



FAQ: REVISED JEWISH COMMUNITY STUDY OF GREATER MILWAUKEE 2011

1. BACKGROUND

What is the 2011 Jewish community study?

Periodically the Milwaukee Jewish Federation has commissioned studies of the local Jewish community to help MJF and other Jewish organizations identify, plan for and address community needs. In 2011, we commissioned a study by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee to explore the population, demographics, religious practices and feeling of connectedness within the Jewish community. Earlier studies took place in 2000, 1996, 1983, 1965 and 1922.

Why did MJF choose UWM for the study?

Jewish communities can select local researchers, often associated with universities, or national researchers who specialize in Jewish community studies. There are advantages and disadvantages to both options. MJF elected to work with the [Center for Urban Initiatives and Research](#) at UWM because the cost was significantly lower; they had done research for MJF in the past, and they were knowledgeable about MJF and the local Jewish community; and they have a reputation for excellence in their work for [major nonprofits, foundations, municipalities and federal entities](#).

What is the Berman Jewish DataBank?

The [Berman Jewish DataBank](#), which is a part of Jewish Federations of North America, is the central online address for quantitative studies of Jewish communities in North America. They review, post and provide access to community study reports and, in many cases, the actual datafiles from the studies.

What is the role of the Berman Jewish DataBank?

The Berman Jewish DataBank identified a potential issue with the data and, at our request, investigated the problem. Once the magnitude of the issue was understood, we contracted with the DataBank to weight and analyze the data and to revise the original report with the revised findings.

2. IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING ISSUES WITH THE REPORT

What were the issues with the conclusions in the report?

The original report over-represented those who live on the North Shore, who tend to be more engaged in the Jewish community, and under-represented those living outside the North Shore, who tend to have more tenuous connections to the community. The researcher should have weighted the data to account for the over-representation of North Shore households, but he did not. As a result, the report overstated the total population of the area and misstated the distribution of the population in the area that was studied. The

report also included erroneous conclusions about certain demographics, Jewish practice, and feelings of connectedness among Jews in the Milwaukee area. The accurate population of Jews in the greater Milwaukee area is 25,800.

How did the issues come to light?

The issue was identified by the Berman Jewish DataBank when they were preparing the Milwaukee datafile for archiving and posting on their website two years after the study was completed.

Are you confident that the original report contained erroneous conclusions?

Yes. Weighting data with non-random samples like the one in this study is not just standard practice; it is essential for accurate statistical analysis.

Are you confident in the accuracy of the revised report?

We are highly confident in the new findings. The original report showed Milwaukee to be atypical compared to similar Jewish communities and compared to the Pew Research Center's 2013 Survey of U.S. Jews. According to the revised report, Milwaukee looks more like similar cities and the Pew study. Also, we are confident in the researchers at the Berman Jewish DataBank who revised the report. They are the national experts in researching Jewish communities.

3. TRANSPARENCY

When did MJF realize there could be an issue?

The possibility of an error was identified by DataBank staff two years after the study was completed. They contacted MJF and, at our request, engaged in a thorough review of the original study and its methodology. As soon as researchers at the DataBank were certain that the issue was sufficiently significant, we commissioned a revision of the report from the DataBank. Reviewing the study and its methodology, weighting the data, re-analyzing the data, and revising and editing the report were time-consuming tasks for DataBank staff. MJF shared the revised information promptly after receiving it, allowing for sufficient time to understand the new results and to determine how best to share the new results with the community. Every action we have taken since we were first contacted by the DataBank has been focused on ensuring that we provide accurate information to our community. We have taken care to communicate with complete openness and transparency.

Has UWM accepted responsibility for the study?

Yes. UWM Chancellor Mark Mone sent a formal letter to MJF acknowledging the error, accepting responsibility and expressing regret for any issues the study has caused the Jewish community.

Did preparation of the revised report cost more money?

The study was funded by two generous local donors. A small portion of the funds was held aside to pay for additional analysis of the data that was collected during the study. Those funds were used for the work of the DataBank. Because the original survey was done reliably, and the data resulting from that survey is sound, the DataBank's work was limited in scope.

Did MJF share my personal information with the researchers?

MJF shared phone numbers without any other identifying information with the researcher at UWM solely for the purpose of identifying households for participation in the phone survey. We use our database only for the purposes of furthering our mission, and we never sell or share information from our database with third parties.

4. RESEARCH TECHNIQUE

How is a sample used in the study of a population?

Researchers analyze a sample of the population, not the entire population itself. Accurate analysis requires a random sample of the population, which is best accomplished through random digit dialing (also known as RDD).

What is random digit dialing?

Random digit dialing (RDD) is a method for selecting people for involvement in telephone surveys by generating telephone numbers at random. When someone answers the researcher's call, the researcher asks screening questions to determine whether the person is appropriate for the study. In this case, the researcher asked if the individual who answered the phone or anyone in the household identified themselves as Jewish.

Was RDD used for the study?

Yes, RDD was used at first, but not enough Jewish respondents could be found for the sample using this technique alone. This is typical because Jews comprise a very small part of the general population, and locating them through random calling is difficult.

How were enough Jewish respondents found for the study?

The RDD sample was supplemented with households from the MJF database. Using Federation lists (or databases) is common in Jewish community studies in order to find and interview enough Jewish respondents.

If using respondents from Federation lists is common, why was it an issue in this study?

Using respondents from Federation lists makes the sample non-random. In this case, Jews from the North Shore, who tend to be more actively engaged in the Milwaukee Jewish community, were over-represented on the Federation's list. The researcher then applies weighting to the final data to correct the imbalance that is introduced by using respondents from a non-random source. Unfortunately, in the original study, the data was not weighted, and therefore the imbalance in the sample was not corrected.

What is weighting?

Weighting is a standard technique that corrects for the over-representation of a subset of people in a sample. A number, or weight, is assigned to members of the subset to rebalance the sample, making the sample align more closely with the population it is designed to represent.

Why wasn't the original data weighted?

MJF and the researchers at the Berman Jewish DataBank have been unable to answer this question.

How did the Berman Jewish DataBank weight the MJF data?

The original survey included enough Jewish households through RDD to depict the geographic distribution of households in the area, even though the number was too small for the full statistical analysis required for the study. The Berman Jewish DataBank balanced the full sample (RDD plus Federation list households) to make it match the geographic distribution indicated by the RDD households alone. They also rebalanced the sample by weighting “down” respondents from the MJF database and weighting “up” respondents contacted through RDD.

If you have additional questions about the Jewish community study, contact Stephanie Wagner, MJF vice president of communications and strategy, at StephanieW@MilwaukeeJewish.org or 414-390-5744.