

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COMPANION

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The Red Push? Migration and the Changing Geography of Orthodox Communities

Methodology and data companion to the working paper

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A full white paper, with the complete introduction, related literature, data and design, results, discussion, limitations, conclusion, and references, is available on request.

© 2026 Heshbon and the author. This companion explains how the working paper was built and how to read its results. It can be shared and cited with attribution.

At a glance

Research question	Is the Orthodox community relocating along political lines toward low-tax Republican states, or does its growth follow the cost of raising an observant family?
Data	Public U.S. Census net domestic migration (2023 to 2024), American Jewish Year Book state Jewish population (2024), the Zillow Home Value Index (2015 to 2025), and Heshbon's Community Database of kollel foundings, day-school enrollment, and neighborhood price premiums.
Unit of analysis	The state, and for the price signals the individual synagogue neighborhood, rather than the household.
Statistical method	Descriptive triangulation across five signals, anchored by a cohort-share analysis of institution foundings.
Headline finding	Jewish population remains about three to one concentrated in Democratic-trifecta states, and 57 percent of the Jews living in a Republican-trifecta state live in Florida alone.
What it shows	A narrow, affordability-driven tilt toward Florida rather than a political realignment.

The question behind the paper

A familiar claim in communal conversation holds that observant families are relocating along political lines, leaving high-tax Democratic states for Republican ones that promise vouchers, low taxes, and a congenial politics. The national migration into the low-tax Sunbelt is genuine, and vivid anecdotes of families decamping to South Florida give the story force.

This paper separates two questions that are easily merged. Americans in general are indeed moving toward Republican, low-tax states. Whether the Orthodox community in particular is doing the same, and for political rather than economic reasons, is a distinct question that

requires holding the community's own trajectory against the national backdrop.

Where the data come from

Migration and population backdrop. Net domestic state-to-state migration for July 2023 to July 2024 comes from the U.S. Census Bureau, counting moves between states while excluding births, deaths, and international arrivals. State Jewish population for 2024 comes from Sheskin and Dashefsky's estimates in the American Jewish Year Book, the standard reference for the field.

Policy classification. Each state is coded as of 2026 on three overlapping dimensions: its government trifecta (whether one party holds the

governorship and both chambers), its school-choice status (universal, partial, or none), and whether it levies a state income tax. These three lenses overlap heavily, which shapes how the results are read.

Community-specific signals. Four measures track the observant community directly, drawn from Heshbon's Community Database: the founding years of community kollels, state home-value growth from the Zillow Home Value Index for 2015 to 2025, day-school enrollment for a sample of communities, and a walk-to-shul housing premium comparing each synagogue neighborhood's four-bedroom value to a nearby comparison area. Eighty of roughly 115 kollel communities carry a reliable founding year.

The statistical method, named and explained

The analysis is descriptive and triangulating rather than causal. Its central device is a cohort-share design: datable kollel foundings are

grouped into eras, and within each era the paper computes the share located in Republican-trifecta, universal-choice, and no-income-tax states, so that a rising share signals a drift toward those states. State status is fixed as of 2026 and applied to foundings of every era, which frames the question as where growth landed relative to today's policy map. Around this spine, the migration series, the population distribution, home values, enrollment, and neighborhood premiums are read together as corroborating signals rather than as a single estimate.

Because sample sizes are small and the political, voucher, and tax labels travel together, the results are offered as direction and magnitude, not precise or causal estimates. The paper is explicit that no cross-sectional design can fully separate a political effect from an affordability one, and it names a future community-specific enrollment event study, keyed to the timing of voucher enactments, as the decisive test.

Key results from the paper

Table 1. Where the newest community kollels landed (2015 to 2026 cohort).

Policy lens (state status as of 2026)	Share of new foundings
Republican trifecta	31%
Universal school choice	35%
No state income tax	31%

Note. The Republican-trifecta share was 12 percent in the 2000s cohort, so the tilt toward these states is real and rising.

Table 2. New kollel foundings by state, most recent cohort.

State	New foundings
New Jersey	7
New York	7
Florida	5
Each other state	1

Note. Democratic-trifecta states host 15 of the 26 newest datable foundings; New Jersey, among the highest-taxed states, is tied for the most.

Figure 1. Home values ran hotter in the Sunbelt, with Texas a caution.



Note. All-population housing demand from the Zillow Home Value Index, 2015 to 2025. Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, and Arizona each cleared 110 percent.

How to read the results

Table 1 shows that the newest kollels do tilt toward red-policy states, with 31 percent in Republican-trifecta states, up from 12 percent in the 2000s. Table 2 tempers that share with levels: New York and New Jersey each added seven new kollels and Florida five, while Democratic-trifecta states still host 15 of the 26 newest datable foundings. Figure 1 shows home values running hotter across the Republican-trifecta states, though Texas grew a below-average 80 percent, a reminder that policy labels do not mechanically produce hot markets. The broader population map barely moved: Democratic-trifecta states hold about 4.4 million Jews against 1.3 million in red states, and 57 percent of the red-state total lives in Florida alone.

What the numbers do not claim

The findings describe direction, not cause. Jewish population is broader than Orthodox population, and the observant subpopulation is younger and higher-fertility, so its trends can run ahead of the totals; the community-specific signals help but are themselves thin. The kollel count is one marker of new-community formation rather than a census, the enrollment sample is small, and the largest, oldest centers cannot be dated and all sit in blue states, so the design if anything understates the blue-state mass. Above all, Republican control, universal vouchers, and the absence of an income tax move together, which means the data are consistent with an affordability pull that happens to coincide with Republican policy.

Reproducing the analysis

The backdrop rests on public data: Census net domestic migration, the American Jewish Year Book population estimates, and the Zillow Home Value Index via FRED. State trifectas and school-choice status can be rebuilt from Ballotpedia and MultiState for 2026, including the November 2025 gubernatorial results. The kollel founding years, day-school enrollment series, and walk-to-shul premiums come from Heshbon's Community Database and companion papers in the Neighborhood Affordability Project, and the figures were independently recomputed from the underlying data.