

*FINDINGS OF THE  
CONFIDENTIAL SURVEY OF  
FEMALE RABBIS ABOUT  
SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION  
AND  
HARASSMENT  
SEPTEMBER 1993*

The Commission for Women's Equality  
American Jewish Congress  
15 East 84th Street  
New York, New York 10028  
(212)879-4500

# AJ Congress

American Jewish Congress  
Stephen Wise Congress House  
15 East 84th Street  
New York, NY 10028-0458  
212 360 1560 • Fax 212 249 3672

Commission for Women's Equality  
Ann F. Lewis, Chair

September 13, 1993

Dear Friend:

We are pleased to send you the findings of the first cross-movement survey of female rabbis, which was conducted by the Commission for Women's Equality of the American Jewish Congress during the Summer of 1993. The survey discussed many aspects of the lives of women in the rabbinate including their experiences in rabbinical school and job searches, the advantages and obstacles they face in their work, the effect of their families on their careers, their relationships with other rabbis, lay leaders, and the Jewish community at large, and their feelings and opinions about these experiences.

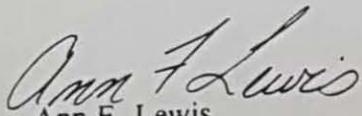
We hope that these findings will be the basis for discussion and action in synagogues, the rabbinical organizations and seminaries, Jewish organizations and other places in the Jewish community.

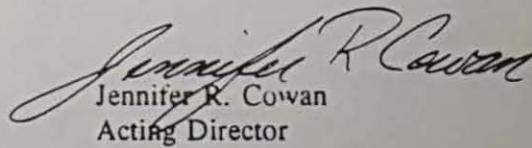
We have been encouraged and gladdened by the success stories that were told to us. We call your attention to the overall high level of career satisfaction that the rabbis expressed and to the fact that so many felt that being a woman is an advantage in performing some of their rabbinical responsibilities.

We believe that the individual experiences of the women who responded to this survey are as important as the statistics. Therefore, in addition to the responses to each question, you will find enclosed quotes taken from the comments and anecdotes that the rabbis related to us during the survey. The survey questionnaire is also included.

Please use this material freely, but credit the American Jewish Congress when you do so. The results are also available broken down for the Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Reform movements (the number of women ordained outside of these movements was too small to make the results valid). If you would like those statistics or have any questions, please call the Commission for Women's Equality at (212)360-1560.

Sincerely,

  
Ann F. Lewis  
Chair

  
Jennifer R. Cowan  
Acting Director

A note about methodology: The survey was mailed to all the women listed in the directories of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform), the Rabbinical Assembly (Conservative), the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, to the women ordained by the Academy for Jewish Religion, and to those ordained by Rabbi Zalman Schacter, a total of 328 rabbis. 146 women, 45%, returned the survey. This is a very high rate of return which confirms our belief that these findings are valid and representative.

**Highlights of the Findings about Female Rabbis and  
Sexual Discrimination and Harassment**  
**September 1993**

### Rabbinical School

- 43% feel that being a woman put them at a disadvantage during rabbinical school.
- 40% heard derogatory comments made about women during classes or lectures at rabbinical school.
- 45% did not have classes, discussions, or lectures about women in the rabbinate or women and Judaism.
- 74% had access to organizations for female rabbinical students.
- 83% received encouragement from professors and/or administrators.

### Work Experiences

- 21% work part-time, and 17% work more than one part-time job. Of those women, 70% do it by choice, and 28% do it because they cannot find a full-time position.
- Of rabbis who work at synagogues, 50% are at congregations with 150 or fewer families as members.
- 71% hold events about feminism or women and Judaism at their jobs. 56% of those rabbis have been criticized for holding them.
- 73% feel that they are treated differently than male rabbis in ways that are not discriminatory.
- 66% rate their careers as an eight or higher on a scale of ten.
- 63% think that being a woman is an advantage when doing counseling.
- 44% feel that being a woman is an advantage in performing life cycle ceremonies, and 49% believe that they are frequently asked to perform life cycle ceremonies because they are female.
- 85% have been asked to participate in events in the Jewish community because they are female rabbis.
- 47% feel that being a woman is an advantage in child education.
- 59% believe that their rabbinical organizations do not adequately address issues of particular concern to women.
- 5% feel that women have equality within the rabbinical organizations
- 19% work at places with sexual discrimination policies.

- 14% work at places with sexual harassment policies.

### **Sexual Discrimination and Harassment\***

- 54% say they have experienced sexual discrimination in relation to their jobs. Of that discrimination 76% of it was by laypersons.
- 50% believe they have not been offered a job because they are female.
- 47% feel they have been offered a lower salary than a man would be.
- 48% say that they are paid less than male rabbis with similar positions.
- 74% have felt tension with other rabbis in their communities because they are female rabbis.
- 49% think they have not been asked to participate in Jewish community events because they are female rabbis.
- 48% said they were asked inappropriate questions about being a woman during job interviews.
- 45% said they faced opposition or resistance because they were pregnant and a rabbi.
- 49% said pregnancy and children were discussed during job interviews or contract negotiations.
- 82% of rabbis who were working while they were pregnant were given maternity leave. Of those women, 88% received paid leave.
- 24% say they are harassed in some way at work once a month or more.
- 73% have been sexually harassed at least once in the course of their work.
- 26% have never been harassed.
- Of respondents who said they had been harassed, 68% said it was by a lay person and 29% said they had been harassed by another rabbi.
- 66% believe their congregation/institution gives them the same respect it gives male rabbis.
- 65% believe their professional colleagues give them the same respect they give male rabbis.

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\* See page 12 for the definition of sexual discrimination and see page 18 for the definition of sexual harassment.

## Quotes from the Survey

### Rabbinical School

"Assertive women were seen as troublemakers but assertive men were rewarded. Women were interrupted constantly when they spoke, but men could hold the floor for as long as they liked. Women were judged more favorably for qualities like friendliness and cooperation than for intellect."

"I have been aware that throughout that time I was devalued as a rabbinic student because I was a woman, that my insights in a Talmud class were less likely to be taken seriously, that I myself was taken less seriously."

