

## FAQ

### **Q: Who did you survey?**

A: We randomly selected a sample of 2,266 people who applied to Taglit-Birthright Israel trips in the winters of 2001-2004, and conducted interviews with 1,223 eligible respondents and interviews with close relatives of another 289. The sample included both people who went on a Taglit-Birthright Israel trip and those who applied to the program but did not go.

### **Q: How did you find the people you surveyed?**

A: We used the contact information that they gave to Taglit-Birthright Israel when they applied to the trip as a starting point. Since that information was often out of date, we did extensive searching online and by telephone, and asked parents and relatives for updated contact information.

### **Q: Why did you only survey applicants from the first few years of the program?**

A: Applicants from the first years of the program were surveyed in order to learn about Taglit-Birthright Israel's long-term impact—how it affected participants five or more years after they returned. This timeframe also covered the critical years in which young adults begin to marry and have children.

### **Q: How did you measure Taglit-Birthright Israel's effect?**

A: Taglit-Birthright Israel's effect was determined by comparing the values for participants and nonparticipants across a number of measures of Jewish engagement. We used a statistical method called regression analysis to control for any pretrip differences between participants and nonparticipants that might have led us to misestimate program effects.

### **Q: Are the Taglit-Birthright Israel applicants you surveyed representative of the overall young adult Jewish population or applicants to Taglit-Birthright Israel in more recent years?**

A: Not really. It is likely that applicants to the early years of Taglit-Birthright Israel came from more Jewishly-engaged backgrounds than the young adult Jewish population in general. Participants in the years studied in this report also were more Jewishly-engaged than those from later years because 9/11 and the second Intifada selectively discouraged travel to Israel for many less engaged Jews. However, the sample included in this study contains individuals with all levels of Jewish background, from those who grew up in completely disengaged homes to those raised in highly connected and observant families.

### **Q: Is it possible then that the effect you see for Taglit-Birthright Israel is simply due to the high level of Jewish engagement of your sample?**

A: No. The main purpose of this study was to compare Taglit-Birthright Israel participants to nonparticipants. While the sample as a whole is more highly engaged than the overall Jewish population, Taglit-Birthright Israel participants and nonparticipants had comparable levels of pretrip Jewish engagement, so the differences observed between participants and nonparticipants represent

the effect of the trip, not the relatively highly engaged group of applicants. While we cannot predict what would the impact of the trip would have been on the general population of Jewish young adults, the evidence suggests that it would have been greater still for many measures—across a variety of outcomes, the trip had a greater impact on individuals from less engaged backgrounds.

**Q: Why didn't the nonparticipants you surveyed go on the trip?**

A: Taglit-Birthright Israel has always had many more applicants for a given round than available places. The selection process that chooses which trip and date an applicant goes on is largely random, and often there is simply no place available for an applicant. Some other applicants canceled their trip or were unable to find a trip on a suitable date.

**Q: Could the results you report be due to biases in who answered the survey?**

A: There is always a possibility of nonresponse bias, but we do not believe this is the case here. The survey achieved a high response rate given trends in survey research and the difficult-to-reach nature of the population. Most importantly, very few individuals refused to complete the survey once they were contacted; most nonrespondents to the survey were individuals for whom we could not locate accurate contact information. This high cooperation rate strongly suggests that it is unlikely that we only surveyed the most Jewishly-engaged individuals or only those with a positive opinion of Taglit-Birthright Israel. However, if less engaged individuals were less likely to respond, the result would be underestimates of the size of the program's effect rather than overestimates, as participants would be compared to the most highly engaged nonparticipants.

**Q: Could the results be artifacts of the statistical techniques you used to analyze the data?**

A: We analyzed the data using a number of different methods, which almost always agreed with one another about whether Taglit had an effect on a given outcome. While the figures we report were the result of the method we felt was most appropriate, the appendix to the report includes the results we obtained using several other methods.

**Q: Why do you only report Taglit-Birthright Israel's effect on inmarriage for the non-Orthodox?**

A: Simply put, Taglit-Birthright Israel applicants who were raised Orthodox were extremely unlikely to marry non-Jews. Out of all the married individuals (both participants and nonparticipants) we surveyed who were raised Orthodox, only a single person married a non-Jew. Substantively, this means that Taglit-Birthright Israel could not increase Orthodox rates of inmarriage, as they were practically at 100 percent without the program. The appendix of the report contains simpler analyses of inmarriage that do include the Orthodox and still show a significant effect for Taglit-Birthright Israel on inmarriage.

**Q: Are marriages where a non-Jewish spouse converted to Judaism considered inmarriages in your report? What about individuals who were engaged to a Jew (or non-Jew) but not yet married?**

A: We defined a Jewish spouse as a spouse who was Jewish at the time of the survey, regardless of whether he or she was raised as a Jew. However, we examined marriages where a spouse who was not

raised as a Jew identified as a Jew at the time of the survey. The evidence suggested that spouses of Taglit-Birthright Israel participants may be more likely to convert to Judaism than those of nonparticipants.

The findings reported in the main report include only those who were married at the time of the survey. However, we analyzed inmarriage including fiancé/es as well and found similar results with regards to Taglit-Birthright Israel's effect.

**Q: Is Taglit-Birthright Israel's effect stronger for the unengaged?**

A: On many outcomes, yes. In relation to Israel, Taglit-Birthright Israel seemed to increase attachment more for those who practiced fewer Jewish rituals growing up. Taglit-Birthright Israel's effect on increasing religious service attendance also appeared to be greatest for those who had little or no formal Jewish education. There is some evidence that Taglit-Birthright Israel's effect on marrying a Jew was greater for those whose parents were intermarried, but this finding was based on the responses of only a few individuals and is not definitive.

**Q: Could the effects you show be due to follow-up programs like Birthright NEXT?**

A: This seems unlikely. Programs like NEXT did not exist when the participants in this report returned from Israel, and the participants in Taglit-Birthright Israel's early years are now too old to be targeted by the programs that have recently come in to being.

**Q: Why can't you say whether or not Taglit-Birthright Israel impacts raising Jewish children?**

A: Because we do not have enough data. Relatively few respondents had begun to have children at the time of the survey, so the margins of error around the estimates of the percentage of children being raised as Jews were extremely large. We hope to conduct additional research that will clarify this question.