



## The Members' Pathway: *Level 3*

PLAN > Membership Action Plan > *Where New Members come from*

The traditional route for new members to join a Lodge is through long standing friends, family members and colleagues. The personal recommendation of a candidate by an existing member is recognised and respected by the other brethren. Candidates who come through this route are often referred to as sponsored candidates.

The growth of the internet and social media, coupled with UGLE's increased openness, have introduced other routes into membership for people attracted to what Freemasonry can offer but who do not know a Freemason themselves often referred to as an unsponsored candidate. UGLE and its Provinces now run a sophisticated system to receive, screen and allocate enquirers to Lodges that are best suited to them.

The future health and strength of your Lodge will benefit from you understanding the balance between these two routes and why and how people to join a membership organisation. The following data, from both outside and inside Freemasonry, explains these points and lead to an approach that will help you identify future members.

### RESEARCH FROM OUTSIDE OF THE CRAFT

According to the Cabinet Office Community Life Survey, 2018-19:

- 22% of adults in England are members of a club, society or organisation. Although this data relates to England only there is no reason to believe the situation is substantially different in Wales, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man.
- Of these, 42% are engaged in hobbies, social clubs and recreation. This equates to approximately 2.7 million male adults in England alone.
- Participation in these activities peaked in 2005, declined in the period from 2005 to 2012 and has since returned to approximately the same level as in 2005.
- Participation rates vary across adult age ranges, from 15% for 25-34 year olds to a peak of 28% for those aged 65-74.
- The highest rates of regular participation are found in the south (26% in the South East and South West). The lowest rates were in London and the North East (16%).
- Those living in rural areas are more likely to participate once a month (29%) than those living in urban areas (20%).
- Among those in work, 22% regularly participate. 27% of those retired and 17% of those unemployed regularly participate.
- The most significant barriers to participation are work commitments (49%), other commitments (35%), home or childcare (23%). 11% said they did not know of any groups seeking members and 10% did not know of opportunities to join. 7% of those aged 16 or more thought they were the wrong age.
- At least 20% of members organisations become active in the work involved in operating their group with 37% of these involved in leading or being on committees, 23% in secretarial work and 55% helping to organise events.

According to the Cabinet Office report, "Helping Out: a national survey of volunteering and charitable giving", prepared by the National Centre of Social Research and the Institute of Volunteering Research:



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- 91% of men who join membership activities do so after personal contact with existing members (71% getting involved through “word of mouth” and 20% after “previous contact”). The remaining 9% approached the organisation in response to its promotional activities, such as leaflets, websites, media and events.
- The top five personal benefits reported by members of organisations were:
  - ‘A sense of satisfaction from seeing the results’ (97%)
  - ‘I really enjoy it’ (96%)
  - ‘It gives me a sense of personal achievement’ (88%)
  - ‘Meet people and make friends’ (86%)
  - ‘Gives me the chance to do things that I am good at’ (83%).

The “Helping out” figures are an almost exact match to those reported by the Volunteering Centre UK in 1991, which found that:

- 91% of volunteers only agreed to join an organisation after being asked to do so.
- People join an organisation to satisfy their personal needs for enjoyment and satisfaction, and they leave if those needs are not met.

The consistency in the data over thirty years suggests it reflects enduring psychological factors rather than societal change. We know that people respond well to being wanted, appreciated and recognised. Perhaps fear of rejection prevents more than 10% of joiners from stepping forward of their own volition.

While these data give cause for optimism, and direct us to membership strategies, we should recognise that we are unlikely to return to the boom years following the Second World War. All measures of civic engagement report that it dropped sharply in first world countries from the early 1970s onwards, as Baby Boomers gradually “replaced” the more civically active war time generation. For example, in the USA the Roper Social and Political Trends surveys report a drop of 40% between 1973 and 1994.

### RESEARCH FROM INSIDE OF THE CRAFT

- The number of Initiations per annum across all UGLE Lodges has been slowly falling. It was 9,286 in 2010, an average of 1.18 per Lodge, and 7,929 in 2019, an average of 1.11 per Lodge.
- Analysis of the 1,747 Initiations in one Province for the period 2006 to 2020 shows that:
  - 91.5% of Initiations came from “Personal recommendations” (the traditional route, or sponsored candidates).
  - 8.5% came from enquiries (unsponsored candidates), either via UGLE or the Province’s own online enquiry system.
  - 17.3% of these Initiates resigned before they had taken their Third Degree, and of these, 8.5% were unsponsored candidates and 91.5% were sponsored.

