



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Understanding the Membership Decision: New Research with Current and Prospective Members into Attitudes and Choices



Between March and June of 2020, Willow Marketing and Audience Audit, Inc., collected data from current and previous association members across the country. With 4,170 respondents, you can rest assured our findings are statistically accurate, and that this is data you can apply to your association with confidence.

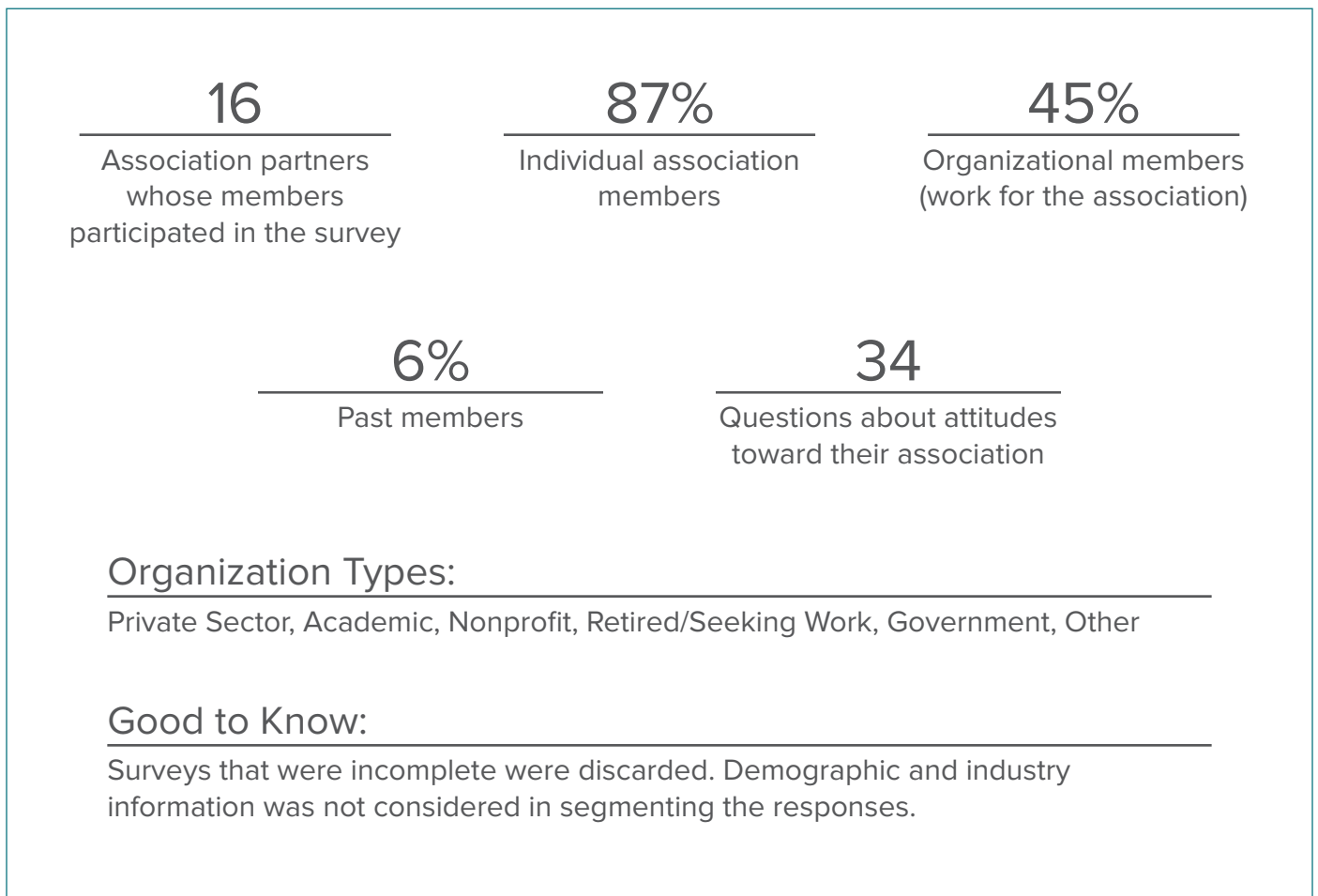


THE THEORY

Association members fall into segments based on their attitudes toward associations. This segmentation exists within all member-based organizations, and each segment is represented in all associations, across all ages, genders, and industries. By working with Audience Audit to distribute and collect surveys from associations across the country, we believed we could identify these consistent attitudinal segments, and provide data organization could use to self-segment their membership, customize communications, and build strategies that speak to their members' unique needs.

