

# Chronic Pain Anonymous 2020 Member Survey

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:

Chronic Pain Anonymous (CPA) is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other so that they may solve their common problem and help others recover from the disabling effects of chronic pain and chronic illness. The only requirement for membership is a desire to recover from the emotional and spiritual debilitation of chronic pain and chronic illness. There are no dues or fees for CPA membership. We are self-supporting through our own contributions. CPA does not ally with any organization or institution.

CPA was started in 2004 by Dale L. and Barry in Baltimore, MD. Since then the fellowship has grown and now has face-to-face and virtual meetings with members from around the world. Along with local face-to-face meetings, we offer meetings that can be attended from wherever our members may be via phone or computer, making it possible for our members to participate in the fellowship, no matter their physical status.

Our primary purpose is to live our lives to the fullest by minimizing the effects of chronic pain and chronic illness in our lives and helping others to do the same. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps and welcoming and giving comfort and understanding to each other. We define recovery as: The ability to live peacefully, joyfully, and comfortably with ourselves and others. Our CPA Declaration reminds us of what is possible when we learn to apply the Steps and the principles of the program to our lives.

We have discovered practicing the principles embodied in the Steps, combined with taking action by using the program tools, grants us the simplicity, compassion and serenity we desperately sought for so long.

### 2020 CPA SURVEY

In 2018, to better understand the needs of our members and how CPA may better serve them, the Board of Directors commissioned the first-ever CPA member survey. Similar surveys from other Twelve Step communities were consulted before the CPA Survey was developed, and the CPA survey was conducted in the last quarter of 2018.

The 2020 survey builds on the 2018 survey, but maintains the same essential goals:

### SURVEY GOALS

- Determine the demographic and sociographic profile of CPA members
- Identify the relations members have with their chronic pain and illness
- Measure the impact the chronic pain and illness on the members' quality of life
- Determine the impact of CPA on members' lives

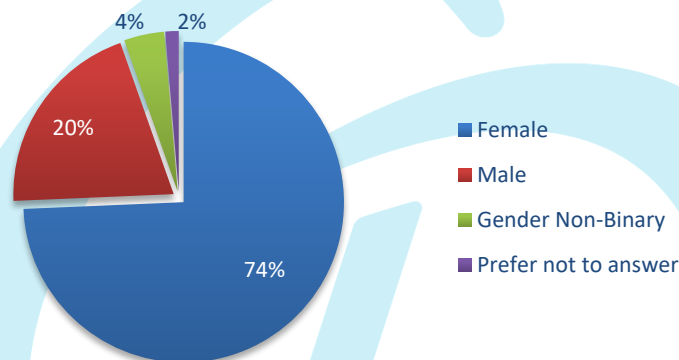
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## KEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS:

The 2020 member survey ran from October 1<sup>st</sup> to November 30<sup>th</sup> on Survey Monkey. In total, 146 members responded, up from 93 members in 2018. Nearly 75% of the responders identified as female and over 90% of all responders attended 2 or more years of college. Approximately 90% of responders identified as “White/Caucasian.”

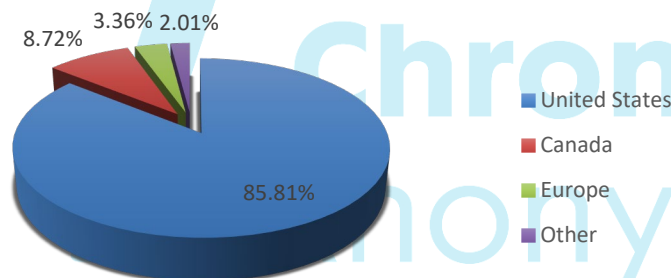
The 2020 demographic and sociographic profile of CPA members below helps define our community:

### GENDER OF MEMBERS:



### GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Although CPA members live primarily in the United States, membership is expanding throughout the world via online and telephone-based meetings. While the vast majority (over 85%) of members hail from the United States, Europe, Australia, and Canada were also represented. Just over 85% of responders have been a member of CPA for 5 years or less, which indicates that CPA continues its growth phase as recognition of its existence expands through fellowship, professional outreach, literature, and word-of-mouth.



