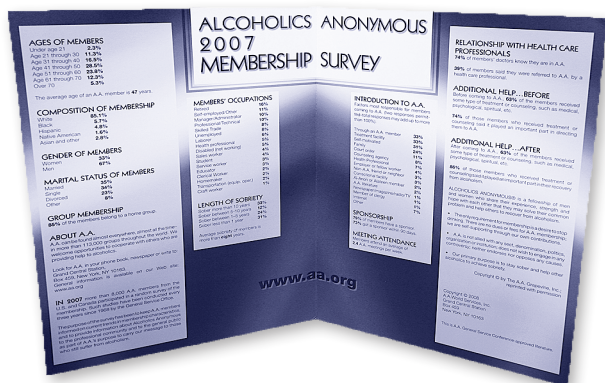


# About AA

## A.A. Membership Survey Indicates Key Role of Health Care Professionals



Thirty-nine percent of A.A. members were referred to Alcoholics Anonymous by a health care professional, according to an anonymous, random survey conducted by A.A.'s General Service Office.

More than 8,000 A.A. members from the United States and Canada were polled for the survey, which covered such details as members' occupation, marital status, length of sobriety, and age.

Thirty-three percent of members cited their stay in a treatment facility as the most important factor in leading them to the Fellowship, while 11% said they were originally mandated to attendance at meetings by court order. Another finding is that 74% of members said their doctors know they are recovering alcoholics.

Alcoholics Anonymous has conducted membership surveys every three years since 1968, with the exception of 1995. An original motive for the survey was a feeling that information about members would be useful to A.A. members in carrying the message of recovery. It was also thought that the results would be of interest to professionals working with alcoholics outside the Fellowship.

Among changes in A.A. indicated by the surveys is that the percent of women in A.A. is at 33%, up from 22% in 1968. In that survey of 40 years ago, more than half cited another A.A. member as steering them to Alcoholics Anonymous. In the most recent survey, the figure is 33%.

Of those polled for the current survey, 63% said they had received some type of treatment or counseling, such as medical or psychological; three-quarters of those said that experience was key in directing them to A.A.

Sixty-three percent said they received counseling or treatment after joining, and 86% of these A.A. members said it played an important part in their recovery.

Among other findings in the survey are that 33% of members are sober more than 10 years, while 31% are sober less than one year. The average age of an A.A. member, according to the survey, is 47,

with those aged 41 through 50 making up 28.5%. A.A. members thirty years old and under make up 13.6% of membership.

The survey is available online at [aa.org](http://aa.org) in the "For the Media" section. Copies can be ordered from G.S.O. (item number P-48; 15 cents each).

## The Twelve Traditions of A.A. Underpin Its Program of Recovery

Representing the distilled experience of A.A.'s past, the Twelve Traditions are the basic principles by which A.A. members work together and relate as a whole to the world. By adhering to these, A.A.'s co-founder Bill W. pointed out: "A.A. cannot possibly be split apart by politics, religious differences, money, professionalism, public controversy—or by old-timers who take a notion to be big shots."

When first published (in the A.A. monthly magazine, *The A.A. Grapevine*, in 1946), "the Traditions got a mixed reception," according to Bill. Only groups in trouble took them seriously; others "were obviously bored" as they listened to him expound on them.

But time has changed all that. The average A.A. member today accepts the Traditions, realizing that they are the key to the unity, functioning, and even the survival of A.A.

Here are the Traditions, word for word, with a capsule explanation of each:

1. "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on A.A. unity." The group must survive or the individual will not.
2. "For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." Group decisions are made by the informed collective voice of the A.A. group — not by any one member.
3. "The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking." There are no additional membership rules or requirements; Alcoholics are A.A. members when they say they are members.
4. "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole." The group, like the individual, necessarily conforms to principles that guarantee survival.
5. "Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers." Bill W. wrote in "Problems Other than Alcohol," "Sobriety—freedom from alcohol—through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps—is the sole purpose of an A.A. group."