Again, this data mirrors the 90 / 10 split between those who join an organisation because an existing member contacted them, and those who contacted the organisation.



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### CONCLUDING FROM THE DATA

- One fifth of all adults are members of clubs and organisations and two fifths of these are related to hobbies, social clubs and recreation.
- All data from the last 30 years show that nine out of ten such members join through personal contact from an existing member. The remaining 10% approach the organisation because of its promotional activities.
- This pattern is repeated within Freemasonry and probably reflects psychological factors underlying why and how people join, remain in or leave membership organisations.
- Levels of participation are similar to those before the 2008 economic crisis.
- Age, location and economic activity need not be barriers to participation.
- Freemasonry is ideally suited to satisfy the hopes and expectations of those who do join organisations.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR LODGES AND MEMBERS

- There are plenty of potential members in our communities. Around 2.7 million men in England join membership organisations.
- Most join through previous contact with a member, or the organisation itself, and this holds true in Freemasonry as much as other organisations.
- This is probably because people want to be wanted, to be approached and encouraged to join something. They may fear rejection if they step forward and volunteer.
- Therefore, the traditional personal recommendation is still the route via which most people will join our Lodges.
- For this to work our existing members must be willing to talk about Freemasonry with their contacts.
- It helps if people are already aware of Freemasonry, and if it has a [positive public image](#).
- We can all build awareness of Freemasonry by being proud of our membership and making our Lodges visible and active contributors to our communities.

### IDENTIFYING PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES

- Everyone has networks of friends and contacts. The following technique is a way of identifying those who could make good candidates.
- Some members may want to complete the following activity on their own. However, for others, it works very successfully (and often to peoples' surprise) when working as part of a group facilitated by someone else, such as the Lodge Membership Officer.
- Start by listing all the men in your various networks. Include in your list:
  - Family members
  - Work colleagues
  - Social club members
  - Friends
  - Fellow worshippers
  - Service providers
  - Customers
  - Other networks to which you belong.



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- Contact lists, address books and other such lists may be useful resources.
- Take time to do this so that you include as many people as possible, whether they have expressed any interest in Freemasonry or not.
- Expand the list by considering who else each person on the list themselves know.
- Pool everyone's individual lists to create one "long list".
- Remove anyone who you are certain:
  - Does not believe in a Supreme Being.
  - Has unspent criminal convictions.
  - Is not a good fit to the Lodge outline, for example if they would not find the Lodge and its specific focus attractive.
  - Is a poor match to the Lodge's ideal candidate profile.
- If you are not certain, keep them on the list until you have done further research.
- Bear in mind that diversity in membership is important in any successful group, especially in respect of having people with a range of different personalities, skills and qualities.
- Avoid making any assumptions about any person's level of interest in Freemasonry, or their availability. These things are for them to decide, not you.
- Each person's name can now be categorised as:
  - SUITABLE to be approached for this Lodge
  - SUITABLE for Freemasonry but perhaps not for this Lodge
  - DON'T KNOWS.
  - NOT SUITABLE for Freemasonry at this time.
- These lists can then be managed as follows:
  - *Suitable to be approached for this Lodge*
    - Decide who in the Lodge should make the approach. This might be based on prior knowledge of the person concerned, the closeness of the existing relationship or simply an available opportunity to discuss the matter.
  - *Suitable for Freemasonry but may be better suited to another Lodge*
    - Those on this list may still be approached but with a view to determining their interest in Freemasonry in general rather than this specific Lodge.
    - It may be better to refer them to the Provincial Membership Officer.
  - *Don't know enough to decide*
    - Nominate someone to obtain the further information required.
  - *Not suitable to be approached*
    - To comply with privacy and data protection requirements, all records of their names – both physical and electronic – should now be destroyed.



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### DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY

- For legal reasons, data protection and individual privacy must be considered when undertaking these activities.
- No personal data relating to named people should be recorded or stored. All notes, except the final short list of people to approach, should be destroyed at the end of this Step.
- Only relevant information, and nothing confidential, should be shared between Lodge members during the process. Relevant information might include:
  - a. how a member came to know each of the people on his list
  - b. how long the member has known them
  - c. any characteristics and qualities that would make each man suitable for Freemasonry.

### WHAT NEXT?

- The next stage in the Members' Pathway looks at how we can use our plans to attract new members, by connecting with personal contacts and others in our community.
- Having completed all the Planning elements, the Lodge the Lodge might want to do a final review and update the [Lodge outline](#) and [Candidate profile](#) before moving on to engage with people.