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PRESS RELEASE

Israeli Voice Index

Conversion – Special Survey for Shavuot

52% of Jewish Israelis think that conversion should be performed leniently

June 4, 2019 – The special **Israeli Voice Index** survey on Conversion to Judaism conducted by the Guttman Center at the Israel Democracy Institute, and published today towards Shavuot, finds that 52% of Jewish Israelis think that the conversion process should be more welcoming and lenient in order to enable more potential converts to join the Jewish people; the majority of Jewish Israelis think that the authority for determining who is a Jew as defined by the State, should be the responsibility of an Israeli state institution; and the majority (71%) support the conversion process as conducted in the IDF.

Main Findings

Who is a Jew? Jewish Israelis think that determining who is a Jew, for purposes of state recognition, should be the responsibility of: a yet-to-be established new government conversion agency (36%); the Chief Rabbinate (32%); and private conversion courts for each of the religious streams – ultra-Orthodox, Orthodox, Conservative and Reform – (17%). Only 9% think that the authority for each stream should lie with conversion courts in Israel or abroad

Best Practice: Jewish Israelis are divided on whether conversion is a process of joining the Jewish people (18%) the Jewish religion (31%) or both (46%). 52% of Jewish Israelis think that the conversion process should be welcoming and lenient in order to enable more potential converts to join the Jewish people and religion.

Conversion and the IDF: the IDF conversion process is simpler, and till now 10,000 soldiers have been converted in its framework. IDF's conversion program enjoys broad public support, and 45% of Jewish

Israelis support its expansion, 26% think it should be left as it is, 7.2% think it should be cut back and 10% think it should be closed.

Acceptance: 86% of Jewish Israelis would accept a person who is not Jewish as a neighbor. The numbers dropped when asked on acceptance of a daughter or son's marriage to a partner who is not Jewish – 39%.

Commenting on the conversion process in Israel **Dr. Shuki Friedman** stated: “Some 400,000 Israelis living among us are not defined as Jewish according to Jewish law, despite the fact that they are an integral part of Israeli society, serve in the army, share the burden, and are part of the Jewish-Israeli mosaic. Many of them would like to complete the conversion process and be recognized as Jews. However the current conversion policy makes it difficult to realize this aspiration, because of the strict policy adopted by the Rabbinat. This is in contrast to Orthodox alternatives to conversion that make the process easier. The results of the survey show that the majority of Israelis attribute significance to the conversion of these Israelis—and potentially—these Jews, and support a change to a more moderate conversion policy by the Chief Rabbinat.”

The survey was conducted by the Guttman Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research of the Israel Democracy Institute. In the survey, which was conducted on the internet and by telephone (to ensure the adequate representation of groups that are not represented proportionally on the network) on between May 20-22, 586 men and women were interviewed in Hebrew and 105 in Arabic, constituting a representative national sample of Israel's adult population of Israel aged 18 and older. The maximum sampling error for the entire sample was 3.7±% at a confidence level of 95%. The fieldwork was conducted by the Rafi Smith Institute. For the full data file see: <https://dataisrael.idi.org.il/>