The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS), founded in 1980, is dedicated to providing independent, high-quality research on issues related to contemporary Jewish life.

The Cohen Center is also the home of the Steinhardt Social Research Institute (SSRI). Established in 2005, SSRI uses innovative research methods to collect and analyze socio-demographic data on the Jewish community.
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Begun in 2009 as an outgrowth of our Birthright Israel evaluation studies, the Jewish Futures Project is a research program designed to understand the long-term impact of Birthright Israel and the Jewish trajectories of a generation of young adults. We are grateful to Birthright Israel’s professional leadership, including Gidi Mark (CEO), Carolyn Kupietzky (Director of Planning and Strategy Implementation), and Dr. Zohar Raviv (Director of Education), who have encouraged a rigorous program of evaluation and allowed us to function as independent scholars. We also note with appreciation Birthright Israel’s founding philanthropists, Charles Bronfman and Michael Steinhardt, whose successful efforts to create Birthright Israel enabled this research project.

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Executive Summary

Birthright Israel is the largest Jewish educational intervention in the world, having sent more than 400,000 Jewish young adults from North America to Israel for a ten-day, immersive educational experience. Its scope and reach suggest the program has the potential to shift the Jewish identities and involvements of a generation of Jewish young adults touched by the program.

Assessing Birthright’s long-term impact began in 2009 with the Jewish Futures Project (JFP), a longitudinal study that follows several thousand Jewish young adults who applied to the program between 2001 and 2009. The present report draws on data from the fifth JFP survey, conducted in 2015-2016. Telephone and Web interviews were completed with over 2,700 respondents, including those who went on a Birthright trip and a “control group” of those who applied to the program but did not participate (“nonparticipants”).

The study documents Birthright’s long-term impact (up to 14 years post trip) and explores how it manifests itself in different subgroups: those with one versus two Jewish parents, men versus women, participants who are single versus those who are partnered, and those whose sole Israel experience was a Birthright trip.

Key findings:

- Birthright participants are more likely to feel a connection to Israel, have a Jewish spouse, raise children Jewish and be engaged in Jewish life, even a decade or more after the trip.
- In contrast to reports of “distancing” from Israel among young American Jews, Birthright’s effect on connection to Israel persists and is significant. Most JFP panelists feel at least “somewhat” connected to Israel, and participants report higher levels of connection than their nonparticipant peers.
- Birthright’s effect on participants with one Jewish parent is similar to that on participants with two Jewish parents. Compared to nonparticipants, Birthright participants who have one Jewish parent remain more connected to Israel a decade or more after their trip. They are also more likely to have a Jewish spouse.
- Birthright’s impact is evident even for participants who have had no other Israel experience, when compared to similar nonparticipants who have never been to Israel.
- Among those who are married, engaged, or living with a partner, Birthright has a positive impact on virtually all areas of Jewish engagement, including Jewish communal involvement, social and cultural engagement, and religious observance. Among those who are not partnered, Birthright has an impact on only a few measures of Jewish engagement.
- The impact of Birthright on partner choice is different for men and women. For men, Birthright participation has a positive impact on having a Jewish spouse, fiancé/e or partner; a positive impact on the likelihood of spousal
conversion to Judaism; and a positive impact on the likelihood that children are being raised Jewish by religion, even if the other parent is not Jewish. These effects are weaker for women. This difference may be related to traditional Jewish views on matrilineal descent or gender dynamics in the contemporary “marriage market.”

For men who participated in Birthright, their greater likelihood of marrying a Jewish spouse decreases as their age at marriage increases. Among men who married after age 30, there are no differences between participants and nonparticipants in terms of their likelihood of marrying a Jewish spouse. Whether the diminishing impact of Birthright on spousal choice as participants age is due to changes in participants’ priorities, their opportunities in the marriage market, or a combination of both is not clear.

The study also provided an opportunity to examine the Jewish choices made by different groups of young adults. For example, even as Birthright has a lasting, positive impact on participants with only one Jewish parent and those with two Jewish parents, the levels of engagement of these two groups are different. Strategies for engaging these individuals likely need to be tailored to their unique backgrounds. Similarly, that Birthright’s impact on Jewish engagement is concentrated among those who are partnered, suggests the need to rethink how the Jewish community engages Jewish young adults in the years before they partner and form families.

Although childhood experiences influence adult Jewish engagement, our findings suggest these trajectories are not immutable. Birthright demonstrates the potential to influence Jewish identity and behaviors in significant ways. The full story of this generation will only emerge over time.
Introduction

It has been nearly two decades since the first plane with Birthright Israel (hereafter “Birthright”) participants landed at Ben-Gurion airport in Israel. The program offered Jewish young adults, 18-26 years old, an opportunity to travel to Israel with their peers on a free 10-day educational trip. Launched in late 1999, Birthright was born of its founders’ goals to strengthen Jewish identity, Jewish communities, and connection to Israel among Jews around the world (Kelner, 2010; Saxe & Chazan, 2008). In Birthright’s first year, 8,000 Jewish young adults from North America participated.

Since then, the program has quadrupled its reach. Every year, more than 30,000 North American participants, and 10,000 participants from other Jewish communities around the globe, travel to Israel on Birthright trips. Since the program began, nearly 400,000 Jewish young adults from North America have had a Birthright experience, making Birthright the largest Jewish educational intervention in the world. Birthright’s scope points to its potential to shift the Jewish engagement of the generation touched by the program.

The oldest Birthright alumni are now in their early 40s, and there is a large and steadily growing group of alumni in their 30s. Many are married, established in their careers, and have young children. It is now possible to assess Birthright’s impact on the adult Jewish choices of its alumni.

Evaluating Birthright’s impact has been a constant throughout the life of the program. Multiple short- and medium-term evaluation studies (three months to several years post-trip) demonstrated that compared to similar nonparticipant applicants, Birthright participants have stronger emotional attachment to Israel, offer more positive evaluations of Israel as a society, and are more confident in explaining the current situation in Israel (Saxe et al., 2008; Saxe, Sasson, & Hecht, 2006; Saxe, Sasson, Phillips, Hecht, & Wright, 2007). Participants also place a higher value on forming Jewish families and are more likely to be engaged in Jewish activities, both on college campuses and beyond (Saxe, Fishman, Shain, Wright, & Hecht, 2013; Saxe et al., 2008; Saxe et al., 2006; Saxe et al., 2007).

Assessments of Birthright’s long-term impact began in 2009 with the Jewish Futures Project (JFP), a longitudinal study following a randomly selected group of several thousand participants and comparable nonparticipant applicants from the early years of the program (Saxe et al., 2009). Findings from the first four JFP surveys were consistent with earlier evidence: Birthright participation has a positive and lasting impact on participants’ likelihood of feeling connected to Israel, marrying a Jewish spouse, and participating in Jewish life (Saxe et al., 2009; Saxe, Phillips, et al., 2011; Saxe, Shain, et al., 2014; Saxe et al., 2012).