"When I applied to rabbinical school I was asked if I had a boyfriend and if I got married, if my husband would accept my being a rabbi."

### Looking for a Job

"Male rabbis are never asked what it's like being a 'man rabbi' nor are they asked if or how their gender affects their ability to do their jobs."

"When I applied for a job I was first asked if I was single. I was then told which jobs would not be appropriate for finding a husband. I have also been asked if I planned on having children, and how long I might stay in a given situation since I was single."

"At an interview for a job, the following was said to me, 'What will you do if your child gets sick? If it is between your children and your career, I would pick your children first for now. Why don't you become a part-time Jewish educator?'

"Although some questions [about being a female rabbi] were appropriate, like 'What do you think women offer that is different, if anything?' many questions were inappropriate, for example: 'Being a single woman, won't you find it hard to date? It will be much harder than for a single man' and 'How can you be a good rabbi and a good mother?' To my knowledge, no one asks how you can be a good rabbi and a good father."

### Work Experiences

"I believe strongly that women rabbis are simply NOT seen as the equal of male rabbis, we are seen as rabbis of a different sort, perhaps a rabbi on a ladder one rung down from a male rabbi. For example, when I am asked to speak, I am asked to speak not on Talmud or history, but on being a woman rabbi or on being a mother-rabbi."

"The expectations had changed [after I returned from maternity leave]. Now every non-working moment was suspect."

"It took a while for me to prove that giving birth and having a baby didn't diminish my intellect."

"I was forced to shorten my contracted maternity leave by a week to return to the pulpit for a bar mitzvah."

"Sexual harassment is far less of an issue than the fact that there is still this perception that male and female rabbis should be willing to move at the drop of a hat and be available twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week."

"I have been expected to be progressive in my politics, liberal in my Judaism, and radical in my feminism -- and when I'm not, I disappoint. I'm expected to worry about who brings the cake for *oneg* and whether the dishes are done in the kitchen. I can't imagine a male rabbi being asked these questions.

"When I was at a synagogue, the Board refused me the appropriate salary because I was not the main wage earner [in my family]."

"People ask to kiss me all the time because 'I've never kissed a rabbi before.' I tell them that I am not public property, and that I don't kiss people I don't know and that shuts them up."

"I have very strong feelings that women have brought on a lot of discrimination themselves. They don't want to work as hard as many men and use the excuse of family. As far as I am concerned, men have three children and manage to work more than full time and so should women."

"[My rabbinical organization] is beginning to address issues of discrimination, harassment, inequality, gender issues, different rabbinic models, and different ways of defining success in the rabbinate. Many problems still exist in the areas of placement and maternity leave. Women feel that we have no real recourse or advocate."

"My experience with sexual harassment occurred with a male colleague in an important position. I have chosen to deal with it directly with him, but frankly I cannot afford to alienate him, nor am I willing to put my family, myself or my congregation through a public ordeal."

"In my job as a prison chaplain, I constantly experienced sexual discrimination from the administrators."

"Part of the issue is exposure to women rabbis in general. Even in my few years in the pulpit, I'm finding fewer people saying 'you're the first woman rabbi I've seen.' We've made progress in small pulpits, now the question is what will happen as we move or try to move to larger ones. In small congregations the 'nurturing' rabbi is a positive characteristic. Will we be able to make the move to more authoritarian positions of larger congregations - both on our part and on the congregations' willingness to hire?"

"I think there are legitimate 'mommy/rabbi' issues - although daddy/rabbis are more and more dealing with many of these same issues. It would help women if our male colleagues would be open about this."

"My take is that in communal work and education, women tend to be exploited as high talent and commitment and low pay."

"As in any pioneering situation, women rabbis must be better than the norm. They have to overcome barriers and 'prove' themselves more than do their male colleagues. However, the real test is competence; if you are good, you will be accepted and applauded."

"What I wear will provoke endless comment - it's attractive, it's chic, it's up-to-date, it's short...I have to think carefully about how I dress."

"Once when I was carrying the Torah at the close of Yom Kippur, one of my older male congregants turned to another man and said, 'I'd rather touch her breasts than the Torah.'

"My problems come largely from people my parents' age who are uncomfortable with professional women."

"There is an assumption by lay people that women do not know how to lead, organize, or manage business decisions, budgets, etc; the 'don't bother your pretty head' attitude that comes straight out of patriarchal/hierarchical systems."

### The Advantages of Being a Female Rabbi

"People are open to me being more caring, appropriately intimate, to attend to the needs of the heart and the spirit. In this sense, in the essence of rabbinical work, being a woman is an advantage."

"I am allowed to express logic and emotion - both are considered appropriate."

"Sometimes people, especially women, feel more comfortable confiding in me."

"People appreciate the feminine side of religion as demonstrated by a female rabbi and appreciate the new perspective brought by a woman."

"Women seem more comfortable coming to me about some issues, i.e. rape, sexual abuse, etc."

"People find me easier to approach. They are more likely to use my first name and to ask questions unself-consciously."

"People generally react to me in a positive way. They assume I am friendlier, more down to earth, and more accessible."

"People tell me they find it easier to approach me, as a woman I am less intimidating. The negative of that is that I am perceived as less authoritative."

"I have always felt that being female really added to my ability to be a good rabbi and that is constantly reinforced to me in comments I receive at life cycle events or in leading services. Specific comments relate to the sensitivity a woman brings to the occasion and often the quality of my voice (and I believe that means its femaleness, as well as expressivity)."

"All in all, it's a double edged sword. On the one hand I find the emphasis on being a female rabbi exhausting, frustrating, and tiresome. On the other hand, the presence of a female rabbi wearing a *tallit* and leading women's discussion groups has been an inspiration to many women and an entree for them into a fuller Jewish life. I don't know if one can exist without the other. Is there a way that a female rabbi can be a challenge and inspiration to women (and men) in the community without also inviting job discrimination and discriminatory role divisions? I have not found that way. While speaking about women's issues in the community has an important impact for women, it also serves to reinforce my role as a different rabbi and discourages people from seeing me as a rabbi at their wedding."