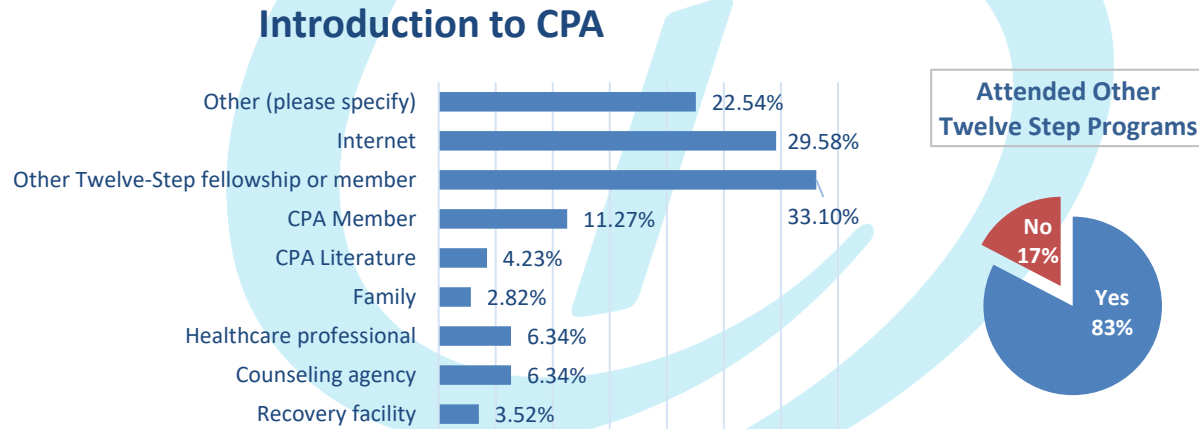
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## LENGTH OF MEMBERSHIP

Less than a year	44.59%
1 - 2 years	22.30%
3 - 5 years	18.24%
6 - 8 years	6.08%
9 - 11 years	5.41%
12 years or more	3.38%

## INTRODUCTION TO CPA:

As with the 2018 survey, the majority of responders to the current survey were introduced to CPA through other Twelve-Step fellowships (33.10%) followed by the Internet (29.58%) and other means (22.54%). Of the responders, nearly 83% have attended other Twelve-Step programs.



With respect to members' introductions to CPA, the following comments were made:

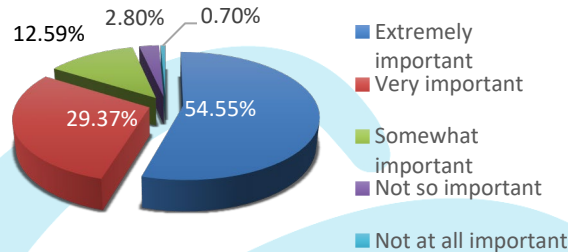
- "It was very hard to find this program! I had no idea it existed and started looking on the web for other 12 step programs that I could relate to with health and chronic pain and illness and luckily just found this on my own from looking up support groups for this."\*
- "I googled 'chronic pain online group'."
- "The meetings were held at my synagogue and saw it posted in their literature."
- "I saw it on the schedule of the 'In The Rooms' website."
- "Longtime multiple AIAnon, & some AA, connections; former member CoDA."

\* Addressed by the CPA Website Design Team in 2020, resulting in CPA appearing, in most cases, as the first Chronic Pain and Chronic Illness support group listing.

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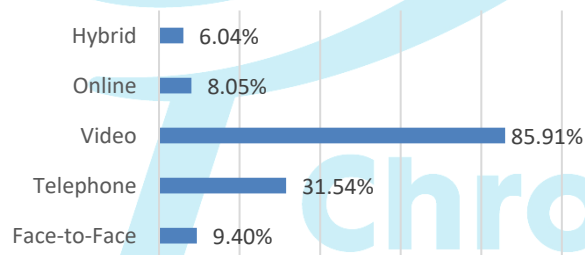
## IMPORTANCE OF THE FIRST MEETING FOR MEMBERS:

With respect to the importance of the first meeting for those who have gone on to join the CPA fellowship, 83.92% of responders to the 2020 survey stated that it was either “Very Important” or “Extremely Important,” indicating first impressions do count.



## TYPES OF MEETINGS CPA MEMBERS ATTEND:

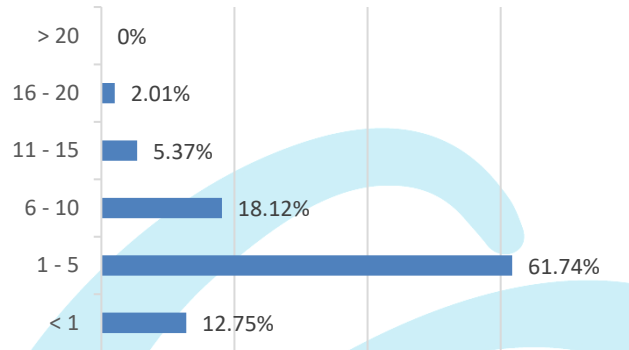
In 2018, video meetings accounted for nearly 55% of all meetings attended by members. This number increased significantly in 2020 to 86%. This number may reflect not just an increase in availability to members of video meetings but the unusual circumstances surrounding 2020 as face-to-face meetings shut down due to pandemic health risks. In fact, face-to-face meetings diminished to just 9.40% of all meetings attended in 2020, down from 33.33% of all meetings in 2018. Yet, telephone and online meetings also diminished from 2018 to the current survey, indicating an increase in overall popularity of the video format for CPA members.