The present report draws on data from the fifth JFP survey, conducted in 2015-2016 and examines how participation in the program influences different subgroups of its diverse pool of participants. In particular, we focus on the following four questions:

**What is Birthright’s long-term impact?**

The findings of previous research notwithstanding, questions about Birthright’s long-term impact remain. In particular, does Birthright’s impact continue to persist over time? In addition, as participants mature, in what areas of life does Birthright’s impact manifest itself? To answer these questions, the report focuses on Birthright’s long-term...
impact (up to 14 years post trip) on connection to Israel, family formation, and engagement with Jewish life.

What is Birthright's impact on those with one versus two Jewish parents? As the rate of intermarriage in the Jewish community increases, questions about the Jewish trajectories of young adults who have only one Jewish parent are increasingly important to study (Cohen, 2006; Feldman, 2015). The Pew Research Center's 2013 study of American Jews demonstrated that half of Jewish millennials have only one Jewish parent. Yet, compared to previous generations, among millennials with one Jewish parent, there is a nearly 100% increase in the proportion who identify as Jews (Saxe, Sasson, & Aronson 2015; Sasson, Aronson, Chertok, Kadushin, & Saxe, 2017).

In recent years, Birthright has seen a surge in applicants with only one Jewish parent (from less than 20% in the early years of the program to nearly 35% in 2017). Recent research has documented that involvement in Jewish life in college, including participation in a Birthright trip, influences the trajectories of Jewish millennials with one Jewish parent, leading to higher rates of engagement in Jewish rituals, connection to Israel, and identifying as Jewish by religion (Sasson et al., 2015). This impact also seems to manifest itself later in life: Those with one Jewish parent who go on a Birthright trip are more likely to marry a Jew (Saxe, Shain, et al., 2014). Does the evidence suggest that the long-term impact of Birthright participation on those who come from families with only one Jewish parent will continue into the future?

What is Birthright’s impact on those for whom Birthright was their sole Israel experience? Research has suggested that Birthright trips may be most effective when they lead to return trips to Israel (Cohen & Kopelowitz, 2010). By offering a free trip, Birthright created an Israel travel opportunity for those who were not otherwise inclined or could not afford to visit Israel on their own. Although some Birthright participants do return to Israel after the trip, for the majority (60%), Birthright is their first and only encounter with Israel (Saxe et al., 2012). What impact does the trip have on those for whom Birthright remains their only Israel experience?

What is Birthright’s impact on men versus women? With the exception of a brief period during the second intifada (2002-2003), Birthright has attracted more women than men. Among applicants to Birthright since 2003, 55% have been women (Taglit-Birthright Israel, 2013). This is unsurprising in light of other evidence that women and girls have stronger connections to Jews and Judaism than do men and boys across almost every dimension (Fishman & Parmer, 2008; Hartman & Hartman, 2009). Accordingly, for much of the 20th century, American Jewish women were more likely than American Jewish men to marry other Jews (Waite & Friedman, 1997). Today, however, among married Jewish adults under age 40, women are less likely than men to have a Jewish spouse. How does this dynamic operate among those who went on Birthright? To the extent that Birthright influences choice of spouse, does it do so differently for men and for women?

The report begins with a description of the study and the analysis paradigm. The findings are presented in three sections, each of which focuses on a different set of outcomes: connection to Israel, family formation, and engagement with Jewish life. Within each section, we look at the impact of Birthright participation on various subgroups: those with one versus two Jewish parents, those whose sole Israel experience was on Birthright, and men versus women.
The Jewish Futures Project (JFP) follows a sample of several thousand Jewish young adults who applied to Birthright in the first decade of the program’s existence. It includes those who participated in the program and similar individuals who applied but did not go. The sample represents the diversity of Jewish backgrounds among applicants, and while not a representative sample of young Jews in the United States, it covers a broad swath of the Jewish experiences of this generation.

In the panel, some have two Jewish parents, and others have only one; some had extensive Jewish education before going on the trip, and others had no formal Jewish education at all. A number had never visited Israel before they applied for the trip, while others had visited once or more, usually with their families. Some applied to Birthright in the first years of the program, soon after 9/11 and during the second intifada, when concerns about security were heightened and Birthright itself was not yet well known. Others applied between 2007 and 2009, when the program was well known and the security situation in Israel was relatively stable. (For a detailed description of the characteristics of JFP panelists, see the Appendix at the end of this report.)

The initial JFP panel comprised a stratified random sample of applicants to Birthright between 2001 and 2004. These individuals were surveyed for the first time in 2009 and again in 2010, 2012, and 2013. A sample of individuals who applied to Birthright in 2005 was added to the panel in 2010, and a sample of individuals who applied to Birthright in 2006 was added in 2012.

This report describes findings from the fifth survey of the JFP panel, conducted in 2015-2016. Existing members of the JFP panel were surveyed again, in some cases for the fifth time. In addition, a sample of individuals who applied to Birthright between 2007 and 2009 was added to the panel and surveyed for the first time (see Technical Appendix A). Thus, the fifth wave of the study includes panelists who applied (or participated in) the program up to 14 years ago.

Like previous surveys, the fifth survey was dual-mode: telephone and Web. The survey included questions about panelists’ upbringings, current Jewish attitudes and behaviors, connections to Israel and choices about dating, marriage, and family life. Field operations began on June 2, 2015 and ended on March 3, 2016. A total of 2,744 panelists responded to the survey, representing an overall response rate (AAPOR RR4) of 50.2% (58.6% for Birthright participants and 40.0% for nonparticipants).

Weights were calculated to account for differential probabilities of selection due to sampling stratification and known differences between respondents and nonrespondents with regard to age, Birthright participation, year of application to Birthright, Jewish denomination at time of application, and gender. These weights are applied to all subsequent analyses. Full details of the survey methodology can be found in Technical Appendix A and the complete survey instrument can be found in Technical Appendix C.
What About Panelists Raised Orthodox?

The Jewish Futures Project collects data from a random sample of all applicants to Birthright’s 2001-2009 cohorts, including applicants who were raised Orthodox. Panelists raised Orthodox represent 9% (N=277) of respondents to the fifth survey of the JFP panel. This group of panelists looks very different from other panelists in terms of their Jewish backgrounds, current Jewish attitudes and behaviors, Israel engagement, and family formation patterns. In many cases, there is almost no variance among the raised Orthodox on the outcome measures explored in this report—for example, among the raised Orthodox who have married, only 2% (N=6) married a non-Jew. Because the Orthodox were not the target of the intervention and due to the “ceiling effect” on the outcomes explored, the raised Orthodox are excluded from all analyses presented in this report, including the description of the panel found in the Appendix at the end of the report.
To analyze Birthright’s impact, we adapt the “Randomized Clinical Trial” (RCT) methods used to assess drug and healthcare interventions (also described as a “true experiment”; see Saxe, 2014). In an RCT, research participants are randomly assigned to experimental and control groups, and the effectiveness of the treatment is assessed by comparing those who received the treatment to those who did not. Because thousands of the Jewish young adults who applied to go on a Birthright trip between 2001 and 2009 never went on a trip, we can use a sample of these nonparticipants as a “control group” and evaluate the impact of Birthright by comparing them to a sample of trip participants.

