainly be viewed as a blemish of sorts. Of course, the underpinning of Modern Orthodoxy is to be involved in secular society, and the more insular Jewish groups (*Haredi*) view that as a blemish that will ultimately lead to non-observance.

The question we originally asked was, “is social orthodoxy sustainable?” This question can be viewed a bit differently as: to what extent will the children of practicing but non-believing (or less-believing) Jews stay within the broad fold of Modern Orthodoxy? Insofar as Modern Orthodoxy seeks to embrace and include Jews whose levels of belief, belonging and behavior sometimes and somewhat depart from the normative, it will continue to attract Jews with lower levels of inter-generational transmission. Is there a point when they should no longer be viewed as fitting within the breadth of Modern Orthodoxy? Perhaps, and they might then enrich some of the non-Orthodox or quasi-Orthodox religious communities.

“Is American Modern Orthodoxy Facing a Schism?” - The Times of Israel, December 13, 2017

“Is American Modern Orthodoxy Facing a Schism?” – By Mark Trencher, Nishma Research

Recent survey data indicate that Modern Orthodoxy (MO) is indeed moving toward a possible schism, but it may well be our attitudes as much as the differences among us that will determine whether that occurs.

There has been a perception in recent years of growing – and worsening – polarization across Modern Orthodoxy. The 2017 Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews did in fact confirm that those on the right have, over the past 10 years, shifted strongly further to the right, while those on the left have shifted further left.

However, questions regarding the extent of polarization are complicated, worthy of future research, and require some clarification.

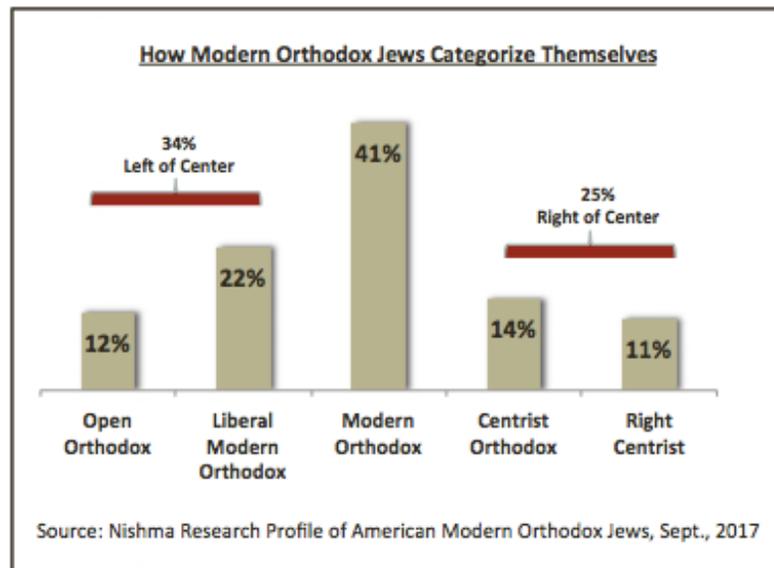
Modern Orthodoxy Comes in a Lot of Varieties

Surveys of the MO community have generally viewed (or, at least, classified) the community homogeneously. But we wanted to explore how Jews position themselves across a spectrum of “sub-denominations” (for simplicity, we will refer to these as groups) within Modern Orthodoxy; and we wanted to explore differences among these groups. (See accompanying chart.)

We labeled five groups, from left to right (based on what we heard in a series of interviews and guidance from the study’s advisory group), as follows: Open Orthodox, Liberal Modern Orthodox, Modern Orthodox, Centrist Orthodox and “Right-wing” Centrist Orthodox (e.g., tending toward Yeshivish).

Interestingly, 93% of respondents were able to identify themselves as “belonging to” one of the five delineated groups, and so it is clear that MO Jews have a sense of where they fit across the spectrum.

One thing the overall survey findings revealed is that MO Jews are very far from homogeneous, and this applies to almost all of their beliefs, religious observances and attitudes as well as their demographic characteristics. Indeed, the variations within MO are arguably broader than those within the *Charedi* world, or within Conservative or Reform Jewry.