**Findings of the American Jewish Congress Commission for Women's Equality  
Confidential Survey of Female Rabbis on Sexual Discrimination and Harassment  
September 1993**

146 Responses, 45% Response Rate

**Personal Information**

1. In which movement were you ordained?

Conservative	14%
Reconstructionist	14%
Reform	65%
Non-Denominational	5%
Private Smicha	3%

2. In what year were you ordained?

1970-75	1%
1976-80	11%
1981-85	25%
1986-90	48%
1991-93	15%

3. What is your age?

25-30	13%
31-35	27%
36-40	32%
41-45	17%
46-50	5%
51-55	3%
56-60	1%
61-70	1%

4. Do you have any other post-baccalaureate degrees?

Yes	65%
No	34%

If yes, which degree:

Of the 65% of the respondents with another post-baccalaureate degree:<sup>\*</sup>

MA	87%
PhD	12%
JD	2%
MD	8%

Of all respondents:

MA	57%
PhD	8%
JD	1%
MD	5%

\* Respondents could indicate more than one answer, so the percentages are over 100%

5. With which movement, if any, are you now affiliated?\*
- |                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Conservative      | 20% |
| Reconstructionist | 17% |
| Reform            | 63% |
| Other             | 5%  |
| None              | 3%  |
6. To which rabbinical organization(s) or professional organization(s) do you belong?\*
- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| Central Conference of American Rabbis    | 65% |
| Rabbinical Assembly                      | 18% |
| Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association | 15% |
| Other                                    | 17% |
7. If you have a congregation, with which movement is it associated?<sup>1</sup>
- |                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Conservative      | 18% |
| Reconstructionist | 5%  |
| Reform            | 63% |
| Other             | 8%  |
| None              | 6%  |
8. Did you have a different career before you became a rabbi?
- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| Yes | 37% |
| No  | 62% |
- If yes, what was it?  
For how many years did you do it?
9. Have you changed careers since you became a rabbi?
- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| Yes | 14% |
| No  | 77% |
| N/A | 9%  |

### Rabbinical School

10. In your training to become a rabbi, do you think that being a woman:\*
- |                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Gave you an advantage     | 21% |
| Did not affect you        | 41% |
| Put you at a disadvantage | 43% |
11. Did you experience any of the following while you were attending rabbinical school?
- Derogatory comments about women during classes or lectures?
- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| Yes | 40% |
| No  | 58% |
- Discouragement from becoming a rabbi from professors or administrators?
- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| Yes | 23% |
| No  | 77% |
- Discouragement from becoming a rabbi from other students?
- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| Yes | 14% |
| No  | 82% |

Encouragement for becoming a rabbi from professors or administrators?

Yes	83%
No	16%

Encouragement for becoming a rabbi from other students?

Yes	84%
No	14%

Sexual harassment by professors or administrators?<sup>2</sup>

Yes	8%
No	79%
No response	13%

Sexual harassment by other students?

Yes	5%
No	93%

Inappropriate sexual behavior by professors or administrators?

Yes	19%
No	82%

Inappropriate sexual behavior by other students?

Yes	10%
No	88%

12. While you were at rabbinical school, were there:

Organizations for female rabbinical students?

Yes	74%
No	25%

Classes, discussions, or lectures about women in the rabbinate or women and Judaism?

Yes	51%
No	45%

13. In rabbinical school, were you encouraged to enter a specific career track because you were a woman?

Yes	14%
No	84%

Did you follow the advice?<sup>3</sup>

Yes	30%
No	70%

## Work Information

15. How would you describe your job:

Congregation	66%
Communal	7%
Education	20%
Counseling	12%
Administrative	11%
Hillel/campus based	9%

Research/writer	7%
Military/hospital chaplain	8%
Other rabbinical related	5%
Non-rabbinical	5%
Currently not working	1%

16. If you are currently not working is it:<sup>4</sup>

By choice	70%
Because you cannot find a position	28%

17. What is your current title?\*

Rabbi	64%
Assistant Rabbi	6%
Director	16%
Professor	1%
Other	17%

18. Do you work full time or part time?

Full time	63%
Part-time	21%
More than one part-time job	17%

19. If you work part-time, is it:<sup>5</sup>

By choice	70%
Because you cannot find a full time position	28%

20. If you are a congregational rabbi, how many members (families) are in your congregation?<sup>6</sup>

150 or under	50%
151 to 300	15%
301 to 500	6%
501 to 800	12%
800 and above	13%
No response	14%

21. Do you hold programs/events specifically about feminism or women and Judaism at your job?

Yes	71%
No	27%

If yes, are they (Circle all that apply):\*<sup>7</sup>

Religious	70%
Political	30%
Cultural	40%
Educational	83%

If yes, are you criticized for holding them?

Never	44%
Occasionally	32%
Sometimes	17%
Frequently	4%
No response	3%

22. Do you work with other rabbis on an every day basis?

Yes	45%
No	53%

If yes, are you (circle all that apply)\*<sup>8</sup>

a supervisor	18%
a subordinate	42%
an equal	61%

23. What is your salary, not including benefits (range)?

Under \$20,000	15%
\$20,000-30,000	15%
\$30,000-40,000	21%
\$40,000-50,000	21%
\$50,000-60,000	16%
\$60,000-70,000	3%
\$70,000-80,000	3%
\$80,000-100,000	1%

24. Compared to the salaries of the rabbis with whom you work or with rabbis whom you feel have similar positions to yours, do you feel that you are paid:

Equally	39%
Less	42%
More	1%
Don't know	17%

25. In general, when talking with female rabbis, do you discover that you are paid:

Equally	19%
Less	23%
More	12%
Don't know	41%
No response	5%

26. In general, when talking with male rabbis, do you discover that you are paid:

Equally	10%
Less	48%
More	2%
Don't know	36%
No response	4%

27. What percentage of the lay leadership of your congregation or organization is female?

0	1%
10	6%
20	5%
30	9%
40	14%
50	23%
60	12%
70	8%
80	2%
90	1%
100	1%
Not applicable	8%
No response	9%

28. Would you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Female and male rabbis choose different types of careers.