Although selection for participation in a Birthright trip is not completely random, participants and nonparticipant applicants are very similar in terms of their demographic characteristics and Jewish backgrounds at the time of application. There are only two systematic differences between the groups: Participants are slightly younger and more likely to have two Jewish parents. Analyses of Birthright’s impact on participants use statistical models that account for differences in age, gender, having one or two Jewish parents, and year of application to Birthright (2001-2006 versus 2007-2009). We use these models to estimate the probability that Birthright participants and nonparticipants will experience certain outcomes, holding all other factors constant.

To answer questions about Birthright’s differential impact on members of subgroups, we present estimates separately for different types of panelists, e.g., those with only one versus two Jewish parents, men versus women, and those who have never been to Israel except on a Birthright trip. To demonstrate Birthright’s impact on the most mature panelists, and those for whom the most time has elapsed since participation, the report only presents data for panelists who applied between 2001 and 2006. For all analyses presented in this report, Technical Appendix B includes the regression models and estimated probabilities with 95% confidence intervals.

As described above, we contrast outcomes for Birthright participants with an equivalent comparison group of nonparticipants who applied for a Birthright trip but did not end up going. Findings appear in three sections:

1. **Connection to Israel:** These analyses examine Birthright’s long-term impact on those with one versus two Jewish parents and Birthright’s impact on participants’ relationship to Israel if Birthright was their only Israel experience.

2. **Family formation:** These analyses examine Birthright’s impact on choice of spouse or partner and likelihood of raising children Jewish. Also investigated are differences between men and woman, those with one Jewish parent and those with two, and the role that participation plays for those who only visited Israel on Birthright.

3. **Jewish Life:** These analyses examine Birthright’s impact on engagement with Jewish life for participants who have spouses and partners. Also discussed is Birthright’s impact on participants who are single.
Enhancing Jewish young adults’ relationship to Israel is a key goal of Birthright. We found strong evidence that going on Birthright has a lasting effect on participants’ feelings of connection to Israel. Although different subgroups of participants have different baseline levels of connection, Birthright’s impact on connection to Israel is evident for those with one Jewish parent, for those with two Jewish parents, and for those who have only ever visited Israel on Birthright.

**One versus two Jewish parents**

Participants with two Jewish parents have a 76% likelihood of feeling “very much” or “somewhat” connected to Israel, compared to 56% for similar nonparticipants (Figure 1). For panel members with only one Jewish parent, the impact of Birthright is also substantial: Participants from these families have a 63% likelihood of feeling “very much” or “somewhat” connected to Israel, compared to 41% among those from similar families who did not go. For those with one Jewish parent and for those with two, Birthright participants are about twice as likely to feel “very much” connected to Israel.7

**Birthright Israel only versus no Israel experience**

Nearly 40% of the nonparticipants in the JFP panel have been to Israel at least once on a trip other than Birthright, and 40% of the participants have been to Israel more than once. In the majority of cases, these additional trips occurred before the panelists applied to Birthright, and the trips did not render them ineligible for Birthright (e.g., a family vacation). In other cases, these were trips that occurred after panelists applied to (or traveled

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**Figure 1. Connection to Israel (one vs. two Jewish parents)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Two Jewish parents</th>
<th>One Jewish parent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nonparticipant</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Predictive margins from an ordinal logistic regression model of connection to Israel on Birthright participation, current age, parental marriage type, and Birthright applicant cohort. Age fixed at 33, applicant cohort fixed at 2001-2006. See Tables B2 and B3 in Technical Appendix B.
on) Birthright. In Figure 1, the levels of connection to Israel reflect the levels of connection for a panel in which the majority of its members have been to Israel at least once. In order to understand Birthright’s unique contribution to the field of Israel travel (enabling those who were not otherwise inclined or could not afford to visit Israel on their own to have an Israel experience), we compare Birthright participants with no other Israel experience to nonparticipants who have never been to Israel.

Participants with two Jewish parents, whose only visit to Israel has been through a Birthright trip, have a 66% likelihood of feeling “very much” or “somewhat” connected to Israel (Figure 2). This estimate compares to a likelihood of 34% for similar individuals who have never been to Israel. Panelists whose only trip to Israel was through Birthright are nearly three times as likely to feel “very much” connected to Israel compared to nonparticipants who have never been to Israel at all. Note that the estimates presented in Figure 2 are minimum estimates of Birthright’s impact—if those who returned to Israel solely as a result of their positive experience on Birthright were included, the impact would be larger.

Figure 2. Connection to Israel (only visited on Birthright vs. no Israel experience)

Note: Subpopulation of nonparticipants who have never been to Israel and Birthright participants with no other Israel experience. Predictive margins from an ordinal logistic regression model of connection to Israel on Birthright participation, current age, parental marriage type, and Birthright applicant cohort. Age fixed at 33, parental marriage type fixed at two Jewish parents, applicant cohort fixed at 2001-2006. See Tables B4 and B5 in Technical Appendix B.
Marrying a Jewish spouse and creating a Jewish family are important indicators of Jewish identity and commitment to Jewish continuity. In this section of the report we demonstrate that going on Birthright has a lasting, positive effect on attitudes and choices related to family formation. We examine how Birthright impacts five outcomes of interest: importance of marrying a Jewish spouse, overall rates of being married, choice of spouse for those married, choice of partner for those in a committed relationship, and raising children Jewish. In this section, we focus in particular on the different ways Birthright impacts men and women.

**Importance of marrying a Jewish spouse**

The vast majority of both men and women in our panel who are not currently married express interest in marrying at some point in the future.

**Men and women who participated in Birthright are more likely to want to marry someone Jewish.** Unmarried men and women who participated in Birthright place the same importance on marrying someone Jewish. Those with two Jewish parents have over a 50% likelihood of saying that it is “very” or “somewhat” important to them to marry someone Jewish. This is higher than the 40% likelihood of saying the same for nonparticipants with two Jewish parents (Figure 3).

**Likelihood of marriage**

The analysis of the relationship between age at marriage, Birthright participation, and gender points to three important findings:

- **Women marry at an earlier age than men.** Consistent with trends in the broader American society, women in our panel marry...
at an earlier age than men (Figure 4). Among panelists under age 30, over one third of the women have married compared to just over one quarter of the men. By age 35, women and men are equally likely to have married, although about one quarter of both men and women remain unmarried.