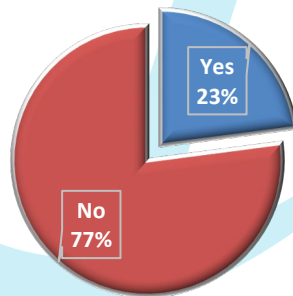
CPA responded to the increased interest in video-based meetings by expanding the amount and variety of meetings in 2020, and it is expected that this trend will continue into the foreseeable future.

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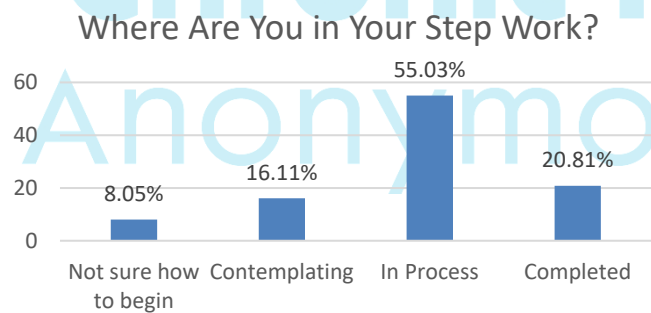
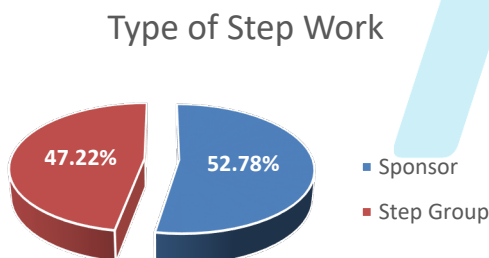
One new question asked in the 2020 survey focused on meeting attendance. The majority of members (61.74%) endorsed attending 1-5 meetings weekly with another 18.12% attending between 6-10 meetings per week.



Two additional new questions for the 2020 survey asked about sponsorship and working the Steps. Almost 23% of members stated that they were acting as sponsors to other members.



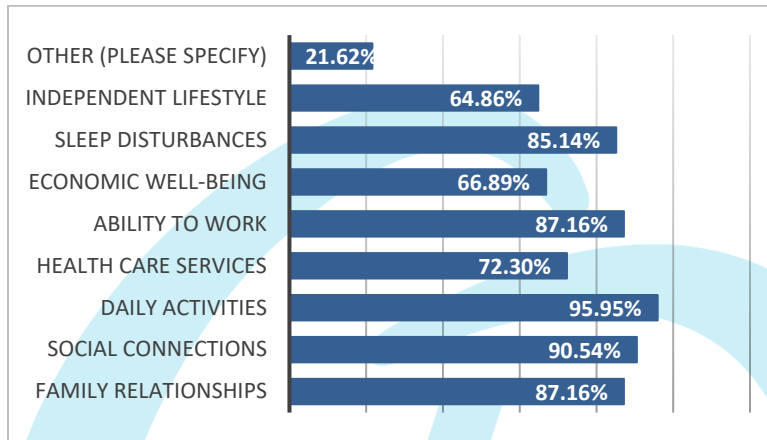
Of those members working the Steps, nearly 53% stated they were doing so with a sponsor, and 47.22% stated that they were doing Step group work. Overall, 55.03% of all members responding were working the Steps, 20.81% had completed them, 16.11% were “contemplating” working the Steps, and 8.05% were “not sure where to begin.”



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## THE IMPACT OF CHRONIC ILLNESS AND CHRONIC PAIN:

Results for 2020 responders were similar to 2018, with 95.95% of members reporting interference with daily activities or activities of daily living (ADLs) compared to 97.85% two years ago. The graph below identifies the degree of impact chronic pain and illness have on the membership.