Agree	62%
Disagree	36%

Female and male rabbis are encouraged to enter different fields.

Agree	22%
Disagree	50%
No response	27%

Any pay differential that exists between male and female rabbis is a result of different career choices

Agree	7%
Disagree	68%
No response	25%

29. If you are married or in a long-term relationship, (or have been after you became a rabbi) has that prevented you from applying or accepting a job because it involved relocating?

Yes	38%
No	48%
No response	12%

30. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your overall satisfaction with your career?

1	1%
2	1%
3	2%
4	2%
5	5%
6	5%
7	10%
8	29%
9	23%
10	14%
No response	5%

### Sexual Discrimination

For the purposes of this survey, sexual discrimination is defined as:

The denial of equal pay or privileges, including compensation, promotion, fringe benefits, sick leave, vacation, and other terms and conditions of employment because of or on the basis of being a woman. Also, differential treatment in hiring and firing, duties, or responsibilities because of or on the basis of being a woman.

31. In the following aspects of rabbinical work, do you think that being a woman gives you an advantage, does not affect you, or puts you at a disadvantage when performing them?

#### Administration

Advantage	4%
Disadvantage	30%
No effect	55%
N/A	5%
No response	6%

**Adult Education**

Advantage	21%
Disadvantage	6%
No effect	64%
N/A	4%
No response	5%

**Child Education**

Advantage	47%
Disadvantage	5%
No effect	29%
N/A	10%
No response	9%

**Community Representation**

Advantage	21%
Disadvantage	42%
No effect	29%
N/A	6%

**Congregant Relations**

Advantage	32%
Disadvantage	21%
No effect	34%
N/A	10%
No response	3%

**Counseling**

Advantage	63%
Disadvantage	4%
No effect	28%
N/A	3%
No response	3%

**Interfaith Activities**

Advantage	22%
Disadvantage	12%
No effect	53%
N/A	6%
No response	7%

**Leading Services**

Advantage	19%
Disadvantage	23%
No effect	51%
N/A	4%
No response	3%

**Life Cycle Ceremonies**

Advantage	44%
Disadvantage	22%
No effect	31%
N/A	4%

**Research**

Advantage	1%
Disadvantage	10%
No effect	62%
N/A	17%
No response	10%

**Writing**

Advantage	5%
Disadvantage	10%
No effect	66%
N/A	11%
No response	8%

32. Do you feel that people treat you differently than they do male rabbis in ways that are not discriminatory?

Yes	73%
No	10%
No response	17%

33. Have you been not asked or asked not to officiate at life cycle ceremonies (brit/naming ceremony, bat/bar mitzvah, conversion, wedding, funeral) because you are a woman?

Never	25%
Occasionally (once or twice)	50%
Sometimes (once a year)	13%
Frequently (more than once a year)	7%
Always	0
Not applicable	1%

34. Have you been asked to officiate at life cycle ceremonies because you are a woman?

Never	9%
Occasionally (once or twice)	18%
Sometimes (once a year)	18%
Frequently (more than once a year)	49%
Always	1%
Not applicable	3%

35. Have you been not asked or asked not to participate in events in your Jewish community because you are a female rabbi?

Never	42%
Occasionally (once or twice)	35%
Sometimes (once a year)	7%
Frequently (more than once a year)	7%
Always	0
Not applicable	2%

36. Have you been asked to participate in events in your Jewish community because you are a female rabbi?

Never	7%
Occasionally (once or twice)	23%
Sometimes (once a year)	23%
Frequently (more than once a year)	41%
Always	4%
Not applicable	1%

37. Have you felt tension or had a conflict with other rabbis in your community because you are a woman?
- |                                    |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Never                              | 35% |
| Occasionally (once or twice)       | 43% |
| Sometimes (once a year)            | 21% |
| Frequently (more than once a year) | 8%  |
| Always                             | 2%  |
| Not applicable                     | 3%  |
38. Have you been prevented from sitting on a beit din or serving as a witness for religious documents or proceedings because you are a woman?
- |                                    |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Never                              | 32% |
| Occasionally (once or twice)       | 27% |
| Sometimes (once a year)            | 14% |
| Frequently (more than once a year) | 5%  |
| Always                             | 5%  |
| Not applicable                     | 18% |
39. Have you decided not to sit on a beit din or serve as a witness because you are a woman?
- |              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| Yes          | 21% |
| No           | 62% |
| N/A          | 14% |
| not response | 3%  |
40. Have you ever felt that your rabbinate is hindered by the attribution of female stereotypes (emotional, overprotective, irrational) to you?
- |                                    |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Never                              | 36% |
| Occasionally (once or twice)       | 37% |
| Sometimes (once a year)            | 16% |
| Frequently (more than once a year) | 7%  |
| Always                             | 1%  |
| No response                        | 3%  |
41. Does your synagogue, organization, or institution have a sexual discrimination policy?
- |             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| Yes         | 19% |
| No          | 67% |
| No response | 14% |
- If yes, do you think it is adequate?
- |             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| Yes         | 68% |
| No          | 14% |
| No response | 18% |
- Has it been implemented in response to a complaint?
- |             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| Yes         | 18% |
| No          | 54% |
| No response | 28% |
42. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:
- I have not been offered a job because I am a woman.
- |             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| Agree       | 50% |
| Disagree    | 47% |
| No response | 3%  |

I have been offered a lower salary than a male rabbi for the same job because I am a woman.

Agree	47%
Disagree	40%
No response	13%

My congregation/institution gives me the same respect they give male rabbis.

Agree	66%
Disagree	27%
No response	6%

My professional colleagues gives me the same respect they give male rabbis.

Agree	65%
Disagree	31%
No response	4%

The lay leaders with whom I work give me the same respect they give male rabbis.