THE SCIENCE

Research unlike anything you've seen before. That was our goal with this study, and what sets it apart is the unique take on the numbers. While previous association research has dealt primarily with "firmographic" data (industry, organization size, role, etc.), this is a quantitative approach to something that has in the past been hard to define: your members' attitudes toward your organization. Here are some of the key demographic breakdowns:





THE FINDINGS

The data uncovered four attitudinal segments of association members. These segments were not predetermined, but were defined by the data. Each segment represents a group of respondents with a unique set of attitudes that connect them, and can be found in any association. Here are the four attitudinal segments you can look for in your organization:

BELIEVERS

Believers are deeply engaged with your organization. They take advantage of in-person events and appreciate connecting face-to-face with other members. They are less likely to be comfortable with online or virtual events and resources.

LEADERS

This segment wants to be perceived as thought leaders in their industry. They are likely to have taken advantage of training, continuing education, or certifications. They may volunteer for mentorship programs, and are eager to take advantage of any tools you provide.

CHANGE-SEEKERS

This group is far more likely to connect virtually, through webinars, online events, and via social media. They appreciate any opportunity to learn or network online, but are the least likely to attend in-person events.

STRUGGLERS

Strugglers find challenges in participating with your organization. Both professional and personal barriers hold them back, and they retain an ingrained skepticism about how an association can bring them value. They crave industry information, updates, best practices, and forecasting, but are not comfortable networking online.

Here's the attitudinal segment breakdown from our study:





KEY FINDINGS:

- All four of these segments will be found within your organization, regardless of its size or industry.
- While respondents over the age of 60 were more likely to be BELIEVERS, those 30 and under were more likely to be CHANGE-SEEKERS.
- While the majority (65%) of respondents said it was important to understand their association's mission and goals, one third said they do not have a clear understanding.
- 62% said it's very important for associations to provide leadership within their industry, but less than half say they feel their association is doing that.
- BELIEVERS are more likely to participate in in-person events, while CHANGE-SEEKERS are more likely to participate in virtual events.
- Respondents overall said that they want to hear from experts, more than in-person networking or conference participation.
- Overall, it's less important HOW they access the information, and more important that WHAT they access is high-quality and high-value.

THE INSIGHT

These findings will help you align your members with their attitudinal segment so you can begin crafting communications and offering resources that meet their needs and instill in your members the value of your organization.

Impact of COVID-19

- The study was conducted in the midst of the global pandemic, giving us the opportunity to adapt our questions in light of the crisis and receive timely and valid feedback.
- A majority of respondents said that COVID-19 had impacted their perceived value of the organization. 62% feel it has had a positive impact (due to increased virtual resources), but others say it has had a negative impact (as many in-person events were forced to cancel).
- 10% of all respondents had been furloughed or laid off prior to completing the survey, a majority of them state it was due to COVID-19.
- One-third of respondents say they are unsure if their association can continue providing value throughout the pandemic.
- A majority of respondents say they are not comfortable attending in-person events right now, and would be happy to seek out virtual opportunities through the rest of 2020.



Interpreting and Implementing the Data

DO craft communications that address the needs and values of each segment.

DON'T cater to one segment while alienating the others.

DO understand the barriers facing each segment (e.g. BELIEVERS are at-risk right now due to lack of in-person events).

DON'T rely on past engagements to guide you in an uncertain future.

What's Next?

Continue or look into providing the following resources for all segments:

- Continuing education resources
- Latest trends and legislative updates
- Employee development and training
- Research and analysis to help people in their profession
- Career development resources

Want More?

Take a deeper dive into the data by joining our 90 minute webinar, and downloading our coming white paper detailing the study's findings and potential impact to your association.

