

# About AA

## A.A. Surveys Its Membership: A Demographic Report

The General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous has conducted a triennial survey of its membership since 1968. This demographic analysis is intended to apprise and inform A.A. members and the professional community of current trends in membership characteristics measured against the results of previous surveys. The 1983 survey is the sixth and most comprehensive survey A.A. has conducted; 7,600 members in the United States and Canada took part in the scientifically designed sample. The sample was constructed by selecting at random a number of groups roughly proportional to the registered number of groups in each area. Delegates in each of the 91 survey areas were asked to deliver survey questionnaires to these groups. The survey design gives an adequate picture of each of the eight A.A. regions and the overall membership.

The focus in these results is on broad trends and characteristics of the Fellowship as they are represented by U.S./Canada averages. An analysis of variance of the various characteristics is still under way. However, the sample is so large that the confidence limits for most overall U.S./Canada averages can be expected to be very narrow. For example, the 90% confidence limits of the proportion of women (30%) are less than  $\pm 2\%$ .

### How the Survey Was Constructed

As Table 1 shows, the size of this latest A.A. sample is smaller than in any year since 1971. Its *validity* is higher, however, because of random sampling techniques used. However, the 1983 results are consistent with trends previously observed, thereby suggesting *overall* validity of all the surveys.

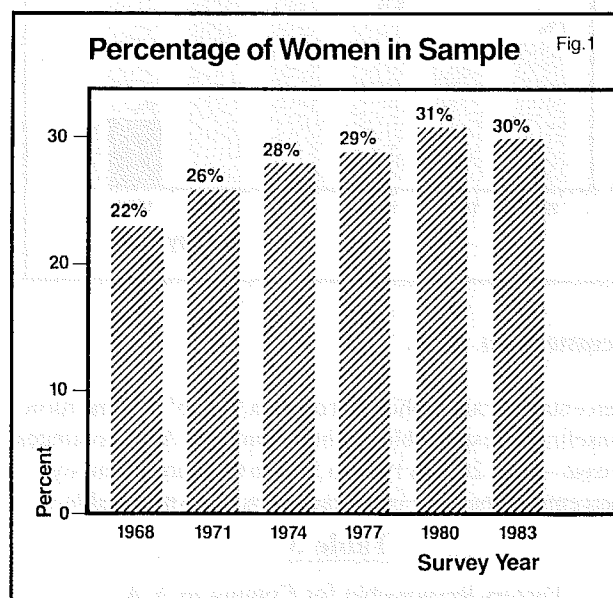
**Table 1**

| Year of survey | Reported membership of U.S./Can. groups | Size of sample |
|----------------|---|----------------|
| 1968           | 170,000                                 | 11,355         |
| 1971           | 210,000                                 | 7,194          |
| 1974           | 331,000                                 | 13,467         |
| 1977           | 404,000                                 | 15,163         |
| 1980           | 476,000                                 | 24,950         |
| 1983           | 653,000                                 | 7,611          |

The sample is biased toward alcoholics who attend meetings frequently, but since "frequency of meeting attendance" is measured by the questionnaire, this bias can be removed. Additionally, characteristics such as "age" and "sex" are only weakly correlated with frequency of attendance so that the sample results are a good approximation of the characteristics of the A.A. population.

### Women in A.A.

The percentage of the women in the sample was 30% — a slight decline from the percentage indicated in the 1980 survey (Fig. 1). The ratio of men to women in A.A. is approximately two to one.



### Young People in A.A.

The percentage of young people (defined as those 30 years of age or younger) in the sample was 20% — an increase of 5% from the last survey. This result continues a trend of increasing membership by young people during the past nine years (Fig. 2).

### Characteristics of Young People

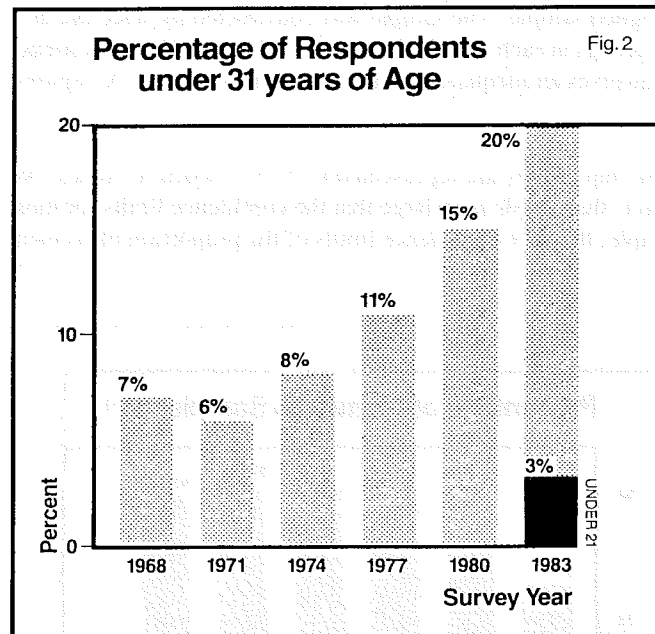
A separate study of young people in the sample reveals characteristics — when measured against the survey as a whole — that are significant. Table 2 measures alcoholics in the sample who are under 21 as they relate to characteristics reported by the total sample. Particularly noteworthy is the prevalence of drug

addiction and the large proportion of women compared to the total sample.