“Is American Modern Orthodoxy Facing a Schism?” (Continued)

Is Polarization Increasing?

While we see that there is currently much variation across Modern Orthodoxy, we do not know statistically how the relative percentages comprising the various groups have changed over time, and thus we do not have empirical trend data based on this question to state that fragmentation is growing.

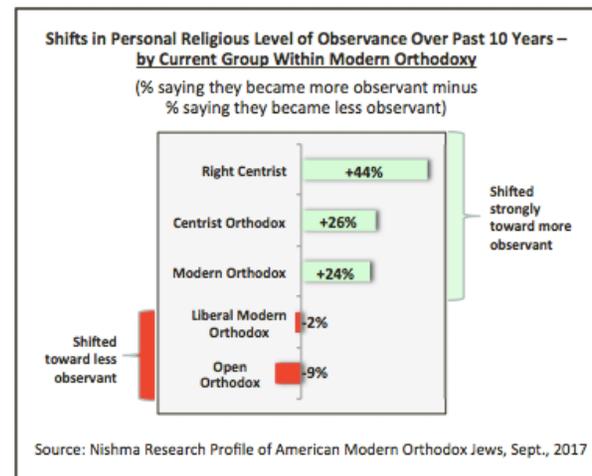
We do know that the Open Orthodox movement, which has spurred and has given an ideological voice to the MO left, came into existence only twenty years ago, and we also know from the survey data that Modern Orthodoxy overall has become more observant over the past decade. These factors – the emergence of an Open Orthodox movement as a vibrant option on the left, the overall shift to the right, and at the same time (and perhaps as a result of the two trends) the growing and public debates about issues such as the role of women – support the thesis of a widening rift, albeit not verifiable by statistical trend data (over time).

(The study found that, across the spectrum of Modern Orthodoxy,) those on the right have shifted further right, while those on the left have shifted further left (see accompanying chart). What we do know is that those now on the right have more often shifted to the right and those now on the left have more often shifted to the left. This makes sense, since people’s past shifts have played a role in where they currently see themselves. Just saying the current left has shifted left and the current right has shifted right might be overstating the extent of polarization. We need to explore this further.

Where is the Next Generation Heading?

A key question is, will today’s right continue to shift further to the right, at the same time that today’s left continues to shift further left? Some data to help us think ahead on this issue is found in how survey respondents described their children’s observance (we asked specifically about the oldest child age 14+), i.e., are their children more or less observant than they are? Overall, we saw a “status quo”: one-third (33%) said their children are less observant than they are and one-third (33%) said their children are more observant than they are.

But how does this play out among the left-to-right groups within Modern Orthodoxy? To some extent, if there are variations among the groups, this might give us a sense of how the religious landscape could change over the next generation. The following chart is similar to the one shown above, but instead of exploring respondents’ personal changes in observance, we are now looking at how their children’s level of observance differs from their own.



(Continued)

“Is American Modern Orthodoxy Facing a Schism?” (Continued)