6. "An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose." A.A. cannot be all things to all people, nor should it try.
7. "Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." Contributions from outside sources could easily divert A.A. groups from their primary purpose. Instead, A.A. members take full responsibility for their own group and service expenses.
8. "Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers." One-to-one work with fellow alcoholics is never paid for, but A.A. could not function without full-time workers as well.
9. "A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve." The aim of A.A.'s services is to bring sobriety within reach of all who want it.
10. "Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy." A.A. does not take sides, ever, in public controversy.
11. "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films." Personal ambition has no place in A.A. It welcomes publicity for A.A. principles, not A.A. members.
12. "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities." Subordinating personal aims to the common good is the essence of all Twelve Traditions and the greatest safeguard A.A. has.

## A.A.'s 20th World Service Meeting Draws Delegates from 42 Countries



The 20th World Service Meeting (WSM) of Alcoholics Anonymous, which was held in New York City over four days in October, drew 59 delegates from around the world.

A.A. has a presence in more than 180 countries, with an estimated 113,168 groups and approximately two million members. There are 61 autonomous A.A. general service offices worldwide, including the New York office. Since its beginnings in 1969, the WSM has served as a forum for the sharing of experience and ideas on ways to carry the A.A. message of recovery from alcoholism. Forty-two countries sent representatives to the meeting, including India, Japan, Australia, Iceland, and Russia, with the majority of delegates from Europe and South America.

Among the topics discussed were approaches to working with professionals. Delegates described their efforts to reach those in medicine, law, business, and government to let them know that Alcoholics Anonymous can be a resource for problem drinkers. Other topics included literature distribution, communication, and service structures. There were also workshops on how to carry the A.A. message into developing countries.

Main sessions were in English, with simultaneous interpretation into Spanish. Attendance was limited to delegates from participating countries, along with several staff members from G.S.O.

The event is held every two years and alternates between New York City and other cities around the globe.

## Four Fellowships Meet in New York City

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous have been adapted by scores of fellowships that address problems other than alcoholism. Earlier this year, the General Service Office of A.A. (G.S.O.) hosted the first-ever sharing session with three of these Twelve Step fellowships, each with its own mission. Attending the meeting were Narcotics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, and Debtors Anonymous.

The organizations are not affiliated in any way with one another, though cooperation is a principle long practiced by most Twelve Step fellowships. The meeting followed a format similar to the Annual Day of Sharing, which is hosted on a rotating basis by A.A., Al-Anon, and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence. "These meetings have been invaluable for G.S.O.," says Greg M., G.S.O.'s current general manager and an A.A. member himself. "Six years ago, for instance, we adapted Al-Anon's approach to public service announcements, with central distribution and tracking."

According to Naomi Lippel, managing director at Overeaters Anonymous (though not a member herself), "the Twelve Step organization is a unique animal in this world. We operate under the Traditions, including the Seventh Tradition, which means we take no contributions from anyone not a member."

Attendees talked about the challenge of impressing on professionals the importance of each Fellowship staying true to its single purpose. With the best of intentions, for instance, professionals sometimes refer to A.A. people who are not alcoholics but who suffer from other addictions, such as drugs, gambling, spending, or food. According to those at the meeting, while the Twelve Steps can help people with a variety of issues, it is important for professionals to understand why not just anyone with any problem will be comfortable attending a particular Twelve Step program's meetings.

For one thing, each Fellowship has differences in their paths to recovery. Members of Debtors Anonymous and Overeaters Anonymous have to figure out how to have a relationship with either money or food without eliminating them entirely from their lives. An A.A. member, on the other hand, avoids alcohol entirely.

Among other items discussed were how to maintain the anonymity of members on the Internet, and how to cooperate with drug and alcohol courts without appearing to be agents of the courts.

Jan S., one of the member trustees attending from Debtors Anonymous, reported that it was helpful to hear how other fellowships handle questions from their members about Traditions. He also agreed that there is often a fine line between "cooperation" and "affiliation." That is, the point at which fellowships maintain a relationship that does not violate each's primary purpose. For instance, he said, D.A. wondered "whether it should put a link to A.A. on our website."

Anthony E., executive director of Narcotics Anonymous, said, "It surprised me that the challenges faced by a group like D.A. are no different than ours. There has been fear in N.A. about sitting down with other groups like A.A., that somehow just doing that means that we will be diluting our mission, our primary purpose. But from this one gathering it is clear there will be benefits to all those involved."

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