

A Wake-Up Call Aging Trends of UMJC Congregational Leaders

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Methodology

In April 2010, I invited all senior and associate congregational leaders currently serving a UMJC synagogue or chavurah to participate in this demographic study. Invitations were sent through the UMJC Leaders Forum and by email. Of the 82+ senior and associate leaders listed on the 2010 UMJC-Executive Directory of Member Congregations, 52 replied who represented 50 different congregations and chavurot in North America, Brazil and South Africa. The survey did not include rabbinical interns who are being trained to take on rabbinical positions. I asked these congregational leaders for their name, year born, and the name and location of their synagogue or chavurah.

Findings

- There are no UMJC congregational leaders in their 20s.
- The youngest UMJC congregational leader is 33 years old.
- The UMJC has five congregational leaders in their 30s and four in their 40s.
- The oldest UMJC congregational leader is 85 years old. He co-leads with his son who is 41 years old.
- 83% of UMJC congregational leaders are over the age of 50.
- Two thirds of all UMJC congregational leaders are between the age of 55 and 70.
- Ten years from now, 38% of all UMJC congregational leaders will be over the age of 70 unless younger leaders are raised up.

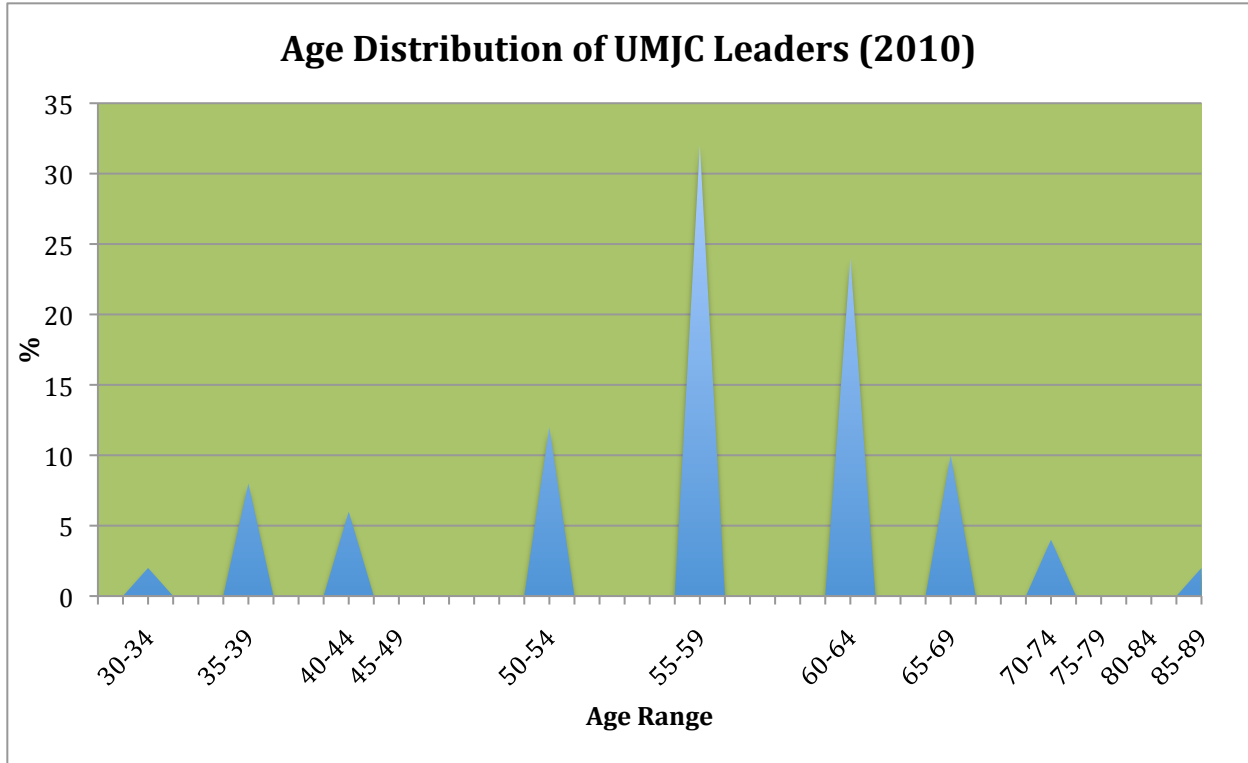
Evaluation

The above findings would seem to indicate that there is a demographic crisis on the horizon. I estimate that we have ten years to turn the corner. Synagogues are presently finding it difficult to fill rabbinical openings when leaders retire, make aliyah or pass way. If we do not respond quickly enough, dozens of UMJC congregations will be without senior leaders in the next decade and the cross-generational continuity of the Messianic Jewish movement in North America may be at risk.

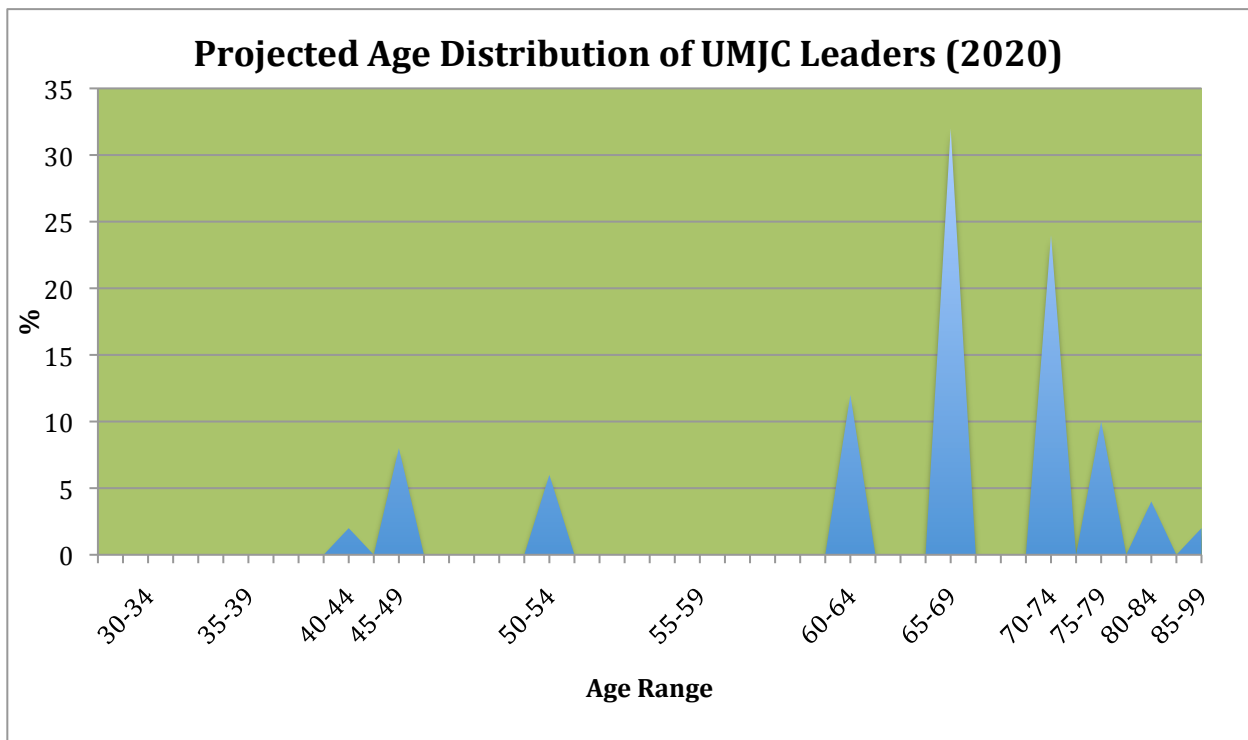
Recommendation

The Messianic Jewish community needs to invest significant time, energy and money now to (1) recruit younger leaders; and (2) support younger leaders financially as they move along the path toward leadership training and rabbinical ordination.

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Source: Rudolph 2010



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