

The RE-IMAGINE Project Method

The evaluation study of The RE-IMAGINE Project is based on 14 synagogues in Greater New York that comprise the second cohort of The RE-IMAGINE Project. The research began in Fall 2004, when the Task Forces were still in the formative stage although most had already had one or two meetings. At that point (Time 1), all members of the Task Forces were surveyed about their views of the congregation and its religious school and about their initial reactions to the project.

One and a half years later, in Spring 2006 (Time 2), Task Force members were sent a follow-up survey to learn about their group's accomplishments and their assessment of the process and its outcomes. ([Click here](#) to view the Task Force survey.) Several questions from the previous survey were also included in order to allow for comparisons over time. The follow-up survey was sent to everyone who had participated in the project regardless of whether they had dropped out, had joined in the second year, or had been a Task Force member throughout. It was administered via the web or paper-and-pencil as per individual preference and every effort was made to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to take part.

At Time 2, we also surveyed lay leaders who serve on the synagogue board of trustees and/or the religious school committee. ([Click here](#) to view the Board survey.) Full lists of lay leadership were obtained from the synagogues and web or paper surveys were sent to every leader who had not been a member of the RE-IMAGINE Task Force. Lay leaders were asked how much they knew about the project and how much they supported the work. Those who were familiar with the project were asked, as well, for their assessment of its products (the vision statement and the initiative implementation plan).

Survey Respondents

Responses to the Time 2 Task Force Survey were received from 240 participants in 13 of the synagogues, a 77% response rate.¹ This sample is referred to as the *Task Force*.

Approximately 70% of the respondents were very or extremely active on the Taskforce; 25% were somewhat active; and the remaining 5% were only a little or not at all active. One-third served on the Leadership Team of their group. Given the high response rate and the level of involvement of respondents, we can assume that results are representative of the RE-IMAGINE experience.

Very few (n=18) came to the Task Force without relevant experience in the synagogue. Almost all are current or past members of the board of trustees, the religious school or education board, or they are current or former parents in the school (Table 1).

¹ One congregation was eliminated from the study after its coordinator made statements to the Task Force that potentially introduced bias into the data.

Table 1: Role in the Synagogue

	%		
	Current	Past	Never
Parent in the religious school	45	35	20
School committee member	37	17	46
Board of trustees	30	12	58

N.B. Some respondents play more than one role in the synagogue.

Responses to the Time 2 Leadership Survey were received from 287 synagogue trustees and school committee members who are *not* RE-IMAGINE Task Force participants. This number represents a 68% response rate. Throughout the report, this sample is referred to as *Synagogue Leadership*.

The two samples taken together can be considered the *Synagogue Activists*—those who are involved in their synagogue either through their work on The RE-IMAGINE Project or through their formal roles in governance.