Women who participate in Birthright marry at a slightly later age. Figure 4 also shows that women who participate in Birthright are slightly more likely to marry at a later age than women who did not participate. Among those who are under age 30, 39% of women who participated in Birthright have married compared to 47% of those who have not participated. Although women who participated are slightly less likely to be married at younger ages, they “catch up” after age 35; in the oldest age group women who participated in Birthright are just as likely to have married as those who did not. The small marriage “delay” apparent among women is not evident for men: Men who participated in Birthright and men who did not are equally likely to be married in every age group.

Marrying at a later age does not stem from disinterest in finding a partner. The difference in marriage rates between women who went on Birthright and women who did not does not seem to stem from different levels of interest in finding a partner. Almost 90% of single panelists under age 35 are actively seeking a partner. Participants and nonparticipants of both genders are equally likely to be seeking a partner.\(^{10}\)

Having a Jewish spouse
Overall, the likelihood of marrying a Jewish spouse is 62% for an average Birthright participant and 46% for an average nonparticipant.\(^{11}\) However, gender, age at marriage, time since trip, having one or two

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Note: Refers to first marriages. Excludes those married before Birthright application. Predictive margins from logistic regression models of ever having married on Birthright participation, current age group, parental marriage type, and Birthright applicant cohort, for men and women. Parental marriage type fixed at two Jewish parents, applicant cohort fixed at 2001-2006. See Tables B6-B9 in Technical Appendix B.\(^{9}\)
Jewish parents, and never having visited Israel are all factors that affect choice of spouse. The analysis highlights following findings:

**Birthright has a positive effect on participants’ likelihood of marrying a Jewish spouse, and this impact is concentrated among men** (Figure 5). Among men, the likelihood of Birthright participants with two Jewish parents having a Jewish spouse is 76% compared to 54% among nonparticipants with two Jewish parents. The difference between women who participated and those who did not is not statistically significant. In the discussion (p. 25), we explain how broader issues, rather than features of the program itself, may be driving the gender-related findings discussed in this section.

**Birthright’s impact on spousal conversion to Judaism is concentrated among men.**

Spousal conversion to Judaism is a relatively rare phenomenon among JFP panelists. Among women whose spouses were not raised Jewish, Birthright participants and nonparticipants are equally likely to have a spouse who converted to Judaism (less than 5%). Among men whose spouses were not raised Jewish, Birthright participants are four times more likely than nonparticipants to have a spouse who converted (16% compared to 4%, respectively). Spousal conversion appears to contribute to the higher rates of having a Jewish spouse among Birthright participants compared to nonparticipants, but is not the primary driver of the difference, even among men.

**Among men, Birthright’s impact on marrying a Jew is highest for those who marry early and shortly after the trip.** Since Birthright’s effect on participants’ likelihood of marrying a Jewish spouse is concentrated among men, we look at some of the dynamics affecting this outcome. For those who participated, the likelihood of marrying a Jew is highest for men who married before age 26 or married fewer than three years after returning from the trip (Figure 6). It is significantly lower for those men who married after age 30 or married more than seven years after returning from the trip. Age at marriage is not significantly related to marrying a Jewish spouse for men who did not participate. It is not possible to determine whether age at marriage or distance between trip and marriage is driving this outcome, or if each of these factors has an independent dampening effect on having a Jewish spouse. However, it does not appear that the trends in Figure 6 are driven by the age at which participants went on the trip.

---

**Figure 5. Having a Jewish spouse (men vs. women)**

Note: Refers to first marriages and excludes those married before Birthright application. Predictive margins from logistic regression models of having a Jewish spouse on Birthright participation, current age, parental marriage type, and Birthright applicant cohort, for men and women. Age fixed at 33, parental marriage type fixed at two Jewish parents, applicant cohort fixed at 2001-2006. See Tables B15-B18 in Technical Appendix B.
Birthright’s impact on having a Jewish spouse is evident for those with one and those with two Jewish parents. Among those with two Jewish parents, the likelihood of having a Jewish spouse is 70% for Birthright participants compared to 55% for nonparticipants (Figure 7). The likelihood of marrying a Jew is much lower among those with only one Jewish parent compared to those with two Jewish parents, but the impact of Birthright is still clearly evident. Among those with only one Jewish parent, the likelihood of having a Jewish spouse is 33% for participants compared to 20% for nonparticipants.
Birthright has an impact on having a Jewish spouse even for those for whom Birthright was their sole Israel experience. Birthright participants who have two Jewish parents and no other Israel experience have a 63% likelihood of having a Jewish spouse, compared to a 41% likelihood for similar nonparticipants who have never been to Israel (Figure 8). As with estimates of connection to Israel in this subgroup, these estimates likely underestimate Birthright’s impact because many of those who were strongly impacted by the program likely decided to return to Israel as a result of their trip, excluding them from this analysis.

**Figure 8. Having a Jewish spouse (only visited on Birthright vs. no Israel experience)**

![Graph showing the likelihood of having a Jewish spouse for participants and nonparticipants.](image)

**Note:** Subpopulation of nonparticipants who have never been to Israel and Birthright participants with no other Israel experience. Refers to first marriages and excludes those married before Birthright application. Predictive margins from a logistic regression model of having a Jewish spouse on Birthright participation, current age, parental marriage type, and Birthright applicant cohort. Age fixed at 33, parental marriage type fixed at two Jewish parents, applicant cohort fixed at 2001-2006. See Tables B30 and B31 in Technical Appendix B.

### Having a Jewish fiancé/e or partner
Birthright participation also has an impact on partner choice for those who are in a committed relationship but not married. Among those who are currently either engaged or living with a partner, Birthright participants are more likely to have a Jewish partner than nonparticipants. The program’s impact on this measure is somewhat more pronounced for men than for women.\(^{16}\)

### Raising children Jewish
**Children of two Jewish parents are raised Jewish.** Virtually all panelists (97%) married to a Jewish spouse—regardless of whether they are Birthright participants or not—are raising their children Jewish.\(^{17}\)

**Children are more likely to be raised Jewish if only the mother is Jewish than if only the father is Jewish.** Among women who are married to a non-Jewish spouse, more than half are raising their oldest child Jewish (Figure 9). Among men who are married to a non-Jewish spouse, the rates of raising their oldest child Jewish are significantly lower. Note, however, that those who are not raising their oldest child Jewish are most likely to be undecided or not raising their child in any particular religion. For both men and women with non-Jewish spouses, the likelihood of raising their oldest child in another religion is less than 10%.