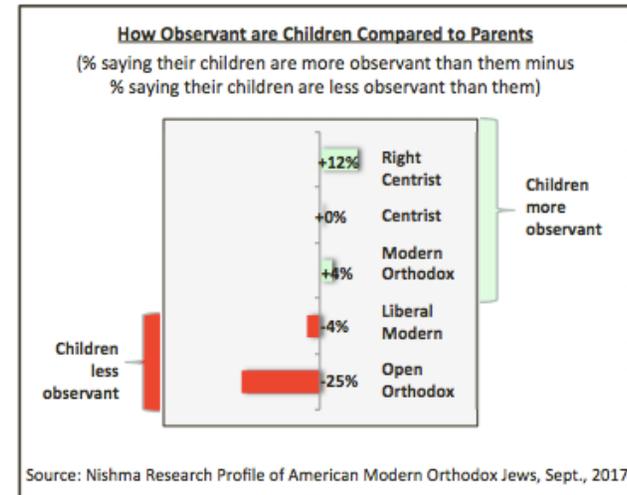
If we were to “fast-forward” 35 years or so (the median current age of the oldest child), this could give us some sense of the direction toward which the future religious landscape is moving. The children of today’s right-most group are currently a bit more to the right of their parents (see accompanying chart) and most will likely continue to define themselves as right-wing Modern Orthodox (although the verbatim responses explaining how they are more observant did indicate that some may move to the *Charedi* world). The children of today’s Liberal Modern Orthodox are a bit more to the left of their parents and most will likely continue to define themselves as left-wing Modern Orthodox. But the children of today’s Open Orthodox are substantially to the left of their parents. Some may leave Orthodoxy, but those who continue to define themselves as Modern Orthodox will be further left than today’s Open Orthodox, and this could stretch the fabric of Modern Orthodoxy.

So Where Does This Leave Us?

An observation in the survey report is worth repeating: “The wide range of identities, beliefs and practices challenges perceptions relating to the extent of uniformity (or close to it) in normative compliance. This wide range may ultimately affect the viability of there being a single camp known as Modern Orthodox. In the future, some Orthodox-identifying individuals may well stay within this camp, or they may seek a place in an adjacent ‘tradition-leaning’ community.”

We need to also remember the survey finding that it is the sense of community that gives MO Jews the most satisfaction, joy or meaning to their Jewish life. Across the spectrum, there is much love of being a member of the Modern Orthodox community – despite complaints and quibbles.

Will there be a schism? It’s really going to be attitudinal. We Modern Orthodox Jews have never been homogeneous in our beliefs, practices and attitudes, and we have long recognized and lived with diversity among us. If we continue to recognize and accept our diversity and our differences, our tent will be larger and stronger, and we will might even have opportunities to learn from each other.



“Survey Highlights Risk of Modern Orthodox ‘Going Off the *Derech*’ (Leaving Orthodoxy)” - *The Times of Israel*, December 20, 2017

“Survey Highlights Risk of Modern Orthodox ‘Going Off the *Derech*’ (Leaving Orthodoxy)” – By Mark Trencher, Nishma Research

There has been growing concern in the Orthodox Jewish world in recent years about people leaving Orthodoxy – going “off the *derech*” (off the path) or, as it is sometimes labeled, “going OTD.” Our recent survey sheds light on this phenomenon

The personal experiences recounted in memoirs (such as Shulem Deen’s *All Who Go Do Not Return* and Leah Vincent’s *Cut Me Loose*) and films (e.g., Netflix’s recent *One of Us*) suggest that this has been viewed largely as a *Haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) world phenomenon that affects individuals in those insulated sects. It is likely that the media and public curiosity have focused more on the stories of *Hasidic* people leaving their fold because their stories are so intriguing, as they often portray strangers in a strange land, with barely any secular education, limited ability to earn a living, often speaking little English, and with only the most minimal understanding of how the world outside their cloistered community works. Additionally, they are often shunned by and alienated from their community and family, and so they draw both curiosity and sympathy.

The OTD trend in the Modern Orthodox (MO) world has, unfortunately, been largely ignored, even though it is actually much easier for someone from the MO community to “check out” (since they are already well-embedded into secular society). It is easier for someone Modern Orthodox to leave the fold in terms of their beliefs and even many practices, because they can retain enough of their look and mannerisms to still live within the community and be largely accepted – albeit perhaps as a more liberal and less *frum* (observant) Jew.

Two questions I am often asked are: why do people leave the Orthodox world, and how many are leaving? Nishma’s 2016 study of 885 people who left Orthodoxy provided answers to the first question: why do people leave the Orthodox world? I am sometimes asked for a summary of the key findings, and I tell listeners that we found that, for every 10 reasons given that reflect people being pulled out (lured or attracted) by the outside world (secular knowledge, science, Internet, popular culture, etc.), 17 reasons are given that relate to people being pushed out (repelled, turned off) by things they see in their community (hypocritical behavior by leaders, abuse, being judged, etc.). Most respondents gave multiple reasons; there was no list of reasons that people could check off, but they were given as much space as they needed to tell their story, and we coded all of the reasons given.