Agree	60%
Disagree	36%
No response	4%

43. Have you been the subject of sexual discrimination in relation to your job?

Never	38%
Occasionally (once or twice)	42%
Sometimes (once a year)	5%
Frequently (more than once a year)	7%
Always	0
No response	8%

44. If you have encountered sexual discrimination was it by (circle all that apply):\*

A lay person	76%
A professional colleague who is not a rabbi	27%
Another rabbi	31%
Other	0

45. If you have experienced differential treatment, do you think it was because of:

Opposition to the ordination of female rabbis based on traditional interpretations of halakha	14%
Sex discrimination	43%
No difference between the two	10%
Other (please specify)	14%
No response	19%

46. What percentage of the female rabbis whom you know have experienced sexual discrimination?

0	1%
10	4%
20	5%
30	6%
40	1%
50	5%
60	3%
70	6%
80	7%
90	8%
100	10%
N/A	10%
No response	34%

47. When you have been interviewed for a job or been negotiating a contract, were you asked questions related to being a woman?

Yes	68%
No	28%
No response	4%

If yes, did you consider those questions appropriate?<sup>10</sup>

Yes	27%
No	71%

48. Was pregnancy or having children ever discussed with you in a job interview or contract negotiation?

Yes	49%
No	46%
No response	5%

49. Does your job provide child care?

Yes	12%
No	79%
No response	9%

The responses to the following questions are of the 68% of respondents who are mothers..

50. How do you think being a mother has affected your career?

Helped a lot	33%
Helped a little	15%
Had no effect	4%
Hindered a little	24%
Hindered a lot	24%

51. Were you pregnant and working as a rabbi at the same time?

Yes	47%
No	10%

52. How did being pregnant affect your ability to work?

Helped a lot	1%
Helped a little	10%
Had no effect	44%
Hindered a little	38%
Hindered a lot	4%
No response	3%

53. Did you face opposition or resistance because you were a pregnant rabbi?

Never	47%
Occasionally	31%
Sometimes	10%
Frequently	4%
Constantly	0
No response	8%

If you did, from whom did the resistance come?<sup>11\*</sup>

a lay person	77%
a colleague who is not a rabbi	10%
another rabbi	26%
other	1%

54. Were you given maternity leave?

Yes	82%
No	9%
No response	9%

Was it paid?<sup>12</sup>

Yes	88%
No	4%
No response	8%

Was your maternity leave subtracted from your vacation time or substituted for it?

Yes	21%
No	68%

55. If you took a maternity leave, when you returned to work did you find your duties or responsibilities had changed?

Yes	9%
No	77%
No response	14%

## Sexual Harassment

For the purposes of this survey, sexual harassment is defined as:

"Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when 1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment 2) submission to, or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or 3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines)

57. Does your synagogue, organization, or institutions have a sexual harassment policy?

Yes	14%
No	66%
No response	20%

If yes:<sup>13</sup>

Do you think it is adequate?	
Yes	76%
No	24%

Has it been implemented in response to a complaint?

Yes	29%
No	43%
No response	28%

58. Listed below are behaviors commonly accepted as sexual harassment which someone may have directed towards you. Please indicate the frequency of your experience with the following behaviors *in the context of your work*.

Note: 73% of the respondents said that they had experienced at least one of the following behaviors at least once in the course of their careers. 24% said they experienced at least one of them "about once a month" or more.

Unsolicited touching or closeness

Never	49%
Once or twice	35%
About once a month	8%
More than once a month	4%
No response	4%

Unsolicited attempt to fondle or kiss

Never	73%
Once or twice	16%
About once a month	6%
More than once a month	1%
No response	4%

Unsolicited sexual comments, teasing or telling of jokes with sexual content

Never	33%
Once or twice	45%
About once a month	14%
More than once a month	7%

Unsolicited letters, calls, or materials of a sexual nature

Never	77%
Once or twice	15%
About once a month	1%
More than once a month	1%
No response	6%

Pressure for dates or activities with a sexual overtone

Never	85%
Once or twice	11%
About once a month	1%
More than once a month	0
No response	3%

Offer to use influence in return for sexual favor

Never	90%
Once or twice	3%
About once a month	0
More than once a month	0
No response	7%

59. Has sexually harassing behavior which is not included above been directed toward you in the context of your work?

Never	76%
Once or twice	7%
About once a month	1%
More than once a month	1%
No response	14%

60. If you have encountered sexual harassment was it by (circle all that apply):\*<sup>14</sup>
- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| A lay person                                | 68% |
| A professional colleague who is not a rabbi | 12% |
| Another rabbi                               | 29% |
| Other                                       | 5%  |
61. Did you confront the person directly about the harassment?
- |             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| Yes         | 29% |
| No          | 35% |
| No response | 36% |
- If yes, was the response acceptable to you?<sup>15</sup>
- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| Yes | 41% |
| No  | 55% |
62. Did you report the incident to the appropriate body or person at your job?<sup>16</sup>
- |               |     |
|---------------|-----|
| Yes           | 11% |
| No            | 28% |
| Doesn't Exist | 27% |
63. Was the response acceptable?<sup>17</sup>
- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| Yes | 67% |
| No  | 33% |
64. What percentage of the female rabbis whom you know have experienced sexual harassment?
- |             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| 0           | 8%  |
| 10          | 8%  |
| 20          | 2%  |
| 30          | 1%  |
| 40          | 2%  |
| 50          | 4%  |
| 60          | 2%  |
| 70          | 4%  |
| 80          | 4%  |
| 90          | 3%  |
| 100         | 2%  |
| N/A         | 10% |
| No response | 50% |

### Professional Organizations

66. If you belong to one of the major rabbinical organizations, does it adequately address issues of particular concern to women?
- |             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| Yes         | 25% |
| No          | 59% |
| No response | 16% |
68. Would you like it to address issues which it currently does not?
- |             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| Yes         | 55% |
| No          | 13% |
| No response | 32% |

69. What do you think the status of female rabbis compared to male rabbis is?

Very bad	1%
Bad	5%
Mediocre	46%
Good	25%
Very Good	8%
Equal	2%
No response	13%

What is the status in the Conservative movement?

Very bad	6%
Bad	24%
Mediocre	28%
Good	3%
Very Good	1%
Equal	0
No response	38%

What is the status in the Reconstructionist movement?