### Birthright influences the rate of raising children Jewish for men with non-Jewish spouses.
**Among men** who are married to a non-Jewish spouse, Birthright participants are more likely to be raising their children Jewish (38%) than nonparticipants (17%) (Figure 9). **Among women** who are married to a non-Jewish spouse, those who participated in Birthright and those who did not are equally likely to be raising their children Jewish.
Figure 9. Couples with only one Jewish partner: Religion of oldest child (men vs. women)

Note: Subpopulation of applicants married to non-Jewish spouses. Predictive margins from multinomial logistic regression models of religion raising oldest child Jewish on Birthright participation, current age, parental marriage type, and Birthright applicant cohort, for men and women. Age fixed at 33, parental marriage type fixed at two Jewish parents, applicant cohort fixed at 2001-2006. See Tables B34-B37 in Technical Appendix B.
Jewish Life

We now turn to Birthright’s impact on engagement with Jewish life among JFP panelists who are married, engaged, or living with a partner. The analysis distinguishes between two pathways of impact. First, is Birthright’s *indirect impact*: Birthright participants are more likely to have a Jewish partner, which in turn increases their likelihood of being engaged with Jewish life and Israel. Second is an additional, *direct impact*: Birthright may lead to increased engagement in Jewish life on top of its impact on partner choice, even for those whose partner is not Jewish.18

Impact across 12 outcomes
Birthright’s impact was assessed on 12 outcomes representing four areas of Jewish life:

- **Communal involvement**: participating in local Jewish community events, belonging to a Jewish congregation, and donating to charitable Jewish or Israeli causes
- **Social and cultural engagement**: having close Jewish friends and consuming cultural Jewish or Israeli content
- **Religious observance**: participating in a special meal on Shabbat, attending religious services, and celebrating Jewish holidays
- **Israel**: talking with friends and family about Israel, seeking news about Israel, and following the 2015 Israeli elections

Birthright’s impact on partnered participants is evident for 11 of these 12 outcomes (Table 1). Below we examine four of these outcomes in detail and present estimates for panelists with one versus two Jewish parents. For each outcome, Birthright’s total impact is described first, after which we address whether this impact is only *indirect* (i.e., only a result of Birthright’s impact on having a Jewish partner) or includes an additional, *direct* component.

For all outcomes, Birthright’s impact is evident for those with one Jewish parent as well as those with two Jewish parents.19

**What About Singles?**

Only about one third of JFP panelists are single—that is, neither married, nor engaged, nor living with a partner. Our analysis of Birthright’s impact on Jewish life for this subgroup detected an impact on just two of the 12 measures examined: Single Birthright participants are more likely than their nonparticipant peers to have attended a local Jewish community event in the past year and to have talked about Israel with friends and family.19 There are likely two reasons for the relative lack of significant Birthright effects on the Jewish lives of single participants. First, because the number of singles in the JFP panel is smaller than that of those who are partnered, it is harder to detect differences between single participants and nonparticipants, especially when the magnitude of difference is relatively small. Second, single, childless adults are far less likely to be engaged in Jewish life than married adults and those living in households with children (Cohen & Kelman, 2007; Sheskin & Kotler-Berkowitz, 2007; see also Wuthnow, 2010).
Table 1. Summary of Birthright’s impact on partnered panelists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Indirect impact on partnered?</th>
<th>Direct impact on partnered?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communal Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in local Jewish community event</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregational membership</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charitable donations to Jewish/Israeli causes</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Cultural engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having close Jewish friends</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural consumption of Jewish/Israeli content</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about Judaism</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Observance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special meal on Shabbat</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious service attendance</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish holiday celebration</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about Israel</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking news about Israel</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following 2015 Israeli elections</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Local Jewish community events
Among panelists who are partnered, Birthright participants are more likely to attend an event sponsored by their local Jewish community. Among those with two Jewish parents, Birthright participants have a 69% likelihood of having attended at least one such event in the past year, compared to 56% for nonparticipants. Among those with only one Jewish parent, Birthright participants have a 52% likelihood of having attended such an event, compared to 38% for nonparticipants (Figure 10).

Birthright has both direct and indirect impacts on participation in local Jewish community events. Differences between participants and nonparticipants are partly due to participants being more likely to have a Jewish partner, but are also due to Birthright’s additional direct impact on those with non-Jewish partners.
Donating to Jewish or Israeli causes

For partnered panelists, participation in Birthright leads to an increased likelihood of donating to Jewish or Israeli causes. Among partnered panelists, Birthright participants with two Jewish parents have a 60% likelihood of having donated in the past year, compared to 48% for comparable nonparticipants. Among those with one Jewish parent, Birthright participants have a 35% likelihood of having donated compared to 25% for nonparticipants (Figure 11).

Birthright has both direct and indirect impacts on donating to Jewish or Israeli causes. Participants are more likely to donate to these causes partly because they are more likely to have Jewish partners, but also because Birthright has a direct impact on likelihood of donating even for those who have non-Jewish partners.

Figure 10. Participation in local Jewish community event in past year (one vs. two Jewish parents)

![Bar chart showing participation in local Jewish community event](image)

Note: Subpopulation of married, engaged, or cohabiting panelists. Predictive margins from a multinomial logistic regression model of participating in a local Jewish community event in the past year on Birthright participation, current age, parental marriage type, and Birthright applicant cohort. Age fixed at 33, applicant cohort fixed at 2001-2006. See Tables B38 and B39 in Technical Appendix B.

Figure 11. Donation to Jewish or Israeli cause or organization in past year (one vs. two Jewish parents)

![Bar chart showing donation](image)

Note: Subpopulation of married, engaged, or cohabiting panelists. Predictive margins from a logistic regression model of donating to a Jewish or Israeli cause or organization in the past year on Birthright participation, current age, parental marriage type, and Birthright applicant cohort. Age fixed at 33, applicant cohort fixed at 2001-2006. See Tables B41 and B42 in Technical Appendix B.
**Jewish friends**

For participants who are partnered, Birthright participation leads to an increased likelihood of having close friends who are Jewish. Among this subgroup, Birthright participants with two Jewish parents have a 65% likelihood of having at least half of their close friends be other Jews, compared to 53% for their nonparticipant peers. Birthright participants with one Jewish parent have a 45% likelihood of having at least half of their close friends be other Jews compared to 34% for similar nonparticipants (Figure 12). Birthright’s impact on having close Jewish friends is indirect. This means that the differences shown below are due to Birthright participants being more likely to have a Jewish partner.

**Figure 12. Close friends who are Jewish (one vs. two Jewish parents)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Two Jewish parents</th>
<th>One Jewish parent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonparticipant</td>
<td>29% 40% 15%</td>
<td>24% 25% 22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>47% 35% 19%</td>
<td>55% 66% 23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Subpopulation of married, engaged, or cohabiting panelists. Predictive margins from a multinomial logistic regression model of proportion of close friends who are Jewish on Birthright participation, current age, parental marriage type, and Birthright applicant cohort. Age fixed at 33, applicant cohort fixed at 2001-2006. See Tables B44 and B45 in Technical Appendix B.
**Shabbat celebration**
For those with partners, Birthright participation leads to an increased likelihood of having a special meal on Shabbat. Among those with two Jewish parents, Birthright participants have a 69% likelihood of having had a special Shabbat meal at least sometimes in the past year, compared to 61% for nonparticipants. Among those with one Jewish parent, Birthright participants have a 52% likelihood of having had a special Shabbat meal at least sometimes in the past year, compared to 43% for nonparticipants (Figure 13).