The 230 formerly Modern Orthodox respondents gave (many) reasons for going OTD (see accompanying chart on the next page).

Now, this is not to say that someone who rates their Orthodoxy as between 0 and 6 in importance will eventually leave Orthodoxy, just as we cannot say that someone who rates their Orthodoxy as a 9 or 10 in importance will remain observant. Still, over the long term (and our 2016 study indicated that, for many people, the process of leaving their Orthodox community takes many years), it is reasonable to view the Detractors as the group at risk of going OTD. But there are also some additional wrinkles to keep in mind.

(Continued)

“Survey Highlights Risk of Modern Orthodox ‘Going Off the *Derech*’ (Leaving Orthodoxy)” (Continued)

First, there is anecdotal evidence that OTD is higher among the young. I saw a Facebook post asking young Modern Orthodox millennials what percentage of their MO high school classmates are still observant, and the median response was 70%, indicating that 30% are no longer observant (not a scientific finding, but telling nonetheless).

Additionally, we found the median age at which Modern Orthodox people go OTD to be 28. Since our survey excluded those under 18, the survey finding may be underreporting the level of detractors due to its exclusion of adolescents.

Second, there are definitional questions. What exactly is OTD? For example, are high schoolers who keep what is sometimes referred to as “half Shabbos” (e.g., texting in their rooms) OTD? How much does the determination that one is OTD depend on adherence to objective, normative behaviors? In our 2016 survey, it was self-definitional, i.e., they were OTD because they told us that they no longer viewed themselves as being members of their Orthodox community of origin. Such questions will be important as the broad Modern Orthodox community considers how to view those on its fringes (especially on the left) ... and we’ll address this further.

Third, “leaving Orthodoxy” does not necessarily mean that one becomes obviously non-observant. We found that 26% of former Modern Orthodox who had gone OTD indicated that they were leading a “double life.” Outwardly they were still members of their community in terms of appearances and visible actions, but internally they no longer viewed themselves that way. We need to recognize that, in the Modern Orthodox community, going OTD often takes the shape (sometimes in the interim and sometimes permanently), of becoming a “double lifer” – appearing to be a member of the community, but not so much in beliefs and private behaviors.

Continuing with our assumption that it is the Detractors who are most at risk of going OTD, we find (see chart on the next page):

- 9% of the Modern Orthodox community are at risk of going OTD.
- There is no significant difference between men and women.
- There are only slight differences across age groups, with the exception of those ages 35-44, where 12% are at risk (perhaps a result of financial stress?)

Why Modern Orthodox People Go Off the *Derech* (OTD)

Men:

- Conflicting learnings, intellectual thought (27%)
- General doubts, loss of faith (13%)
- Questions not welcomed/answered, lack of openness (11%)
- Religious practice, *chumrahs*, minutiae, no spirituality (10%)

Women:

- Role and status of women (37%)
- Conflicting learnings, intellectual thought (18%)
- Community hypocrisy, double standards (13%)
- My sexual orientation (11%)
- Community judgmental, gossip, not accepted (11%)
- Exposure to non-Orthodox, non-Jews, outside world (11%)
- Sexual abuse, physical abuse, domestic violence (10%)

Source: Starting a Conversation: A Pioneering Survey of Those Who Have Left the Orthodox Community, Nishma Research, 2016; based on 230 responses of those who had previously been Modern Orthodox

“Survey Highlights Risk of Modern Orthodox ‘Going Off the *Derech*’ (Leaving Orthodoxy)” *(Continued)*

The lack of any significant difference between men and women is noteworthy, as there has been some talk about women being turned off by their limited (compared to men) role in Orthodoxy. But our finding refutes the view that women are “checking out” any more than men. Verbatim responses in the survey indicate that there are differences between men and women in terms of the aspects of their Orthodox lives that cause them the most unhappiness (paralleling the finding in the 2016 survey), and we will be exploring this in the future. But, bottom line, neither gender is more nor less likely overall to leave Orthodoxy.

