

INSIGHTS FROM PEER-LED LISTENING SESSIONS

Jews of Color (JOC)

Many participants expressed a deep sense of overlapping discrimination (race, gender, sexual orientation).

Stereotypes of Black women are particularly potent.

In the Jewish community, leadership tends to be expressed most frequently in its white male form.

“Leaning in” doesn’t work. We need more representative role models, access to opportunities for advancement, and more mentoring for emerging leaders of color.

People in #2 roles at organizations are doing substantial work without being recognized for it, limiting internal pipelines to the top.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) needs to be on the agenda for every board and organization.

Jewish men of color could do a better job of lifting up Jewish women of color.

Men

Participants feel that gender norms are rampant in the Jewish community and harm people of all genders.

Search committees are incredibly biased toward men and traditionally male leadership qualities.

You never really know as a male CEO—did you get the job because you’re the best fit or because you fit a certain mold / type (e.g., white male)?

There is an assumption that only men can handle high-pressure jobs and demands.

Some men fear speaking out—either because they fear they will say the wrong thing or because they feel they don’t know enough about gender issues to speak.

How can men be good allies without being accused of mansplaining or taking up too much space?

Some men feel they have something to lose if there are more women in leadership roles.

Men want to feel confident that if they are the best candidate, they will be chosen; they don’t want to lose a role to a female candidate who is chosen just because she’s a woman.

Some participants feel that the Jewish community has more important priorities than this issue.

Some participants feel guilt around male privilege.

Orthodox Women

It's a struggle to balance home and work life.

They have to combat assumptions about women's ability to take top leadership roles while also being a mother and/or homemaker.

Work environments can be unsupportive to women.

The lack of pay equity is demotivating.

They face unclear paths to salary increases and promotion.

Nepotism, patriarchy, and the "boys' club" mentality hold them back.

One participant shared that when she asked her male superior why she did not receive the raise she requested, he replied: "If we offer (you) higher pay, it sets the standard for other women to want leadership positions."

The gender disparity is particularly confusing to Chabad women, who are taught from a young age that Jewish women are powerful and hold a special significance in their community. They are afforded visible female leaders, teachers, and mentors. They typically receive more secular education than their male counterparts, thereby better preparing them for positions in business and management. Yet the other problems persist.

Setbacks were often excused by being coded in religious terms (modesty, etc.). Some participants expressed deep frustration that this religious paradigm becomes weaponized, while some women felt that men in their communities were unaware of how their actions marginalized women and with proper education could learn to become allies.

There is often a marked difference between how single and married women are treated in the workforce, relating to the types of jobs available, sometimes referring to work by unmarried women as "volunteering."

Even when women achieve an excellent education before beginning work, there is little support or professional development in the workforce.

People with Disabilities

As the field moves toward more virtual work, managers and leaders are making few to no considerations for employees or potential employees with disabilities. Concerns include basic representation, accessibility concerns on Zoom, and more.

Men need to be empowered to speak on behalf of women.

Those in power are not always willing to make room or go to bat for those not in power.

There are not enough programs that give *practical* leadership skills and experience. There are especially few that also give proper consideration to disability issues.

Not only do women look around the table and not see themselves in top positions, but also there are only a handful of leaders with disabilities. They are known within the disability community, but not shown on a broader stage.

More attention needs to be paid to the bottom of the talent pipeline.

Transgender and Nonbinary Jews

OVERARCHING THEMES

Most in the Jewish community still see gender as a binary. We need more education around the gender spectrum.

Transphobia—as well as a lack of education around trans issues—is persistent in the Jewish community.

Camp and youth groups are a huge pipeline for work in the Jewish professional field. If these spaces are not trans-affirming, this pipeline is virtually closed to trans people.

The leadership of white cisgender men seems to be privileged above all others.

There is a subconscious assumption that white cisgender men “have a shot” at top positions, whereas others are not necessarily shown that a “ladder” exists.

STEREOTYPES

People make assumptions that if you’re trans, you’re political and touchy.

People make assumptions that if you’re trans, you are less Jewishly engaged or knowledgeable, or even less authentically Jewish.

Standards for being and acting “professional” are very gendered (dress codes, appearance expectations, etc.).

FEAR

Some Jewish organizations are scared that if they have a trans or nonbinary person in visible leadership, donors will be deterred from supporting the organization.

Trans people exist with a fear of bullying, harassment, and discrimination, and are often scared of being out due to a lack of education, awareness, and inclusiveness.

REPRESENTATION

The paucity of transgender and nonbinary people on executive teams leads some trans and nonbinary people to assume that they would not be a good fit for an organization.

When trans people are hired, there is often an expectation that they are to be seen and not heard—that they are there simply to boost the appearance of diversity.

At the same time, people often assume that it is the job of the marginalized person to “educate” the organization and that can be exhausting.

When there is not actual representation, the use of pronouns in bios/email signatures makes a difference. It signals that people are aware of these issues.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

HR departments need to be better educated about gender—everything from ensuring pronouns are respected to having trans-inclusive health benefits.

Participants say they need more mentorship, allyship, and systemic change—rather than just individuals “being nice.”

Women, Late-Career

Participants felt that sexism exists with more energy in the Jewish community than elsewhere. Cultural and behavioral patriarchy is well entrenched here.

There is a persistent myth that women are not good fundraisers.

Boards in the Jewish community are too focused on wealth.

Search firms tend to be led by men and people hire people in their own image.

There is a disconnect between Jewish values of family and the life a CEO is expected to lead.

Women, Mid-Career

There were very few female role models in earlier generations; mid-career women had to look to male role models who were leading Jewish organizations, and they feel that loss now.

The top jobs are unsustainable and unappealing to people of all genders; they’re not compatible with integrated life today.

The Jewish community prioritizes male leadership qualities.

The “old boys’ network” persists.

The Jewish workplace operates like a dysfunctional family.

Boards have too much power.

We need to change the culture of overwork and unrealistic expectations.

Women are in fact at the helm of so many important social justice and social service organizations—we need to emphasize and value that more.