Birthright’s impact on Shabbat celebration is indirect. Thus, although participants are more likely to have a special meal on Shabbat than nonparticipants, the effects are entirely due to the fact that Birthright participants are more likely to have a Jewish partner.

**Figure 13. Special meal on Shabbat at least sometimes in past year (one vs. two Jewish parents)**

![Bar chart showing the percentage of special Shabbat meals by Jewish parent status](chart.png)

**Note:** Subpopulation of married, engaged, or cohabiting panelists. Predictive margins from a multinomial logistic regression model of having a special meal on Shabbat at least sometimes in the past year on Birthright participation, current age, parental marriage type, and Birthright applicant cohort. Age fixed at 33, applicant cohort fixed at 2001-2006. See Tables B47 and B48 in Technical Appendix B.
Discussion and Conclusion

The impact of Birthright and the persistence of its effects over time
In the 18 years since Birthright’s inception, a series of systematic evaluation studies involving comparisons between program participants and equivalent others has consistently demonstrated that Birthright alters the trajectories of Jewish engagement of Jewish young adults. The findings of the present study parallel earlier work and add to the body of evidence demonstrating that the impact of Birthright persists over time. A decade or more after the trip, Birthright participants are more likely to feel a stronger connection to Israel, have a Jewish spouse, raise children Jewish, and be engaged with Jewish life than nonparticipants.

Connection to Israel
The study finds continued evidence of Birthright’s impact on participants’ connection to Israel, with participants more likely than nonparticipants to report stronger feelings of connection to Israel. In light of the debate in the Jewish world about American Jews “distancing” from Israel as a result of political disaffection and broader trends of assimilation (Cohen & Kelman, 2010; Sasson, 2014; Sasson, Kadushin, & Saxe, 2010), it is noteworthy that we continue to see evidence of long-lasting feelings of connection to Israel among Jewish young adults. The persistence of the Birthright effect on connection to Israel is striking, as are the levels of connection reported by panelists.

Forming Jewish families
Research focusing on religious and cultural engagement within the Jewish community has produced substantial evidence that couples in which both spouses are Jewish are more engaged with Jewish life and have stronger ties to the Jewish community than couples in which only one spouse is Jewish (Fishman, 2004; Pew Research Center, 2013). The findings of the present study provide more evidence of Birthright’s impact on participants’ marriage choices and their decisions to raise Jewish children. Overall, compared to similar nonparticipants, participants are more likely to marry other Jews and raise their children Jewish. The size of these effects varies by the gender and background of panelists, in particular whether they have one versus two Jewish parents.

Engagement in Jewish life
This study’s findings also indicate that on virtually all measures of Jewish engagement, those who participated in Birthright are more likely to be engaged with Jewish life. Overall, compared to nonparticipants, participants are more likely to be part of Jewish communal life (e.g., donate to Jewish/Israeli causes), to be socially and culturally engaged (e.g., “consume” Jewish/Israeli cultural content), to follow religious traditions (e.g., attend religious services), and to be involved with Israel (e.g., seek news about Israel). The effect of Birthright on engagement is, however, related to whether or not the individual is partnered (married, engaged, living with a romantic partner) and whether or not their partner is Jewish.

Birthright’s impact on different types of participants
Along with demonstrating Birthright’s sustained impact on its participants in these three areas, the present study also finds that Birthright’s impact differs for various subgroups.

Impact on those with only one Jewish parent
A decade or more after the trip, Birthright participants with only one Jewish parent are...
more connected to Israel and more likely to have a Jewish spouse than similar nonparticipants. These results suggest that the effects of Birthright on this group are not transitory but have long-lasting implications. The same holds for those with two Jewish parents. Nevertheless, compared to those with two Jewish parents, JFP panelists with only one Jewish parent demonstrate weaker Jewish connections on all of the outcomes we examined: connection to Israel, marrying a Jewish spouse, raising Jewish children, involvement in the Jewish community, social and cultural Jewish engagement, and religious observance.

Impact on those with no other Israel experience
Among JFP panel members, 40% of Birthright participants have visited Israel more than once, as have nearly 40% of the nonparticipant control group. Participants for whom Birthright has been their sole Israel experience are more likely to be connected to Israel and to have a Jewish spouse than similar nonparticipants who have never been to Israel. These findings demonstrate that any Israel experience has a powerful, enduring effect on feelings of connection to Israel and engagement with Jewish life, even a short, 10-day trip. Israel travel among the nonparticipant control group may also somewhat obscure the true magnitude of Birthright’s impact.

Impact on singles
Research on religious engagement in the United States in general, and in the Jewish population in particular, indicates that single adults are far less likely to engage in religious and communal life than those with young families (Putnam, 2000; Sheskin & Kotler-Berkowitz, 2007; Wuthnow, 2010). Consistent with these trends, among those who are married, engaged, or living with a partner, this study demonstrates a Birthright effect on virtually all measures of Jewish engagement, including Jewish communal involvement, social and cultural engagement, and religious observance. Among those who are not partnered, Birthright’s effect appears only on a couple of these measures. Therefore, the full impact of Birthright on this generation is unlikely to manifest until a greater proportion of the participants marry and have children.

Impact on those with non-Jewish partners
Our findings indicate that some, although not all, of Birthright’s positive effects on the Jewish lives of married, engaged, and cohabiting participants is a result of Birthright’s positive effect on participants’ likelihoods of choosing Jewish partners. For example, participants are more likely to have close friends who are Jewish and to celebrate Shabbat simply because they are more likely to have Jewish partners—we call this an indirect effect of Birthright. On the other hand, participants are more likely to participate in local Jewish community events and donate to Jewish or Israeli causes even if their partners are not Jewish—this is a direct effect of Birthright. We found indirect effects on 11 out of 12 measures of engagement with Jewish life and additional direct effects on seven measures.

Family formation and engagement in Jewish life
Birthright operates within the context of broad trends related to family formation and religious engagement among millennials in the United States. Understanding the wider context in which Birthright participants make decisions about family and religion is critical for understanding how the program affects the trajectories of participants’ Jewish lives.
Choice of spouse
For a variety of reasons, millennials are waiting longer to get married and form families compared to their parents and grandparents (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012). This development has implications for the impact of Birthright on this generation.

As the age at marriage increases for Birthright participants, their greater likelihood of marrying a Jewish spouse decreases. Among men in the JFP panel who married after age 30, there are no differences between participants and nonparticipants in terms of their likelihood of marrying a Jewish spouse. Whether the diminishing impact of Birthright on spousal choice as participants age is due to changes in participants’ priorities, their opportunities in the marriage market, or a combination of both is unclear. Regardless, these two trends combined—a gradual diminishing of Birthright’s impact on spousal choice as participants age and the growing number of later-in-life marriages—implies that, for applicants who applied in these early rounds, the overall magnitude of Birthright’s impact on spousal choice may decrease over time.