**Table 2**

| Characteristic           | Total | Under 31 | Under 21* |
|--------------------------|-------|----------|-----------|
| Percent of women         | 30%   | 33%      | 42%       |
| Average sobriety (mos.)  | 45    | 17       | 11        |
| Addicted to drugs        | 31%   | 60%      | 79%       |
| A.A. member important    | 38%   | 35%      | 33%       |
| Couns. & rehab important | 30%   | 38%      | 51%       |

\*These data, in contrast to data in Table 4, are from an enriched, larger sample specifically aimed at young people.



### Newcomers to A.A.

The percentage of alcoholics that credit a 'rehab' or some form of counseling as responsible for their coming to A.A. continues to increase – from 26% in 1980 to 31% in this current survey. The percentage that cite other factors is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

Factors Responsible for Coming to A.A.

| Factor         | 1977 | 1980 | 1983 |
|----------------|------|------|------|
| A.A. member    | 44%  | 42%  | 37%  |
| “On my own”    | 33%  | 27%  | 27%  |
| Family         | 22%  | 21%  | 20%  |
| Couns. & rehab | 19%  | 26%  | 31%  |
| Doctor         | 10%  | 9%   | 7%   |

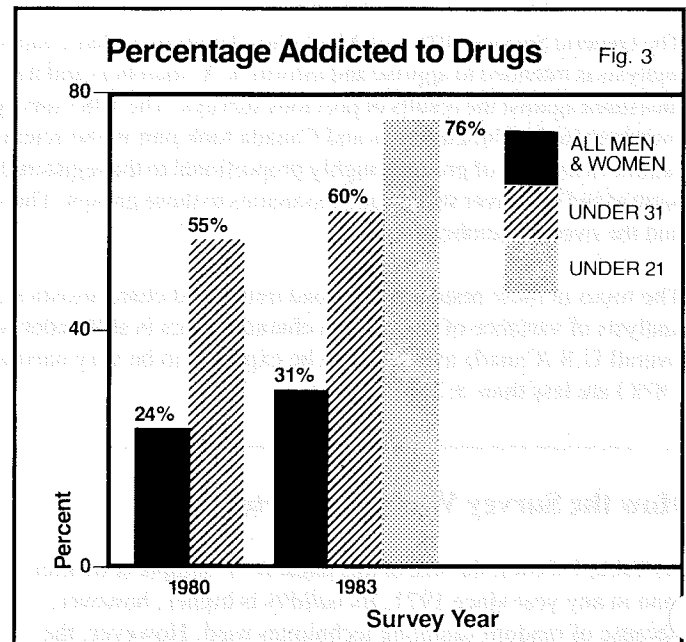
### Dual Addiction

Those in the sample reporting addiction to another drug (in addition to alcohol) rose to 31% from the 24% observed in the 1980 survey. The trend since 1977, when this question was first included in the survey, is shown in Figure 3 with further details in Table 4.

**Table 4**

% Addicted to Drugs

|       | All  |      | 30 & under |      | 20 & under |
|-------|------|------|------------|------|------------|
|       | 1980 | 1983 | 1980       | 1983 | 1983       |
| Women | 34%  | 40%  | 63%        | 64%  | 78%        |
| Men   | 20%  | 27%  | 51%        | 58%  | 74%        |
| All   | 24%  | 31%  | 55%        | 60%  | 76%        |



### Additional Highlights

Some random findings culled from the sample survey provide valuable insight into the A.A. population:

- The average length of sobriety (total abstinence from alcohol) of those responding was 45 months – about the same as reported in previous years.
- The fraction of newcomers that remain after three months (sober or not) has apparently increased, slowly, from about 50% in 1977 to about 60% in 1983.
- The average member in this sampling attends four meetings a week.
- The age span of those taking part in the 1983 survey ranged from 15 years of age to over 85.

### “The A.A. Member – Medications and Other Drugs” Now Available

The new Conference-approved pamphlet “The A.A. Member – Medications and Other Drugs” is a report from a group of doctors in A.A. and contains stories sharing A.A. experience. It replaces the pamphlet “The A.A. Member and Drug Abuse,” which has been discontinued. Available from G.S.O., 15¢ each.