

Negative Rabbi Experiences

1

While negative rabbi experiences are not frequent, when they occur, they leave young Jews feeling disappointed, uncomfortable and angry.

2

These negative experiences can have a lasting impact on young Jews' relationship to Judaism and the Jewish community, making them less likely to engage.

3

To keep young Jews engaged in some form of Jewish community, it's critical to avoid these negative experiences from occurring at younger ages.

Negative rabbi experiences are varied, but services, youth experiences (educational settings or camp), life cycle events or spiritual guidance gone wrong can have a lasting impact

Negative experiences with a rabbi were most likely to have occurred at Hebrew school or day school, or at any type of service. As a result, many young Jews indicate their negative rabbi experience happened when they were young (likely before college) --- more than 10 years ago for 30-44-year-olds and 6-10 years ago for 18-29-year-olds. This means that it's crucial to ensure the youngest Jews are having positive experiences with rabbis so that they're not turned off from future interactions with other rabbis.

Please select all of the situations where you have had a negative experience with a rabbi.

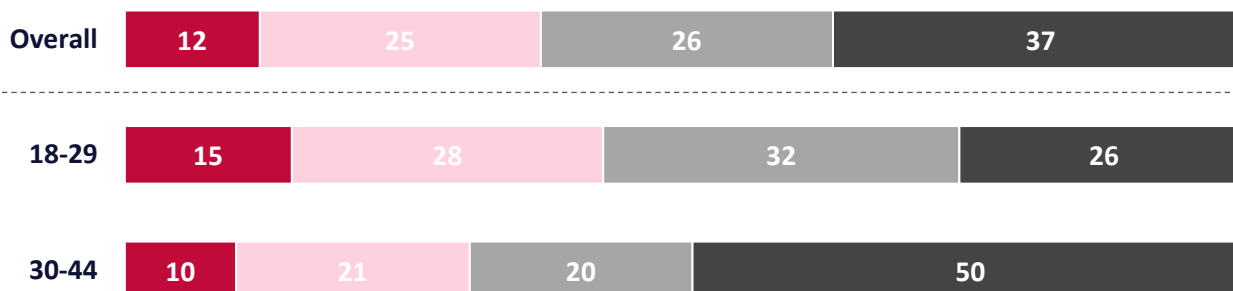
Asked among those who had a negative or mixed experience (20%), Multiple responses accepted

		% MOST NEG EXPERIENCE
At a Hebrew school, Jewish preschool, day school or Hebrew high school	20	8
Services at a temple or synagogue (high holidays, shabbat, etc.)	19	10
A funeral service	17	8
A B'nei Mitzvah service	16	6
Looking for personal, spiritual or religious guidance	16	8
A wedding ceremony	15	7
A Shabbat dinner or other social holiday event	15	0
A shiva	13	3
Looking for general guidance/advice for your life	13	5
A casual interaction or social situation	13	3
At a Jewish summer camp	13	8
A rabbi reaching out to you on the street or in a public place	13	4
On a college campus	12	6
In an online setting, such as on Zoom or on social media	12	2
On a trip to Israel, a March of the Living trip, or other immersive Jewish travel	11	5
A family meeting preparing for a funeral	10	4
In an academic or intellectual setting such as in a class or on a panel or group discussion	10	4
A baby naming or a bris	8	1
As a guide or participant in a conversion/affirmation process	8	3

Roughly how long ago did this negative experience or interaction with a rabbi occur?

Asked among those who had a negative or mixed experience (20%)

■ Within past year
 ■ 1-5 years ago
 ■ 6-10 years ago
 ■ Over 10 years ago



Negative experiences lead to decreased connections with the Jewish community and faith

Negative experiences leave young Jews feeling disappointed, annoyed, and uncomfortable most of all. The most dominant takeaway when asked to describe their negative experience is a feeling of judgment, which is very much in line with what we heard from our qualitative journaling phase of research. Notably, those with a negative experience selected an average of 4 emotions while those who had positive experiences averaged over 5 positive feelings, indicating positive experiences carry more weight.

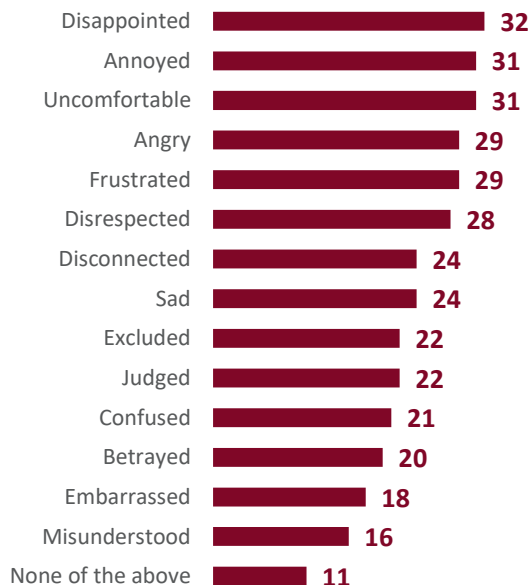
What made this a negative experience for you? (Open End)

- 20% said the rabbi was judgmental or they felt judged
- 10% said the rabbi was rude, mean or unfriendly
- 6% said they were unhelpful or didn't have answers for their question
- 4% said they were hurt by the rabbi as a child
- 4% said they were misbehaving as a child
- 4% said they did not feel listened to or taken seriously

The remainder offered a wide variety of reasons ranging from long or confusing services (3%) to being asked for money (3%), while many said it just left them feeling unhappy or unsatisfied.

How did this experience make you feel? Please select all that apply.

Asked among those who had a negative or mixed experience, Multiple responses accepted



These negative experiences make young Jews much less likely to seek out a rabbi in the future and contribute to disengagement from the Jewish community, particularly for 30-44-year-olds. However, it's notable that all of these scores are lower than the positive ones on page 17, indicating that positive experiences have a much bigger impact than negative ones.

Impact of negative rabbi experiences

Asked among those who had a negative or mixed experience

% Strongly agree among

	Strongly agree		Total Agree	% Strongly agree among	
	18-29	30-44		18-29	30-44
It made me less likely to seek out that rabbi or other rabbis in the future	32	29	61	30	35
It made me less likely to recommend the rabbi or the community to others	31	35	66	32	30
It made me feel like I am 'not Jewish enough'	27	24	51	25	28
I became less involved in a Jewish community or Jewish friend group	26	24	50	22	30
It made me less likely to practice or participate in Jewish rituals or behaviors	25	26	51	21	30
It made me less interested in Judaism	23	26	49	17	29
It made me feel negatively about being Jewish	22	24	46	20	25
It made me feel less confident and comfortable being Jewish	18	31	49	20	17
I felt less spiritually connected	17	34	51	14	20