Gender and marriage
Birthright’s impact on choice of spouse may also be influenced by gender dynamics affecting the millennial generation and Jewish millennials more specifically. Consistent with previous studies, the present findings indicate that for both men and women who have not yet married, Birthright has the same, positive impact on the desire to marry someone Jewish and raise Jewish children. Yet, the impact of Birthright on the eventual behavior of men and women is different. For men, Birthright participation has a positive impact on having a Jewish spouse, fiancé/e, or partner; a positive impact on the likelihood of spousal conversion to Judaism; and a positive impact on the likelihood that children will be raised Jewish by religion, even if the other parent is not Jewish. These effects are weaker for women. Birthright participation also results in women marrying at a later age, although they “catch up” to their nonparticipant peers by age 35.

External evidence suggests that these gender differences may be driven by broader secular trends. One explanation concerns the traditional Jewish concept of matrilineal descent, which bases a child’s Jewish status solely on the mother’s Jewish status (Cohen, 1985; Fishman & Parmer, 2008). In effect, matrilineal descent, the standard in Orthodox and Conservative Jewish communities, gives Jewish women more license to choose a non-Jewish spouse, because their children will be considered Jewish regardless. Although the Reform movement, the largest denomination in the United States, also accepts patrilineal descent, even liberal Jews may be concerned that their children will not be fully accepted if their children do not have a Jewish mother.

Another possible explanation for the gender differences in Birthright’s impact on family formation concerns the contemporary “marriage market” facing young adults in the United States. As women have surpassed men in rates of college enrollment, the pool of single, college-educated women has grown larger than the pool of single, college-educated men (Birger, 2015; Fry & Cohn, 2010; Goldin, Katz, & Kuziemko, 2006). Men also have social license to marry later than women, partly because age-related fertility decline affects men less acutely. As a result, men can afford to be more selective about who they marry.

Men who participate in Birthright and return with an increased desire to marry someone Jewish appear generally able to find a Jewish partner or a partner who is willing to convert
to Judaism or raise Jewish children. Women who participate in Birthright and return with the same increased desire to marry a Jew seem to delay marriage longer than nonparticipant women while they search for a suitable Jewish partner, but by age 35 many “give up” and marry a non-Jew. This explanation is supported by substantial anecdotal evidence of the unique problems that Jewish women face in finding suitable partners (Kay, 2015; Naumberg, 2012; Notkin, 2013).

It is possible, and perhaps likely, that multiple dynamics—matrilineal descent and issues related to the marriage market—operate in tandem. Understanding the dynamics of marital decision making by young adult Jews is the focus of new research currently being conducted by this research team and understanding these processes should be a priority for those concerned about the Jewish future.

**Final thoughts**

Few interventions, particularly in Jewish education, are subject to evaluation that compares “experimental” participants with similar others who do not receive the treatment. Even less typical is collecting evidence at multiple intervals after the treatment. The design of the present research enables us to rule out alternative explanations and confirm the accumulating strong evidence of Birthright’s independent and persistent effect on participants.

The study also allows us to examine dynamics beyond Birthright participation that affect the Jewish choices made by young adults. For example, even as Birthright has a lasting, positive impact both on participants with only one Jewish parent and those with two Jewish parents, the levels of engagement of these two groups are different. Strategies for engaging these individuals likely need to be tailored to their unique backgrounds. Similarly, the fact that impact on Jewish engagement is concentrated among those who are partnered suggests a need to rethink how the Jewish community interacts with those who are single.

As we follow our panel members during their early adult lives, the portrait of Jewish engagement provided by the findings of the Jewish Futures Project becomes increasingly nuanced. The full story of the generation who came of age as Birthright was launched is still unfolding, and the final chapters will no doubt reflect the varied experiences of those with diverse backgrounds. However, that levels of engagement—with Israel and the Jewish community—have been enhanced by participation in Birthright is certain. Our findings confirm that childhood experiences are only one set of factors that influence adult Jewish engagement. Educational interventions have the capacity to continue shaping Jewish identity through multiple stages of development, including the college and young adult years.
Notes

1 CMJS analysis of Birthright’s registration database.

2 An analysis of panelists’ Israel travel history conducted in 2012 suggests that 15% of Birthright participants returned to Israel after their visit, 15% visited Israel both before and after their Birthright trip, and an additional 13% visited Israel before their trip but never returned (see Saxe et al., 2012, p. 19).

3 Authors’ analysis of the Pew Research Center’s Survey of US Jews (2013), using the Steinhardt Social Research Institute’s minor reclassifications of Jewish respondents (Saxe, Sasson, & Aronson, 2015). Among married Jewish adults not raised Orthodox, 41% of men and 20% of women are married to Jews.

4 Response rates for this study were calculated using the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) standard definitions. The response rate is defined as the number of complete interviews with reporting units divided by the number of eligible reporting units in the sample. Response Rate 4 (RR4) estimates what proportion of cases of unknown eligibility are actually eligible, includes them in the denominator, and considers both complete and partial interviews (AAPOR, 2009).

5 See Table B1 in Technical Appendix B. Panelists were sorted into binary categories of one or two Jewish parents based on an extensive series of questions about the adults they lived with while growing up and the religious/Jewish identity of those adults. These questions can be found in Technical Appendix C. Panelists raised by one Jew by birth and one convert to Judaism (N=189) were included in the “two Jewish parents” group, as were panelists raised by one adult who was Jewish (N=29). Panelists who converted to Judaism as adults were included in the “one Jewish parent” group (N=32).

6 The number of available slots increased substantially between 2007 and 2009, and those who applied during these years had weaker Jewish connections than those who applied earlier. In our statistical models we account for this difference by including a control for application time period.

7 In general, the size of Birthright’s effect on the outcomes mentioned in this report is not significantly different for those with one vs. two Jewish parents. In regression models of each outcome on Birthright participation, current age, parental marriage type, Birthright applicant cohort and an interaction between Birthright participation and parental marriage type, the interactions were not significant for connection to Israel (Figure 1), having a Jewish spouse (Figure 7) or 11 of the 12 measures of engagement with Jewish life shown in Table I (analyses available upon request). The percent differences between Birthright participants and nonparticipants shown in the figures are larger among those with only one Jewish parent than among those with two Jewish parents because panelists with one Jewish parent have lower “baseline” levels, and mathematically, the same-sized impact produces a larger percent increase for those who start from a lower level. See also Note 14 and Note 18.

8 The advantage of the logistic regression models of ever having married is that they omit information on age at marriage for those who have married. As an alternative, we attempted to model age at first marriage using Cox proportional hazards models (i.e., time-to-event or “survival” analysis), which do account for age at marriage. Unfortunately, because the impact of Birthright participation on likelihood of marriage lessens with age (as shown in Figure 6), the proportional-hazards assumption was violated for Birthright participation in tests using Schoenfeld residuals (p<.001). Consequently, the results reported here are derived from logistic regression models rather than Cox proportional hazards models.