Where we do see significant differences in the risk of going OTD are across the “sub-denominational groups” within Modern Orthodoxy, as follows:

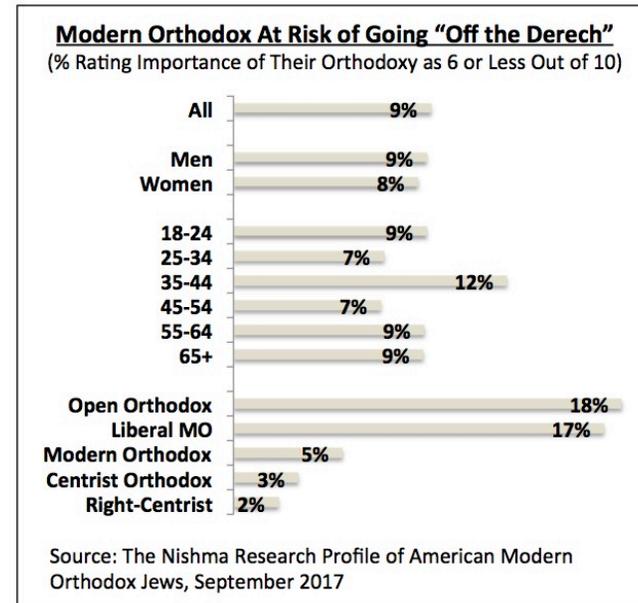
- 18% – Open Orthodox
- 17% – Liberal Modern Orthodox
- 5% – Modern Orthodox
- 3% – Centrist Orthodox
- 2% – Right-Wing Centrist Orthodox

Finally, looking at the left wings (Open Orthodox and Liberal Modern Orthodox) by age, there are nominal differences, and it is perhaps surprising (but also encouraging) that younger respondents (13% of those ages 18-34) actually seem to have a somewhat lower risk of going OTD (compared to 18% of those ages 35 and older).

Our conclusions are that the OTD risk for Modern Orthodoxy overall is noteworthy (9%), and it is virtually identical for men and women. It is much higher (17%) among left-leaning individuals within Modern Orthodoxy, and much lower (4%) in the center and right of Modern Orthodoxy. Overall, there are only moderate differences across ages.

I would love to hear what readers think of this estimate. Does it jibe with your sense?

Ultimately, the question of whether people have “gone OTD” will not always be black and white. Interestingly, when we asked what gives the most satisfaction, joy or meaning to people’s lives as Orthodox / Observant Jews, the most-cited response was not in areas of beliefs or practices, but in the sense of community and belonging. Given the importance of the community, we should consider which is stronger: a broad community that is inclusive of those on its margins, or a smaller, tighter and more homogeneous community? How the Modern Orthodox community answers this question – both at the individual level (family members and friends) as well as its institutional policies – will ultimately determine its shape.