Very bad	0
Bad	1%
Mediocre	8%
Good	29%
Very Good	15%
Equal	11%
No response	36%

What is the status in the Reform movement?

Very bad	0
Bad	5%
Mediocre	25%
Good	35%
Very Good	9%
Equal	8%
No response	18%

What is the status in other denominations?<sup>18</sup>

Very bad	
Bad	
Mediocre	
Good	
Very Good	
Equal	
No response	

What is the status in Jewish communal work?

Very bad	7%
Bad	14%
Mediocre	19%
Good	15%
Very Good	8%
Equal	2%
No response	35%

What is the status in Jewish education?

Very bad	5%
Bad	8%
Mediocre	15%
Good	21%
Very Good	12%
Equal	5%
No response	33%

What is the status in terms of pulpit rabbis?

Very bad	4%
Bad	15%
Mediocre	27%
Good	19%
Very Good	8%
Equal	1%
No response	26%

What is the status in the rabbinical organizations?

Very bad	7%
Bad	13%
Mediocre	27%
Good	14%
Very Good	6%
Equal	5%
No response	28%

#### Notes

1. The responses to this question are of the 66% of the rabbis who describe their jobs as "congregational."
2. See definition, page x.
3. The responses to this question are of the rabbis who said they were encouraged to enter a specific career track.
4. The responses to this question are of the 1% of the rabbis who said they were not working.
5. The responses to this question are of the 38% of the rabbis who said they worked part-time or more than one part-time job.
6. The responses to this question are of the 66% of rabbis who described their job as congregational.
7. The responses to this question are of the 71% who hold events about women in their work.
8. The responses to this question are of the 45% of rabbis who said they work with other rabbis on a daily basis.
9. The responses to this question are of the 19% of the rabbis who said they did have a sexual discrimination policy.
10. The responses to this question are of the 68% of respondents who were asked questions related to being a woman during a job interview or contract negotiation.
11. The responses to this question are of the rabbis who worked while they were pregnant and faced resistance to that fact at some time.
12. The responses to this question are of the rabbis who were pregnant and working and received maternity leave.
13. The responses to this question and the following one are of the 14% of respondents who said that the organization at which they work has a sexual harassment policy.
14. The responses to this question are of the 73% of respondents who have been harassed at least once in the course of their careers.
15. The responses to this question are of the rabbis who said that they confronted a person who harassed them.
16. The responses to this question are of the 73% of respondents who have been harassed at least once in the course of their careers.
17. The responses to this question are of the rabbis who said they reported harassment to the appropriate body or person at their jobs.
18. There was widespread confusion about the meaning of this question so the replies are invalid and have been omitted.

Please return the completed survey to:  
The Commission for Women's Equality of the American Jewish Congress  
15 East 84th Street, New York, New York 10028-0458 (212)360-1561

Confidential Survey of Female Rabbis

**Personal Information**

1. In which movement were you ordained? A. Conservative      B. Reconstructionist      C. Reform  
D. Non-Denominational(please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
E. Private Smicha(please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
2. In what year were you ordained? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you have any other post-baccalaureate degrees?      Yes      No  
If yes, what are they? \_\_\_\_\_
5. With which movement, if any, are you now affiliated?  
A. Conservative      B. Reconstructionist      C. Reform      D. Other \_\_\_\_\_      E. None
6. To which rabbinical organization(s) or professional organization(s) do you belong?  
A. Central Conference of American Rabbis      B. Rabbinical Assembly  
C. Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association      D. Other \_\_\_\_\_      E. None
7. If you have a congregation, with which movement is it associated?  
A. Conservative      B. Reconstructionist      C. Reform      D. Other \_\_\_\_\_      E. None
8. Did you have a different career before you became a rabbi?      Yes      No  
If yes, what was it? \_\_\_\_\_ For how many years did you do it? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Have you changed careers since you became a rabbi?  
If yes: How many times? \_\_\_\_\_  
Specifically, what careers have you had? \_\_\_\_\_

**Rabbinical School**

10. In your training to become a rabbi, do you think that being a woman:  
A. gave you an advantage      B. did not affect you      C. put you at a disadvantage
11. Did you experience any of the following while you were attending rabbinical school?

Derogatory comments about women during classes or lectures?	Yes	No
Discouragement from becoming a rabbi from professors or administrators?	Yes	No
Discouragement from becoming a rabbi from other students?	Yes	No
Encouragement for becoming a rabbi from professors or administrators?	Yes	No
Encouragement for becoming a rabbi from other students?	Yes	No
Sexual harassment by professors or administrators? (see definition, p. 4)	Yes	No
Sexual harassment by other students?	Yes	No
Inappropriate sexual behavior by professors or administrators?	Yes	No
Inappropriate sexual behavior by students?	Yes	No
12. While you were at rabbinical school, were there:  
Organizations for female rabbinical students?      Yes      No  
Classes, discussions, or lectures about women in the rabbinate or women and Judaism?      Yes      No
13. In rabbinical school, were you encouraged to enter a specific career track because you were a woman?  
If yes:  
What career track? \_\_\_\_\_  
Who suggested it? \_\_\_\_\_  
Did you follow the advice? Yes      No  
Why? \_\_\_\_\_
14. If you like, please give specific examples of incidents that happened to you in rabbinical school which you feel could qualify as sexual discrimination or harassment. Please add paper if you need more room.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Work Information

15. How would you describe your job:  
A. congregation      B. communal      C. education what level? \_\_\_\_\_  
D. counseling      E. administrative      F. Hillel/campus based  
G. research/writer      H. military/hospital chaplain      I. other rabbinical related \_\_\_\_\_  
J. non-rabbinical      K. currently not working \_\_\_\_\_
16. If you are currently not working is it: A. by choice    B. because you cannot find a position  
If you are currently not working, please complete this survey based on your most recent job.
17. What is your current title (Rabbi, Assistant Rabbi, Senior Rabbi, Director, Professor, etc.)? Please be vague if you would like to remain anonymous \_\_\_\_\_
18. Do you work full time or part time? A. full time    B. part-time    C. more than one part-time job (how many?) \_\_\_\_\_
19. If you work part-time, is it: A. by choice      B. because you cannot find a full time position
20. If you are a congregational rabbi, how many members (families) are in your congregation?  
A. 150 or under    B. 151 to 300    C. 301 to 500    D. 501 to 800    E. 800 and above
21. Do you hold programs/events specifically about feminism or women and Judaism at your job? Yes    No  
If yes, are they (Circle all that apply):  
A. religious    B. political    C. cultural    D. educational  
  