9 See Table B10 in Technical Appendix B

10 Refers to first marriages and excludes those married before Birthright application. Predictive margins from a logistic regression model of having a Jewish spouse on Birthright participation, current age, parental marriage type, and Birthright applicant cohort. Age fixed at 33, applicant cohort fixed at 2001-2006, and parental marriage type fixed at .78. See Tables B28 and B29 in Technical Appendix B.
Spouses were sorted into binary categories of Jewish or not Jewish based on a series of questions about the religious/Jewish identity with which they were raised, whether they had a Jewish parent or parents, their current religious/Jewish identity and any formal conversion to Judaism. These questions can be found in Technical Appendix C. Jewish spouses were those who identified as Jewish and had either a Jewish parent (N=730) or a formal conversion to Judaism (N=49). Non-Jewish spouses were those with no Jewish connections (N=545) as well as those with Jewish background who did not identify as Jewish (N=30) and those who considered themselves Jewish because of some affinity for Jews or Judaism, but who had neither a Jewish parent nor a formal conversion to Judaism (N=68).

See Tables B19-B22 in Technical Appendix B. Parental marriage type was not included in the model of conversion because all men whose spouses formally converted to Judaism have two Jewish parents.

In a regression model controlling for both age at trip and distance between trip and marriage, only the latter was statistically significant at the .05 level. See Table B27 in Technical Appendix B.

There is no statistically significant difference in the size of Birthright’s effect on having a Jewish spouse for those with one versus two Jewish parents. See Note 6 above.

See Tables B32 and B33 in Technical Appendix B.

The survey collected information about all children in the panelists’ households. For analysis of children, the dataset was reshaped from “wide” (one row per panelist) to “long” (one row per child). Only one child per panelist was considered in each analysis, but the reshaped dataset facilitated the easy identification of the child of interest from among each panelist’s children (e.g., oldest child, oldest child not yet in kindergarten, oldest girl, etc.). For analysis of children, one stratum had a single sampling unit, which was treated as a certainty unit (i.e., contributed nothing to the standard error).

Birthright’s direct impact on these outcomes is assessed via additional regression models which include a control for whether the spouse is Jewish. Birthright is considered to have a direct impact on the outcome in question when the Birthright coefficient remains significant and positive in these models, which can be found in Technical Appendix B.

The size of Birthright’s effect on engagement with Jewish life is not significantly different for those with one versus two Jewish parents. See Note 6. The one exception is having a special meal on Shabbat (Figure 13, page 21), where there is a significant, negative interaction between Birthright participation and parental marriage type (p<.05), indicating that Birthright’s effect on those with one Jewish parent is smaller than its effect on those with two Jewish parents.

Analyses available upon request.

See Table B40 in Technical Appendix B.

See Table B43 in Technical Appendix B.

See Table B46 in Technical Appendix B.

See Table B49 in Technical Appendix B.
References


Beyond Ten Days


Appendix: Description of the Jewish Futures Panel

The Jewish Futures Project panel consists of a stratified random sample of individuals who applied to Birthright in the winter rounds between 2001 and 2009. This appendix looks at the demographic and Jewish background characteristics of JFP panelists who responded to the fifth wave of data collection, including Birthright participants and nonparticipants. It also compares JFP panelists to the broader Jewish population in that age cohort. As with all other analyses in this report, the analyses in this appendix exclude those who were raised Orthodox.

Current Jewish identity
At the time of their application to Birthright, all JFP panelists identified as Jewish and had at least one Jewish birth parent or had formally converted to Judaism. In the intervening years, 1% of panelists (N=29) stopped identifying as Jewish. Most of these (N=24) now identify as atheist, agnostic, or nothing, and not Jewish or partially Jewish aside from religion; a few (N=5) now identify as Christian or as Messianic Jews. Regardless of current identification, panelists who were eligible for Birthright at the time of their application are included in these analyses.

Birthright participation and year of application
Table 1 shows the distribution of JFP panelists by Birthright participation and year of application to Birthright. Although the majority of panelists are Birthright participants, there is also a sizable number of nonparticipants, allowing for an examination of the impact of the trip across cohorts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of application</th>
<th>Nonparticipants</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>124</td>
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<td>2009</td>
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<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1,765</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Age
JFP panelists are between the ages of 25 and 40, with a mean age of 31 years. Participants are, on average, one year younger than nonparticipants (Figure 1).

Childhood Jewish engagement
Figure 2 compares the Jewish background of JFP panelists to that of all same-age Jewish young adults (born 1974 to 1987), using data from the Pew Research Center’s (2013) A Portrait of Jewish Americans. JFP panelists are more likely than their same-age Jewish peers to have two Jewish parents, although the difference is somewhat less dramatic for later cohorts of applicants. JFP panelists are also slightly more likely than their same-age Jewish peers to have had formal Jewish education and to have celebrated a bar or bat mitzvah as a child.

Figure 1. Current age by Birthright participation

![Figure 1](image1)

Figure 2. Jewish background of JFP panelists by Birthright participation and cohort of application, versus all Jewish young adults

![Figure 2](image2)

Furthermore, 51% of the JFP panelists with only one Jewish parent have some formal Jewish education, compared to only 40% of their same-age Jewish peers with only one Jewish parent. Thus, in addition to being an underrepresented group, individuals with one Jewish parent in the JFP panel also have unusually strong Jewish backgrounds.

**Educational attainment**

JFP panelists have higher levels of educational attainment than their same-age peers in the Jewish population at large (Figure 3). This difference may be the result of Birthright recruiting on college and university campuses.

**College Jewish engagement**

Looking within the JFP panel, those who participated in Birthright at college age were more likely than nonparticipants to have been involved in Jewish campus activities (Figure 4) and to have taken undergraduate courses specifically focusing on Israel or on Jewish subjects (Figure 5), while those who participated in Birthright after college age look similar to nonparticipants. The causal direction of this relationship is not clear—it is possible that those involved in Jewish campus life were more likely to go on Birthright trips, that program participation inspired involvement in Jewish campus life, or a combination of both these factors.

**Figure 3. Educational attainment of JFP panelists by Birthright participation and cohort of application, versus all Jewish young adults**

Figure 4. Undergraduate involvement in Jewish campus activities by Birthright participation and age at participation (bachelor’s degree or higher only)

Figure 5. Undergraduate courses focusing on Israel or Jewish subjects by Birthright participation and age at participation (bachelor’s degree or higher only)
The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University is a multi-disciplinary research institute dedicated to the study of American Jewry and issues related to contemporary Jewish life.

The Steinhardt Social Research Institute (SSRI), hosted at CMJS, uses innovative research methods to collect and analyze socio-demographic data on the Jewish community.