

A SURVEY OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS IN GREAT BRITAIN OVER THE PAST 50 YEARS

Frequency of AA Meeting attendance (%)						
	1978	1981	1986	1991	1997	2002
5+ /wk	9	13	17	18	22	17.3
3-4 /wk	36	37	46	43	46	41.6
1-2 /wk	53	47	36	38	31	38.9
0-1/mth	2	3	1	1	1	2.2

Length of Sobriety of AA members (%)						
Sobriety	1978	1981	1986	1991	1997	2002
0- 6 mth	26	29	22	20	19	17
7-12 mth	14	10	10	9	10	7
1-2 yrs	13	28	15	13	10	11
2-10 yrs	40	26	45	42	39	36
Over 10 yr	7	7	8	16	22	29

Number of years membership(%) in AA						
Age group	1978	1981	1986	1991	1997	2002
Under 1 yr	23	24	17	16	13	16
1-2 yrs	13	27	10	11	9	11
2-6 yrs	37	21	32	30	25	24
6-10 yrs	13	16	22	17	18	16
Over 10 yr	14	12	19	26	34	33

Multiple Addiction (%)						
	1978	1981	1986	1991	1997	2002
Yes	21	24	26	23	22	24
No	79	76	74	77	76	76

Point of Entry into AA (%)		
Source of Entry	1997	2002
Al Anon	2.3	1.0
AA Literature	2.3	0.6
Media	4.1	1.6
Counselling agency	3.9	3.7
Other	4.7	4.5
Doctor	8.5	5.3
Treatment facility	10.3	16.6
Non member*	21.1	2.8
On own accord	18.5	29.6
Member	24.3	24.5
0845 Tel No		9.3
Website		0.4



© General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited 2002
Registered Charity No. 226745

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrievable system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission of the publisher.

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

AA has been in existence in Great Britain for just over fifty years. AA surveys have been held at various stages over the past 30 years: from 1972 to 1997 a total of seven were held - roughly one every five years. A recent survey was held in June of this year.

The intent of these surveys is to learn more about the Fellowship of AA in Great Britain so that the AA message may be carried more effectively to more suffering alcoholics, thus helping us to fulfil our Primary Purpose in the most effective manner possible.

RESULTS OF SURVEY 2002

Average size of a meeting - Meeting sizes varied from as low as 5 to as high as 90. The average size of a meeting is 19.2 members.

Average number of meetings attended per member per week is 2.94 meetings.

Total size of AA in Great Britain - The membership of AA in Great Britain is around 22500.

Number of Home Group members - 88% of members - i.e. some 19800 - said they considered a particular Group as their 'Home Group'.

COMPARISON WITH RESULTS OF SURVEY 1997

Gender of AA members - the proportion of women members has increased to 40% in 2002 from 36 % in 1997

Age distribution of members - the percentage of members under 40 years in 2002 are down by one-third over 1997 while those over 50 are up by a third

Length of sobriety - the percentage of members with over ten-years sobriety in 2002 has also increased by one-third over those in 1997

Frequency of weekly attendance - down to 2.9 meetings per week in 2002 from 3.3 in 1997

Home-group membership - the percentage is down to 88% in 2002 from 92% in 1997

Addiction to drugs other than alcohol - members saying 'yes' to this question in 2002 are up by 5% over 1997, bringing the 'yes' figure for 2002 up to 23%

DEVELOPMENTS OVER THE PAST 25 YEARS

Surveys of AA have been carried out in the years 1972, 1976, 1978, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1997 and 2002. Since 1978, surveys have been carried out in a uniform manner. This enables meaningful comparisons to be made between parameters that can be used to characterise trends in the development of AA over these years.

Gender of AA members - the percentage of women members over the past 25 years has increased to a present level of 40%. Bearing in mind that over this period the number of groups has increased threefold (from a little over 1000 to 3200 today), the proportion of women has remained surprisingly constant. It is now moving upwards.

Age Distribution of AA members - the relatively small percentage of younger members in 1978 has declined over the years, while the over-60 bracket has almost doubled during the same period. The middle bracket of 40-year olds hasn't changed much. The trend suggests that existing members are growing older, rather than young members are leaving the Fellowship and older ones joining.

Number of years in AA - the profiles again show the decreasing proportion of younger - and

the increasing proportion of older - members as the years progress. Whereas in the early 1980's the modal age group was 'one to two years' it is now the 'over ten years'.

Meeting attendance frequency - the pattern of attendance frequency has changed over the years. In the early years, 1-2 meetings per week seemed to be sufficient: in the mid-80's the norm had shifted to 3- 4 but has moved down to become more a 2-3 pattern for the present year. The trend to fewer meetings since 1997 is evident (the actual number was 3.3 in 1997 and is 2.9 now).

Influences on reaching AA - it is clear that most members reach AA either via another member - or are almost equally likely to come 'On their own accord'. Quite a large number come in through a Treatment Centre. The Telephone Service, accounts now for 10% of total.

Addiction to drugs other than alcohol - this percentage has been fluctuating somewhat over the past 25 years but has always been around 20%. The percentage has increased by 5% since 1977 to a level now of 23%. This means that every fourth AA member has at some time been addicted to drugs other than alcohol.

GROWTH &TRENDS OVER THE PAST 50 YEARS

There has been a decreasing rate of growth in the number of meetings since 1986. The percentage growth rate per annum since the inception of AA in the early 50's show, in the first ten years huge - and unsustainable - growth rates of some 30 to 20%, falling to 10% by the mid 70's and to 5% by the mid 80's. The average growth level now is around 1%.

There can be little doubt that the number of AA meetings per week in relative terms has virtually ceased to grow. Those who consider that meetings are increasing in size are perhaps witnessing evidence characteristic of the high frequency (~3) of weekly attendance at them, rather than a real growth in members. In business terms, the growth curve is characteristic of a product or process which has lost its novelty and is in need of some form of revitalisation. Perhaps this could be achieved by the Fellowship thinking more in terms of substance than of form - i.e. by looking perhaps more outwards at influences, rather than inwards at procedures. In this way, we may be able to improve how we carry out our Primary Purpose.

Statistical data taken from AA Surveys conducted in 1978,1981,1986,1991,1997,2002

Gender of AA members as a % of total						
Gender	1978	1981	1986	1991	1997	2002
male	66	65	65	64	64	60
female	34	35	35	36	36	40

Age Distribution of AA members (%) since 1978						
Age	1978	1981	1986	1991	1997	2002
Up to 29	7	9	9	8	7	5
30 to 39	29	31	30	27	24	19
40 to 49	32	32	36	35	33	29
50 to 59	22	20	16	20	25	30
Over 60	10	8	9	10	11	16