If yes, are you criticized for holding them?  
A. Never    B. Occasionally    C. Sometimes    D. Frequently    E. Always
22. Do you work with other rabbis on an every day basis? Yes    No  
If yes, are you (circle all that apply)  
A. a supervisor      B. a subordinate      C. an equal
23. What is your salary, not including benefits (range)?  
A. under \$20,000    B. \$20,000-30,000    C. \$30,000-40,000    D. \$40,000-50,000  
E. \$50,000-60,000    F. \$60,000-70,000    G. \$70,000-80,000    H. \$80,000-100,000  
I. \$100,000-120,000    J. \$120,000-140,000    K. above \$140,000
24. Compared to the salaries of the rabbis with whom you work or with rabbis whom you feel have similar positions to yours, do you feel that you are paid:  
A. equally      B. less      C. more      D. don't know
25. In general, when talking with female rabbis, do you discover that you are paid:  
A. equally      B. less      C. more      D. don't know
26. In general, when talking with male rabbis, do you discover that you are paid:  
A. equally      B. less      C. more      D. don't know
27. What percentage of the lay leadership of your congregation or organization is female?  
0    10    20    30    40    50    60    70    80    90    100    N/A
28. Would you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
Female and male rabbis choose different types of careers.      Agree    Disagree  
Female and male rabbis are encouraged to enter different fields.      Agree    Disagree  
Any pay differential that exists between male and female rabbis is a result of different career choices      Agree    Disagree
29. If you are married or in a long-term relationship, (or have been after you became a rabbi) has that prevented you from applying or accepting a job because it involved relocating? Yes    No
30. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your overall satisfaction with your career? \_\_\_\_\_

## Sexual Discrimination

For the purposes of this survey, sexual discrimination is defined as:

The denial of equal pay or privileges, including compensation, promotion, fringe benefits, sick leave, vacation, and other terms and conditions of employment because of or on the basis of being a woman. Also, differential treatment in hiring and firing, duties, or responsibilities because of or on the basis of being a woman.

31. In the following aspects of rabbinical work, do you think that being a woman gives you an advantage, does not affect you, or puts you at a disadvantage when performing them?

Administration	Advantage	Disadvantage	No effect	N/A
Adult Education	Advantage	Disadvantage	No effect	N/A
Child Education	Advantage	Disadvantage	No effect	N/A
Community Representation	Advantage	Disadvantage	No effect	N/A
Congregant Relations	Advantage	Disadvantage	No effect	N/A
Counseling	Advantage	Disadvantage	No effect	N/A
Interfaith Activities	Advantage	Disadvantage	No effect	N/A
Leading Services	Advantage	Disadvantage	No effect	N/A
Life Cycle Ceremonies	Advantage	Disadvantage	No effect	N/A
Research	Advantage	Disadvantage	No effect	N/A
Writing	Advantage	Disadvantage	No effect	N/A

32. Do you feel that people treat you differently than they do male rabbis in ways that are not discriminatory? Yes No  
If yes, in what ways? \_\_\_\_\_

33. Have you been not asked or asked not to officiate at life cycle ceremonies (brit/naming ceremony, bat/bar mitzvah, conversion, wedding, funeral) because you are a woman?

A. Never	B. Occasionally (once or twice)	C. Sometimes (once a year)	
D. Frequently (more than once a year)	E. Always	F. Not applicable	

34. Have you been asked to officiate at life cycle ceremonies because you are a woman?

A. Never	B. Occasionally (once or twice)	C. Sometimes (once a year)	
D. Frequently (more than once a year)	E. Always	F. Not applicable	

35. Have you been not asked or asked not to participate in events in your Jewish community because you are a female rabbi?

A. Never	B. Occasionally (once or twice)	C. Sometimes (once a year)	
D. Frequently (more than once a year)	E. Always	F. Not applicable	

36. Have you been asked to participate in events in your Jewish community because you are a female rabbi?

A. Never	B. Occasionally (once or twice)	C. Sometimes (once a year)	
D. Frequently (more than once a year)	E. Always	F. Not applicable	

37. Have you felt tension or had a conflict with other rabbis in your community because you are a woman?

A. Never	B. Occasionally (once or twice)	C. Sometimes (more than once a year)	
D. Frequently (Once a month)	E. Always	F. Not applicable	

38. Have you been prevented from sitting on a beit din or serving as a witness for religious documents or proceedings because you are a woman?

A. Never	B. Occasionally (once or twice)	C. Sometimes (once a year)	
D. Frequently (Once a month)	E. Always	F. Not applicable	

39. Have you decided not to sit on a beit din or serve as a witness because you are a woman? Yes No AN

40. Have you ever felt that your rabbinate is hindered by the attribution of female stereotypes (emotional, overprotective, irrational) to you?

A. Never	B. Occasionally	C. Sometimes	D. Frequently	E. Always
----------	-----------------	--------------	---------------	-----------

41. Does your synagogue, organization, or institution have a sexual discrimination policy?

If yes, do you think it is adequate?	Yes	No
Has it been implemented in response to a complaint?	Yes	No

42. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

I have not been offered a job because I am a woman.	Agree	Disagree
I have been offered a lower salary than a male rabbi for the same job because I am a woman.	Agree	Disagree
My congregation/institution gives me the same respect they give male rabbis.	Agree	Disagree
My professional colleagues gives me the same respect they give male rabbis.	Agree	Disagree
The lay leaders with whom I work give me the same respect they give male rabbis.	Agree	Disagree

43. Have you been the subject of sexual discrimination in relation to your job?

A. Never	B. Once or twice	C. Sometimes (about once a month)
D. Frequently (more than once a month)	E. Always	

44. If you have encountered sexual discrimination was it by (circle all that apply):

A. A lay person	B. A professional colleague who is not a rabbi	C. Another rabbi	D. Other _____
-----------------	--	------------------	----------------