The Study Advisory Group

- **Steven Bayme, Ph.D.** – Essayist, author and lecturer; director of Contemporary Jewish Life of the American Jewish Committee and the Koppelman Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations; serves on the Wexner Heritage Foundation faculty.
- **Prof. Rivkah Blau, Ph.D.** – Author, professor at Yeshiva University; Jewish Studies and humanities teacher in high school and college; has served as principal of two yeshiva high schools.
- **Dr. Erica Brown** – Educator, author of twelve books on leadership, Bible and spirituality, Director, George Washington University Mayberg Center for Jewish Education and Leadership; associate professor of curriculum and pedagogy; tweets Daf Yomi daily.
- **Rabbi Dr. Michael Brody** – Professor of law, academic director of Emory Univ. Law and Religion Program, and senior fellow in its Center for the Study of Law and Religion; Fulbright scholar; former pulpit rabbi and *dayan* of Beth Din of America; written extensively and is widely consulted on Jewish law and ethics.
- **Aliza Bulow** – Jewish adult educator of basic Judaism, philosophy and textual learning skills; served in the IDF; was national coordinator of Ner LeElef's North American Woman's Program; co-founded CORE, which creates warm and inspiring Jewish communities by nourishing and networking Orthodox women.
- **Rabbi Dr. Zev Eleff** – Chief academic officer, Hebrew Theological College (Chicago); author or editor of nine books (including *Modern Orthodox Judaism: A Documentary History*) and more than forty scholarly articles in the field of Jewish history and sociology; two-time finalist for the National Jewish Book Award.
- **Prof. Sylvia Barack Fishman, Ph.D.** – Renowned expert on Modern Orthodoxy; Joseph and Esther Foster Professor of Contemporary Jewish Life, Brandeis; co-director of Hadassah-Brandeis Institute; author of eight books and many articles on Jewish social issues.
- **Rabbi Avrohom Gordimer** – Has written extensively on a wide range of topics affecting the Jewish community; *kashruth* professional; Chairman of the Rabbinic Circle at Coalition for Jewish Values; member of the New York Bar.
- **Leslie Ginsparg Klein, Ph.D.** – Academic Dean of General Studies at Women's Institute of Torah Seminary; instructor of Jewish studies, Jewish history and research methods
- **Bethany Mandel** – Author, political and cultural commentator; served on the Rabbinical Council of America committee on safeguards against abuses in the conversion process.
- **Jeremy Pava, West Hartford, CT** – CFO at Aspen Square Management; trustee of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation; Managing Trustee of the Micah Foundation; founder and past president of the Hebrew High School of New England.
- **Rabbi Ezra Schwartz** – Rosh yeshiva and *bochein* (Official Examiner for shiur placement) at Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (YU); teacher in the *semicha* program; former Assistant to the President for Research and Communications; Senior Rabbi at the Mount Sinai Jewish Center.
- **Rabbi Avi Shafran** – Widely published commentator, political and social critic, columnist and blogger on Jewish world events and trends; Director of public affairs at Agudath Israel of America; a author of five books.
- **Ariel Weiner** – Advisory Board member, Midreshet Lindenbaum Women's Institute for Halachik Leadership; Past board chair Yeshivat Maharat and JOFA board member; serves on SAR Academy Board of Education; Wexner Heritage Fellowship.
- **Rabbi Elie Weinstock** – Rabbi at Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun and oversees its highly successful Beginners Program; member of Judaic Studies faculty at Ramaz School; serves as special advisor to the National Jewish Outreach Program.
- **Rabbi Dr. Dov S. Zakheim** – Rabbi, university professor, entrepreneur, writer and former US government official (including Undersecretary of Defense) who has been active in the national Jewish community.

About Nishma Research

- Nishma was founded in 2015 by Mark Trencher, a former financial industry executive, professor and Jewish communal lay leader (a 1971 *musmach* of the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School).
- Nishma Research focuses on larger-scale communal sociological studies in the Orthodox Jewish community and also provides marketing research to Jewish organizations.
- Nishma is a full-service research firm that supports synagogues, schools, community organizations and other researchers. Nishma conducts custom research, data collection, analysis and presentations employing both quantitative and qualitative research approaches.
- In 2016, Nishma conducted the first-ever broad, quantitative survey of people who have left Orthodoxy (“off the *derech*”), and in 2017 Nishma conducted the first-ever broad demographic and attitudinal profile of American Modern Orthodoxy. In addition, Nishma has conducted several Jewish organizational member surveys, synagogue member surveys, demographic studies, provided educational consultation, and has shared research findings since 2016 at approximately two dozen synagogues and conferences.
- “Nishma” means “we listen” – and our mission includes conducting more than 50% of our research on a pro bono basis, on topics that will promote greater listening among the diverse strands of the Jewish people. Findings and additional information are available at <http://nishmaresearch.com>.