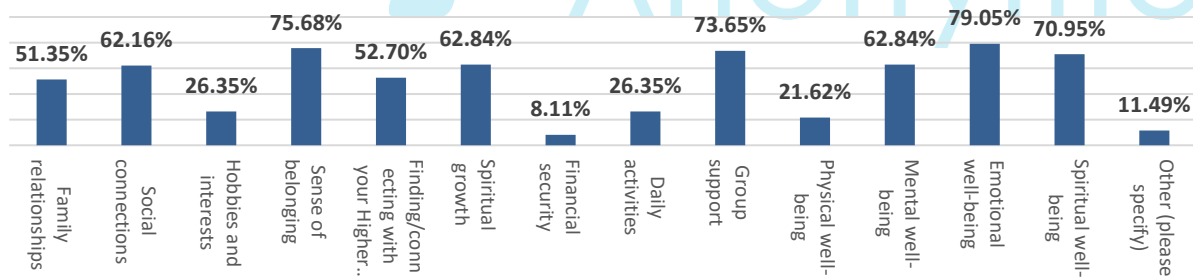


Of note, clients reported under the “Other” category that chronic pain and illness interfered with “self-esteem,” “travel,” “libido,” “mood,” or “emotional well-being,” and “spiritual connection.”

## POSITIVE IMPACT OF CPA ON MEMBERS

In the 2018 survey, a key question for members was whether CPA has a positive impact on one’s life, and, if so, in what area(s). This remains a crucial question when evaluating the efficacy of any program. In the original 2018 CPA survey, more than 93% of the responders endorsed some progress in their lives spiritually and psychologically. CPA members voiced that over 65% have experienced some improvement in their social and physical well-being.

The 2020 survey results demonstrate that CPA continues to have a positive impact on members, but drop-offs were seen in most categories from 2018 to 2020. Over 60% of responders experienced improvements of spiritual, social, and mental well-being. At the same time, improvements in family relationships in 2020 dropped slightly from 2018 (56.99% to 51.35%) as did improvements in physical well-being (31.18% to 21.62%) and spiritual growth (83.87% to 62.84%).



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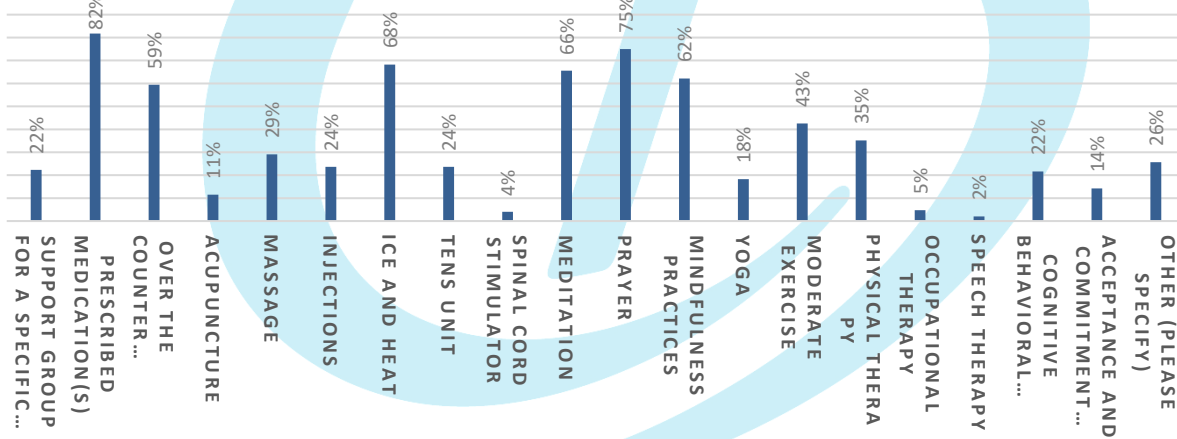
Members provided a range of positive-to-negative comments on the impact of CPA, stating that it:

- “helps with isolation and loneliness and not feeling I belong or am different.”
- “fosters becoming one's fullest REAL self.”
- improves one’s “relationship to significantly self-kinder and less shame-filled”
- “I prefer deep connection with a few people – not a group person”

Several comments indicated that no judgment had yet been made as the member was still new to the community.

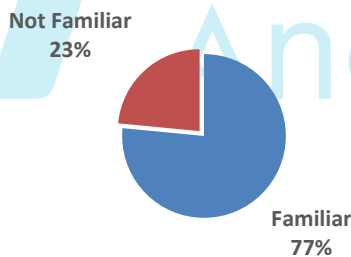
## METHODS THAT ARE USED TO HELP EASE CHRONIC PAIN AND CHRONIC ILLNESS:

Although there were slight changes in percentages from 2018 to 2020, the use of prescribed medications, prayer, ice and heat, meditation, and OTC medications remained the primary ways members ease chronic pain and chronic illness.



## CPA MEMBERS WHO KNOW AND USE CPA MATERIALS:

Over 70% of members stated they were familiar with CPA Conference Approved Literature, and nearly 45% endorsed the desire to see new literature.