45. If you have experienced differential treatment, do you think it was because of:  
A. opposition to the ordination of female rabbis based on traditional interpretations of halakha  
B. sex discrimination  
C. no difference between the two  
D. other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

46. What percentage of the female rabbis whom you know have experienced sexual discrimination?  
0    10    20    30    40    50    60    70    80    90    100    N/A

47. When you have been interviewed for a job or been negotiating a contract,  
were you asked questions related to being a woman?      Yes    No  
If yes, did you consider those questions appropriate?      Yes    No  
What issues were the questions about? \_\_\_\_\_

48. Was pregnancy or having children ever discussed with you in a  
job interview or contract negotiation?      Yes    No  
If yes, in what context? \_\_\_\_\_

49. Does your job provide child care?      Yes    No  
If yes, what are the arrangements? \_\_\_\_\_

If you are a mother please answer the following questions. If not, please go to question #56.

50. How do you think being a mother has affected your career?  
A. Helped a lot    B. Helped a little    C. Had no effect    D. Hindered a little    E. Hindered a lot

51. Were you pregnant and working as a rabbi at the same time?      Yes    No

52. How did being pregnant affect your ability to work?  
A. Helped a lot    B. Helped a little    C. Had no effect    D. Hindered a little    E. Hindered a lot

53. Did you face opposition or resistance because you were a pregnant rabbi?  
A. Never    B. Occasionally    C. Sometimes    D. Frequently    E. Constantly

If you did, from whom did the resistance come?  
A. a lay person    B. a colleague who is not a rabbi    C. another rabbi    D. other

54. Were you given maternity leave?      Yes    No  
If yes, how long? \_\_\_\_\_ Was it paid or unpaid? \_\_\_\_\_  
Was your maternity leave subtracted from your vacation time or substituted for it?      Yes    No

55. If you took a maternity leave, when you returned to work did you find your duties  
or responsibilities had changed?      Yes    No  
If yes, why? \_\_\_\_\_

56. If you would like to, please use this space to describe specific instances of sexual discrimination which you have faced. Please add paper if you need more room.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Sexual Harassment

For the purposes of this survey sexual harassment is defined as:

"Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when  
1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment  
2) submission to, or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting  
such individual, or 3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work  
performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. (Equal Employment Opportunity  
Commission Guidelines)

57. Does your synagogue, organization, or institutions have a sexual harassment policy?      Yes    No  
If yes, do you think it is adequate?      Yes    No  
Has it been implemented in response to a complaint?      Yes    No

58. Listed below are behaviors commonly accepted as sexual harassment which someone may have directed towards you. Please indicate the frequency of your experience with the following behaviors *in the context of your work*.

	Never	Once or twice	About once a month	More than once a month
Unsolicited touching or closeness	1	2	3	4
Unsolicited attempt to fondle or kiss	1	2	3	4
Unsolicited sexual comments, teasing or telling of jokes with sexual content	1	2	3	4
Unsolicited letters, calls, or materials of a sexual nature	1	2	3	4
Pressure for dates or activities with a sexual overtone	1	2	3	4
Offer to use influence in return for sexual favor	1	2	3	4

59. Has sexually harassing behavior which is not included above been directed toward you in the context of your work?

A. Never B. Once or twice C. About once a month D. More than once a month E. Always  
What type of behavior? \_\_\_\_\_

60. If you have encountered sexual harassment was it by (circle all that apply):

A. a lay person      B. a professional colleague who is not a rabbi      C. another rabbi      D. other

If you have been harassed more than once, please answer the following questions for each instance.

61. Did you confront the person directly about the harassment? Yes No

If yes, was the response acceptable to you? Yes No

What was the response and/or what would you have liked the response to be? \_\_\_\_\_

62. Did you report the incident to the appropriate body or person at your job? Yes No Doesn't Exist

63. Was the response acceptable? Yes No

What was the response and/or what would you have liked the response to be? \_\_\_\_\_

64. What percentage of the female rabbis whom you know have experienced sexual harassment?

0    10    20    30    40    50    60    70    80    90    100

65. If you would like to, please use this space to describe specific instances of sexual harassment which you have faced. Please add paper if you need more room.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Professional Organizations

66. If you belong to one of the major rabbinical organizations, does it adequately address issues of particular concern to women? Yes No

67. What specific programs does it have? \_\_\_\_\_

68. Would you like it to address issues which it currently does not? Yes No  
If yes, which issues? \_\_\_\_\_

69. What do you think the status of female rabbis compared to male rabbis is?

A. Very bad    B. Bad    C. Mediocre    D. Good    E. Very Good    F. Equal

What is the status in the Conservative movement?	Very bad	Bad	Mediocre	Good	Very Good	Equal
What is the status in the Reconstructionist movement?	Very bad	Bad	Mediocre	Good	Very Good	Equal
What is the status in the Reform movement?	Very bad	Bad	Mediocre	Good	Very Good	Equal
What is the status in other denominations?	Very bad	Bad	Mediocre	Good	Very Good	Equal
What is the status in Jewish communal work?	Very bad	Bad	Mediocre	Good	Very Good	Equal
What is the status in Jewish education?	Very bad	Bad	Mediocre	Good	Very Good	Equal
What is the status in terms of pulpit rabbis?	Very bad	Bad	Mediocre	Good	Very Good	Equal
What is the status in the rabbinical organizations?	Very bad	Bad	Mediocre	Good	Very Good	Equal

This is an anonymous survey. If you are willing to be interviewed (either anonymously or with attribution) for the article on the results, please write your name, address, phone number and the best time to reach you. \_\_\_\_\_

(over)

Please take this page to relate any experiences about being a female rabbi or about sexual discrimination and harassment that you think are relevant to the questions asked in this survey. Please add paper if you need more room.

Survey written by Jennifer R. Cowan  
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## AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS NATIONAL OFFICERS: 1992-1994

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\*Deceased

## Commission for Women's Equality

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