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Representative comments included the following:

- “Daily Meditation Book, Literature that touches on specific issues (for ex: experiences of LGBTQ+ people with CP/CI, BIPOC ppl with CP/CI, ppl with mental health diagnosis with CP/CI)”\*
- “A collection of prayers that can be used in meetings and at home - a brochure about being a meeting chair - what to expect, resources, challenges and solutions. I know we did workshops about it, but I need the document/pamphlet/brochure for chairs to do workshops”\*
- “Step 4 inventory help, bookmark of slogans, how members should treat other people, bookmark or brochure of important reminders”
- “Tradition book, 12X12”\*
- “More “Stories of Hope””
- “Small daily reader book, service manual like other 12 step programs”\*

CPA will introduce new literature in 2021, including a book on the Twelve Traditions and Business Tools which include information on how to chair meetings as well as how to resolve meeting challenges. In addition, CPA’s Literature Committee is currently working on a Daily Meditation Book. Moving forward, CPA will use the term Higher Power rather than God, with exception to stories and vignettes written by CPA members.

## **SHARED THOUGHTS FROM CPA MEMBERS:**

The 2020 survey concluded with room for comments and 95 members chose to share thoughts and suggestions. A selection of those comments include the following:

- “I was very hesitant when first introduced to CPA. After experiencing it firsthand and seeing the changes, I believe there is a lot to gain from this program. I recommend it to anyone I meet struggling with chronic pain or illness.”
- “CPA saved my life. I was suicidal. Now I have an actual social life. It’s all online but it’s ok. I have friends and people who understand me. I really can’t talk about the gifts of this program without tearing up. Not only saved my life but it provided me with a better one. A life that I look forward to. Life with friends that I love. My pain and illness are the same but I’m actually grateful for it because without it I wouldn’t be part of this amazing group of people.”
- “In order to make the fellowship safer, more inclusive and more accessible, I would like to see more gender-neutral language used in meeting material (for instance, the phrase “CPA is a fellowship of people,” rather than “CPA is a fellowship of men and women...”). The idea of having closed meetings, I believe, is essential for certain groups to be able to share openly and feel safe in their recovery group. I would also like to see the option of rotating positions utilized, if/when possible (granted, not always possible given health challenges/physical limitations of CPA members)—personally, I have not heard a call for members to consider becoming an apprentice for some of the bigger, more intensive service positions, in order to create a structure that is more democratic—allowing for more members to be heard, and to participate in service positions, particularly the higher level positions, like in Alcoholics



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Anonymous and other 12 step fellowships where positions rotate every year or two a timeline that may very well not be possible in a smaller fellowship of folks with health challenges.”\*

- “I am so new...two weeks since found CPA...and I really appreciate the organized, structured, and thoughtful approach the organization takes to its purpose. Since I’m so new, it would be nice to have a page for beginners that lays out first steps (maybe it's here and I missed it). I'm waiting for the newcomer meeting but would like to study the steps with others... Amazing group of people, so respectful and so supportive. Thank you!”\*\*
- “CPA has changed nearly every aspect of my life. I enjoy welcoming and assisting new members. Service work has been a great experience for me. I have become more of a creative thinker. I have a new perspective on my past, present and future. It is an exciting time for me to be a member of CPA with so much growth, new literature, numerous ways to be of service and I enjoy a feeling of purpose and connectivity which I have not experienced before. I consider the other members of the fellowship to all be of great importance to the fellowship. They each have something unique to bring to the fellowship and improve my experience. New members remind me of where I used to be and how much I have grown, and I am excited to be able to see their growth...”
- “Wish there was more consistent ability to connect with old timers, they seem to be in a clique and only want emails or texts and not open to new relationships, it’s so hard to get anyone to call me back, I made 10 calls the other day and not one, a week later called me, very disappointing.”

### CONCLUSION:

Close to 150 CPA members from the U.S., Canada, France, and Australia participated in the 2020 random survey of the membership. This is the second survey conducted by CPA and we plan on continuing surveying the membership every two years.

Chronic Pain Anonymous conducts this survey to keep members informed on current trends in membership characteristics. The survey also provides information about CPA to the professional community and the general public as part of CPA’s purpose to carry our message to those who still suffer with Chronic Pain and Chronic Illness.

\* Open positions are announced monthly at the General Advisory Council and distributed via the minutes to the fellowship

\*\* In 2021, CPA will work with the fellowship to create a Newcomer’s page

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ongoing success of such this undertaking would not have been possible without the hard work, dedication and support of numerous individuals, including:

- The Chronic Pain Anonymous fellowship
- The Board of Trustees
- The General Advisory Council
- All the General Representatives for promoting the survey

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